*Slim: Change. I think change is good. Whatever it takes for me to get out of here.*

In Jail.

Inmate: Here we go! Let him know.

Bruce beat up on Jerry all that day. We were in jail. Whatever it took for us to get here, once we landed here, it was twice as hard to get out of this life. There is no such thing as friends here.

Inmate: Tomorrow, Bruce faces Tony Lee.

We fought. It’s all we had to do. Right after lunch it started. One after the other and the winner would keep going. We really had no other thing to do. I didn’t like fighting. It didn’t make sense to make other people suffer. Most days the reward was just bragging rights. Sometimes when you lost, you’d get picked on all day. The guards didn’t even really seem to care much. None of us were supposed to go home soon. Well, I wasn’t. That was until the warden called me and told me that I was up for parole. I had done a year for selling dope and I wasn’t planning on coming back again. That’s until I revoked my probation by stealing some things from a store. I had been back in here for six months.

Warden: There are two types of people that come by here. The kind that want to stay for a while and the kind that do they’re time and learn from it. What have you learned since being in here?

Slim: That I don’t want to be the same. I’m a different kind of person, warden. I know things could get worse for me the moment I step out of here. The difference is I’m not trusting my instincts anymore. I want to follow the rules and get by.

Warden: Do you have any employment options, Mr. Bolkin.

Slim: Yeah. I think I could stock some things on some shelves or maybe get a store truck and drive around stocking some shelves, as I said before.

Warden: Are you planning to steal something, James?

Slim: No, sir. I know that if I don’t pay for it, it’s not my property.

Warden: Very well, James. He sold dope, did his time, and revoked his probation by stealing some things. We think you’re good to go, James. This place is packed with people and we hardly have room for you. We believe you’re one of the ones who can apply yourself in society. We’ve been told that you’re in the library a lot. What do you do in there?

Slim: I read books. I read about good news. I read old-fashioned books about people with normal problems.

Warden: Do you read the bible, James?

Slim: No, sir. Not like I should.

Warden: Do you believe that reading books helps you understand why you shouldn’t want to do time for things that you aren’t supposed to be doing?

Slim: Yes, sir.

Warden: What do you plan to do when you get out of here Mr. Bolkin?

Slim: I plan to make a living and spend time with my mom. I lost my dad a few years ago. He was a good man who followed the rules.

Warden: What evidence is there to convince us that you won’t break the rules once you get out of here?

Slim: I’ve already accepted that I don’t make the rules. If I did, it wouldn’t be fair to everybody since I obviously have had trouble following them myself. I like rules because they teach me how to engage and disengage with people. I also like rules because I’m not the only one who has to follow them.

Warden: So you believe that rules are made to make life easier and following them would help you to stay out of this place?

Slim: Yes, sir. I believe that’s what I’m trying to say.

Warden: You can go, James.

I called my best friend, Janie.

Slim: Hey, Janie.

Janie: How are you doing, Slim?

*Slim: My friends called me Slim. My real name is James.*

Slim: I’m getting out.

Janie: Really? When do you come home?

Slim: Probably in two weeks.

*Slim: I lived in a small town in Texas. Cowboys, Mexican food, pretty waitresses, and a lot of beer. Well, I’m getting out. I packed the two letters that my mom sent me. I didn’t get a chance to write her back with the guys being rowdy and all. I get another chance to be civilized, to act right and see my family.*

Slim: I hope I don’t come back here again.

Guard: We’re counting on it, Slim. You take care of yourself and don’t come back to this place, you hear?

I’m home.

Slim: Mom. What are you up for?

Mom: James, I just want you to behave and stay out this time. You’re twenty-nine years old, James. Are you going to behave?

Slim: Yes, mom. I will this time. I want to get a job.

Mom: You need to study, James. What are you going to study? You need to get an education, and then a job.

Slim: Yeah, mom. I’ll look into it. Can I have your newspaper? I need to look for a job.

Mom: An education, James.

Slim: Sure, mom. I said I’d look into it.

Mom: Janie called to see if you were home yet. She’s a good girl, James.

