

December 24, 2013

Mr. Dennis Sobin
Prisons Foundation/Safe Streets Art Foundation
2512 Virginia Avenue NW
#58043
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Mr. Sobin,

Enclosed you will find my original screenplay, The Ninth Life. I am sending it to you to publish on your website. I hope that the "nubs" on the left hand side will not inhibit your scanning process since this copy had been previously bound.

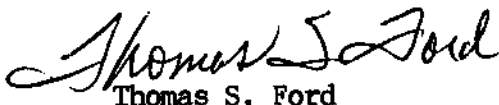
I intend to send you my memoir as soon as I reconcile copyright usage issues for outside material that I refer to in my book.

I have enclosed a SASE for you to let me know that you have indeed received my screenplay and, if possible, the direct URL address that my work can be viewed at.

Incidentally, I think my screenplay may be too long to qualify for the "From Prison to Stage" presentation since it would be considered a full-length script at ninety minutes. Perhaps you could also let me know if it would in fact be allowed in the competition.

I thank you for this wonderful opportunity for my work to be made "public" and if there is anything that I can do for your cause, I will be happy to do so.

Happy Holidays and my best regards,



Thomas S. Ford

Thomas Ford 91457-004
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P. O. Box 779800
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THE NINTH LIFE

An Original Screenplay Written by

Thomas S. Ford

Logline:

When a loner finds a stray kitten and decides to end his exile from society, he has no idea that these events will expose his secret and reveal a past that isn't necessarily what it appears to be.

Synopsis:

With the prompting of his psychologist, Wilson Berman takes in Elder Hanson, a young woman and her four-year-old child, Kelly. As they develop a friendship, Wil's estranged ex-wife, Janet, threatens to reveal his dubious past. All the while, Kelly becomes enamored with Wil's stray kitten, Toby. Meanwhile, Elder is trying to patch her relationship with Teddy, the father of Kelly. His increasing erratic behavior and irresponsibility has forced her to take refuge surreptitiously with Wil. One stormy night, as Janet confronts Wil and Teddy learns the whereabouts of his family and violently intrudes upon their serene retreat, they will all learn the true nature of an event from twenty years ago that nearly destroyed their lives and now threatens their very future. Only the stray kitten, Toby, can help them through the Ninth Life.

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fiction/screenplay * WGA registered #1665679 * Copyright 2013

FADE IN:

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET - DAY

WILSON 'WIL' BERMAN, 50s, a tall, once handsome man walks slowly but deliberately down the street. He is caught up in his thoughts.

Suddenly from the corner of his eye, he notices a small, black kitten who appears to be homeless.

WIL

Hey kitty, kitty. Are you lost?
You look like a little fella I
knew a long time ago.

CLOSE ON KITTEN

MEOWS.

BACK TO SCENE

Wil bends over and picks it up.

WIL

I'll bet you're hungry.
(looking around)
Do you belong to someone?
(beat)
Well, I guess you do now.

Wil continues walking with kitten held to his chest.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DR. CALLEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Psychologist DR. CALLEN, 60s, is Wil's shrink. He has a modern office decorated with Batman memorabilia. They are in mid-session.

WIL

Suzy wasn't so thrilled with the
new kitty, but she'll warm up to
him soon enough.

DR. CALLEN

Now that you have a new addition
to the family, have you given any
more thought to renting out your
vacant rooms?

WIL
I really could use the money, but
the dragon --

DR. CALLEN
(interrupting)
Your ex-wife, Janet?

WIL
(nodding)
Since mom left the house to both
of us, I fear she will have to put
her two cents into it. She has to
control everything. It never used
to be that way.

DR. CALLEN
You've been away a long time.
People change over time and
Janet's control issue may stem
from her sense of abandonment.

Wil becomes tense and defensive.

WIL
That wasn't my fault. I got
fucked over worse than anyone. I
should be the one with control
issues.

DR. CALLEN
Instead you have trust issues,
which is to be expected. It's
been two years since you've come
home, but now you have to start
opening yourself to others. You
can't change the past, but you can
move beyond it and learn to live
for today. Learning to trust
others will help you to trust
yourself more.

Challenged in his self-imposed exile, Wil grabs a pillow
and clutches it to his chest subconsciously for comfort.

WIL
It's been over twenty years now,
how do I learn to trust people all
over again?

DR. CALLEN
What about renting out your apartment? That is certainly something that you have to have a trusting relationship for.

WIL
I trust Suzy. Isn't that enough?

DR. CALLEN
Ah, but Suzy's trust is unconditional. You're going to have to try a bit harder than that if you want to move forward.

Dr. Callen gives him a look that imparts Wil is not trying hard enough.

WIL
I know that. It's just not that easy.

DR. CALLEN
You've been coming to see me for some time now and you trust me, don't you?

WIL
Yes, but that is easier now.

DR. CALLEN
But it wasn't at first. You have to take steps to open yourself to others.

Wil tosses the security pillow to the side.

WIL
I can't do that with the dragon, she --

DR. CALLEN
(interrupting)
Janet.

WIL
Janet. She makes it very difficult to open up. She blames me for everything that has gone wrong in her life. She's miserable.

DR. CALLEN

So you've limited your interactions with her, right?

WIL

As much as I can. We still have some personal business between us, but I try to keep it brief.

DR. CALLEN

That's the best at this time. You know by now that you can't change others. Just keep working on the trust issues that you have and you will begin to move away from the past.

Wil becomes distracted in thought and grabs for the pillow again.

WIL

She's coming over this weekend, so I'm a bit nervous. She's always so angry. It stresses me out so much.

(beat)

Cripe, she doesn't even like Suzy, and everybody likes Suzy!

DR. CALLEN

Perhaps if you disarm her anger. Maybe offer her lunch or show an interest in her personal activities.

Wil looks incredulously at Dr. Callen.

WIL

Maybe ask her for a roll in the hay? The dragon --

(catching himself)

Janet isn't that easily manipulated.

DR. CALLEN

Persuasion can take many forms.
(beat)

Are you still sexually attracted to her?

WIL

Sure, when I think about it, but she makes it hard to think about that when she's around.

(beat)

I think I'll just stay out of her way as much as possible.

DR. CALLEN

I'm sure you'll do the right thing when the time comes.

(looks at watch)

Speaking of time, ours is just about up.

WIL

See you again next week, same Sat day, same Sat couch?

Dr. Callen smiles as he checks his calendar.

DR. CALLEN

You got it. Try working on the trust issue and we'll discuss it more then.

Wil sets the pillow aside again and stands.

WIL

Thanks, Commissioner.

Dr. Callen chuckles as Wil shakes his hand and exits.

INT. GREEN'S GROCERY STORE - MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

VINCE GREEN, 40s, commanding owner of store sits behind desk as ELDER HANSON, 25, one of his cashiers, sits across from him. She is pretty in an everyday sort of way.

ELDER

(embarrassed)

I wouldn't normally ask, but Kelly's school --

VINCE

(interrupting)

Elder, it's okay. We all need help once in awhile. Besides you're practically family to me.

Vince opens a drawer, pulls a few bills out, and places them into an envelope and passes it to Elder.

ELDER

Thank you. I'll pay it back
before you know it.

(beat)

This really means a lot to me.

VINCE

And you mean a lot to me. We've
known each other a long time now.

As Elder rises to leave, there is a KNOCK at the DOOR and
PEGGY, 30s, another cashier, pops her head into the
office.

PEGGY

'Scuse me, Boss. Someone up front
to see you.

Elder exits past Peggy absent-mindedly.

VINCE

I'll be right there.

INT. GREEN'S GROCERY MAIN STORE - DAY

Peggy catches up to Elder as they walk towards the front
of the store.

PEGGY

You all right, Sweetheart?

ELDER

Sure. I'm just in a little fog
today.

PEGGY

You let me know if you need me to
cover for you if you want to take
a break. Okay, honey?

ELDER

Thanks, Peggy.

As they walk by the service counter, they pass Wil Berman
who waits patiently as Vince comes up the aisle to greet
him.

VINCE

Yes sir, may I help you?

WIL

I'd like permission to post an ad
for rooms I'm renting.

VINCE

Sure, our bulletin board is right over there by the exit.

Vince points to the exit area.

WIL

Yes, but it seems to be filled up.

VINCE

Let's see if we can make some room for you.

As Vince and Wil walk to the bulletin board, they pass the checkout stands. Peggy is just finishing ringing up customer, SADIE.

PEGGY

Thank you, Sadie. See you again next week.

SADIE

Now Peggy, don't forget Thelma's Tupperware party this Saturday.

PEGGY

By golly, I did almost forget. I'll see you there, Honey.

Sadie exits as Peggy turns to Elder who is restocking a merchandise display.

PEGGY (CONT)

Say Elder, how'd you like to go to a Tupperware party this weekend?

ELDER

I wouldn't mind it, but I can't afford that stuff.

PEGGY

None of us can, Darlin'. It's just an excuse to get together and eat and gossip. It'll be fun.

ELDER

I'll have to see if Teddy can watch Kelly.

PEGGY

How is that adorable bunch of sunshins? She's just the cutest little bunny.

ELDER
She's doing really well --

Elder is interrupted as TEDDY LESTER, 28, storms into the store and runs quickly up to her. He is disheveled and anxious.

TEDDY
We need to talk!

ELDER
But Teddy, I'm in the middle --

TEDDY
(interrupting)
Now!

Elder and Peggy are both startled by Teddy's outburst.

PEGGY
(frowning)
Go on, Sugar.

Teddy leads Elder outside the store, passing Vince and Wil as they exit. From the large window, Vince watches as Teddy appears to rant and rave, waving his arms around to a bewildered Elder.

Once Elder begins to respond to him, Teddy violently grabs her by the shoulders and begins to shake her back and forth.

EXT. GREEN'S GROCERY STORE - DAY

Vince rushes from the exit and runs to where Teddy and Elder stand. Wil watches from the window.

VINCE
Teddy, get your hands off her and
get the hell out of here!

Teddy lets go of Elder and steps back. Vince pulls Elder to himself defensively.

TEDDY
(to Elder)
We'll finish this later!

Teddy exits toward his truck.

VINCE
 (yells to Teddy)
 Next time, I'm calling the cops.
 Stay away from here, you hear me?

Vince and Elder turn and walk towards store entrance.

INT. GREEN'S GROCERY STORE - DAY

Vince and Elder enter store walking past Wil and cashier stands toward the office as Peggy rings up an on-looking customer.

ELDER
 I'm sorry, Vince. He's upset, but
 I never thought he'd cause a scene.

VINCE
 I don't care what's wrong with
 him, I better never see him touch
 you like that again.

ELDER
 He's been angry lately, but he's
 never gotten physical like that
 before.

They reach the office and enter.

