

Everything Must Go

by

Dan Rush

Based on the short story  
"Why Don't You Dance"

By

Raymond Carver

"There is no instance of a country having benefited from prolonged warfare."

Sun Tzu, 16th Century

INT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY

CLOSE on a stone paper weight sitting on a frosted glass desk. It is etched with the words "If you don't hit the target, you don't score."

NICK (V.O.)  
...I want to finish up with a  
little refresher...

CLOSE on a framed photograph of a couple holding up two first prize ribbons shaped like fish. Our view is cropped so we don't see the woman's face.

NICK (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
I know you all have heard it  
before, but I've been going over  
the May numbers and a little review  
of the basics won't hurt.

CLOSE on a silver plated clock with a plaque underneath it. It reads, "Nick Porter, Most Inspirational Employee, Dallas Office, 1996."

NICK (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
So today, I give you the "Five  
Rules of Customer Service."  
(a small group moan)  
One - know your products. Whether  
it's a PC or a piece of paper.  
Know how it works. Know how to use  
it. Knowledge builds confidence.

CLOSE on a photograph of four 35-45 year old men in red shorts and tee shirts standing on a baseball field. They hold mitts and aluminum bats and raise beers to the camera.

NICK (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Two - Know your customers. Learn  
everything you can about them.  
Listen to what they want and what  
they don't want.

CLOSE on a clear glass mug filled with steaming coffee. A white line cuts across the middle of the mug. The text below the line reads "this glass is now half empty."

NICK (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
Three - Make sure someone always  
answers the phone - Bob.  
(group chuckle)

WIDE of the office, just like thousands of others across the country. Beige carpet, maple laminate furniture, flat screen PC and torchiere lamps. Lots of glass to promote synergy.

NICK (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Four - Always give what you promise. Fail to deliver and you will lose the customer.

CUT TO:

INT. CORPORATE BOARDROOM - DAY

The lights are dimmed. A group of regional sales managers, all in suits, sit around a conference table watching a Powerpoint presentation complete with graphs and printed versions of the Five Rules of Sales.

NICK PORTER, hovering somewhere around 40, stands in front of the screen, his face bathed in the light of the projector as he finishes up his talk.

NICK

And the moment you've been waiting for. Five. Go the extra yard. If you don't have the answer. Find it. Remember a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step...

The lights go up.

NICK (CONT'D)

Okay. Let's get those numbers up.

As people leave the room, Nick puts his stuff away. He notices his boss, GARY, early 30's, a dick who doesn't think he's a dick, standing by the door. Nick walks up to him.

NICK (CONT'D)

Hey Gary, I didn't know you came to these things anymore.

They walk into the hall together.

GARY

Solid presentation, Nick.

NICK

Thanks.

GARY

Same one you gave last month right?

INT. GARY'S OFFICE - DAY

Gary closes his door and sits behind his desk. He settles in and opens a file. Nick sits on Gary's couch. It is low to the ground and Nick has to sit awkwardly.

GARY

Arkansas and New Mexico numbers are up. Oklahoma is still pretty flat.

NICK

I think they're finally getting it. It took a lot of work. As for Oklahoma - what can I say, they're Okies.

Nick laughs. Gary doesn't.

GARY

How's the wife doing?

NICK

Great. She's doing great.

GARY

Kids?

NICK

I don't have kids.

GARY

Right. Sorry. And the softball team is what? Three and one?

NICK

We've got some hitters this year.

GARY

Good. Good. Look, Nick, I know how familiar you are with this routine. You practically wrote our manual, so I am going to get right down to it. The company has decided to make a change...

NICK

(interrupting)

Gary, before you say anything, I want to go on record.

GARY

You don't have to go on record.

NICK

I've been seeing my sponsor. Going to meetings. My wife has been completely supportive.

GARY

Nick.

NICK

I promised that my drinking would be under control and it is.

Gary looks down at his paperwork.

GARY

Not in Denver, apparently.

NICK

I'm sorry?

GARY

This is a delicate time with the merger and all. The higher ups cannot afford bad press.

NICK

I told you exactly what happened.

GARY

And the company did their own thorough investigation.

NICK

I don't know what you heard Gary but I told you it wasn't like that.

GARY

When I get a phone call from our lawyers at the main office, I've heard enough.

NICK

Sales are up in all my markets.

GARY

Not in Oklahoma.

NICK

Just - look at the numbers.

GARY

It isn't about numbers anymore.

NICK

This office has become a major player because of me. My record reflects that.

GARY

(going through a file)  
Your record? 1998. One month paid leave for alcohol counseling. 2000. Another 30 days. 2001. Accused of assault.

NICK

It was a softball game. The guy was blocking the plate.

GARY

2003. DUI. 2005. Destruction of corporate car.  
(pointing to the file)  
Honestly, this is the reason I'm sitting here and you are over there.

NICK

Gary, please.

GARY

You've been a huge asset to this corporation. No one is going to deny that.

NICK

Sixteen years. I've given sixteen years of my life to this company.

GARY

And the company has rewarded you for your loyalty. Listen, this mess will clear up. You're still a young guy. You've got a great wife. You're well liked in the community. You'll bounce back.

He pauses and takes something out of his desk.

GARY (CONT'D)

Mr. Goodson and the rest of the higher ups wanted you to have this as a token of their appreciation.

Gary leans over the desk and hands Nick a small giftwrapped box. As Nick stares at the box the sound drains away until Gary can barely be heard.

GARY (CONT'D)

(muted)

You can keep the corporate car  
through the end of the month.  
Health benefits too.

CLOSE on the box.

GARY (CONT'D)

Your files are corporate property.

CLOSE on Gary's lips, moving.

GARY (CONT'D)

But you can take three file boxes  
containing personal items with you.

The sound fades back up.

GARY (CONT'D)

I think that covers it.

Gary stands up to shake Nick's hand. Nick doesn't move. Gary waits, awkwardly. After what seems like a minute Nick speaks.

NICK

Gary, I always taught you, when you  
want to shitcan somebody you go to  
their office. That way when they  
start begging for their miserable  
job back you can leave and go back  
to *your* office.

Gary smiles nervously, fearing that Nick might snap.

Instead, Nick stands up across from Gary, smiling tightly.  
He shakes Gary's hand, hard. Too hard.

NICK (CONT'D)

I wish you the best in all of your  
endeavors and hope that we get the  
chance to work together again.

He finally lets go and walks out of a relieved Gary's office.  
He pauses outside the glass door for a moment. Gathers  
himself.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING PARKING LOT - DAY

Summer in Texas. The sun bakes Nick's corporate car, a blue  
Crown Victoria. Nick sits inside biding his time, AC on,  
waiting for the workday to end.

INT. NICK'S CROWN VICTORIA - DAY

Nick dials his cellphone.

NICK

Hey honey. It's me. Just finishing up lunch. I'm going to try and make it home early. Maybe we can go out for dinner. Okay?

Nick puts the phone down. He drums his fingers nervously on the steering wheel. He looks at his glove compartment.

NICK (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Stop. Stop. Stop. Be smart.

He looks at the glove compartment again. He opens it. He stares at something inside. Shakes his head. He looks pained.

Nick reaches in the glove compartment and pulls out a flask. He quickly unscrews the top and takes a hard pull.

INT. NICK'S CROWN VICTORIA - LATER

CLOSE on the flask. Now lying empty on the passenger seat.

CLOSE on the box Gary gave him, sitting on the dashboard.

Nick stares at it. It appears he has been doing this for a while. Nick takes the box in his hand. He slowly unties the ribbon. Carefully tears off the paper. Opens the lid. He stares inside the box.

Nick takes out a Swiss Army Knife. It is engraved with the company's corporate logo on one side. Nick turns it in his hand. His initials are on the other side.

Nick holds the knife up to get a better look. He flips the tools up and down. Saw. Magnifying glass. Tweezers. Knife.

He looks out the window. Exits the Crown Vic.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING PARKING LOT - DAY

Nick walks purposefully, passing by an entire aisle of Crown Victoria's. He stops.

ANGLE ON:

A new yellow Mustang GT. Gary's car. Nick looks around the parking lot for signs of life.

He bends down by the driver side door.

CLOSE on the tire as the Swiss Army Knife plunges into it.

Nick smiles as the air HISSES out.

His work done, he tries to pull the blade out.

It won't budge.

Nick hears VOICES. He pops his head up and sees people are leaving the office. The lunch crowd. He yanks on the knife hard. It's stuck. He has to make a choice.

Nick crab walks away from the car. We stay on the knife and the initials "N.A.P." as Gary's tire slowly deflates.

EXT. TEXAS SUPERHIGHWAY - DAY

Nick commutes home, leaving the city and heading for the suburbs. His shirt sleeves are rolled up and his tie is loose. He cranks the stereo and listens to some Herbie Mann-ish jazz as he holds the wheel in one hand and dangles his arm out the window as if he didn't have a care in the world.

Nick travels outside the city. We see exit signs for the 635. A twisted maze of on-ramps and off-ramps.

Arapaho Road. The 190. West 15th Street.

EXT. W. 15TH ST. OFF-RAMP - DAY

The Crown Vic exits the highway, careening a bit as if the driver may have forgotten his exit.

EXT./INT. CROWN VICTORIA - DAY

Nick drives through the outskirts of Plano, Texas. An upper middle class suburb of Dallas. There's a Home Depot, a Target, Olive Garden, Applebee's and a Starbucks.

EXT. 7-11 PARKING LOT - DAY

Nick pulls in fast and hard. Two TEENAGERS barely move as he hits the concrete parking divider in front of the store, almost rolling over it. Nick exits and gives them a nod as he goes inside.

Through the window we watch Nick. He grabs two twelve packs of beer. Fish food. A bag of Doritos. He passes by the Slurpee machine. Stops. Goes back and gets one.

He pays at the register.

Nick exits. The teenagers comes up to him. One is big, steroid big, the other lanky. Both are baked.

LANKY TEENAGER

Hey bro'. I'll give you ten bucks  
for one of those twacks.

NICK

Sorry.

He can't get his key in the door. He's a little drunk.

LANKY TEENAGER

C'mon. We have cash.

BIG TEENAGER

(snickers)  
You sure don't need it.

NICK

(getting frustrated)  
Aren't you a little young to be  
drinking beers?

The big teen steps in. He slaps the Slurpee out of Nick's hand. It splashes all over Nick's pants, staining them red.

BIG TEENAGER

Aren't you a little old to be  
drinking Slurpees, fucklips?

Nick stares at the kids. He gets in his car. As Nick pulls out the big teen fakes chasing him.

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Nick sips on a beer as he drives through a neighborhood with large, new homes.

Nick drives through a neighborhood with smaller, older homes. They are still substantial and well kept and all variations on a theme - Ranch style. Navajo White Stucco. Green lawns. With large front yards and ample space they are the reason people like Nick commute an hour each way to work.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Nick pulls his car into a driveway. We don't see his house, just his garage. He kills the engine but doesn't get out. He just sits there. Looking at something outside the passenger window that we cannot see.

He turns the music down.

He gets out of the car and starts walking towards the house.

The camera DOLLIES with him to reveal what he has been staring at.

The trappings of his life. His furniture. Clothes. Stereo. Record collection. Baseball cards. Tiki bar. Poker table. Replica samurai sword. George Foreman Grill. All of his possessions, dumped violently and unceremoniously in a pile on his front lawn.

Nick stands amongst his stuff. He picks up the samurai sword. Looks at it. Drops it back in the pile.

He looks to the house, dumbfounded but not overly surprised.

He looks around the neighborhood. It's still early afternoon and fairly empty. Except for a large BLACK KID who stares at him from across the street.

He walks to the front door. Tries the key. It doesn't work.

He looks in the mailbox. Empty.

He looks for signs of life in the house. None.

He presses the intercom button.

NICK

Hi. Are you in there?

He gets only static.

NICK (CONT'D)

If you are, can this happen on another day?

He waits for a response. Still just static.

NICK (CONT'D)

I'll just be out here if you want to talk about this. Okay?

He walks back to his car and grabs another beer out of a shopping bag. Takes a big swig. He pulls the garage door opener from the visor. He presses the button. Nothing.

Nick walks around to the side yard. Tries the gate. It's locked. He grabs a trash can and rolls it up to the gate. He tries climbing on top.

The can is empty and can't hold his weight. It tips.

He falls spilling his beer and landing awkwardly on his ankle. Nick curses. He limps to get another trash can, this one full. He gingerly gets on top and reaches over the gate, unlatching it.

CUT TO:

EXT. NICK'S BACKYARD - DAY

The backyard has a Japanese garden feel to it. Stone lanterns, gravel paths and wind chimes. Its most distinctive feature: three large above ground water tanks. Speakers hangs over each tank piping in Japanese classical Gagaku music.

As Nick walks around the house we look inside the tanks. Each contain hundreds of small koi fish.

Nick pays them no attention. He looks under a potted plant. No spare key. He tries a few windows. They are all locked.

He sees an envelope taped to the back screen door.

CLOSE on the envelope. It has the name "Nicholas" written inside the shape of a fish.

INT. CROWN VICTORIA - DAY

Nick holds the envelope, staring at it. Nick opens another beer. He finally works up the nerve to open the letter.

We see fragments of delicate cursive.

INSERT - *"lawyer called from Denver." "No more." "Don't call." "Catherine."*

Nick puts the letter down. Takes a drink and picks up his phone. Presses send. It RINGS, then goes to voicemail. Nick listens to the message. We can just make out a woman's voice and a BEEP.

NICK

Hi. It's Nick. I'm gonna just try and clean some of this stuff up and get it out of here if that's alright with you. When you're ready we can talk. Oh, I guess you heard I lost my job today so...Okay. Bye.

Nick thinks for a moment before pressing end.

EXT. NICK'S DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

Nick gets out of the car.

He grabs a pile of clothes and carries it to his car. He opens the trunk. It's occupied with his file boxes from work.

CUT TO:

EXT. NICK'S SIDEYARD - DAY

Nick carries the file boxes he brought home from work. He empties the boxes including his awards and office paperwork into a trash can.

BACK TO - THE FRONT YARD

Nick grabs the clothes. He stuffs them in the file boxes and puts them in the trunk.

The trunk fills quickly. Nick sweats profusely.

He rests for a moment and finishes a beer.

He shoves his golf clubs in the car, tearing the headliner.

He tries putting a camping tent in and scratches the paint.

He fills the backseat. The pile on his lawn still looks as big as it did before he started.

INT. NICK'S CAR - DAY

Nick, back in the driver's seat, pulls on beer. He swishes it in his mouth. He has an idea. He dials his cell phone, puts it on speaker phone, and rests it on the dash.

AUTOMATED PHONE OPERATOR

Need to find the perfect restaurant for that romantic night out?

(MORE)

AUTOMATED PHONE OPERATOR (CONT'D)  
It's right at your fingertips.  
City and listing please?