Slim: She’s my best friend, mom.

Mom: Why do you have bruises?

Slim: I got into a fight.

Mom: You need to be more careful.

Slim: I will mom. I’ll call you tonight. I’m going out with Janie.

Mom: Is she driving? You know you don’t have a license.

Slim: I know. She’s driving.

Mom: Ok. Take care of her.

Slim: I’ve got to go, mom.

Mom: James. James!

Slim: What, mom?

Mom: Take care of yourself.

Slim: Sure thing.

I went to the bar.

*Slim: I don’t have any friends in this town.*

Bobby: Hey, Janie. Do you want to dance?

Janie: Yeah, sure Bobby. Slim. Are you ok?

Slim: Yeah, I’m fine Janie.

Janie: I’m going to dance.

Slim: Sure.

Chris: What’s up, Slim?

Slim: What’s up, Chris?

Chris: You got a problem, Slim?

Slim: No, Chris. I’m just here with Janie.

Chris: Janie? You’re a bum, Slim. You could never get with a girl like Janie.

Slim: We’re just friends.

Chris: Yeah, just friends. Hey Janie, Slim wants to dance.

Janie: Ok.

Chris: Bobby come here. Is Janie here with this bum?

Bobby: You mean James?

Chris: Yeah. Slim.

Bobby: I don’t know. Chis don’t start a fight today.

Chris: Sure thing, Bobby. Hey, Slim. Are you going to buy me a beer?

Janie: Leave him alone, Chris. We were just leaving.

Chris: Are you not going to buy me a beer, Slim?

Slim: I don’t have any money.

Chris: Yeah. You sure don’t have any money. You just got out of the slammer. Why are you hanging out with him, Janie?

Janie: Chris, leave us alone.

Slim: Leave her out of this, Chris.

Chris: You owe me a beer, Slim.

*Slim: Needless to say, I got into a fight.*

Janie: Why did you fight in there, Slim? Why is Chris even bothering you?

Slim: I don’t know, Janie.

Janie: You didn’t have to fight. You’ve got two black eyes now.

Slim: It’s no big deal. Ow.

Janie: Let’s go to my house and get you cleaned up.

We went to Janie’s place.

Slim: That’s burns.

Janie: It’s alcohol. Let me wipe it.

Slim: You think I’m a loser, Janie?

Janie: Slim. You just get into trouble sometimes.

Slim: I know. Does that make me a loser?

Janie: No, but you need to stop overreacting.

Slim: Ok. Are you ok?

Janie: Yes. I’m fine.

SIim: I’m going home.

Janie: Ok. Take care of yourself.

I called Janie.

*Slim: You’re all I need.*

Janie: Hello?

Slim: Hey, Janie. What are you up for?

Janie: I’m working at the department store today, Slim. Are you going to get a job?

Slim: Yes. I’m going to get a job.

Janie: Have you found anything yet?

Slim: My mom wants me to study.

Janie: Study? Why?

Slim: She wants me to be educated. So, do you want to meet me after work?

Janie: Yes, but we’re not going to the bar this time. Ok?

Slim: Ok. I’ll call you.

Janie: Ok. Bye.

I’m at home.

Slim: Hey, mom.

Mom: Hey. I was getting groceries. Are you going to eat?

Slim: No. I’m on my way out.

Mom: You need to eat.

Slim: I ate toast.

Mom: Want some cereal?

Slim: Sure. Thank you, mom.

Mom: I love you, Slim. Please try to stay out of trouble.

Slim: Ok. I’m going out.

I went to see Janie.

Slim: Hey, Janie.

Janie: Hey Slim. You’re not supposed to be here.

Slim: I got you these flowers.

Janie: Did you pick these?

Slim: No. I robbed a flower truck.

Janie: That’s so not funny. They’re pretty.

Slim: They smell good, don’t they?

Janie: Yes. Now go because I don’t want my manager to see you here. Thank you, Slim.

Slim: No problem, Janie. Bye.

I went down to the parking lot.