INT. GREEN'S GROCERY STORE - MANAGER'S OFFICE - DAY

Vince motions for Elder to sit as he sits behind his desk.

VINCE
 Elder, you're like a daughter to
 me and I'm concerned about your
 relationship with Teddy. What's
 going on with you two?

Elder hesitates. Tears well in her eyes.

ELDER
 He's lost his job again. We're
 losing our apartment.
 (starts crying)
 I told him I can't move back in
 with his father again.

VINCE
 Is that why he got so violent with
 you just now?

Elder nods her head.

ELDER
His dad's a drunk. I'm not going
to raise my daughter with that.

VINCE
What are you going to do? Is
there anything I can do for you
and Kelly?

ELDER
Vince, you're always so great to
me. Just bear with me through
this. I'll figure something out.

VINCE
I'll always be here for you and
Kelly.

INT. WIL BERMAN'S KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Wil enters from outside carrying grocery bags.

WIL
Suzy, I'm home.
(sets bags down)
Suzy?

Wil starts to put groceries away as he hears a SOFT MEOW.
He turns to find his new kitten standing in the doorway
to dining room.

CLOSE ON KITTEN

BACK TO SCENE

Wil walks over and picks kitten up.

WIL
Hello there cutie. I'll bet you're
hungry.
(beat)
Do you know where Suzy is?

Wil pulls a bowl from the cabinet, fills it with cat
food, and sets it and kitten on table to eat. He turns
and looks at dining room doorway.

WIL
Well, hello stranger. Where have
you been hiding?

CLOSE ON SUZY

A full-grown cat sits in doorway.

BACK TO SCENE

WIL (CON'T)

Suzy, are you still mad at me for
bringing this little guy home?
Come on, let me feed you.

As Wil places bowls of food on the floor, his rotary-dial
TELEPHONE RINGS. He crosses kitchen to answer it.

WIL

Hello?

(listens)

Yes sir, of course I remember.

(listens)

No kidding? Sure, tomorrow at
three will be fine.

Wil hangs up the phone and stands bewildered.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WIL BERMAN'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Wil's home is old-fashioned. He has not updated it since
his mother passed. He is sitting on sofa watching
television while Suzy sits beside him.

The DOORBELL RINGS, he rises, shuts the T.V. off, and
looks at Suzy.

WIL

Now behave yourself.

CLOSE ON SUZY

looks at him oddly as he crosses to answer the door.

BACK TO SCENE

He opens the door to find Vince and Elder standing there.

WIL

Hey Vince, come on in.

Vince and Elder enter. Wil closes the door behind them.

VINCE
Wil, this is Elder. She's a
cashier at the store.

ELDER
Hi.

Wil and Elder shake hands.

WIL
Yes, I remember you. Please come
in. Have a seat.

Wil motions them to the sofa. Elder sits next to Suzy.

ELDER
What a beautiful cat.

Elder pets Suzy.

WIL
If she could talk, she'd agree
with you. Her name is Suzy.

VINCE
Elder is looking for a room and I
immediately thought of you.

ELDER
Yes, may we see it?

WIL
Sure, it's this way.

Wil leads them down a hall off of the dining room.

WIL (CON'T)
It's really more a suite than a
room.

He opens a door and leads them in.

WIL (CON'T)
A very large bedroom with a
private bath.
(opens another door)
And a nice sized sitting room.

ELDER
It's lovely.

VINCE

(to Elder)

What do you think? It's big
enough for you and Kelly.

WIL

Who's Kelly?

ELDER

She's my four-year-old daughter.

Wil shakes his head.

WIL

I'm sorry, I should have put no
kids in my ad.

ELDER

(disappointed)

Oh, and it's just so perfect too.
I should have known there'd be a
hitch.

Needing an excuse, Wil fumbles for an explanation.

WIL

With the cats and all, I just --

VINCE

(interrupting)

Wil, would you mind if Elder took
a look around the backyard? I'd
like to talk with you for a moment.

WIL

Um, sure.

Elder takes the hint and exits as Wil and Vince look
after her.

EXT. WIL BERMAN HOUSE BACKYARD - DAY

Elder walks around the beautifully landscaped yard and
sits upon a stone bench.

VINCE (O.S.)

(from distance)

Elder.

Elder turns to see Vince and Wil at rear of house. She
walks over to join them on the patio.

ELDER
You have a beautiful home.

WIL
Thank you.

VINCE
(to Wil)
So, tomorrow night?

Wil looking reluctant, nods his head.

WIL
It's a date.

Wil and Vince shake hands as Elder looks bewildered.
Vince and Elder walk to car until out of earshot of Wil.

VINCE
After tomorrow night you'll have
a new place to live.

Vince gives a devilish smile as they enter the car.

INT. GREEN'S GROCERY STORE - DAY

Peggy and Elder are setting up cash registers for the day.

ELDER
It's just happening so fast.

PEGGY
Honey, honestly I think this will
be good for you and Kelly. After
the other day, I'm afraid he
might harm you.

ELDER
Teddy's never hurt me before, but
to be honest, his behavior has
been erratic lately and I am
concerned. I don't want Kelly
being exposed to stuff like that.

PEGGY
If this Wil guy offers you his
place Sweetheart, you take it and
kiss Teddy and that no-good daddy
of his goodbye.

Elder pauses. She looks determined at Peggy.

ELDER

This won't mean it's over between me and Teddy, after all he is Kelly's father. We'll just live separately until he pulls himself out of this rut. Everything will work out, you'll see.

PEGGY

You're a smart cookie, I know you'll do what's right.

INT. DR. CALLEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Wil and Dr. Callen are in mid-session.

WIL

She seems like a nice enough gal, but she's got a little girl and a rowdy boyfriend. Her boss has promised me that he'll back her and that I don't have to worry.

DR. CALLEN

Are you worried about what kind of tenant she'll be, or whether this rental thing is too much too soon?

WIL

I guess a little bit of both, to be honest. I mean, she has a child for crying out loud.

DR. CALLEN

You're the landlord, not a babysitter. You don't have to raise her.

Wil appears very reluctant. He grabs a pillow and clutches it.

WIL

With what has happened in my life and at my age, I never thought I'd have to deal with the idea of kids again.

DR. CALLEN

That's the funny thing about life, we never know what might come our way. Even when we try and avoid it.

(MORE)

DR. CALLEN (CON'T)
Honestly, I think it could be good
for you to have some unavoidable
diversion in your life.

WIL
Aren't you paid to say that?

DR. CALLEN
I'm paid to listen.

Wil smiles and continues.

WIL
They're coming over tonight for
dinner. The guy bribed me with
steaks. He said I should meet the
little one and see how things go.

DR. CALLEN
That seems fair enough. If things
don't work out, you're under no
obligation and you got a good
meal out of it.

WIL
(jokingly)
What if they murder me?

DR. CALLEN
Then I guess you'll miss your
appointment next week.

They smile at each other as Wil pretends to throw the
pillow at him.

EXT. WIL'S BACKYARD GARDEN - EARLY EVENING

Wil is preparing a picnic table with plates, candles, ect.
As he lights the barbeque grill, Vince, Elder, and Kelly
enter from driveway.

WIL
You're right on time. Welcome.

VINCE
I hope strip steaks are to your
liking.

ELDER
We brought macaroni salad and corn
on the cob, too.

VINCE
Not to mention a nice bottle of
vino.

Not wanting to be left out, Kelly runs up with a paper in
her hand.

KELLY
And cake!

WIL
You've thought of everything.

VINCE
And this is our guest of honor,
Kelly. Kelly, this is Wil.

KELLY
Hi, I made you a picture.

Kelly hands Wil the hand-drawn picture.

WIL
Thank you, Kelly. It's nice to
meet you.

KELLY
It's a kitty-cat. My mommy says
you have a real kitty.

WIL
Yes, I have two. Would you like
to meet them?

KELLY
Yes!

WIL
Let me show you guys the kitchen
and then we can meet the kitties.

Wil helps carry items inside as he leads the way.

INT. WIL'S KITCHEN - EVENING

WIL
If you look around you'll pretty
much find what you need. This was
my mom's house and she was a cook
so it's stocked well.

VINCE
Good deal. Wine glasses?

Wil indicates the cupboard the wine glasses are in.

None for me. ELDER

No? WIL

I don't drink. ELDER

WIL
I'll have one, but first I have to
introduce somebody to someone.
Elder, you and Kelly come with me.

Wil, Elder, and Kelly exit kitchen for living room.

INT. WIL'S LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The three approach the sofa where Suzy lays.

WIL
Kelly, I'd like to introduce you
to Suzy. Suzy, this is Kelly.

Kelly giggles as Suzy yawns and stretches out one paw.

KELLY
That's a silly name for a cat.
(to Wil)
Can I pet her?

WIL
Sure. What did you think her name
would be?

Kelly pets Suzy.

KELLY
I don't know, maybe Fluffy. Mommy,
she's so pretty.

WIL
I have another kitty around here,
but he's kind of shy. Maybe later
he'll come out to meet you.

KELLY
What is his name?

WIL
Well, he doesn't have one yet.

KELLY

But what does his mommy call him
if he doesn't have a name?

WIL

He came to live with me because he
doesn't have a mommy. If he comes
out later, what's say you and me
name him together?

KELLY

Yeeh! Mommy, I'm gonna help Wil
name his kitty-cat!

ELDER

That will be fun.

(to Wil)

That's very sweet. Thank you.

WIL

How about we go and help Vince
with dinner.

EXT. WIL'S BACKYARD GARDEN - EVENING

Dinner is over and Wil, Elder, and Vince are talking as
Kelly chases fireflies nearby.

WIL

Now that we are relaxed, there are
a few things we need to discuss.

ELDER

(excited)

Of course.

WIL

I was at the store the day that
your boyfriend grabbed you. I
don't want him around here.

Elder looks a bit embarrassed.

ELDER

You don't have to worry about that
happening.

VINCE

He won't even know they live here.

WIL

I don't want any parties or
anything like that.

ELDER

I don't drink or smoke and neither does Kelly.

Wil smiles at Elder's joke.

WIL

You'll have to keep an eye on her and be with her at all times.

VINCE

She does now. You can't keep her away from Kelly.

Kelly enters from background.

KELLY

Mommy, can me and Wil find the kitty now so we can name him?

ELDER

Well Honey, it's kind of late and the kitty-cats are probably sleeping now.

Excited about the cats, Kelly persists.

KELLY

But we could wake him up.

WIL

Hey Kiddo, how about the next time you come by I can have the kitty all ready to meet you and we can name him then?

KELLY

You promise?

WIL

The moment you walk in the door. I promise!

KELLY

Okay, but will you give them a kiss goodnight for me?

WIL

(smiling)

I sure will, Sweetheart.

Totally enamored with Kelly, Wil turns to Vince and Elder.

WIL (CON'T)

When do you want to move in?