NICK  
Plano. A moving company.

PHONE OPERATOR  
Can you spell that for me sir?

NICK  
Actually, I'm just looking for any  
moving company.

PHONE OPERATOR  
I'm sorry sir. I need a name to  
search for a listing.

He thinks for a moment.

NICK  
Uh. How about Triple A Movers?

OPERATOR  
I have a Double A Movers in Westlake?

NICK  
That's great.

OPERATOR  
I'll connect you. Have a great day.

Nick takes a sip of beer.

MOVER ON PHONE  
Double A Movers. How can we assist you?

NICK  
I need someone to help me move.

MOVER ON PHONE  
We can do that for you sir. City  
and street address?

NICK  
Plano. I'm at 12478 Tonkawa Lane.

MOVER ON PHONE  
And where are you going, sir?

A long pause.

MOVER ON PHONE (CONT'D)  
Sir?

NICK

Can you recommend a storage space,  
near a hotel preferably?

MOVER ON PHONE

Sure. We have a special. It  
includes pick up and a storage space  
rental, six month minimum up front  
and three free nights at the Motel 6,  
located right across 121. It's nice.  
It has a fitness center which people  
seem to like. We like to call it the  
break up special.

NICK

(irritated)

How much is that?

MOVER ON PHONE

How much do you have?

NICK

I have enough to pay you to move.

MOVER ON PHONE

No sir, I meant how much stuff do  
you have to move?

NICK

I don't know, enough to fill one of  
those small rental trucks.

MOVER ON PHONE

Well. Let's say one small cube,  
two movers, full day pack, load and  
off-load. Twenty by twenty storage  
space. You are looking at about  
1199.99 up front. Plus boxes.

Nick looks at himself in the rear view mirror.

NICK

Okay.

MOVER

Great. We have tomorrow at 11:30?

NICK

That's fine.

MOVER

Your mover's name is Ron. And  
thank you for using AA Movers. At  
AA, we move mountains for you...

Nick hangs up on her. This isn't going to be easy. He finishes his beer and leans his head back.

REVEAL out the driver's side window. Nick's neighbor, ELLIOT ALSTON standing next to his gleaming new F-250 Truck. A sign on the door reads Allston Landscaping. Elliot is well groomed with good posture. He wears a green polo shirt with his company's logo, a pair of pressed khakis, a Bluetooth headset and a disapproving look on his face.

Nick rolls down his window.

NICK

Hi Elliot. You're home early.

ELLIOT

Benefit of being the boss, I guess.  
(pointing to the lawn)  
You know having all that stuff on  
your lawn is going to destroy the  
root system.

NICK

Sorry about the mess. I'll have it  
out of here by tomorrow.

Nick looks at Elliot, knowing he is enjoying it.

ELLIOT

Nick, you know me, I try to keep  
out of these things, but if I'm  
being honest, I saw this coming a  
mile away.

NICK

Well, thanks for warning me.

ELLIOT

No problem.

NICK

Anyway, I apologize for the  
disruption. You know relationships,  
ups and downs, lefts, rights.

ELLIOT

Kitty and I sail smoothly through  
that sea. We have an excellent  
helmsman.

NICK

Right.

Nick gets out of the car and walks over to Elliot.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Could I use your bathroom to clean up?  
I kind of fell off the trash can.

ELLIOT  
I would love to help you out Nick,  
but I can't.

NICK  
Why not?

ELLIOT  
It would be going against Kitty's  
wishes.

NICK  
Kitty's wishes?

Nick starts to walk away. Turns around.

NICK (CONT'D)  
How many times have you been over  
for dinner?

ELLIOT  
Well, I can't count off hand.

There is an awkward pause.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)  
Sorry, Nick.

Nick walks back to his car.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)  
(after him)  
You've got some brown patches over  
there you should look into.

Nick gets in the car and shuts the door.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER - DUSK

Nick starts looking through his belongings. Organizing them for packing. He puts some of his albums back into their old milk crates. He throws his old books into a pile. He puts his sports memorabilia on top of his poker table.

As he goes through his things you get the feeling that he hasn't seen some of these things in a long time.

He takes his Lazy Boy and rights it.

Nick sits and drinks as he watches the worker bees return to the neighborhood. A couple of people stare at him as they get out of their cars. Nick smiles and tips his beer to them. Though his pain is deep he is feeling very little of it now.

Across the street, a NURSE wheels an OLDER MAN in a wheelchair out of the house to take the evening air. He wears an old military jacket. The nurse smiles politely at Nick. The man in the wheelchair just stares at him.

Their moment is interrupted by a car driving up the street. A Volvo Wagon with requisite peacenik bumper stickers towing a Ryder trailer. It pulls up to the house directly across from Nick's, which has a for sale sign out front covered with a "Sold" sticker. The driver backs up and goes forward repeatedly until the car and trailer are perfectly straight.

A YOUNG WOMAN, 20's gets out. She stretches her back and rubs her stomach, which is just beginning to show her pregnancy. She surveys the house. The neighborhood. She looks across the street and notices Nick's yard. She smiles nervously and waves at him.

She goes to her front door, steels herself and enters her new house for the first time.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER - EVENING

Nick is still on the Lazy Boy but it is fully reclined. He is engaged in a common after work ritual. Getting drunk. Except now he is on the lawn. And instead of TV he watches the young woman as she walks around her new house checking for dust, opening windows and switching lights on and off.

Nick's eyes flutter and then close. It has been a long day.

FADE OUT.

EXT. PAINTED DESERT - DAWN

A rock climber, silhouetted by the rising sun, scales a vertical butte. He is free climbing a difficult piece of the rock.

Titles SUPERIMPOSE over the tableau.

**ACHIEVEMENT:**

**The moment you commit yourself is the moment your goal is assured.**

The sound of SPRINKLERS slowly fades up over the peaceful moment.

FADE OUT.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - MORNING

We still hear sprinklers as we reveal Nick passed out on his Lazy Boy, mouth agape.

A stream of water slashes across frame, soaking Nick's shirt as it passes. He does not stir.

We stay on Nick, listening to the CHUK-CHUK-CHUK of the sprinklers.

UNTIL - The water stream comes back and hits him right in the mouth. Gagging him. Nick struggles to get up. He has no idea where he is. Finally it comes to him.

All of his possessions are getting soaked.

Nick runs over to one of the sprinklers. He tries to stop the water with his hand but that just widens the spray. He throws a shirt over the head but by the time he reaches the next one, the shirt has flown off. Finally, he scrambles to move everything out of the water's reach.

As he pulls his possessions to the safety of the driveway, he slips on the wet grass, staining his clothes green and brown.

He gets everything clear. He leans against his car for a moment. He is dirty and wet but he has saved his stuff.

The sprinklers stop.

CUT TO:

Nick grabs some dry clothes from the bottom of a pile.

He gets in the car and changes. He looks in the mirror. He is still wet; a combination of water and sweat. His body needs alcohol. He takes the flask out of his glove compartment. Empty.

Nick goes through his beer can collection. They're all empty.

Nick looks in his rear view mirror and sees the young woman across the street unpacking the Ryder trailer.

EXT. - YOUNG WOMAN'S HOUSE - MORNING

Nick lumbers across the street. The young woman is lifting a box out of the back of the trailer.

NICK

Nice bumper stickers.

Samantha turns around to see Nick, not sure if he is serious. We get a good look at the stickers. One is anti-Bush, one is pro-choice and one is anti-gun.

SAMANTHA

I probably should have taken them off before I hit Arkansas.

NICK

Don't bother, just get a gun like the rest of us.

They smile. The ice broken. He extends his hand.

NICK (CONT'D)

I'm Nick. My wife, Catherine, and I live across the street.

(looking at her stomach)

And congratulations.

SAMANTHA

Samantha. And thank you.

NICK

(pointing to a box)

Let me help you with that.

SAMANTHA

Sure.

She hands him a box filled with photography equipment.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

You can just put that in the garage with the others.

They walk with the boxes.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

(looking at his house)

Getting rid of your old stuff?

NICK  
Yeah. Spring cleaning.  
(looking in the box)  
You're a photographer?

SAMANTHA  
A photography teacher.

NICK  
Where do you teach?

SAMANTHA  
New York. My husband - we - are  
relocating for work.

NICK  
I lived in Newark for two years.  
Commuted into the city every day.

SAMANTHA  
(smiling)  
Westchester County.

NICK  
Who's he with?

SAMANTHA  
Danner Pharmaceuticals.

NICK  
Good company. Well, welcome to Texas.

Nick leaves the box in the garage.

SAMANTHA  
Thank you.

NICK  
Listen, if it's not too much of an  
imposition, I was wondering if I  
could ask you a favor?

SAMANTHA  
Sure.

NICK  
Do you think you could keep an eye  
on my stuff over there while you  
unpack? I have to run to the store.

Nick looks over at his yard. He notices the extremely large  
black kid from yesterday. The kid rides a very small bike  
and circles the items Nick has left on the driveway to dry.

SAMANTHA

Sure.

(looks at her watch)

I'm sorry. I can't. I have to return this trailer and go meet my new doctor down in Richardson? Is that far?

NICK

Not more than twenty minutes.

SAMANTHA

I'm sorry.

NICK

It's okay.

Nick, distracted by the kid, starts walking away.

SAMANTHA

It's nice to meet you.

NICK

Likewise. I'll see you around.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Nick walks over to his driveway, watching the kid circle.

We get a good look at him. He is about 13, but huge for his age. He looks like a circus bear riding a mini motor cycle.

NICK

Can I help you?

The boy doesn't respond. He circles Nick like a hawk.

NICK (CONT'D)

Do you have a name?

KENNY

Kenny Loftus.

NICK

Kenny. Do you live around here?

KENNY

My mom's been taking care of the lady in the grey house. Miss Cooper. Why aren't you at work?

NICK

I got the day off.

KENNY

Why?

NICK

Personal stuff.

KENNY

With your wife?

NICK

Why do you say that?

KENNY

I saw her yesterday. She just kept coming out and going back in. Had a locksmith come over. An alarm guy too.

NICK

Did she say anything?

KENNY

She asked me to help her move some stuff. She was screaming a lot. Crying. Cursing too, on the phone.

Nick looks at the pile of stuff.

KENNY (CONT'D)

(nodding towards the beer)  
Isn't this a dry county?

NICK

No. Don't you have school?

KENNY

It's summer.

NICK

Where's your mom?

KENNY

(still circling)  
They're in the hospital. Miss Cooper's dying. What do you do?

NICK

Do?

KENNY

For work.

NICK  
 (getting impatient)  
 I'm a little busy. Don't you have  
 any friends you can hang with?

KENNY  
 Nope. What do you do for work?

NICK  
 I help people sell stuff. Listen,  
 are you hungry?

Kenny stops his bike in front of Nick.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 If you stay here and watch my  
 stuff, I'll get us some food.

KENNY  
 Where are you going?

NICK  
 I don't know. The Minimart.

Kenny is unresponsive. Nick goes into his pockets.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 I'll give you five bucks.  
 (he holds the money out)  
 But you can't leave. And don't  
 touch anything.

Nick pats his pockets, looking for his keys.

KENNY  
 (taking the money)  
 I would like some Funyuns.

Nick searches for his keys around his Lazy Boy.

KENNY (CONT'D)  
 And a diet Dr. Pepper.

Nick has no idea where his keys are.

NICK  
 Shit.

KENNY  
 You want to borrow my bike?

NICK  
 (still looking)  
 I'll find them.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Reveal Nick, riding Kenny's little BMX bike down the road. He is a bit unsteady and needs a drink.

EXT. BANK - DAY

The BMX sits parked by the ATM.

INT. BANK - CONTINUOUS

Nick sits at a desk, waiting. The BANK MANAGER comes back holding a piece of paper.

MANAGER

Mr. Porter. So I checked the ATM.  
It's working fine.

NICK

(yelling)  
I don't get it. There's at least...  
(whispering)  
Thirty five thousand dollars in  
that account.

MANAGER

Apparently a stop has been put on  
that account.

NICK

How? It's my account.

MANAGER

Technically, it's a joint account  
and either you or your wife can put  
a stop on it.

NICK

Who authorized that?

MANAGER

(pointing to the paper)  
You did. Your signature is right  
here, sir. Next to your wife's.

EXT. BANK - DAY

Nick walks Kenny's bike across the street as he dials his cellphone.

NICK

Hey honey. It's Nick. I was just at the bank and they told me our account is frozen. I'm going to need some money to get everything off the lawn - so if you could give me a call back to work this out. Okay? Bye.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - DAY

Nick walks in and grabs some beer and other supplies. We watch through the window as Nick gives the cashier his credit card. It doesn't work. He tries another. It doesn't work. Frustrated, he pays cash.

Nick walks outside and takes out his cellphone. He considers dialing Cate and then throws it to the ground, smashing it.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Nick pushes the bike down the sidewalk. Two plastic bags of food hang off the handlebars as he balances a Styrofoam cooler filled with beer on the seat.

EXT. INTERSECTION BY NICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Nick crosses the street. A car waits for him at the stop sign. Nick stops in front of the car. It's a Crown Victoria. His Crown Victoria. He makes eye contact with the DRIVER.

Nick puts the bike's kick stand down, blocking the intersection. He puts the cooler on the ground and walks up to the car window. The driver rolls down the window.

DRIVER

Can I help you?

NICK

This is my car.

The guy's body language changes slightly.

DRIVER

(looking at a form)

This car belongs to Office Expo Inc. I'm just bringing it back to its rightful owner.

NICK

I get to keep it for a month.

DRIVER

Looks like there was some kind of  
change order.

NICK

So, you're just gonna take my car?

DRIVER

Like I said. It's not your car.

NICK

(pointing inside)  
Well. That's my stuff.

DRIVER

Technically, it belongs to Office  
Expo now so you'll have to take it  
up with them. Sorry.

CLOSE behind the car. The reverse lights go on as the driver  
starts to back up so he can get around the bike.

Nick reaches in the open window and grabs the steering wheel.

CLOSE behind the car as the brake lights go on.

NICK

I don't want any problems. I just  
want my stuff.

The driver looks at Nick's hands on the steering wheel.

DRIVER

Take your hand off the steering  
wheel, please.

NICK

(smiling politely)  
I just want my stuff.

CLOSE behind the car as the brake lights go off.

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

CLOSE on Nick's feet moving fast on the asphalt. Sprinting.

WIDE to reveal the Repo Guy has trapped Nick in the window  
and is driving in reverse down the street dragging him along.  
Nick runs as fast as he can to keep his feet on the ground.  
He screams as the car moves past us into the distance.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - LATER

CLOSE on some clothes. Photographs. A few of the things Nick had put in the car, strewn on the street.

