

A CHRISTMAS TO BE

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FADE IN:

EXT. LIVINGSTON MALL, CHRISTMAS EVE 1983 - NIGHT

An 18-year-old woman struts toward the doors in the falling snow. She's got spiked hair, dark and thick makeup, and a scowl. She also has a drawstring bag across her shoulder.

This is RUDI WEISS.

She slams a door open with both hands and bursts inside.

INT. MALL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Rudi marches in the direction of a WOMAN and two small CHILDREN, who are heading in the opposite direction.

Frightened of Rudi, the woman pulls the children away -- causing Rudi to look even more belligerent.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Rudi steps inside and glances around.

A SALESMAN notices her, and rushes up to a SECURITY GUARD.

The salesman points at Rudi, and the guard warily looks at her before yanking out a walkie-talkie.

MEN'S DEPARTMENT

Rudi shuffles through some sweaters with lots of disinterest.

She stops and turns her head.

Nearby the guard glares at her while talking on his walkie-talkie.

INT. DEPARTMENT STORE ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Rudi storms out. Though she comes to a sudden halt when she reaches a chocolate shop.

INT. CHOCOLATE SHOP - NIGHT

Rudi enters, and the CLERK behind the counter raises her hands in surrender, with eyes bigger than apples.

RUDI
(through clenched jaw)
A half pound of white chocolate.

LATER

The clerk offers Rudi a small paper bag of chocolate with her shaking hand.

Rudi slams some money onto the counter and grabs the bag.

INT. OUTSIDE CHOCOLATE SHOP - NIGHT

Rudi marches out with the bag and stops, with a grimace.

Nearby a MALL SANTA plies his trade -- one who's way-too-thin and way-too-young.

RUDI
Phony and fake. Like this whole
place.

She rushes away.

INT. OUTSIDE A&O TOYS - NIGHT

Rudi turns a corner and heads down a corridor.

Though again she comes to a sudden halt -- and turns toward the window of the store, which displays a miniature waterfall.

Mesmerized, Rudi drifts toward it -- and, when she gets to the glass, she puts her hand on it.

RUDI
The best anywhere.

GIRL (O.S.)
There it is, Mommy -- there it is!

Against her will, Rudi takes a few steps toward the sound, and she peeks her head around the corner.

A small GIRL drags a reluctant WOMAN in a blue coat to a Cabbage Patch doll in the window.

The woman stares at the price, while searching for words.

Slowly, she turns to the girl, with overwhelming sadness.

Rudi spins back around the corner.

STEPFATHER (V.O.)
Not this year, little girl.

Rudi lowers her eyes.

GIRL (O.S.)
It's okay, Mommy. Really.

WOMAN (O.S.)
How about some hot chocolate?

Rudi walks into the store.

INT. INSIDE A&O TOYS - NIGHT

Rudi approaches an OLD MAN, who looks older than time, and who smiles warmly at her from behind the counter.

OLD MAN
Merry Christmas.

She looks around, thinking the man must be addressing someone else. But there's no one else.

OLD MAN
What can I do for you?

She looks at the waterfall in the window -- but she points to the doll.

The old man reaches for the doll and takes it out of the window.

OLD MAN
You're lucky. This is the very last one. I literally couldn't keep them in stock.

He puts the doll in its box.

OLD MAN
Would you like it gift-wrapped?

She looks out the window -- at the mother and daughter, who are sitting down with their drinks in the near distance.

RUDI
Will it take long?

OLD MAN
It won't take but a minute.

He grabs some fancy gold paper and starts wrapping the box -- with Rudi continuing to stare out the window.

RUDI
You think you could do me a favor?

OLD MAN
What's that?

She points to the mother.

RUDI
You see that woman over there in the blue coat?

He looks out the window.

RUDI
Could you give her the doll?

He turns to Rudi, looking confused.

RUDI
Tell her, I don't know, tell her it's a store promotion -- or a contest. Tell her anything.

Again, he looks out the window -- and notices the woman's melancholy.

And he turns back to Rudi and smiles -- even warmer than before.

OLD MAN
(softly)
What about you? Can I get something for you to give?

Ignoring the question, Rudi takes out a wallet from her drawstring bag and opens it. She further counts out bills -- and lays the entire wad onto the counter.

And she rushes out of the store, with the old man watching her with lots of tenderness.

INT. OUTSIDE A&O TOYS - NIGHT

Rudi again turns the corner -- and again comes to a quick stop.

Slowly, she turns around.

The old man limps toward the mother and daughter, carrying a shopping bag with the gift-wrapped doll.

He stops in front of the woman and whispers something into her ear -- which causes her to become so shocked that she jumps a bit, with eyes even larger than those of the clerk in the chocolate shop.

Rudi's scowl turns into a smile. She smiles big.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

With the snow continuing to fall, Rudi rides a Harley onto the lot and stops.

Ominously, she turns her head -- toward Saint Barnabas Hospital across the road.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

With a Christmas carol softly PLAYING, a frail and sickly man of 18 carries a large gift-wrapped box -- one lovingly tied with a big white bow.

This is TOMMY GOODWIN.

Looking faint, he stops in front of a modest Christmas tree, and he slowly lowers himself and the gift. He also coughs -- a loud hacking cough.

Quietly, Rudi opens the front door behind him.

Tommy struggles to put the gift under the tree.

Rudi looks as if she will cry. But she pulls herself together and enters the apartment, and closes the door.

He turns to her and smiles.

TOMMY

You've caught me.

RUDI

I don't have a gift for you.

TOMMY

You've already given me your gift.

RUDI

I do have a little something.

She walks up to him while taking off her drawstring bag.

And she reaches inside her sack -- and takes out a small box, wrapped with the same fancy gold paper the old man used on the doll. Which causes Rudi to become even more shocked than the woman in the mall.

RUDI

I don't get it.

TOMMY

Get what?

RUDI

He, he must've slipped this into my bag somehow.

TOMMY

What are you talking about?

RUDI

I don't know. I really don't.

TOMMY

Can I open it?

RUDI

I don't even know what it is.

Gently, he takes the gift from her -- and, even more gently, he unwraps it, revealing a plain white box. Which he opens after discarding the paper.

He looks inside the box with surprise.

RUDI
What is it?

TOMMY
A card.

He takes out the card and reads it.

RUDI
What does it say?

TOMMY
The holder of this card is entitled
to a future.

EXT. WATERFALL, CHRISTMAS EVE PRESENT - DAY

A 50-ish TOMMY stands in a forest clearing beside roaring water. He's handsome and youthful and healthy. He's also wearing an expensive suit and a wool overcoat.

He looks at his surroundings in bewilderment -- and then reads the card he's holding.

TOMMY
Returns only till Christmas?

He flips over the card, and looks at it up close.

INSERT - CARD

It's the logo of A&O Toys.

BACK TO WATERFALL

Tommy puts the card back in the box and the box in his right overcoat pocket -- and he sits on a rock overlooking the falls with a dazed expression.

TOMMY (V.O.)
I was sick. And, and there was
someone . . .

A phone RINGS -- with the tone of a ROTARY PHONE -- causing Tommy to jump to the extent that he almost falls over the cliff.

He steadies himself, and, with two fingers, pulls out a phone from his left overcoat pocket, which he looks at with utter confusion.

INSERT - PHONE

It displays "Darlene."

BACK TO WATERFALL

Hesitantly, Tommy presses a button on the screen, and puts the device to his ear.

TOMMY

Hello?

DARLENE (V.O.)

I thought you were getting in last night.

TOMMY

Darlene? Darlene Windsor?

Darlene LAUGHS.

DARLENE (V.O.)

No one's called me that in thirty years.

TOMMY

Thirty years?

DARLENE (V.O.)

Hurry home -- Wendy's got big news.

TOMMY

Wendy?

DARLENE (V.O.)

We'll see you soon. Love you.

Darlene hangs up, and Tommy puts the phone back in his pocket -- at which time he notices he's wearing a smartwatch.

INSERT - WATCH

It's 10:41 on 12/24.

EXT. FOREST ENTRANCE - DAY

A shaky-looking Tommy exits a path and comes upon a long road with lots of parking spaces, but only one car -- an expensive one.

He reaches into his pants pocket -- and pulls out a keyless remote, which he gazes at. He further pushes the unlock button, and the car unlocks.

INT. CAR - DAY

Tommy looks around the dashboard.

TOMMY

How am I supposed to start this?

He fumbles around -- and stumbles upon the keyless ignition -- and the car starts.

FEMALE VOICE

GPS engaged.

Startled, he looks around the car.

FEMALE VOICE

Destination, please.

TOMMY

What?

FEMALE VOICE

Destination, please.

He feels around himself, and reaches into his jacket pocket -- and takes out a wallet.

Which he opens, finding lots of cash and credit cards. He also finds his driver's license.

TOMMY

(shocked)

What?

FEMALE VOICE

I'm not familiar with that address.

Hurriedly, Tommy looks at himself in the vanity mirror -- and he becomes even more shocked.

FEMALE VOICE

Destination, please.

TOMMY

(reading license)

Three Seventy Overhill Road.

A map displays on the dashboard, along with directions.

EXT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - DAY

Tommy's car turns onto the driveway of a big beautiful mansion, and it approaches a garage door, which opens.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Tommy exits the car, and looks at a covered motorcycle parked nearby.

He walks up to it, and removes the cover, revealing the Harley Rudi was driving back in 1983.

INT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - DAY

A still shaky-looking Tommy passes a staircase. He hears running FOOTSTEPS -- and stops and looks up.

At the top of the staircase stands WENDY -- a pretty 17-year-old girl with a huge smile.

WENDY

Daddy!

She storms down the stairs and jumps into Tommy's arms, and he awkwardly embraces her.

TOMMY

Wendy?

She breaks their embrace.