Vince and Elder smile and hug each other.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WIL'S HOUSE - MORNING

Elder drives into the driveway with Kelly and a backseat full of boxes. Peggy follows in her car, also with boxes. Wil enters front porch as they exit their cars.

WIL

(waving)

Goodmorning.

ELDER

'Morning Wil. This is my friend Peggy.

PEGGY

Hi.

ELDER

She's helping me today.

WIL

Vince came by with the big stuff earlier, so you're practically moved in.

Kelly excited to be there, rushes up to Wil.

KELLY

Is the kitty-cat awake now?

WIL

(laughing)

Yes, and waiting to meet you.

(to Peggy and Elder)

Come and have some coffee before you get started.

Wil opens front door as they enter. Kelly first, Peggy second, and finally Elder.

WIL (CON'T)

(to Elder)

She doesn't forget anything does she?

ELDER
 (laughing)
 Not a chance!

INT. WIL'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

PEGGY
 You have an adorable little home
 here.

WIL
 Thank you. Coffee's in the kitchen.

Elder and Peggy exit to kitchen.

WIL (CON'T)
 (to Kelly)
 And you sit right here and I'll
 bring someone out here to meet you.

Kelly plops herself on the sofa.

KELLY
 Yea!

Wil exits to bedroom as Elder and Peggy enter from
 kitchen with coffee mugs.

KELLY (CON'T)
 Mommy, Wil went to go get the
 kitty! He says I can help name
 him.

PEGGY
 Oh Honey, that is so sweet.

Wil enters with black kitten wearing a red bow and sits
 next to Kelly.

WIL
 (to Kelly)
 This is who wants to meet you.

Wil places the kitten in Kelly's lap.

KELLY
 He's a baby kitty!

WIL
 I knew a kitty just like him a
 long time ago. His name was Toby.
 (MORE)

WIL (CON'T)

As a matter of fact, I gave Toby to a little boy who was just about your age.

KELLY

I like that name. Mommy, can we name him Toby?

ELDER

If that's okay with Wil, Sweetheart.

Kelly looks at Wil.

WIL

Why don't you ask kitty if he likes that name.

Kelly picks up kitten and looks into his eyes.

KELLY

Do you like the name Toby?

The KITTEN MEOWS. Kelly smiles.

KELLY (CON'T)

He likes it!

WIL

I guess it's settled then.

ELDER

Kelly, you stay here on the couch and play with Toby while we move the boxes in.

KELLY

Okay, Mommy.

INT. ELDER'S SUITE - DAY

Elder and Peggy bring in boxes and set them down among several others.

PEGGY

Well Sugar, that about does it. This place is going to be adorable once you get it all together.

ELDER

(sadly)
Thanks, Peggy.

PEGGY

What's wrong, Sweetheart?

ELDER

I'm just worked up over the move.
I haven't seen Teddy in three days.
He's been staying at his dad's and
doesn't even know that I moved out.

Peggy stops puttering with the boxes and looks at Elder.

PEGGY

When are you going to tell him? Do
you think he'll take it well?

ELDER

I've left messages telling him
that I have something important to
talk with him about. I'm pretty
sure he'll be royally pissed.

PEGGY

You better make sure someone is
around when you talk to him, I
don't want him doing anything bad
to you or Kelly.

ELDER

I hope he doesn't get that crazy.

PEGGY

Just don't take any chances, Honey.

ELDER

You worry too much.

(beat)

Thank you.

Elder and Peggy hug.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WIL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Wil sits with Suzy on sofa watching T.V. as Elder enters.

ELDER

She's finally asleep.

(MORE)

ELDER (CON'T)
 I never thought I'd get her down.
 She's so excited about Toby.

Wil smiles as Elder joins him on the sofa.

ELDER (CON'T)
 Thank you.

WIL
 For what?

ELDER
 Giving us a chance. And for
 the cat thing with Kelly. Her
 daddy won't let her have one. For
 some reason, he hates them.

WIL
 I find them to be more trustworthy
 than most people. Suzy here is my
 best friend since my mom passed.

Wil pets Suzy.

ELDER
 When was that?

WIL
 Just over three years ago. This
 was her house.

Elder looks around the room.

ELDER
 It does have a mother's touch.
 Comforting...
 (beat)
 Have you lived here your entire
 life?

WIL
 I grew up here, but I was away for
 quite a long time.

ELDER
 Military?

Wil is caught off guard and clumsily looks at watch.

WIL
 Gosh, I didn't realize how late it really is. I've an early appointment in the morning. Front and back doors are locked. Just shut the lights off when you turn in. Good night.

Wil stands to exit as Elder looks on puzzled.

ELDER
 'Night.

WIL
 Come on, Suzy.

Suzy exits after Wil as Elder looks on.

EXT. TEDDY'S FATHER'S TRAILER - NIGHT (ESTABLISHING)

A ratty pick-up truck recklessly pulls up to the trailer.

INT. TRAILER - NIGHT

DANIEL LESTER, 40s, Teddy's father and drunken shell of a man, sits with a bottle of booze watching T.V. He is startled by loud SLAMMING of trailer DOOR.

DANIEL
 Theo, is that you?

TEDDY (D.S.)
 Who the fuck you think it is?

Teddy enters.

DANIEL
 Watch your mouth, boy.

TEDDY
 I told you not to call me that. I hate Theo!

DANIEL
 What the hell's got you so pissed off?

TEDDY
 I went by the apartment and she's moved completely out. I don't know where she went.

DANIEL

I thought that bitch was movin' in here.

TEDDY

She don't want to live here.
She's too fuckin' good to live in a trailer.

DANIEL

I was looking forward to spending alone time with my grandbaby, too.
(lifts bottle)
Have a drink, calm down.

TEDDY

How the hell am I supposed to calm down when Elder's got my baby hidden somewhere?

Teddy grabs bottle and takes a healthy swig.

DANIEL

You know where the slut works, just go pay her a visit there.

TEDDY

(lights cigarette)
You better believe it. She ain't running out on me no fuckin' way!

Teddy takes another swig from the bottle.

EXT. WIL'S HOUSE - DAY

Wil is watering his front lawn as a car pulls up and parks on the street.

WIL

Oh shit, I forgot.

JANET BERMAN, late 40's, angry ex-wife of Wil's exits car and crosses to Wil.

JANET

Company?

Wil follows her gaze to Elder's car parked in driveway.

WIL

Um, yeah.

JANET

Don't tell me you forgot I was coming by today. I told you I have to go through some boxes in the attic.

WIL

No, of course not.

(beat)

Listen, before you begin, why don't we have lunch? We could go out or I could make something.

JANET

Lunch? You're kidding, right? What are you up to? You want to poison me or something?

WIL

For crying out loud Janet, I'm trying to be nice.

JANET

Why would you want to do that?

WIL

I just think it's long overdue. I don't want to fight with you all the time. It's exhausting.

JANET

You want to talk exhausting? How about the years I put into this marriage after what you did to us. And trying to have a normal life again being on my own. You have some nerve telling me you're exhausted!

WIL

Janet, this has been hard on both of us, but we've got to let go of this and move on. For both our sakes.

JANET

Sounds like you've been to see the shrink again. When are you ever going to learn that everything can't be tied up in a neat, little bow --

Suddenly, Janet is distracted as she sees Elder and Kelly exit the side door of the house and approach their car.

JANET (CON'T)

Well now, what do we have here?

Wil turns to see Elder standing at her car.

ELDER

(waving)

Be back a little later.

Elder gets in car with Kelly and drives away.

JANET

She's a bit young for you and she has a child.

(beat)

So this is what all that "let's be nice" shit is about.

WIL

It's not what you think.

Janet becomes much more dramatic and facitious.

JANET

Oh no? Then what ever could it be? My mind is just a whirl with possibilities.

WIL

Now just calm down. Let's get something to eat and I'll explain everything to you.

Janet now shows more anger.

JANET

Wilson, she has a child! What in God's name are you thinking? Have you completely lost your mind?

WIL

I haven't lost my mind and I would appreciate it if --

Not wanting to hear anything further, Janet interrupts Wil.

JANET

Forget it! Forget it! I'll come back some other time. I can't even think straight now.

Janet turns and storms off to her car.

WIL

(yelling)
 You've got it wrong again, Janet!
 (to himself)
 Goddamn it!

EXT. GREEN'S GROCERY STORE - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

Teddy's pick-up truck pulls in and parks.

INT. GREEN'S GROCERY STORE - DAY

Teddy enters store making sure Vince doesn't see him. He stands behind stock display while Elder finishes with customer.

ELDER

(to customer)
 ... and your change. Thank you and
 have a nice day.

Customer exits as Elder turns to register and then turns to find Teddy standing in her check-out lane.

TEDDY

(in low voice)
 What the hell do you think you're
 doing?

ELDER

(startled)
 Teddy. Where have you been? I've
 been trying to reach you.

TEDDY

(angry)
 The question is, where have you
 been? I've gone to the apartment
 and you don't seem to live there
 anymore.

Elder looks around to see if Vince is around.

ELDER

I can't talk right now, and if
 Vince finds you here, he'll call
 the cops.

TEDDY

If you're trying to scare me, it
 ain't gonna work.

(MORE)

TEDDY (CON'T)

You've got my daughter and she needs her daddy as much as her mommy. How could you take her away from me?

ELDER

I haven't taken her away from you. We just can't live with your father.

TEDDY

It's only until I get a job again. We could save money and have him watch Kelly and drop the daycare.

Elder is shocked that he could think such a thing.

ELDER

I wouldn't let him watch my pet hamster.

TEDDY

You're really starting to piss me off.

ELDER

Look, I'm doing this for our daughter. She needs a steady, comforting environment, which I found, until you get a job and we work out the problems we are having.

TEDDY

Problems? What problems?

ELDER

Teddy, you're angry all the time. You've been reckless with your job and money. Since you've started hanging with your dad you've been drinking more, and half the time you don't even come home.

Teddy gets defensive.

TEDDY

So everything is my fault?

ELDER

It's not about fault. It's about responsibility.

TEDDY
Listen Bitch, I'm not gonna be
lectured --

Teddy is interrupted by Vince who's been standing nearby.

VINCE
Teddy, you've got three seconds
to leave my store before I call
the cops and have you arrested for
harassing my employee.

Teddy stares Vince down a moment.

VINCE (CONT)

One...

TEDDY
(to Elder)
This ain't over yet!

Teddy turns and storms out of the store.

ELDER
I'm sorry, Vince.

VINCE
Not to worry. That's probably the
last time we'll see him around here.

SQUEALING TIRES are heard from the parking lot.

EXT. TEDDY'S FATHER'S TRAILER - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

Elder's car pulls up outside. She is alone and goes to
the door and knocks. She knocks a second time and Daniel
finally opens the door. He is characteristically drunk.

DANIEL
If it isn't Ms. High and Mighty.