WIDE to reveal Nick, sitting in the middle of the street. His pants are torn and his shirt is missing some buttons. He watches as his car heads into the distance. The driver flings a piece of Nick's clothing out the window and yells out some epithets as he disappears around the corner. Nick gets up gingerly and walks along the road picking up his stuff and salvaging what he can.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Nick arrives home rolling Kenny's bike. He has packed as much as he can into the grocery bags and cooler. He looks homeless. Kenny is going through a box of Nick's stuff.

Nick lays Kenny's bike down.

NICK  
Why didn't you stop him?

KENNY  
He said it was his car.

Nick sits on the grass and opens a beer. He is hurting.

KENNY (CONT'D)  
Did you get my Funyuns?

NICK  
What? Yeah.

Nick reaches into a grocery bag for the Funyuns. He sees that Kenny is holding on to a baseball in a plastic case.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Where did you get that?

KENNY  
I found it in the pile.

NICK  
I told you not to touch anything.

KENNY  
Why?

NICK  
(grabbing the baseball)  
Because, it's worth a lot of money.

KENNY  
It's a baseball.

NICK  
It's a baseball autographed by the  
entire '78 World Series Champion  
Yankees. Reggie Jackson? Thurman  
Munson? Ron Guidry?  
(Kenny is oblivious)  
Never mind.

They don't speak for a bit. Kenny breaks the ice.

KENNY  
We have a good team at my school.

NICK  
Do you play?

KENNY  
I tried out last year but I didn't  
make it.

Nick hands Kenny his soda and tries moving him along.

NICK  
Well there's always next year.  
Listen, I appreciate you watching  
my stuff but I have some work to  
do. So...

Kenny just sits, eating his Funyuns.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Your mom is probably worried.

KENNY  
She's gone 'til Miss Cooper dies.

NICK  
She leaves you alone?

KENNY  
My sister comes at night. She's in  
nursing school.

Nick sits in his chair drinking a beer.

NICK  
Kenny. That's your name right?  
I'm going to try the direct  
approach with you. Okay? I want  
you to leave. Now.

He stares at Kenny. Kenny stares back for a moment. He grabs his bike and heads home. He stops and turns to Nick.

KENNY

I found your keys.

He throws them to Nick.

EXT. NICK'S STREET - CONTINUOUS

As Kenny leaves, a moving truck with the logo "AA Movers," pulls up in front of Nick's house. A mover exits the van.

NICK

Shit.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

CLOSE on a nametag. It reads RON. Widen to reveal Ron the mover as he hands Nick his credit card.

MOVER

This isn't working either.

NICK

It worked fine at the store. I'm sorry about this. Can we just reschedule?

MOVER

(not buying it)

Sure. I'll call dispatch. We'll just need to collect ten percent for this visit.

NICK

But you didn't move anything.

Ron just looks at him.

NICK (CONT'D)

(frustrated)

How much?

MOVER

One-twenty.

He looks in his wallet at his dwindling bankroll.

NICK

Ron, I'm running kind of low on cash. Is there some kind of deal we could make?

RON

What kind of deal?

Nick notices Ron is wearing a Texas Rangers hat. He goes over to a small plastic chest on the lawn. He opens it and starts sifting through the contents. He pulls out a stack of baseball cards and walks over to Ron.

NICK

How about a 1989 Nolan Ryan baseball card? First year with the Rangers.  
(looking at the card)  
Led the league in strikeouts with 301? Got 5,000 career?

Ron thinks about it. He smiles and takes the card and gets back in his truck. Nick watches him go.

NICK (CONT'D)

(a little bitter)  
He also holds the record for most walks, Ron.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER - DAY

Nick sits in his Lazy Boy with a beer. He watches the mailman deliver to Elliot's house. The mailman wears a headset and talks on his cellphone. He walks over to Nick's house, passes right by him, and puts the mail in the box as if Nick didn't even exist.

Nick is depressed. He looks around thoughtfully at his stuff. At the neighborhood. People go about their business, either not caring he is there or pretending he doesn't exist.

He reaches for a small table lying on its side next to the Lazy Boy. He rights it. Puts the mail and his beer on it.

He has a side table. He looks at some other stuff.

He gets up. Falls back into his chair. He puts his beer down on the table so he can balance better with both hands.

He stands up his poker table and places his books on it.

He moves his dresser across the lawn, puts some of his clothes in it. Places his replica samurai sword on top as a decorative touch.

He picks up his tiki bar off the ground. Puts it in the driveway. Puts glasses on it.

He is recreating his house on the lawn.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

Nick surveys his work. An island of order is slowly spreading out across the lawn.

A slight smile comes across his face. It is gone quickly, replaced by the reflection of flashing blue and red lights.

A police car has pulled into Nick's driveway.

A COP exits the car, talking into his shoulder radio and sheathing his nightstick.

COP  
Evening.

NICK  
Hi.

COP  
Driver's license please.

NICK  
I left it in my car.

COP  
Where's your car?

NICK  
It's gone. Though technically it wasn't mine.

The cop doesn't like what he is hearing.

COP  
Would you like to tell me what you're doing out here?

NICK  
I would. I'm getting my things organized. Is there a problem?

COP  
We got some complaints about someone living on their lawn.

NICK  
Really? Who complained?

Nick looks over at Elliot's house. A curtain quickly closes.

COP  
That's confidential, sir.

NICK  
Well. This is my lawn. And this  
is my house. And I believe the law  
says I can do whatever I want to on  
my property.

The cop looks at the pile of empty beers on the lawn.

COP  
How much have you had to drink?

NICK  
Not enough.

COP  
You know there's a law against  
having open containers in public.

NICK  
In Texas? There is a law in Texas  
that says I can't drink a fucking  
beer on my front lawn?

COP  
(tensing up a bit)  
I think you should come with me sir.

NICK  
(resolute)  
I can't leave my stuff.

The cop talks into his shoulder mike. He approaches Nick in  
take down mode.

COP  
Your stuff will be fine, sir.

NICK  
(stepping away)  
Just stop. Stop talking into that  
thing and listen to me. Call  
Detective Garcia. Frank Garcia.

The cop stops.

COP  
Detective Garcia. You want me to  
call Detective Garcia?

NICK  
Yes. Call him - please.

The cop looks at Nick.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

The sun is down. Nick sits on the grass, hands in plastic cuffs behind his back.

An unmarked police car is parked next to the cop car. DETECTIVE FRANK GARCIA, 40's, close cropped hair, well built talks with the cop. They both laugh as Frank shakes his hand.

The cop gives Nick a final look and gets in his car.

Frank comes over to Nick and takes a knee next to him, surveying the scene, particularly the empty beers.

NICK  
Thanks, Frank.

FRANK  
I came as soon as I could. Had a double homicide. Kid blew both parents away with a shotgun.

NICK  
I knew there was a reason I didn't have kids.

Frank raises an eyebrow as he cuts Nick's cuffs.

FRANK  
We missed you. The softball team has been losing its ass.

NICK  
She changed the locks. The garage code. The alarm. She cancelled my credit cards.

FRANK  
And you haven't tried to break in yet? I'm impressed.

NICK  
Did you talk to her?

FRANK  
I think it might be worth giving her some time on this one.  
(looking around)  
(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

So, this is your plan to cool things down? Sit in the yard and get drunk?

NICK

They say that the dining room is the least utilized part of the house. I think it's the front lawn.

Frank stands up.

NICK (CONT'D)

We put all this energy into it. Mowing. Watering. Fertilizing. Why? To impress people as they drive by. To make our neighbors jealous. Show them how successful we are. But do we ever actually use it?

FRANK

The minute you even thought about taking a drink, you should have called me.

NICK

I got fired from the only job I ever had, I was accused of assaulting a coworker and my wife leaves me. Somehow calling you slipped my mind.

Nick goes back to his Lazyboy.

FRANK

You can't do this, Nick.

NICK

I'm just going to get things organized. It's starting to look good don't you think?

FRANK

You can't stay here. It's illegal.

NICK

Well, why don't you just pick the lock and let me in?

FRANK

I don't pick locks.

NICK

I paid for this house. For her  
fish. For this grass. It's my  
house.

FRANK

(standing up)

Let's find a place for you to stay.  
She'll cool down. Then we can all  
get together and have a sit down.

Frank puts his hand out. Nick doesn't budge.

FRANK (CONT'D)

C'mon. We'll get this stuff tomorrow.

Nick thinks of something. He gets up and starts rummaging  
through his boxes.

FRANK (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

He gives Frank the "wait there" hand signal. Nick finds what  
he is looking for. A small book. He finds a page and hands  
it to Frank.

FRANK (CONT'D)

What's this?

He goes into the cooler and pulls out a beer. He sits in the  
Lazy Boy. He gestures for Frank to sit on the coffee table.

NICK

Just read it. The highlighted part.

Frank gives him a look.

NICK (CONT'D)

Come on.

Frank sits and begins to read.

FRANK

When the defeat of your enemy is  
imminent be sure to leave those who  
flee the battlefield a way out. Do  
not corner the remaining  
opposition. For when they know  
they are trapped and death is  
imminent each soldier will fight  
back with the strength of a hundred  
men.

NICK

I give my sales trainees this book. This guy Sun Tzu was a master general.

FRANK

I know who he is Nick. We read him in the academy.

NICK

We have these workshops. I have everyone choose one of the sayings and apply it to their job. I always choose "peace is only a time to be used to prepare for war." It sounds tough and I figure it's good for my image. But the one you just read, that's always been one of my favorites.

FRANK

What's your point?

He looks around at his stuff. His face turns very serious.

NICK

This is my corner - I'm not leaving my stuff.

He takes a pull off his beer.

Frank looks at Nick. He puts the book on the table knowing they are done.

FRANK

I'll call dispatch and make sure no one comes by tonight. Slow down on the beer and get some rest. We'll figure this out tomorrow.

He walks away.

NICK

Hey, Frank?

Frank stops.

NICK (CONT'D)

You're a good sponsor.

He smiles at Nick.

FRANK

Thanks.

NICK

She's coming up on a year.

FRANK

I know Nick. I'm her sponsor too.

As Frank drives away, Nick sits in his chair, looking at his neighbors' houses like Jimmy Stewart in "Rear Window."

Samantha hangs some large photos in her living room.

His old neighbor sits in front of the TV still wearing his bomber jacket. His nurse feeds him soup.

Elliot washes dishes as Kitty stands behind him drinking a glass of wine, talking his ear off.

FADE OUT.

EXT. RIVER - DAWN

An oar cuts the glassy surface. Then another. And another.

An eight man scull glides across the river. The whole crew works in perfect harmony.

Titles SUPERIMPOSE.

**TEAMWORK:**

**Together we achieve that which no one can achieve alone.**

As the scull moves out of frame the sound of the oars dissolves into the sound of GURGLING water.

FADE OUT.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - DAWN

CLOSE on an AUTOMATIC KOI FEEDER. Basically, a large aluminum box with a timer on it. The clock flashes 6:30AM. A trap door opens, dropping pellets into one of the tanks. The fish rise to the surface and feed.

EXT. SIDE YARD - SAME

CLOSE on a recycle bin. It has around thirty empty beer cans in it.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - DAWN

Nick. Passed out on his Lazy Boy. Mouth open. Same as yesterday. The sound of sprinklers off-screen. Then, a stream of water carves a path across his face. He wakes up.

He grabs one of his batting helmets and tries to cover a sprinkler. It doesn't work. His stuff is getting wet again. He looks around. He shambles to the side of the house.

EXT. SIDE YARD - DAWN - CONTINUOUS

Nick finds the shutoff valve for the sprinkler system. Turns it. The water stops. Nick is proud of himself. He hears a hair dryer. Looks across the hedge into Elliot's house. Kitty, in a towel, is blow-drying her hair. She senses someone watching her. Looks out her window. Nick smiles at her. She holds his gaze, ice.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - DAY

CLOSE on Nick's side table. It is a little more organized than yesterday. His Yankee's baseball alarm clock sits on it. He has a coaster underneath his beer.

CLOSE on the makeshift coffee table. An oozing and partially defrosted burrito. Chile Lime Doritos, a jar of Nacho Cheese dip and a few bottles of warm beer.

WIDE as Nick chews thoughtfully on a Twizzler and chases it with a beer.

Frank pulls up in his unmarked police car. He exits, carrying a large plastic bag in one hand and two coffees in the other. Nick eyes him warily.

FRANK  
(looking at the food)  
Breakfast of champions.

NICK  
Man's got to eat.

Frank throws the plastic bag on the coffee table.

FRANK  
I brought you coffee and some  
cigarettes.

NICK  
(pulling on his warm beer)  
I quit smoking.

Nick sees Frank is hurt. He parts with his beer and takes the coffee. A gesture of peace.

FRANK  
Black, two Sweet & Lows.

NICK  
Thanks.

FRANK  
Need any help moving today?

NICK  
Nope.

FRANK  
Planning on leaving any time soon?

Nick goes over to his stuff and starts looking through it.

NICK  
Well since I have no money, no car,  
no phone, I was thinking of staying  
for a while.

FRANK  
How long do you think it might take  
to pull your shit together?

NICK  
Are you going to make me leave?

Frank looks at Nick for a moment. Shakes his head. He takes a piece of paper out of the plastic bag. Gives it to Nick.

FRANK  
City of Plano has an ordinance  
stating a property owner can hold a  
yard sale for no more than five  
consecutive days and no more than  
ten days in any one year.

NICK  
I don't want to sell my stuff.

FRANK  
Just read the ordinance.

As Nick reads, Frank empties out the bag onto the table.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
Here are some Sharpies and some  
paper. Make some signs and you can  
stay for three more days.

NICK  
I need to make signs?

Frank is disgusted. He walks away. Nick gets up.

NICK (CONT'D)  
It was a joke.

FRANK  
(losing his temper)  
We've been through this too many  
goddamn times. I'm not gonna tell  
you what to do, since we both know  
that doesn't work. If it takes you  
sitting out here and making an  
idiot of yourself to get cleaned  
up, then so be it. Sell your shit.  
Or don't. I don't care. But after  
this, you move on. If you don't,  
I'll haul your ass off to a mental  
facility.

Nick grabs Frank's hand.

NICK  
Thanks, Frank. I mean it.

Frank rolls his eyes and heads to his car.

FRANK  
Don't make an ass out of me Nick.  
(as he gets in)  
Oh, and use lots of colors for the  
signs. Supposed to increase sales.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

Nick sits in his Lazy Boy. His face is pressed against an old Viewmaster picture as he looks at some 3-D images of cowboys and Indians. He stops and surveys his domain. He makes a decision.

CUT TO:

CLOSE on a piece of paper as Nick prints big black letters: E, S, T, A, T, E, S, A. He reaches the end of the paper. He is out of space.

WIDER as Nick sits on the grass. There are a few botched signs on the ground next to him.

