

FADE IN:

EXT. LAGUNA BEACH -- DUSK

Dark clouds over rough seas. Big waves pound the sand at Crystal Cove. A red, "high surf" flag waves from the lifeguard tower.

Cars move along PCH, pounded by rain.

INT. TOM'S CAR -- DUSK

DONNA CHASE (35) drives, sipping a Starbucks coffee, windshield wipers working. TOM CHASE (40), in the passenger seat, watches traffic ahead. Both are good looking, nice clothes. NICKI CHASE (7) sits behind her mom, seat belt on.

TOM

Slow down a little. We'll get there.

DONNA

Don't tell me how to drive.

(beat)

We're going to be in and out, right?
I have a brief to write.

TOM

You could have stayed home.

DONNA

I don't know why we couldn't visit
them tomorrow.

TOM

Nicki and I have a tribe meeting
tomorrow night. First Mondays,
remember?

DONNA

That tribe. You spend more time
with those men than you do with me.

TOM

It's about spending time with Nicki.
Not the other dads.

DONNA

Yeah, right.

TOM

Does it really matter? You'll have
another brief to write tomorrow night,
won't you?

Nicki leans forward to join the conversation.

NICKI
Mommy, can I have some of your cookie?

DONNA
No, Nicki. You already had one.

TOM
I can't believe you bought those. I
spent three hours making a cheesecake.

Tom looks down at a cake in a plastic holder at his feet.

DONNA
I don't like cheesecake.

TOM
The most popular dessert on my menu
seven years running. Who the hell
doesn't like cheesecake?

DONNA
Me. And you know that.

Nicki sneaks a piece of the cookie resting in a paper sleeve
between the front seats. Donna sees Nicki's hand. She turns
around.

DONNA (CONT'D)
I said, no.

Tom looks back at Nicki, smiles at her, laughs a little.
Gives her a wink. She eats the piece in her hand, giggling
with her dad.

Donna now looks at Tom.

DONNA (CONT'D)
Great. Encourage her.

When Donna finally turns her eyes back to the road, the car
is on well across the double yellow line. She turns the
wheel a bit too hard.

EXT. PCH -- CONTINUOUS

The car swerves, slips, turns sideways as an oncoming car
slams on its brakes, skids into the rear passenger door,
Nicki's side. A LOUD, sudden collision.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM -- DAY

Tom lies in a bed. Black eyes. A NURSE monitors his vitals and injects something in his IV, then writes on a chart.

DR. HOWIE LERNER, (45), curly hair, a bit overweight, stands next to the ATTENDING DOCTOR who reads the chart at the foot of Tom's bed. Tom's eyes open as the two doctors confer.

HOWIE

So, tomorrow?

The attending doctor nods her head, yes, then leaves the room.

TOM

(disoriented)

Where am I?

HOWIE

Tommy... Tommy, it's me, Howie.

Howie moves closer.

TOM

Howie?

HOWIE

You're okay. You're going to be fine.

TOM

Donna...

HOWIE

Donna's alright. She's going to be okay. Do you remember anything?

TOM

(a little more lucid)

We... we were driving.

HOWIE

Yes. You had an accident. But you're okay. A couple of your ribs are broken. It's painful, but you'll go home tomorrow.

TOM

The cookie...

Howie looks at a nurse, doesn't understand the reference, then back to Tom.

HOWIE

Donna's going to stay here a another week or so. It's... it's going to be a while before she can walk again, Tom. But she will. She will.

Tom suddenly sits bold upright, in pain. He grimaces as he speaks.

TOM

Nicki!

Howie gently tries to put Tom back down.

HOWIE

Whoa. You're not going anywhere just yet. Lay back down.

Tom pushes his hands away.

TOM

Where's Nicki?

Howie hesitates.

HOWIE

Tommy...