WENDY

I did it!

TOMMY

Did what?

WENDY

I got into Harvard!

TOMMY

Oh. That's good.

WENDY

Good? Just good?

DARLENE (O.S.)

There you are.

DARLENE appears down the hall. She's Tommy's age and gorgeous.

WENDY

I got way too many calls to make!

Wendy giddily rushes up the stairs.

Darlene shakes her head and marches toward Tommy.

DARLENE

You really did it this time.

TOMMY

Did what?

DARLENE

I don't know how you found time to tutor her -- but you did it!

She rushes up to him and gives him a big kiss, which makes him way more than uncomfortable.

DARLENE

I thought we'd celebrate by taking the girls to Disney World before heading back.

TOMMY

Back?

DARLENE

The Senate doesn't convene until
the Third, right?

TOMMY

The Senate? The US Senate? Are you
saying I'm a senator?

DARLENE

(with a smile)

Hopefully not for long.

She hugs him.

DARLENE

Hopefully, this time next year
it'll be President Elect Thomas
Goodwin.

TOMMY

(mouthing)

President Elect?

DARLENE

I'm so proud of you.

Tommy notices an enormous Christmas tree in an adjoining
room -- one that's well decorated and has lots of presents.

He steps toward the tree, and Darlene joins him while
pointing to one of the gifts.

DARLENE

That came yesterday from President
Clary.

TOMMY

President Clary?

DARLENE

You know, French President Clary.
He also sent a card. Maybe later
you can translate it for me.

TOMMY

I speak French?

She playfully slaps him.

DARLENE

Oh, you.

MICHELLE -- a way-too-cute 7-year-old girl -- skips toward them jumping rope.

DARLENE

Michelle, what did I tell you about jumping rope inside the house?

MICHELLE

You told me not to.

DARLENE

So, why are you doing it?

MICHELLE

I'm being rebellious.

Darlene grins, and Michelle skips out of the room.

TOMMY

She's wonderful. Both of them.

DARLENE

You're just now realizing this?

She heads back down the hall.

DARLENE

Oh, the realtor called -- they'll be showing your mom's house on Friday.

TOMMY

Darlene?

She stops and turns back to him.

DARLENE

Yeah?

TOMMY

Do you know where the keys are to the Harley?

DARLENE

The kitchen, I think. Are you going somewhere?

TOMMY
I, I was just gonna take a drive.

DARLENE
(with a grin)
Last minute shopping?

TOMMY
Something like that.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Tommy straddles the Harley and pauses.

TOMMY (V.O.)
I feel like that proverbial gift
horse, looking at my mouth in the
mirror.

He starts to get off the motorcycle, but again pauses.

TOMMY
Oh, what the hell.

He sits down and starts the bike.

EXT. LIVINGSTON MALL - DAY

Tommy enters the same door Rudi burst through in 1983.

INT. OUTSIDE A&O TOYS - DAY

Tommy hesitantly enters.

INT. INSIDE A&O TOYS - DAY

Tommy approaches the old man, who hasn't aged at all.

And the man smiles warmly at Tommy, just as he had smiled at
Rudi.

OLD MAN
Merry Christmas.

TOMMY
Merry Christmas.

OLD MAN

What can I do for you?

Tommy pulls out the gift box from his pocket and opens it -- and he takes out the card, which he shows the old man.

TOMMY

Did this come from here?

OLD MAN

It certainly looks like ours. Do you wish to return it?

Quickly, Tommy pulls the card away.

TOMMY

No.

OLD MAN

So, you're happy with it.

TOMMY

I don't know.

OLD MAN

It's not an uncommon reaction. But it'll pass.

Tommy nods, and he puts the card in the box and the box in his pocket, and he turns to leave -- but spins back to the old man.

TOMMY

This is gonna sound crazy.

OLD MAN

Believe me, it won't.

TOMMY

I can remember being sick. Very sick. Even if the details are fuzzy. I can also remember there was someone with me. But I can't remember this person at all.

OLD MAN

Probably because your existence in the present precludes this person's presence in your past.

TOMMY

It's really gnawing at me that I
can't remember.

OLD MAN

It won't gnaw for long.

The old man points to a clock on the wall, which reads about
12:25.

OLD MAN

When Christmas strikes at midnight
you won't even remember you were
sick. And all the missing memories
of your new life will fill in.

TOMMY

Why at Christmas?

OLD MAN

It is a Christmas gift. And we want
you to be happy with it. That's why
we give you some time to decide
whether you really want it.

TOMMY

Someone gave me this as a gift?

OLD MAN

I would think so.

TOMMY

Who gave it to me?

OLD MAN

That I can't say.

TOMMY

Could it have been the person I
can't remember?

OLD MAN

It could've been.

TOMMY

And there's no way of finding out
who this person was?

OLD MAN

Have you ever heard the saying
"Don't look a gift horse in the
mouth"?

TOMMY

I've heard it.

OLD MAN

Go home, Mister Goodwin. Go home
and enjoy your gift. I can pretty
much guarantee that the person
responsible for it would be very
happy right now.

TOMMY

How do you know who I am?

OLD MAN

You're famous, Senator.

TOMMY

There is a way I can find out about
this person, isn't there?

The old man sighs, and he grabs a pair of glasses, which he
places on the counter.

OLD MAN

If you wear these in places
connected to your past, you can
experience events that have no
longer passed.

Hesitantly, Tommy reaches for the glasses.

OLD MAN

But I warn you.

Tommy pulls away his hand.

OLD MAN

It could be dangerous, and not just
for you. You could change the
present through your actions.

Tommy stares at the glasses for a few moments -- and grabs
them.

TOMMY

How much?

OLD MAN

The price has already been paid.

Again, Tommy turns -- and again he spins toward the old man.

TOMMY

What time do you close today?

OLD MAN

You needn't return the gift here,
if that's what you decide. Just
discard the card, along with the
box. That's all you have to do.

Tommy nods and once more turns to leave -- and this time he does so, with the old man expressing the same tenderness he had expressed toward Rudi.

INT. OUTSIDE A&O TOYS - DAY

Tommy exits and stops in front of the store window, with a view of the old man standing behind the counter by himself.

TOMMY (V.O.)

Whoever gave me this gift must've
been here.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

It could be dangerous.

Tommy pauses in thought, and puts on the glasses.

He watches Rudi pay for the doll. He further watches her rush out of the store.

And he rips off the glasses with a grimace.

TOMMY (V.O.)

How could I have had anything to do
with someone like that?

He starts walking, with a pensive expression.

TOMMY (V.O.)

She was about my age.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Tommy drives his Harley through a long winding road that cuts through the forest, looking as if he were someplace else.

He hears a police SIREN -- and looks back -- at the police car behind him.

And he pulls over.

LATER

A POLICEMAN saunters up to Tommy.

TOMMY

Was I speeding, officer?

POLICEMAN

You're not wearing a helmet.

TOMMY

So?

POLICEMAN

It's against the law.

TOMMY

It is?

POLICEMAN

License and registration, please.

Tommy takes out his driver's license and looks around the bike.

POLICEMAN

Is there a problem?

Tommy hands the policeman his license.

TOMMY

I'm not sure where the registration is.

The policeman looks at the license and becomes surprised, and he glances at Tommy with an inquisitive expression.

TOMMY
Is there a problem?

POLICEMAN
Senator Goodwin?

TOMMY
I . . .

POLICEMAN
Why didn't you just tell me who you
were right away?

TOMMY
I . . .

POLICEMAN
I know. You didn't want any special
treatment. Figures. I read all
about how you got that treaty
signed and refused to take credit
for it.

The policeman slaps the license against his palm.

POLICEMAN
That's why I signed that petition.

TOMMY
Petition?

POLICEMAN
You know, the one asking you to run
for president. I'd like to think my
signature was what sent it over the
top.

The policeman hands Tommy back his license.

POLICEMAN
I guess I could let you off with a
warning, being that it's Christmas
and all.

INT. TOMMY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Darlene types into a laptop while sitting at a desk.

Tommy enters, and looks at the computer inquisitively.

TOMMY

What are you doing?

DARLENE

Making reservations for Disney World.

TOMMY

On that?

She stops typing and turns to Tommy.

DARLENE

How else?

TOMMY

I don't know. Travel agent?

DARLENE

Oh, you. Did you want something?

TOMMY

Do you remember this girl . . .

DARLENE

Someone from your office?

TOMMY

No, I'm talking about when we were teenagers. She was all, I don't know, punked out.

DARLENE

I don't remember anyone like that. Was she in our class?

TOMMY

I don't know.

DARLENE

Our yearbooks are up in the attic.

INT. ATTIC - DAY

Tommy, who's sitting on the floor, flips through pages near the back of a large hardcover book.

He closes the book -- one labeled "Columbia High School 1983."

He further pulls out the gift box from his overcoat pocket and opens it -- and he takes out the card, which he stares at.

INT. STAIRCASE - DAY

Tommy descends the last steps.

DARLENE (O.S.)

You find your mysterious punk girl?

Tommy stops and turns to Darlene -- and shakes his head.

DARLENE

Why are you looking for her?

TOMMY

I'm not sure.

DARLENE

Should I be jealous?

TOMMY

No.

DARLENE

That was a joke.

TOMMY

Sorry.

DARLENE

Are you all right? You seem, not yourself today.

TOMMY

You've noticed, too.

DARLENE

You know you can talk to me about anything, don't you?

TOMMY

We have a good marriage, don't we?

She answers him with a smile.

EXT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - DAY

The garage door opens and Tommy drives out on his Harley.

He comes to the end of the driveway and stops, and pauses in thought.

OLD MAN (V.O.)
Go home, Mister Goodwin. Go home
and enjoy your gift.

Tommy takes off down the road.

EXT. COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Tommy and the Harley enter a lot, and he parks -- with an expression of uncertainty.