*Slim: You can’t see me.*

Slim: Bobby come here. Is Chris down there?

Bobby: Yes.

Slim: Alright. Hey, Chris.

I’m at the police station.

Cop: So let me get this straight. This man Chris gets hit in the face with a rock and you were there but you don’t know who did it?

Slim: Yeah. I already told you. I didn’t see who did it.

Cop: And you weren’t close to Chris when he was hit in the face?

Slim: No. I was further along the road.

Cop: Ok. Well until somebody ID’s you we can’t charge you or keep you here. We’ll have to let you go. I saw your record. Stay out of trouble.

Slim: Sure thing, boss.

I went back to see Janie at the store.

Janie: I heard that someone hit Chris in the face.

Slim: Really?

Janie: Yeah. I guess it’s his own fault. He’s always looking for trouble.

Slim: That’s too bad. So, are you off of work or what?

Janie: Yeah. Let’s go.

Slim: Where are we going?

Janie: I just need to go home.

Slim: Are we going out?

Janie: I thought you were supposed to be looking for a job.

Slim: I found one unloading trucks at the supermarket.

Janie: Oh, really? When do you start?

Slim: Tomorrow.

Janie: You should get home then. You start work tomorrow.

Slim: Ok.

Janie: Bye, Slim.

Slim: Bye, Janie.

Janie: I’ll pick you up and take you to work tomorrow.

Slim: I’ll be up before you get there.

Janie: Ok.

I went home after work the next day.

*Slim: It’s funny.*

Mom: Slim. Why did you come home so early?

Slim: I did my job.

Mom: You did your job?

Slim: Yes.

Mom: Ok. I’m not going to fix dinner because I already ate.

Slim: It’s ok.

Mom: Do you want something?

Slim: No. I’ll fix lunch for myself.

Mom: Ok. Slim. Have you been going to the bar?

Slim: Not since the other night. Why?

Mom: I heard that they’ve been doing nothing but causing trouble over there.

Slim: I’m not in any trouble.

Mom: I know. That’s the way it should be.

Slim: Ok.

Mom: You shouldn’t go out today. There was a parade today and everyone’s going to be celebrating. You know how everyone has to drink when they celebrate.

Slim: Sure thing, mom. I’m not going out today.

Mom: Ok. Clean yourself up.

Joey called me.

Joey: Hey, Slim. This is Joey. Listen. I’ve got some dope that I’m trying to get rid of. You want to sell some for me?

Slim: I got a job, Joey.

Joey: Yeah, but you could make a thousand dollars a day.

Slim: I would Joey, but I’m trying to stay clean. I’m on parole. I have to see my parole officer. I’ve got to stay clean man. I don’t want any dope.

Joey: Hey, have you talked to Janie?

Slim: Yes. Why?

Joey: I heard she’s got a boyfriend.

Slim: Really?

Joey: Yes.

Slim: Well, I’ve got to go, Joey.

Joey: Hey.

Slim: Alright, man.

Mom: Was that Joey?

Slim: Yes. He just offered me a ticket back to jail.

Mom: Stay away from him. He used to be such a good kid.

Slim: Yeah. Well that ship has sailed.

Mom: Yeah. Stick with Janie. She’s good company.

Slim: I know. Well, I’m going to turn in mom.

Mom: Ok. Slim.

Slim: What?

Mom: You should go to church with me. Sunday.

Slim: Sure, mom.

Mom: And I don’t expect you to dress up. Just come as you are.

Slim: Thanks, mom.

Mom: Invite Janie.

Slim: I’ll ask her.

I went to see Janie.

*Slim: You’ve got to keep your head up.*

Slim: Hey, Janie.

Janie: Hey, Slim. Are you working out?

Slim: A little. Can you tell?

Janie: Yes. You look good.

Slim: Hey, Janie. Do you have a boyfriend?

Janie: I’ve been seeing this guy.

Slim: Why didn’t you tell me about him?

Janie: It’s not a big deal.

Slim: Yes, but you could of told me.

Janie: Slim. You and I are just friends. That’s all.

Slim: I know. I didn’t mean to overreact.

Janie: Well, call me later.

Slim: Ok. Bye.

I went back to work.

Slim: Hey, boss.

Boss: Hey, Slim. You’ve been doing a good job. I’m proud of you so I’m going to tell your parole officer to cut you some slack.

Slim: I appreciate it, boss.

Boss: Slim. Do you have a family?

Slim: Just my mom.

Boss: You should be proud of yourself, Slim. You’re starting to turn things around for the better.

Slim: Thank you.

Bobby stopped by my house.

Bobby: Hey, Slim.

Slim: What’s up, Bobby? I know it was you who hit Chris in the face that night.

Slim: It wasn’t me.

Bobby: I know it was you, Slim. But to tell you the truth, Chris had it coming.

Slim: Are you going to keep bothering me, Bobby?

Bobby: Well, I came to ask you if you could help me out.

Slim: With what?

We went downtown.

Bobby: There he is. That’s the guy. He’s a high roller.

Slim: What do you expect me to do?

Bobby: Let’s jump him and get his cash. He’s walking out. We’ll get him outside of the hotel. Come on.

*Slim: We beat that guy black and blue. We split about 9,000 dollars between the two of us.*

Slim: Bobby. Don’t tell anybody about this. Alright? Especially Janie.

Slim: I won’t tell anybody if you don’t, Slim.

Slim: Alright.

Bobby: I’m going to the bar. Are you coming?

Slim: No.

Bobby: Ok. See you, Slim.

I picked up Janie.

Slim: You ready, Janie?

Janie: Yeah, Slim. You look nice.

Slim: Thanks, Janie. You look great.

Janie: Is this dress ok?

Slim: We’re going to church. I’m pretty sure you’ll be dressed the nicest.

Janie: Ok. You ready?

Slim: Yes. Let’s go.

*Slim: Meet me at the altar.*

Janie: The reverend said we’re all guilty, Slim. Do you feel guilty?

Slim: I don’t feel guilty but I know that I am guilty. Is there a difference?

Janie: I guess we should all know to live better than the way we do Slim.

Slim: Yeah. I don’t regret anything.

Janie: Slim, do you want to be my boyfriend?

Slim: Yes. Does this mean you’re my girl now?

Janie: Yes. I guess so.

*Slim: Time goes by and I still can’t believe I’m with Janie. Chris ended up dying in the hospital. I guess I killed him. As long as no one asks any questions, I’ll be fine. It made me want to stay off of the streets. I haven’t done any crime in a while and I’m off of parole. I still have my job at the supermarket and Janie still works at the department store. Janie’s pregnant.*

Slim: Janie. Will you marry me?

Janie: Yes, James. I will.

Slim: I know there’s some things I haven’t told you Janie but I just want to put it all behind us.

Janie: I’m proud of you slim and I just want you to turn your life around. I love you.

Slim: I love you too, Janie.

We went to church.

Reverend: Do you promise to love each other to have and to hold through sickness and in health for rich or for poor for better or for worse until death do you part?

Janie: Yes. I do.

Slim: I do.

Reverend: I now pronounce you husband and wife. You may kiss the bride.

*Slim: Things have changed since I got married to Janie. We don’t go to the bar anymore. I’ve got a child on the way. We pay rent at an apartment that we hardly stay in. I picked up extra shifts at the supermarket and Janie works part time. We mostly stay at my mom’s house. I’ve been thinking a lot about what my mom said about getting an education. The manager at the supermarket says that they’ll help me go to school. Whatever it takes to stay off of the streets and away from drugs.*

I was hanging out with Bobby.

Bobby: Slim.

Slim: What?

Bobby: Now that you’ve got a child on the way, how are you going to make ends meet?

Slim: I don’t know, Bobby. Why?

Bobby: Do you remember that guy we robbed?

Slim: Yes.

Bobby: There’s more guys like him at the hotel, you know?

Slim: I can’t risk going back to jail, Bobby. I just can’t let Janie down like that. I’ve got a child on the way.

