

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

SILENT STAR

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INT. ABANDONED PARKING BUILDING - DAY

Three middle-aged men and two young adults stand in a five-story parking building smeared with moss and cracks. One of them is RICK, 28. He wears a brown jacket over some dirty old clothing. Rick is surrounded by the others.

RICK

Okay, let's have an agreement.

MAN 1

You're yet to pay Johnny, Christopher, Nolan, and even Lebowski. What are you even trying to do out here? Commit suicide?

RICK

Well, now if you put it that way, it just feels like an exaggeration. You just can't take those people seriously, can you?

MAN 2

Wait until you're decimated by them.

RICK

That's an overstatement. Besides, how long do you think those pretentious bastards will be able to roam unsupervised around these blocks before they rot in jail?

MAN 1

And how long do you think you can just run away all the time?

The two stare at each other before the man motions for an immediate attack. The next instant, a buff-looking man punches Rick hard in the face.

Rick grunts. He was expecting it.

RICK

Okay.

Rick reluctantly throws a punch, which falls flat.

More rapid punches follow. Rick finds dodging the punches anymore overwhelming; he's only able to throw a single successful punch before getting thrown to the ground. All four of them rush towards him.

RICK (cont'd)

Nope.

Rick immediately returns to his feet. He keeps missing his punches. A few more punches later, he's knocked out. They leave him on the ground.

EXT. STREETS OF MANHATTAN - DAY

Rick has a bleeding nose and several bruises. He walks across a destitute civilization. There are abandoned buildings all across the streets. Immensely peaceful.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Rick goes to a convenience store. The place is quiet.

He grabs a jug of water and a loaf of bread. Rick's bruised face unsettles the two only customers. Rick goes to the cashier. His name is ROGER, 33. He is the sole employee and the owner. He has a stash and is skinny.

ROGER  
Anything else?

Rick shakes his head ever so slightly. Roger looks at Rick in dismay as he scans the things. There is an awkward silence between the two.

ROGER (cont'd)  
What the hell is wrong with you?

RICK  
What?

ROGER  
Look at your face!

RICK  
What about it?

ROGER  
Seriously?

RICK  
I mean, it's not a big deal. I'm totally fine.

ROGER  
I couldn't care less about how you are. You come here every day looking like a piece of disaster!  
(Rick rolls his eyes)  
You're scaring off my customers!

RICK

What customers? All I see are just two edgy teenagers.

ROGER

Two valuable customers.

RICK

Oh god.

ROGER

And not to mention you're undermining my reputation by doing so.

RICK

Reputation? This forsaken store has been here for ten whole years, and there's never been much to it. You think a health inspector would even bother to consider this place? Just look at those...

(pointing)

God knows what even is that anymore.

Dozens of rotten, moldy meals that have been sitting for more than six months.

RICK (cont'd)

Just take this money.

After paying for the items, he leaves the market. Roger takes it all in: *he does have a point...*

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

A group of homeless people is taking shelter in a five-story abandoned building. There are dozens of small tents, a bonfire, and an old water dispenser.

Rick goes inside the building.

INT. SHELTER - DAY

The interior looks empty, with barely any furniture and dim lighting. It is dark, cramped, and damp.

Someone is lying down on a filthy couch. Their name is ZOE, 26. She's in a green jacket over a white T-shirt. She's currently reading a book. Rick comes inside, and she notices his bruised face.

ZOE

Again?

Her face says this happens more often than it should.

RICK

Nope.

Rick walks away in an attempt to cover his face.

ZOE

You know, you'd be rushed to the hospital at some point. And from there, how do you expect me to pay the bill?

RICK

I'm glad that's your priority of concern.

Zoe giggles.

ZOE

Are you alright?

RICK

Nothing that the body can't heal.  
(beat)  
Here.

Rick hands over the water and bread to her.

ZOE

You do realize these people couldn't just eat bread all the time, right? They need more than just one type of carbohydrate.

RICK

Well, there's a supermarket right up the street, so be my guest.  
(beat)  
You know it's never by choice.

As Rick is about to exit the building:

ZOE

Oh and there's a lady in a suit looking for you outside. It was something about documents?

RICK

(shrugs)  
I'd take a look.

Rick exits the building.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

Zoe refills the dispenser with the newly bought water. She then cuts the bread into equal portions. She serves one to each homeless person.

ZOE  
Okay, last customer.

MR. GOLDMAN, 78. He has a scar-like birthmark and a beard. He enjoys acting out a role by himself. He rubs his finger in excitement.

MR. GOLDMAN  
(playfully)  
What appears to be on the menu today?

ZOE  
(playing along)  
A special breakfast made specifically for you, fresh from the oven

MR. GOLDMAN  
To be served such a delicious breakfast is truly an honor.

Mr. Goldman takes a bite of the bread.

MR. GOLDMAN (cont'd)  
Magnificent!

Zoe smiles.

EXT. STREETS OF MANHATTAN - DAY

Rick goes to search for the lady who's looking for him. There is no indication of her presence until Rick meets a lady in a suit near the shelter. She carries a bunch of documents in her hand. Her name is AMANDA, 46.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

Rick approaches the lady.

RICK  
Can I help you?

AMANDA  
Are you Rick Williams?

RICK  
Yes, I am. Is there a problem?

AMANDA

There is. Do you live in this building?

RICK

Anybody can live in this building.

AMANDA

That includes yourself, yes?

RICK

And?

AMANDA

Mr. Rick, you have no permission to live on this property legally.

RICK

Why not?

AMANDA

There are policies and laws you need to abide by because neither this property nor any of the other abandoned properties around are yours.

(beat)

Let me ask you a question: Do you have official documentation proving your ownership rights to this property? Or a registered deed that bears your name? I'm afraid not.

RICK

This building has been sitting here empty for long periods.

AMANDA

The absence of occupants does not necessarily indicate that a structure has been abandoned and is accessible for unauthorized habitation. That indicates that you are trespassing on this property. The bank will now be the holder of the property, and a deconstruction might occur.

RICK

What do you mean by deconstruction? You can't do that.

AMANDA

We can.

RICK

Okay, what if the owner of the property disagrees with that?

AMANDA

We have the right to do so.

(beat)

There are things you don't understand.

RICK

But I understand that if the building is deconstructed, the people who live here will have nowhere to go.

AMANDA

The streets are always free, Mr. Rick.

(beat)

I'm giving you two and a half weeks to pack your things out and make sure nobody stays in the area any longer by then. Have a good day, Mr. Rick.

Amanda leaves the place. Rick is unsure what to do.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A boring office that lacks color.

Every employee is in their cubicle. The looks on their faces were as if they were being mentally tormented. There is not a thought behind their eyes. Simply put, it's monotonous work.

On the corner of the office, there is JOHN, 29. He is tall, with wavy hair and a beard. He is wearing casual office wear. He's more dedicated to his work than the other employees around him.

Behind him, there's BARNEY, 30. He is fat with thin hair and wears small glasses.

John's loud typing noises irritate him.

BARNEY

Dude!

John stops.

JOHN

Hm?



BARNEY

Can't you just type like a normal person? I can't concentrate while having that noise attacking my ear every second.

John doesn't seem to care about Barney's words.

BARNEY (cont'd)

What's with the rush? We have all the time in the world to do this shit.

(beat)

Wait a minute... I see now. It's because of that promotion, isn't it?

(laugh)

You're all clear, man. Nothing is blocking you from entering that door. It's even crazier that you think there's a larger room beyond that door.

JOHN

That's weird. Because, throughout my observation, you seem to be highly cautious for someone who doesn't care. Which door are you entering, Barney?

(beat)

Why don't you grab us a couple of bottles of water in the kitchen? Dehydration can cause some serious distractions. Don't want to lose our focus, don't we?

Barney obeys him with his eyes full of rage.

A speaker directly attached to John's desk activates.

SPEAKER

John Jackson. You are required.

John locks his computer before leaving his desk.

INT. BOSS OFFICE - DAY

John enters the room, nods, and then takes a seat. Here, he seems to be relatively quiet and more anxious. There is nothing but the sound of the clock ticking.

The boss of the office, ELIZABETH, 47.

John can feel Elizabeth's expressionless face staring into his soul. Even though he's attempting to stay calm, John is visibly nervous.

ELIZABETH

John. Your recent work has been outstanding, as I have noticed. Having someone like you is something for which I am grateful, so allow me to make you an offer.

JOHN

What offer?

ELIZABETH

A friend of mine who runs the "Lotus children orphanage" has requested a volunteer for their event.

JOHN

What event?

ELIZABETH

An event where the volunteer would be a temporary guardian for a chosen orphan. I'm asking you to take part in it.

JOHN

I'm sorry, but I can't.

ELIZABETH

I beg your pardon.

JOHN

I don't do well with kids.

ELIZABETH

I don't find anybody else who is qualified and trustworthy enough for this task.

JOHN

Not one?

ELIZABETH

No.

JOHN

I'm sorry. I can't.

ELIZABETH

I thought I hired you to do  
everything I asked you to do. Isn't  
that why you're here?

John could do nothing but obey her every word.

INT. LOTUS CHILDREN ORPHANAGE - DAY

A spacious space with vibrant walls and children playing  
everywhere. Happy music is playing on the speaker. Two  
adults are keeping an eye on things.

At the corner of the room, there is SKY, 10. She is blonde  
and wears a blue T-shirt. She is all alone, playing with a  
miniature piano. She's syncing with the music, which fits  
perfectly together.

An adult approaches. Her name is SAMANTHA, 25.

SAMANTHA

Hello there, Sky. What are you doing  
all by yourself?

SKY

Experimenting.

SAMANTHA

What kind of experimentation?

SKY

The idea of music incorporates  
rhythm, melody, harmony, and color to  
express thoughts and emotions in  
profound ways.

Sky proceeds to play a soft and melancholy melody. Back at  
the center, an announcement is being made by QUEEN, 28.

QUEEN

Alright, everybody! I need all of you  
to gather around over here.

All of the kids gather around.

QUEEN (cont'd)

Now that you are all here, something  
exciting will soon come. It will  
offer you the chance to embark on an  
exciting journey around the world.

A kid raises their hand.

KID

Like a field trip?

QUEEN

Not quite. It is something you are going through with another person. Each of you will have a chosen guardian assigned to you for thirty days.

SKY

Why would we trust strangers to take care of us?

QUEEN

They're not just strangers, Sky. They are specifically selected people who are fully qualified to serve as guardians. Your daily activities will be reported everyday. Following the event, you will all be taken to a different district in Buffalo.

Sky is fearful of what lies underneath.

EXT. LOTUS CHILDREN ORPHANAGE - MOMENTS LATER

The guardians are arriving. They pair with one child each after confirming their identities. Many kids are eager to meet their guardians.

John steps out of his car. The walls take a toll on his eyes. He can't bear it.

He forces himself to walk towards the front desk. He looks at the place in disgust.

JOHN

I'm here for the guardian thing.

RECEPTIONIST

May I have your name?

JOHN

John Jackson.

The receptionist goes through a list of names.

RECEPTIONIST

Ah. Here it is. All you need to do now is fill out this verification form and show your ID.

He opens his wallet and then gives her his ID card. He rolls his eyes when filling out the form.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)  
Alright. Now give me a minute.

The receptionist goes inside. John looks around, wondering how much longer it will be until he finally gets to leave.

The receptionist returns with Sky holding her hand.

RECEPTIONIST  
I would like to introduce you to Sky.

JOHN  
(awkwardly)  
Hey there, Sky. How are you doing?

RECEPTIONIST  
(to Sky)  
Don't be afraid. He's a trusted gentleman. He will take care of you, and it will be a fun experience for both of you. Trust me.

Sky forces herself to stand by John's side and eventually holds his hand.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)  
There you go. That's not so bad, isn't it?  
(beat)  
If there's any problem, you could always contact us.

JOHN  
Sure. Thanks.

RECEPTIONIST  
Goodbye! Have fun the two of you!

Sky takes a last glimpse of the place before entering John's car.

INT. CAR (MOVING) - DAY

They are now heading to John's house.

JOHN  
So hold old are you again?

SKY  
Ten.

JOHN

Uh-huh.

The tall, looming buildings outside catch Sky's interest.

SKY

Why are these buildings so tall? Is it necessary?

JOHN

What?

SKY

Why is it built that way?

JOHN

(sighs)

So it could fit hundreds of employees into a single structure without using much land.

SKY

Isn't it dangerous when it reaches a certain height? The possibility of it collapsing?

JOHN

Architects have designed these structures to ensure that doesn't happen.

Sky nods.

INT. JOHN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The place is uncluttered. In the sink, there are a lot of dirty dishes. On the desk are several empty beer bottles. The floor is strewn with paper fragments. The place is freezing.

An orange cat emerges from the shadows.

SKY

You didn't say you have a cat.

JOHN

Well, I do. Her name is Bells or whatever you want to call her.

SKY

That's the best name you could think of?

JOHN

That's the only name I could think of.

Sky pets the cat.

JOHN (cont'd)

Hungry?

Sky nods. Very much hungry.

KITCHEN.

John opens the refrigerator, which is full of frozen foods and beers. He takes a frozen pizza out of the refrigerator and heats it in the oven.

SKY

Is there anything healthier to eat?  
Something that has vegetables?

JOHN

No.

SKY

Why?

JOHN

Because it's my food, my choice.

SKY

You could always choose a healthier option.

John sighs.

After a short while, John takes it out of the oven and places it on the table.

JOHN

Here's the knife. Water is in the fridge.

SKY

You're not eating?

JOHN

No. I've work to do.

SKY

It's nighttime, shouldn't you be resting?

JOHN

Just eat your dinner, alright? Let me  
mind my own business.

John breaks away from her and goes to his room.

SKY

(to Bells)

Do you want some?

Sky shares a small portion of it with Bells.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER

Sky's stomach is full, and she is now tired.

She sleeps in a cavernous bedroom. She is trembling  
underneath a thin blanket and a flat pillow.

Sky hears noises outside the door. She gets closer to the  
door. The noises are getting louder. She opens the door.  
It's Bells.

SKY

Hey. You're all lonely out there,  
aren't you? Come here.

She brings her under the blanket.

INT. AUTO SHOP - DAY

A dated, filthy auto shop with an oily floor and rusty  
tools. The owner of the place, HECTOR, 30. He has a thin  
goatee and is muscular with various tattoos.

Rick is there repairing a broken car's undercarriage.

HECTOR

Hey! Mind passing that wrench?

RICK

Just a second.

Hector installs the last part of the engine.

HECTOR

Now try activating.

RICK

Where are the keys?



HECTOR

On the desk.

Rick grabs the keys. He enters the car and turns it on. For a split second, the car roars to life before gradually dying.

HECTOR (cont'd)

(sigh)

Try again.

Rick makes another attempt. The results are the same.

RICK

I don't think it's working.

HECTOR

You don't say that.

RICK

Have you checked the battery?

HECTOR

I've checked everything.

RICK

You sure?

HECTOR

I'm sure of it.

RICK

Who knows? Maybe you missed something.

HECTOR

I know what I'm doing, Rick.

(beat)

And by you mean "missing" you mean the part that is in your pocket.

RICK

What?

HECTOR

(sighs)

Just give it back to me.

RICK

Give what back?

HECTOR

Stop playing around. I know what you've been doing.

(MORE)

HECTOR (cont'd)

You have been stealing the parts so  
that you could sell them later.

Rick feels embarrassed of himself.

HECTOR (cont'd)

Listen, you're my friend. I gave you  
a paid job and will come to help when  
you are most in need. But this is  
something I can't tolerate.

Rick returns the part he stole. Feeling guilty.

RICK

I'm sorry...

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Returning to the gloomy office, John put in yet another day  
of excessive work. He brings Sky with him. She looks around  
the area with interest. She comes across nothing but  
computer screens.

SKY

Why are we here again?

JOHN

I'm working.

SKY

You're always working. I thought this  
stupid event was supposed to be fun  
and exciting. This is nothing like  
it. Why did you even volunteer in the  
first place?

JOHN

I don't need your commentary.

SKY

And I don't need your ignorance.

JOHN

Just try to do something until I'm  
done.

SKY

You mean for like another seven  
hours? Ugh.

(beat)

Can't we just go outside? Have a  
walk. Breathe some fresh air. Maybe  
ice cream?

John keeps ignoring her.

SKY (cont'd)  
Please? Come on...

The chattering irritates Barney.

BARNEY  
Hey, control your kid, man. I'm  
working here.

JOHN  
Not my kid.

BARNEY  
Then why would you bring her here?

SKY  
(to Barney)  
I didn't even want to be here in the  
first place.

BARNEY  
(rolls his eyes)  
Whatever.

Barney returns to his computer.

SKY  
We've been here since seven.  
All that matters to you is  
work. Nothing else. It's  
barely even a week, and I  
hated this already. It  
would've been a hundred  
times better if you weren't  
the ones I was assigned  
with. Why are you even doing  
this if you couldn't care  
less about it at all?

JOHN  
Sky, stop. Stop talking.  
Just stop for once. Stop!

John has had enough.

JOHN (cont'd)  
Would you just please... stop.  
Talking. Shut up alright!

Sky frightens. All eyes are on John.

JOHN (cont'd)  
You want to go outside? Fine. Let's  
go outside.

He grabs her arm.

EXT. PARK - DAY

John gives her some money from his wallet.

JOHN

Take this. Go buy whatever you like.  
I'll be at that over there. Once  
you're done, go straight to the bar,  
alright? Don't go anywhere else.

Sky nods. John leaves and walks into the bar. Sky starts to wander around the park. Next, she treats herself to ice cream. Sky decides not to obey orders and instead walks farther.

A man approaches her carrying a bag of candy. He wears formal attire and is tall and lean.

STRANGER

Hello there, little one.

SKY

Yes?

STRANGER

I'm not sure if it's the face but,  
you look similar to the person I'm  
looking for.

SKY

I do?

STRANGER

Indeed.

SKY

To who exactly?

STRANGER

I will tell you more about it if  
you'd like to go with me.

INT. AUTO SHOP - DAY - CONTINUOUS

HECTOR

Care to join me at the game next  
Wednesday?

RICK

I don't think I could. Got a tight  
schedule.

HECTOR

For what?

RICK

I mean, if you'd still like me to go--

HECTOR

No, that's alright. I'll just ask my sister to go with me.

Rick starts to look at something else. The auto shop is across the street from the park. Rick notices Sky talking to the stranger. He goes for a check as he is aware of the possibility.

HECTOR (cont'd)

Where you going?

RICK

Be right back.

EXT. PARK - DAY

The stranger slowly reaches for Sky's hand.

STRANGER

Don't worry, it just takes a couple of minutes--

RICK

Hey!

STRANGER

Yes?

RICK

What do you think you're doing?

STRANGER

I was...

Rick looks at the bag full of treats.

RICK

Right.

STRANGER

It's not what you think.

RICK

You better get going.

The stranger walks off.

RICK (cont'd)

Creep.

(to Sky)

Hey, are you alright?

SKY

I'm fine.

RICK

You sure?

SKY

Yeah. I guess.

RICK

What are you doing out here by yourself?

SKY

Enjoying this ice cream.

RICK

Anybody here that knows you?

SKY

I am with somebody. He's on that bar.

RICK

He better be responsible. I'll tell you what, I'll accompany you back to him. What do you think?

SKY

I'd like that.

RICK

You got a name?

SKY

Sky.

RICK

Rick.

(beat)

You're from around here?

SKY

Something like that. I find this part of the city different.

RICK

How so?

SKY

Well, it's brighter over here, and the neighborhood is also greener but has an unhygienic environment.

RICK

Seems on point.

SKY

I came from the other side of the city. The one with tall, massive, and colorless constructions.

RICK

I guess we all have our own perspective.

SKY

The locals here appear to be... impoverished.

RICK

Nice observation.

(beat)

But you'd find it different once you get to know this place better.

SKY

How so?

RICK

I'll tell you more about it if we ever meet again.

They arrive at the bar. John is outside looking worried.

JOHN

Sky! Where the hell you've been? I told you to go to the bar once you're done.

SKY

I would rather take my time before going back to that tedious office.

Rick finds John's face to be familiar.

RICK

Wait a minute. I know you don't I?

JOHN

I'm sorry?

RICK  
You're...  
(thinking)  
John, aren't you?

JOHN  
And you are?

RICK  
Oh, I hope I'm not mistaken here but  
I'm Rick. Rick Williams. and you're  
John Jackson, right? we were together  
in high school.

JOHN  
(realizing)  
Oh, right. Of course, I remember.

RICK  
I know.

JOHN  
(intentionally)  
You're that obscure and anxious  
shirker, aren't you?

RICK  
What?

JOHN  
(sarcastically)  
Now I fully remember. Wow. What a  
coincidence.

The memories are coming back to Rick after hearing those words.