Elder ignores his greeting.

ELDER
Is Teddy home?

DANIEL
His truck ain't here, so it
appears he ain't either.

ELDER
I need to talk to him.

DANIEL
Why don't you come in and have a
talk with me?

Elder doesn't think this is a good idea.

ELDER
I think I'll stay out here.

DANIEL
You think you're so much better
than us.

He steps out of doorway and down in front of Elder.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
You think you can just take my
grandbaby and disappear into the
night and we won't do anything to
find you?

Elder starts to lose her cool.

ELDER
This is between me and Teddy.

DANIEL
Kelly is my granddaughter and
Teddy is staying with me, so that
makes it my business too.

ELDER
I'm not discussing any of this
with you. When Teddy gets back,
you tell him to call me.

Daniel looks past Elder.

DANIEL
You can tell him yourself, here he
comes.

Elder turns to see Teddy's truck heading for them. He
parks next to Elder's car and walks up to her as Daniel
stands near them. It is obvious he has been drinking.

TEDDY
If it isn't the runaway bride.

ELDER
We're not married.

DANIEL
Common law you are.

Elder gives Daniel a dirty look.

TEDDY
Where's my daughter?

ELDER
She's at daycare.

Teddy is beginning to get angry.

TEDDY
You know what I mean. Where are
you hiding out?

ELDER
Can we please discuss this alone?

Teddy exchanges glances with Daniel.

TEDDY
Anything you have to say, you can
say with my dad here.

Elder is reluctant to continue. She takes Teddy's arm
and moves them a step away from Daniel.

ELDER
We're staying with a friend for
awhile until you're able to find a
job and work on your anger issues.

DANIEL
The only reason he's mad is
because you're such a bitch.

Elder is exasperated and throws her hands up.

ELDER
(to Teddy)
You want us to move in with him?
You've got to be crazy if you
think I'm letting this man
anywhere near my daughter.

TEDDY
Who are you living with?

ELDER
That's not important right now. I
just need to know that you are
going to work on making things
better to get us back to where we
were.

Teddy tries to soften Elder up.

TEDDY
Baby, I'm working on finding a job
and everything will be fine again.
(beat)
Come on, move back in here with me.

ELDER
I can't do it, Teddy. I just
can't put my daughter through this.

TEDDY
She's my daughter too!

ELDER
Then work to make things better
for her. For us.

TEDDY
I'm doing the best I can.

Elder eyes him suspiciously.

ELDER
Are you? You smell like you just
drank a fifth.

Daniel interrupts.

DANIEL
All you ever do is bitch at him.
Let him have some fun.

ELDER
(to Teddy)
If you want to take this seriously,
call me. I gotta go.

As Elder turns to go, Teddy grabs her arm fiercely.

TEDDY
Don't you fuckin' walk away from
me.

Elder pulls herself away from him.

ELDER

If you ever touch me in anger again, I'll make sure you never see Kelly again.

DANIEL

If it was me, I'd smash your damn face in.

Elder turns to Daniel.

ELDER

That's just one more reason why you never see your granddaughter anymore.

Elder turns and walks to her car as Daniel yells after her.

DANIEL

I have just as much right to see that baby girl as you do!

Teddy watches Elder get in her car and drive away.

TEDDY

Shut up, Dad!

DANIEL

Theo, you better --

TEDDY

(interrupting)

I said shut up!

Teddy stands watching Elder drive away as Daniel indignantly walks to the trailer, enters and slams the door shut.

EXT. WIL'S HOUSE - EARLY EVENING (ESTABLISHING)

Wil's car pulls into driveway behind Elder's car.

INT. WIL'S KITCHEN - EARLY EVENING

Elder is cleaning up from dinner as Wil enters.

ELDER

Hi Wil. We just finished dinner.
Can I get you some?

WIL

No thanks. I ate out tonight.
Where's Kelly?

ELDER

She's in her room playing with
Toby.

WIL

It's hard to separate those two.

ELDER

She loves that little guy.
(beat)

I'm going to go give her a bath
and read her a story. After she's
asleep, I was going to make some
tea and sit out back and enjoy
this beautiful night. Care to
join me?

WIL

That's the best offer I've had all
week.

Suddenly, Kelly runs into the kitchen, completely naked.

KELLY

Mommy, I'm ready for my bath.

WIL

For God's sake Elder, she's naked!
Please put some clothes on her.

ELDER

(to Kelly)
Honey, go put your robe on. Mommy
will be right there.

KELLY

But it's bath time.

WIL

(angrily)
Put some clothes on!

Wil storms off as Elder stands bewildered and Kelly pouts.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WIL'S BACKYARD - NIGHT

Elder is enjoying tea on the patio as Wil enters from the house.

WIL
(sheepishly)
Hi.

ELDER
(aloof)
Hi.

There is an awkward silence as Wil sits down.

WIL
I'm sorry for losing my cool
earlier.

ELDER
She's just a little girl. She
doesn't know any better.

WIL
I know. I overreacted. I've
never really been around kids
before. I usually avoid people
altogether, especially naked
children.

Elder smiles and softens sympathetically.

ELDER
Would you like some tea?

WIL
Thanks.

Elder pours him a cup of tea and hands it to him.

WIL (CON'T)
So, are things going any better
with you and your boyfriend?

ELDER
Not exactly. He doesn't seem to
understand my point of view and
he's become so selfish lately.

WIL
I can relate to that.

ELDER
You can?

WIL
Remember the other day when I was
talking to that lady in the front
yard?

Elder nods.

WIL (CONT'D)
That's my ex-wife. I call her the
dragon. She does everything but
breathe fire. Although I have
seen smoke come out of her ears on
some occasions.

ELDER
(laughing)
I'm sorry to laugh, but that
struck me as funny.

WIL
(smiling)
When it comes to Janet, if I
didn't laugh, I'd be crying.

There is a brief pause as they sip their tea.

ELDER
So why did you divorce?

WIL
A whole bunch of reasons. As my
grandmother used to say, "nothing
in specific, and everything in
general". Unfortunately, I still
have some ties to her and have to
deal with seeing her from time to
time.

ELDER
Perhaps some day I'll meet her.

WIL
I won't wish that on you, but that
dark day may come about.

Elder raises her eyebrow questioningly.

ELDER
She can't really be that bad.

WIL

When she swoops down on her broom
one of these days and turns me
into a carnival side show act,
you'll see.

ELDER

(laughing)
Speaking of carnivals, I'm taking
Kelly to the county fair tomorrow.
How about you join us?

WIL

No thanks. Like I said, I'm not
big on people or crowds.

ELDER

It'll be fun and Kelly would love
to have you come with us.

Wil shakes his head.

WIL

Sorry, but no. Why not go with
Teddy?

ELDER

Because I don't want to fight all
day. I want to keep all that away
from my daughter.

WIL

Understood.
(beat)
I'm gonna turn in. Thanks for the
tea and sympathy, I enjoyed it.

Wil rises to exit.

ELDER

See you tomorrow.

Wil exits as Elder enjoys her tea.

EXT. WIL'S HOUSE - NIGHT INTO DAY (ESTABLISHING)

Time lapse of house from evening through to daylight.

INT. WIL'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Wil enters kitchen where Elder and Kelly are having
breakfast.

WIL
Goodmorning young ladies.

ELDER
'Morning.

KELLY
Mommy's taking me to the fair
today!

WIL
Oh boy, that will be fun.

KELLY
I asked mommy if Toby and Suzy
could go with us, but she said no.

WIL
Suzy doesn't like rollercoasters,
but sometimes if she finds my keys
laying around, she'll take the car
for a drive.

Wil winks at Elder.

KELLY
(laughing)
That's silly, cats don't know how
to drive.

WIL
Are you sure? Maybe they ride
motorcycles.

KELLY
(laughing)
No!

WIL
Bicycles?

KELLY
No!

Elder has a sneaky idea.

ELDER
Wil, why don't you join us today?
We can make a day of it.

KELLY
Yea! Come with us!

WIL
 (to Elder)
 You play dirty.

ELDER
 It's a beautiful day. Would it
 hurt you to get out and enjoy it?

WIL
 Have you been talking to my
 shrink?

Elder smiles.

ELDER
 It's just that Kelly and I enjoy
 your company --

KELLY
 (interrupting)
 Please Wil. Please, please?

ELDER
 And who else will be able to win
 us a big teddy bear?

KELLY
 I want a teddy bear!

WIL
 You two really know how to gang up
 on a guy.
 (beat)
 Okay, I'll go.

KELLY
 Yee!

WIL
 (to Kelly)
 But you better tell Suzy and Toby
 not to drive the car while we are
 away.

KELLY
 Okay!

Kelly jumps up and exits into living room.

KELLY (CON'T)
 Suzy, Toby...

Wil smiles and looks at Elder.

WIL
 You should be ashamed of yourself
 using your daughter to manipulate
 me like that.

ELDER
 (smiling)
 Let's hope she doesn't try
 teaching Toby how to ride her
 bicycle.

They both laugh.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HIGHWAY ROAD - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

Elder drives car to county fair.

INT. ELDER'S CAR - DAY

Elder drives with Wil in passenger seat and Kelly in
 child seat in back.

WIL
 I haven't been to the county fair
 since I was a little boy.

ELDER
 I'm glad we could persuade you to
 come with us. This is Kelly's
 first time, right Honey?

KELLY
 I want a teddy bear!

WIL
 We'll try to win you a really big
 one, okay?

KELLY
 Okay. Can we get one for daddy,
 too? I miss him.

ELDER
 Sure Sweetie. Don't worry, we'll
 see daddy really soon.

Wil turns to Elder as Kelly plays with a toy.

WIL
 So tell me, how'd you meet Teddy?

ELDER

I was nineteen and working at a thrift store. He came in with a bunch of junk to donate. I didn't have the heart to tell him that we would throw the stuff away. He left and came back an hour later, stammered around, and finally got the courage to ask me out. He was so cute and clumsy.

WIL

And you said yes?

ELDER

Indeed I did. We dated for two years and then God brought me my angel back there.

Elder nods her head toward Kelly in back seat.

ELDER (CON'T)

We moved in together and everything was good up until about two years ago.

WIL

What happened then?

ELDER

He went to work construction with his dad. I didn't think it a good idea, his father's a drunk.

WIL

Does Teddy have a problem with drinking?

ELDER

A problem? No, in fact, he does it quite well.

(frowns)

He's a binge drinker and he gets angry.

WIL

Has he always been like that?

ELDER

No, since he got fired from the construction job, it's gotten worse.

(MORE)

ELDER (CON'T)

Now he can't seem to keep a job
and he drinks more.

WIL

Is that why you don't drink?

Elder pauses to ponder Wil's question.

ELDER

My mother was an alcoholic. It
was hard to live with.

WIL

And your dad?

ELDER

Never knew him.