Nick looks across the street. Kenny is riding his bike in front of his house. Nick gets up and walks over to him.

NICK  
I'm sorry about what I said  
yesterday.

KENNY  
It's cool.

NICK  
How's your penmanship?

KENNY  
Pretty good.

NICK  
I was thinking. Seeing as you're  
not doing anything, you might want  
to work for me?

Kenny stops riding his bike.

KENNY  
What kind of work?

NICK  
Make some signs. Maybe sell a  
couple of things.

KENNY  
What are you offering?

Nick puts an arm around Kenny and walks him over to the sign  
making material.

NICK  
Discussing salary and  
responsibilities up front. Smart.  
It's the best way to minimize  
employee resentment.

KENNY  
I want to be a partner.

NICK  
A partner?

KENNY  
A partner.

NICK  
Fine. Partner. As for salary,  
let's say four bucks an hour  
against ten percent of gross sales?

KENNY

What's gross?

NICK

It means I'm not going to rip you off. Responsibilities. If I need to leave, you stay here, look tough and watch the stuff. I feed you, give you bathroom and cigarette breaks as required by state law.

KENNY

I don't smoke.

NICK

Right. So do we have a deal?

Nick holds out his hand.

KENNY

Texas minimum wage is five dollars and fifteen cents.

NICK

Okay. Five fifteen it is.

Kenny just stands there.

NICK (CONT'D)

What? It's a good deal.

KENNY

I want to learn to play baseball.

NICK

You want me to teach you how to play baseball? I don't know...

KENNY

I saw all those trophies and stuff.

NICK

Those are from high school. Why do you want to learn to play baseball?

KENNY

My mom says I need to get exercise. And my dad played baseball.

NICK

Did he play college ball?

KENNY

He didn't go to college. But he was a good center fielder. A power hitter.

Nick thinks about it. They shake on it.

INT. SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - LATER

She is cleaning glassware and looking out the window at Kenny and Nick as they sort through Nick's belongings.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Nick is looking at his album collection. He watches as the mailman walks by him again, putting the mail into the box.

KENNY

What about these clothes?

NICK

Keep.

Kenny puts them in a pile.

KENNY

What about these?

Kenny is holding up some old porn mags.

NICK

I am going to keep those for a bit.

Kenny moves them to the "Keep" pile. Kenny points to Nick's Yankees autographed baseball off the table.

KENNY

Are you going to sell that?

NICK

(picking up the ball)

When you look at this, what do you see?

KENNY

A baseball.

NICK

It looks like a baseball. But actually it's one of the greatest teams ever assembled. Back to back pennants. Total domination.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)  
 (holding the case)  
 In my hand I am holding excellence.

KENNY  
 Why don't you like any Texas teams?

NICK (O.S.)  
 We tried switching to the Rangers  
 when we moved back. But the  
 Yankees were our team. She gave  
 this to me for our fifth  
 anniversary.

KENNY  
 Where did she go?

NICK  
 Who?

KENNY  
 Your wife.

NICK  
 (back in reality)  
 I don't know. Austin probably,  
 with her sister.

A VW Squareback pulls up in front of Nick's house. A LANKY  
 MAN with thick glasses exits. He wears an old duster and  
 looks as if he hasn't showered for days.

Nick and Kenny watch as the man sifts through the stuff.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 Can I help you?

The man pays no attention. He runs his hand across Nick's  
 tiki bar checking for dust. He sits in Nick's chair.

SHOPPER  
 How much?

NICK  
 Sorry. Not for sale.

The shopper, annoyed looks at some of Nick's shirts.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 Those aren't for sale, either.

The man doesn't pay attention. He starts going through Nick's  
 toiletries. Throwing toothpaste, floss. He pulls out a half  
 bottle of Listermint. Looks at it in the sun.

SHOPPER  
How much for this?

NICK  
You want to buy that?

SHOPPER  
(insistent)  
How much?

NICK  
Fifty cents.

SHOPPER  
Twenty five cents.

NICK  
I just can't do it.

The Shopper starts to fidget.

NICK (CONT'D)  
I'll tell you what. Let's stay at  
fifty but I'll throw in...  
(Nick fishes around his  
toiletries)  
the floss.

The Shopper thinks for a moment. Is he getting taken?

SHOPPER  
Deal.

He fumbles for change in his overcoat. He hands Nick a bunch of coins and walks away.

NICK  
Rule Number Eight. Give them  
something extra.

He hands Kenny a nickel.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Here's your take.

Kenny stares at the nickel in his hand.

KENNY  
Can we work on baseball?

NICK  
I'm pretty beat. Why don't you  
hang some more of those signs you  
made and we'll call it a day.

Kenny grabs some signs and walks away as Nick grabs a trash can.

KENNY

I don't know why I'm hanging signs  
if you're not gonna sell anything.

NICK

(after him)

Hey. I sold mouthwash! That's  
something.

EXT. SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Samantha is putting up a new mailbox. Nick takes his trash cans down to the curb, holding a beer.

SAMANTHA

Is this your first time?

NICK

Excuse me?

SAMANTHA

For a yard sale. The pros come on  
Saturday. They'll try to beat you up  
on price. Sunday's when the yuppies  
come. That's your profit day.

Nick walks over to her side of the street.

NICK

You go to a lot of them?

SAMANTHA

They're good for finding old  
cameras. I've done a couple myself  
too. Once you get rid of all that  
stuff, you are gonna feel great.

Nick nods. Ambivalent. He doesn't want to get rid of his stuff and he doesn't want to feel great.

NICK

Thanks for the advice.

SAMANTHA

Sure.

Nick smiles and starts walking back to his lawn. He stops.

NICK

I was going to order some Chinese food? It's not New York but...

SAMANTHA

I've got a lot of work to do before my husband gets in.

NICK

I understand.

SAMANTHA

Thanks for the offer.

NICK

It's fine. Good night.

SAMANTHA

Good night.

Nick walks across the street. Stops.

NICK

Could I use your phone? To order?

She smiles politely.

INT. ELLIOT AND KITTY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Kitty watches Nick use Sam's cordless from her window.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - EVENING

CLOSE on a camping lantern as it sputters to life, bathing everything in a fluorescent glow. Nick has cleared off his coffee table. He sits in his Lazy Boy drinking a beer. The street is quiet. Peaceful.

The silence is broken by a beat up Honda Accord. It stops in front of Nick's house. An Asian delivery man steps out. He walks right past Nick, carrying the takeout to the front door and rings the door bell.

Nick watches. The delivery man rings the door bell again.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - EVENING - LATER

Nick sits in his Lazy Boy. He has no utensils or dishes so he eats straight from the container with chopsticks.

He tries eating some noodles but they end up on his shirt. He pulls them off with his hand and puts them in his mouth, leaving a snakelike stain.

He looks up. Samantha stands there holding two plates.

SAMANTHA

I brought these, just in case.

Nick takes the plates. Places them on the table.

NICK

Thanks.

SAMANTHA

(looking at the records)  
Do you mind?

NICK

Go ahead.

Samantha starts looking at them.

SAMANTHA

My husband would freak if he saw these.

NICK

They were my dad's. Something to drink?

SAMANTHA

Water's fine. He had quite the collection.

Nick gets up and goes to the hose bib on the side of his house. He fills Sam's glass.

NICK

He was a DJ. "The Late Night Mix with Cal Porter on KLIF." He played jazz, Tejano, country, rock, all kinds of crazy stuff. My mom used to say he could play whatever he wanted, since the only people listening at four AM were truckers and drunks and neither of them would take the time to complain.

He hands Samantha her water.

SAMANTHA

Is it still around?

NICK

The station? Sort of. They were one of the first to switch to top 40 in the 70's. When he found out, he got drunk, barricaded himself in the studio and put Dylan on. Played a whole album before they busted in and took him to jail.

SAMANTHA

He sounds like an interesting guy.

NICK

More of a drunk who occasionally did interesting things.

He takes an album from Sam. He starts to cackle.

SAMANTHA

What?

NICK

I just keep seeing my wife climbing into the attic to get these.

(he stops laughing)

I can't believe she went into the fucking attic.

Nick realizes he is making her uncomfortable. He also realizes there is no place for her to sit.

NICK (CONT'D)

(ushering her to the  
Lazyboy)

I'm sorry. Sit. Sit.

Samantha sits. Nick starts piling food onto her plate.

NICK (CONT'D)

So you're a teacher?

SAMANTHA

I guess I should say I am a photographer, but teaching takes up most of my time.

NICK

(making himself a plate)

To do something creative with your life. And to teach. That's great.

SAMANTHA

It can be. What do you do for work?

Nick takes the records out of one of his milk crates, flips it over and sits down on it.

NICK

Well, I was a senior vice president  
in charge of sales.

SAMANTHA

That sounds like a big job.

NICK

My company has two hundred and  
seventy four Senior VP's.

SAMANTHA

Oh.

NICK

I made good money. Bought this house.  
We've been to Europe, the Caribbean  
and Japan, twice.

Nick stares at his house. Samantha eats her food. Quietly.

NICK (CONT'D)

So do you have a name yet?  
(off her confused look)  
For your baby?

SAMANTHA

It's a boy. My husband wants to  
name him Jack. That's his name. My  
husband. I think it's a little  
ridiculous, naming your child after  
yourself, but his father was Jack  
too, so I guess I'll just have to  
name the next one. Do you have  
any children?

NICK

No. No kids. We have fish.

Samantha gives him a puzzled look.

EXT. NICK'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

CLOSE on the Koi as they fight over food in one of the tanks.  
They are a writhing mass of red and white.

WIDE to reveal Nick and Samantha leaning against the tank,  
their plates balanced on the edge. Nick drops some noodles  
into the tank. He points to the koi all of which are red  
patterned against a white background.

NICK

These are all Kohaku.

(pointing to the other  
tanks)

Those are Bekko and those are  
Asagi. She had the breeders shipped  
over from Japan. A grand each.

Nick dips his finger in the water. The fish nibble at it.

NICK (CONT'D)

But these are her specialty. She's  
already won three state prizes for  
them. White like the snow of Mount  
Fuji. Red like the Japanese flag.

SAMANTHA

What's the music for?

NICK

She read that it improves breeding.

Samantha watches Nick as he takes a drink.

SAMANTHA

I know it's not my place. But,  
whatever you did, I'm sure you can  
work it out.

NICK

You think so?

SAMANTHA

If you love her and she loves you.  
I believe you can.

Nick stares at his wife's prized koi for a long moment.

NICK

We've always struggled. Both of us.  
But, Catherine, my wife, has been  
strong lately. Focused.

(beat)

I was sober for almost six months.  
I had a couple of slips, but  
nothing major. I was trying. This  
new girl, Sharon, started a few  
months ago in the Denver office.

(he pauses)

I was just, I was on a business trip  
and we closed a big deal so we went out  
to celebrate. It was her first big  
deal. She ordered champagne. I just  
figured I would have a glass, to toast.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

We must have gone through six or seven bottles. And pretty soon it was just us drinking in her room keeping the party going. It seemed like we were having a good time but...

He stops again, and now Samantha looks up at him.

SAMANTHA

So what happened?

NICK

Everything seemed alright. She was gone in the morning when I woke up. I had to fly back. A week later I get a call from her lawyers and here I am.

SAMANTHA

Did you do what they say?

NICK

I've been a drunk most of my life. I've wrecked cars, punched guys in the face, but I've never hurt a woman.

Samantha realizes she should have left a while ago.

SAMANTHA

I've got to get up early tomorrow.

Nick helps her up.

NICK

Sure. Don't worry about all this. I'll clean up.

SAMANTHA

Thanks for dinner.

She turns to go.

NICK

Hey. Your fortune cookie.

Nick gets up and hands it to her.

SAMANTHA

Good night.

Nick sits back down and takes a drink.

He opens his fortune cookie. Reads it. Throws it in the tank.

A sad look crosses his face as he drinks some more.

CLOSE ON THE FORTUNE - It reads, "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. - Lao Tzu"

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

Nick is asleep. In the foreground, two blurred figures are rummaging through his cooler, whispering. Nick stirs. Sees them. Kids, drinking his beer and going through his stuff.

NICK

Hey.

He startles them. They run down the street, carrying a couple of six packs. Nick tries to give chase. After about thirty yards he stops and doubles over. Exhausted.

He looks at his pants. He has peed himself. He looks around to see if anyone is watching.

EXT. NICK'S BACKYARD - LATE AT NIGHT

Nick's wet pants and boxers are thrown to the ground. He stands at the koi tank and starts to pee into it, fresh pants slung over his shoulder, ass hanging in the wind, as Japanese music plays quietly on the speakers above him.

CLOSE on Nick's face as he hums to the music. He is interrupted by the sound of distant groaning.

He finishes up and heads to investigate.

EXT. NICK'S SIDEYARD - LATE AT NIGHT

He parts the bushes separating his house from Elliot's. He's getting warmer. The groaning is louder, more animated.

EXT. ELLIOT AND KITTY'S SIDE YARD - CONTINUOUS

Nick sneaks over to the side of the house. There is a basement window/lightwell, halfway below ground level. A pulsating light emanates from within.

Nick kneels down and looks through the window. The groans are louder and more distinct. A mix of pain and pleasure.

CLOSE on Nick's eyes. He looks instantly sober.

NICK'S POV OF THE ALSTON BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Kitty is wearing a dominatrix outfit. She is also wearing a strap on. Elliot is bent over and Kitty is fucking him in the ass, hard. A strobe light illuminates the ugly tableau as Elliot writhes in ecstasy.

CLOSE ON NICK'S EYES - Filled with fear and wonder.

CUT TO:

INT. - WHITE BACKGROUND

A majestic tiger stares at us. He roars a la Leo the MGM lion.

Titles SUPERIMPOSE.

**ATTITUDE**

**Attitude makes the difference.**

He purrs. It is interrupted by the sound of a doorbell.

FADE OUT.

EXT. CLOSE ON A DOORBELL - MORNING

A finger presses on the bell.

EXT. ELLIOT AND KITTY'S FRONT DOOR - MORNING

A groggy Elliot answers the door in his robe.

REVEAL Nick standing in front of Elliot. A beer in his hand and a smile on his face.

BACK TO Elliot. A confused look on his face.

BACK TO Nick. Still smiling.

BACK TO Elliot. A worried look on his face.

Kitty steps into the doorway wearing her robe. She sees Nick smiling. She sees Elliot, worried. Now she is worried.

CUT TO:

EXT. ELLIOT AND KITTY'S SIDEYARD - MORNING

CLOSE ON an OUTDOOR ELECTRICAL SOCKET.

An orange extension cord is plugged into it. Music plays in the background. The camera moves away from the socket, following the cord away from the Allston's. Across the bushes. Across Nick's driveway. Onto his lawn. To a power strip. All the sockets are occupied.

The camera moves to Nick's baseball clock. Plugged in and flashing 12:00.