Bobby: Are you going to have a daughter?

Slim: Yes.

Bobby: Alright, Slim. I’m going to need a new partner in crime because I really need money.

Slim: Wait Bobby, why don’t I ask my manager if he’ll give you a job?

Bobby: Really?

Slim: Yes. Can you hold a job?

Bobby: I can try. Thanks, Slim. I really appreciate that. Nobody ever thinks about me.

Slim: Hey, Bobby. Get rid of that alcohol. I can’t be caught with an open container in the car.

Bobby: Sure.

Slim: Janie. Are you having trouble? Let me get the door. You really look like you’re having a hard time. Here, let me get the groceries. Come on.

Janie: Slim, this baby’s almost here.

Slim: I know. Do you want me to drive you to the hospital? Mom should I drive her to the hospital?

Mom: Yes. I think that’s a good idea.

Janie went into labor.

Janie: Aahhhh.

Doctor: It’s a girl.

Slim: Oh, sweet Jesus.

Mom: It’s your daughter, Slim.

Slim: Thank you, God.

Doctor: She’s a healthy baby girl.

Slim: Janie.

Janie: What?

Slim: I promise that I’m going to do more for you, babe. I’m going to do the best I can, Janie. For you and for my baby girl. I’m a father. I’m here for you.

Janie: Where’s my baby?

Slim: Calm down. She’s here. She’s here.

I was back at home.

Janie: Slim. Have you thought about going to college?

Slim: Yes.

Janie: You didn’t tell me you were applying for school. You’ve got mail.

Slim: I know, Janie. I can do it. I just have to study in the morning and between extra shifts. I can do it. Really.

Janie: Ok.

Slim: You stay home with the baby. By the time this kid’s in school, I’ll have a degree.

Mom: We’re going to church tomorrow, Slim.

Slim: I know. I already ironed my pants. Look at this shirt. Janie got it for me.

Mom: That’s nice. Navy blue. That looks good on you, Slim.

We went to church again.

Reverend: You are all lost. None of you can pay the debt for the evil that the human race does. There’s only one thing you can do. Give up your heart to a God who is perfect. He is the only one who can take care of you and bring you to justice. He can heal you.

*Slim: It turns out that Bobby was beaten up by some cops for resisting arrest after they chased him down an alley behind the hotel. I heard he was critical. He was robbing someone again. He never did show up for work after I talked to my manager about him. Mom had to quit her job because she got tired. She slowed down a lot but still has a good mind. I guess mom was the reason that I wanted to turn my life around. Even as an old lady, she’s still the smartest woman I know. She always does the right thing.*

Slim: Mom. I really enjoy church.

Mom: That’s good, Slim. You have to put others before yourself and that’s what you’re doing. Take care of your little family. I’ll be fine.

*Slim: I ended up getting my business degree and started working full time in sales.*

Janie: Slim. Would you say that you’re a good person.

Slim: No, Janie. You and my daughter are the only good thing about me.

Janie: I was just thinking about how you’re turning your life around.

Slim: Sometimes I think that the things that I’ve done will come back to haunt me. My mom used to tell me that if I didn’t do what was right, that there would be consequences. I still feel like there’s things that I’ve done that I haven’t paid for.

Janie: You shouldn’t worry so much. You’re doing good.

Slim: Really?

Janie: We’re doing good. I want to do good for my daughter. I don’t want her to go through what I went through.

I went to work.

Troy: Slim.

Slim: What?

Troy: Do you want to go the bar after work?

Slim: No. I’m think I’m going home to my wife and child.

Troy: Come on, Slim. We’re just going to have a few drinks.

Slim: No. You go on ahead. I won’t be joining you.

Troy: Alright, but it’s Friday. When are you going to relax and have a little fun?

Slim: I don’t need any trouble, Troy.

Troy: Alright. I’ll see you.

The next day at work.

Troy: Come with me.

Slim: Why?

Troy: I’m going to go outside and teach this guy a lesson. He said I was flirting with his girlfriend.

Slim: Were you?

Troy: Of course not. He also said I was a bum. Hey.

Customer: What do you want?

Troy: I’m going to rip your head off.

*Slim: Troy fought with a customer until the girl got in the middle of it and broke it up. Troy was so mad I think that he even hit the girl. The police showed up.*

Police officer: I’m going to have to file a police report, James. So how much of this did you see and what happened?

Slim: I don’t know. This customer just came at Troy and started to hit him. The girl got in the middle of it and broke it up.

Police officer: That’s all you saw?

Slim: That’s all I saw.

*Slim: I told Janie about it when I got home.*

Janie: Why did you lie?

Slim: It’s a street code.

Janie: What? You know that troy was starting trouble with that guy.

Slim: Yeah, but the police officer was filing a report and I didn’t want to cost troy his job. He’s got kids.

*Slim: The world’s full of chaos. Even though I didn’t tell the truth about Troy, my boss fired him. A few weeks later he was drinking at a bar and started a fight. He ended up in the hospital. I went to see him.*

Slim: How are you doing, Troy?

Troy: Not good. My wife said she’s going to leave me if I don’t get a job soon. Thanks for siding with me at work, Slim.

Slim: Well, you still lost your job.

Troy: Listen, Slim. You know the drug angle don’t you.

Slim: It’s hardly worth it, Troy. You end up spending the money as fast as you make it and it doesn’t really pay the bills with you having to buy more drugs all the time.

Troy: Just hook me up with somebody Slim. My wife’s going to leave me if I don’t make some money.

Slim: Won’t she leave you when she finds out you’re selling?

Troy: We’re not living together. I’ve been out drinking almost every night since I lost my job.

Later, at home.

Janie: So you gave him Joey’s number?

Slim: Yes. I didn’t know what else to do. I felt sorry for him. He was desperate.

Janie: Slim, sometimes I think you’re not using your brain.

Slim: I’m sorry.

Janie: You’re not doing him a favor.

Slim: I know. Besides I think I gave him the wrong phone number. Joey changed his phone number.

Janie: You still talk to joey?

Slim: He calls me once in a while.

Janie: Once in a while?

Slim: Yes.

A few weeks later.

Janie: Slim. I’m having problems with your mom.

Slim: What’s wrong with her.

Janie: She needs a surgery but it’s very expensive.

Slim: Is she sick?

Janie: Yes. Very sick. I know that we were saving up money to buy a house but the doctor said she needs this surgery and some very expensive medication.

Slim: What do you want me to do?

Slim: Help, maybe.

Slim: Ok. I’m going to work. What else can I do?

I drove around.

*Slim: I was desperate. I really wanted a house of my own. I’d been working and saving up money for one. I was finally going to be able to provide the right type of life for my family. These times are getting hard. Oh well. It’s still a good day. I parked outside of the hotel. I went around the block and saw a few women leaving. I decided I would rob someone. I saw a man with a suit on. I ran up from behind him and held a knife to him.*

Slim: Give me your jewelry.

Victim: What.

Slim: Give me your wallet.

Victim: I don’t even know you man.

Slim: Hurry up.

Victim: Alright. Calm down.

*Slim: I went around the hotel and got into my car. I don’t think anyone saw me. I made about 4,ooo dollars selling the jewelry and the guy had about 1,800 dollars in his wallet.*

Janie: Where did you get this money?

Slim: I got an advance from work.

Janie: Really.

Slim: Yeah.

Janie: This is great. This will help a lot. Ok. I’m taking your mom to the doctor’s office. Hopefully we can get her this surgery as soon as possible.

*Slim: My mom made it out of the hospital a couple of weeks later.*

Mom: Slim.

Slim: Yes, mom?

Mom: Come here. I really appreciate you paying for my surgery.

Slim: It’s ok, mom. I need you well for your granddaughter.

Mom: I’m really happy, Slim. It all turned out for the best.

Slim: I’m glad, mom.

*Slim: I took a couple of weeks off of work to clear my head. I could only reason that you would identify my life by the crimes I’ve committed. Maybe I need counseling. Maybe I need to accept responsibility and stop taking what I want. But you don’t know my life. You don’t know how I struggled after the death of my dad. I bought a house and went to visit my mom.*

Mom: Slim. Have you been behaving yourself?

Slim: Yes, mom?

Janie: Don’t lie, Slim.

Slim: Mom. I’m ok.

Mom: Slim. I’ve been down and out. You’re not stuck with bad luck. You have a good job and a nice family. You just have to believe that your good decisions will be rewarded.

Slim: You have to make good decisions first.

Mom: What do you mean by that?

Slim: Nothing.

*Slim: I’m trapped and looking for heaven’s door. I started to get depressed. I couldn’t believe that I started to feel guilty for what I’d done. I murdered someone and robbed people and sold drugs. I thought that I just liked to steal stuff and that it wasn’t a very big deal. I thought I was just addicted to doing crimes that I could get away with. But it turns out that I had a real problem coping with the way things were. Crime was supposed to be punished and I’d gotten away with a lot of things that started to weigh on my conscience. I felt like I was about to break down and I didn’t know where I would end up. I had never been so down and out. I felt like leaving Janie and my baby. I felt like leaving my mom and leaving town.*

I went to church.

*Slim: God. I surrender. I can’t keep going at it alone. I would die a thousand times before I hurt Janie or my baby.*

Slim: I’ve sinned so many times reverend. I’m thinking about leaving my family.

Reverend: I’ve struggled many times, Slim. But you can’t give up that easily. Give it another try. You often find that it’s a lot easier to try again than to give up. Trying again is actually the easier thing to do, because giving up makes it impossible for you to consider the possibility that you may not have failed yet.

*Slim: I’m here because I haven’t failed.*

Slim: Janie. I’m sorry that I took my anger out on you. I feel like giving up Janie.

Janie: Slim. I’ve never seen you like this before but the things you are saying make sense. We can’t go on alone, Slim. We need another chance to try again. This time we have to let God take care of us. No one can do it alone, Slim.

Slim: I think I’m having a panic attack.

Janie: We’ll get you some medication.

I went to see a counselor.

Counselor: So why are you telling me all of this, James?

Slim: To say that I don’t know how I got away with those things but after a very long time, I’m still here fighting to push those things out of my head.

Counselor: True that it was you who committed those crimes, yet no one is blaming you and you’re blaming yourself. What I gather from this is that you’re now suffering for things that you did that you should’ve considered at the time you were doing them. You were wrong but you are no longer guilty and you struggle because now you regret those things whereas before you should have felt remorse and been held responsible. I feel we’re getting somewhere, James. Our time is over for now. Keep taking your medications and come back and see me.

Janie: So how do you feel?

Slim: I feel like I haven’t really admitted what I did. I feel a little better but I don’t want to talk about it anymore.

Janie: Well you should keep taking your medications.

Slim: I know. I will.

*Slim: How do you know actually that you’ve failed. Is it a feeling of remorse or regret or is it when you’ve hit rock bottom? Is it when you actually admit you’ve failed or when you give up? Is it when you ask for help or when you isolate yourself from others? In my journey, I don’t think I’ve failed until there’s something that I can’t change or make better. I’m not giving up. I’m going to focus on what I can change no matter what the circumstances are. I’m not afraid anymore. I’m going to let someone help me and repay that person for their caring.*

Slim: Bobby. When’s the last time someone took you out to dinner?

Bobby: It’s been a long time.

Slim: Let’s go get something to eat.

Bobby: Why?

Slim: Because I’m hungry and I want to talk to you. Come on.

Bobby: So Slim. Are you on medication?

Slim: Yes.

Bobby: Sometimes I feel like a crazy person too Slim.

Slim: Tell me about it Bobby.

Bobby: I’d rather not so one else knows that I’m crazy.

Slim: Fair enough. Hey, you put your wallet up. I’m buying.

Bobby: Ok.

I went home and talked to my mom.

Slim: Mom. I’m starved for love ever since my dad died. I appreciate Janie and everything she does for me and I would never again think about leaving her or my child.

Mom: What’s best for you is that you forgive yourself and continue to seek counseling. I see the good in you, Slim. I see the nice things that you try to do for people but you have to help yourself by forgetting about the things you did.

Slim: I do need my confidence back. I just can’t keep going back to the life I used to live before.

Mom: You have a daughter now and with a very special person who loves you. I’m always going to love you but what Janie has done for you is more.

Slim: I promise I won’t let her down mom.

Mom: I hope so and I’m here for you. Don’t let your new life fade away, Slim.

Slim: I know mom. I won’t.

Mom: I love you.

A surprise party for Janie.

Slim: Do you know what I did for you?

Janie: What? Be serious. What did you do?

Slim: Come on. Let’s go inside.

Janie: What’s inside?

Slim: We’re celebrating that we’ve been married for a year.

Guests: Surprise!

Janie: Oh my gosh. You actually got everyone together?

Guests: Happy anniversary Slim and Janie!

Slim: Yes. Even bobby’s here.

Janie: This is awesome.

Slim: I figured that you and I should spend some time together with other people. I’ve just felt so alone and I know that you need other people as much as I do.

Janie: Yes, but this spending time with others is for now. You still owe me some alone time with my daughter. She also deserves to spend it with us. Everyone looks great. I’m going to mingle.

Slim: Ok, sure.

*Slim: The party was great. No one had too much to drink except bobby but he’s harmless when he’s happy drunk. I finally got over my slump of guilt and realized that if I really want to change my life then I don’t have to live with the guilt and remorse. I’m still going to counseling from time to time just to touch base and talk to someone about my problems but I’ve pretty much changed my ways and I promise that I don’t get into the kind of trouble that I used to.*

Joey called me.

*Slim: Let me live.*

Joey: Hey Slim. It’s Joey. How are you living man?

Slim: Good.

Joey: Are you staying out of trouble?

Slim: Yes. I’m doing good. Thanks. Why?

Joey: Look man. I know you’ve got a good job and stuff. I’m in jail, Slim. I just need some money to post bail. I’ll pay you back man. I promise.

Slim: It’s alright, Joey. You don’t have to pay me back. Where are you?

Joey: In the county.

Slim: Ok I’ll be by there tomorrow.

Joey: Slim. I really appreciate it man.

Slim: Alright.

The next day.

Janie: You bailed Joey out of jail?

Slim: Yes. It was just a misdemeanor that they gave him.

Janie: This time I don’t disagree with you, Slim. I know how you like to help other people when you can.

Slim: Yes, but I don’t know that Joey’s not going right back to jail living the way he is.

Janie: I know. But did you talk to him right? Maybe he’ll listen to you.

Slim: Joey’s in that life right now. All I told him was that I could help him this time.

Janie: Ok. Well, you did what you could right?

Slim: Yes.

*Slim: It’s not too late to start over.*

Slim: Dear baby girl, you are what wakes me up every morning. I love to see you smile. I love when you cry because you want me to hold you. You’re actually holding me. I promise you that nothing will separate us. I need you just as much as you need me. We hold each other together and I know that it’s you that’s going to help me clean my act up and get my life together. You’re precious and having you is the best thing that’s ever happened to me. Don’t grow up too fast, ok? Don’t let this world invade your peace and change you too soon. I’m going to protect you from all that I can. I love you.

Janie: Oh. Is that right? Are you going to protect her from everything?

Slim: Everything I can.

Janie: She’s saying her first words.

Slim: It’s funny how she really began talking a long time ago.

Janie: What do you mean?

Slim: I mean that she’s made all the difference in the world to me and her need for me is what reminds me that we all need somebody. I’m not alone. Just like we’ll always be here for her, someone will always be there for us.

*Slim: I still wonder how I ended up where I am now. It didn’t seem to me that I should let Chris beat me up, so I attacked him. I beat that guy up in the street and robbed another guy. I lied for Troy and bailed joey out of jail. It seemed like even though I wanted to do good that trouble kept finding me.*