WIL

I'm sorry.

ELDER

That is why Vince means so much to
me.

WIL

He does care for you like a father.

ELDER

And he adores Kelly.

WIL

That's not hard to do. She's quite
a personality.

Hearing her name, Kelly is drawn away from her toy.

KELLY

Mommy, are we there yet?

ELDER

Just a few more miles, Sweetheart.

EXT. HIGHWAY ROAD - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

AERIAL SHOT - CAR

Elder is driving on road to county fair in the distance.

SERIES OF SHOTS - COUNTY FAIR - DAY

People riding various amusement rides.

Crowds walking and eating fair food.

People playing arcade games and winning prizes.

Wil, Elder, and Kelly enter county fair grounds.

ELDER

(to Kelly)

Now Honey, make sure you stay near
Mommy or Wil. We don't want to
lose you in this crowd.

Kelly, in the middle, grabs Elder's and Wil's hands as
they walk.

KELLY

Okay, Mommy.

ELDER

We should probably let Kelly ride
a few things before we eat
anything. No use paying for good
food just to have it barfed on the
person next to us.

WIL

Good idea.

ELDER

After we eat, maybe play some
games. Gotta let the food settle.

WIL

Spoken like a true mom. I'm
really impressed.

ELDER

Impressed?

WIL

You're so responsible for your age.
And your daughter is so well
behaved.

ELDER

It's hard work, but so worth it.

KELLY

Mommy, can I go on that ride?

Kelly points to a miniature Merry-Go-Round.

ELDER

Sure Honey, do you want mommy to go with you?

KELLY

I can go by myself, I'm a big girl.

ELDER

Okay, we'll sit here and watch you.

Elder points to a nearby bench and gives the ticket to the attendant as Kelly runs to a place on the ride.

WIL

(to Kelly)

Hold on tight.

KELLY

I will!

Wil and Elder sit on the bench as the ride starts.

ELDER

Did you ever want to have kids?

WIL

I never really thought too much about it. When Janet and I got married, we might have talked about it, but ultimately time got away from us.

Kelly waves to them from the Merry-Go-Round.

KELLY

Mommy, look at me!

Elder and Wil wave back to her.

WIL

I can't even imagine it now at this point in my life.

ELDER

It's one of the most challenging things, yet the most rewarding, too.

(beat)

I'd bet you'd make a great dad.

WIL

I don't think so. Children really frighten me.

ELDER
 (perplexed)
 Frighten you?

Kelly runs up to Wil and Elder.

KELLY
 Mommy, that was fun! Can I go on
 that one now?

Kelly points to a miniature tea cup ride.

ELDER
 Okay. Give this ticket to the man
 there before you go on.

Elder hands Kelly a ride ticket.

ELDER (CON'T)
 And don't run. I don't want you to
 get hurt.

KELLY
 I won't get hurt. You and Wil
 watch me, okay?

Kelly runs off to the tea cup ride.

ELDER
 (to Kelly)
 Don't run!
 (to Wil)
 That's the one thing that worries
 me the most about her at this age.
 That she'll fall and break
 something.

Kelly finds a spot on the ride and waves. They wave back.

WIL
 You think you'll have any more?

ELDER
 Kids? I don't know. Things will
 have to improve considerably with
 Teddy if that is going to happen.

WIL
 I'm glad you said that, I know
 that if Janet and I had had any
 kids, they would probably hate me
 too.

ELDER

Does she really hate you?

WIL

It sure comes across that way.
I'm certainly not her favorite
person.

Elder shows concern.

ELDER

I'm sorry to hear that. Maybe
some day you two can be friends
again.

WIL

Too many sorrows and too many
harsh words for that to happen now.

Kelly comes up to Elder and Wil.

KELLY

Mommy, you and Wil have to go on
rides with me now.

WIL

I was thinking the same thing.
Come on!

Wil grabs Kelly and Elder by the hands and leads them
through the crowd.

SERIES OF SHOTS - COUNTY FAIR - DAY

Wil, Elder, and Kelly ride various amusement rides.

The trio enjoy various fair-style foods.

All three watch the various livestock exhibits.

The group play different carnival games.

Wil, Elder, and Kelly carry small prizes as they approach
a ball-pitching game with large teddy bear prizes. The
game ATTENDANT eyes them.

KELLY

(pointing)

I want one of those teddy bears!

ATTENDANT

You heard the little lady, Dad,
knock the bottles over three
times, win your choice.

WIL

Well, let's give it a try then.

Wil pays the attendant and throws the first ball. It
knocks the bottles over. His second attempt fails to
knock all of them down.

ATTENDANT

Oh, too bad. Here you go little
one.

The attendant hands Kelly a very small prize.

KELLY

I want a big teddy bear.

The attendant addresses the crowd of on-lookers.

ATTENDANT

You hear that folks? Daddy's not
gonna wimp out on his little girl,
is he?

Wil stands challenged as he stares the attendant down.
The tension mounts as the crowd looks on.

CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTY FAIR MIDWAY - DAY

Wil, Elder, and Kelly, holding a huge teddy bear, make
their way through the crowd.

KELLY

Thanks for the teddy bear, Wil.

WIL

Your welcome, Honey.

(to Elder)

I guess I showed him who the wimp
is.

ELDER

Did you have to chip his tooth?

WIL

Can I help it I threw it so hard
it bounced and hit him in the face?

Wil smiles as Elder surpresses a laugh.

ELDER

I guess not.

WIL

Besides, I didn't want to
disappoint Kelly.

The trio approach a seating area.

ELDER

Let's have a seat, I'm tired.
(to Kelly)
How you holding up, Honey?

KELLY

I'm having fun, Mommy!

Kelly spots a kids bounce house ride not too far away.

KELLY (CON'T)

(pointing)
Can I go on that ride?

ELDER

I don't know, Sweetie. I think
maybe we should go soon. It's
getting late.

KELLY

Please, please Mommy. Just one
more. I want to jump around with
those kids.

WIL

(to Elder)
She has been a really good girl
today.

KELLY

See Mommy, Wil says yes!

ELDER

Okay, but you gotta promise me
you'll be careful.

KELLY

I promise! I promise!

Elder hands Kelly a ticket and she runs to the ride.

ELDER

No running!

(to Wil)

I hope she doesn't crack her skull open.

WIL

She'll be fine. Would you like a soda? I'm gonna get one.

ELDER

Sure.

Wil gets two sodas as Elder watches Kelly. Wil returns and hands her the soda.

ELDER

Awesome.

Wil sits down.

ELDER (CON'T)

I want to thank you for a wonderful day. I know that I put you on the spot this morning. It wasn't nice to do, but I'm glad you came with us.

WIL

If I would have thought about it too much, I probably wouldn't have. But I had fun and I'm glad I came too.

Suddenly, Wil and Elder are startled by a SCREAM coming from the direction of the bounce house. They turn to see the bounce house filled with smoke.

The ride is totally enclosed with only one entrance that is starting to collapse.

ELDER

Oh my God, Kelly!

Wil immediately jumps up and runs toward the malfunctioning ride as Elder follows.

WIL

Kelly! Kelly!

Wil reaches the ride and sees the ride ATTENDANT trying to extinguish a fire in the air pump with a towel. The ride has collapsed.

WIL (CON'T)

Hey, how many kids are in there?

ATTENDANT

I... I don't know!

ELDER

(searching the
crowd)

Kelly! Where are you?

WIL

(to Attendant)

Leave that! Help me get them out
of there!

Wil sees a child crawl from what used to be the entrance. He tells the attendant to hold the spot open as he enters the smokey ride.

WIL

Kelly!

As Wil enters the ride, a crowd has formed to watch and help. Wil spots a semi-conscious child and carries them to the exit. A MAN is helping hold open the entrance.

MAN

Are there more?

WIL

(coughing)

I'm not sure.

Wil returns to the smokey interior and finds another child. He struggles to bring the child to the exit. As a man takes the child from him, he turns back inside.

MAN

Get out of there!

PARAMEDICS and FIREFIGHTERS arrive and start to assist the injured and put out the fire. Wil struggles to stay conscious as he searches for Kelly.

WIL

(coughing)

Kelly!

Wil spots a small shoe and pulls it towards him. As he does, he realizes that it is worn by Kelly. He grabs the unconscious girl to his chest and works towards the exit.

Before he can exit, he goes unconscious and falls with Kelly. Firefighters pull him and the girl out.

ELDER

Kelly! That's my daughter! Is she okay?

(sees Wil)

Oh, Wil!

Paramedics administer oxygen to Wil, Kelly, and other victims.

ELDER (CON'T)

Are they going to be okay?

Wil begins to regain consciousness and starts to pull off oxygen mask.

PARAMEDIC

Sir, relax. Keep the mask on.

WIL

Kelly? Kelly! Did you get her?

ELDER

You saved her.

WIL

The others?

The paramedic replaces Wil's mask.

PARAMEDIC

Everyone is fine.

Kelly regains consciousness, coughing and crying. She pulls mask off.

KELLY

Mommy! Mommy!

ELDER

I'm here Honey! Oh thank God!

Kelly struggles with paramedic replacing her mask.

ELDER (CON'T)

Sweetheart, you're going to be okay. Leave the mask on and breathe. Mommy's right here.

Wil is now fully conscious as a firefighter approaches him.

FIREFIGHTER

Sir, how are you feeling?

Wil pulls his oxygen mask off.

WIL

I'm okay. Did you get everybody out?

FIREFIGHTER

Please keep the mask on.

Wil replaces the mask.

FIREFIGHTER (CON'T)

We've put out the fire and everyone made it out alive thanks to your quick action. You're a hero, sir.

As Wil's eyes well with tears as Kelly is loaded into an ambulance with Elder right beside her.

FIREFIGHTER (CON'T)

We're gonna take you to the hospital for observation, but everyone is going to be okay.

As Wil is loaded into the ambulance next to Kelly, the gathered crowd applauds him as a hero.

FADE TO:

EXT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT (ESTABLISHING)

Teddy's pick-up truck is parked outside.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

Teddy sits at the bar drinking and talking with DEAN, the bartender. Teddy is obviously drunk.

TEDDY

Dean, get me another, will ya?

DEAN

Dude, you better pace yourself or I can't serve you anymore.

TEDDY

Don't worry about that. I'm more pissed off than I am drunk.

DEAN

From where I stand, that's not
always a good combination.

Dean gets Teddy another drink.

DEAN (CON'T)

Nurse it this time.

TEDDY

(raising glass)

Here's to all the bitches.

DEAN

Trouble with the ladies. I should
have known.

TEDDY

She ain't no lady. She took my
kid and moved out. I don't know
where the fuck they are.

Teddy downs the drink and lights a cigarette.

DEAN

Just up and moved out? Man,
that's rough.

TEDDY

Says I need to be more
responsible.