To Nick's Ron Popeil Rotisserie. A burrito spins, heating to perfection.

To Nick's stereo. It is completely set up. One of his dad's records spins on the turntable.

The camera moves again to a humming mini refrigerator. The door opens. The fridge is filled with beer. A hand reaches in and grabs an icy cold one.

WIDEN to reveal Nick, cracking the beer. A smile on his face as he enjoys the music and the morning sun. Things are shaping up. He looks over to Kitty and Elliot who stand inside their garage. He raises his beer to them.

Kenny and Nick work on organizing Nick's lawn. Things are starting to find their right place. It looks less like a yard sale and more like a re-creation of Nick's living room. His albums are near his stereo. His food sits on his fridge.

Nick looks across the street. The nurse is trying to get the old man and his wheelchair up the steps to the porch. With no ramp, it's hard work. He watches her struggle for a bit. He has an idea.

EXT. SPECIALIST SEARS HOUSE - LATER

CLOSE on a wheel going up a ramp.

WIDER to reveal Nick, holding a beer and trying to help the Nurse maneuver the wheelchair up the ramp which Nick has fashioned from an upside down pair of old water skis.

NURSE

I can't thank you enough.

NICK

Keep them. Please.

NURSE

I'm just about to give him his lunch. Why don't you join him?

Nick looks over at Kenny. Sees that he's doing fine alone.

NICK

Sure.

Nick sits down next to the old man, who stares straight ahead at Nick's house.

The Nurse comes out. She has two trays with pea soup and grilled cheese on them.

NURSE

He fought all over Europe and the Pacific. Very decorated. He lost his voice on one of the islands. Shot right through the throat.

The old man moves his hands on his lap and opens his palms as if reading a book.

NICK

What's he doing?

NURSE

He wants to show you his scrapbook. Do you mind?

NICK

No.

She walks inside. Nick and the old man chew on their sandwiches looking out at Nick's lawn. The nurse returns.

NURSE

It ain't exactly what I would call lunch time reading.

She hands him the thick album. Nick puts his food down and opens it.

The first page has a series of medals attached to it.

NICK

Specialist Sears.  
(putting a name to the face)  
These are all yours?

Specialist Sears looks straight ahead.

Nick looks through the book. There are postcards from Europe. Letters of Commendation. Letters to his wife. Pictures of young soldiers mugging to the camera.

Nick stops at the last page. It contains a series of old photos. One shows a sword wielding Japanese soldier about to behead a prisoner.

Another shows an image of dead Japanese soldiers, stacked like logs. Specialist Sears and his buddies stand on top of the bodies, rifles across their chests. The final image is of a smiling young Specialist Sears kneeling behind a dead Nazi. He holds the dead man's head proudly in the air as if displaying a trophy buck.

Nick closes the book and takes a long pull on his beer.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Specialist Sears. You are one sick fuck.

Nick looks over at the old soldier. Specialist Sears' mouth turns up into the slightest of grins. Nick closes the book and looks back at his house.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

Nick sits in his Lazy Boy drinking a beer staring across the street at Specialist Sear. He has headphones on and listens to a record. Kenny comes up to Nick.

He points to a guy looking at Nick's Ron Popeil Rotisserie.

KENNY  
That guy wants to buy that thing  
for five bucks.

NICK  
(pulling of his  
headphones)  
How am I going to cook?

KENNY  
You still have the Foreman.

Kenny is bummed. Nick notices.

NICK  
Okay. Sell it.

Kenny goes to the guy and takes his money. He comes back to Nick and hands him the money. He is still bummed.

NICK (CONT'D)  
What?

KENNY  
Nothing.

Nick knows Kenny is not happy.

NICK

You've been busting ass and I want you to know I appreciate it. You know what? This company needs a shake up. We're too corporate. We need less "me" and more "we."

Kenny has no idea what he is talking about.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

Nick looks through his stuff. He is wearing a Yankees jersey emblazoned with the name Munson. He finds a Yankee batting helmet. A Texas Rangers sticker covers the NY. He brings the helmet to Kenny who wears a University of Texas jersey which reads Porter across the back. The jersey is three sizes too small. Nick tries putting the helmet on Kenny's huge skull but it doesn't come close.

Nick goes back to his stuff and starts looking again.

NICK

You sure you don't want to play football?

He finds a cycling helmet.

KENNY

My mom won't let me.

He puts it on Kenny. It kind of fits.

NICK

You're a born left tackle Kenny. Second highest paid athlete on the team. You're big. Fast. Smart. We could make you into a goddam millionaire.

Kenny stands there, bat in hand. Nick comes up to him. Puts the bat in ready position. Starts moving his body.

NICK (CONT'D)

Okay. Front shoulder and chin tucked in. Hands back. Weight on the balls of your feet. Don't swing at bad pitches.

KENNY

Where's the umpire?

NICK

We don't need one.

KENNY

How do I know if it's a bad pitch  
without an umpire?

Kenny doesn't move. Nick is frustrated. He sees something  
across the street.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

Nick wheels the old veteran from across the street onto the  
lawn. He places him right behind Kenny.

NICK

Now you just try and hit it to me.

He looks at Specialist Sears. He goes and grabs a big pillow  
and places it in front of Specialist Sears' chest. He pats  
him on the back and walks about thirty feet away.

NICK (CONT'D)

I just want to see your form.

Nick holds a yellow softball. He goes into an exaggerated  
pitcher stance. Looks at imaginary signs. Kenny smiles.  
Nick smiles and winds up. He pitches. Kenny doesn't move.  
The ball hits Specialist Sear's pillow.

NICK (CONT'D)

That's good. All good hitters wait  
for the right pitch.

Nick grabs the ball and runs back to the mound.

NICK (CONT'D)

Okay. Give it a swing this time.  
Don't worry about the pitch.

Nick gets in position. Kenny just stands there. Nick goes  
over and puts Kenny in a more athletic position. He goes  
back to his "mound." He pitches.

Kenny swings. His girth makes him about three seconds late.

NICK (CONT'D)

That's good Kenny. Real good.

Nick notices Samantha is watching them.

NICK (CONT'D)

(to Kenny)  
Hold on.

He goes over to one of his boxes and grabs something. He runs over to Sam's house.

NICK (CONT'D)

Hey. I found this. It was my mom's.  
(he hands her an old Polaroid  
camera)  
I'm not sure if it works.

She opens it expertly and points it at Nick. Checks the focus.

SAMANTHA

Smile.

Nick smiles. Samantha presses the shutter and a Polaroid spits out.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Thanks. This is beautiful. What do I owe you?

NICK

Can you play first?

Samantha smiles at him.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

VARIOUS SHOTS

Nick stands at the plate. Kenny pitches. Nick bunts and runs to first. Sam walk/runs after him and tags him out.

Nick pitches to Sam. She gives it a little swing and waddles towards first.

Nick stands behind Kenny and helps him connect with Sam's pitch. He ushers Kenny to run to first. Kenny and all of his girth run in slow motion.

Kenny smiles, having reached first base.

Nick stands at the plate. He points his bat a la Babe Ruth. Kenny goes into an exaggerated wind up and pitches to Nick. Nick rips the pitch high and deep. His form is impressive. Everyone watches as the ball sails through the air and then disappears from sight only to be replaced with the wail of a car alarm. The moment shattered.

Nick, Kenny and Sam look at each other. They instinctively do what every person who has hit a car with a ball does. They run, leaving Specialist Sears alone on the lawn.

EXT. MISS COOPER'S BACKYARD - LATER

Nick sits in a floating pool chair, drinking a beer. Kenny sits with his feet in the water reading a book titled "The Sales Bible." Next to him are a few more sales books.

NICK

How's Miss Cooper doing?

KENNY

My mom says she's gonna die soon.  
But she isn't suffering.

(looking at his book)

What's it mean? Make it easy to buy.

NICK

Well, it can mean lots of things.  
Like getting rid of extra paperwork.  
Displaying things in a way that's  
appealing to people. Explaining how  
products work so there's no confusion.  
You're actually interested in this  
stuff?

KENNY

Yeah.

NICK

You read those and you'll know more  
than me.

Kenny keeps looking up from his book at Nick. Nick tries not pay attention. Finally, he can't take it.

NICK (CONT'D)

What?

KENNY

Nothing.

NICK

No. Go ahead.

KENNY

Are we friends?

NICK

I guess so.

KENNY

Remember when I told you I tried  
out for the baseball team?

NICK

Yeah.

KENNY

I lied. I don't play sports.

NICK

Why not?

KENNY

They make you change in the locker room. The other kids...

NICK

What do they say?

KENNY

They call me Shamu, man tits, they make jokes.

NICK

What kind of jokes?

KENNY

(using ghetto voice)

You so fat you got shocks on your toilet seat. You so fat if your arm broke, gravy be comin' out.

Nick is laughing. At first Kenny is hurt. But then he starts laughing.

NICK

Kenny, some of us got dealt some shit cards. You can't worry about what other people think about you. You just got to fight back.

KENNY

(he stops laughing)

Is that what you're doing?

NICK

What?

KENNY

On your lawn. Are you fighting back?

NICK

Yeah. I'm fighting.

KENNY

Who?

NICK  
Who, what?

KENNY  
Who are you fighting?

Nick looks at Kenny but doesn't have an answer. He just bobs up and down in the water and drinks his beer.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE - LATER

Nick carries a case of beer. He goes to a phone booth. Dials a number.

OPERATOR (V.O.)  
Office Expo.

NICK  
Gary Wexler, please?

He waits to be connected.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Hi, Lynette. It's Nicholas Porter.  
Sure, I'll hold.

Nick holds. He looks at a sign taped to the outside of the booth. It reads "Estate Sale, 12478 Tonkawa Lane, Everything Must Go!" A garbled voice comes up over the phone.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Hi Gary.

All we can hear on the other side of the phone is YELLING.

NICK (CONT'D)  
I know. It was stupid.

More YELLING.

NICK (CONT'D)  
You're right. I'm an asshole.

Nick can't handle this stress. He takes a beer. Opens it. Finishes it in one gulp as Gary SCREAMS.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Yes Gary, leaving the knife was  
pretty fucking stupid.

Nick listens.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 Gary. Gary.  
 (trying to get a word in)  
 ...calling every company?

Gary's YELLING interrupts him.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 Yes, I'm sure that took a long  
 time. Why don't I come in and we  
 can talk about this in person?

Silence.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 Gary? Gary?

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

Nick sits in his chair holding the classifieds. He is very drunk. He looks across the street at Samantha's. She is hanging artwork in the living room wearing a tank top and shorts.

He looks back at the paper but peeks up at her a few times.

He turns the page. Something catches his eye. He reaches for his phone, knocks it over and picks it up. He dials.

NICK  
 Do you work in Plano? That's fine.  
 No, I'm not. The address is 12478  
 Tonkawa Lane. 10 o'clock. You  
 can't come earlier? OK.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Nick sits in his Lazy Boy, almost catatonic. A number of empty beer cans by his side.

A tricked out Pontiac Fiero pulls up front. A SKINNY WHITE GIRL stumbles out of the car. She has long blond hair, a very short skirt and high heels on. From the way she weaves as she walks, she is clearly on something. She sees Nick on the front lawn and becomes confused.

NICK  
 Over here. Over here.

Even in her haze she is wary. Nick fumbles with his wallet.

NICK (CONT'D)

Here's the money. Plus the extra  
for coming out here.

SKINNY WHITE GIRL

Not here, man. Let's go inside.

NICK

Listen, just come over here. Have  
a beer. We can talk right here.

SKINNY WHITE GIRL

Is there a fuckin' camera out here?

INT. SPECIALIST SEARS HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Specialist Sears, lit by the glow of the TV, looks out his  
window. Across the street the girl sits next to Nick. It's  
pretty far away but we can tell she is going down on him.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Nick stares straight ahead, wasted as the girl sits like a  
zombie on the couch.

NICK

I was the first to go college. He  
never knew. Car crash. Right into  
a fucking tree.

SKINNY WHITE GIRL

Do you have any glass? It's so  
fuckin' hot.

NICK

I don't think they wanted kids.  
Catherine always wanted kids. Said we  
had to both be sober before we tried.  
So we did it. Exercised everyday.  
Joined a gym. It didn't work. I told  
her it was a sign.

The girl gets up shakily and goes to her car. Nick doesn't  
notice.

NICK (CONT'D)

I started drinking again, and I  
told her I wasn't going to bring  
another kid into this world with  
two drunks for parents. So she  
started drinking again.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)

And then she stopped and we never talked about it again. She just started with the fish. I should give her a kid. What do you think?

Nick looks over and sees her Fiero tearing away. Nick is alone. He looks around at his stuff and notices something.

CLOSE on a Super 8 Projector.

A shaky hand plugs it into the powerstrip.

Nick switches it on. The bulb lights up and the reel works.

CLOSE on a small tin box of Super 8 reels. They are labeled with old masking tape. Some have dates like "*Summer, 65,*" others say "*Wedding,*" etc.

Nick reaches in and pulls a reel out that says "*B-day, 69.*"

His shaky hand threads it on the projector. He turns it on.

WIDER - Nick projects the film onto the side of his house.

Scratches, light leaks and jump cuts blend into a grainy Kodachrome moving picture.

A young Nick holds a little baseball bat. He wears a cowboy hat and a little Texas Rangers jersey. He swings in slow motion and cheers as an imaginary ball goes over the fence.

The older Nick smiles at this image of himself.

The picture blows out.

We see a woman, NICK'S MOTHER, holding a drink. She stands in front of a Dodge Dart, a small well kept house behind them. Nick wears a birthday hat. Nick and his mom wave to camera.

Nick's mom beckons to the person behind the camera. Nothing happens. Finally, she comes to the camera and grabs it.

The film goes black and then reappears. Nick is still at the car but is joined by his FATHER, a Texas bohemian, who stands at the opposite edge of the car holding a can of Schlitz and a cigarette. He does not interact with his son at all.

CLOSE on Nick as the light of the projector reflects on him. He's not smiling anymore.

FADE OUT.

EXT. CEMETERY - MORNING

Rows of gravestones. All the same and going on as far as the eye can see.

Titles SUPERIMPOSE.

**Always choose the future over the past.**

FADE OUT.

CLOSE ON A RECYCLE BIN

Overflowing with bottles and cans.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - MORNING

Nick goes through his stuff. He's been up all night. Kenny tries organizing some clothes but he can't help but check on Nick.

Nick comes up to him and hands him a box with the Super 8 projector and reels.

NICK

This goes in the for sale pile.

Kenny takes it as Nick sits down in his Lazy Boy. Kenny brings over Nick's high school yearbooks.

KENNY

What about these?

He hands them to Nick, who starts looking at them.

ELLIOT

Hi, Nick. Kenny.

Elliot stands above Nick in suit and tie.