Tom sees in Howie's demeanor that his daughter is gone. The pain visible on his face changes from physical to the unbearable emotional pain of a lost child.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. TOM AND DONNA'S HOUSE -- DAY

June gloom, fog. A craftsman style, two level home in Laguna village. White picket fence.

A black, stretch limo pulls into the driveway.

INT. TOM AND DONNA'S HOUSE -- DAY

Nicely decorated. Framed family pictures on walls, on tables. Tom, a black suit, looks out the window, notices the limo.

EXT. TOM AND DONNA'S HOUSE -- FLASHBACK

The SOUND of giggling girls. A clear sunny day. SEVERAL GIRLS seven and eight-year-olds, in formal dresses, run toward a limo in the driveway.

INT. HOUSE -- DAY

Tom, in a tux, watches the girls from a living room window. He turns to see Nicki come down the stairs. She wears a beautiful dress, hair styled fancy. Donna trails behind holding a hair brush and scrunchies.

DONNA

Your date for this evening, sir.

Tom opens the front door and extends his elbow to Nicki, but she runs straight past him.

NICKI

The limo's here! The limo's here!

Tom looks up at Donna, and they both laugh.

Donna, now at the bottom of the stairs puts her arms around Tom's neck.

DONNA

Have fun.

TOM

I love you.

DONNA

I love you too.

TOM

Wait up for us? For me?

DONNA

Wake me up.

She gives him a sexy kiss.

TOM

You got it.

Tom follows Nicki out the door. Donna watches them from the threshold.

EXT. HOUSE -- DAY

Tom, Howie, FELIX RODRIGUEZ and SEVERAL OTHER DADS, all in tuxes line up in front of the long car, each behind his daughter as the LIMO DRIVER looks through a camera.

HOWIE

C'mon Tommy, we're waiting on you here.

Tom gets in his spot behind Nicki, and the camera FLASHES.

INT. DISNEYLAND HOTEL -- NIGHT

Another FLASH from a camera lights up a professional photographer's umbrella as a long queue of DADS and DAUGHTERS wait to be photographed. In the b.g., several DISNEY CHARACTERS in costume pose with GIRLS as DADS take pictures.

Nicki and Tom are near the front of the line.

NICKI

Daddy, why are these pictures better than the ones you take?

TOM

Oh, these are professional photos, sweetie. They make us look our very best.

NICKI

Will you put our picture in a frame? And put it in the living room?

TOM

Absolutely. One day, I'll have a whole collection. You'll be taller and prettier in each one, and I'll be more and more gray.

NICKI

Why will you be gray?

TOM

Because each picture is one year closer to the day I have to give you away.

NICKI

What day is that?

TOM

Oh, a special day. You'll be wearing the prettiest dress ever, and your hair will be just as perfect as it is right now, and you'll be the most beautiful bride since your mom.

Nicki smiles at the thought.

It's their turn. They move toward the small seat in front of the back drop. Tom sits. Nicki on his knee.

The photographer takes the picture with a FLASH.

INT. HOUSE -- PRESENT DAY

Tom looks from the window over to a framed photo on a side table. His eyes are wet.

INSERT FRAME:

Two pictures, side by side. One, the group shot, dads and daughters by the limo. The other is the professional picture of Tom and Nicki, a backdrop with a sign that reads: "Indian Princess. Disney Dinner Dance. 2009."

BACK TO SCENE:

Donna rolls her wheelchair out the door. Her hair is perfectly styled, black dress nicely pressed. She wears makeup, but her face is somehow colorless. Her beauty gone.

Tom moves to help push the chair, but he doesn't get very close before Donna says:

DONNA
(emotionless)
I can do it myself.

She wheels through the doorway and down a plywood ramp.

Tom moves into an open kitchen, pulls a bottle of pills from inside a cabinet.

He shakes two pills into his hand, stares hard at them.

He shakes two more from the bottle. Throws all four pills into his mouth.