(beat)

I'll get another job. I've got
skills.

(beat)

Give me another.

Dean leaves and returns with a cup of coffee.

DEAN

Here, Buddy.

TEDDY

What the fuck is that?

DEAN

It's on the house.

Teddy now shows his anger.

TEDDY

Shit! Get me a drink.

A WOMAN sits a stool away from Teddy. Dean helps her.

DEAN
What can I get you?

WOMAN
Whatever's on draught.

As Dean fills her order, Teddy checks her out.

TEDDY
(to woman)
Do I look drunk to you?

The woman realizes Teddy is talking to her.

WOMAN
Me?

DEAN
Teddy, knock it off.

TEDDY
I'm just asking the lovely young
lady her opinion.
(to woman)
Do I look drunk to you?

Dean serves the woman her drink.

WOMAN
Thank you.
(to Teddy)
You look like you're feeling no
pain.

TEDDY
No, I still feel the pain. That's
how I know I'm not drunk enough
yet.

WOMAN
Well, cheers.

The woman takes her drink and moves to the other side of
the square bar, across from Teddy.

TEDDY
(muttering)
Bitch.

DEAN
Take it easy, dude.

TEDDY

As soon as you get me another
drink.

DEAN

Coffee first.

TEDDY

Damn it!

Teddy grabs the coffee and gulps it down.

TEDDY (CON'T)

(demanding)

Drink!

Dean sighs and gets Teddy another drink.

DEAN

Now I mean it this time, take it
easy.

Teddy notices a MAN well into his 30s sits down and
starts talking to the woman across the bar.

TEDDY

My family leaves me and disappears
and you want me to take it easy.

Dean serves the new customer and leaves Teddy alone to
talk to himself.

TEDDY (CON'T)

She's gonna wish she never fucked
with me. Damn, I gotta find her.

Teddy downs his drink. He notices the woman across the
bar seems to be uncomfortable with the man talking to her.

TEDDY (CON'T)

Dean, one more.

Dean serves him another drink.

DEAN

Slow up, man, or this will be it.
You hear me?

TEDDY

Whatever.

Dean moves to another side of the bar while Teddy
continues to mutter to himself.

TEDDY (CON'T)

Hiding out on me like I'm some
kind of psycho. I'll show her
how crazy I am.

Teddy sees the woman across the bar remove the hand of
the man next to her from her shoulder and move a stool
away from him. The man moves next to her. Teddy gets
up and walks over to the couple.

TEDDY

(to Man)

Hey Pal, it looks like the lady's
had enough of your company. Why
don't you move on?

MAN

Son, this is between me and the
lady, so why don't you take your
drunk, punk-ass back --

Before he can finish, Teddy punches him in the face
knocking him to the ground. The woman screams as Teddy
pummels the man repeatedly.

Dean jumps over the bar pulling Teddy off the man and
pushes him up against the wall.

DEAN

Teddy! Get the fuck out of here!

Teddy stares Dean down. He looks at the beat up man and
back to Dean and then storms out of the bar.

EXT. WIL'S HOUSE - NIGHT (ESTABLISHING)

Cars in driveway.

INT. WIL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Wil sits on sofa with Suzy as Elder enters from
bedroom.

ELDER

She's asleep.

WIL

It's good to be home.

Elder sits next to Wil. She has tears in her eyes.

ELDER

You saved my baby's life today.

WIL
(grabbing her hand)
It was just instinct.

ELDER
You almost didn't go. If you weren't there, they would have died.

Elder breaks down. Wil hugs her close.

WIL
Shhh... Everything is fine.

ELDER
You risked your life to save my child, I'll never forget that.

While still embracing, Wil starts to tear up. As they pull apart, Wil tries to cover his emotions.

WIL
Everyone is fine now. We all have that to be grateful for.

ELDER
I tried calling Teddy to let him know what happened, but once again I got his voicemail.

Wil looks somewhat alarmed.

WIL
Elder, please don't let him know you live here. Until you work things out with him, this has to be a safe house for you and me.

ELDER
I'm being very careful about that. I don't think he'd do anything stupid, but until things settle down I'm not taking any chances.

Wil stretches and yawns.

WIL
It's been a very long day, so I'm gonna turn in. I'll most likely sleep until Thursday.

Wil rises to exit.

WIL (CON'T)

Get the lights, okay? Come on
Suzy.

Suzy follows Wil to his room. Before he enters, Elder
calls to him.

ELDER

Wil?

He turns to Elder.

ELDER (CON'T)

Thank you.

Wil nods his head and turns to enter his bedroom.

EXT. WIL'S HOUSE - MORNING

Someone stands watching from the sidewalk.

MYSTERY POV

Walks from sidewalk up onto front porch, RINGS DOORBELL.

EXT. WIL'S FRONT PORCH - CONTINUOUS ACTION

The front door opens and Elder appears. She is surprised
by the visitor.

ELDER

Can I help you?

BACK TO SCENE

Janet stands at door, just as surprised as Elder is.

JANET

(coldly)
Is Wilson here?

ELDER

Wilson?
(beat)
Oh, Wil. Yes, please come in.

JANET

I'll wait here.

ELDER

Sure, one moment.

Elder leaves the door ajar, exits, and Wil soon appears.

WIL

Janet, what are you doing here?

JANET

I thought I'd drop by for a moment just to see how things are going. My how cozy everyone seems to be around here.

Wil steps onto the porch, closing the door behind him.

WIL

I thought I asked you to call before coming by.

JANET

So you could hide your new love interest? Obviously, she's been spending the nights here.

WIL

Elder is not my lover, and I have nothing to hide. If you wouldn't have had a hissy-fit the last time you were here, you'd know the whole story.

JANET

Does she know about your story?

Wil suddenly looks scared and threatened.

JANET (CON'T)

I thought not.

(threateningly)

Do you think Elder might be interested in knowing all about the great Wilson Berman?

WIL

That's all in the past, Janet. There is no reason to bring that up. You need to mind your own fucking business!

Janet dramatically eggs him on.

JANET

Temper, temper. You don't think the whole torrid and gruesome truth would have her running for the hills, do you?

(MORE)

JANET (CON'T)

I mean, being a young mother, how horrified would she be to hear --

Wil can no longer take her innuendos.

WIL

(interrupting)

Shut up, Janet! Just shut the hell up! You think you know everything about me. You can't accept my truth, but you believe all the bullshit you've been fed. You better leave the past where it is. You got that?

JANET

There's your truth and the documented truth. You better be careful which one you tell her.

Janet turns to leave, then stops. She turns back.

JANET (CON'T)

Tell Elder I'll see her again sometime soon.

Janet exits as Wil glares hatefully after her.

EXT. DR. CALLEN'S OFFICE - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

INT. DR. CALLEN'S OFFICE - DAY

Wil is obviously distraught as he paces around the office.

WIL

... and then she makes this veiled threat like she's going to tell Elder everything.

DR. CALLEN

Okay, first just settle down. Come on, sit.

Wil, exhaling a deep breath, sits across from Dr. Callen.

DR. CALLEN (CON'T)

So you're feeling helpless because Janet --

WIL

(interrupting)

The dragon!

DR. CALLEN (CON'T)

... because Janet has taken control of the situation.

WIL

As you know, that seems to be her special evil power.

DR. CALLEN

Have you given any thought on how you could regain control?

Wil grabs a pillow and hugs it.

WIL

Aside from hiring a hitman or moving to Siberia?

DR. CALLEN

I was thinking more along the lines of telling Elder about your past.

WIL

I don't know, I hear Siberia is pretty nice this time of year.

DR. CALLEN

Is there really a risk in telling her what happened to you? From what you tell me and what I read in the paper, she obviously trusts you.

Dr. Callen grabs a folded newspaper from beside his chair and tosses it on the table in front of Wil.

DR. CALLEN (CON'T)

Nice picture.

INSERT - NEWSPAPER

Article with photo of Wil. Headline reads: "LOCAL MAN FAIR HERO".

BACK TO SCENE

WIL

(sarcastically)

My mom would be so proud.

DR. CALLEN

You should be proud. You've been making excellent progress interacting with people.

WIL

But I don't need this kind of notoriety. Not with my past.

DR. CALLEN

You saved lives by risking your own. The lives of children. That's not something to be taken lightly. And it's the present. It's now.

WIL

Is that enough to overcome all the baggage from twenty years ago? What if I explained everything to Elder and she rejects our friendship?

DR. CALLEN

You do have some options that you can consider in making this decision.

WIL

Such as?

DR. CALLEN

What do you think they are?

Wil tosses the pillow he has been clutching aside.

WIL

I hate when you do that.

DR. CALLEN

(smiling)

Humor me.

WIL

I could tell Elder my story and see how she takes it, or I could not say anything and hope that Janet doesn't carry through with her threat. Either one is a gamble.

DR. CALLEN

But which one of those choices gives you the control in the situation?

WIL

I see what you mean.

(beat)

If I could afford it, a hitman would be the best answer.

DR. CALLEN

If you could afford it, I'd charge you more for these sessions. I guess we can both dream, huh?

(beat)

Same time next week?

Wil smiles and shakes his head.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD SIDEWALK - AFTERNOON

Elder, Wil, and Kelly walk down the street as they head to the nearby children's playground.

KELLY

Thanks for coming, Wil.

WIL

I haven't been to the playground since I was about your age.

KELLY

Can you go on the slide with me?

WIL

I don't know, Honey. I think I'm too big for that.

KELLY

But Mommy said I couldn't bring Toby because he was too small.

ELDER

Kitty-cats don't usually like to do the same things people do.

KELLY

But Suzy likes to drive a car.

Wil and Elder glance at each other and smile.

KELLY (CON'T)

We're here!

As they reach the playground, Elder and Wil choose a bench that oversees the entire area. Several children are in the process of playing.

ELDER

(to Kelly)

Now listen to Mommy. I want you to be careful. Play with the others, but make sure you are polite and that you take turns, Wil and I will be right here.

KELLY

Okay, Mommy!

Kelly runs off and joins the other children. Wil and Elder sit down on the bench.

ELDER

I heard it might storm later tonight.

WIL

This time of year the weather can be unpredictable.

ELDER

Like my life, lately.

Wil gives her a questioning look.

ELDER (CON'T)

What happened at the fair. My relationship with Teddy.

(beat)

I haven't been able to reach him, and I'm starting to worry. Plus Kelly wants to see him.

WIL

Maybe he needs the time to get himself together. Who knows, maybe he has a new job now.

ELDER

You really think so?

(beat)

I hope you're right.

WIL

I'm sure you'll hear from him soon.

ELDER

Thanks Wil. I'm glad we've become friends. You're such a gentle soul. Kind of like Vince, the father I never had.

Wil looks off in the distance as he shifts uncomfortably on the bench.

WIL

I don't know if you've noticed or not, but I don't really have any friends. I lost all of them years ago.

ELDER

What happened?

WIL

I guess I'll start at the beginning.

(takes deep breath)

I married Janet when I was twenty-three. We were so happy together. I was an accountant and she was working on becoming a real estate agent.

Wil pauses as he reflects on his early life.

WIL (CON'T)

We worked hard and finally bought a house, but we never really had the time to cultivate friendships. Still, everything was fine until...

Wil again stares off and doesn't finish his statement.

ELDER

Until?

Wil is visibly uncomfortable as he continues and just blurts it out.

WIL

I was in prison for twenty years.

Elder is obviously shocked and not sure she heard Wil correctly.

ELDER

Prison?

(beat)

My God, did you kill someone?

WIL

No, no. Nothing like that. I was falsely accused and wasn't able to prove my innocence.

ELDER

How is that possible?

WIL

Well, back then they didn't have testing for stuff like that the way they do now.

ELDER

You mean like DNA?

Wil nods.

ELDER (CON'T)

Did someone accuse you of rape?

Wil is upset and on the verge of tears.

WIL

This is really hard for me, so please hear me out.

(beat)

The worse thing I've ever had to face in my life is knowing I'm innocent and everyone else thinking I'm a monster.

Wil pauses. He searches for the words to go on.

WIL (CON'T)

We had lived in our house about a year.

ELDER

You and Janet?

Wil nods.

WIL

We lived next door to a young family. They had a son, about six years old or so.

Wil pauses as he holds back tears.

WIL (CON'T)

We were neighborly with them. I even gave the boy a kitten. One day, out of the blue, I was arrested. They said I touched him.

ELDER

The boy?

WIL

I didn't, I swear. I figured it was a huge mistake and that they would find this out, but doctors claimed he'd been abused and he accused me.

Elder is moved to near tears.

ELDER

Oh Wil, I'm so sorry.

WIL

Janet divorced me about five years into my sentence. She had a hard time working through everything. Shit, she still has issues with it all these years later.

ELDER

But what about you? You've had to live with this too.

Finally relieved by telling his story, Wil stands and begins pacing back and forth in front of Elder.

WIL

I wouldn't even call it living. It's more like existing. Twenty years of my life are gone and even now I don't know how to live.

Wil sits and Elder takes his hand into hers.

ELDER

It doesn't have to stay that way.

A tear falls from Wil's eye as he realizes that Elder trusts and cares about him.

Without either Wil or Elder knowing it, Kelly has approached them.

KELLY (O.S.)

Wil, why are you crying?

Wil, surprised by Kelly, pulls his hand away from Elder and wipes the tears away. Elder tries to explain for him.

ELDER

Well Honey, Wil and I were just --

Wil interrupts Elder with a renewed vigor.

WIL

I'm crying because I'm so happy!

Seeing that Kelly doesn't understand this concept, Wil tries to explain.

WIL (CON'T)

Sometimes when grown-ups are filled with so much joy, it spills out as tears.

KELLY

Why are you so happy?

WIL

Because of you and your mommy. I'm happy because we're at the playground...

Wil stands up.

WIL (CON'T)

... and I'm happy because I'm gonna chase you all over the place!

Wil begins after Kelly as she screams and runs off laughing.

KELLY

(yelling)

Mommy, help!

Elder joins in the chase as she and Wil play with Kelly.

EXT. TEDDY'S TRAILER - DUSK (ESTABLISHING)

Storm clouds threaten in the distance.

INT. TEDDY'S TRAILER - DUSK

Teddy is sitting alone at the kitchen table looking through the want ads. He drinks beer as he mutters to himself.

TEDDY

Not a Goddamn thing I'm qualified for.

Disgusted, he looks through the paper scanning various articles until his eyes land on "LOCAL MAN FAIR HERO" story.

TEDDY

Another fucking good samaritan.
(reading)
Wilson Berman, where do I know that name from?

As he continues reading, he becomes noticeably angrier.

TEDDY

What the fuck?
(reading)
"Berman's friend, Elder Hanson, twenty-five, whose four year old daughter, Kelly was saved from the blaze says she had to talk him into coming to the fair. My daughter is alive today because Wil changed his mind and came with us".

Teddy jumps up from the table pissed off and slightly buzzed. He quickly lights a cigarette.

TEDDY

My baby almost dies and this is how I find out about it? Who the hell is this guy?

He grabs the newspaper and runs into the living area where an old computer sits on a desk. As he fires up the computer, lightning flashes through the windows and THUNDER is heard with the approaching storm.

TEDDY

I'm gonna find you if I have to kill someone to do it.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Teddy typing feverishly on computer keyboard.

CLOSE ON his face as his eyes scan computer screen.

He drinks more beer as he types.

He smokes more as he searches the internet.

Finally, he finds information that sends him over the top.

TEDDY

Oh my God, no. No!

He jumps up and runs to a closet and pulls a wooden box from the top shelf. He opens the box to reveal a handgun that he lifts out and stares at. He is crazed with anger.

TEDDY

There is no way you are ever gonna take another thing from me!

Lightning flashes and THUNDER CRASHES all around him.

INT. KELLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As the storm rages outside, Elder is tucking Kelly in for the night. Toby lies next to Kelly.

KELLY

Mommy, I'm scared.

ELDER

There's nothing to worry about. Toby will be right here with you.

Elder reaches over to lower the window blind as a CRASH of THUNDER jolts her. She jumps from the loud sound.

KELLY

Mommy!

ELDER

Okay, I'll stay with you.

As Elder scoots in beside Kelly, Wil appears in doorway.

WIL

Are you two okay? That was a loud one.

KELLY

Me and Toby are scared.

ELDER

We're fine. I'm gonna stay with Kelly during the storm.

WIL

Okay, if you need anything, I'll be in the living room. Good night.

Wil exits as Elder settles in with Kelly.

EXT. WIL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

As the storm rages outside the home, from across the street, Teddy's truck rolls silently INTO FRAME.

INT. TEDDY'S TRUCK - NIGHT

Teddy sits silently looking at the Berman home. He is holding a half-full bottle of booze. He takes a swig from the bottle as he looks at the passenger seat.

INSERT - GUN

The gun sits on the seat gleaming as lightning flashes.

BACK TO SCENE

Teddy grabs a pack of cigarettes with his free hand, pulls one out with his lips, drops the pack, grabs a lighter and lights it. He draws deeply from it, withdraws it and takes another deep swig of booze.

He looks back at the house.

TEDDY

(whispering)

Surprise.

WIL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Wil sits watching television with Suzy. The STORM RUMBLES outside. He hears a KNOCK at the DOOR.

WIL

Who the heck could that be in this weather?

Wil crosses the room to answer the door.

EXT. WIL' S FRONT DOOR - NIGHT

MYSTERY POV

The door opens and Wil reacts in utter surprise.

WIL

My God, what are you doing here?

BACK TO SCENE

Janet stands in the doorway, dripping wet.

JANET

I was in the neighborhood and
thought I'd stop by for a chat.

(beat)

Aren't you gonna let me in?

Without waiting for a response, she pushes right past him.

INT. WIL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

WIL

(sarcastically)

Come on in. Where are my manners?

Janet takes off her wet coat and hands it to Wil who hangs it in the hall next to the door.

She sits on the sofa and Suzy jumps off and leaves. Wil enters from the hall.

JANET

So where is that lovely young lady
Elder? I thought maybe we could
all have a nice long talk.

WIL

She's sleeping.

JANET

(looks at watch)

So early? What a shame.

WIL

What do you want, Janet?

JANET

Since I hadn't been introduced to
Elder, and I'm your wife --

WIL
(interrupting)
Ex-wife!

Wil becomes angry, Janet gets to the point.

JANET
Look, there is a child involved here. It would be careless of me not to let the mother know that a possible risk exists --

WIL
(interrupting)
A possible risk? Are you out of your fucking mind? I'm no more of a threat to anyone than Suzy is.

JANET
The authorities may not necessarily agree with you.

Wil is now clearly enraged, yet he tries to contain himself so as to not wake Elder.

WIL
Why, Janet?
(beat)
Why would you want to make my life any more miserable than it has been for all these years?

For a moment, Janet looks as though she might soften, she doesn't.

JANET
It's in all our interests to protect children.

WIL
Was there ever a time that you believed me?

Wil is finally getting to her.

JANET
Wilson...

WIL
Can you remember? Ever?

Janet stares off remembering days long gone by. She can no longer contain her anger and tears well in her eyes.

JANET

For the longest time I thought I was stuck in a nightmare. My husband could never do that. It couldn't be true.

Tears slowly fall from her eyes.

JANET (CON'T)

Even after they took you from me, I thought they'd find it to be a big mistake and you'd be freed.

Janet wipes the tears away as Wil listens quietly.

JANET (CON'T)

I figured that if I divorced you, I could make it all go away.

(beat)

It didn't. I couldn't move on.

Wil sits next to her on the sofa, wanting to comfort her but not knowing how to.

WIL

We are both victims of this lie. I'm sorry, Janet.

Lightning flashes and THUNDER ROARS as Janet pulls herself together.

JANET

This was a bad idea. I shouldn't have come here like this.

WIL

I told her.

Surprised by this admission, Janet pauses from getting up from the sofa.

WIL (CON'T)

It's okay, it's all in the past.

She looks at Wil for a beat, smiles weakly knowing it will never be in the past for her. She pats his knee and rises.

JANET

I've got to go.

Janet walks to the door, Wil helps her on with her coat. Without talking, Janet opens the door. At that moment, a flash of lightning reveals a shadowy figure in the doorway.

Janet shrieks at the site of the dark figure.

Drunk, wet, and disheveled, Teddy enters holding a gun.

TEDDY

Where's Elder?

WIL

Teddy?

Teddy hits Wil in the head with the gun. Wil drops to the floor, Janet yelps and stoops to help Wil.

TEDDY

(louder)

Where is she?

Teddy advances on the pair as Janet realizes Wil is bleeding.

JANET

Don't hurt him!

Teddy kicks at Wil.

TEDDY

Get up. Get up!

Janet helps Wil to his feet.

TEDDY (CON'T)

Get in there and sit down.

They move to the living room where Wil and Janet sit on the sofa.

JANET

I was just leaving, so if --

TEDDY

(interrupting)

Shut up!

INT. KELLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elder who is sleeping with Kelly, suddenly awakens. She looks at window, sees flashes, and thinks thunder woke her.

She gets out of bed, tucks the still sleeping Kelly and her kitty, Toby in and exits room.

INT. WIL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Teddy holds Wil and Janet at gunpoint. He is angry and obviously very distressed.

TEDDY

Where's Elder? Where's my daughter?

WIL

Teddy, they're sleeping in the other room. They're safe. Please put down the gun and I'll go get them.

TEDDY

No! You're never going to hurt me or my family again!