TOMMY (V.O.)
I never even graduated.

He steps off the motorcycle and walks toward the empty school.

TOMMY (V.O.)
But I loved this place. Football,
the student body -- I even loved
History. Especially History.

BY SCHOOL ENTRANCE

Tommy stops near the doors and stares out into space, looking lifeless.

TOMMY (V.O.)
But I was also missing something.

He takes out the glasses and puts them on.

STEPHEN (O.S.)
It meets Sunday nights at the South
Orange Recreation Center. I'll take
you there myself.

RUDI (O.S.)
Sure thing, sheriff. Anything else?

Tommy turns his head.

Nearby Rudi heads toward the school with her drawstring bag over her shoulder. Alongside her marches STEPHEN -- a tall muscular man who has a crew cut and a suit.

STEPHEN

There's gonna be a lot of eyes on you here.

TOMMY (V.O.)

Who is she?

Rudi notices Tommy staring at her and she looks uncomfortable, but she can't break eye contact with him no matter how hard she tries.

She and Stephen reach the doors -- and she stops near Tommy and thrusts her hands onto her hips and glares at him.

RUDI

What are you looking at?

TOMMY

Who are you?

She grabs his jacket and flings him into the wall.

RUDI

A nightmare!

Tommy suddenly looks alive and excited to be so, causing Rudi to become even more uncomfortable than before.

Stephen grabs the collar of Rudi's jacket with one hand, and he effortlessly lifts her off her feet and toward the doors.

STEPHEN

Nice start.

Stephen slams open a door with one hand and tosses Rudi inside the building with his other, with Rudi glancing at Tommy.

TOMMY

What's your name?

Tommy opens a door and enters the school.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY

Tommy stares into an empty and short entranceway that leads to a perpendicular hallway.

TOMMY

Hello?

There's no reply, and he hesitantly moves farther inside.

TOMMY (V.O.)

What am I doing here? She is a nightmare, and probably doesn't care about anything or anyone. Just go home.

Instead, he reaches the hallway and looks both ways -- seeing no one.

TOMMY

Hello?

There's no reply, and he tilts his head in thought.

TOMMY (V.O.)

I should check Special Ed.

TEACHER (O.S.)

We're gonna prep today for the AP test.

Tommy walks toward an open door from which the voice comes.

TEACHER (O.S.)

Miss Weiss, being new here, I'll give you the honor of finding all the first order partial derivatives of the function on the board.

Tommy peeks into the class -- at a complex calculus problem on the blackboard.

TEACHER (O.S.)

Do you even know what I'm talking about?

Rudi marches to the board, picks up some chalk, and, looking bored, solves the problem as rapidly as if she were doing simple addition.

She covers the entire board -- and flings the chalk down while still facing the board.

RUDI

Happy?

TEACHER (O.S.)

It, it took me thirty minutes to solve that last night.

Rudi shrugs.

TEACHER (O.S.)

You may sit down.

She turns around -- toward Tommy and his surprised expression -- and, once again, she looks uncomfortable.

The TEACHER appears in the doorway.

TEACHER

If you'll excuse us.

The teacher slams the door in Tommy's face.

Tommy removes the glasses and rubs his eyes, and he opens the door and looks inside -- at the empty classroom.

He puts the glasses back on and hears FOOTSTEPS, and he turns his head.

Rudi rambles toward the end of the hallway.

TOMMY

Wait up!

He rushes after her.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Tommy enters, a bit out of breath -- and he looks at the emptiness.

TOMMY (V.O.)

I know she came in here.

He sits at a table -- and hears FOOTSTEPS, and turns his head.

Rudi carries a tray of food past him.

She notices him, and, once more looking uncomfortable, marches toward the opposite end of the room.

She looks like she'll march right through the wall, but she stops at the last second and sits at a table -- and starts picking at her food while stealing glances of Tommy.

Who can't keep his eyes off her no matter how hard he tries.

Suddenly, she jumps up, and marches out a door in the back.

TOMMY (V.O.)

This couldn't've been anything more
than some silly school crush.

He stands up.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Tommy approaches the entranceway.

RUDI (O.S.)

This is so stupid!

Tommy stops and turns toward the door of a girls' bathroom.

RUDI (O.S.)

He doesn't care about you! Nobody
cares about you! I don't even care
about you!

Rudi slams open the door, carrying a bunch of books -- and she becomes embarrassed.

RUDI

Don't think for a second that I was
talking about you.

TOMMY

Why would I think that?

She marches off.

And he follows a safe distance back.

They come upon OWEN -- a hulking 17-year-old bully holding a textbook over the head of PHILIP -- a geeky boy of 16, who quixotically reaches for the book.

PHILIP

Come on, Owen -- I need it.

OWEN

How badly do you need it?

TOMMY (V.O.)

(shaking his head)

God, how I hate that kid.

Rudi reaches Owen, and, against her will, stops.

Tommy stops, too -- just inside the entranceway by a wall, and he faces the three.

RUDI

Just give him back the book.

OWEN

Who's gonna make me?

RUDI

You got three seconds: one . . .
two . . .

OWEN

(with a grin)

Three.

Rudi drops all her books, except for a big hardcover one, which she flings across Owen's jaw -- sending him flying into a nearby locker, where he bangs his head and falls to the floor in a daze.

She kneels and picks up her things as if nothing had happened.

PRINCIPAL (O.S.)

Detention, Weiss!

She sighs -- and turns toward Tommy, who's staring at her in shock.

Trying to hide her discomfort, she takes a threatening step toward him.

And he flies back into the wall, banging his head. He further smiles at her -- a smile that says "I get you -- and I like it."

This smile stuns Rudi.

PRINCIPAL (O.S.)

Now!

Rudi rushes toward the voice -- and away from Tommy.

Tommy steps out of the entranceway and into the hallway, and he turns in the direction Rudi went.

But she's not there.

Still, he walks that way.

INT. OUTSIDE CLASSROOM - DAY

Tommy approaches an open door.

A TEACHER exits and turns back toward the room.

TEACHER

I'll be right back.

The teacher walks past Tommy, and Tommy peeks inside the room.

INT. INSIDE CLASSROOM - DAY

Rudi draws something in a notepad, with a copy of The Catcher in the Rye lying on the desk in front of her.

Angrily, she rips out the page, balls it up, and flings it onto the floor.

Against her will, she reaches down for the ball and stuffs it into her drawstring bag.

Tommy approaches her -- and she crosses her arms and looks away.

He sits next to her, and he points to the copy of The Catcher in the Rye.

TOMMY

Good book.

RUDI

If you like reading about a nothing
little no one.

TOMMY

That's not what it's about, though.

She doesn't reply, and he turns from her and looks deep in
thought.

TOMMY

It, it's about being alone. About
being the only person in the whole
world. The only person who thinks
and feels like you.

(lowering his eyes)

And being so scared because of this
you don't even know if you want to
live.

With surprise, she slowly turns to him while lowering her
arms -- and he turns to her, and they stare into each
other's eyes.

TEACHER (O.S.)

You can go home.

A bit frightened, Rudi stuffs the book into her bag and
grabs the frayed drawstring -- and she drags the sack along
the floor as she rushes out.

Tommy follows.

INT. OUTSIDE CLASSROOM DAY

Tommy exits -- and looks down the hall.

Rudi turns into the entranceway, still dragging her bag.

He hurries after her.

INT. ENTRANCEWAY - DAY

Tommy stops and turns toward the doors.

Rudi violently swings her bag over her shoulder as she
bursts out a door.

EXT. SCHOOL ENTRANCE - DAY

Tommy rushes out and comes to a sharp stop.

Nearby, Rudi, who's kneeling on the ground, frantically tries to collect her things into her bag, whose drawstring has just broken.

The balled-up piece of paper rolls toward Tommy in the breeze -- and he leans down to pick it up.

RUDI (O.S.)
That's mine!

Tommy opens the paper and looks at it.

INSERT - PAPER

It's an emotive drawing of Tommy at 17.

BACK TO SCHOOL ENTRANCE

Tommy's jaw drops.

Rudi rips the paper from him, with her other arm holding her broken bag.

RUDI
I said, it's mine!

TOMMY
(pointing at picture)
Thanks.

RUDI
It's not you!

TOMMY
You're a much better artist than
you are a liar.

She sneers at him, turns around, and heads off.

TOMMY
How is it?

She reluctantly stops, but doesn't turn around.

RUDI
How is what?

TOMMY
How is it you can see things in me
I can't see myself?

She rushes off.

TOMMY
What's your name?

Rudi continues on.

TOMMY
Mine's Tommy.

She comes to a halt -- and spins toward him indignantly.

RUDI
And why would I care?

He points to the drawing -- and she hides the paper behind her back, with her face flush.

He smiles -- angering her.

RUDI
What's so funny?

TOMMY
I didn't know punk girls blush.

DEKE (O.S.)
Rudi!

Rudi and Tommy turn their heads toward the parking lot.

There stands DEKE -- a man in his twenties with shoulder-length hair, bloodshot eyes, and a menacing expression, who's leaning against a Porsche from the early 1980s.

DEKE
Get in the car!

Rudi lowers her head and walks toward Deke as if she were heading to her execution.

TOMMY
You okay, Rudi?

She doesn't reply.

Tommy notices a gun underneath Deke's jacket as he enters his car.

TOMMY

Rudi?

Rudi steps into the car.

DEKE (O.S.)

Who the hell is that?

RUDI (O.S.)

No one!

DEKE (O.S.)

Don't lie to me!

The car starts and speeds off.

Tommy runs toward his Harley.

And he glances to his right.

By the school, Rudi approaches Owen, who's sitting on the ground with his back to the wall and his head down. Against her will, she stops next to him and gently puts her hand on his shoulder.

Owen looks up at her with lots of surprise.

Tommy turns his head forward.

The Porsche is gone.

Tommy looks to his right.

Owen and Rudi are gone, too.

TOMMY (V.O.)

Now what?

OLD MAN (V.O.)

Go home, Mister Goodwin. Go home
and enjoy your gift.

Tommy steps toward the bike, and he hears a CRUNCHING PAPER sound, and he looks down -- at an old shriveled-up flyer in the dirt.

He picks it up and unravels it.

INSERT - FLYER

It's an announcement: "Columbia vs. East Orange at Underhill Field."

EXT. OUTSIDE UNDERHILL FIELD - DAY

Tommy and his Harley park in front of an empty high school football stadium.

EXT. INSIDE UNDERHILL FIELD - DAY

Tommy walks under the stands and reaches the edge of the football field.

CROWD (O.S.)

Tom-my! Tom-my! Tom-my!

He smiles.

RUDI (O.S.)

You must be eating this up.

Tommy turns to Rudi, who's standing next to him with her arms crossed and her face full of apathy -- and then he looks back at the field.

TOMMY

Maybe a little. Maybe a little more than a little.

RUDI

I hate football.

TOMMY

Yeah?

RUDI

And anything else that has to do with large groups of people who think alike.

TOMMY

Define a "large group of people"?

RUDI
Any greater than one.

He chuckles.

RUDI
I don't even know what I'm doing
here. I could be seeing Bad Brains
right now.

TOMMY
Is that a band?

She sighs, with great exasperation.

TOMMY
You wanna get a bite later? I know
this great pizza place.

RUDI
What about your girlfriend?

TOMMY
Girlfriend?

Rudi glances down the sideline.

RUDI
That cheerleader over there.

Tommy glances down the sideline as well.

TOMMY
Darlene?

RUDI
She looks like she wants to rip my
skull off and drink from it.

TOMMY
I actually don't have a girlfriend.
You wanna know something funny?
I've never had a girlfriend. Not a
real one.

RUDI
(from a distance)
There's no such thing as fairy
tales.

TOMMY

What's that?

Tommy turns toward Rudi, but she's gone. He further looks behind himself.

Outside the stadium, Rudi reluctantly gets inside Deke's Porsche, and it speeds off.

EXT. OUTSIDE UNDERHILL FIELD - DAY

Tommy climbs onto his Harley and takes off.

He drives a few blocks and approaches Rudi walking by herself, away from him.

He passes her and glances back -- at her bruised and teary face.

TOMMY

(with fright)

Rudi?

A horn HONKS.

He turns around and notices he's in the wrong lane, and that he's just about to smash into a pickup truck.

At the last second, he swerves into the right lane -- and pulls over.

He turns his head -- and Rudi's gone.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Tommy slows his Harley at a traffic light and comes to a stop -- near a restaurant called Reservoir Pizza. Which he glances at.

INT. RESERVOIR PIZZA - DAY

Tommy walks inside, and a WAITER carrying a pizza smiles at him.

WAITER

Tommy!

TOMMY

Hey.

The HOST -- a middle-aged man in a suit -- greets Tommy with a grin and a hearty handshake.

HOST

We were gonna close early, you
know, for the holiday. But for you,
for you we're always open.

The host turns to the CUSTOMERS.

HOST

Everyone, the next president of the
United States!

The entire restaurant stands and cheers, and Tommy responds with an awkward smile.

LATER

Tommy sips a glass of water while sitting at a table in the empty restaurant.

Rudi marches up to Tommy -- with a face that's neither bruised nor teary.

RUDI

Just so we're clear . . .

She grabs a chair and sits across from him, with the back of the chair facing the table.

RUDI

This isn't a date or nothing.

TOMMY

No date.

RUDI

We have nothing in common.

TOMMY

You sure about that?

The waiter puts a veggie pizza on the table.

WAITER

You need anything else, just let me know.

Tommy nods and the waiter walks off -- and Rudi glances at the pizza.

RUDI

Who told you?

TOMMY

What?

RUDI

What what? Who told you I'm a vegetarian?

He smiles -- angering her.

RUDI

What's so funny?

TOMMY

We have nothing in common.

RUDI

No football player is a vegetarian.

TOMMY

Yeah, and no punk cares about anything or anyone. They don't protect little kids, and they're certainly not nice to bullies they've just beaten up.

Rudi sneers, and Tommy grabs a slice -- and he notices she's not eating.

TOMMY

Aren't you gonna have any?

RUDI

I hate pizza.

TOMMY

Is there anything you don't hate?

RUDI

I'm not sure.

She grabs a slice and takes a small bite -- and can't hide her surprise.

TOMMY

Good?

She responds by taking another bite -- a much bigger one.

Again, he smiles.

RUDI

Now what's so funny?

TOMMY

That's not why I'm smiling. I don't even know the reason.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Tommy slows his Harley at a traffic light and comes to a stop, with Rudi sitting behind him -- her arms draped around his waist, her cheek pressed against his back, and a dreamy look in her eyes.

TOMMY

Where do you live?

RUDI

With Mister Cross.

TOMMY

The guidance counselor?

RUDI

He's my foster dad.

TOMMY

Wasn't he a Marine?

RUDI

You can imagine how much fun we have together.

TOMMY

Where does he live?

RUDI

I don't want to go home.

TOMMY

I know a great record store up in
Irvington.

RUDI

You're not talking about Vintage
Vinyl, are you?

TOMMY

As a matter of fact, I --

RUDI

-- All right, who's been talking to
you about me?

TOMMY

I go there lots.

RUDI

I go there all the time, and I've
never seen you there.

TOMMY

Ask Butch if you don't believe me.

RUDI

I don't know what to believe
anymore.

TOMMY

So, where do you want to go?

RUDI

Anywhere.

TOMMY

I know the best anywhere there is.

EXT. FOREST ENTRANCE - DAY

Tommy parks his Harley in the spot where he found his car
earlier, and he and Rudi step off the bike.

RUDI

This is your best anywhere? I've
been here lots. It's boring.

TOMMY

That's because you've never really
looked.

He heads down the path.

RUDI

Now where you going?

Reluctantly, she follows.

Deke's Porsche quietly parks next to the Harley.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Tommy leads an exasperated Rudi through some trees.

RUDI

If you haven't noticed, I'm not
exactly the woodsy type.

EXT. WATERFALL - DAY

Tommy and Rudi reach the clearing and the water -- and her
jaw drops.

RUDI

I never knew this was here.

TOMMY

Not many people know about it.

He sits on the same rock he sat on when he first arrived in
the present.

TOMMY

This is really the only anywhere I
go. When my dad was dying I came
here almost every day. It's the one
place I'm never alone.

She sits next to him and leans against him.

RUDI

You're right. This is the best
anywhere.

Tommy's phone RINGS and once again he jumps, and again almost falls off the cliff.

He steadies himself, and notices Rudi's gone. And he takes out his phone and looks at it.

INSERT - PHONE

It displays "Darlene."

BACK TO WATERFALL

Tommy answers the phone.

TOMMY

Hey.

DARLENE (V.O.)

Hey, hon. Just wanted to let you know your mom called. She wants you to get her grandmother's tea service.

TOMMY

I know it.

DARLENE (V.O.)

She says it's in the kitchen. Oh, and we just got a really nice gift from Pete Simmons.

TOMMY

Pete Simmons?

DARLENE (V.O.)

Man, you really are out of it today. Pete Simmons -- the CEO of Goldman. By the way, he mentioned that they're in. All-the-way.

TOMMY

In what?

DARLENE (V.O.)

The PAC! And the speech, too.

Tommy looks beyond confused.

TOMMY

Maybe we should discuss this later.
I'll see you soon.

EXT. MOM'S HOUSE - DAY

Tommy parks his Harley in front of a big home that has a For Sale sign in front.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - DAY

Tommy tries the handle. But it's locked.

He looks around, and notices a flower pot -- and he leans down and checks underneath it, and he finds a key.

INT. MOM'S HOUSE - DAY

Tommy wanders around -- and approaches the swinging doors of a kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Tommy pushes his way through the swinging doors -- and looks inside.

A bowl of chocolate bars lies on the table.

TOMMY

(with a smile)
Some things never change.

BY THE TABLE

Tommy eagerly searches through the bowl, and he finds a bar of white chocolate, which he picks up and unwraps. He further takes a big bite of it, with an expression of bliss.

RUDI (O.S.)

How can you eat that?

He turns to a grimacing Rudi, and he swallows what's left in his mouth.

TOMMY

It's my favorite.

RUDI
It's disgusting.

TOMMY
I have strange tastes.

Rudi becomes uncomfortable, and she rushes out of the kitchen.

TOMMY
Where you going?

Tommy puts the chocolate down on a counter and goes after her.

INT. OUTSIDE KITCHEN - DAY

Tommy pushes his way through the swinging doors, and he looks around.

Rudi's gone.

He hears FOOTSTEPS and rushes over to a staircase -- and he looks up.

RUDI (O.S.)
Hate me yet?

TOMMY
Not yet.

RUDI (O.S.)
Let's see if we can change that.

He again hears FOOTSTEPS and heads up the stairs.

INT. SECOND FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Tommy walks up to a closed door at the end of the corridor.

RUDI (O.S.)
Your mom must be the Queen of
Navarre.

He opens the door, exposing Rudi, who's gazing at an opulently furnished bedroom.

And he walks inside the room and closes the door behind himself.

TOMMY (O.S.)
You shouldn't be in here.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

An agitated Rudi turns to Tommy.

RUDI
No, I shouldn't.

She starts to leave.

RUDI
See ya.

TOMMY
I meant in this room.

She stops and spins toward him with a sneer.

RUDI
Did you?

TOMMY
Why are you always fighting me?

RUDI
Who says I'm fighting you?

She again starts to leave.

TOMMY
Rudi --

Again, she spins toward him.

RUDI
(with rising emotion)
-- Can't you see how messed up I
am? How I'd embarrass you? What
could you possibly see in me?

TOMMY
It's what you saw in me.

RUDI

What are you talking about?

TOMMY

Remember when we first met?

She thinks about it.

RUDI

You mean, when I threw you against
the wall?

Tommy chuckles.

TOMMY

Before that. You were looking at me
in a way no one has ever looked
before. You were looking at me just
like you are looking at me now.

RUDI

How?

TOMMY

Like I matter.

RUDI

I'm a nobody, Tommy. Even my mom
thought so -- when I was three.
That's when I stopped believing in
fairy tales.

TOMMY

Maybe you could start again.

RUDI

I've got a record -- a long one.

TOMMY

I don't care.

RUDI

I'm also an --

TOMMY

-- I don't care!

RUDI

I'll only hurt you, Tommy. And I
don't want to hurt you.

The door opens, and Tommy's MOM -- an attractive middle-aged woman stops in the threshold, looking at Rudi with a mixture of shock and disgust.

TOMMY

Mom.

MOM

Who's this?

TOMMY

This is Rudi. My . . .

RUDI

An acquaintance.

MOM

(through clenched jaw)

Will this, this acquaintance be staying for dinner?

TOMMY

Yes.

No.

RUDI

Rudi glares at Tommy.

MOM

By all means stay for dinner, Rudi.
I'm just dying to know more about you.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Tommy and Rudi sit on a couch together.

RUDI

She hates me.

TOMMY

She doesn't hate you.

RUDI

And if I were her, I'd hate me, too.

He picks up a remote off a coffee table.

TOMMY

Wanna watch some TV?

RUDI
I hate TV.

TOMMY
One more thing to add to your list.

Rudi crosses her arms and turns away -- and Tommy turns on the television and changes the channel.

The Uncle Floyd Show appears on the screen.

Surprised, Rudi lowers her arms and turns her head toward the TV.

RUDI
Except this show.

TOMMY
What's that?

RUDI
You really watch Uncle Floyd?

Tommy, whose focus is only on the TV, chuckles.

The two continue watching -- and they burst out into laughter at the same time, with the same intensity.

Slowly, they turn to each other.

MOM (O.S.)
Dinner's ready!

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Rudi, Tommy, and Mom sit in front of a formal table setting, which Rudi stares at in confusion.

ELIZABETH -- a servant -- serves soup.

RUDI
I don't think I've ever seen so many utensils.

TOMMY
(glaring at Mom)
We don't usually eat so formally.

MOM

I thought it would be a nice change.

TOMMY

(to Rudi)

It's real easy. As the courses come, use the utensils farthest from you.

RUDI

Why not use the same utensils?

MOM

You can use your fingers if you'd like.

Both Tommy and Rudi glare at Mom.

Elizabeth finishes serving.

MOM

Thank you, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth nods and leaves.

Tommy and Mom pick up their soup spoons -- and, while watching them, Rudi picks up hers.

MOM

So, Rudi, do you go to school?

TOMMY

She's the smartest one there.

RUDI

That's not true.

TOMMY

You should've seen her solve this crazy-looking calculus problem. I bet not even Einstein could've done it that fast.

RUDI

(with embarrassment)

Tommy.

Mom looks a bit discomforted.

MOM

Tell me, Rudi, is, is this getup of yours the new thing? Should I expect Tommy to be sporting a Mohawk?

TOMMY

Stop it.

MOM

Tommy, you'll never guess who I saw at the mall the other day: Darlene. Talk about flawless. So unlike

. . .

(to Rudi)

So unlike anything else.

Rudi averts her eyes, causing Mom to grin.

TOMMY

I said, stop it.

MOM

Just telling it like I see it. I'm sure Rudi sees it, too. Don't you?

TOMMY

Mom --

MOM

-- Darlene was telling me she's leaning toward Princeton. But, of course, she's waiting to see what you decide.

TOMMY

She shouldn't.

MOM

Why shouldn't you two go to school together? And then afterward . . .

Rudi turns to Tommy.

RUDI

I'm sorry, but I'm feeling very uncomfortable.

TOMMY

I know how you feel.

RUDI

And this is just a small taste of
what we'd get if we went together.

MOM

(gasping in horror)
Went together?

RUDI

No need to worry, Misses Goodwin.
Your son and I have nothing in
common.

TOMMY

(with rising anger)
Except for Uncle Floyd and
Reservoir pizza and The Catcher in
the Rye. But that's nothing. It's
so nothing that she can look me in
the eyes and tell me it's nothing.

Rudi boils, but doesn't respond.

TOMMY

I'm waiting. I'm waiting for you to
look at me and tell me that I don't
matter!

Rudi flings her spoon onto the table.

MOM

Well, I never --

RUDI

-- Shut up!

Rudi turns to Tommy, while trying to control her emotions.

RUDI

It's you who needs to look at me!
Really look! And not just at my
hair or my makeup or my clothes.
Look at who I am. I'll never be the
girlfriend of someone like you.

Rudi desperately tries to keep herself together.

RUDI

Let's not kid ourselves -- I'll
never be the girlfriend of anyone!

Rudi jumps up and rushes off, and Tommy goes after her.

MOM

Let her go.

TOMMY

Shut up!

Tommy runs out, with Mom watching in shock.

INT. FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

On the verge of tears, Rudi finishes putting on an overcoat and swings her bag over her shoulder before opening the door -- and Tommy grabs her arms from behind.

RUDI

Let go of me!

She yanks her arms away.

TOMMY

I'll drive you home.

RUDI

Why can't you let me be? I was
doing fine until I met you. I never
used to get so emotional, and now
look at me!

She rushes out the door, with Tommy watching her from the threshold.

TOMMY

Rudi!

RUDI

I don't fit in your world! I don't
even live in it!

Deke's Porsche pulls up beside her, and she stops, but doesn't look at it.

The passenger door swings open.

With a stunned expression, she glances inside and then back at Tommy -- and she fearfully steps inside the car.

TOMMY

Rudi?

The car speeds off.

MOM (O.S.)

I understand all about rebelling. I
did a lot of it myself. But this,
this . . .

TOMMY

Her name is Rudi.

MOM (O.S.)

I don't care what her name is!

TOMMY

You don't have to like her. But you
do have to respect her.

MOM (O.S.)

I don't! She's never setting foot
in this house again!

TOMMY

Then, neither am I.

Tommy walks out.

INT. STREET - DAY

Tommy and his Harley approach the South Orange Public
Library, and he slows down before coming to a stop near the
entrance.

TOMMY (V.O.)

I bet she did fine without me. But
if I could know for sure.

He drives onto the lot.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Tommy looks through some stacks and comes upon the Reference
Desk, where sits a female LIBRARIAN, who's working on a
computer.

TOMMY

Excuse me.

She looks up at Tommy as if she recognizes him.

LIBRARIAN

Yes?

TOMMY

I'm looking for telephone
directories.

LIBRARIAN

We got rid of those long ago.
Everything's on the Internet now.

TOMMY

The Internet?

LIBRARIAN

You don't know what the Internet
is?

TOMMY

Should I?

LIBRARY CORRIDOR

The librarian leads Tommy past numerous bookshelves.

LIBRARIAN

I guess you're not into computers.

TOMMY

I took a course in high school.

LIBRARIAN

That must've been a long time ago.

TOMMY

If you say so.

LIBRARIAN

Has, has anyone ever told you that
you look a lot like Senator
Goodwin?

TOMMY

Someone has told me that. More than
one person, actually.

LIBRARIAN

I have a really big crush on him.
And not for the reason you think.

They stop in front of a set of computers.

TOMMY

This is a computer?

LIBRARIAN

This is a computer.

TOMMY

No punch cards?

LIBRARIAN

What's a punch card?

TOMMY

It doesn't matter.

He sits in front of a computer, and the librarian points to
the screen.

LIBRARIAN

Just click in that box.

TOMMY

How?

With a bit of a sigh, she takes his hand and puts it on a
nearby mouse.

LIBRARIAN

Take the mouse.

Startled, Tommy pulls his hand away.

TOMMY

Mouse?

LIBRARIAN

(with a smile)

It won't bite.

Again, she puts his hand on the mouse and moves it around.

LIBRARIAN

You move the mouse like this and click. See?

TOMMY

Now what?

LIBRARIAN

Type in the name of the person you're looking for and hit Enter.

He types Rudi's name and hits Enter.

LIBRARIAN

These are summaries. You click on the blue underlined title and it'll take you to the information.

TOMMY

None of these summaries are about her.

The librarian clicks the Next button, and another screen of summaries display.

LIBRARIAN

What about these?

He carefully looks through the screen -- and he shakes his head.

LIBRARIAN

Are you sure about the name? The spelling, for instance.

TOMMY

I'm not sure about anything.

EXT. COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL ENTRANCE - DUSK

Tommy stops by the doors and looks at his watch.

INSERT - WATCH

It's 4:46.

BACK TO SCHOOL ENTRANCE

TOMMY

Rudi? Are you around?

There's no reply.

TOMMY

All day long I see you wherever I
go, and now you decide to hide?

Again, there's no reply -- and he tries to open a door. But
it's locked.

TOMMY

Fine -- I'm just gonna go home and
enjoy my Christmas, and my happily
ever after. And forget all about
you! You hear me?

He starts toward the parking lot and reaches a large
classroom window -- and he stops.

TOMMY

Oh, what the hell.

He reaches down and picks up a big rock -- and he throws it
through the window. The glass shatters completely, and an
alarm RINGS.

Quickly, he rushes up to the window and climbs through it.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DUSK

Tommy runs through the darkened corridor with the alarm
softly RINGING.

TOMMY

Rudi?

There's no reply, and he comes to a stop, pausing in
thought.

TOMMY (V.O.)

The Catcher in the Rye. We read it
in English. And she was reading it,
too.

He runs off in a different direction.

INT. OUTSIDE CLASSROOM - DUSK

With the alarm still softly RINGING, Tommy rushes toward an open door, gasping for breath.

TOMMY

Rudi?

KRASNER (O.S.)

I'm the teacher here -- Mister
Krasner.

Tommy stops at the door and looks inside.

INT. INSIDE CLASSROOM - DUSK

KRASNER faces Rudi, who's holding a printout.

RUDI

Well, I'm the student here -- Ms.
Weiss.

KRASNER

This is Honor's English.

Rudi looks at the printout.

RUDI

What a surprise -- that's what it
says here, too.

Krasner marches up to her and grabs the printout -- and he reads it.

KRASNER

All right, Gertrude -- have a seat.

TOMMY (V.O.)

Gertrude. Her real name was
Gertrude!

Tommy runs off.

INT. OUTSIDE CLASSROOM - DUSK

With the alarm loudly RINGING, Tommy reaches an open door leading to the room with the broken window.

The alarm stops.

A flashlight BEAM enters the room -- and Tommy jumps to the side of the door.

POLICEMAN 1 (O.S.)
See anything?

POLICEMAN 2 (O.S.)
It was probably just some kids.

The flashlight goes out.

POLICEMAN 1 (O.S.)
What about the bike in the lot?

POLICEMAN 2 (O.S.)
I'll check the plates.

Tommy peeks into the room, and he reaches inside and grabs a large textbook -- and he tosses it down the hall, where it makes a loud THUMP.

POLICEMAN 1 (O.S.)
Let's go!

Tommy hears FOOTSTEPS rushing off -- and he sprints inside the classroom.

EXT. SCHOOL - DUSK

Tommy hurriedly climbs through the broken window.

EXT. SCHOOL PARKING LOT - DUSK

Tommy jumps onto his motorcycle -- and starts it -- and speeds off.

POLICEMAN 1 (O.S.)
Hey, you!

EXT. SOUTH ORANGE PUBLIC LIBRARY ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The librarian exits with a set of keys in her hands, and she starts to lock the door.

TOMMY (O.S.)
Wait!

She turns around, and Tommy runs up to her -- and, when he reaches her, he doubles over out of breath.

LIBRARIAN

You okay?

He rises.

TOMMY

I need to use that . . . what did you call it . . . the Internet.

LIBRARIAN

We're closed.

TOMMY

Please.

LIBRARIAN

It's Christmas Eve. Come back on Friday.

He opens his mouth to say something, but instead he turns around.

LIBRARIAN

Hey.

Quickly, Tommy turns back to her.

LIBRARIAN

You really are Senator Goodwin, aren't you?

TOMMY

That's what people say.

LIBRARIAN

You know, if you hadn't gotten that bill passed, the sister I'm about to spend Christmas with wouldn't be around to spend Christmas with.

(nodding inside)

Come on.

INT. LIBRARY COMPUTER SECTION - NIGHT

Tommy rushes up to a computer and sits down -- and grabs the mouse.

TOMMY

I'll be just a minute. I promise.

LIBRARIAN (O.S.)

Take your time.

INSERT - MONITOR

"Gertrude Weiss" displays letter-by-letter in the search box, followed by the sound of a KEY PRESS.

Search results display, and the mouse pointer stops on a link labeled "Gertrude Weiss, 17, Found ..." -- which is followed by a MOUSE CLICK.

A newspaper clipping displays, with a mug shot of Rudi and a photo of a motel called The Lucky Strike. The headline reads: "Gertrude Weiss, 17, Found Murdered in Motel Room."

BACK TO LIBRARY

Tommy reads the article in horror.

OLD MAN (V.O.)

You could change the present
through your actions.

Tommy pauses in thought -- and he jumps up and runs off.

EXT. THE LUCKY STRIKE - NIGHT

Tommy and his Harley exit an urban highway, and he pulls onto the lot of a crumbling motel and parks.

TOMMY

Rudi?

There's no reply.

TOMMY (V.O.)

What if I can't change this?

Deke's Porsche enters the lot and stops near the office.

TOMMY (V.O.)

Something tells me this is the
point of no return.

Deke exits the car and swaggers inside the office.

Tommy jumps off the bike and hustles toward the Porsche.

BY THE PORSCHE

Tommy raps on the passenger window -- and an angry Rudi rolls it down.

RUDI

What are you doing here?

TOMMY

What are you doing here?

RUDI

This has nothing to do with you!

TOMMY

I wish that were true. You don't know how much I wish it.

Deke exits the office and smirks at Tommy.

DEKE

Lookee here. You come to watch?

Rudi jumps out of the car and slams the door.

RUDI

Let's just get this over with!

Deke saunters toward a nearby room and starts to unlock the door.

Rudi rushes toward it.

TOMMY

Rudi, what are you doing? Do you know what's gonna happen?

DEKE

She knows.

RUDI

I told you, Tommy -- I don't live in your world. I live in a totally different one!

TOMMY

Rudi --

RUDI

-- Go home already! Go home and
forget me! I'm trash!

Deke swings open the door of the room, and Rudi storms
inside it. Deke then enters and blows Tommy a kiss.

DEKE

See ya.

Deke slams the door closed, and Tommy hears the deadbolt
TURN.

TOMMY (V.O.)

What more can I do? She even told
me to go.

He marches toward his bike.

BY THE HARLEY

Tommy climbs onto the motorcycle.

He hears a VIOLENT SCUFFLE coming from inside the motel
room.

RUDI (O.S.)

Help! Help!

He lowers his head.

BY THE MOTEL ROOM

Tommy rushes at the door -- and breaks it open with his
shoulder. And he storms inside the room, with the door
closing behind him.

Another VIOLENT SCUFFLE comes from inside the room.

DEKE (O.S.)

How's this for irony? She only came
because I threatened you!

More SCUFFLING comes from inside the room.

DEKE (O.S.)
You came to watch, and now you're
gonna watch!

A gun FIRES.

EXT. MOTEL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

An ambulance, with its sirens BLARING, rushes onto the lot
-- and parks in front of the motel room.

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

A PARAMEDIC rolls out a stretcher with a body completely
covered by a sheet.

Two more PARAMEDICS roll out an unconscious Tommy and Rudi.

EXT. SAINT BARNABAS HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The speeding ambulance stops in front of the emergency room
entrance.

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

A DOCTOR examines a still unconscious Tommy, who starts to
wake.

TOMMY
Is, is she okay?

DOCTOR
The girl you came in with? She's
gonna live. But you've lost a lot
of blood.

A NURSE rushes over with a packet of blood, which Tommy
stares at with great fear.

TOMMY
No. Don't do it. Don't do it!

DOCTOR
Just calm down.

Tommy falls off the stretcher onto the floor, and he
desperately stumbles away.

DOCTOR
Come back! You'll die!

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Tommy stumbles down the hall, looking as if he'll collapse at any moment.

TOMMY
Rudi! Rudi!

He continues on and comes upon a nurses' station, behind which sits a NURSE.

TOMMY
Rudi Weiss. Where is she?

NURSE
Are you all right?

TOMMY
Forget me. I need the room number for Rudi Weiss.

NURSE
You --

TOMMY
-- Just do it!

The nurse looks through some information and shakes her head.

NURSE
I don't have anyone by that name.

TOMMY
Gertrude! Try Gertrude Weiss!

The nurse again looks.

NURSE
Three Seventeen. She's in Room
Three Seventeen.

Tommy drags himself down the hall.

EXT. OUTSIDE RUDI'S ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy falls to the floor by the door and coughs -- a loud hacking cough. And he sits up against the wall.

Rudi slithers out of the room in a hospital gown, with her face bandaged.

She checks her gown and slides down the wall, and sits next to Tommy, who doesn't look at her.

RUDI

Now you must finally hate me.

He shakes his head.

RUDI

What do I have to do then?

He doesn't reply.

RUDI

(emotionally)

I told you I'd hurt you. I told you.

He still doesn't reply.

RUDI

You're such a stupid --

TOMMY

-- I love you.

Rudi turns away from Tommy in shock.

RUDI

(gasping)

You love me?

TOMMY

I wish I could say I was heroic back there. But I wasn't. I was scared and wanted to leave and only didn't because I couldn't. I couldn't because I love you.

RUDI

Yeah, well, I love you, too.

Tommy turns toward Rudi.

RUDI

I didn't want to love you. I didn't
want to love anyone, not even
myself. But you're the most
magnificent person I've ever met or
will ever meet.

Rudi turns to Tommy with tears in her eyes.

RUDI

You, you're my fairy tale.

Rudi disappears -- and Tommy coughs badly as he stands up
and stumbles off.

INT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Tommy, who's still coughing, approaches the automatic doors.
He stops and spins around.

TOMMY (V.O.)

That wasn't the last time she was
here.

BY RECEPTION AREA

A sick-looking Tommy walks up to a tall desk.

TOMMY

Do you have a Rudi Weiss here? I
mean, Gertrude Weiss.

CLERK (O.S.)

Just a minute.

Tommy puts his elbows on the desk, and his head on his
palms.

CLERK (O.S.)

No. No one by that name.

TOMMY

How, how about Thomas Goodwin?

INT. HOSPITAL ELEVATOR BANK - NIGHT

The second floor indicator lights and a bell RINGS.

The elevator door opens and Tommy steps out -- and he staggers down a corridor, looking even sicker than before.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

We need to run some tests on you.

RUDI (O.S.)

No.

Tommy turns a corner.

He approaches a couch where Rudi sits with her head down, next to Stephen -- the tall muscular man with a crew cut who led her to school earlier -- who's in a state of shock.

In front of them stands a worried DOCTOR holding a clipboard.

DOCTOR

You could be very sick, Rudi.

RUDI

(shaking her head)

I can't be.

DOCTOR

We need to test you.

RUDI

No!

She raises her bruised and teary face -- and she turns to Stephen and cries.

He hugs her -- and she punches his back over and over with her mighty fists.

RUDI

It's not fair! It's not fair.

Stephen cries, too.

Tommy continues down the hall.

He stops at a room, and staggers inside.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Like a zombie, Tommy slithers up to an empty bed -- and he lies on it.

DOCTOR (O.S.)

Tommy?

Tommy looks up at the foot of the bed, where stands the same doctor who had been talking to Rudi and Stephen.

DOCTOR

I, I have something to tell you.

The doctor pauses.

TOMMY

What is it?

DOCTOR

We believe you have AIDS.

TOMMY

AIDS?

The doctor fades as he speaks.

DOCTOR

We think you contracted it through
the blood transfusions you received
. . .

The doctor disappears, and Tommy looks up at the ceiling -- and his REFLECTION.

REFLECTED TOMMY

You're gonna die, Tommy. You're
gonna die.

RUDI (O.S.)

Tommy?

Tommy turns toward the door and Rudi's tear-soaked face.

TOMMY

Stay away from me.

He turns away from her -- and she runs up to him and grabs his hand, which he pulls away.

TOMMY

Don't touch me! I'm infected!

RUDI

You can't give it that way.

TOMMY

How do you know?

RUDI

I know! I know!

TOMMY

Go away. Please, go away.

RUDI

I'm not going nowhere.

TOMMY

I don't want you to watch me die.

RUDI

(with breaking voice)

Can I watch you live? Can I?

TOMMY

Find someone else.

RUDI

There is no one else.

TOMMY

(angrily)

Someone you have something in
common with.

RUDI

There's only you!

Again, she grabs his hand -- and he turns toward her and
pushes her onto the floor.

RUDI

Tommy?

TOMMY

You did this to me! You did this to
me!

She starts crying.

RUDI

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

TOMMY

I never want to see you again. Get out. Get out of my life!

RUDI

Tommy!

Two NURSES wearing surgical masks and rubber gloves rush in, and they grab Rudi -- and they drag her out the door.

RUDI (O.S.)

I love you!

Tommy puts his hands to his ears and shakes his head as he collapses into a fetal position.

INT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Tommy approaches the automatic doors -- and steps through them.

EXT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Tommy stops at the curb.

STEPHEN (O.S.)

This is a very contagious disease!

Tommy turns his head.

Nearby Stephen rushes after Rudi.

RUDI

If it were that easy to catch, half the world would have it!

STEPHEN

Maybe they do! Maybe they do!

RUDI

Then, it doesn't matter if I --

STEPHEN

-- You're not seeing him again!
Ever!

A taxi pulls up in front of Tommy.

EXT. THE LUCKY STRIKE - NIGHT

The taxi enters the lot and stops by the Harley.

Tommy exits the back seat, and the taxi leaves -- and he climbs onto the bike. He also looks at his watch.

INSERT - WATCH

It's 8:22.

BACK TO THE LUCKY STRIKE

Tommy starts his Harley -- and notices a nearby motel room door ajar, with light coming from inside it.

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy approaches the door and knocks.

There's no answer -- and he knocks again.

Still, there's no answer -- and he opens the door.

INT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy looks around a place awash in fast-food refuse and empty liquor bottles and other junk.

He sits on the bed and picks up a vodka bottle off the floor.

TOMMY (V.O.)

I lived here.

While dropping the bottle, he leans down -- and he picks up a cassette tape and looks at it.

INSERT - TAPE

Handwritten on it is: "Black Flag - Damaged."

BACK TO MOTEL ROOM

He hears glass SMASH, and he looks into the bathroom.

The mirror there has been punched, with dried blood around the puncture.

He drops the cassette, and looks at himself in the room mirror.

TOMMY

Had enough?

He takes off the glasses.

EXT. MOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy exits and approaches the Harley.

TOMMY (V.O.)

No more looking back. Only ahead.

His phone RINGS -- and he takes it out and looks at it.

INSERT - PHONE

It displays "Jack."

BACK TO MOTEL

Tommy answers the phone.

TOMMY

Jack?

JACK (V.O.)

Sorry to bother you on Christmas Eve, boss.

TOMMY

Boss? You work for me?

JACK (V.O.)

Are you trying to tell me something?

TOMMY

No. Not at all. What's up?

JACK (V.O.)

Bad news. Wesson's going negative,
just like we anticipated.

TOMMY

Negative?

JACK (V.O.)

Just saw the ads. They're brutal --
and Wesson's gonna blanket Iowa and
New Hampshire with them right after
Christmas. We have to go hardball.

TOMMY

Hardball?

JACK (V.O.)

(softly)

You know. Like we talked about.
Pass along that you-know-what
before they can run those ads.
It'll be over. Way over.

TOMMY

I don't know about this.

JACK (V.O.)

Senator, this is big boy time. You
can't expect to win a presidential
campaign wearing white dinner
gloves.

Tommy thinks for a few moments.

TOMMY

You're quoting Lenin?

JACK (V.O.)

Paraphrasing. There's a difference.

TOMMY

I gotta get back to you.

Tommy hangs up.

TOMMY (V.O.)

I wonder if they'd be cheering me
now.

EXT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy drives his Harley onto the driveway, and the garage door opens.

INT. TOMMY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy walks past the staircase.

TOMMY

Hello?

DARLENE (O.S.)

I'm in here!

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy enters, and stops a short distance from Darlene, who's watching TV on a couch.

DARLENE

You missed dinner.

TOMMY

Sorry.

DARLENE

We understand. You've got an important job. There's some turkey warming in the oven.

TOMMY

I'm a vegetarian.

She glances at him incredulously.

DARLENE

You haven't been a vegetarian in twenty years.

TOMMY

What?

She turns back to the television.

DARLENE

Remember all those barbecues you had to go to when you were running for the assembly?

TOMMY

I guess, I guess I'm not such a honest politician, after all.

DARLENE

You're the most honest there is.

TOMMY

That's pretty scary.

DARLENE

Come here -- our favorite show's starting.

He walks up behind her, and she reaches back for his hand, which he reluctantly takes. He further looks at the TV.

TOMMY

Is Uncle Floyd still on the air?

DARLENE

Who?

TOMMY

You know, that crazy show from when we were kids. You had to watch it on one of those UHF stations.

DARLENE

I don't remember it.

The two continue watching the television.

Darlene bursts out into laughter, while Tommy looks on blankly.

TOMMY

This is our favorite?

DARLENE

Watch it every week.

Tommy notices Darlene's desk and the laptop on top of it -- and he points to it with his free hand.

TOMMY
Does that have the Internet?

BY THE DESK

Tommy looks at the laptop screen with a hopeless expression.

TOMMY (V.O.)
What's worse: knowing she's gonna
die or not knowing anything?

He takes out the pair of glasses -- and he stares at them.

EXT. COLUMBIA HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

Tommy, who's wearing the glasses, drives by on his Harley.

TOMMY
Rudi?

There's no reply or sign of her, and he continues on.

EXT. UNDERHILL FIELD - NIGHT

Tommy drives by the stadium.

TOMMY
Where are you?

There's no reply or sign of her, and he continues on.

EXT. RESERVOIR PIZZA - NIGHT

Tommy drives by the restaurant.

TOMMY
I'm sorry!

There's no reply or sign of her, and he stops -- and looks everywhere.

TOMMY
I'm so sorry.

He speeds off.

EXT. MOM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy pulls up to the curb, with Rudi speaking to Elizabeth by the front door.

BY THE DOOR

Elizabeth shakes her head.

ELIZABETH

I don't know what I can tell you.

RUDI

Could you call me if you hear anything?

ELIZABETH

I'm sorry, but Misses Goodwin --

RUDI

-- Please. He's all alone. And I love him.

Visibly moved, Elizabeth looks inside the house -- and then turns back to Rudi.

ELIZABETH

(softly)

Give me your number. Quickly.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Rudi aimlessly heads down a sidewalk.

A safe distance back rides Tommy on his Harley.

She approaches a small group of TEENS, who snicker among themselves while staring at her.

She lowers her head as she reaches them -- and they rush away from her like she has the plague.

BOY

(loudly)

Guys, what's the hardest part about telling your mom you have AIDS?

Out of nowhere comes Owen -- the bully Rudi earlier beat up and then befriended -- and with great fury he grabs the boy by the collar and lifts him into the air.

OWEN

Not funny.

Rudi runs away.

OWEN (O.S.)

Rudi! Rudi!

She comes to an intersection -- and turns right.

EXT. SOUTH ORANGE RECREATION CENTER - NIGHT

Rudi enters a darkened two-story building that has one lit room -- on the second floor.

Tommy rushes in after her.

INT. RECREATION CENTER, SECOND-FLOOR HALLWAY - NIGHT

Tommy approaches an open door, in which leans Rudi with her back to him.

PEOPLE (O.S.)

(hauntingly)

God, grant me the serenity to
accept the things I cannot change.
The courage to change the things I
can. And wisdom to know the
difference.

FRANK (O.S.)

Would you like to share something
with us?

Rudi shrugs, but slowly steps inside.

Tommy walks up to the door and waits by the side of it.

INT. ROOM - NIGHT

Rudi stops up front, next to FRANK -- an aging man who's sitting beside a table covered in keychains of various colors.

She faces forward.

RUDI
My name's Rudi.

PEOPLE (O.S.)
Hello, Rudi.

RUDI
I've been clean, I don't know, for
about a week.
(to Frank)
I was doing real good before that.
Almost a year.

He smiles gently, and Rudi turns forward again.

RUDI
Oh, I forgot to say I'm an addict.

FRANK
(softly)
It's all right.

RUDI
I guess, I guess I didn't say it
because I like to pretend that I'm
not. I like to pretend that I've
licked all my problems, and that
I'm strong and in control.

She lowers her head.

RUDI
But I'm an addict, and I'm not
strong and I'm not in control and
I'm just about to fall apart.

Frank reaches out his hand to Rudi and she grips it tightly.

RUDI
I've always been alone. Even when I
was all messed up I never let
anyone near me. Never. And now, now
that I . . . I don't even know if
he's alive right now, and I don't
know if I can make it if he's not.

She rushes out of the room.

EXT. OUTSIDE ROOM - NIGHT

Rudi storms into the hallway, watched by Tommy, who's crying.

EXT. FOREST ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Rudi rushes down the path heading to the falls.

Tommy parks his Harley in front of the path.

EXT. WATERFALL - NIGHT

Tommy enters the clearing, not far from Rudi, who's sitting on the rock he has sat on multiple times.

She crosses her arms as if she were holding someone.

RUDI

It doesn't work, Tommy. It doesn't.
I still feel alone.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Rudi lifelessly staggers down a sidewalk.

A safe distance back rides Tommy on his Harley.

She stops at a house.

EXT. RUDI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Rudi walks through the front door, leaving it open.

Tommy walks up to the door, and, after some hesitation, he enters the house.

INT. RUDI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy passes a staircase, and he hears FOOTSTEPS coming from upstairs -- and he hides behind a wall.

STEPHEN (O.S.)

You have a phone call. Someone
named Elizabeth. She says it's
important.

RUDI (O.S.)
Elizabeth?

STEPHEN (O.S.)
She doesn't sound like a teenager.

RUDI (O.S.)
Oh. I'll get it.

Tommy hears FOOTSTEPS rushing down the second-floor hallway and then down the stairs.

Rudi runs past him and enters the kitchen -- and Tommy peeks inside it.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Rudi anxiously grabs the phone.

RUDI
You've found him?

She listens with horror.

And she drops the receiver onto the floor, and rushes out of the kitchen.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Hurriedly, Rudi puts on an overcoat from the closet and grabs her drawstring bag. She further turns around -- and faces an angry Stephen.

STEPHEN
Who was that?

RUDI
A friend.

STEPHEN
It was about Tommy! I was listening!

RUDI
(with lots of anger)
So, why are you asking me?

STEPHEN

What did I tell you about him?

Rudi pushes Stephen away and starts toward the front door.

STEPHEN

You're not gonna see him!

RUDI

You can't stop me!

STEPHEN

The hell I can't!

Stephen runs up to Rudi, and he grabs her from behind -- and she flips him over her shoulder and onto the floor. And she continues toward the door.

Hurriedly, Stephen rises to his knees.

STEPHEN

You see him and you're never coming
back into this house again!

The only reply is the SLAMMING of a door.

Stephen jumps to his feet and marches to the stairs and up them.

Quietly, Tommy heads toward the front door.

EXT. RUDI'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tommy exits into heavily falling snow.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

With snow and wind pounding her, Rudi marches up a long and steep and slippery hill.

A safe distance back rides Tommy on his Harley.

TOMMY

I'm so not worth it, Rudi. I'm a
fraud. I'm such a fraud. Go back.
Please go back. Go back and forget
me.

She continues up the hill.

TOMMY

I know what you're thinking. I'm thinking it, too. I'm just saying these things so I won't feel bad about living.

He stops the bike, and lowers his head.

TOMMY

Is that so bad? Is it such a bad thing to want to live? Is it?

He raises his head.

TOMMY

I, I may not be perfect, but think what I could do if I became president. I could do good. I could change the world!

He watches Rudi continue up the hill.

TOMMY

You'd want me to live. I know you would. You know it, too. You know it!

He starts the bike and takes off.

And he speeds past Rudi.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Tommy turns a corner.

Halfway down the hall the doctor talks to Rudi, who's covered in both snow and ice.

DOCTOR

Even if he makes it through this bout, if he keeps doing what he's doing, I can almost assure you he won't make it through the next.

RUDI

What can I do?

DOCTOR
Ever heard of tough love?

Rudi nods.

DOCTOR
You're the only one I see who can
give it to him.

Tommy enters an empty room -- and Rudi turns around and
walks toward it.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy lies on a bed, with an ominous expression -- and he
turns away from the door.

TOMMY (V.O.)
You have to convince her. It's your
last chance.

Rudi comes to the door, and she puts on an apathy face
before marching toward Tommy.

She reaches him, and grabs his hand -- and he pulls it away.

TOMMY
I told you to leave me alone.

She grabs his hand again -- this time firmer.

RUDI
You can't push me away no more.

TOMMY
Go. Just go. Please.

RUDI
Not until you look at me.

Reluctantly, he turns toward her and sees her fury.

RUDI
There's gonna be some changes
around here. From now on you're
gonna take care of yourself, and do
what that doctor tells you!

Her fury morphs into tears.

RUDI

And, and you're gonna love me!

She collapses on top of him and grasps his jacket with her fists as she cries.

RUDI

Because I love you! God, how I love you!

He tries to resist her. He tries and tries and tries.

Suddenly, he grips her neck with his hand and he clenches his eyes closed -- and he shivers. She shivers, too.

RUDI

Tommy!

TOMMY

I can't live without you. It's not a figure of speech or hyperbole or whatever the correct term is. It's just fact.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Tommy exits the room and staggers down the hall.

He comes to an open door and looks inside a somewhat darkened room.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Tommy approaches Rudi, who's asleep in a chair by the empty bed -- with an open college textbook in her lap and a Reservoir Pizza box on the table next to her. On the wall behind her hangs her drawing of Tommy set inside a frame.

He stops at the bed, and climbs onto it -- and he notices a diary on the nightstand. Which he picks up and starts shuffling through -- before coming to a stop at a page in the middle, which he reads.

TOMMY (V.O.)

It was the best part of the night
-- the best part of my life:
holding her and protecting her and
feeling her breathe against me.

He turns the page.

TOMMY (V.O.)

This is actually the best incentive
I have to keep living: so I can
keep feeling her body clinging to
mine. I even told myself I wasn't
gonna die, and I kept saying it
over and over till I believed it.

He closes the diary, puts it back on the nightstand, and
turns to Rudi.

TOMMY

(softly)

Rudi.

She awakes, and smiles at him with overwhelming love.

RUDI

You okay?

TOMMY

Why? Why are you doing all this for
me? Why?

She stands up, puts the textbook on the table -- and she
sits on the bed next to him.

He scoots over a little, and they both lie down -- and she
rests her head on his shoulder.

RUDI

Don't think for a second that I did
any of this for you. I did it all
for me. I'm the most selfish person
alive.

He gently puts his hand on her wrist, and she gasps.

RUDI

I was thinking. I was thinking
maybe I could change my look some.

She pauses, and collects her thoughts.

RUDI

You know, get a new haircut, some new clothes and makeup. I could be, I don't know, I could be someone who doesn't embarrass you.

He doesn't reply.

RUDI

Tommy, did you hear me?

TOMMY

I fell in love, I fell in love with a girl who was no one but her. Nothing less would ever do.

She clenches her eyes closed, trying to prevent the tears.

RUDI

You were wrong, after all.

TOMMY

About what?

RUDI

You're the best anywhere.

TOMMY

And you're my fairy tale.

INT. HOSPITAL ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Tommy approaches the automatic doors.

His phone RINGS, and he ignores it -- and exits.

EXT. FOREST ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Tommy parks his Harley in the same spot he found his car that morning -- and he looks at his watch.

INSERT - WATCH

It's 11:43.

BACK TO FOREST

Tommy steps off the bike and walks down the path.

EXT. WATERFALL - NIGHT

Tommy sits on the same rock he sat on when he first arrived in the present day.

He takes out the gift box from his overcoat -- and glances at it.

RUDI (O.S.)
What is it?

TOMMY
An illusion.

With his watch displaying 11:59, Tommy tosses the box.

The box hits the water below and splashes.

Tommy's watch turns to 12:00.

INT. TOMMY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

With a Christmas carol softly PLAYING and snow falling in the window behind him, a sickly 18-year-old Tommy -- who's sitting on a bed -- struggles to tie a big white bow wrapped around a gift-wrapped box.

Sweat drips down his face as he fails to tie it.

He takes out a handkerchief and wipes his face. He further looks at a nearby wall -- at Rudi's framed drawing of him.

Inspired, he tries to tie the bow again, with lots of determination.

This time he succeeds -- and he slowly lifts himself off the bed, and even more slowly lifts the present. And he carries it, step-by-step toward the door.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

With the Christmas carol still PLAYING, Tommy exits the bedroom with the present and continues forward.

Looking faint, he stops in front of a modest Christmas tree, and he slowly lowers himself and the gift. He also coughs -- a loud hacking cough.

Quietly, Rudi opens the front door behind him.

He struggles to put the gift under the tree.

She looks as if she will cry. But she pulls herself together and enters the apartment, and closes the door.

He turns to her and smiles.

TOMMY

You've caught me.

RUDI

I don't have a gift for you.

TOMMY

You've already given me your gift.

RUDI

I do have a little something.

She walks up to him while taking off her drawstring bag.

And she reaches inside her sack -- and takes out the bag of chocolate she bought at the mall in the beginning of the story.

LATER

With "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" PLAYING, Tommy and Rudi -- while sitting on a couch together -- each lift a big hunk of white chocolate, and they smile at each other.

They further intertwine their arms as if they were toasting with champagne, and they eat their chocolate, with expressions of bliss.

Slowly, they move toward each other -- and they kiss.

And he finds himself wrapped in the arms of his gift.

FADE OUT.