EXT. CEMETERY -- DAY

A large group. All the tribe DADS, their WIVES, DAUGHTERS, and a few FRIENDS and ASSOCIATES are huddled around a small coffin listening to a REVEREND who closes his Bible.

REVEREND
God rest her soul.

The reverend steps aside.

Howie holds his daughter CHLOE'S hand as they approach the coffin, and Chloe places a single rose on top.

Tom kneels down and Chloe hugs him. When Tom stands, Howie gives him a long hug as Donna turns away.

She rolls her chair toward the limo.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTROOM -- DAY

COURT REPORTER, CLERK, BAILIFF, JUDGE are present. TOM stands next to FELIX. Donna, now using a cane and her LAWYER, both dressed like goddesses, stand at the next table.

FELIX

Is there any cause to believe there can be reconciliation and that you should delay termination of this marriage?

Tom trembles a bit, his voice cracks.

TOM

No.

INT. COURT CAFETERIA -- LATER

Tom sits across a table from Felix who has loosened his tie. There is a tray with fruit and drinks in front of them.

FELIX

Congratulations. You're divorced.

TOM

Then why are we still here?

Felix pushes a wad of papers across the table to Tom.

TOM (CONT'D)

We've been negotiating this for months, and the deal doesn't ever change.

FELIX

It's a computer program. Those are the numbers. It's not worth the fight, Tom.

(beat)

You get the house.

TOM

And the mortgages.

Felix pulls a pen from his pocket and holds it toward Tom.

FELIX

Let's just end it.

(MORE)

FELIX (CONT'D)

I'm not talking to you now as your lawyer. I'm telling you this as a friend and a tribe brother.

(beat)

Leave divorce litigation to the angry, rich, and stupid.

Tom stares hard at the pen in his face, he reaches for it.

EXT. TOM'S HOUSE -- DAY

A REALTOR hammers a "FOR SALE" sign into the dirt. He shakes Tom's hand, a friendly smile, then throws his mallet into the trunk, gets in and drives off, cell phone to his ear.

Tom waives good-bye to the car as it moves away, then he gives the guy the finger.

INT. TOM'S HOUSE -- DAY

Folded boxes lean against the wall. Packing tape in guns on the counter. Full boxes, taped shut and marked with a Sharpie are stacked against a wall nearby.

Tom sits on his kitchen table, shirtless, jeans. Howie places his doctor's bag on the counter, removes a blood pressure cuff and stethoscope. He puts the cuff on Tom's arm and takes the reading.

HOWIE

So you're going to make the meeting tomorrow, in the park, right?

TOM

Of course.

HOWIE

The girls have been working on this a long time. They all sold cookies to raise money for the tree. The whole thing was their idea.

TOM

I know, Howie. I wouldn't miss it.

Howie starts taping his hands all over Tom's chest.

HOWIE

Any pain in the ribs?

TOM

They've been healed for months. This is a waste of time.

HOWIE

You in a hurry to do something?

TOM

Yeah, find a job. I didn't do as well on this house and I was hoping.

HOWIE

Why the hell you got a bug up your ass to go back to work so soon?

TOM

It's not so soon anymore, Howie.

(beat)

I'm broke.

HOWIE

Broke? No. Broken. Your life was cracked like your ribs and cruelly dragged in the dirt. But it's time to fight back, to heal your spirit.

TOM

Your friend Bill is the spirit healer.

HOWIE

Still seeing him?

TOM

Until tomorrow. Last time. I don't need it anymore.

HOWIE

Good! Then you're ready. Ready to embrace change. Live no longer in denial.

TOM

I'm not denying anything.

HOWIE

Aha! You just denied something, didn't you? But fear not. It's understandable. It's normal, healthy, important. And now that the time has come--

Howie waves his pelvis at Tom, smiling.

HOWIE (CONT'D)

You must navigate the waters of bachelorhood. Sail through the sea of available pussy like a modern day Odysseus on a booze cruise in Cabo.