Teddy points the gun at Wil just as Elder enters the room.

ELDER

Oh my God, Teddy?

Elder realizes he has a gun.

ELDER (CON'T)

What are you doing?

Teddy points the gun at her.

TEDDY

Get in here. Sit down.

Elder sits on the sofa next to Wil. She sees he is bleeding from his forehead.

ELDER

You don't need the gun, Teddy. Let's just all talk this out.

TEDDY

You want to talk now? You take my daughter away from me, hide out with some freak, and have your boss chase me away when I try to talk to you.

(looks at gun)

This is the only way I can get you to talk?

Teddy sits on the arm of a chair, looking down on the group as he aims the gun at them.

ELDER

It's not that way at all. You know we can't live with your father.

TEDDY

Oh yeah, you can't live with a drunk!

Elder defiantly stares at Teddy.

ELDER

I lived with an alcoholic mother my whole life. You better believe I'll never raise my daughter like that! I don't care who threatens me.

Teddy is surprised by her moxie, even with a gun pointed at her.

TEDDY

Where is my little girl?

ELDER

She's in the other room sleeping.
(beat)
Please put that away and don't do anything stupid.

Elder realizes a moment too late her poor choice of words.

TEDDY

(standing)
Stupid? Stupid?! You kidnap my daughter and bring her to this, this... pervert's house and you call me stupid?

Wil and Janet exchange glances as he points the gun at Wil.

ELDER

I provided our child a safe and stable environment and Wil has been nothing but a kind and caring friend, who incidentally, saved your daughter's life!

TEDDY

Do you know anything about this man? Anything about his past? The internet is an amazing place to find out information on someone.

Elder looks over to Wil who has his head down.

ELDER

I know what he was accused of.

Wil raises his head and smiles weakly at Elder.

TEDDY

People don't go to prison based on accusations.

Wil responds, his head still lowered.

WIL

I was falsely accused.

TEDDY

(enraged)

You're a Goddamn liar!

Wil, Janet, and Elder are jolted by Teddy's outburst. Elder attempts to calm him.

ELDER

Teddy, listen to me. Wil has told me the entire story, You can't trust everything that's on the internet.

TEDDY

Trust? You want to talk about trust? You take my daughter and move in with a guy who hurts children?

Teddy starts to pace back and forth erratically.

TEDDY (CON'T)

Trust, huh? I used to be able to do that. As a boy, I once trusted my next door neighbor. Yeah, he was a swell guy.

Teddy becomes more agitated and disconnected.

TEDDY (CON'T)

He even gave me a kitten one time.

Teddy's eyes well up with tears.

TEDDY (CON'T)

Then he hurt me. He hurt me bad.

Teddy's revelation hits the trio at the same time.

ELDER

Teddy?

JANET

Oh my God.

Wil looks up into Teddy's eyes.

WIL

Theo? Theo Lester?

Teddy's face contorts in anguish.

TEDDY

(screams)

Don't call me that!

Teddy menacingly points his gun at Wil.

TEDDY (CON'T)

You hurt me you sick bastard!

Lightning flashes and THUNDER ROARS.

CUT TO:

INT. KELLY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kelly is sleeping when she suddenly wakes up. It is still stormy and she looks around frightened.

KELLY

Mommy?

She sees Elder is no longer with her and gets out of bed and picks up her kitten, Toby.

KELLY (CON'T)

Don't be scared, Toby. We'll go sleep with mommy.

She exits bedroom.

INT. ELDER'S BEDROOM - NIGHT.

Kelly enters the room to find it empty.

KELLY

Mommy?

Not seeing or hearing Elder, she exits the room.

INT. WIL'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The scene is tense as Teddy dangerously points his gun at Wil, while he glares at him menacingly.

WIL

(pleading)

I never did that, Teddy. It wasn't me. You're memory is --

TEDDY

(interrupting)

Shut up! Just shut up!

Teddy is on the verge of losing control. He clamps his eyes shut as a vision grabs him.

FLASHBACK - INT. LESTER HOME - TWENTY-TWO YEARS AGO

YOUNG TEDDY'S POV

He is overhearing a conversation between Daniel and his MOTHER in the living room. He is watching from behind a doorway.

MOTHER

There was blood, so I took him to the doctor.

DANIEL

Is he alright?

MOTHER

They... they said...

Teddy's mother finds it hard to say as she verges on tears.

DANIEL

(impatiently)

What?

MOTHER

Daniel, someone has been touching our Teddy.

She clasps her hands to her face and starts crying.

DANIEL
Touching?

MOTHER
He's been raped.

Daniel is shocked by the news.

DANIEL
Our boy? Who? Who did this?

MOTHER
(drying eyes)
We have to talk to him.

Teddy exits to his room.

BACK TO SCENE

Mother sits on chair while Daniel stands behind her.
They call for Teddy.

DANIEL
Theo?

MOTHER
Teddy, come here a moment.

Teddy slowly appears in the doorway. He is reluctant to enter the room.

DANIEL
Come here, son.

He walks tentatively up to them.

MOTHER
Teddy, this is very important so you will have to tell me and Daddy the truth. Do you understand?

Teddy slowly nods his head up and down.

MOTHER (CON'T)
Honey, has someone been touching you?

Teddy lowers his head without answering.

MOTHER (CON'T)
It's okay, Sweetheart. You can tell us.

DANIEL

Son, look at me.

Teddy raises his head.

UP ANGLE - DANIEL

Looking over Teddy's shoulder.

DANIEL

You need to tell us so we can help you.

BACK TO SCENE

Teddy looks down again.

MOTHER

Is it true, Teddy?

Teddy slowly nods his head without looking up.

DANIEL

Theo, who did this to you?

Teddy remains silent.

DANIEL (CON'T)

Theo!

TEDDY

(softly)

Mr. Berman.

Daniel and Mother exchange glances.

MOTHER

Wilson Berman from next door?

Teddy nods his head.

MOTHER (CON'T)

We have to call the police.

DANIEL

Theo, go to your room.

Teddy exits.

END FLASHBACK.

Teddy is brought back to present with Elder's voice.

ELDER

(softly)

Teddy, think of Kelly. Please don't do anything that will hurt her.

With tears in his eyes, Teddy slowly turns to Wil.

TEDDY

Tell me you haven't hurt my daughter.

(pleading)

Please tell me you haven't hurt my Kelly.

Before Wil can answer, they are all surprised to hear a small voice.

KELLY (O.S.)

Daddy?

They all turn to see Kelly standing in the room with her kitten. She runs to Elder on the sofa. Teddy stands vacant holding the gun on the group. The storm continues outside.

KELLY

Daddy, don't hurt Toby!

As this line echos in his head, Teddy sinks into a chair across from them. Remembering something, he clamps his eyes shut tightly.

FLASHBACK - INT. DARK ROOM

CLOSE UP - YOUNG TEDDY'S FACE

He is crying and looking up at a MAN in the room with him.

MAN'S DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)

If anyone finds out, you can't tell on me. Do you understand?

The boy nods in agreement.

YOUNG TEDDY'S POV

A KITTEN in man's hand MEOWS uncomfortably.

MAN'S DISTORTED VOICE (O.S.)

Someone will get hurt if people know it's me.

CLOSE UP - YOUNG TEDDY'S FACE

YOUNG TEDDY

(crying)
Don't hurt Toby.

The KITTEN makes a STRANGLED SOUND and is then silent.

YOUNG TEDDY'S POV

The kitten lies silent in the man's hand. Slowly TILT UP TO REVEAL the man as Teddy's father, Daniel Lester.

YOUNG TEDDY (O.S.)

Daddy, don't hurt Toby!

CLOSE UP - KITTEN

hits the floor dead.

YOUNG TEDDY'S POV

Dad's face with sick smile looking down on him.

YOUNG TEDDY (O.S.)

(crying)
No, daddy, no!

END FLASHBACK.

Teddy sits with his eyes closed, a disturbed look on his face. Tears stream down his cheeks.

TEDDY

No, daddy, no!

He is startled as he opens his eyes. He realizes the truth finally after all these years.

TEDDY (CON'T)

It was my dad.
(crying)
My daddy hurt me.

Suddenly, a flash of lightning followed by a ROAR of THUNDER shakes the house, it surprises everyone.

Teddy drops the gun he has been holding. He reaches down and picks it up. The GUN is pointed at the sofa when it accidentally GOES OFF.

CLOSE ON TEDDY (SLOW MOTION)

He is caught by surprise with anguish as he realizes what has just happened.

TEDDY

Nooo... !

SLOW FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. GREEN'S GROCERY STORE - DAY (ESTABLISHING)

SUPERIMPOSE:

"SIX MONTH'S LATER"

INT. GREEN'S GROCERY STORE - DAY

Elder is counting her cash drawer as a customer places a small juice bottle at her check-out.

ELDER

Will that be all?

She turns to see Wil standing there smiling.

ELDER (CON'T)

Will!

She reaches across the counter and hugs him.

ELDER (CON'T)

How've you been?

WIL

Well, you know.

Wil lifts a cane he now uses to walk with.

WIL (CON'T)

The doctor says another six months and I'll be just like I was before I was shot.

ELDER

I'm so glad!

WIL

Like a cat, I've got nine lives.
How are you and Teddy?

ELDER

He's been trying really hard with the psychologist and doing well. He's got a new job and everything is going nicely.

WIL

Are you happy?

Elder pauses a moment.

ELDER

You know, I am. And I feel safe again with him.

WIL

And Kelly?

ELDER

She's so happy with Toby. Thank you for letting her keep him. She's growing like a weed, too. We'll have to come over sometime for a play day.

WIL

I'd love that.

Elder rings up Wil's juice and he pays her.

ELDER

How is Janet doing?

WIL

She's trying really hard to put everything in perspective. She's actually making great progress in being a better person.

Elder nods her head. They share an awkward silence.

ELDER

It's really great seeing you. Seriously, let's get together soon.

WIL

I'll be looking forward to that play day.

Wil winks and Elder smiles as he turns and exits. She watches him leave with a sense of inspiration mixed with a little sadness for him.

EXT. GREEN'S GROCERY STORE - DAY

Wil chugs down the juice and throws the empty in a nearby trash can. He walks down the street where something catches his eye on the sidewalk.

He looks down and sees a small kitten sitting all alone against a building.

WIL

What do we have here?

CLOSE ON KITTEN

looks up and MEOWS at Wil.

BACK TO SCENE

He looks around to see if it can belong to anyone. He determines it is a stray.

WIL (CON'T)

Are you an orphan?

(beat)

Well, come on.

He stoops to pick up the kitten. He holds the kitten to his chest as he continues walking home.

WIL (CON'T)

You know, Suzy's gonna kill me.

Don't worry, you'll love her...

Wil continues to AD LIB his conversation with the kitten as he walks away towards home.

FADE OUT.

THE END