NICK

(not looking at him)  
Elliot.

ELLIOT

You need to use the bathroom again?

Nick still reads.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Well, if you need to use the phone.  
Long distance, whatever.

Nick stops reading the yearbook.

NICK

Elliot, your business is your business. I won't tell anyone.

Elliot exhales.

ELLIOT

Nick, if you ever want to join me we have a men's group every Thursday night at the church. We get some pizzas and sodas. It's just a bunch of guys talking. Some people find it very helpful.

NICK

I appreciate the offer, Elliot.

ELLIOT

Sure. Oh. I forgot to tell you. Those brown patches on your lawn, it's not dogs. Your lawn is sick. It's a disease called St. Augustine Decline. If you don't fix it the whole thing will die. But you're lucky, it's still early.

NICK

(staring at his lawn)  
Is there a cure?

ELLIOT

Well, you can't spray because it actually lives inside the blade. You can fertilize but that only delays the inevitable. Only thing you can do is put new plugs in. Pretty soon the new stuff crowds out the old stuff. Good as new.

NICK

Thanks, Elliot.

Elliot gives him a little wave and gets in his truck. Nick goes back to his yearbook. He looks at the notes.

INSERT - A note reads, "*Dude, you rock! So psyched to get out of here. Let's rage this summer!*"

INSERT - Another note, next to a cheerleader's headshot. "*I still can't believe u banged Stephanie! See you in college. 4 more years of drinkin' & fuckin! (a smiley face behind it)*"

KENNY  
(pointing to the book)  
Is that yours?

Kenny comes over and looks over Nick's shoulder. Nick has found his class picture.

KENNY (CONT'D)  
You look happy.

NICK  
I was, I guess. What grade are you in?

KENNY  
Eighth. What happened?

NICK  
What do you mean what happened?

Kenny looks at him.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Life happened. Work happened,  
marriage happened.  
(shifting gears)  
You shouldn't be here with me.

KENNY  
Why not?

NICK  
At your age, I was going to parties.  
Having fun. Meeting girls.

KENNY  
Were you popular in school?

NICK  
I don't know. I guess so.

Kenny just gives him a look.

NICK (CONT'D)  
You know what you want to do when  
you get out of school?

KENNY  
I don't know. Maybe open a store.  
I like selling stuff. It makes  
people happy.

NICK  
Stuff doesn't make people happy.

KENNY

It makes some people happy.

NICK

Who?

KENNY

People who don't have stuff.

Nick smiles.

NICK

You're a born salesman.

Kenny smiles. Nick looks back down at the yearbook.

A picture of an attractive but geeky looking girl, DELILAH ARMSTRONG. *"Nicholas, you're a diamond in the rough. Hiding behind that jock is a nice guy. You can't fool me! I know you'll never call...but here's my # 555-786-4504."*

CUT TO:

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

Nick stands by the Tiki Bar. The yearbook is open in front of him. He dials a number on Elliot's phone and watches Specialist Sears' nurse take him on a walk.

NICK

Hi, is this Mrs. Armstrong?

We hear an OLDER woman's voice respond.

NICK (CONT'D)

Hi. Mrs. Armstrong. This is Nicholas Porter. I went to high school with your daughter Delilah?

The woman's voice rises in recognition.

NICK (CONT'D)

He passed away just after high school ma'am.

She asks him something.

NICK (CONT'D)

Yes ma'am. I'm on the high school reunion committee and we are trying to contact Delilah. Do you have her address or phone number so I could send her some information.

She gives Nick the information.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 (writing in the year book)  
 Thank you. It's nice talking to  
 you too.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE- LATER

CLOSE ON A SPRINKLER HEAD

It is wedged between two beer bottles so that it can't move.

WIDEN OUT to reveal Nick getting sprayed down. He has erected part of his tent to screen his body from his neighbors. The cool water is having a sobering effect.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

Nick looks through his dresser for something clean. He picks a pair of jeans and a decent button down shirt.

CUT TO:

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Nick rolls Kenny's bike down the driveway. He carries a plastic bag. He looks semi-presentable. Kenny sits on the Lazy Boy.

NICK  
 So. When's your sister come home?

KENNY  
 Not until eight.

NICK  
 I'll be back before then.

KENNY  
 McKinney is pretty far.

NICK  
 I'll be fine. I need the exercise.

Nick goes into his wallet and pulls out ten bucks. It looks like almost all he has left.

NICK (CONT'D)  
 Here. Order something in. Whatever  
 you want.

He hops on the bike and starts to peddle away.

NICK (CONT'D)  
(yells over his shoulder)  
Always remember to make eye  
contact!

As Nick rides away the mailman walks up and puts his mail in the box.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

CLOSE on spinning wheels.

Reveal Nick weaving down the road on his old ten speed.

VARIOUS SHOTS as he makes his way through town. He is out of shape but seems kind of happy to be free of his lawn.

EXT. LESS UPSCALE SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

The houses are smaller in this neighborhood. Bungalows. Less well kept. Nick gets off his bike. He is sweating from the long ride and lack of alcohol in his body.

Nick holds a piece of paper. He looks up at the addresses.

EXT. DELILAH'S HOUSE - DAY

Nick finds the address on the paper. He takes Kenny's bike and puts it against the fence a few houses down, out of sight of Delilah's house. He walks back and enters her yard. Inside the house he hears children making a ruckus.

EXT. DELILAH'S FRONT DOOR - DAY

Nick stands outside. He sees his armpits are soaked. He smells them. He hesitates but finally decides to knock on the screen door.

DELILAH (O.S.)  
Just a minute.

Nick looks around the neighborhood. This is a bad idea.

DELILAH ARMSTRONG opens the door. No makeup. Hair up. She is attractive, with bright eyes hidden behind a tired face. She keeps the screen door closed as she sizes Nick up.

DELILAH (CONT'D)  
 Are you selling magazines? Because  
 I bought some yesterday.

Nick just stares at her.

DELILAH (CONT'D)  
 I'm a little busy with the kids so  
 can you come back another time?

She goes to close the door.

NICK  
 Delilah? It's Nick. Nick Porter.

Delilah opens the door. Looks at him through the screen,  
 studying his face.

DELILAH  
 Nicholas? Oh my god.  
 (smiling)  
 What are you doing here?

NICK  
 I was just in the neighborhood and  
 thought I would drop by.

DELILAH  
 (wariness setting in)  
 Wow. How did you find me?

NICK  
 I called your parents. They gave  
 me your info.

DELILAH  
 Oh.

Delilah's DAUGHTER jumps into her arms. Delilah assesses  
 Nick as he stands on her front porch. He is not a threat.

DELILAH (CONT'D)  
 What a surprise. Do you want to  
 come in for a minute? I'm just  
 getting dinner ready for the kids.

Nick looks in the house. A part of him isn't comfortable  
 being indoors anymore.

NICK  
 That's okay. I just figured I'd  
 stop by. Say hello.

He just stands there.

DELILAH

(sensing he wants to talk)  
Well, listen. I'll bring the kids  
outside to eat. It's pretty out.  
You just wait out there.

EXT. DELILAH'S HOUSE - LATER

Delilah's two YOUNG CHILDREN sit at a small picnic table on  
the lawn eating chicken fingers and pizza. Nick and Delilah  
sit on an old porch swing drinking lemonade.

DELILAH

I went to L.A. to study acting. My  
accent got me work for awhile. I did a  
TV commercial with Brad Pitt. It was  
for Japan so nobody's seen it, of  
course. We're in the desert at this old  
gas station with tumbleweeds going by  
and all. Drinking beers, which you  
could never show in the U.S. Anyway,  
these Japanese tourists pull up, holding  
one of those star maps. I know. It  
sounds stupid. So I say, "Y'all look  
lost." And then Brad smiles and he  
takes the map and points to his house.  
He was a real sweetheart.

(she is done reminiscing)

Anyway, after Shane was born, my  
husband just up and left. So I came  
back here. It's a good place for the  
kids to grow up. It's safe.

Delilah stops her story, distracted by a clinking noise. She  
looks down at Nick's hand. It trembles, shaking his ice in  
the glass.

DELILAH (CONT'D)

I'm sorry.  
(realizing she's blabbing)  
I haven't talked to an adult in a  
while. How's your lemonade?

NICK

(embarrassed by his hand)  
It's great.

DELILAH

It's store bought. Paul Newman's.  
The kids like it. But what about  
you? Are you married?

NICK

Yes. I am.

DELILAH

Kids?

NICK

We talk about it. I guess we're waiting for the right time.

DELILAH

Trust me, there isn't one.

NICK

How do you handle all this?

DELILAH

All what?

NICK

The responsibility. Taking care of them by yourself. Supporting them.

DELILAH

I guess I don't really have a choice do I? My dad always used to say, "Delilah, good without the bad ain't no good at all."

Delilah's daughter comes up and sits on Nick's lap. She smiles at him.

DELILAH (CONT'D)

She likes you.

Nick is uncomfortable with the young girl on his lap.

DELILAH (CONT'D)

You're a natural.

Delilah sips her lemonade. Nick smiles awkwardly as Delilah's daughter just sits there, smiling at him.

HOLD on Nick and Delilah's daughter, staring at each other.

EXT. DELILAH'S HOUSE - LATER

Delilah is walking Nick to the front gate.

DELILAH

Where's your car?

NICK  
(covering)  
Down the street.

DELILAH  
It was really nice seeing you.

NICK  
It was nice seeing you too.

Nick shakes her hand. She pulls him in for an awkward hug, which he then holds a bit too long. He starts walking away.

DELILAH  
Nick? Is there some other reason  
you came here?

NICK  
What do you mean?

DELILAH  
I'm sorry...you show up here at my  
house. Your clothes. Your hand.  
You can barely stand.

NICK  
I'm sorry.

She picks up her kids. He takes the yearbook out of the plastic bag. Shows her the page she signed.

NICK (CONT'D)  
When we were in high school you  
wrote this.

Delilah looks at Nick. Reads the entry.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Was that just something you said to  
everyone?

DELILAH  
Nick that was twenty years ago.

NICK  
I know. I know. This is so  
fucking stupid.  
(to her daughter)  
I'm sorry.

DELILAH  
We weren't really even friends.

NICK

You're right. I'm sorry. It was really good to see you.

He starts walking away.

DELILAH

Wait.

She walks to him.

DELILAH (CONT'D)

There was this one time. We were at a party at Brian Seaver's house. Everyone was really drunk and a one of the baseball guys started, you know trying to. I was screaming bloody murder but nobody did anything. Well, you came in and hit him. Broke his nose, I think. You left your girlfriend at the party and you took me home. I think you got suspended for a game or something for fighting.  
(off Nick's look)  
You don't even remember that do you?

NICK

No.

DELILAH

You have a good heart. That doesn't change. You call me when you clean up. We'll get a coffee. Okay?

Nick doesn't move.

DELILAH (CONT'D)

Are you going to be alright?

Nick, anything but "alright" smiles at Delilah. Nick walks away. His face turns pained as years of failure wash over him.

INT. CITY BUS STOP - EVENING

Nick sits staring into space, Kenny's BMX his only companion. A bus pulls up. He gets up slowly. He haphazardly puts Kenny's bike on the front rack of the bus and gets on.

INT. CITY BUS - CONTINUOUS

Nick stands up front, scrounging up enough money for the fare. He walks to the back and sits, looking out the window, watching the city go by.

EXT. NICK'S STREET - NIGHT

Nick walks with the bike up to his front yard. It's late and Kenny is gone.

Nick looks in the fridge. His beer is gone. He looks behind the tiki bar. Takes out a couple of empty bottles of beer. He sips on a last bit of backwash. He is sweating. He needs alcohol. He sees a hand printed sign on the couch. It reads "*Had to go home, see you tomorrow for the big day.*"

Nick walks over to Kenny's house. He knocks on the door.

A young woman, KENNY'S SISTER, opens the door.

NICK

Hi. I'm Nick. I live over there.  
Is Kenny here?

KENNY'S SISTER

I know who you are. He's sleeping.

NICK

I just need to ask him something.

She just stares at him.

NICK (CONT'D)

(agitated)

See, my fridge was filled with beer  
and now it's gone. Can you just  
wake him and ask him where it is?

KENNY'S SISTER

No.

NICK

Come on.

She shuts the door in his face.

NICK (CONT'D)

Okay. Sorry to disturb you.

He walks back to his house. Frustrated. He paces.

INT. SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - SAME

Samantha is cleaning the house. She hears something outside. She looks over to Nick's yard. He is stumbling about holding his samurai sword. Fighting with an invisible enemy.

INT. ALLSTON HOUSE - SAME

Elliot and Kitty watch Nick from their window as he slashes with his sword.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - SAME

Nick throws his sword down. He picks up his Yankee baseball. He holds it in his shaky hand. He takes it out of the case. Looks at all the names. He looks at his house.

INT. KENNY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

In his bed, Kenny stares up at the ceiling with an open sales book on his lap, listening to Nick. He hears a crash. He goes to the window and sees Nick standing in front of his house, his window broken by the baseball.

EXT. SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Samantha walks outside, carrying a glass of water and a bottle of pills.

She crosses the street to Nick's lawn.

REVEAL Nick lying on the ground. Gasping for air and sweating profusely. He is staring straight up into the sky.

Samantha kneels down and lifts his head up. She puts two pills in his mouth and gives him some water.

SAMANTHA

These are Valium. They'll help.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

Nick is on the Lazy Boy. He is feeling no pain.

NICK

(looking around)  
Did I hurt anyone?

SAMANTHA

No.

NICK

Thanks.

SAMANTHA

(getting up)

I'm going to go. You should get some sleep.

NICK

Stay. Please.

She sits back down. Looks at him.

SAMANTHA

You need some help.

NICK

I've tried help.

SAMANTHA

Maybe it wasn't the right kind. You know there's new medication and therapies.

NICK

I don't need medication.

SAMANTHA

You can't live like this.

NICK

Why not?

SAMANTHA

It's just not normal.

NICK

Normal? What's normal? Mr. Sears over there keeps photos of the people he's killed in a scrapbook. That guy, Stanley whatshisname who lives in the blue house, his wife blew her brains out last month when her daughter didn't make cheerleading. Kenny practically lives by himself. Elliot and Kitty, I won't even tell you what they do. I'm no different than any of you. I just don't hide in my house.

SAMANTHA  
What does that mean?

NICK  
What?

SAMANTHA  
"Any of you." What does that mean?

NICK  
Nothing. I was just saying...

SAMANTHA  
You said, "any of you."

NICK  
Never mind.

SAMANTHA  
I'm a big girl. Go ahead.

NICK  
I don't want to do this.

SAMANTHA  
Say it.

Nick doesn't want to, but he can't help himself.

NICK  
Your husband. What's his name?

SAMANTHA  
Jack.

NICK  
Jack. Right. He started up in a regional office, right?