RICK  
(shocked)  
Yeah...  
(beat)  
Is she your kid?

JOHN  
No. She's not.  
(beat)  
anyways, we'd better get going now.

RICK  
Okay. Nice to meet you again, I  
guess...



SKY  
(waves)  
Bye!

Rick waves back to Sky with a smile.

INT. STREETS OF MANHATTAN - NIGHT

A cold, silent, and windy night.

The world is asleep. There's barely a person in sight. An orange street light illuminates the streets.

Rick offers himself in secret for a gig.

CLIENT  
10\$, 20\$, 30\$. There.

RICK  
Can't you add a bit more?

CLIENT  
You're kidding?  
(beat)  
If you're looking for consistency,  
I'd suggest that you get an actual  
job. A steady job.

RICK  
Easier said than done.

CLIENT  
You'd never know if you don't try.

RICK  
(pause)  
Right.  
(beat)  
By the way, do you know any tax  
property records around here?

CLIENT  
What for?

RICK  
Nothing. There's just something I  
have to do.

CLIENT  
There's probably one a couple of  
blocks from here, if I recall.

RICK  
Alright. Thanks.

INT./EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - DAY

Bells and Sky are currently playing inside the house. While John is sitting next to his sister outside. OLIVER, 32. She is tall, has long hair, and dresses in black.

They are both reviewing a blueprint.

OLIVER  
It is grossly out of proportion. It's not symmetrical. Who was assigned to work on this? It's downright nonsense.

JOHN  
That's what happens when you trust someone else to do your work.

OLIVER  
Whoever did this better be responsible enough to admit it.

JOHN  
Doubt it.

OLIVER  
We have to drive over to Chicago to fix this absolute imperfection.

JOHN  
Chicago? You're serious?

OLIVER  
What's wrong?

JOHN  
You know I'd have to bring the kid with me. And having her in such a place is not a good idea.

OLIVER  
I can't see why you can't leave her.

JOHN  
I was told to be with her at all times or else--

OLIVER

Or else what? Elizabeth will discover that you're not doing what she told you to do?

(sighs)

She has about five other corporations to keep an eye on. Do you really believe she will notice whether the kid is right by your side? Do you have any acquaintances?

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

Having no other option, John comes to the one person he actually knows.

RICK

You can't be serious.

JOHN

I've no other choice.

RICK

For how long again?

JOHN

Two weeks more or less.

RICK

After all these years, we just met again yesterday. And now you're asking me to do this?

JOHN

I don't know anybody else that's capable of doing this.

RICK

And you think I can? Your "obscure and anxious" high school friend? What about daycare? Why aren't you considering that?

JOHN

I can't.

RICK

Why exactly?

JOHN

It's just for two weeks! Why are making this complicated?

RICK  
(referring yo lack  
money)  
There are other issues.

John finally understands the main issue and has put the pieces together.

JOHN  
Okay. I get it.

John gives Rick a handful of money.

JOHN (cont'd)  
This is an approximation. Call me if there's anything.

John leaves the place.

Sky starts introducing herself to all of the homeless. Their faces lit up as they meet her. Sky meets Mr. Goldman, who's dancing and wielding a baseball bat while donning a cowl.

SKY  
(giggling)  
What are you doing?

MR. GOLDMAN  
(American-Indian  
accent)  
I'm an Indian. Celebrating a successful hunt by engaging in a ceremony to gain the gods' blessings.

SKY  
Are you a descendant?

MR. GOLDMAN  
(normal accent)  
No. I would be denying modernity and would rather live free in the wild.

Sky nods slowly. Trying to process it.

MR. GOLDMAN (cont'd)  
Simmer down the solemnity. I was simply acting. What is your first impression of it?

SKY  
I think it was very convincing. Especially with the accent. You sounded like an actual Indian.

MR. GOLDMAN

I'll be damned. Another glorious performance of mine! How marvelous! Come little one, we will enjoy this great deal of a moment!

She's led to dance by Mr. Goldman. Rick smiles from a distance.

INT. SHELTER - DAY

ZOE

Since when did you agree to take care of her?

RICK

Since now. Besides, what could possibly go wrong?

(beat)

Luckily, that bearded pedantic gave coverage.

ZOE

Interesting description.

RICK

Thanks. You think she'd fit on the couch with you?

ZOE

Yeah. We could make it work.

RICK

Great.

Sky comes inside the building.

RICK (cont'd)

There you are. How was the dance?

There is a huge smile on Sky's face that can't seem to fade.

SKY

One of the best moments of my life.

RICK

Glad you feel that way. Anyways, I'd like to introduce you to Zoe. She's a friend of mine.

ZOE

Hi there, Sky.

SKY

Nice to meet you.

ZOE

Nice to meet you too.

RICK

I'm sure it's different from where you were before.

SKY

I mean, it has its fair share of advantages and disadvantages. But honestly? Here is much preferable. The people, the air, the freedom, let me tell you, the place where I was before was the complete opposite of this. It was like living at the North Pole!

Both Rick and Zoe laugh.

RICK

Agree to disagree.

Sky explores more of the building. She discovers an old bookshelf.

SKY

Whose books are these?

ZOE

It's for everybody to read. Mostly, it's just me, though.

SKY

Have you read all of them?

ZOE

Not yet, but I'm planning to.

SKY

Which one is your favorite?

Zoe grabs a fantasy book with a pink-colored cover.

ZOE

I would say this one.

SKY

What is it about?

ZOE

What about we read the entire book together? So you'll know why it's my favorite.

SKY

I like the sound of it.

ZOE

Great. We'll read it soon, alright?

SKY

Okay.

EXT. STREETS OF MANHATTAN - DAY

The skies are foggy. The streets are wet. Rick introduces Sky to the neighborhood while looking for a tax property records office.

SKY

So... both you and John were together in high school?

RICK

You could say so...

SKY

You two were like buddies?

RICK

(hesitant)

Not really, no. I mean, sure, he was a decent company back then. But it didn't stay that way.

SKY

What happened?

RICK

He used to be kind, considerate, and friendly. He was likable. But, as time goes on, that confidence develops into arrogance. He started to put himself above everything and everyone. You'd be surprised how overconfidence can make one presumptuous.

SKY

What about you?

RICK

Me? What John said about me was enough to tell the story.

SKY

I don't believe that.

RICK

Why not?

SKY

You said it yourself. John became a dreadful person over the years. If he said anything to an acquaintance, it would be something meant to patronize you.

RICK

Out of everything he has said and done. That's the most honest he's ever been.

A beat.

RICK (cont'd)

I have a question. What is your relationship with John?

SKY

(lying)

He's... a friend of my parents.

RICK

Really?

SKY

(mumbly)

I mean, more of a co-worker. My parents had to go out of town so they couldn't bring me. You can tell how the rest of the story goes.

RICK

(nods)

I see.

They arrive at the tax property records office.

RICK (cont'd)

Don't get me wrong, but I'd have to leave you here for a couple of minutes if that's okay. There's something I need to do.



SKY

It's alright. I'm used to it by now.

RICK

Don't worry. It will be quick.

Rick goes inside the office.

Sky takes a seat on the sidewalk. She's taking in her surroundings when she spots a piano.

INT. TAX PROPERTY RECORDS OFFICE - DAY

Rick sits in a cramped, overheated office with green-painted walls. JOLLY, a 55-year-old woman, walks into the room. Her hair is curly, her face is wrinkled, and she's dressed in a green sweater.

Jolly opens a drawer and grabs a sheaf of documents.

JOLLY

Mr. Rick?

RICK

Yes.

JOLLY

To claim an abandoned property, you might want to have a confirmation with the actual owner.

RICK

The owner still exist?

JOLLY

Generally speaking, real estate can never be abandoned, because there will always be the name of an owner recorded on the deed for the property.

RICK

Okay, if they're still out there somewhere, how do I contact them?

JOLLY

There are several ways. However, I strongly suggest tracking the tax records.

RICK

The tax records. It's available?

JOLLY

Yes, if real estate exists and someone is paying or owns taxes. It's possible the contact information for the owner is written on it, but it might take a while.

RICK

I have time.

MOMENTS LATER.

JOLLY

Well, a record's a record...

Rick examines the tax records. Countless dollars have been spent over the years, and the last tax was paid decades ago. Rick can't seem to find a name on it.

RICK

Where's the name?

JOLLY

What name?

RICK

The owner. I thought their name was supposed to be written here.

JOLLY

Whoever the owner was, I don't think they wanted their name on it. However, there's an address.

RICK

It's the location of the building. Where can I find more specific information?

JOLLY

Going to the recorder's office is your only option.

EXT. STREETS OF MANHATTAN - DAY

Rick is glad about the slightest hint he received before realizing he had been away from Sky for some time. He gets concerned. Rick checks around the block before discovering Sky. She is still playing the piano.

RICK

Sky! I'm sorry it took me way too long.

She stops playing.

SKY

No, it's okay. Besides, I've found myself some amusement.

RICK

You played it well.

SKY

Want to hear some more?

RICK

Why not?

Sky begins to play almost flawlessly. Her performance amazes Rick. However, he notices that her hand positions are incorrect.

RICK (cont'd)

That's amazing.

SKY

Thank you.

(beat)

I always wanted to play in front of an audience.

RICK

You can be a child- prodigy musician, you know.

(Sky grins)

But if you want to perform in front of an audience, I suggest you fix your hand's position. So, in the end, you won't be confused by mixing what should be played with your right and left hands. Audio is a priority. But the visual is as important as everything else when you're on stage.

SKY

Do you play?

RICK

No. Not anymore...

A sudden sadness crosses his face. He tries his best to hide it.

SKY

Well, now is your chance!

RICK  
(forcing a smile)  
That would be unnecessary.

SKY  
But I want to see you play.

RICK  
Maybe another time.

SKY  
Come on... please?

RICK  
Time to go.

EXT. STREETS OF MANHATTAN - DAY

They are on now on their back to the shelter.

SKY  
How long have you been living here?

RICK  
Long enough.

Sky looks at the homeless people on the streets. They are all starving, freezing, and sick.

SKY  
Why aren't the rich helping out these people?

RICK  
Because they don't find any use in doing so, you don't look back once you're on top. They can't bear the thought of being in their shoes. That's why they keep everything for themselves.

SKY  
Does it satisfy them?

RICK  
Money can only buy so much happiness.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

The instant they return, they witness a gang of homeless people attempting to steal their goods.

Zoe is struggling to stop them. They are so many that her attempts are futile. Rick rushes towards the madness.

RICK  
What's happening here?

ZOE  
(out of breath)  
Rick! Where have you been? Don't you see what's happening here?

RICK  
How am I supposed to know?

ZOE  
Don't just stand there, do something!

Rick walks into the indignant group. They're trying to take everything at once, destroying the tents and dispensers.

RICK  
What do you think you're doing? You can't take those! Give it back!

RAGING HOMELESS 1  
Like hell I am!

They push Rick to the ground and run away before Rick can even get back up.

RICK  
I said stop it!

Rick tries to retrieve what they have stolen, but they all band together against him. Rick is getting beaten up and doesn't stand a chance.

MOMENTS LATER.

Nothing but bread crumbs on the ground are left. Rick is hurt. He's cleaning up the mess.

MR. GOLDMAN  
It was inevitably coming. Nothing can be done to reverse this. Forgiveness is a consideration. Acceptance is required.

RICK  
Thanks for the help, Mr. Goldman. You should try telling them next time.

INT. SHELTER - NIGHT

Rick walks inside to rest. He notices Zoe reading Sky her favorite book. He stands back and watches.

ZOE

(reading out loud)

...The proposition that man made might or might not alter the course of human history. He believed it to be overstated. an impossible destination. a dream. Nothing was thought to be impossible, though, because he lives in the same world as a supercilious demon and a dragon wracked with rage. giving his all despite being misunderstood because of his appearance and background.

SKY

That's just sad.

ZOE

It's just the tip of the iceberg. Wait until you read the rest of it.

Zoe notices Rick hiding under the shadows.

ZOE (cont'd)

Rick? Are you alright?

RICK

That's a question that doesn't need an answer.

Sky runs towards him and hugs him.

SKY

Rick! Thank god you're okay.

RICK

It's alright. Nothing to worry about.

(beat)

How was the book?

SKY

The more I read it the more depressing it gets.

RICK

Well, not all story is a "happily ever after."

SKY

We haven't finished the book, though.

RICK

I'm sure we can continue it later  
because it's time for bed.

SKY

Oh...

Sky hops onto the couch and settles into a comfortable position. Rick helps her with the blanket, and they both smile as they look into each other's eyes.

RICK

Sleep well.

Sky closes her eyes.

FIRST FLOOR.

Rick is now lying back on the first floor, preparing to close his eyes, when Zoe comes with bandages.

ZOE

Let me take a look.

RICK

I don't need that.

ZOE

Yes, you do.

Zoe gently cleans the wounds.

RICK

Ouch.

ZOE

I thought you were used to this by  
now.

RICK

It still hurts.

ZOE

How are we going to recover from  
this?

RICK

Like always, start from the  
beginning.

ZOE

For how long?

RICK

As long as it takes.

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

Oliver is showcasing her presentation in a large meeting room with a group of elderly dressed in suits. John takes a seat in the back of the room. His attention is elsewhere.

ELDERLY 1

What is this? I don't understand the concept of it. What is it about? what is the purpose of it?

OLIVER

Okay, so initially the artifact will be presented--

ELDERLY 2

Blabber all you want, but deep down, we all know this silly little project of yours is absolute horseshit. How do you expect us to trust you with your work if you can't even explain what your project is about or how it works?

ELDERLY 3

I believe what he's saying is: stop wasting our time and leave this place at once.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Oliver is visibly frustrated and disappointed.

OLIVER

What are you even doing back there? You were supposed to help me convince them!

JOHN

I didn't say I was going to be any part of it.

OLIVER

You're kidding? This project is important to us.



JOHN  
Your project.

OLIVER  
Are you serious?

JOHN  
You don't want to get drawn into this, Oliver. They're going to suck you dry until there's nothing left, and then you'll be replaced as if you never existed. Do you really want to work for these people?

Oliver is reconsidering.

INT. COUNTY RECORDER OFFICE - DAY

Rick goes to the recorder's office in hopes of finding further information. He looks through an infinite array of data.

RICK  
How can someone even do this?

Rick slams the desk in exasperation as he is unable to find any clues. People around him warn him to keep quiet. Rick goes to the front desk for help.

RECEPTIONIST  
How can I help you, sir?

RICK  
I'm looking for records on this property.

RECEPTIONIST  
Alright, give me a minute.

The receptionist inputs the data to the computer.

RICK  
Anything?

RECEPTIONIST  
I was able to discover the mortgage recorded on the deed.

RICK  
Of who?

RECEPTIONIST

You could bring the mortgage record to the nearest bank. They might be able to help you with that.

RICK

Can't it be done here?

RECEPTIONIST

I'm afraid not.

INT. BANK - DAY

RICK

How come that information is inaccessible?

BANK RECEPTIONIST

We can't share that kind of information.

RICK

All I ask is just a name. Nothing more.

BANK RECEPTIONIST

I'm afraid that is not possible.

RICK

How come?

BANK RECEPTIONIST

The amount of information available is limited.

RICK

Okay, what are the available information?

BANK RECEPTIONIST

Something that you don't already have.

RICK

I need a name, contact information, or anything that tells me who owns this.

BANK RECEPTIONIST

As I said before: that is not possible.

(MORE)

BANK RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)

(beat)

Sir, if you do not have any other business to do, I would like to ask you to leave.

RICK

I'm still not done here!

BANK RECEPTIONIST

Sir, I need you to calm down.

RICK

Please, I don't want to start chaos as much as you do.

BANK RECEPTIONIST

(sighs)

Fine. Perhaps I'm able to give you an address.

The bank receptionist writes down the address: paper streets.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Rick's cell phone vibrates. He answers it.

RICK

(into phone)

Yes?

JOHN (O.S.)

It's John.

RICK

Oh. How's it going?

JOHN (O.S.)

Nothing much.

RICK

Alright...

JOHN (O.S.)

Is Sky with you?

RICK

Not currently.

JOHN (O.S.)

What do you mean?

RICK

She's alright, don't worry. I just have something to do at the moment.

JOHN (O.S.)

Alright. Is the money enough?

RICK

Hopefully.

JOHN (O.S.)

Okay. Just checking. I'll see you soon.

RICK

Sure.

The phone hangs up. Not long after, the phone vibrates again. Rick answers it.

RICK (cont'd)

John?

It's a different caller with an intimidating voice.

UNKNOWN CALLER (O.S.)

Rick Williams. Where is our money?

RICK

(into phone)

Um...

UNKNOWN CALLER (O.S.)

You owe us! if you don't pay soon, we will--

RICK

Wrong number.

Rick hangs up.

EXT. PAPER STREETS - DAY

Rick takes a cab to the location. The area is dotted with expensive homes that have unique shapes and sizes. Rick starts to look for the address.

He circles the block before finding the house. It's an immense mansion with elegant front lights, a lavish porch, and enormous ornamental plants.

Rick knocks on the door. There is no response. He knocks a second time with the same result.

An old man with a dog passes by.

RICK  
Hey!

OLD MAN  
Yes?

RICK  
Is there by any chance you know the  
person that lives in this house?

OLD MAN  
(hesitantly)  
You mean Mr. Adrian?

RICK  
Yes. him...

OLD MAN  
Everybody does. He's such a kind  
gentleman.

RICK  
Do you know where he is?

OLD MAN  
I'm not sure. He often goes out of  
town. Never been in his house for  
more than five days.

RICK  
Any idea when he will return?

OLD MAN  
I'm afraid not.

RICK  
Alright. Thanks.

OLD MAN  
Anytime.

The old man walks away.

INT. SHELTER - DAWN

Rick makes his way back to the shelter after another setback. The building is empty. He notices Zoe has her book open. Rick hears laughter outside and sees Sky and Zoe when he peers out the window.

EXT. PARK - DAWN

Sky is playing fetch with a golden retriever.

RICK  
That seems fun.

ZOE  
Oh, hey.

RICK  
Where did the dog come from?

ZOE  
I don't know. I left Sky for a moment  
and the minute I returned, the dog  
was already with her.

RICK  
Odd.

Sky runs towards Rick once she spots him. The dog follows her.

SKY  
Rick!

RICK  
Hey, I've noticed you made a new  
friend.

SKY  
Yeah. He's cute, don't you think?

RICK  
I can see that.

The dog jumps on Rick and licks him repeatedly.

RICK (cont'd)  
Okay, you're energetic.

Rick pets the dog.

SKY  
I think I'll name him... Lucky! What  
do you think?

RICK  
Very original.

SKY  
Come on, Rick, Zoe, follow me!

Sky runs towards the meadow. Lucky follows her right away.

SKY (cont'd)  
What are you waiting for?

RICK  
Looks like we have no other option.

Zoe and Rick join her. Lucky continues to bark and chases them around the field. Her tail is wagging rapidly. From a distance, Mr. Goldman notices them and soon joins the party.

MR. GOLDMAN  
Dare to not invite the Goldman to  
this glorious party?

Mr. Goldman pretends to fight sky with an imaginary sword.

MR. GOLDMAN  
Come here, you little monster! Thou  
shall not pass my judgment.

Sky laughs frantically. Mr. Goldman catches her. He lowers her to the ground.

MR. GOLDMAN (cont'd)  
Do not resist!

SKY  
Someone save me!

Rick and Zoe come to the rescue. Rick pushes Mr. Goldman away from Sky.

RICK  
Be gone!

MR. GOLDMAN  
No! I am defeated! This cannot be!

RICK  
(bowing)  
You are saved my royal highness.

SKY  
Why thank you my knight in shining  
armor.

They sit down and relax. As they watch the sun go down, nothing seems to matter. They look at each other, smiling.

EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

Sky is alone on the building's rooftop, gazing at the stars. Rick accompanies her and takes a seat next to her. They sit beneath the radiant, dazzling stars.

SKY

You ever wonder how it would feel to see one up close?

RICK

One thing I know is, I would be instantly vaporized before I could even react.

Rick killed the mood. He now feels guilty about it.

RICK (cont'd)

Hey, even if it only lasted for a few nanoseconds, an experience is still an experience. Before allowing yourself to sink into your fantasies, you must comprehend reality.

SKY

What if you fantasize to escape reality?

RICK

You might consider it paradise if you could live in nothingness for all of eternity in peace, not caring about anything outside of yourself. But people rarely anticipate what might be hidden beneath the gratification.

SKY

And that is?

RICK

Emptiness. That dream doesn't fulfill you as you had anticipated. You can't call it living if you don't have a purpose. Our lives, our souls -- none of us ever asked to be created. It just happens. Either you're having the time of your life or being at rock bottom. There's no getting around that. Incorporating the good and the bad together results in a human being. Remove one side or another. It's not human anymore.



SKY

What about the meaning?

RICK

Meaning?

SKY

Like, for instance, the stars. People told me they symbolized various emotions in different forms. They kept saying it was meaningful. But I never figured out what it truly meant.

RICK

Let's say that the ancients saw a reflection of themselves in them. They formed a connection and decoded what defines humanity. Each generation viewed something different from their vantage point as it passed down through the years. Stars are like humans. You see them up there? Can you count them individually?

SKY

No. There's way too many.

RICK

Exactly. And are they all the same sizes?

SKY

No.

RICK

Just like humans, we all come in different shapes and sizes. One might say each is unique; one might not. People often categorize each other due to their differences. The larger and brighter the star is often categorized as the special one. However, it's truly just a matter of perspective. The little ones are as special as the big ones. And even the ones that possess no light are as bright as the brightest.

(beat)

You, me, Zoe, your parents -- we are all worth the same. It's just the path we take differs.

SKY

(pause)

I... they're not around anymore...

Rick is shocked.

RICK

Oh. I'm sorry. I didn't know.

Rick starts putting the pieces together.

RICK (cont'd)

(hesitantly)

So that's why you were with John.

Sky nods.

SKY

Once this is over, I will be transported to buffalo.

RICK

What's wrong with buffalo?

SKY

A place where you'd rather be dead. I'll probably spend the rest of my life trapped there.

Sky starts dropping tears.

RICK

Hey, look at me. Don't worry. Everything will be alright.

SKY

You're just saying that to make me feel better. That won't change anything!

RICK

You're right. I can't stop the inevitable. What's changeable can only be done by yourself.

SKY

How?

RICK

As I said, If I can't change your life, then there is no way for me to know the key to it.

SKY

If a person can change their fate,  
then why you're still here?

A beat.

RICK

It's inconsequential.

SKY

No. If everything is going to be  
alright, why shouldn't it be for you?

RICK

Trust me, Sky, I'm trying. You can't  
see the result until the very end.  
Maybe there is no result at all in my  
case.

SKY

You said, anyone.

RICK

Anyone with strong determination.

SKY

And you're not?

RICK

Mostly demolished.

A beat.

RICK (cont'd)

Anyway, let's talk about what you  
want.

Rick tries to change the topic of the conversation.

SKY

What?

RICK

What would you do if you had the  
chance to fulfill your desire?

SKY

(thinking)

Well, I'd love to watch a classical  
music performance. Maybe also go to  
an amusement park and watch a movie  
on the big screen.

RICK  
Excellent choices.

They both continue to stargaze.

SKY  
What would you do if there was an  
alien invasion?

RICK  
I'd just move to another country.

SKY  
Wouldn't they invade the whole earth?

RICK  
No. Only America.

EXT. PAPER STREETS - DAY

Rick is back at the mansion. He knocks on the front door  
several times but receives no response until today.

The old man comes back.

OLD MAN  
Still waiting?

RICK  
What does it look like?

OLD MAN  
I don't know what matter you have  
with this person, but he was here for  
a moment.

RICK  
Really?

OLD MAN  
Yes. I saw him go inside briefly  
before going out again. He went to  
the cafe near the city, I believe.

RICK  
How long has that been?

OLD MAN  
Forty minutes?

Rick swiftly runs his way to the cafe without hesitation.

The old man smirks.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

Sky explores the surroundings. She sees Zoe providing for the needs of the homeless. She passes Mr. Goldman. He's sitting on the corner all by himself.

SKY

Mr. Goldman. Why are you here? Are you okay?

Mr. Goldman's body is shaking and his face looks pale.

MR. GOLDMAN

Oh, no need to worry, my dear. I am completely alright.

SKY

You don't look so well to me. You're shaking.

MR. GOLDMAN

It's merely a subconscious reaction by the body to generate heat in the cold breeze.

She comforts him by sitting right next to him.

SKY

Why do people do that?

MR. GOLDMAN

Do what?

SKY

Hide their pain?

MR. GOLDMAN

(pause)

I suppose it's an underlying lack of trust in oneself and others. They don't want to be vulnerable, or else they will be considered weak. Just because they don't have a tear in their eyes doesn't mean they're not hurt.

SKY

Is that what you've been doing?

MR. GOLDMAN

Why do you think I act?

Mr. Goldman struggles to stand up. He starts to lose his balance and then collapses.

SKY

Mr. Goldman!

Mr. Goldman is gasping for air.

SKY (cont'd)

Zoe!

Mr. Goldman is put inside an ambulance. Neither Zoe nor Sky can accompany him along the way.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Rick is now in the cafe. He searches for a face but doesn't know what to look for. Rick goes to the barista.

BARISTA

Can I get your order?

RICK

I'm not here to order anything. I'm looking for information.

BARISTA

What kind of information?

RICK

I'm looking for Mr. Adrian. He was supposedly here about forty minutes ago.

BARISTA

Yeah... I have no idea who that is.

RICK

You don't remember ever serving his order? it was forty minutes ago.

BARISTA

We have new customer every minute. It could've been someone else who served his order, so you can't blame me for that.

RICK

What about the purchase history?

BARISTA

I'm not scrolling through a bazillion of data to look for a name.

RICK

Please.

BARISTA

(sighs)

I'm sorry. I can't.

(beat)

Now, unless you're going to order anything, I'm going to ask you to leave, because you're holding the line.

Rick looks back, and there are a bunch of impatient customers.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Rick is now clueless once again. He then notices three muscular but short men walking towards him from across the street. Rick attempts to vanish as a truck passes by. They catch him running and begin to run as well.

EXT. EMPTY ALLEY - DAY

Despite all his running, Rick gets overrun by them. They shove Rick up against the wall and choke him.

SHORT MAN

You little bastard. You think you can keep running away?

RICK

I think you need a mirror.

SHORT MAN

Shut up! You can't talk your way out of this.

RICK

It's not like I was even trying to. Because you won't kill me.

SHORT MAN

Oh, yeah?

RICK

Because killing me would be murder. You can't outrun the law short-legged.

SHORT MAN

As long as you're dead.

RICK

It's not something I try to avoid.

(MORE)

RICK (cont'd)

(beat)

But you and your buddies will be imprisoned. You're already qualified if you want to.

SHORT MAN

Why you have to be so infuriating?

RICK

I could ask you the same question.

The short man chokes Rick even harder.

SHORT MAN

We're just one of many. You're lucky we let you live another day; what the rest would do to you is unimaginable.

RICK

They will be joining you in prison.

SHORT MAN

(to the two men)

Do it.

Two men search through his jacket. As soon as they find his wallet, they start emptying it.

RICK

Great.

SHORT MAN

We're done here.

The short man releases Rick, then vanishes without a trace. Rick reaches down to pick up his wallet and finds a dollar bill lying on the ground. He examines the peculiar look of the money.

When Rick holds the bill up to the sun, it surprises him to discover that it is a fake. It was the money from John.

RICK

Son of a bitch.

EXT. CITY - DAY

Rick is on his way back when an ambulance collides with a car; both vehicles launch at a considerable distance. Rick, as well as everyone else there, is shocked.

After the collision, a police vehicle plows into the already destroyed ambulance, flipping it on its side.



The ambulance door is open, which reveals the person inside. This compels Rick to investigate. He recognizes the figure. He can see who it is as he approaches. It's Mr. Goldman.

Rick is in absolute shock. Rick checks Mr. Goldman's condition right away. While alive, Mr. Goldman is bleeding terribly.

RICK  
(confused)  
Mr. Goldman?

MR. GOLDMAN  
Rick? Is that you?

Mr. Goldman is barely conscious.

RICK  
Why are you in an ambulance? What happened?

MR. GOLDMAN  
There's no need for an explanation.  
I'm afraid what's next is inevitable.

RICK  
No. You can't say that.

MR. GOLDMAN  
You can't deny fate.

RICK  
Well, I tell fate otherwise. Because I'm bringing you to the hospital.

MR. GOLDMAN  
It might work if the nearest hospital isn't too far away.

RICK  
I'll get help.

Mr. Goldman grabs Rick's arm.

MR. GOLDMAN  
It's too late.

RICK  
It's not if you stop holding me back.

MR. GOLDMAN  
We don't have much time--

RICK

Exactly. Now let go of me.

MR. GOLDMAN

Stop avoiding what were meant to be.  
Running away won't make the storm go  
away. You'll have to confront it. The  
more you try to avoid, the more  
probable it is that you'll take a  
turn you didn't intend to take.

(gasp)

Promise me you will set course in the  
right direction.

RICK

I...

MR. GOLDMAN

Promise me.

RICK

I promise.

MR. GOLDMAN

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr. Goldman closes his eyes.

RICK

The curtains are closed. You can rest  
now.

Tears are running down Rick's face.

INT. SHELTER - DAY

Rick goes back to the shelter. Sky and Zoe rush over to tell  
him something that he already knows.

ZOE

Thank god, you're finally here.

SKY

Rick! Mr. Goldman... He...

RICK

I know.

SKY

What?

ZOE  
(unsure)  
You... know?

SKY  
What do you mean you know? You mean  
you know that he was rushed to the  
hospital?

RICK  
He wasn't.

SKY  
What are you saying? I don't  
understand.

RICK  
It's better if you don't.

Rick remains composed.

SKY  
What?

The Sky looks at Zoe. She's starting to worry that there's  
something more she doesn't know about.

SKY (cont'd)  
Rick?

Rick sighs.

SKY (cont'd)  
Why aren't you saying anything? Rick?  
Say something!

RICK  
(finally bursting--)  
He's gone, alright! Which part of  
that do you not understand?

Sky stands aghast.

SKY  
No. That's not true!

RICK  
I wish that was the case.

SKY  
I don't believe you!

RICK

For Christ's sake, Sky. How many times do I need to tell you so you can understand that he's no longer with us? I was there, alright. Mr. Goldman is dead, and there is nothing we can do about it. He's not coming back.

Sky is whimpering. She quickly runs out of the building.

ZOE

Sky...  
(to Rick)  
What is wrong with you?

RICK

Me?

ZOE

Yes, You! What were you thinking?

RICK

I told her the truth.

ZOE

That's not how you're supposed to do it.

RICK

Then how? You want me to lie to her instead? Making her believe a lie will only hurt her more than it should.

ZOE

There are other ways.

RICK

Why do you have to be so self-righteous? You can change the way it's delivered any way you want, but the truth remains unavoidable.

(beat)

You see? You're terrified of the idea of opening your eyes and seeing something horrific. That's your problem.

ZOE

How is that have to do with anything?

RICK

It has to do with everything. You can't bear the pain the world gives you. So you shut your eyes and live in your fantasy, cupcake-rainbow world, where you don't have to worry about anything. But guess what? At some point, we all have to wake up, whether we want to or not. Because it's reality. We can't escape it.

ZOE

You think I don't know what kind of life I'm living? That we live in a destitute wasteland inside this hopeless, mundane reality? Or maybe I was putting aside my misery for the sake of my sanity and doing what I could do best for my life rather than feeling sorry for myself all the time. Every single day I have to--

RICK

Oh, please. None of what you do is equivalent when it comes to what I have to do and pay for. I'm the one who had to work my ass off for everything we have right now. While you lie down on a couch, reading a book for hours, I have to make sure everything is enough for the day, the next day, and so on, so everybody can survive. So that you could survive.

(pause)

We've been on this never-ending cycle for too long, and I'm getting sick of having to pretend the day is not as bad as every other day is. But the truth is, there's not a single day where there are no bigger problems than yesterday. I'm not sure how long I can keep this going...

Rick's eyes are swelling with tears. Zoe can tell he is more upset with himself than he is with her. She tries to comfort him.

RICK (cont'd)

No.

Rick wipes his tears and goes outside.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

Rick sees Sky leaning against the wall all alone. She's still processing what just happened. Rick glances at her with eyes full of guilt before promptly walking away.

INT. AUTO SHOP - DAY

Rick comes to the only place where he can let out his frustration. He's hammering down a car engine without a thought.

HECTOR

Hey...

Rick doesn't seem to listen. He's drifting away from reality as he progressively hits harder and harder each second.

HECTOR (cont'd)

Stop it. I said stop it.

Hector grabs his arms and throws away the hammer from his grip.

Rick takes a distance, reeling a little.

HECTOR (cont'd)

Listen, I know everything is going downhill. Especially after what happened to Mr. Goldman, and I'm sorry for that... but trust me when I say you're not alone.

RICK

You can let go of me now.

HECTOR

Will you be alright?

RICK

I don't need to be.

HECTOR

You need to take a break.

RICK

From what? My life? This is my life.

HECTOR

It's not the end of it.

RICK

Maybe it is.

Rick leaves the auto shop.

INT. LOAN AGENCY - DAY

RECEPTIONIST  
Your identification is verified, and  
you are now eligible for a loan of  
one-thousand-dollar in cash.

Rick nods.

RECEPTIONIST (cont'd)  
Will you be requiring a case?

RICK  
No.

RECEPTIONIST  
Are you sure?

RICK  
Yes.

RECEPTIONIST  
It's your responsibility.  
(beat)  
Be aware that you need to pay back  
the loan within three months.

RICK  
(hesitantly)  
Of course.

INT. SHELTER - DAY

Rick is back at the shelter. He sees Zoe on the couch. She  
is lost in thought.

RICK  
Where is she?

Zoe looks upward, indicating the rooftop.

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

Rick sees Sky and approaches her. Making a beeline.

RICK  
Hi.

SKY  
No.

RICK  
I know...

SKY  
You don't.

RICK  
Okay, I don't.

SKY  
(contemptuously)  
Why are you here?

RICK  
Thought it was obvious already.

SKY  
I just want to hear what you have to say.

RICK  
I have nothing to say, and I have no right to.  
(beat)  
Sometimes, we are overtaken by ourselves without even noticing it. We become what we are not because we're unsure what to feel or think.

SKY  
It's unfair.

RICK  
It always will be.  
(beat)  
I keep trying to make sure everybody around me is happy enough so they don't have to worry about the world around them, yet it has shown me that it's impossible.

SKY  
Why?

RICK  
Because no matter how hard you try, you can't protect people from their own lives.

SKY  
What about Mr. Goldman?



RICK

He has lived his life and wants to make sure that the rest of us do the same.

SKY

You won't be going anytime soon, won't you?

RICK

No. Why would you ask that?

SKY

It's just that... there haven't been many who genuinely cared about me who have stayed. They leave nothing but memories and broken promises.

RICK

Nothing lasts forever. There is no guarantee for that, but the least I can do is keep my word.

SKY

What word?

RICK

Being there at your happiest moment.

SKY

What happiest moment?

RICK

Your soon-to-be happiest moment.

Rick grabs something out of his pocket, revealing three pieces of tickets to a classical music concert. Sky is flabbergasted.

SKY

You're kidding.

RICK

After everything?

SKY

How can I trust you?

RICK

I trust you enough to trust me.

Her sadness subsides. It's now a huge smile on her face. She jumps to hug him.

RICK (cont'd)  
(laughs)  
Okay, calm down there.

Sky rushes downstairs.

INT. SHELTER - DAY

Zoe is crossing her arms after hearing the news.

ZOE  
(to Rick)  
Seriously?

Rick shrugs.

ZOE (cont'd)  
Where did that come from?

RICK  
What does it matter?

ZOE  
If there's something bigger down the  
line, and you're risking it all just  
for the sake of redemption, then yes.  
Absolutely.

RICK  
You need to relax.

ZOE  
During this time?

RICK  
You're right.  
(beat)  
I just can't have her experience this  
much longer. I don't want her to  
share in our suffering. That kid  
doesn't deserve this. We don't  
deserve her. I'm not letting another  
person's life be ruined because they  
were indirectly involved in mine...  
(pause)  
Including you.

Zoe nods.

RICK (cont'd)  
You're coming or what?

A genuine smile on her face.

ZOE  
While looking like this?

RICK  
Of course not. That's why we should  
get going.

INT. CLOTHING STORE - DAWN

They visit a clothing shop. They are in the category of  
formal attire.

Rick dresses in a tuxedo. He goes over to Sky. She is  
undecided about which of the two dresses she should choose.

RICK  
Might as well try them both.

Sky walks over to the dressing area. Zoe had only recently  
left it. She dresses in a stunning gown.

ZOE  
(spinning)  
What do you think?

RICK  
No words.

ZOE  
I couldn't even remember the last  
time I wore anything like this...

RICK  
It's not really the kind of luxury we  
have.

ZOE  
You're looking sharp in that tux.

RICK  
(playfully)  
Yeah? Do I look like your James bond?

Zoe giggles.

Sky returns from the fitting room.

SKY  
How do I look?

RICK  
Perfect.

Sky grins.

RICK (cont'd)  
Alright. We got three and a half  
hours before the show. Which means we  
got time to do something else first.

Rick winks at Sky. She knows exactly what he means.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - NIGHT

A crowded theme park. They are riding the pirate ship ride.  
All are Bursting with laughter.

RICK  
(to Sky)  
How do you feel?

SKY  
I think this is an indescribable  
experience!

Sky is having the time of her life. A pure unadulterated  
joy.

After the ride, they head over to buy ice cream.

SKY (cont'd)  
I'd like the cookies and cream  
flavor, please.

The employee nods.

ZOE  
What about you, Rick? Anything?

Rick looks slightly pale.

RICK  
Um... you know what? I'd pass. You go  
get some.

ZOE  
You alright?

RICK  
I'm fine. I just need to go to the  
bathroom real quick.

ZOE  
Alright.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Rick vomits in a hot and narrow bathroom. He leans against the wall to catch a breath. Staying inside with the malodorous air doesn't help at all.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - NIGHT

Rick exits the bathroom to breathe some fresh air. Both Sky and Zoe are already waiting for him.

ZOE

You sure you're alright?

RICK

Why wouldn't I?

(beat)

Come on, let's watch something. We still have time.

EXT. OUTDOOR THEATER - NIGHT

The audience is sitting on a field of grass. Majorly are lovebirds. We could see them crying, hugging, eating, and sleeping.

The film "Shawshank Redemption" is showing.

CHARACTER (FILM)

"Their feathers are just too bright. And when they fly away, the part of you that knows it was a sin to lock them up does rejoice. But still, the place you live in is that much more drab and empty that they're gone. I guess I just miss my friend."

Rick takes it all in.

INT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

Sky and Zoe walk into a massive hall with glaring lights. The orchestrated instruments are compelling to the eyes. Sky notices an empty seat next to her after they take their seats, and Rick is nowhere to be found.

SKY

Where's Rick?

ZOE

I thought he was right behind you.

The light dims. The crowd silences. All eyes are on the stage. The musicians step onto the stage and are confined to their instruments. All but one, the piano.

With the orchestra yet to begin, the audience starts murmuring.

Vague but visible, there is a faceless figure beneath the shadows. The figure steps onto the stage to reveal itself as Rick. This startle Zoe and Sky. This is beyond their comprehension.

Rick walks soothingly towards the piano. His hands are on the keys and are now ready to play.

A prolonged silence. He presses a single note, then another, and another, and so on...

It begins soft and tender - before becoming wild. His hands are shaking from not playing in years. He's visibly nervous.

He tries to keep it professional, but he can't control his emotions. Rick's performance mesmerizes Sky. She observes how he moves his hand.

Rick looks at the audience and notices two intimidating-looking men staring at him. Once Rick recognizes the threat, he starts to slow down. He brings the performance to a conclusion before the rest of the orchestra joins him.

Rick hurries to the exit. The two men follow after noticing his escape attempt.

Zoe senses something isn't right.

ZOE (cont'd)  
I think it's time to go.

SKY  
But it just started.

ZOE  
We've seen enough.

They exit the hall.

EXT. CONCERT HALL - NIGHT

After looking for Rick, Zoe and Sky reunite with Rick. He looks uneasy. His breathing is heavy.

RICK  
Zoe?

ZOE

Rick! I saw you running away. What's wrong?

SKY

Rick! You were absolutely incredible! How did you--

RICK

We need to go.

SKY

Why?

RICK

I'll explain later, the important thing is, we get the hell out of this place right now.

They tentatively follow Rick to the parking lot.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Rick breaks a car window and then hotwires it.

ZOE

What are you doing?

SKY

Are we stealing it?

RICK

We're borrowing it.

The car roars to life after several attempts.

RICK (cont'd)

Finally! Get in!

INT. CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT

Rick thrust his foot on the pedal. He makes a sharp turn.

ZOE

Okay, now can you tell me what's going on?

SKY

Where are we going?

RICK

We're going back.

SKY

Already?

RICK

Yes.

Rick's anxiety is impairing his ability to think clearly. He looks over to the rearview mirror repeatedly.

From the darkness, a tinted black van is pursuing them. This alarms Rick to sink his feet deeper on the pedal.

ZOE

(afraid)

Why is there a van chasing us?

The black van picks up speed. Now it's right there next to them. The van rattles the car.

SKY

What are they doing?

RICK

Hang on tight!

Rick eventually loses control of the wheel. It's enough damage for the engine to be dead.

RICK (cont'd)

No...

No matter how many times Rick tries to revive the car, there is no sign of hope.

Zoe looks over her shoulder and sees five abnormal-looking men emerging with lethal weapons and aluminum baseball bats.

ZOE

Rick... I don't think they're friendly.

(frantically)

What did you get yourself into?

RICK

I...

(pause)

Just stay here. I'll deal with them.

ZOE

Are you crazy? they're going to kill you!



RICK  
(to Sky)  
Sky, hide underneath the seat for me  
would you?

Sky nods in fear.

ZOE  
You can't be serious.

RICK  
There is no other way.

ZOE  
Don't do anything stupid.

RICK  
I already have...

EXT. THE STREETS - NIGHT

Rick steps out of the car and begins to walk toward them. He is surrounded by them. They are ready with their weapons and are bellicose.

RICK  
Listen, I know--

One man punches Rick in the face. His nose bled. He grabs him by the shirt and then pushes him onto the car hard enough that it leaves a dent.

He looks him right in the eye before throwing Rick to the ground like a rag doll. The man motions for an attack.

With punches thrown every second, Rick is defenseless against them.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Sky is still hiding with her ears covered under the seat. When Zoe stares out the window, she finds it unbearable to witness the atrocities outside.

EXT. THE STREETS - NIGHT

Rick gets flung into the car. Causing its windows to break. He is bleeding profusely. There are bruises all over his face.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Zoe has seen enough of it and steps outside of the car.

EXT. THE STREETS - NIGHT

ZOE  
Rick!

RICK  
No... Go... take Sky with you...

ZOE  
I'm not leaving you.

Zoe rushes towards the men. She's pushing them out of the way, yet they remain unfazed. A man aims and strikes his baseball bat at her head... CRACK!!!

The hit leaves Zoe to fall to the ground unconscious.

RICK  
(devastated)  
Zoe!!!  
(beat)  
You son of a bitch!!!

Rick strikes the man with all of his remaining strength, but it is not enough.

A man knocks him off. The men get inside their van and depart. Leaving everything as it is.

MOMENTS LATER.

Everything remains unchanged. Rick is starting to wake up. He is splattering blood. He turns to face Zoe, who is still on the ground.

RICK (cont'd)  
Zoe?

He crawls up to her.

RICK (cont'd)  
Zoe? Wake up.

He feels for her pulse but finds none. She is dripping blood from her nose. Her head is wet, which Rick notices. He checks it, and it turns out to be blood.

RICK (cont'd)  
Don't... don't do this to me.  
(MORE)

RICK (cont'd)  
(in heavy tears)  
Please... not you. Not you, please...  
Zoe? Zoe! I'm sorry...

Rick hugs her as tears drop from his eyes.

EXT. SHELTER - NIGHT

Rick manages to drive back to the shelter. He looks over to the backseat, seeing Sky is somehow asleep.

INT. SHELTER - NIGHT

Rick gently put her on the couch. He wraps a blanket around her and turns off the lights.

EXT. SHELTER - NIGHT

A recognizable black sedan arrives at the shelter. The door opens, revealing to be John.

RICK  
I'm sorry I had to call you this late.

JOHN  
What the hell happened to you?

RICK  
I'm alright, don't worry.

JOHN  
I'm not worried about you. I'm worried that this indicates it happened while Sky was with you.

RICK  
She's fine.

JOHN  
What were you thinking? Why would you let something like this even happen? I thought she'd be safe here, knowing you'd take care of her. But no, you instead tried to get her killed!

RICK  
That's not why you brought her here. I think we both know that.

JOHN

What?

RICK

Out of all people, you're the last person I expect to care about her well-being. You never cared about her in the first place. You're only concerned about her because her safety could affect your regard. You were obliged. You are as treacherous as you've always been.

JOHN

You think you're doing a better job than me?

RICK

I'm the one who gave her the comfort and affection she always needed - while you're up there, having little to no struggle to do your job. Caring about nothing but yourself.

JOHN

Let's not forget that you're also the one who actively tried to get her killed, so what's your point? You want to blame me for ending up down here? You had as many opportunities as everyone else in this world. But you were too frightened to take them. afraid to be overwhelmed. To fail. To try. Then that opportunity went away, and everything went downhill. You weren't even trying to save it. You just let it happen. And now you're here, hoping it will get better day by day without you even trying to make a difference. You might view me as a relentless human being, but you can't ignore the fact that what I said is true. Are you going to keep living under your own deception?

A beat.

JOHN (cont'd)

I'm bringing her back tomorrow morning, and there's nothing you can do about it.

John leaves.

INT. HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Rick is half-asleep in an empty hallway. A doctor later emerges with a bag of medicine and documents.

DOCTOR  
Mr. Rick?

RICK  
Yes?

DOCTOR  
Are you sure you won't need any medical assistance? Your injuries could be fatal.

RICK  
No.

DOCTOR  
Okay. At least take this medicine to help the healing process.

RICK  
What about them?

The doctor hands him multiple pieces of paperwork.

DOCTOR  
My consolation for your loss.  
(beat)  
These are the forms you need to fill out -- death certificate, report of death, and some more identification. I'd like for you to be as detailed as possible.

RICK  
Can I see them?

DOCTOR  
Of course.

INT. MORTUARY - NIGHT

Rick stands between two people who meant everything to him and are now gone, covered by a white sheet.

Rick couldn't bare to look at their faces. He just stands there.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

John is waiting outside. There's nothing Rick can do. He watches from afar as Sky reaches out to John. She glances at Rick before entering the car. The car drives away soon after.

The telephone rings. Rick answers.

RICK  
(into phone)  
Yes?

AMANDA (O.S.)  
Mr. Rick. It's the bank. I'm here to remind you that you have a day left before we start the deconstruction.

RICK  
No... you need to give me more time.

AMANDA (O.S.)  
Time for what? There were no negotiation.

RICK  
There has to be another way.

AMANDA (O.S.)  
There isn't.

RICK  
(desperate)  
Okay, what about adverse possession?

AMANDA (O.S.)  
The requirement for adverse possession is that the occupation must be open and notorious, exclusive, hostile, and continuous and uninterrupted for a prescribed period of time.

RICK  
So?

AMANDA (O.S.)  
It's too late for that now.

RICK  
Please... give me another chance...

AMANDA (O.S.)

There is no other chance. Have a good day, Mr. Rick.

The telephone hangs up.

Rick smacks the telephone furiously several times.

RICK

Goddammit!!!

He collapses to the floor.

EXT. PAPER STREETS - DAY

Rick returns to the mansion for one last time. He's now banging on the door, yet there is still no response. The place is as dead as it will ever be.

Rick ultimately turns around and sits down on the sidewalk, where it is raining heavily. From a distance, a figure is walking toward him -- it's the old man.

The old man sits right next to him.

RICK

Why are you jogging? It's raining.

OLD MAN

(shrug)

It happens to rain while I jog.

(beat)

Still waiting?

RICK

Not anymore.

OLD MAN

And why is that?

RICK

It's too late for anything now. I did everything I could, and all I got was a name...

OLD MAN

...And an address.

RICK

Stop.

OLD MAN

Stop what?

RICK  
Being hopeful.

OLD MAN  
Does this behavior relate to the  
cause of your face?  
(pause)  
Or the impact of it?

RICK  
What are you even trying to do?  
Enlighten me? Because that's not  
happening. I'm not doing this  
anymore. I'm done taking risks.

OLD MAN  
There's always a risk for everything.

RICK  
All I ever got were the consequences.  
It's never the other way around. So  
don't expect me to go back searching  
for this nonexistent person.

OLD MAN  
On the contrary, his existence is  
based on your beliefs. The choice is  
always going to be in your hands.

The old man politely walks away.

EXT. STREETS OF MANHATTAN - DAY

On his way back to the shelter, Rick hears loud noises not  
far away.

EXT. AUTO SHOP - DAY

A pickup truck loaded with crates and toolboxes. Half of the  
auto shop is vacant.

RICK  
Hector? What are you doing?

HECTOR  
You should've known better Rick.

RICK  
I don't understand.

HECTOR  
Of course, you don't.



RICK

Is it about the parts? I'd try to make it up to you as soon as I--

HECTOR

That's something I can easily replace, but the reputation you obliterated, cannot.

(beat)

Do you know how much criticism I receive because a part of their car is missing? Which caused trust issues with other customers, resulting in no customers.

RICK

You're not closing the auto shop, are you?

HECTOR

It's a choice I was forced to make because of you.

RICK

Hector... I'm sorry.

HECTOR

"Sorry" won't do anything.

Hector slips inside his truck and then drives away.

INT. JOHN'S CAR - DAY

Sky is one step away from the end of her journey. She looks around at the other children, whose smiles never seem to fade.

JOHN

Here we are. The embodiment of monstrosity.

(sarcastically)

Onto the next adventure, am I right?

Sky refuses to go outside and avoids eye contact.

JOHN (cont'd)

Why the long face? You knew it was always going to end like this. I thought you liked this place. You didn't even want to go in the first place.

SKY

I didn't want to go with you.

JOHN

You prefer to stay with the  
problematic Mr. Williams?

SKY

I'd choose him over you.

JOHN

As if I wanted to be chosen.

(beat)

Guess what? Now you don't have to be  
with either of us, isn't that great?

Sky looking dead in the eye.

JOHN (cont'd)

Okay, you either go out or I'm  
crashing this thing from the back.

SKY

Do it. It's your car. Your loss. Good  
luck with the insurance.

JOHN

Jesus.

John steps outside.

SKY'S POV: John approaches and talks to Samantha. He's  
pointing out at Sky, but it's unclear what he's saying.  
Samantha begins to walk towards the car.

INT./EXT. JOHN'S CAR - DAY

Samantha greets sky over the half-open window.

SAMANTHA

Hello there, Sky. Long time no see! I  
missed you! How do you feel?

SKY

Agitated.

SAMANTHA

I know. Transportation can be tough.  
Especially in an environment you're  
not familiar with. However, you've  
had a glimpse of what life could be.  
This could be your chance to discover  
more about the world.

SKY

(sighs)

It just had to be you, huh?

Sky, at long last, decides to go. She holds Samantha's hand.

EXT. LOTUS CHILDREN ORPHANAGE - DAY

JOHN

Guess this is it.

SAMANTHA

The memories you both share will  
always be there.

Sky looks at John with pure hatred.

JOHN

I suppose.

SAMANTHA

John, I can't express how thankful we  
are for your participation in this.

JOHN

Pleasure.

SAMANTHA

Come on, Sky. Say goodbye to John.

Sky doesn't take a second look at him. Both of them part  
ways.

JOHN

Thank god.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

John walks triumphantly to his new office. Passing by other  
workers with their eyes full of jealousy.

BARNEY

Well, this wasn't a surprise. Should  
we even applaud?

JOHN

Maybe if you weren't such a  
lazybones, you might achieve  
something in your life, Barney.

John takes a seat in his new chair. He's showing his superiority by putting his foot above the desk and laying his arms back.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Rick is loading a handful of boxes onto a truck. He takes a moment to catch his breath after placing the boxes.

FOREMAN

Hurry up! We're leaving in four minutes! If I don't see those boxes up in that truck by then, none of you are getting paid.

There is only one large box left as the other workers load the remaining boxes into the truck. Rick lugs the enormous box by himself.

Rick begins to stagger as he makes his way to the truck. He can hold it for a minute before dropping it, which spreads the box's contents all over the place. The other employees spring into action to clean up the mess.

The foreman shakes his head in disappointment.

MOMENTS LATER.

The workers wait in line to receive their pay. When Rick tears open the envelope, he finds there is much less money inside.

RICK

Excuse me, this isn't the amount I was promised to be paid.

FOREMAN

You caused us to be late on the schedule. That's fatal.

(beat)

Folks like you should be in the hospital, not out here picking up boxes.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Rick goes over and buys the same thing with the money. Roger glances at him as if he's about to kick Rick out of the store.

RICK

Don't worry. I won't be coming to this place anymore.

ROGER

(sigh)

Honestly, Rick, you're one of the reasons why this store is still standing in the first place. You were one of the three paying customers I have here. This place is pretty much a reflection of who I am.

RICK

You can't blame yourself.

ROGER

The same goes for you.

RICK

What goes for me is the truth.

Rick pays Roger the money.

RICK (cont'd)

(referring to the money)

Don't go for that, and you'll be a better salesman than you've ever been.

INT. SHELTER - DAY

Rick sits down on the couch. Completely lost in thought. He grabs Zoe's favorite book that was left open.

RICK

It's unfortunate she couldn't get to know why this was your favorite, huh?

Rick lies down on the couch and begins to read the book. He reads a few pages before getting up and going to the first floor.

FIRST FLOOR.

He goes to a timeworn shelf and pulls out an aged briefcase; it's full of paperwork, from his birth certificate to his resume.

EXT. RESTAURANT - DAY

With his last drop of hope to change everything, he heads over to a twenty-four-hour restaurant with a poster saying: musician needed.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

Rick is being interviewed.

INTERVIEWER  
Any experience?

RICK  
One or two.

INTERVIEWER  
Like what?

RICK  
School...

INTERVIEWER  
Seriously?

RICK  
Sorry.

Rick can tell the interviewer is disappointed by his answer, let alone his resume.

INT. CAFE - DAY

This interviewer looks disgusted by Rick's appearance. They don't even bother to look at his resume.

RICK  
Aren't you going to look at that?

INTERVIEWER 2  
I'm looking for an entertainer, not an intimidator.

The interviewer looking on in scorn.

INT. MOTEL - DAY

INTERVIEWER 3  
I'm sorry but this isn't a scare house.

The interview ends within an instant.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - DAY

Rick now tries to apply at a retro-modern jazz venue. The interviewer is visibly menacing. He nods as he observes the way Rick looks.

INTERVIEWER 4

You know one thing interesting about musicians? People don't usually come to a performance to watch the performer play. No, they come to hear the music they're playing. To listen. To feel. Unless, of course, you're an egoistic millionaire spoiled child with a pretty face who can't write anything but a lyric or two before covering your ear-damaging, out-of-tune voice with endless layers of echoes.

(beat)

But in your case, you might be helpful when this place eventually gets robbed.

(beat)

What I think is truly helpful are... traits. I want you to show me why you're here in the first place. Why you wanted to be here. I don't need any of those time-wasting pieces of paper. I just need a performance.

Rick puts his hands on the keys.

EXT. SHELTER - NIGHT

Rick returns. The place is quiet. Everybody is sleeping in their tents.

INT. SHELTER - NIGHT

He takes a moment to cherish the place. Giving one last look. Rick starts to pick up a large box and begins to collect valuables.

EXT. SHELTER - THE NEXT DAY

Two large boxes outside. Rick brings out the last box. He's out of breath and hasn't slept ever since.

As expected, Amanda arrives at the location.

RICK  
I know. It's time.

AMANDA  
Mr. Rick.

RICK  
Would you at least spare me a minute  
with them?

AMANDA  
(sigh)  
Mr. Rick.

RICK  
Yes?

AMANDA  
I'm not here to initiate a  
deconstruction.

RICK  
What?

AMANDA  
There was a change of plans.  
(beat)  
Someone recently claimed to be the  
owner of this property over the  
phone, and after getting a few  
confirmations, they stated ownership  
would be transferred to you.

RICK  
They what?

AMANDA  
You are given ownership. You now  
legally own this building.

RICK  
Why?

AMANDA  
I thought you might've been able to  
answer that yourself.  
(beat)  
Congratulations, Mr. Rick. You can  
deal with the papers later; in the  
meantime, try to enjoy your time.

Amanda walks away.



Rick is grateful despite not knowing what just happened or for what reason. He looks over at the boxes he'll now have to put back inside.

Before Rick has the chance, a blue sports car appears out of nowhere. There's no familiarity with the vehicle. The door opens, and it's the previous interviewer. We'll now refer to him as "NAMELESS INTERVIEWER."

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER

Rick!

RICK

You?

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER

Come here.

RICK

Is this about the job?

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER

No, it's about my daughter's broken marriage with her problematic fiance.

Rick has no idea what to say.

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER (cont'd)

Yeah, no shit, Sherlock.

(beat)

Straight to the point, I need you tonight.

RICK

What for?

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER

Are serious right now? I need you to perform for me tonight

RICK

Does that mean I get the job?

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER

Since the other applicants are worthless, you're the only decent one I can find. If you could prove yourself, then you might possibly get the job.

(beat)

There will be a set list. Just play it, and don't go anywhere beyond that.

Rick nods.

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER (cont'd)  
8 o'clock. Don't be late.

The nameless interviewer departs as quickly as he arrived.

INT. JAZZ CLUB - NIGHT

Rick is in his Sunday best. He did everything he could to look respectable and clean, yet his injuries are still visible.

He stands in the middle of the entrance, watching the crowded tables. He's lost in thought.

CUSTOMER  
Excuse me.

Rick moves aside. The nameless interviewer emerges.

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER  
Rick! What are you doing, man? You're blocking the entrance.

The nameless interviewer pulls Rick out of the way.

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER (cont'd)  
You see that piano? That's your part.

RICK  
Solo?

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER  
For now. It's been a while ever since someone was on the keys.

RICK  
(getting nervous)  
You announced it?

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER  
How else can I get them excited enough to come here?

A beat.

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER (cont'd)  
(casually)  
Don't worry, if you're good, they'll like you. If you're not, I'll kick your ass out of here.

The nameless interviewer isn't making this any easier for Rick.

Customers notice Rick as he walks across the dining tables. Knowing what he will do, the customers are intrigued.

Rick steps onto the stage. The crowd silences. All eyes are now on Rick.

The nameless interviewer watches as he taps his foot. Rick's silence isn't doing it for him.

With enough bravery, Rick sits down and put his fingers on the keys. His heart is pounding. A prolonged deep breath.

He commences playing. It starts gently before progressively picking up speed to an impressively high tempo. His hands are shaking and sweaty. He's one step away from failure.

As the performance goes on, customers begin getting into the groove. They start nodding their heads. A smile of satisfaction grows on their faces. The nameless interviewer nods in approval.

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER

Let's hear it for our man on the  
keys, ladies, and gentlemen!

All are clapping their hands.

Rick is now more at ease than he was earlier. He smiles. Rick's performance comes to a dramatic conclusion. He faces the audience, never happier or prouder of himself.

EXT. JAZZ CLUB - LATER

The club is now closed.

Rick is leaning against a traffic light. He looks up at the star-studded sky. The nameless interviewer approaches.

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER

Quite the view, huh?

RICK

I thought you went home already.

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER

You don't think I'm that  
irresponsible, don't you?

Rick chuckles.

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER (cont'd)  
Your performance back there was...

RICK  
...Amazing?

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER  
Satisfactory.

Rick nods.

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER (cont'd)  
Here.

The nameless interviewer hands him a pile of cash.

RICK  
I thought I'm not hired yet.

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER  
You are now.  
(beat)  
Take the money before I change my  
mind.

RICK  
Thank you.

NAMELESS INTERVIEWER  
Don't mention it.  
(beat)  
Go get some rest.

Rick nods. The nameless interviewer walks out. Rick  
continues to gaze at the stars.

EXT. CEMETERY - DAY

SUPER: Two years later.

Two graveyards with a name carved on them: Goldman Nelson.  
Zoe Michael.

There are flowers on both.

Someone is crouching near it. We can't see their face or  
body. Nothing more but a pair of leather shoes. The figure  
stands up and then leaves.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

In this very place, a two-story building would normally stand. However, things have changed, and it's now a fully renovated structure with increased room and capability.

The original materials, such as wood, are now aluminum. The tents are now mattresses. It's a complete transformation with the same purpose. An endless line of homeless people waits as far as the eye can see.

INT. SHELTER - DAY

A formally dressed man is running down the stairs. It's Rick. He doesn't seem much different other than his more energized behavior.

ADMINISTRATOR

Mr. Rick! We have a situation.

RICK

I'm aware.

ADMINISTRATOR

What do we do?

RICK

Use any kind of space left.

ADMINISTRATOR

You sure?

RICK

This place was built to offer chances, not shut them down.

ADMINISTRATOR

Where are you going?

RICK

I have a promise to keep.

Rick departs with his car.

EXT. FREEWAY - DAY

Rick drives through the horizon. He passes a sign that says: Buffalo.

INT. LOTUS CHILDREN ORPHANAGE - BUFFALO - DAY

RECEPTIONIST

Just a minute, please.

He's preparing himself. We could see how nervous and excited he is.

Soon after, the door opens, revealing a familiar-looking Blondie.

A huge smile grows on Rick's face.

THE END.