SAMANTHA  
Yes.

NICK  
Danner is based in New York. He impressed people. Moved him up to the big leagues. How many years?

SAMANTHA  
Two.

NICK  
And now back to the regionals. You sacrificing your "promising career"  
(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)  
(he makes quotations)  
as a photographer for him.

SAMANTHA  
So?

NICK  
I figured you out in five minutes.

She says nothing.

NICK (CONT'D)  
He drinks. I'm not sure whether he  
hit you or fooled around. Maybe  
you threatened to leave but he  
knows you won't.

Samantha eyes start to water.

NICK (CONT'D)  
You thought getting pregnant would  
help. But it didn't. So they  
transferred him down here because  
he fucked something up and you  
probably thought the change of  
scenery would be good for you. It  
might even save your marriage.

SAMANTHA  
You must be really good at your  
job.

Samantha starts to walk away. Nick yells after her.

NICK  
You should get some curtains.

She turns to face him.

SAMANTHA  
Why, so I don't have a drunk  
staring at me all day?

NICK  
No. So you don't have to look at  
your future.

She walks over to one of Nick's trash cans and pulls out his  
beer which she has hidden away. She throws the cans at Nick.

SAMANTHA  
Fuck you! Fuck you!

Nick covers himself up, trying to avoid being hit.

Samantha throws the last one. Catches her breath.

EXT. TEXAS PLAINS - DAY

Wide on a small house isolated in barren fields. Ominous clouds fill the sky. THUNDER punctuates the silence.

Titles SUPERIMPOSE.

### EXPECTATION

**If you always expect the worst you will never be disappointed.**

A lightning bolt explodes from the clouds and hits the house. The CRACK of the bolt is followed by a SIZZLING SOUND.

CUT TO:

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - DAWN

CLOSE UP on bacon SIZZLING on a George Foreman Grill. Fat drips into a handy drain container.

CLOSE on Nick. Passed out on the couch, empty beer cans by his face.

He wakes up painfully and sees Kenny cooking breakfast.

NICK

Hey.

KENNY

Hey.

Nick looks over at Samantha's house. Kenny carries a tray with the bacon, some Doritos and a beer over to Nick.

NICK

(looking at it)

Thanks.

Nick looks at the yard. The mess he made from last night is cleaned up. Kenny has organized things.

Nick gets up to look at Kenny's handiwork. By the sidewalk he has taken Nick's camping gear and set it up into a little tableau. The tent has been taped up and pitched, the lantern hangs from a tree, Nick's stuffed coyote sits out front.

NICK (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Nice display work.

(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)  
(to Kenny)  
How long have you been here?

KENNY  
A couple of hours.

Kenny has also taken Nick's tiki bar and created a little environment. Nick looks on approvingly.

He walks over to his clothes. They are laid out as if the lawn was a Gap. Color coordinated and well folded.

Nick picks up an old jean jacket and reads the tag.

NICK  
Antique jean jacket from the 70's.  
(to Kenny)  
Very rare?

KENNY  
I'm making it easy for the customer.

Nick picks up a large mirrored frame priced at fifty cents. It holds a picture of Nick and Catherine at their wedding (her face is obscured). Nick smiles at the young and happy version of himself. He is distracted by his reflection in the mirrored frame. Unshaven, bloated, miserable - the antithesis of the photo he holds.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON NICK'S FACE

He chews his bacon. A SPRINKLER can be heard off screen.

WIDEN OUT to reveal Nick standing in his shower contraption. He stares at the picture of Catherine.

CUT TO:

Nick sitting in his chair, still chewing on the bacon.

Nick looks at all of his stuff. At his beer. He stands up.

Frank pulls up in his unmarked car. He gets out, donning his aviator glasses.

FRANK  
How's it coming?

Nick stands next to him. Looks over his goods.

NICK  
Good. Can I get you a coffee?

FRANK  
I'm good thanks.

NICK  
I'm gonna sell what I can and move on.

FRANK  
And leave all this?

NICK  
(selling himself)  
Catherine - we can - I can work  
this out.

Nick gives Frank a hug. Nick smiles. Frank, unbeknownst to Nick has a sad look on his face.

FRANK  
I'm proud of you bud.  
(getting in his car)  
There's a meeting at the Y tonight.

NICK  
(pointing at him)  
I'll be there.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

A cup of water boils on the George Foreman grill. Nick pours some Folger's crystals in and steels himself for the day.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

People are starting to arrive. One of his dad's albums spins on the record player. Specialist Sears has a fanny pack in his lap, the de facto cashier.

Nick stands with a guy who is looking at one of his suits.

GUY  
How much for this and the blender?

Nick looks at the price. Realizes something.

NICK  
I got engaged in this suit.

The guy just wants the price. Nick is waffling on the sale. Kenny sees what's going on. He comes over.

KENNY

We'll do both for sixteen.

GUY

How do I know if the blender works?

Kenny goes over and plugs it in. Runs it.

KENNY

It's great for margaritas.

GUY

Sixteen, then?

KENNY

(looking over to Nick)  
Is sixteen okay?

Nick looks at Kenny. He nods.

CUT TO:

A fishing line as it dances back and forth across the sky. Nick is casting over the lawn with a fly rod as a HEAVYSET MAN in black socks and shorts looks on.

NICK

Have you ever fished the Guadalupe?

HEAVYSET MAN

No.

NICK

At sunset, with the water like glass. It's religious.

HEAVYSET MAN

The tag says twenty. I'll give you fifteen.

NICK

It's carbon fiber. Strong and lightweight.

(looking at the tag)

Made in the U.S. before they moved manufacturing to China. And it's a steal at twenty. I hate to let it go.

The guy thinks Nick is working him but actually he really isn't sure he wants to sell.

HEAVYSET MAN

Okay. I'll do twenty.

Nick looks at the rod for a moment and then hands it to the man in exchange for a twenty.

CUT TO:

Kenny is selling one of Nick's old jackets to a YOUNG GUY. HIS GIRLFRIEND watches him try it on.

KENNY

(deadpan)

That looks really good on you.

GIRLFRIEND

(to Kenny)

Isn't it cute? It's so retro.

KENNY

Really cute. Old school.

YOUNG GUY

I'm not sure.

KENNY

Your girlfriend is.

Kenny winks. He looks over at Nick, who smiles at him.

CUT TO:

Nick with a young TEXAN LADY, all dolled up with her FRIEND on an "adventure" at the suburban yard sale. She is looking at Nick's poker table.

TEXAN LADY

Isn't this darlin'?

FRIEND

Larry has been buggin' me for one of these for the basement.

Nick smiles politely.

TEXAN LADY

(looking at the tag)

It's expensive. Don't you think?

NICK

Ladies, where are y'all from?

TEXAN LADY

Richardson.

NICK

Home of the Bulldogs. Do you play?

TEXAN LADY 2  
Our husbands are obsessed.

NICK  
What if I told you I could teach  
you to whip them on this table?

The women smile.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Kenny grills hot dogs for people on the George Foreman Grill.  
He looks over at Nick who is having a good time teaching the  
ladies to play.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

Nick and Kenny are loading the poker table into a Ford  
Excursion. One of the ladies gives Nick a kiss on the cheek.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

A young HIPSTER goes through Nick's albums. Nick comes up  
behind him.

HIPSTER  
You can't hardly even find this  
stuff anymore.

NICK  
I know.

HIPSTER  
These are cherry.

The hipster has a pile of albums.

HIPSTER (CONT'D)  
How much for these?

NICK  
I'm sorry. They aren't for sale.

HIPSTER  
C'mon man. You have to sell these  
to me. What do you want for them?

NICK  
I can't.

HIPSTER  
Dude. I'm begging you.

NICK  
I'll tell you what. Pick one and  
I'll give it to you.

HIPSTER  
Come on, give me a price.

NICK  
Sorry.

The guy is bummed but he sees Nick is serious. He chooses.

HIPSTER  
This one.

Nick looks at the album. Smiles.

NICK  
First edition. Mint condition.  
Good choice. Enjoy it.

The guy walks away.

NICK (CONT'D)  
Hey. Just one thing before you go.

CUT TO:

THE RECORD PLAYER

Nick puts the needle on the record.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE

The song starts to play. Nick stands and listens.

He closes his eyes.

He opens them and watches the yard sale go by in slow motion.

He watches Kenny sell. All of his items, the items he has  
been using over the last days, going to different people,  
different worlds, and leaving his.

FADE OUT.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Nick stands in his yard. They have sold a lot of his stuff. It's been a good day. A few stragglers still shop.

Nick notices the strange man who bought the Listermint is sitting in his Lazy Boy. He puts the chair in recline mode.

Nick walks over to him.

NICK  
How's the Listermint treating you?

SHOPPER  
(oblivious)  
How much for the chair?

NICK  
Can I ask you why you want it?

SHOPPER  
I need a new chair.

NICK  
What happened to your old one?

SHOPPER  
It got a TV over at a sale in Ennis. I need a new chair. Old one is no good.

Nick ponders this logic.

NICK  
Eighteen. It's real leather.

SHOPPER  
Sixteen. It's stained. It's got your sweat all over it.

NICK  
Seventeen and you've got a deal.

He gets up and shakes Nick's hand and gives him a hug.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - LATER

Nick watches the shopper pull away in an old VW Squareback. The Lazy Boy is haphazardly attached to the roof. He honks his anemic horn. Nick waves, watching him drive away.

The mailman, still talking on his cellphone, comes up to Nick and hands Nick his mail without looking at him. Nick smiles. He looks across the street at Samantha's house.

EXT. SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Nick rings Samantha's doorbell. No answer. He knocks.

NICK

Samantha. Please. I know you're  
in there.

He waits. The deadbolt clicks. The door cracks open. Nick enters.

INT. SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He follows the sound of scrubbing into the kitchen. Samantha is attacking the grout lines on her tile countertop with a brush. She doesn't look up at Nick. She just scrubs.

NICK

I wanted to apologize for last  
night.

(beat)

You came to help me and I wasn't  
ready to hear it. Anyway, I'm  
sorry.

SAMANTHA

(without looking at him)

It's okay. I shouldn't have  
pushed.

NICK

No. It's not okay. I don't know  
you and I don't know your husband.

Samantha stops scrubbing.

SAMANTHA

See. That's the problem. You do  
know me and you do know my husband.

(she starts scrubbing  
again)

I don't even know why I'm doing  
this.

Nick is afraid to say anything more. Finally he breaks the silence.

NICK

You know, they have these special pens you can get over at the hardware store. You go right over the old grout and Wham! Good as new.

Nick puts on a salesman's smile. Samantha, her back to him, surrenders a little smile. She looks out her window as Kenny works cleaning up Nick's yard.

SAMANTHA

It looks like the sale went well.

NICK

We did all right. Anyway, Kenny and I wanted to invite you to a little celebration we're having.

SAMANTHA

I'm pretty busy. My husband's coming in tomorrow...

NICK

How long have you been in Texas?

SAMANTHA

Almost a week.

NICK

And you haven't had real Texas BBQ yet?

SAMANTHA

No.

NICK

Well, I think it's time. Besides we need someone to drive us.

Samantha still hesitates.

NICK (CONT'D)

Kenny's buying. Come on. It'll be fine.

Samantha looks at Nick, who smiles at her. She smiles.

EXT. SONNY BRYAN'S SMOKEHOUSE - EVENING

An unassuming beige one story building with yellow and red neon signs. The parking lot is filled with fancy cars and people waiting in line to eat.

EXT. SONNY BRYAN'S SMOKEHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Nick is at a pay phone.

NICK

Hey. It's me. I just wanted you to know things are going well. I sold a bunch of stuff today. It felt good. Call me when you're ready. I'm not sure where since I don't have a phone. Anyway. I miss you. Bye.

He hangs up and walks over to Samantha and Kenny who sit in old wooden schoolhouse chairs eating BBQ. They are having a good time.

Nick raises a glass of sweet tea.

NICK (CONT'D)

To a successful sale.

They all click glasses.

NICK (CONT'D)

I'll tell you Kenny, you have the gift. When you start your business you sign me up.

Kenny smiles.

NICK (CONT'D)

(to Sam)

You ready for tomorrow?

SAMANTHA

I think so. I got a lead on a teaching job here in Dallas. They have day care and everything.

NICK

That's great.

SAMANTHA

What about you?

NICK

Tomorrow, Kenny and I finish the job. And then, I don't know. Find someplace to live. Find a job. Try to get my life together, but just the good parts.

SAMANTHA  
To the good parts.

Samantha raises her glass. Nick and Kenny toast with her.

NICK  
(getting up)  
I'm gonna hit the head. If you see  
the waiter, I'm getting the check.

INT. SONNY BRYAN'S SMOKEHOUSE BATHROOM - LATER

Nick stands at the urinal. Someone comes up next to him. He looks over. Does a double take. It's his boss, Gary. Gary notices the attention and looks over at Nick.

NICK  
Hi Gary.

GARY  
Nick. Wow.  
(he laughs uncomfortably)  
Uh, what brings you into the city?

NICK  
Just having dinner with some  
friends. How about you?

GARY  
I'm here with some of the guys.

Gary tries to finish peeing, but has a bit of stage fright.

NICK  
How's everything at work?

GARY  
Same old, same old.

Nick finishes up and goes to wash his hands. Gary looks back at Nick in the mirror as he pisses.

GARY (CONT'D)  
Oh. They got rid of that Sharon  
girl. Turns out she was a nut job.  
They found out she had threatened  
to sue two other guys at her last  
job at Kittridge. Total bullshit.  
She used a fake name and resume  
when she came to work for us.  
(Gary finishes up)  
Wow.

(MORE)

GARY (CONT'D)

If you hadn't stabbed my Mustang,  
you probably could have had your  
job back. Sued for wrongful  
termination even.

Nick gives it a shake and zips up his pants.

GARY (CONT'D)

I'll see you around.

Gary wipes his unwashed hand on Nick's back as he leaves.  
Nick stands alone looking in the mirror.

EXT. SONNY BRYAN'S SMOKEHOUSE - LATER

Sam and Kenny sit outside waiting for Nick. Two OFFICE EXPO  
EMPLOYEES in suits stand in front of them, having a smoke.

EMPLOYEE

Did you see Porter? Sixteen years  
of service and I heard he is  
sleeping on his fucking lawn.

EMPLOYEE 2

He's toast. Done.

EMPLOYEE

Better him than me.  
(finishing his cigarette)  
I've got to get home to the wife.

They go to their cars.

Kenny and Samantha sit there, saddened by what they've heard.

Nick comes out putting on a happy face.

NICK

Ready?

INT. SAMANTHA'S CAR - EVENING

Samantha drives Nick and Kenny home. They are silent.  
Country music plays in the background. Something like, "All  
My Exes Live in Texas." Nick, noticing the silence starts to  
sing with the radio. He urges Kenny and Samantha to join.

Samantha resists at first but can't help but smile. Learning  
the chorus she starts to sing along.

Kenny starts to sing too.

EXT. SAMANTHA'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

We hear them sing as the car drives away down the highway.

INT. SAMANTHA'S CAR - LATER

They drive through Plano.

Kenny sleeps in the back.

Nick looks at something out the window.

THROUGH THE WINDSHIELD, A large brick church building with lights on. A few people stand on the steps outside smoking.

Nick looks at Samantha.

NICK

Can you stop the car?

Samantha looks at Nick, puzzled, but she pulls over.

Nick looks out the window. Samantha follows his gaze. Sees what he is looking at. She pulls over.

NICK (CONT'D)

You mind taking Kenny home?

Samantha smiles.

NICK (CONT'D)

Thanks.

Nick gets out of the car. He looks like a kid going to his first day of sleep away camp. He waves to Samantha.

She waves back and watches Nick walk to the church.

He goes up the steps, shakes a guy's hand and heads inside. Samantha watches through a window as Nick join a group of people sitting inside.

INT. PLANO SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

Nick sits in the waiting area. Frank comes into the station. Nick stands and they shake hands.

FRANK

Hey. What are you doing here?

NICK  
 Came to see you. I missed you at  
 the meeting.

Frank smiles and pats him on the back.

FRANK  
 Sorry. I got called out on an  
 emergency. How'd it go?

NICK  
 Okay. It was good.

FRANK  
 Come on back.

INT. DETECTIVES' PIT - NIGHT

Nick sits at Frank's desk as he finishes a phone call.

FRANK  
 ...and the kid's fine? Okay. Good.

Frank hangs up.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
 Listen, I have to take a statement.  
 Give me a minute and we'll get a coffee?

NICK  
 Sure.

FRANK  
 Okay.

Frank walks out.

Nick looks around. He is happy. If not at peace, he is at least making forward progress. And he's not drunk.

A cellphone RINGS on Frank's desk. It's one of those customized musical rings. The tune sounds familiar. Nick cocks his head, trying to place it. He picks up the phone and realizes what it is he is listening to.

One of the Japanese tunes that plays on the speakers for his wife's koi fish.

The ringing stops.

Nick no longer looks happy.

He looks around the pit. It's pretty empty.

Nick picks up the phone. Presses send. Someone picks up.

CATHERINE (O.S.)

Hey. Sorry to bug you again, but I was going to order in. Do you want something? Frank? Frank?

Nick looks at the phone. He presses end and puts it down on the desk.

CUT TO:

CLOSE ON A FIFTH OF VODKA

The clear liquid drains from the bottle. The camera reveals Nick sucking it down like a newborn at his mother's breast.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE PARKING LOT - SAME

Nick exhales. Opens another fifth and starts drinking.

CUT TO:

INT. DETECTIVES' PIT - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

Nick sits in the chair across from Frank's desk. He stares straight ahead.

Frank, in another room, sees Nick is back. He walks in.

FRANK

Where the hell did you go?

Frank looks over at Nick who hold his gaze, hard. Frank knows an angry drunk when he sees one.

NICK

Can I stay at your house tonight?

FRANK

Why don't I get you a hotel room.

NICK

I think it would be better if I stayed with you.

FRANK

You know you can't do that.

Frank rubs his eyes. Nick's eyes start to water.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
She didn't have anywhere to go.

NICK  
She could've gone to her sister's.

FRANK  
She wanted a drink, so she came to me.

NICK  
We always joked about it.

FRANK  
What?

NICK  
The Thirteenth Step.

FRANK  
(playing dumb)  
What?

NICK  
First you teach them the Twelve  
Steps, and then you get 'em in bed  
and teach them the Thirteenth Step.

FRANK  
It's not like that.

NICK  
You're her sponsor.

FRANK  
She came to me...

NICK  
...don't give me that bullshit!

People notice the commotion but this is nothing unusual.

Nick laughs. Then stares, hard, at Frank.

FRANK  
Nick. Don't do this. Not here.  
Let's go get a coffee and talk.

Nick's face begins to quiver.

He leaps over the desk at Frank, trying to kill him. He gets his hands around Frank's neck for a second but Frank's training kicks in and he quickly drops Nick to the floor. He pins Nick's arm behind his back and uses his other hand to drive his face into the floor.

FRANK (CONT'D)  
 (yelling)  
 You're a fucking loser! She  
 deserves better, you piece of shit.  
 She deserves better.

An officer pulls Frank off of Nick. He resists, getting a couple of kicks into Nick's ribs.

Frank realizes everyone is looking at him. He walks away. Nick lies motionless on the floor.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. A JAGGED SNOWY PEAK

Clouds rush by a Matterhorn-like peak. Impossible to summit.  
 Titles SUPERIMPOSE.

**Courage is doing what you are afraid to do.**

CUT TO:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - AFTERNOON

Out a car's side window, the houses of Plano blur together.

REVERSE to reveal Nick, complete with blood caked nostril and split lip, sitting in the back of Frank's unmarked police car. He stares out the window as the world passes by.

INT. FRANK'S CAR - SAME

Frank looks at Nick in the rear view mirror. It is clear they haven't spoken since last night.

FRANK  
 Some guys in Richardson want me to  
 run for Sheriff out there. They  
 think we need a Latino in office.

NICK  
 You can't even speak Spanish.

FRANK  
 (angry)  
 I can speak Spanish, Nick.  
 (calming down)  
 (MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

Do you know the success rate for marriages when one person gets sober and the other doesn't?

NICK

Is it higher than the suicide rates for cops?

FRANK

(not paying attention)

Almost zero. I know this because I go to meetings. I do the work.

Nick stares out the window.

FRANK (CONT'D)

She came to me about six months ago. I wanted her to leave you but she wanted to give you another chance. Said she still loved you, even after everything you'd done. And you go out and get drunk and fuck another woman. I mean it's perfect actually.

NICK

How could you lie to me? Pretend like everything was okay?

FRANK

How long has it been since you slept together? Who's lying here?

Frank pulls into the driveway.

NICK

Don't pull into my driveway.

EXT. NICK'S STREET - SAME

The car reverses out of the driveway. Parallel parks.

INT. FRANK'S CAR - SAME

Frank turns the car off.

NICK

What do you want?

FRANK

Catherine wants a divorce. And she wants the house.

NICK

That's it?

Frank takes a large envelope off the passenger seat.

FRANK

(turns to look at Nick)

These are divorce papers. The house keys are in there. Some spending money, too. She wants to keep this amicable. Sign the papers and you'll get your share.

NICK

My share?

Frank slides the envelope through the plexi partition in the car. Nick takes the package. He looks at it and then looks at Frank.

NICK (CONT'D)

I'm forty two years old, I'm an alcoholic and I don't know what to do here, Frank.

FRANK

You clean yourself up. You get a new job, you'll be fine.

NICK

My boss called every company in the Midwest.

FRANK

So go back to New York.

Frank doesn't answer.

NICK

I need your help.

FRANK

I'm sorry. I can't help anymore.

NICK

You're my sponsor, my only friend. Tell me what to do, Frank. Please.

CLOSE on the rear door lock as it pops up.

FRANK

I'll tell you what to do. You go inside. Take a hot shower. You eat something. Sign the papers.

(MORE)

FRANK (CONT'D)

Make sure that you get all of your things. Find someplace to live. Go to meetings. You move on.

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Nick stands on the curb, holding the envelope as Frank pulls away. Frank stops. Puts it in reverse and comes back to Nick. He rolls down the passenger window.

FRANK

I'll be by tomorrow to check on the fish.

Frank pulls away.

Nick looks over at Elliot who is watering his lawn. Elliot gives him a small sympathetic wave.

Nick walks over to his lawn. It's empty. His stereo system, his albums, everything else he was planning to sell, is gone.

He sits down, holding the envelope that Frank gave him. He opens it and dumps the contents out on the grass.

He picks up the divorce papers. Starts reading them but stops after a couple of pages. He picks up the house keys.

CUT TO:

INT. NICK'S HOUSE - SAME

CLOSE on a wall. A series of unfaded rectangles on the wallpaper show where Nick's pictures once hung.

CLOSE on the carpet. Four indentations where the Lazy Boy once sat.

CLOSE on a wood shelf. Dust surrounds clean areas where Nick's baseball and trophies were displayed.

CLOSE on a flat screen TV, hanging at an angle from its wall mount where Cate tried to pull it off and failed.

CLOSE on Nick's autographed Yankee ball. On the carpet surrounded by glass. A hand reaches down and picks it up.

Nick stands, holding the ball.

WIDER. Inside the house for the first time. It is clean, tasteful. The decor has a Japanese bent to it.

## NICK'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Nick opens the drapes. He looks through the broken front window at his stuff strewn across the front yard just as Catherine must have right before she left him.

Nick stands there. Taking it all in. Over this we hear the sound of someone PEEING into a toilet.

## INT. NICK'S POWDER ROOM - DAY

Nick finishes up. He wipes the toilet clean. Flushes. Watches the water go down.

CUT TO:

## INT. CATHERINE'S CLOSET - DAY

Nick stands in front of her clothing. He pulls out one of her blouses. He leans in and smells it, inhaling deeply. Nick hears something in the backyard. A SLAPPING. The moment is gone. Nick turns and slowly walks out of the room.

## EXT. NICK'S BACKYARD - DAY

Nick stands outside. The JAPANESE MUSIC plays softly. The SLAPPING sound is louder. He walks forward and stops. Stares down at his feet.

CLOSE ON a beautiful red and white koi fish, struggling on the cement. Its tail slaps in futility as it tries to fill its lungs with air it cannot breathe.

HOLD on the fish. Then on Nick's face.

Nick picks up the koi and places it back in the water.

## INT. NICK'S ROOM - DUSK

Nick lies on the bed, looking up at the ceiling. He looks over to Catherine's side of the bed. Stares at her pillow. He is interrupted by the sound of music, coming from outside.

## INT. NICK'S HOUSE - DAY

Nick opens the door. Kenny stands there holding a fanny pack.

NICK

Hi.

KENNY

Hi.

Kenny hands Nick the fanny pack. It's filled of small bills.

NICK

What's this?

KENNY

Our profits. I sold it all. Sam helped me. I put the stuff you wanted to keep in the side yard. I set the stereo up for you in case you wanted to listen to music.

Nick looks past Kenny and sees that his stereo system and albums are all set up on the front lawn.

NICK

Thank you.

He puts his hand on Kenny's shoulder. Gives him a hard hug.

He hands Kenny the fanny pack.

NICK (CONT'D)

Here's your take.

Kenny looks at the cash.

KENNY

This is too much.

NICK

I was skimming your profits for beer. Take it. Never go into business with a friend.

Kenny looks at the cash. He smiles and puts his hand out.

KENNY

It was a pleasure working with you.

Nick shakes his hand.

Kenny walks across the street, a spring in his step.

Nick goes to his album collection and starts looking through it.

He looks up and sees Samantha standing on her lawn.

They look at each other.

Nick looks down at his vinyl collection. He picks an album.

He places it on the record player. It begins to play.

He walks to the curb.

Samantha crosses the street.

Nick offers her his hand.

They walk onto the lawn.

Samantha puts her arm over Nick's shoulder.

She lays her head on his shoulder and they dance.

WIDE as they dance slowly on the lawn. They hold each other, saying nothing.

The song ends and so does the moment.

Samantha and Nick separate. She reaches into her pocket and pulls something out. She hands it to Nick, gives him a kiss on the cheek and runs back to her house.

Nick watches her go. He looks down at the thing she gave him.

It's the Polaroid she took of him. Underneath she has pasted her fortune from Chang's. Nick looks at it.

CLOSE on the fortune. It reads, "Everything is not yet lost."

Nick looks over at Sam's house and smiles.

FADE OUT.

A 1970'S TEST ROCKET STANDS AT THE READY ON THE LAUNCH PAD

Ignition. It soars into the sky, higher and higher.

Titles SUPERIMPOSE.

**FAILURE:**

**Failure is the opportunity to begin again, more intelligently.**

As the rocket makes an unintended left turn and starts spinning and spinning until it hits the ground and explodes.

FADE OUT.

OVER BLACK - THE SOUND OF SPRINKLERS

FADE IN:

EXT. NICK'S HOUSE - DAWN

CLOSE on a sprinkler as it spits water.

CLOSE on the Koi Autofeeder as it releases its pellets.

CLOSE on the Koi, sucking their food down.

CLOSE on the front window of Nick's house still broken but there is a board over it.

CLOSE on three recycling bins. They are overflowing with bottles and cans. A trash truck pulls up. A garbage man gets off and starts filling the truck.

The trash truck pulls away revealing Nick's lawn. There is nothing on it. Just grass.

A taxi pulls up in the foreground blocking our view.

EXT. NICK'S STREET - DAWN

CLOSE on loafer clad feet. The feet pause halfway up the lawn in front of a box of old albums. Nick's albums.

Samantha stands at the front door. Smiling. The loafer's owner, her husband, comes up to her. They kiss and hug.

CLOSE on Samantha's face as she smiles.

She looks at Nick's stereo and album collection on her lawn. Her smile fades slightly as she looks at Nick's empty lawn.

EXT. ELLIOT AND KITTY'S HOUSE - DAWN

Elliot comes out in his robe. Holding his coffee. He notices a basket on the porch. He bends down and pulls something out of it. It is one of Nick's vintage Playboys. Elliot looks around the neighborhood. He smiles.

EXT. KENNY'S HOUSE - DAWN

Kenny comes outside. There is a small box sitting on his stoop. The same box in which Nick received his Swiss Army knife. He picks it up. Examines it.

He opens the box.

He takes out the autographed Yankee baseball. He smiles.

CUT TO:

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

An empty apartment. We hear a BUILDING SUPERINTENDANT talking outside. He opens the door and enters, followed by Nick, carrying a small gym bag. He looks better. He's clean shaven, has gotten a haircut and wears decent clothes. They tour the interior which is clean with standard furniture.

BUILDING SUPER

The cable is on. Linen service twice a week. All new appliances. The pool is next to building B. If you don't like the furniture we've got other options.

Nick looks around. It's hard to tell if he is happy or sad.

NICK

Thank you.

BUILDING SUPER

Well, I'll let you get settled.

He leaves. Nick sits down on his new TV Chair. Tries to settle in. Exhales. He turns on the TV. He switches the channel until he reaches a baseball game. The Texas Rangers play the New York Yankees. He watches for a moment.

CUT TO:

Nick goes into the kitchen and stares out the window for a moment. He opens his gym bag and pulls out his yearbook.

He grabs his phone and a chair from the dining room and walks to a sliding glass door. He opens it and walks outside to a little patio. He puts the phone down on a small outdoor table and sits down. He opens the yearbook. As he searches through it...

FADE OUT: