

IMAGINE

by

Dan Fogelman

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We begin with a DISCLAIMER:

"The following is kind-of based on a true story a little bit."

The words are lifted away in a haze of CIGARETTE SMOKE.

INT. CHIME MAGAZINE OFFICES - DAY (1967)

Snapshots from an office of a bustling late 60's music magazine:

- MULTIPLE CIGARETTES, all being smoked indoors. Smoke wafts over cubicles, everywhere.

- FEET in four-inch PLATFORM SHOES. Women AND men.

- Music POSTERS and SIGNAGE line cubicle walls. Hendrix. Dylan. Simon and a Jew-fro'd Garfunkel.

- MINI-SKIRTS. Really "mini" mini-skirts.

- A poster of a young RICHARD NIXON. Someone has drawn a MUSTACHE on Nixon's face as well as a "SPEECH BUBBLE" which reads *"I'm an asshole."*

- We hone in on a SINGLE CIGARETTE, as the hand holding it reaches over a cubicle wall and ashes on the floor.

The hand returns inside the safe confines of its cubicle.

INT. CUBICLE - CONTINUOUS

Still following that cigarette. It gets set down, on a desk, as the hand picks up a small, old TAPE RECORDER.

VOICE (O.S.)
(re: recording)
This cool?

SURE. SECOND VOICE (O.S.)

A PACK OF CIGARETTES are held forward.

Smoke? VOICE (O.S.)

No thanks. SECOND VOICE (O.S.)

The pack is pulled back REVEALING for the first time:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OUR INTERVIEWER, GUY DELOACH (36). His style is of the day and his manner that of a hippie who thinks he knows everything about anything worth knowing.

DeLoach leans back in his seat. He takes a long drag on his cigarette as he studies the YOUNG MAN opposite him.

ON THIS YOUNG MAN.

Throughout, we see him only in FACELESS SNAPSHOTS.

- Long hair, very much of the era.
- Open collared shirt. A hairless chest.
- A single gold cross on the hairless chest.
- Those few facial features we can make out are boyish, untouched by... well, anything.

BACK TO DELOACH.

DELOACH

Jesus H, you're a baby. What are you, sixteen?

YOUNG MAN

Nineteen.

DELOACH

Jesus H.

DeLoach takes another drag. A beat, then he smiles.

DELOACH (CONT'D)

Well it's a hell of an album, Kid. People are going to freak.

YOUNG MAN

Thank you.

DELOACH

Who got you there?

YOUNG MAN

I'm sorry?

DELOACH

Your influences. Who do you dig? Who makes you hard?

YOUNG MAN

(uncomfortable)
Oh, well, I--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DELOACH

Hold on.

DeLoach picks up the recorder, speaks into it.

DELOACH (CONT'D)

June 30th, 1967, Guy DeLoach with
Danny Collins for Chime Mag, go
ahead.

A beat of silence.

DANNY

Me go ahead?

DELOACH

Yes.

DANNY

Oh, well, I don't know, really. I
listen to everything so--

DELOACH

There's the Dylan comparison
obviously. The singer-songwriter
thing. Stripped down. Raw.
(then)
You're seriously nineteen?

In profile, Danny NODS.

DELOACH (CONT'D)

More than anything it's the
writing. You write like fucking
Lennon man.

DANNY

Oh, well, that's... thank you.

DELOACH

He's clearly an influence here,
no?

DANNY

Yeah, I mean... I guess he's the
one who makes me the hardest?

A beat. DeLoach LAUGHS, shakes his head.

DELOACH

Jesus H. Well, you're going to be
huge, Kid. I know the real thing
when I hear it and you're it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Danny doesn't say anything. DeLoach raises a brow.

DELOACH (CONT'D)

Kid, look at me. I've been a star-maker and a star-fucker for a very long time, and I'm telling you: You. Are. Going. To. Be. Huge. Richer than richer, famous as shit, more women than you know what to do with. And I'm telling you this, and I've got to ask: why are you sitting there, staring at me, looking like that information scares the living shit out of you?

Danny leans forward, full-frame for the first time.

DANNY

Because it does.

CUE TITLE CARD:

IMAGINE

We FADE BACK IN on the sound of A DULL, THUMPING ROAR. THUMP. THUMP. THUMP. A distant crowd awaits their star.

CHYRON: 43 YEARS LATER.

EXT. THE NEW MEADOWLANDS STADIUM - EVENING

A large marquee outside bears only four words:

Danny Collins. Sold Out.

AROUND THE PARKING LOT

Late STRAGGLERS hustle in toward the stadium. The crowd we see, generally, feels... well, older.

In fact, OLDER FOLKS abound. Many carry blankets. Seat cushions. A few argue about which entrance to go into.

We spot FOUR YOUNGER PEOPLE racing toward the stadium (TWO GUYS, TWO GIRLS). They're drinking beer from cans.

GUY #1

So we're really going in?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GIRL #1

Honestly, I don't know if I can go through with this.

GUY #2

Guys, this is going to be fucking hysterical, just trust me.

INT. THE NEW MEADOWLANDS STADIUM - CONTINUOUS

The chanting crowd continues.

CROWD

Dan-ny! Dan-ny! Dan-ny!

An OLDER WOMAN holds up a sign reading, "THIS GRANNY LOVES DANNY."

EXT. DRESSING ROOM - MEANWHILE

A sign on the door reads: **HEADLINER.**

INT. DRESSING ROOM - MEANWHILE

A WORN HAND fingers a CROSS.

The cross dangles from a chain, half buried in a patch of grey chest hair.

The cross is removed, placed on a table.

The cross OPENS, like a coffin. It gets turned upside-down, dumping a line of COCAINE on a table.

A NOSE comes into frame, snorts some.

INT. TUNNEL - MOMENTS LATER

From behind, an ENTOURAGE marches down the tunnel, enveloping the star. The CHANTING CROWD grows closer.

ON HIS FEET

Black PLATFORM SHOES, providing him a solid five inches. His steps are wobbly, not exactly in a straight line.

AT THE STAGE CURTAIN

From behind, we watch as this WHITE-SUITED FIGURE pauses. He finishes off a bottle of BEER, hands it to someone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

One deep breath. One crack of the neck, each way. Then:

DANNY

Yep.

He goes through the curtain. From behind the curtain, we hear the crowd instantly go APESHIT.

EXT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

We see DANNY COLLINS (now in his 60's) for the first time since he was nineteen.

He's still a striking man, but the years have definitely left their mark... and all the make-up in the world can't hide it (though not for lack of trying).

He wears a stark white suit, black shirt, and those black platform shoes. Equal parts Johnny Cash and Neil Diamond.

He approaches the mic. Smiles.

DANNY

Thanks for coming.

The crowd ROARS approval. Danny nods.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I think you might know this one.

Danny turns to his BAND behind him.

DANNY (CONT'D)

One, two, three, four!

LIGHTS BLAST ON!!! Everywhere. The BAND begins playing as the crowd ERUPTS.

During the song: VIDEO SCREENS do their best to overload senses. PRE-RECORDED IMAGES of Danny play everywhere: singing, dancing, occasionally winking.

This is over-the-top spectacle... but not caricature. The music, the act, it's cheesy without being cartoony, campy without being completely void of melody.

It's pretty clear that the stadium isn't the only thing that has sold out.

Danny has clearly lead off with his biggest hit, akin to *Sweet Caroline* (equally catchy, almost as good).

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CONTINUED:

Sweet Caroline is a good reference actually, mainly because from the first note (and especially the chorus), the audience is SINGING ALONG in a call and response fashion.

ON DANNY

As he performs, taking in the crowd in slow motion.

ON CROWD

AN OLDER COUPLE, arm and arm, SING the response part of the song back at him. They're singing way too hard.

THREE OLDER WOMEN sit quietly in their front row seats, eating RED VINES and mouthing words along, lifeless.

A GROUP OF YOUNG PEOPLE sing along with energy... but they're LAUGHING. They're not laughing *with* Danny.

ON DANNY

He's seen it all a thousand times. It no longer phases him.

He pivots with a little shimmy, keeps performing.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - HOURS LATER.

Danny's dressing room has transformed into an AFTER-PARTY. HANGER-ONS are everywhere. Drinking, smoking, making a mess of the place.

Everyone's a solid twenty to thirty years younger than Danny. At least.

OFF TO THE SIDE

A MAN in an expensive suit drinks from a BOTTLE OF WATER, watches it all. This is FRANK GRUBMAN (50's).

He looks...

ACROSS THE ROOM (FRANK'S POV)

At Danny, holding court for a small group of SYCOPHANTS and doing his best to stay awake. He's drinking EXPENSIVE SCOTCH and fingering his cross.

A THIRTY-SOMETHING kneels beside Danny, asking (clearly) to snap a picture of them on his CELL PHONE. Danny shakes his head no, the guy takes the picture anyway.

Danny shrugs it off, takes another sip of scotch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BACK TO FRANK

He's seen enough. He heads over, sits next to Danny.

FRANK
How you doin', Kid?

DANNY
Peachy, Frank.

FRANK
It was a good show.

DANNY
Inspired.

Frank tilts his head, takes Danny in.

FRANK
Hey, Sylvia Plath? You okay?

DANNY
I'm fine.
(then, admitting)
Birthday blues or some shit I
guess.

That's all Frank needs to hear. He stands.

FRANK
(announcing)
Alright everyone, sorry but it's
time to clear out. My guy needs a
little rest.

No one really listens.

FRANK (CONT'D)
LISTEN UP YOU LEECHES, IT'S TIME
TO GET THE FUCK OUT OF HERE!

DANNY
Frank, let 'em be--

FRANK
No, Danny, I can name three people
in this room and that's about
three more than you can.
(to room)
DID I STAMMER, I SAID GET THE FUCK
OUT!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The mumbling crowd ("Jesus," "what the hell?" "what a dick") begins dispersing. Once they're gone, Danny and Frank sit in silence for a moment. Then:

FRANK (CONT'D)

Birthday's not till tomorrow, Kid.
Got a few hours till the state
mandated depression has to set in.

Danny's not listening.

DANNY

You see the Golden Girls sitting
in the front row? Eating
liquorice the entire time?

FRANK

Can't choose your fans, Danny.

DANNY

Three of them. Each of them older
than the next. Made one pack of
liquorice last the entire show.
Just sat there gumming it for two
hours.

Frank stands.

FRANK

Alright, enough of this crap.
It's your birthday tomorrow,
that's your big problem? Pregnant
women in Africa, feeding half
their village from their
titties... those ladies have
problems. Not you.

Danny smiles weakly.

DANNY

No, I know. You're right.

FRANK

Course I'm right, I'm always
right. So go home to your
mansion, pop a little blue pill,
and make love to your stunning
half-your age fiance who's
throwing you the massive surprise
party tomorrow that I didn't just
tell you about. Then come tell me
and the sore tittied African
ladies about all your problems.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Danny nods.

DANNY

Okay.

He stands, goes to exit. Frank's voice stops him.

FRANK

It was a good show, Kid. Really.

Danny turns, about to say something, then thinks better of it. He simply replies:

DANNY

Yeah.

CUE SONG: *Nowhere Man*, written by John Lennon and Paul McCartney.

INT. DANNY'S MASERATI - LATER

It's a preposterous car for anyone... let alone a man in his sixties. Red on the outside, leather everywhere on the inside, it's a spaceship on wheels.

Danny whisks in and out of traffic on Route 17... heading out of New Jersey and onto:

EXT. THE GEORGE WASHINGTON BRIDGE - LATER

Where the Maserati can be spotted easily from above, weaving through traffic effortlessly.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY - CONTINUOUS

We follow the car into Manhattan... Park Avenue, specifically.

The car slows in front of the MOST LUXURIOUS BUILDING on the avenue... and pulls into its UNDERGROUND PARKING.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Danny eases the car through the parking structure. Across the way stands an UNDERGROUND DOORMAN, currently talking on a HOUSE PHONE. This is MARTY (30's).

Marty waves Danny forward towards a small, CLOSED GARAGE DOOR and holds up a finger ("Be with you in a second").

(CONTINUED)

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Danny parks, waits. After a beat, Marty hangs up and approaches. Danny SIGHS, lowers the window.

MARTY
Good show, Mr. Collins?

DANNY
It was, thanks Marty.

MARTY
Calling it early? No after-party?

DANNY
Little tired. Just looking to hit
the sack so...

He motions at the garage. Marty doesn't take the hint.

MARTY
What'd you open with tonight?

DANNY
Same as always, Marty.

MARTY
Bet they loved it.

DANNY
They always do.
(then)
I really gotta hit the sheets,
Kid.

He hands Marty a twenty. Marty nods, slowly stands.

MARTY
Have a good night, Mr. Collins.

Marty walks toward the garage door, hits a BUTTON. The door raises. Danny drives inside and parks, a typical single car garage. Here's what's not typical:

INSIDE THE GARAGE

The door closes, encasing the car. Then starts RISING. This isn't a garage, it's an elevator. For a car.

And it's taking Danny and his Maserati all the way up.

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Danny EXITS the car, ENTERS the actual apartment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

It's HUGE. Modern. Insane. Every New Yorker's dream.

DANNY
(calling out)
I'm home.

No response. Danny tosses down his keys, heads deeper inside. We stay with him...

DOWN A LONG HALLWAY

PHOTOS, PLATINUM ALBUMS, MEMORABILIA line the walls. We track with Danny, never stopping long enough to fully absorb anything - holy shit was that a photo with Michael Jackson? Wait, did that say 4 million copies sold? - simply getting the general impression of a man who's had grand success in music for a very long time.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A bed fit for a King. Multiple fireplaces. Huge flatscreen. Danny calls out again.

DANNY
Where you at?

VOICE (O.S.)
Shower!

Danny walks across the room, into...

INT. MASTER BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

A female figure (masked by steam) showers. The shower is roughly the size of Rhode Island.

SHOWERING WOMAN
How'd the show go?

DANNY
It went.

SHOWERING WOMAN
Sorry I missed it.

DANNY
You've seen it before.
(then)
What'd you do tonight?

SHOWERING WOMAN
Just busywork around here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANNY

Always doing busywork.

SHOWERING WOMAN

It's a big house. Running it
keeps a girl busy.

(then)

I'll be out in a minute. I'm just
finishing shaving.

DANNY

Okay.

(then, realizing)

Oh, Hon'?

The door to the shower opens, revealing:

SOPHIE (31). She's Danny's fiance'. She's very young,
very hot, and very naked.

And she's currently shaving her pubic hair with a
disposable pink razor (shaving cream covers the region).

DANNY (CONT'D)

Jesus, Sophie.

SOPHIE

What?

He shakes his head, thrown by the sight, and turns to go.
Then he stops, remembering:

DANNY

Oh, yeah: the kid downstairs, can
you do something about him? I
don't need a half hour of chit-
chat every time I pull into my
garage.

SOPHIE

He's just trying to impress you.

DANNY

Yeah, well, he's failing.

(then)

Okay, I'm gonna go work a little
bit.

SOPHIE

Okay, Baby.

(then, realizing)

Wait, work on what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANNY

Just... Sophie, please watch what
you're doing, you're going to maim
yourself.

(then)

Don't wait up, alright?

He EXITS the bathroom. She calls after him.

SOPHIE

Seriously, Baby! Work on what?

No reply. Sophie SHRUGS, continues her grooming.

INT. DANNY'S HOME STUDIO - LATER

Danny ENTERS the room, flicks on a light.

ON THE ROOM

It's a great space... INSTRUMENTS abound, RECORDING
EQUIPMENT, a nice BABY GRAND PIANO in the corner. It's
obvious, however, that the room is not used often.

ON DANNY

He looks around, spots what he's looking for: a GUITAR
CASE in the corner, buried under paperwork.

He picks up the case, sits down in a chair. He wipes the
case clean of dust, opens it.

INSIDE

An OLD ACOUSTIC GUITAR. It's a 1960's, vintage, Gibson.
Probably worth a small fortune.

BACK TO DANNY

Who smiles weakly. It's been a long time.

Danny begins strumming. A few chords. The beginning of
something simple, melodic, and gentle.

He pauses, lowers the guitar. Thinks for a moment.

He raises the guitar, but as he does he catches sight of
himself in the full-wall studio mirror opposite him:

ON HIS REFLECTION

An old man in a silly white suit, wearing platform shoes
and holding an ancient acoustic guitar.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ON DANNY

Realizing. He stops, unwilling to go further. You can see it in his eyes, What's the point?

He puts the guitar down on the ground, leans back in his chair, and closes his eyes.

He falls asleep sitting up.

INT. CAR (INSIDE CAR ELEVATOR) - NEXT NIGHT

Danny and Sophie ride the elevator up (inside the car). Sophie holds leftovers from dinner in her lap.

Sophie is dressed in something super revealing. Danny wears a flashy suit, with a bright pink shirt (and customary wide-spread collar).

You can imagine the looks they got at dinner.

SOPHIE
Good birthday dinner, Baby?

DANNY
(nodding)
Good birthday dinner.

She kisses his cheek. He smiles at her.

DANNY (CONT'D)
So how many people are inside?

SOPHIE
Dammit! Fucking Frank!

DANNY
How many?

SOPHIE
About a hundred.

Danny SIGHS.

DANNY
Honey: you can't surprise a man my age. You want to give me a heart attack or something?

She motions at her wedding ring.

SOPHIE
Not until it's legal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANNY

Funny.

SOPHIE

Uch, I'm so pissed at him!

Sophie reaches into her purse, pours a line of coke on the dash, bends forward and does some.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)

You want?

Danny SIGHS.

DANNY

You are trying to kill me.

He accepts some, does it quickly, moves for the car door.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Sweetheart?

SOPHIE

Yeah?

DANNY

Fix your dress.

Her right breast is hanging out of the low-cut dress. She stuffs it back in nonchalantly and EXITS the car.

INT. PENTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

They ENTER to the apartment to a huge:

CROWD

Surprise!

The penthouse is full of GUESTS. Danny feigns shock.

DANNY

No way! Are you kidding me!?

(to Sophie)

You did this?

But Sophie's already hopped up, barely listening, rubbing her nose and sniffing.

Danny covers her behavior by hugging her. The CROWD AWWWWS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANNY (CONT'D)
(putting on a show)
Don't you all know you don't
surprise a man my age? You could
have given me a heart attack!

Everyone LAUGHS. Someone CUES Danny's MOST FAMOUS SONG
(the one we saw him open the concert with).

DANNY (CONT'D)
I think I know this one!

LAUGHTER. Danny couldn't be more miserable, but he's had
decades of experience performing. And boy, can he
perform. As WELL-WISHERS descend on Danny we launch:

A PARTY MONTAGE

As Danny goes through the motions in snapshots.

- He LAUGHS with guests.
- He DANCES slowly with an older woman.
- He DOES COKE in the bathroom, alone.
- He OPENS gifts, pretends to like them.
- At one point, he spots Sophie chatting with Marty (the
garage doorman). He watches as she hands him some CASH.
Marty takes it, walks away. Danny approaches Sophie.

DANNY (CONT'D)
What was that?

SOPHIE
He helped me plan things.

DANNY
Oh. Okay.

She holds out her secret stash of coke.

SOPHIE
You want?

DANNY
No thanks.

- Back in the bathroom. Danny does more coke.
- More gifts. More dancing. More fake laughing. Until
finally...

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - LATER

The party has pretty much cleared out. Danny and Frank (his manager, we met him before) sit on one couch.

Opposite them, Sophie is passed out on a love seat. Sprawled all over it.

As usual, she's hanging out everywhere.

FRANK
(teasing)
She's like a young Jackie O'.

DANNY
Careful.

FRANK
Yeah, okay.

Danny CHUCKLES, shakes his head.

DANNY
I look absurd with her.

FRANK
Yes, you do.

A beat. She begins to snore, drunkenly.

DANNY
We have to make her sign a pre-nup, don't we?

FRANK
Yes, we do.

Another beat.

DANNY
I'm way too old to be putting this much shit up my nose.

FRANK
Yes, you are.

DANNY
Jesus, don't give me all the good stuff at once, Frank. You're really earning that ten percent tonight, Pal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK

What do you want me to say? No
Danny, you look totally normal
standing next to a coked up
teenager who can't keep her
nipples covered for more than five
minutes. No, Danny, you should
put more shit up your nose, I mean
hell: you're only 64! Pre-nup?
Who needs a pre-nup? I mean sure,
you've been through three wives
already, but this one really seems
like the real deal. Oh look, I
can see her vagina again!

Danny smiles.

DANNY

Cute.

FRANK

Thank you, I try.

Frank STANDS.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Okay, so... I got you something.
It's pretty much the best birthday
gift ever and it cost me a fortune
so do me a favor and upside down
the frown for five minutes, huh?

Danny smiles, sits up.

DANNY

Okay, okay.

(boyish)

What'd you get me, what'd you get
me? It's expensive? You know how
I like expensive.

Frank smiles, bends, and picks up a wrapped GIFT. Danny
grabs it, starts unwrapping. Frank explains, excitedly:

FRANK

I wanted to get you something good
this year. I know how fanatical
you are about Lennon, so I started
futzin' around on the internet.
Ebay, Lennon memorabilia, that
kind of stuff.

Wrapping paper is off. The gift is in a thin box bound
by a few RIBBONS. Danny starts removing them.

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CONTINUED: (2)

FRANK (CONT'D)

Anyhow, I get in touch with this one guy, a collector. I explain the situation: I'm Danny Collins' manger, he's a huge Lennon fan, blah blah blah. Say I'm looking to get you something special. He calls me back two days later, freaking out.

Frank takes a deep breath.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Holy shit, I've been holding this in for three months now! I'm bursting here!

(then)

Danny, wait, hold on, you have to hear this first.

Danny stops opening the gift.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You remember doing an interview, when you were a kid? Probably one of your first. Something called Chime Magazine? Fella named DeLoach?

ON DANNY

As he FLASHES BACK to our opening scene. 1967. The tape recorder. The cigarette smoke. Guy DeLoach.

DANNY

(confused)

Yeah. I remember.

FRANK

So '67, the interview gets published. I don't know what you'd said in it - something about being worried about getting rich, you mentioned Lennon, doesn't matter. Point is: Lennon read it! And he wrote you a letter!

Danny lowers the box, confused.

DANNY

What? Frank, what the hell are you talking about?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

FRANK

John Lennon wrote you a letter, Pal! In 1967. He sent it to you at the magazine, care of this DeLoach guy. DeLoach smells money - handwritten letter from John Lennon and all - so he holds onto it, never tells you. DeLoach died five years ago, he's not the point. The point is he sold the letter to a collector. The guy I called finds it, tells me. I bought it for you. Can you believe this shit?

DANNY

I'm not following this, Frank.

FRANK

Open the box, just open it.

Danny does, slowly. Frank has had the letter framed and matted, beautifully.

ON THE LETTER

It's small, handwritten. Very personalized.

FRANK (CONT'D)

A handwritten letter to you from John Lennon, written in 1967. Can you fucking believe it? Read it!

Danny is still processing. He reads, out loud, slowly:

DANNY

Dear Danny Collins. Yoko and I read your interview. Being rich and famous doesn't change the way you think. It doesn't corrupt your art. Only you can do that. So what do you think about that, Danny Collins? Stay true to your music. Stay true to yourself. Love your family. It is all that matters. My phone number is below. Call me, we can discuss this. We can help. Love, John.

FRANK

Crazy, right!? I've been sitting on this thing for months. I wanted to give it to you when I...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

As Frank continues rambling excitedly, we PUSH in on Danny.

ON DANNY

He's just staring at the letter. Reading it, over and over. His world has clearly just rotated on its axis.

A letter from your hero, meant to be delivered to you when you were nineteen. Warning you of all the things you wound up doing and now regret. Forty years too late.

Can you imagine?

CUE SONG: *Imagine*, written by John Lennon.

Everything SLOWS as Danny looks around the room. The imagery conflicts with the beautiful song: his fiancée, belching and half-conscious. The hanger-ons passed out in the corner. His preposterously lavish apartment.

Sad, horrific, irony.

The song carries into...

INT. DANNY'S STUDIO - LATER THAT NIGHT

Danny sits there, holding the letter, staring at it.

He's slowly unraveling.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Danny lies in bed, awake. He hasn't slept. He gets up from the bed, stands. Sophie rolls over.

SOPHIE

Where are you going?

DANNY

For a ride.

SOPHIE

When will you be back?

DANNY

Late.

INT. DANNY'S MASERATI - LATER

Danny drives through NYC. All morning. West side. East Side. Mid-town. Aimless. Just thinking.

The whole time the letter sits next to him, on the passenger seat. Haunting him.

Finally he winds up driving through:

CENTRAL PARK.

He pulls the Maserati over, stopping behind a row of EMPTY HORSE CARRIAGES. He gets out of the car.

EXT. CENTRAL PARK - CONTINUOUS

PEOPLE spot Danny, recognize him. They whisper. Point. But Danny's oblivious. He just stares out at the park.

Slowly... ever so slowly... a smile creeps over his face.

He cracks his neck, once each way. Then, as before:

DANNY

Yep.

He gets back in the car and races off. Full speed now.

EXT. PARK AVENUE - CONTINUOUS

The Maserati turns into the usual UNDERGROUND PARKING AREA of Danny's building. But then... the car stops. Slowly backs up and parks, instead, on the street.

Danny gets out. Enters the building from the front door.

INT. LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Danny strides into the regular elevator.

INT. ELEVATOR - CONTINUOUS

A MUSAK VERSION of Danny's most popular song plays as he rides up in silence. He shakes it off, determined.

INT. PENTHOUSE APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Danny ENTERS.

DANNY

I'm home!

We hear frantic FOOTSTEPS in the distance.

SOPHIE (O.S.)

Baby!?

Danny smiles, marches toward the bedroom.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Sophie lies in bed, confused and a little frazzled.

SOPHIE

I thought you were coming back
late.

DANNY

Change of plans.

Danny takes a SUITCASE out. He begins filling it.

SOPHIE

What are you doing?

DANNY

Packing.

SOPHIE

Where are you going?

DANNY

Away.

(then)
Where is he?

SOPHIE

Who?

DANNY

Whoever you were just in bed with,
where is he hiding?

SOPHIE

Danny--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANNY

Honey, I didn't pull in the garage, so the kid downstairs couldn't call you and then stall me with idle chit-chat so you could get him out of here in time. I'm not mad, I promise, I just don't want to open a closet and have a strange man jump out and scare the shit out of me. He's not in the closet is he?

SOPHIE

(relenting)

No.

DANNY

Good.

(then, loudly)

You can come out! I promise I'm not mad!

SOPHIE

Jesus.

(loudly)

Just come out. It's okay.

A YOUNG HANDSOME MAN in TIGHTY-WHITEYS comes out from under the bed. Danny smiles, continues packing.

DANNY

(to the guy)

You must be busywork.

YOUNG MAN

Judd.

DANNY

I'll call you busywork. She's always doing busywork. Now I understand.

SOPHIE

(apologetic)

Danny.

DANNY

Sweetie, I could not be less mad. I had fun, did you have fun?

SOPHIE

Yeah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANNY

Good. I'm glad. You stay. Keep the apartment for a while. You and Busywork here. Enjoy yourselves. Be young, have fun, I need my address book, there's an address I need in my address book. Ah, here it is.

Danny leans in toward Sophie, kisses her cheek.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I would have made you sign a pre-nup anyway. You're not missing out on any big money if that makes you feel better.

SOPHIE

I guess it does a little.

DANNY

I'm glad.

Danny holds his hand out toward Judd. They shake.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Busywork, take care of her.

JUDD

My parents had their first dance to one of your songs, Sir.

DANNY

Well that's fucked up in all kinds of ways now, isn't it?

(then)

Okay, adios Kids.

He grabs his SUITCASE and EXITS.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - MINUTES LATER

Danny EXITS the apartment, a skip in his step. He gets in the Maserati, still parked in front of the building, and zooms away.

We can hear his LAUGHTER all the way down Park Ave.

CUE SONG: *Watching the Wheels*, written by John Lennon

EXT. GARDEN STATE PARKWAY - ONE HOUR LATER

The Maserati takes EXIT 172 on the Garden State Turnpike.
The EXIT SIGN READS: "Grand Ave/Last Exit in NJ."

EXT. WOODCLIFF LAKE HILTON - TWENTY MINUTES LATER

The Maserati pulls up in front of this ordinary Hilton.

The rest of the valet area is littered with Toyotas,
Minivans, and Fords.

ON A VALET KID (22)

Standing there, bored. He sees the Maserati approach.

VALET KID

(re: car)

Holy shit.

The car pulls to a stop. Danny steps out of the car.

VALET KID (CONT'D)

(re: Danny Collins)

Holy shit!

The kid runs forward.

VALET KID (CONT'D)

Welcome to the Hilton, Danny
Collins... Mr. Collins...

(trying again)

Welcome to the Hilton, Sir.

DANNY

It's good to be at the Hilton,
young man. And call me Danny.
What should I call you?

VALET KID

Nicky Ernst.

DANNY

Nicky Ernst, it's an absolute
pleasure. You have a wonderful
face. Here.

He hands Nick a HUNDRED. Nicky masks his excitement.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NICKY

So. Mr... Danny... will you be staying with us, or just joining us for breakfast today?

DANNY

Nicky: I'm going to be staying with you, I'm going to be joining you for breakfast, I'm going to be taking advantage of all the amenities the Woodcliff Lake Hilton has to offer... Nicky, I can't help but notice that you're drooling on my car.

NICKY

Sorry. It's just so... awesome.

DANNY

It is awesome isn't it? I don't even notice how awesome it is anymore. Tell you what, you're welcome to use it whenever you want, take your girl out for a spin. You have a girl?

NICKY

No.

DANNY

You will if you take her out for a spin in this car.

NICKY

(ha ha)
Yeah, okay.

DANNY

Okay.

NICKY

Wait, seriously?

Danny is already walking away.

DANNY

(calling back)
Bring my bag to my room, Nicky.
Careful with the guitar.

INT. WOODCLIFF LAKE HILTON - CONTINUOUS

Danny walks in. It could be any hotel, in any city. A lobby. A LOBBY restaurant. A lobby BAR. That's it.

A SIGN reads: "WELCOME GREATER NJ DENTAL ASSOCIATION."
(Note: people who look like... well, dentists, will populate the hotel throughout our stay).

DANNY
(in heaven)
Perfect.

Danny walks to the front desk. A PRETTY YOUNG GIRL (23) works on the computer.

YOUNG GIRL
(not looking, bored)
Welcome to the Hilton, do you have
a reservation?

DANNY
I do not have a reservation, but
I'm hoping that won't be a deal-
breaker because I am rapidly
falling in love with this Hilton.

She SIGHS, looks up.

YOUNG GIRL
Holy shit!

DANNY
I get that a lot.

YOUNG GIRL
I'm sorry, I didn't--

DANNY
No apology required. What is your
name?

YOUNG GIRL
Jaime.

DANNY
Jaime, I'm Danny.

JAIME
I know who you are.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANNY

What about Nicky out front? Do you know who he is?

JAIME

The Valet guy?

DANNY

Nicky Ernst. Ask him to take you for a ride in my car, you'll fall in love.

(then)

Look at you! Another fantastic young face. What an amazing place this Woodcliff Lake Hilton is. Why are your faces so fantastic and young?

JAIME

We're all college kids I guess, off for summer or just graduated.

DANNY

Ah. That must be it.

JAIME

How long will you be staying with us Mr. Collins?

Danny pulls out his ADDRESS BOOK from his suit pocket.

DANNY

Jaime, my GPS tells me that we're not far from a Hillsdale, New Jersey. Now tell me: is my GPS lying to me or giving me the straight shit?

JAIME

(smiling)

Straight shit. You're five minutes.

DANNY

Well, then I will be staying indefinitely.

Jamie smiles, a little confused.

JAIME

Okay. I'll give you the Honeymoon suite, it's our nicest room... only I don't know how to do an indefinite reservation.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANNY

Don't need a honeymoon suite.
Just a regular, everyday room.

JAIME

Okay but I still don't know how...

Jaime turns toward the back, yells out.

JAIME (CONT'D)

(calling out)

Mary?

DANNY

If someone else with a wonderful
face comes out I don't know if
I'll be able to handle it.

MARY SINCLAIR (50's) emerges from the BACK OFFICE. She's
beautiful, great smile... an age appropriate beauty.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Okay, I officially can't handle
it.

Jamie darts over towards Mary, WHISPERS loudly.

JAIME

Look who it is!

MARY

(calmly)

I see.

JAIME

(rapid-fire whisper)

He wants to stay indefinitely and
I don't know how to do that. I
was going to give him the
honeymoon suite but--

DANNY

(loudly)

He didn't want the Honeymoon
Suite.

Mary and Jaime turn toward him, synchronized.

DANNY (CONT'D)

It's not my Honeymoon and I'm not
very sweet. Regular room will do
just fine.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Mary approaches. Jaime follows, eager to remain involved.

DANNY (CONT'D)
And what college do you go to
young lady?

MARY
Ha.

DANNY
Ha.

A beat.

MARY
You're staying indefinitely?

DANNY
I am.

MARY
Here?

DANNY
Huge fan of this Hilton.
(then)
Are you married, Mary?

MARY
I'm sorry?

DANNY
Are you currently betrothed?

MARY
No.

DANNY
Good. Dinner?

MARY
I'm sorry?

DANNY
No need to apologize. Can I take
you to dinner?

MARY
You're asking me to dinner?

DANNY
I think so. Jaime, I asked her to
dinner didn't I?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JAIME
(excited)
You did.

DANNY
I did.

Mary shakes her head.

MARY
I'm sorry, are you on drugs?

DANNY
Currently or in general?

MARY
Currently.

DANNY
No.
(then)
Dinner?

MARY
I'm sorry, I'm going to have to
decline.

DANNY
Not a fan of mine?

MARY
Currently or in general?

DANNY
In general.

MARY
No.

DANNY
Me neither. God, we have a great
patter don't we!? Jaime, can you
follow any of this?

JAIME
(giggling, excited)
No!

Mary smiles, shakes her head.

MARY
I'll check you in.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

DANNY

While you check me in, I'll check
you out.

MARY

Oh my God.

Mary goes back to the computer. Despite herself: she
can't help but smile, just a little.

INT. DANNY'S HOTEL ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Danny stands in the center of the room, taking it in.

ON THE ROOM

It could be any hotel room in the world. A bed, a small
desk, and a two seat couch. That's it.

BACK TO DANNY

He may as well be taking in the Sistine Chapel. He walks
over to the ratty loveseat, rests his guitar against it.

He digs into his bag, and pulls out the framed LENNON
LETTER. Sets it up on his nightstand.

He steps back, takes it all in. Then, once more:

DANNY

Perfect.

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER THAT NIGHT

Around the bar, we see PATRONS talking, whispering,
pointing. They all seem distracted by something on the
other side of the room.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ROOM

Danny sits at the bar. He's wearing a customary over-the-
top suit and has his GUITAR CASE standing against the
stool next to him. He's drinking scotch.

FRANK (O.S.)

Danny?

Danny turns. Frank stands there.

DANNY

Frank!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Danny stands, envelopes Frank in a surprising BEAR HUG.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Sit, sit. Thanks for coming.
Have you been here before?

FRANK
The bar at the Woodcliff Lake
Hilton?
(then, obviously)
No.

Frank sits. He's obviously concerned.

FRANK (CONT'D)
I called the house. Spoke to
Sophie. She said you--

DANNY
I did.

FRANK
So you--

DANNY
Yes.
(then, calling out)
Barkeep? An ice water for this
handsome young man, por favor?

Frank notices the GUITAR next to Danny.

FRANK
You're carrying your guitar around
I see? To hotel bars.

DANNY
Trying to get used to the feel of
it. I might start writing again.

FRANK
Well that's great, Pal.

Danny turns toward Frank, serious.

DANNY
Frank, I've decided to make some
big changes in my life. Some of
them may come as a bit of a shock,
some of them may even affect you
financially.

Frank puts his hand on Danny's knee.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

FRANK

I'm here as your friend, Danny.
Not as your manager.

DANNY

Actually, I need you to be here as
my manager for a moment.

Danny takes a sip of scotch.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I need you to cancel tomorrow
night's show.

Frank doesn't hesitate.

FRANK

Okay. It won't be easy, but okay.

DANNY

Good. Cause then I need you to
cancel the rest of my tour.

FRANK

I'm sorry?

DANNY

Don't be sorry, I'm not sorry.
I'm done, Frank.

(then)

Oh, I'll also need you to call
Ken, tell him to sell all my
stock, all the houses, put
everything into savings accounts,
or CDS, whatever's safest. I want
no debt, no expenses, no risk. So
help me God I will never be forced
to sing those songs again. Oh,
wait, tell Ken not to sell the
penthouse yet. I'm going to let
Sophie and the kid she was
cheating on me with stay there for
a while--

FRANK

Danny, stop!

Danny stops.

FRANK (CONT'D)

You're spiraling. Are you on
something? What did you take?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DANNY

Nothing, I promise. Actually, I'm done with that shit too. No more drinking, no more smoking, no more drugs. I'm done.

FRANK

You're drinking right now, Danny.

DANNY

True. Okay, forget what I said about the drinking. I mean, I'm making a life change, not becoming a priest, right?

FRANK

This is because of Sophie?

DANNY

Sophie? No! Jesus, Frank, give me a little credit.

(then)

It's because of the letter.

Danny puts down his drink. Changes tone.

DANNY (CONT'D)

What if I had gotten it when I was supposed to, Frank? What if I had gotten it when I was a sweet nineteen year old kid who didn't know jack shit about anything?

FRANK

What are you talking about?

DANNY

He was my hero. I would have called him. I would have spent six days dialing the phone and hanging up but I would have called eventually.

(then)

Maybe my life would have turned out different.

FRANK

You're too hard on yourself, Kid. Always have been.

DANNY

I was a songwriter, Frank. That's all I was. Simple songs.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DANNY (CONT'D)

Just me and my guitar. You've heard my first album.

FRANK

Yes, I'm the only one.

DANNY

Yeah, so I sold out. For money. For fame. I did it all wrong. Just look at the letter. "Stay true to your music."

Danny makes a BZZZZZZ sound like an "incorrect" game show buzzer.

DANNY (CONT'D)

"Stay true to yourself."

"BZZZZZ!"

DANNY (CONT'D)

"Love your family?" I have three failed marriages and a grown son I've never spoken to.

"BZZZZZ!" Frank leans forward, concerned. Gently:

FRANK

You're having a break down Danny.

DANNY

Hate to tell you, Buddy, but I've been breaking down for forty years. I'm broken. Ain't nothing left to break.

(beat, then)

I'm sixty-four, Frank. I've been abusing my body for the better parts of four decades. If I'm gonna find any kind of redemption, I can't waste any more time.

He taps his guitar.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I'm gonna write some real songs. People will probably hate them, but so what? And I'm gonna go see my kid. He'll probably hate me, but I'm gonna try that, too.

FRANK

You know where he is?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

DANNY

Had a guy track him down two years ago. Lives in Hillsdale, New Jersey.

FRANK

Where's that?

DANNY

Five minutes from here.

FRANK

Jesus.

DANNY

Yeah.

A beat, then:

FRANK

You make this move, it'll be hard to turn back, Danny. A sixty-something man starts cancelling tours, disappointing fans, people start wondering. I'm talking to you as your manager.

DANNY

Actually, I need you to be my friend again now.

Frank nods, sits there for a beat, then:

FRANK

I'll cancel the tour.

Danny nods back, clinks his scotch against Frank's water. They turn back toward the bar in unison.

After a beat, from behind, Frank puts his hand on Danny's shoulder. There's nothing left to say.

INT. WOODCLIFF LAKE HILTON LOBBY - NEXT MORNING

Danny walks through the lobby, a spring in his step. His outfit/suit is typically bold.

He stops at the front desk. Jamie and Mary are there.

DANNY

Jaime, have you talked to Nicky Ernst about taking that ride yet?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

JAMIE
Not yet, Mr. Collins.

DANNY
Don't forget, I see a lot of
potential in that young man.

He turns to Mary.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Dinner at seven? I'll meet you...

He points five feet away.

DANNY (CONT'D)
There?

MARY
Still gonna have to pass.

DANNY
Mary, you keep passing, I'll keep
making passes, we'll see who gives
up first, sound good?

MARY
(slight smile)
Have a nice day, Mr. Collins.

DANNY
Going to meet my son. How do I
look?

MARY
Honestly?

DANNY
If this relationship is going to
go the distance Mary, I think we
should always be honest with one
another.

MARY
You look ridiculous.

DANNY
Nah, I look sharp. See you at
seven.

MARY
No you won't.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANNY
And round and round we go.
(turning)
Jamie, don't forget about Nicky
Ernst. Wonderful young man.

EXT. HILTON - CONTINUOUS

Danny steps outside, Nicky waits with his car.

NICKY
She's ready for you, Sir.

DANNY
The girl at the front desk, she
won't stop talking about you,
Nicky. You should ask her out.

NICKY
(stunned)
Jamie?

DANNY
That's the one. Don't go after
Mary, Mary's mine.

Danny gets in the car, rips out of the parking lot.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE (HILLSDALE, NJ) - TEN MINUTES LATER

A modest HOUSE, in a modest NEIGHBORHOOD. TOYS are
scattered around the lawn. It could not be more ordinary.

And up to this house pulls a gleaming, red, Maserati.
Driven by...

Danny Collins. National superstar. Wearing, what can
best be described, as a zoot suit.

He emerges from the car, carrying a large BROWN BAG.
Danny takes a deep breath, cracks his neck each way.

DANNY
Yep.

He approaches the front door.

EXT. FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Danny RINGS the bell, shuffles nervously. Footsteps from
inside. Danny braces himself. The door OPENS, revealing:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nobody.

CHILD'S VOICE (O.S.)

Hello.

Danny looks downward at:

A LITTLE GIRL (6). This is HOPE, Danny's granddaughter.
Needless to say, Hope is pretty fucking cute.

DANNY

Hello.

HOPE

I am Hope.

DANNY

I am Danny.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Hope, you are not to open that
door for strangers!

HOPE

He's not a stranger! We saw him
on TV.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

What?

Hope's mother arrives. This is SAMANTHA (late 30's).
Samantha is pretty and pregnant. She's a study in
contrasts: tough but emotional, sexy but a little
tomboyish, and - at the moment - calm but completely
thrown by the sight of Danny Collins on her front
doorstep.

SAMANTHA

Whoa.

HOPE

Told you.

SAMANTHA

(strongly)
What are you doing here?

HOPE

(imitating her
mother)
YEAH, WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE!?

DANNY

Hi, I'm Danny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAMANTHA

We know who you are.

HOPE

(still imitating,
yelling)

YEAH! WE KNOW WHO YOU ARE!

Hope WHEEZES. Samantha immediately turns her attention to her daughter. She rubs Hope's back, calming her.

SAMANTHA

Settle, Baby. Calm down. Deep
breath.

Hope takes a deep breath. Samantha waits for her.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Okay?

HOPE

(nodding)

Okay.

SAMANTHA

Small voices for a minute, right?

HOPE

(nodding, whispering)

Small voices.

Samantha and Hope look back up at Danny.

HOPE (CONT'D)

(still whispering,
admitting)

I don't really know who you are.

Danny bends down, takes in Hope for the first time. His granddaughter. Wow. He touches her face, gentle.

Up above them, Samantha doesn't move, unsure what to do.

Danny stands back up, offers forth his BROWN BAG.

DANNY

I was unsure of what was
appropriate to bring...

SAMANTHA

(ignoring)

He's at work.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DANNY
So I brought bagels.

Samantha thinks.

SAMANTHA
Wow. Okay. This is weird. I
guess...
(then)
Come in?

DANNY
Okay.

Danny follows them into the house.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

They walk into the small kitchen. There are no granite tops here. No fancy espresso machines. It's warm, but small. Hand-drawn pictures on the fridge.

Danny puts the bagels on the table.

HOPE
(still whispering)
I want a bagel, can I have a bagel
Mommy?

SAMANTHA
Regular voices now, okay Baby?
But still calm?

HOPE
Okay.

Samantha sits Hope down at the table with Danny. She goes into cabinets, getting out plates, knives, creme cheese, etc. As she works...

DANNY
Can I do anything?

SAMANTHA
I've got it.

She starts creme-cheesing a bagel for Hope. She looks at Danny, shakes her head.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Wow. I mean... wow on so many
levels.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOPE

Too much creme cheese Mommy--

Samantha realizes what she's doing.

SAMANTHA

Sorry, Baby.

DANNY

How far along are you?

SAMANTHA

Six months.

DANNY

Boy or girl, do you know?

SAMANTHA

Boy.

DANNY

A boy. Wow.

SAMANTHA

On so many levels.

She stands.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I have to call him.

DANNY

Of course.

She walks to the other side of the kitchen, dials the phone, keeping an eye the whole time on Danny and Hope.

SAMANTHA

(into phone)

Amy, it's Samantha. Is he in?

Thanks.

Danny turns to his granddaughter.

DANNY

So... Hope, what grade are you in?

HOPE

I just finished the first grade.
My teacher is named Mrs. Williams
and my best friend is named Abby.
Why are you on TV?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANNY

Because I'm a singer.

HOPE

Are you a good singer?

DANNY

No, not really.

HOPE

I didn't think so.

SAMANTHA

Hope!

DANNY

(smiling)

It's okay.

(back to Hope)

Why didn't you think so?

HOPE

Because when you were on the TV,
Daddy said "Shut it off,
Samantha," and Mommy turned it off
really fast, and then Mommy said,
"Tom?" and Daddy said, "No" and
that was that.

Samantha starts to say something, but then starts talking
into the phone (he's gotten on the line). Danny watches.

SAMANTHA

(into phone)

Hey, so... your fa... Danny
Collins just showed up at the
house.

(long beat)

Uh huh. I know. Having bagels in
the kitchen with Hope.

(a beat)

What was I supposed...

(a beat)

Yes. Okay.

She hangs up, puts on a big fake smile, and announces:

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

He's coming home.

HOPE

Yay!

Danny looks at Samantha. She SHRUGS.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Hope is watching television, completely absorbed.

Danny and Samantha sit awkwardly on the couch behind her, watching her watch the television.

DANNY

So how long have you two been together?

SAMANTHA

Married twelve, together fifteen.
We met in college.

DANNY

Rutgers, right?

SAMANTHA

(confused)
Uh-huh, that's right.

A beat, then:

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I have so many questions.

DANNY

Ask away.

SAMANTHA

I can't think of any of them now.

Hope SCREAMS excitedly at something on the TV.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

Hope? Calm, okay?

Samantha watches Hope for a beat, monitoring.

DANNY

Is it asthma?

SAMANTHA

Yeah. It's pretty severe, we almost lost her once. And she's diagnosed hyperactive which doesn't make managing it any easier... why are you here?

The way the question is delivered catches Danny by surprise.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANNY

I'm making some changes.

SAMANTHA

It's a little late for that, isn't it?

DANNY

Maybe. I hope not.

Samantha leans back, thinks for a moment. Then:

SAMANTHA

My husband is the best man I've ever met. Solid. Kind. Funny. We've had one fight. Fifteen years, we've had one serious fight. Two years ago, I got tickets and backstage passes to one of your shows, thought it was time he should, I don't know... I thought he should at least meet you.

(then)

He disagreed. He disagreed strongly.

Danny nods.

DANNY

So this isn't going to be pretty?

SAMANTHA

No. I wouldn't imagine it will be.

DANNY

Well, if you could help grease the wheels at all... I swear I am here with only the best intentions.

SAMANTHA

Mr. Collins, my parents are dead. His mom is too. I'd like my daughter to know her one remaining grandparent, I would. I'd like my husband to know his father. And I'll admit to being a little star-struck by you. But in a minute, my husband is going to walk through that door. And when he does, I'm confident that this will be the last time I ever see you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

And despite your celebrity, and
despite what I want for my
daughter, and my husband, I will
not try and stop that. You did
this to yourself. Shame on you.

Danny NODS, understanding.

DANNY

That was good.

SAMANTHA

(emotional)

I've been practicing it in my head
since you gave me the bagels.

Danny smiles.

DANNY

He married well.

SAMANTHA

Yeah, I'm pretty great. You see?
You really missed out.

And just then: the FRONT DOOR opens. There stands TOM
(40's). Handsome. A serious man in a serious suit.

From the moment he ENTERS he doesn't take his eyes off of
Danny.

HOPE

Daddy! Daddy!

Hope runs to him. Tom's eyes remain on Danny as he hugs
her.

TOM

Easy Baby, nice and calm, okay?
Nice and calm.
(to Samantha)
Hi Honey.

SAMANTHA

Hi Baby.

TOM

(to Danny)
Could I speak to you outside for a
second?

DANNY

Of course.

Danny stands, offers his hand to Samantha.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DANNY (CONT'D)
If I have, then I am truly very
sorry to have missed out on you.

SAMANTHA
(formal)
Thank you for the bagels.

DANNY
(smiling)
Okay.

Tom guides his daughter towards Danny.

TOM
Hope, say goodbye to Mr. Collins.

HOPE
Goodbye to Mr. Collins.

TOM
Mr. Collins, say goodbye to Hope.

Danny kneels down, takes a knowing last look at his
granddaughter.

DANNY
(sad smile)
Goodbye to Hope.

He stands, follows Tom out the door.

EXT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Tom closes the door behind them. They stare at each
other for a long beat. A really long beat. Finally:

DANNY
You're so tall.

TOM
(calmly)
I'm sorry. What exactly do you
want?

DANNY
I just--

TOM
Are you sick? Is that why you're
here? Are you dying?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANNY

No. I'm not sick.

Danny takes a deep breath, contemplating. Then:

DANNY (CONT'D)

You have every right to be angry--

TOM

I'm not angry, I'm really not.
I'm a little confused. And I'm
extremely not interested in
anything you have to say. So if
you have anything to ask me, go
ahead, because this will be the
last time we see each other.

Danny NODS.

DANNY

What do you do for a liv--

TOM

I work for a bottling company in
Paramus, New Jersey called Rierston
Bottling. Upper level management.
Not my dream job but it's steady
and there's decent benefits and a
short commute both of which were
necessary considering Hope's
medical issues. I make \$84,000
dollars a year which isn't as much
as it seems but we do what we can.
What else?

DANNY

Your mom--

TOM

Died of cancer ten years ago.
Never married, never spoke about
you except to say it was a wild
thing she did one time when she
was twenty-three and got drunk
backstage after a concert. I use
her last name. Anything else?

DANNY

You're clearly very angry.

TOM

I'm not angry, I don't care enough
to be angry.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TOM (CONT'D)

I'm thinking about what I'm going to tell my daughter about you, and I'm thinking about the meeting I have back at work in twenty minutes. Are we done?

DANNY

I've sent you checks.

TOM

Ripped them up. Don't want your money. Okay? Nice to meet you, have a good life.

Tom heads back inside. One last question stops him.

DANNY

Are you happy?

TOM

Am I happy?

DANNY

Do you have a happy life?

Tom turns around. He smiles, finally slows down a little.

TOM

I don't love my job. And I'm not crazy about New Jersey. But I have the best wife in the history of wives. An amazing little girl. I wish she wasn't so sick. I'd do anything for that. But yes. If it makes you sleep better, I'm happy. Oh, and fuck you, you selfish prick. I am angry.

Tom ENTERS the house, slams the door behind him.

Danny stands there for a moment, then trudges back to his car.

CUE SONG: *Beautiful Boy* written by John Lennon.

EXT. WOODCLIFF LAKE HILTON - LATER

Danny drives the car up toward the valet. Nicky is there, waiting.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

NICKY

You were right! Jamie talked to me today. She's never talked to me before!

But Danny's not in the mood.

DANNY

That's good, Kid. That's real good.

He trudges away, inside the hotel.

INT. WOODCLIFF LAKE HILTON LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

Danny walks in, passing Jaime at the counter.

JAIME

Hey, Mr. Collins!

DANNY

Jamie how ya doing?

Jamie is about to respond, but Danny doesn't wait for a reply. He just keeps walking.

Mary is walking towards him in the other direction. She smiles when she sees him...

But he simply nods at her and keeps walking. Mary watches him go, surprised.

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER

Danny drinks by himself in the corner. He's been here a while.

VOICE (O.S.)

What if I'd said yes?

Danny looks up. Mary stands there.

DANNY

Huh?

MARY

When you passed me before, in the lobby, you didn't ask me to dinner. Maybe that was the one time I would have said yes and you never would have known because you didn't ask.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANNY
Would you have said yes?

MARY
(a beat, then)
No.

DANNY
Well now I know.

Danny returns to his drink.

MARY
Okay, well, it's 7:30 and I'm done
for the day so... goodnight.

Mary walks away. Danny's voice stops her.

DANNY
I had a bad day.

She turns around, looks at him, and admits:

MARY
I did, too.

A beat. A long one.

DANNY
Can I buy you a drink? Not
dinner, God forbid. Just a drink.

Mary thinks about this.

MARY
Yes. Okay.

Danny looks up, surprised. Mary sits.

DANNY
Wow. Okay. What can I get you?

MARY
Tequila, rocks, something anejo.
Splash of soda.

DANNY
(shocked)
Jesus.

MARY
You're not the only rock star in
this hotel.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANNY

Apparently not.

(calling to
bartender)

Tommy, get me some of that patron
anejo, rocks, splash of soda.

BARTENDER

Right away, Boss.

Danny turns back towards Mary.

MARY

So? Why so sad?

DANNY

No, I need a break from myself.
You go first. Why'd you have a bad
day?

MARY

Oh, because I work with a bunch of
well-meaning but remarkably dim
twenty-somethings who are just
passing time until they go back to
school or get a real job. And one
of them screwed up the computer
system and it took me half the day
to reprogram every reservation
manually.

Her drink is delivered, she takes a sip.

MARY (CONT'D)

And you? C'mon, spit it out,
why'd you have a bad day?

Danny takes a sip, bracing himself. Then:

DANNY

I tracked down my grown son who
I'd never met before. Met him,
his wife, my granddaughter. Then
he told me, quite emphatically, to
fuck off and die.

She processes this, then:

MARY

EVERY reservation, each one had to
be reprogrammed manually. I hope
I made that clear.

Danny LAUGHS. Mary leans forward, serious.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

MARY (CONT'D)

Can I ask you a question?

DANNY

Not if it's about why I've never met my son until today.

MARY

Shit. That was my question.

They sit there in silence for a long beat, then:

MARY (CONT'D)

Okay, can I ask you a different question?

DANNY

Sure.

MARY

Why is Danny Collins staying at the Woodcliff Lake Hilton, asking out a regular old woman like me and offering twenty-one year old valets the use of his sportscar?

DANNY

You're not a regular old woman.

MARY

You're not answering my question.

DANNY

It's a long story.

MARY

Thank God it's only 7:45.

Danny looks up at the bartender.

DANNY

Tommy? Another round please.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HOTEL BAR - LATER

We pick them up, many minutes (and many drinks) later:

DANNY

... and then he writes, "What do you think about that Danny Collins?"

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY
(repeating, laughing)
John Lennon writes "what do you
think about that, Danny Collins!?"

DANNY
Yes.
(as if answering)
I don't know, John. What do I
think about that? I think you
should have sent the letter to my
house so I could have avoided
living a completely bullshit life
for the past forty years, that's
what I think about that.

Mary explodes in laughter.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER THAT NIGHT

As Mary reveals herself a little:

MARY
She's twenty-five now. Rick and I
split when she was... sixteen.
Yeah, most parents try to wait
till the kids are out of the
house, but we tried to do it at
the time when it would screw her
up most.

DANNY
Did it work?

MARY
Oh, yeah. She's a complete mess.
Hates both of us. But guess what?

DANNY
What?

Mary leans in, whispers conspiratorially:

MARY
She hates him more.

DANNY
Perfect!

Mary suddenly becomes emotional and vulnerable:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY

Okay I don't like joking about
this anymore. I'm a good mother,
I swear.

DANNY

(whoa)
No, I know.

MARY

(adorable)
I was just trying to be funny.

DANNY

I know!

MARY

(completely gone)
We did split up when she was
sixteen but I don't think she
hates me. Oh, maybe she does.
I don't want any more tequila!

She's crying now, but also laughing. It's incredibly
appealing. And Danny's obviously falling for her. Hard.

LATER THAT NIGHT

DANNY

My second wife was actually one of
the stars of *Gilligan's Island*.

MARY

I didn't know that! Who?

DANNY

Guess.

Beat, then:

MARY

Ginger?

He shakes his head "no." Suddenly, Mary gets it.
SCREAMS!

MARY (CONT'D)

Mary Ann!

He smiles.

MARY (CONT'D)

Holy shit! You were married to
Mary Ann!? That's insane!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

AND LATER THAT NIGHT:

MARY (CONT'D)

And so that's it, just no more touring?

DANNY

Yeah. I mean, at least with the old stuff. But I don't know... I started writing again. I actually wrote something last night.

MARY

Really?

Danny NODS, then:

DANNY

You want to hear it?

INT. DANNY'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Danny pulls his GUITAR out of its case. Mary, meanwhile, is looking at the LETTER FROM LENNON.

MARY

(re: letter)

This is truly unreal.

She shakes her head, puts the letter down.

MARY (CONT'D)

You better have something to play me. Because if this was just a lame attempt to get me to your room--

DANNY

I have something to play you.

Danny sits, settles. He's nervous. He fiddles with the guitar.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Okay, so, I haven't written anything in a very long time. And I haven't written anything like this... since I was in my twenties.

MARY

Okay, okay. Enough stalling, Collins. Let's hear it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANNY

Okay.

Danny cracks his neck, then:

He starts playing. He's playing the same MELODY he started back in the fancy studio of his penthouse, long before he'd received Lennon's letter.

But now it has words.

Danny starts to sing... the music is simple, the melody and lyrics wrenching. It's Dylan, it's Cash, and *these will NOT be the final lyrics.*

DANNY (CONT'D)

I woke up just this morning/Didn't
know where I'd been/But there's
far bigger things/That

Danny stops, looks up.

MARY

Keep going, keep going!

DANNY

That's as far as I got.

Mary looks confused.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Honestly, this kind of *was* just a
lame attempt to get you to my
room.

MARY

Jesus Christ.

Mary shakes her head, stands.

DANNY

Come on! Stay! I'm an old man
with ten scotches in him. The
odds of anything risque happening
here are very, very slim.

MARY

(with a smile)
Goodnight, Danny.

DANNY

(giving up)
Goodnight, Mary.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She stops at the door.

MARY

It's going to be a good song.

DANNY

You think? Cause it's pretty different from what I'm known--

MARY

It's beautiful, Danny. A little short, but it's going to be beautiful.

DANNY

Thank you.

She EXITS the room, stops in the HALLWAY.

MARY

And hey, about what we talked about? You shouldn't give up.

DANNY

I agree.

(then, immediately)

Mary, will you have dinner with me tomorrow?

MARY

Not that. Your son.

Danny smiles.

DANNY

I know.

MARY

Okay.

(then)

But don't give up on dinner either.

DANNY

(immediately)

Mary, will you have dinner with--

But the door closes before he can finish.

ON DANNY

Completely smitten... and maybe even a little inspired.

CUT TO:

EXT. WOODCLIFF LAKE HILTON BUSINESS CENTER - NEXT MORNING

Outside, HOTEL GUESTS (and a lot of DENTISTS) are crammed around the GLASS DOOR, looking inside...

INT. WOODCLIFF LAKE HILTON BUSINESS CENTER - CONTINUOUS

Where national icon Danny Collins sits at a COMPUTER wearing only a HOTEL ROBE and SLIPPERS. He has PAPERS scattered around him, everywhere.

- He takes notes.
- He sends faxes.
- He makes calls.
- In between he behaves as if he's Eloise at the Plaza: ROOM SERVICE BREAKFAST is brought in for him. A NEWSPAPER delivered. COFFEE refills served.
- We hear and see bits and pieces of everything: Danny explaining who he is over the phone. Danny giving a credit card number. Danny asking how quickly whatever he's planning can happen.

OUTSIDE THE BUSINESS CENTER

Mary pushes through the spectators to see what's going on. She sees Danny pacing around inside, a man possessed.

She smiles, doesn't interrupt.

BACK INSIDE

We watch as Danny makes one final call:

DANNY
(into phone)
Hey, Frank. It's me. Listen, I
need you to make some calls.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Frank sits at a desk with another MAN IN A SUIT.

FRANK
(into phone)
Hey Pal, good timing.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRANK (CONT'D)
Look, Ken's here. We need to go
over some stuff with you as soon
as possib--

Frank stops talking, starts listening. Danny has cut him off.

FRANK (CONT'D)
(listening)
Uh huh. Uh huh. Danny, slow
down. Okay, listen: this is
exactly what we need to talk to
you about.

Frank listens, SIGHS, relents.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Yes. Okay. Okay. Hold on.

Frank grabs a PAD and a PEN.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Go ahead. Uh huh, uh huh...

As Frank writes he covers up the receiver for a moment,
looks at Ken, and WHISPERS:

FRANK (CONT'D)
Not good.

Ken shakes his head.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOM AND SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - NEXT DAY

A quiet morning in the neighborhood.

A SUBURBAN DAD waters his lawn next door.

A STRETCH LIMOSINE (gigantic) pulls up to the curb,
catching the dad's attention. Out steps Danny Collins,
wearing a white suit, pastel yellow shirt, black shoes.

SUBURBAN DAD
Holy shit.

Danny walks towards his son's front door. As he passes,
he NODS to the neighbor.

DANNY
Mornin'.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUBURBAN DAD
(stunned)
Hi.

Danny RINGS the bell. The door opens. It Samantha:

SAMANTHA
(re: Danny)
Oh fuck me.

DANNY
Language, Dear.

Hope runs to the door, sees Danny

HOPE
WE DON'T WANT YOUR MUSIC!

SAMANTHA
Hope, easy. Calm.

Danny bends down, confused.

DANNY
You don't want my music?

Samantha explains, pointedly:

SAMANTHA
Tom explained to Hope the other
day how you're a musician and how
some musicians go door to door to
sell their music.

DANNY
Ohhh. Okay.

SAMANTHA
(still explaining)
But we weren't interested in
buying any music. Much the same
way some people aren't interested
in buying girl scout cookies.
Doesn't mean we're rude, just that
we weren't interested in buying
any music.

DANNY
No, I get it. Possibly more
complicated an explanation than
required for a six year old, but
okay.

Hope spots the limo.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HOPE

Whoa!

Hope runs for it.

SAMANTHA

Hope!

DANNY

(calling out)

Jimmy.

A LIMO DRIVER (Jimmy) gets out. He opens a door for Hope, lets her in.

DANNY (CONT'D)

She's fine, let her play. He's got her.

Tom arrives at the door, sees Danny.

TOM

(re: Danny's
presence)

Are you fucking kidding me?

DANNY

Oh good, we're all here.

TOM

You have a hell of a nerve you--

DANNY

Have you heard of Texas Children's Hospital in Houston?

Tom stops.

TOM

What?

DANNY

There's a doctor, Dr. Ryan Kurtz, he's considered the most progressive guy in pediatric pulmonology. Turns out his parents are fans of mine. Really big fans actually. He'll see Hope. He'll see her this weekend.

SAMANTHA

I'm sorry, what?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DANNY

I spoke to him for a while, this Kurtz. He thinks he can help. He can't promise anything till he sees her, sees her charts, but--

Tom LAUGHS.

TOM

Are you out of your mind? Do you honestly think that we haven't seen every doctor, tried everything imaginable that might help her? We've BEEN to every hospital. In New York, New Jersey, Boston, Philadelphia--

DANNY

Have you been to Texas Children's Hospital in Houston? Have you seen Dr. Ryan Kurtz?

Tom steps forward, he's had enough.

TOM

You know, I'm about two seconds from dropping you--

SAMANTHA

(sharply)

Tom.

Tom goes quiet. Samantha motions towards Danny to continue. Danny takes the opportunity.

DANNY

He's progressive. He runs tests no one else is running. He's been having success with a new corticosteroid. Long term, life-changing, success... with kids exactly Hope's age. People wait over a year to see him. He's willing to see you this weekend.

Samantha looks at Tom. Tom says nothing.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Just give me one weekend to do something good for you. You'll still go to Heaven cause you're so damn tolerant, and I'll still go to Hell because you can't buy redemption. Everyone wins.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

Tom looks at Samantha. She clearly wants this. He shakes his head, still holding onto his fury.

TOM

So we'd have to go to Houston is that it?

DANNY

I've made arrangements. We'll take my plane.

TOM

I'm not putting my family on some dangerous four seater plane.

Danny smiles.

DANNY

Me neither.

CUT TO:

EXT. TEETERBORO AIRPORT, NJ - HOURS LATER.

The biggest goddamn PRIVATE JET you've ever seen. We pan Danny's family, taking it in.

SAMANTHA

Holy shit.

Hope GIGGLES.

HOPE

Mommy said shit.

SAMANTHA

(nodding)

Yes she did, Baby. Yes she did.

CUE SONG: *Ticket to Ride*, written by John Lennon.

INT. PRIVATE JET - LATER

We're mid-flight. Tom, Samantha, and Hope sit on one side of the plane.

Hope is in Tom's lap, pressed against the window, pointing things out in the sky.

HOPE

Is this where God lives?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOM

Oh no, Baby. God lives much
higher than this. Much better
view...

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PLANE

Sits Danny, watching. Tom is patient with Hope:
explaining things, making her laugh, involving Samantha
in the laughter, too.

Is there anything better than watching someone who's
great with a child?

Yes, actually, there is: watching *your child* be great
with *his* child.

EXT. TEXAS CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - LATER

It's a massive complex, located in the heart of Houston.

INT. TEXAS CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

The family sits in the empty waiting room. Hope is
CHATTERING away but there's clear tension between the
adults.

A YOUNG DOCTOR in street clothes (40's) ENTERS. This is
DR. RYAN KURTZ.

DOCTOR

Sorry to keep you waiting. And
sorry for the jeans - I refuse to
wear a lab coat on the weekend.
I'm Dr. Kurtz and holy cow, you're
Danny Collins!

Danny smiles, shakes Kurtz's hand.

DR. KURTZ

Wow, seeing you in person is way
different than talking to you on
the phone.

DANNY

Good to meet you, Doc.

He turns to Tom.

DR. KURTZ

And you must be Hope.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOM
(not that amused)
Tom.

Kurtz feigns confusion, turns toward Samantha.

DR. KURTZ
Then... you must be Hope.

SAMANTHA
Samantha.

DR. KURTZ
Then who's Hope?

Hope, of course, finds this routine hysterical.

HOPE
I'M HOPE! I'M HOPE!

She WHEEZES. Samantha pats her back.

SAMANTHA
Easy, Baby.

Kurtz smiles, kneels down.

DR. KURTZ
I should have known.
(then)
Hope, would you like to leave this boring room and come do some fun breathing games with me? I have lollypops, and I'm not talking junky Doctor lollypops, I'm talking cavity inducing lollypops with chewy goo in the middle.

HOPE
Yeah!

Dr. Kurtz turns toward Tom and Samantha.

DR. KURTZ
I've looked at her charts, but I'm gonna need a few hours with her, okay?

They NOD. Kurtz turns toward Danny.

DR. KURTZ (CONT'D)
Is it okay if I... you know...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANNY

Of course.

Dr. Kurtz smiles, calls out:

DR. KURTZ

Mom? Dad!?

Into the rooms steps MR. and MRS. KURTZ (70's). They see Danny and immediately freak out.

MRS. KURTZ

Oh my God.

DR. KURTZ

Mr. Collins, these are my parents, Arny and Anne Kurtz. They are--

ANNE

(bursting)

Your biggest fans!

DR. KURTZ

Okay, Ma, hands to yourself, like we talked about. Alright, I'm going to let you guys get to know each other, while I get to know Hope.

Dr. Kurtz WINKS at Danny and EXITS with Hope. Danny immediately begins performing for his audience.

DANNY

Now your son tells me you two actually perform some of my songs at your recreation center? Is that true or is he putting me on?

As Danny entertains, we PAN to Samantha and Tom, watching. This is clearly the deal that was struck between Danny and Dr. Kurtz.

Samantha smiles at Tom, entertained by it all.

But Tom shakes his head and walks to the other side of the room, unwilling to engage with any of it.

CUT TO:

INT. WAITING ROOM - TWO HOURS LATER

Dr. Kurtz's parents finish PERFORMING the call and response portion of Danny's most popular song. It is endearingly terrible.

They finish, and everyone CLAPS/CHEERS - especially Danny who continues his charm offensive.

DANNY

Now a lot of people don't know this, but the first time I had the crowd sing the chorus back to me, it was actually because I forgot the words myself--

ARNY

No!

SAMANTHA

Seriously? Is that true?

DANNY

It's true, hand to God.

Everyone LAUGHS. Except Tom. He sits there, stone-faced. Anne turns towards Tom.

ANNE

It must be just incredible to have such a fascinating, famous father.

TOM

Oh yes. It's been a dream.

Just then:

DR. KURTZ (O.S.)

Okay.

Dr. Kurtz emerges with Hope. Hope has a HUGE LOLLYPOP in her mouth. She runs to her mother.

DR. KURTZ (CONT'D)

Hope, would you mind staying here with my Mommy and Daddy for a few minutes while I take your Mommy and Daddy to my office?

HOPE

(through lollypop)

Okay!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dr. Kurtz motions for Samantha and Tom to join him.
Danny hangs back. Dr. Kurtz notices.

DR. KURTZ
(to Danny)
C'mon, you. You started all this.

Danny hesitates, looks toward Tom. Tom, exasperated,
doesn't even care any more. He throws up his hands in
defeat.

Danny joins them.

INT. DR. KURTZ'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

They ENTER the office. Samantha and Tom sit opposite
Kurtz (who sits down behind his desk). Danny stands next
to them.

Dr. Kurtz organizes some files, finally looks up.

DR. KURTZ
So you guys have had a hell of a
run with this thing, huh?

Samantha gets emotional quickly.

SAMANTHA
When she was three, she almost
died. She had a severe attack
again when she was five--

DR. KURTZ
Yeah, no, I saw the files. Hell
of a run.

He SIGHS.

DR. KURTZ (CONT'D)
Okay, as you know, Hope has an
extreme case of acute asthma. As
I'm sure you also know, there's no
known cure for asthma, only
management. And unfortunately, I
do not have a cure.

They deflate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. KURTZ (CONT'D)

What I do have, are a couple of medications that are working at pretty much a one hundred percent clip for kids with Hope's exact condition. I'm going to show you some charts, charts belonging to a six year old boy named Bradley Scott, a patient of mine.

He puts up CHARTS on his board.

DR. KURTZ (CONT'D)

We'll call these Bradley's "before" files: his breathing levels, his lung capacities. If you looked closely - and had a medical degree - you would see that they are pretty much identical to Hope's.

More CHARTS go up.

DR. KURTZ (CONT'D)

These are Bradley's "after" files. I can take you through them, but basically, they read as if Bradley is a child *without* ashtma. I've had the same results with every child I'm treating at this age and these levels. Now, the corticosteroid I use is very expensive and it's not covered--

DANNY

It's fine.

DR. KURTZ

...and I'd require that Hope come to Houston once every six months which I know is difficult--

DANNY

They'll fly privately, it's fine.

TOM

Wait, wait, hold on...

Tom and Samantha are lost.

TOM (CONT'D)

Why have... why hasn't...

Tom stops, confused.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DR. KURTZ

Why hasn't anyone ever offered this before? A lot of reasons: I run different tests, I use different treatments, a lot of it is new--

TOM

(skeptical)

So this is this some kind of untested clinical drug...

DR. KURTZ

No, it's basically the same thing Hope's already been taking, just a slightly different variation. Listen, we're going to have many more conversations before we do anything. You'll be able to look over my research, confer with your own doctor, whatever you need. If we move forward with this - which we absolutely should - she's still going to have asthma. You just won't know it anymore. Okay?

SAMANTHA

Wait, I'm sorry, I just...

She gathers herself as best she can.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I have the spent the past six years...

Her voice cracks. Tom goes to comfort her but she shakes him off, continues through emotion.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)

I have spent the past six years wondering if every day... if every day will be *the* day. The day that she wanders out of my sight, or the day something happens at school that I can't control. The day the big one hits and takes our baby away from us. I have spent every day of the past six years worrying about that. And you're saying...

DR. KURTZ

Yeah, I'm saying you don't have to do that anymore.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

Samantha breaks down, instantly. Tom takes her into his arms. Danny just stands there, watching, stunned.

Dr. Kurtz stands from his desk, smiles, and shakes Danny's hand.

DR. KURTZ (CONT'D)
I'll give you all a minute.
(then)
You've got a good grandpa here.

He EXITS. As Samantha continues crying into Tom's chest, Tom and Danny share stunned eye contact.

If it was possible, things just became even more complicated.

INT. PRIVATE JET - LATER THAT NIGHT

Tom sits on the left side of the plane. Hope is asleep across his lap. He's rubbing her back. Samantha is asleep on his shoulder.

Danny sits on the other side of the plane, watching.

They do not speak.

EXT. TOM AND SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - LATER

The limosine pulls to a stop in front.

INT. LIMOSINE - CONTINUOUS

Hope is still asleep, now on Tom's lap. Samantha opens the door to the limo, steps out.

SAMANTHA
Here, I'll take her.

TOM
You sure?

SAMANTHA
I'm carrying one of your kids
already, what's another?

Tom smiles. She takes Hope, turns to Danny.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
Um, so...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Her eyes well up.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
I want to say something but I'm
afraid I'm going to be too nice.

Danny smiles, takes her off the hook.

DANNY
Goodnight, Samantha.

SAMANTHA
Just... thank you. I think. Yes,
definitely. Thank you.

She awkwardly EXITS, carrying Hope with her.

ON DANNY AND TOM

Alone. Father and son, facing off. No one speaks. It's
a Mexican standoff. Finally - surprisingly - it is Tom
makes the first move.

TOM
(serious)
You are a ridiculous man.

Silence.

TOM (CONT'D)
A kid grows up not knowing his
father, the only upside is that
you get to picture him however you
want. But I didn't even get that.
I had to HEAR you on the radio and
SEE you on TV: wearing those
ridiculous suits, singing as if
you didn't have a care in the
world. It made my situation
slightly unique.

This hangs there.

TOM (CONT'D)
I have spent my entire life trying
to become the kind of man you
aren't. I am exhausted. You have
no idea how exhausting that has
been.

Danny thinks, explains:

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANNY

When I met your mother... I was married at the time. Strung out, on God knows what. When I found out, I tried to send her money. She refused it. She was stubborn, like you I guess. Over the years, I always wanted to... I wanted a normal relationship with you but...

He pauses.

DANNY (CONT'D)

My life was extreme. The drugs. Women. Travel. I thought you were better off, better off with a *normal* life. And then, by the time I realized: I just thought it was too late. I was too... ridiculous, as you say. You were too old. I don't know. I don't know how I allowed it to go this long.

Silence. Tom finally leans forward.

TOM

What you did today - for my family - we're even now. Your slate is clean with me. But that's as far as this goes. It ends here. We end here.

DANNY

I want to be a part of your life.

TOM

No. I can't handle that right now.

DANNY

I can't just walk away from this.

TOM

Well, you're going to have to because it's just not a good time--

DANNY

Not a good time, what does that mean, not a good time--

TOM

I'm sick.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

It comes out quickly, strongly, and unintentionally. The car goes silent.

TOM (CONT'D)

Shit.

Tom quickly closes the door to the limo. Danny is lost.

DANNY

What the hell are you talking about? What do you mean you're sick?

Tom shakes his head. He doesn't want to do this. Finally, he gives in.

TOM

It's what Mom died...

(beat, then)

It's in the bloodstream. And before you start: there's no magic doctor in Texas who can cure this one.

Danny looks stunned. A long, silent beat as he processes. Then:

DANNY

Are you fucking kidding me!?

Tom looks up, surprised.

DANNY (CONT'D)

We just fixed HER! And now you're telling me... I mean, you've got to be fucking kidding me!

This hangs there, awkwardly. Danny takes a breath, regroups.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Okay, obviously that was not a great reaction. I'm sorry.

TOM

No, don't be silly! I'm the one who should be sorry. After all: you're Danny Collins! What business do I have getting in the way of your happy ending?

DANNY

Tom--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

TOM

Tell me: how did this all go in the little movie you have playing in your head? You show up out of nowhere, fix my kid, and we hold hands and cry as the music swells? Was that it?

DANNY

(reaching for him)
I didn't mean to--

TOM

Don't you fucking touch me. You want a taste of the real world? You want "normal"? Well here it is, Superstar: I've got a four hundred thousand dollar mortgage, a sick kid, a pregnant wife, and oh yeah, a rare form of Leukemia that's probably gonna kill me. Welcome home, *Daddy*, see what you've missed?

Danny's head is spinning.

DANNY

I don't know what to say.

TOM

I don't need you to say anything, I really don't. I just need you to leave. I have to go inside before Sam asks me what we were talking about--

DANNY

Wait, wait, wait, hold on... she doesn't know?

Tom says nothing.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Are you insane?

TOM

Three weeks of radiation. They can tell within a month if I've responded at all. If I do, maybe I have a chance. Then we explore options. If not, it progresses quickly. Two years, max.

Danny shakes his head, trying to process this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

DANNY

Samantha--

TOM

Is pregnant. And Hope, as sick as she's been... and now we've finally gotten some actual *good* news--

He stops, retaining his calm.

TOM (CONT'D)

I'm going on a business trip for three weeks. That's all she knows. Once I know what I'm facing, I'll tell her. By then, at least the baby will be born.

(then, serious)

You can't say anything--

DANNY

Tom--

TOM

I am not playing.

DANNY

Okay, okay. I won't say anything.

Silence.

DANNY (CONT'D)

You'll need help.

Nothing.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Have you told anyone? A friend?

TOM

My friends are her friends.

DANNY

Jesus.

(then)

Okay. Well, I'll be there then.

TOM

Be where?

DANNY

There. Just... there. Wherever you need me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

TOM

I don't need you.

DANNY

Yeah, well, you need someone and I'm all you've got so you're gonna have to find a way to deal with it. Now go inside to your wife.

TOM

But--

DANNY

It's not open for discussion, Tom. Go. Now.

It's authoritative. Fatherly. Tom slowly obeys, gets out of the car. For the first time since we've met him, he looks like a lost little boy.

From inside the car, Danny nods at him. Reassuring.

DANNY (CONT'D)

It's okay, we'll fix this. It'll all be okay.

Tom stares ahead blankly, suddenly confused by all the dynamics in play. Danny closes the door to the car.

Tom watches the limo drive away.

BACK INSIDE THE CAR

Now in the clear, Danny drops the performance. He slumps against his seat, overwhelmed.

INT. WOODCLIFF LAKE HILTON - LATER

Danny walks into the lobby. Mary sees him, smiles.

MARY

How'd it go?

Danny looks up, dazed.

DANNY

Come here please?

Mary walks over from behind the front desk, confused. Danny simply steps forward and... HUGS her. That's all, just a long, hard, hug.

After a long beat he backs away.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY

Wow. Some day, huh?

DANNY

Yeah.

MARY

You need to go write. Right now.
You need to go write.

DANNY

I'd rather take you to dinner and
drown myself in scotch.

MARY

You go finish that song, then
we'll have that dinner. Now go.

Like his son before him, Danny has no choice but to obey the command. He NODS, heads off to his room.

INT. DANNY'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Danny sits in his CHAIR, holding his GUITAR, looking at the LETTER FROM LENNON.

Next to him he has a YELLOW NOTE PAD. We can see that he's written down LYRICS. A lot of lyrics.

He begins to play the song we've heard him start twice. But this time, he plays it all the way through.

The SONG covers a...

MONTAGE - OVER THE NEXT MONTH

Note: occasionally, we pop in for bits of dialogue...

EXT. TOM'S OFFICE - DAY

A large office building for a BOTTLING COMPANY.

Danny sits out front, in his car. Tom EMERGES from the building and spots the Maserati immediately. Danny waves him toward the car.

Tom shakes his head, gets in the car without a word.

INT. ONCOLOGY OFFICE - DAY

A DOCTOR gives Tom an I.V. Danny stands by his side.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTOR

Okay, Mr. Donnelly. I won't lie,
this isn't gonna be pleasant. You
ready?

Tom NODS. Danny watches, concerned.

INT. NEW YORK CITY HOTEL - AFTERNOON

A small boutique hotel. Expensive looking.

Danny pulls the car up to the Valet, gets out, and runs around to the other side to help a WOOZY TOM from the car. Tom resists his help as best he can.

INT. TOM AND SAM'S HOUSE - MORNING

Danny stands at the front door, RINGS the bell. Samantha OPENS the door. She's surprised to see him and, clearly, unsure what to do.

Danny holds up his recurrent peace offering: A BAG OF BAGELS. Samantha hesitates, then... lets him inside.

INT. DANNY'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

We go back to Danny in his hotel room, playing his song.

PULL BACK to reveal that Mary now sits in the room with him, listening.

PULL BACK FURTHER to reveal:

Danny's CELL PHONE, VIBRATING on the night stand next to the Lennon letter. It goes to VOICE-MAIL.

INT. FRANK'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Where Frank hangs up his phone, frustrated. He's not reaching Danny.

EXT. WOODCLIFF LAKE HILTON - AFTERNOON

Where Danny tentatively hands NICKY ERNST the keys to his MASERATI and watches JAMIE hop in the front seat.

Nicky gives Danny a thumbs up, and TAKES OFF. Way too fast.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Danny steps back. Mary stands there. She looks at him, smiles, and MOUTHS the words:

MARY
You're fucking crazy.

INT. TOM'S HOTEL ROOM - EVENING

Tom lies in one bed, recuperating. Danny in the other. They watch ESPN together, in silence.

Danny looks at Tom, notices something. He gets up, brings him some water, feels his forehead. Tom does what he can to resist, but Danny is determined and wins out.

Finally satisfied, Danny retakes his position on his own bed.

They continue watching ESPN in silence.

INT. TOM AND SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Danny sits at the kitchen table with Hope, DRAWING PICTURES with her. One of her pictures is a drawing of HER FAMILY. She's included "Gran Pa."

Samantha cooks in the background, watching. She smiles.

INT. ONCOLOGY OFFICE - MORNING

Where Tom, treatment completed, gets final instructions from the Doctor.

As the Doctor talks, Danny writes everything down in a NOTEBOOK.

DOCTOR
Okay, Tom, so three weeks from today, we'll look at results together, hope for the best.

They SHAKE, say their GOOD-BYES.

INT. DANNY'S HOTEL ROOM - EVENING

Where Danny finishes the FINAL VERSE of the song and puts down the guitar. He looks across the room at Mary, nervously.

Mary CLAPS, steps forward.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANNY

You like?

MARY

I love.

DANNY

Can I take you to dinner now?

MARY

Play it in concert, then you can
take me to dinner.

DANNY

You are such a dinner tease.

There's a KNOCK at the door. Danny goes to answer.

MARY

I am not a dinner tease.

DANNY

You are a huge dinner tease.

Danny answers the door. Frank stands there. He does not
look happy.

FRANK

I've been calling.

DANNY

Frank! Sorry, busy few weeks.

Frank looks inside, sees Mary.

FRANK

Apparently.
(then)
May I?Danny motions for Frank to come in. Danny makes
introductions.

DANNY

Mary, my best friend and manager,
Frank Grubman. Frank, this is
Mary. She is my new girlfriend.

FRANK

(surprised)
Really?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MARY
(equally surprised)
Really?

DANNY
Well, I'm hopeful. At some point,
obviously, she'll need to stay
over. Oh, and have dinner with
me.
(to Frank)
Huge dinner tease.

MARY
I am not.

DANNY
She keeps moving the goalposts for
dinner.

Mary LAUGHS. Frank watches, perplexed. What's with all
the cutesy? Where the hell has his pal Danny gone?

FRANK
Mary, would you mind if I had a
word with Danny in private? It's
kind of a business thing.

MARY
No, of course.

Mary takes her leave.

DANNY
Dinner tonight?

MARY
You're ridiculous.

GIGGLING, Mary closes the door. Danny looks at Frank,
smiles.

DANNY
Right?

FRANK
(admitting)
She's lovely.

DANNY
And age appropriate.

FRANK
She's a solid ten years younger
than you, Danny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DANNY

Baby-steps.

Frank smiles, sits. Danny sits next to him.

FRANK

We need to talk.

DANNY

We do. I have a lot to tell you about, Pal--

FRANK

Danny, unfortunately I've got the manager hat back on right now.

Danny nods. Something's clearly wrong. He changes tone, serious.

DANNY

What's up?

Frank thinks. How to say this?

FRANK

Do you remember a few years ago we were watching that thing on ESPN about Mike Tyson? And they were saying how even though he'd made like twenty million a fight, he'd blown it all, and now he could barely afford to feed the pigeons on his roof? Remember how we couldn't believe someone could be that stupid?

Danny processes this. Then, child-like, asks:

DANNY

I'm Mike Tyson?

FRANK

Well, not quite, but... I've been going over things with Ken and you're not quite where you think you are.

Danny nods, staying calm.

DANNY

Okay. Where am I?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

FRANK

You're a little bit ahead, once we sell properties and pay off some debt. But just a little.

Danny lets this sink in.

DANNY

I don't understand. How?

FRANK

Lot of things. That schiester we were using before Ken, he hurt us. We shouldn't have sold your publishing rights so early. All the properties, the housing markets have collapsed everywhere. The private planes, your lifestyle, the Madoff thing absolutely killed you, as you know. You're not bankrupt or anything, but you need to understand how serious this is.

DANNY

Okay, I understand.

(then)

What do I do?

FRANK

One of two things: you start living like a normal human - buy a Prius, fly Continental, that kind of shit... or you go back on tour. This last tour was my retirement plan for you. We had a big piece: merchandise, sold-out arenas--

DANNY

No, I know.

They sit in silence for a long beat.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I've been writing, Frank.

FRANK

Danny--

DANNY

It's good. I'm telling you, Mary thinks it's really good.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

FRANK

The Woodcliff Lake Hotel manager?
Oh, okay. Well now I feel better.

DANNY

Careful.

Frank eases up.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Just book me a gig.

FRANK

A "gig?"

DANNY

Something local. Not an arena. In
the city or somewhere in Jersey.
Like what Springsteen would do if
he was just popping in somewhere.

FRANK

"Like what Springsteen would do?"
Danny, do you even hear yourself.

DANNY

This is how we fix it, Frank. I'm
telling you: the new stuff will
play. *Then* we tour. And the bonus
is that I won't have to feel like
killing myself every time I step
on the stage.

Frank SIGHS, shakes his head. Stands.

FRANK

Okay. I call you with the
details.

Frank stops at the door.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Just don't buy any pigeons.

Frank EXITS.

Danny thinks for a beat, then picks up his GUITAR and
continues working... a man possessed.

INT. TOM AND SAM'S HOUSE - MORNING (DAYS LATER)

Tom, Samantha, Hope, and Danny sit at the kitchen table.
Samantha is even more pregnant now... she's huge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Danny taps a SPOON on his coffee MUG. He has an announcement.

DANNY

So I'm playing a gig Friday night.
Joe's Pub in the city.

HOPE

What's a gig?

DANNY

It's where I sing in front of
people, Hon'.

HOPE

I want to hear you sing!

DANNY

And I want *you* to hear me sing.
More than anything. But only if
it's okay with your parents.

TOM

(concerned)

It's at a pub?

DANNY

It's really more of a small music
venue, like a theatre.

(off their looks)

Seriously! I wouldn't invite her
if it was bad. It's non smoking,
there will be a sectioned-off
table for you and everything.

Tom and Samantha share a look, still hesitant.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Show starts at 7:30. Done by
9:00. Late, but not too late.

(pleading)

It's a big one for me. It would
help if I could see these cheeks.

He squeezes Hope's CHEEKS. She GIGGLES. Tom SHRUGS at
Samantha. It's her call.

SAMANTHA

Okay.

Hope and Danny share a HIGH FIVE.

HOPE

These cheeks will be there!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Everyone LAUGHS, but laughing makes Tom COUGH, loudly.
Sam goes to get him water.

SAMANTHA
(to Danny)
Do you hear this?
(then, to Tom)
Would you get yourself to the
doctor already, Tom?

Danny looks at Tom. Tom quickly looks away.

TOM
It's just a little bug.

SAMANTHA
Little bug, it's been ever since
you got back. Hope, is your Daddy
the most stubborn man on the
planet?

HOPE
Don't be so stubborn, Daddy.

TOM
I'm fine, really.

Samantha feels his head.

SAMANTHA
Finally have everyone in this
house healthy and he insists on
walking around like the living
dead instead of getting
antibiotics. Stubborn man.

HOPE
Stubborn man!

Samantha smiles, kisses Hope's head. Tom and Danny share
a look but say nothing.

Over the top of their silence we:

CUE SOUND: THUMP. THUMP. THUMP.

EXT. JOE'S PUB - EVENING (ONE WEEK LATER)

A small, intimate music venue in the East Village.

We can hear from the outside (as when we first saw Danny
in concert) that the crowd inside is awaiting their star.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The ritual:

Danny's hand comes into frame, touches...

THE GOLD CROSS, which drops down into his chest.

But instead of opening the cross in search of drugs, now the hand lowers, touching:

THE LETTER FROM LENNON. Sitting on a nearby table. A source of inspiration.

We PULL BACK, revealing:

DANNY

For the first time since we've known him, Danny isn't dressed like a borderline Vegas pimp.

He's wearing a casual polo shirt. Slacks. He looks...

FRANK (O.S.)

Jesus, you look like Lee Trevino.

Danny looks up, Frank stands there. Danny smiles.

DANNY

Really? Cause that's what I was going for.

Frank CHUCKLES, ENTERS.

FRANK

Okay, real quick: the place is packed. The band's out there and ready if you want them--

DANNY

I won't.

Frank NODS.

FRANK

Your family's table is up front, they just arrived. I saved a spot for Mary with them.

Danny nods, deep breath.

DANNY

Thanks, Frank.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MARY (O.S.)
Yeah, thanks Frank.

They turn around.

MARY stands at the door. Frank smiles, takes his leave.

FRANK
Break a leg, Kid.

DANNY
Just tell me whose and I will.
Anything for you, Pal.

An old joke. Frank winks and EXITS, nodding to Mary as he passes. She steps inside.

MARY
Just came to wish you luck.
(beat)
You nervous?

DANNY
Mary, I have done this a zillion
times and I've never been nervous.
Hand to God, not once.
(then)
I'm nervous as hell.

She nods, understanding. He snaps out of it, feigning calm.

DANNY (CONT'D)
So bad news for you. Looks like
you're finally going to have to
let me buy you dinner.

MARY
Or we could skip the dinner and I
could just stay over tonight?

Danny looks up, surprised. He smiles.

DANNY
(playful)
Okay, okay. Put a little more
pressure on me tonight, I see what
you're doing.

She LAUGHS.

MARY
Meet you in your room after.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She holds A KEY up.

DANNY
How'd you get that?

MARY
Perk of the job.

Mary walks to the door, stops.

MARY (CONT'D)
It's a weird thing to say, I know,
considering I haven't known you
very long. But I'm very proud of
you, Danny.

She EXITS. Danny takes a deep breath, stands.

EXT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

As when we first met him, Danny walks down a corridor to the stage. But now there's no entourage. This walk is far lonelier. The hall much smaller.

VOICE (O.S.)
Danny?

Danny turns. There stands SOPHIE (his earlier young fiancée') and her "boyfriend" JUDD.

DANNY
Sophie!? What the hell are you
doing here?

SOPHIE
Came to support our sugardaddy.
Frank let us backstage, we just
wanted to say hey.

Danny turns towards Judd, smiles.

DANNY
Busywork, how are you?

Judd smiles back.

JUDD
Busy.

DANNY
Ha. Very good.
(then, to Sophie)
You look well.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SOPHIE
(big news)
I've decided to start a career.

DANNY
Good for you, Sophie.

SOPHIE
I'm going to be a movie star.

Danny looks at her for a beat, then...

DANNY
Alright, gotta go. Everyone
waiting and all.

SOPHIE
We'll party after?

DANNY
Always, Darling.

He kisses her cheek, continues on down the hall. As he
walks, Danny LAUGHS to himself, shakes his head...

He's come a long way.

FROM BEHIND

We watch Danny make his way toward the BACKSTAGE CURTAIN.
We're once again tracking him from behind (just as at his
first concert).

But now, instead of a mysterious figure in a white suit,
he's just a Grandpa in a golf shirt and slacks.

ON HIS FEET

No more platform shoes. Brown loafers have taken their
place.

AT THE CURTAIN

He pauses, stops. Puts a bottle of water (not beer) down
on the floor.

He cracks his head each way, then:

DANNY (CONT'D)
Yep.

He EXITS onto stage. From behind the curtain, we hear
the small crowd go APESHIT.

INT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Danny takes the stage, looks out. It's a packed house.

RIGHT UP FRONT

Sits his family at a table. Mary is with them. So is Frank. He smiles at them.

Hope SCREAMS through the crowd, bursting with excitement.

ON DANNY

He looks behind him, towards the back of the stage:

His BAND is ready, unsure what they're supposed to do.

Danny simply nods at them and heads towards:

A SINGLE STOOL

Center stage. And resting against the stool, his GUITAR. Danny sits, picks up the instrument.

He leans into the microphone.

DANNY

Thanks for coming.

Danny starts strumming the opening chords of his NEW SONG. We recognize the melody instantly. As he strums, he takes in the crowd.

DANNY'S POV OF THE CROWD

A WOMAN SCREAMS for Danny to play his MOST POPULAR SONG.

AN OLDER COUPLE CLAP THEIR HANDS in unison, anticipating.

In fact...

EVERYONE is clapping. In UNISON. These are Danny Collins fans. They know what happens first.

Everything SLOWS DOWN.

ANOTHER FAN screams for Danny's most popular song. AND ANOTHER.

AT HER TABLE, Hope looks around, thrilled. She's CLAPPING with everyone. Tom and Samantha LAUGH, clap with her. Frank, too.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BACK TO DANNY

Suddenly frozen. He just sits there, playing the same GUITAR CHORD over and over again, watching the CHANTING CROWD. His adoring granddaughter. His son. He knows what they want from him.

We watch it happen, just like that - in an instant: all progress lost. There's too many people. He's too old. He can't just change it up suddenly. He knows what they want and he has to give it to them. He's been doing it for too many years to stop now.

Slowly, he stops strumming. Puts down the guitar. His eyes are glossy.

He turns to his band, NODS. They quickly pick up their INSTRUMENTS.

Danny leans into his microphone and announces, sadly:

DANNY (CONT'D)
I think you know this one.

The crowd goes nuts.

DANNY (CONT'D)
One, two, three, four--

The band launches into Danny's MOST FAMOUS SONG. The crowd goes ballistic.

As Danny goes through the motions, we push in CLOSER AND CLOSER on his face. He's singing. He's performing.

He's breaking his own heart.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STAGE - TWO HOURS LATER

Danny finishes up a song with a fake flourish.

DANNY
Thank you! Thank you for coming!
Goodnight.

Danny EXITS stage, quickly.

INT. BACKSTAGE - CONTINUOUS

As soon as he's out of sight, behind the curtain, he sinks. He's a broken man.

SOPHIE (O.S.)
Great show, Danny!

Danny looks up. Sophie and Judd stand in the hallway.

SOPHIE (CONT'D)
We couldn't even find a seat!

Sophie SNIFFLES, rubs her nose. Danny doesn't even hesitate.

DANNY
What do you have on you?

SOPHIE
What do you mean?

DANNY
You know what I mean.

Sophie smiles.

SOPHIE
I got it all, Baby.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Danny chugs from a bottle of SCOTCH, numbing himself as quickly as possible. Judd SMOKES in the corner. Sophie pours some COKE OUT onto A TRAY, hands it to Danny.

But it's not a tray... she's poured a line on the FRAMED LETTER FROM LENNON.

Sad, horrific, irony.

Danny shakes his head, hesitates, then bends down to do it. Just then:

HOPE (O.S.)
Grandpa!

Danny looks up and drops the letter to the ground, as coke goes flying.

AT THE DOOR

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Tom, Samantha, and Hope stand there.

HOPE (CONT'D)
(confused)
Grandpa?

Samantha quickly pulls Hope back. Tom looks on, shocked.

TOM
Nice.
(pointedly)
Real nice, Grandpa.

DANNY
I'm sorry, I didn't--

TOM
Don't. Don't even bother.
(then)
Jesus.

He turns to go. Danny calls out:

DANNY
Yes, keep judging me, Tom, you're great at that. When you finish - you know, being so perfect and honorable - maybe you should talk to your wife about what you did on your "three week business trip."

As soon as he says it he regrets it. Tom freezes.
Samantha (pushing Hope out the door) stops, confused.

SAMANTHA
Huh?

Tom glares at Danny. Samantha looks at Tom, it's too weird not to comment on.

SAMANTHA (CONT'D)
What's he talking about?

Tom turns to her. She looks at him, expectant. He knows it's over.

TOM
We'll talk at home, okay?

He leads his family out the door, but not before turning back towards Danny.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TOM (CONT'D)
If you ever come near my family
again...

He trails off. The message is clear. Nothing left to say. And with that...

He EXITS.

ON DANNY

Completely undone. He bends down, picks up the LENNON LETTER off of the ground.

ON THE LETTER

It's cracked, smattered with cocaine. Symbolic.

BACK TO DANNY

Who turns towards Sophie and Judd.

DANNY
Let's get the fuck out of here.

CUE SONG: *Cold Turkey* written by John Lennon.

EXT. NEW YORK CITY STREETS - LATER

Danny's Maserati RACES away, through the streets of NYC.

CUT TO:

INT. DANNY'S HOTEL ROOM - HOURS LATER.

We hear a KEY go into a door. The door opens.

UNSEEN ENTRANT'S POV:

Walking through the small hotel room:

The room is trashed. Bottles and cans everywhere. The LENNON LETTER lies on the floor, cracked.

There's an overturned ROOM SERVICE TABLE in the center of the room.

And on the bed, Danny is sprawled out, unconscious. His shirt half unbuttoned. A BOTTLE OF BOOZE on his chest.

THE CAMERA TURNS AROUND

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Revealing Mary, the source of our POV. Taking in the train-wreck. Just then...

SOPHIE stumbles out of the bathroom. As per usual, her boobs are on display.

SOPHIE

(wasted)

Who are you?

MARY

I... um... I work for the hotel.

SOPHIE

Oh, good. We need more towels, can you get us more towels? And some beer.

MARY

Yes. More towels. And some beer.

The conversation causes Danny to STIR. He opens his eyes, sees...

DANNY

Mary.

Mary turns, walks out of the room.

EXT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Mary heads for the elevator. Half stumbling, half dressed, Danny runs after her.

DANNY

Mary! Mary, wait!

Mary turns.

DANNY (CONT'D)

She's not... it's not what it looks like. Her boyfriend is probably passed out in the bathtub for Christ sake.

MARY

Please, you think I care about that?

(beat, then)

What the hell happened tonight, Danny?

Danny looks down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANNY

I couldn't. I just couldn't.

She NODS.

MARY

Yeah, well, I can't either.

DANNY

Mary--

MARY

I'm just a regular old woman,
Danny--

DANNY

I keep telling you you're not.
Not to me.

MARY

Oh, I am. I assure you, I am.
(then)

This can't work, Danny. I was
married to Ronny Tischler. You
were married to Mary Anne from
Gilligan's Island. I work at a
Hilton in New Jersey. You're a
famous, rock star musician who
does cocaine and trashes hotel
rooms. And I thought maybe that
was over. I thought maybe that
part of your life...

(then)

You're too much for me.

DANNY

Mary.

The elevator door opens.

MARY

You should have played the song,
Danny. You should have at least
played the one song.

Mary GETS IN THE ELEVATOR, leaving Danny alone in the
hallway.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Danny RE-ENTERS his room, slowly begins cleaning up the
mess.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He picks up the LENNON LETTER from the floor, looks at it.

DANNY
(to letter)
Fuck you John.

INT. HOTEL ELEVATOR - NEXT MORNING

Danny rolls his SUITCASE into the elevator. He's leaving.

As the elevator descends, it plays (once again) THE MUSAK of Danny's most famous song. Danny NODS, knowingly.

One last final body blow before he goes.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - MORNING

Danny rolls his SUITCASE through the lobby. Jamie works behind the front desk. Danny sees her.

DANNY
You take care of yourself, Jaime.

JAIME
You too, Mr. Collins.

DANNY
And be good to Nicky. He's a good boy. Wonderful face. You two will have wonderful-faced children one day.

JAIME
(smiling)
Okay, will do.

Danny looks behind Jamie, toward the OFFICE that hides beyond the front desk. Jaime shakes her head "no." Mary doesn't want to see him.

Danny nods, steps up to the desk, and yells out:

DANNY
FOR THE RECORD: MARY ANNE'S REAL NAME WAS DAWN WELLS AND SHE WAS MISS NEVADA BEFORE SHE GOT FAMOUS AND SHE COULDN'T HOLD A FUCKING CANDLE TO YOU.
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANNY (CONT'D)
ALSO FOR THE RECORD: YOU RUN THE
BEST GODDAMN HILTON I'VE EVER
STAYED IN AND I STOLE LIKE FIFTY
OF THOSE LITTLE SOAP BAR THINGS
BECAUSE THEY MAKE ME SMELL NICE
BUT NOT GIRLY. GOODBYE!

Danny turns and EXITS the hotel.

EXT. WOODCLIFF LAKE HILTON - CONTINUOUS

Nicky pulls up the Maserati, loads in the SUITCASE.

DANNY
Nicky, it's been a pleasure.

NICKY
The pleasure has definitely been
mine, Danny.

Danny reaches into his pocket to TIP Nicky. But he's got
no cash.

DANNY
Shit.
(then)
You know what?

Danny goes to his trunk, removes the suitcase, and
WHISTLES for a cab (in line at the nearby stand).

He hands NICKY the KEYS to the Maserati.

DANNY (CONT'D)
(re: the tip)
I'm out of hundreds.

NICKY
You're kidding me.

Danny smiles.

DANNY
The second you stop finding it
awesome, you give it to someone
else. Deal?

NICKY
Deal.

DANNY
Good. Now get the hell out of
here.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Nicky doesn't know what to do with himself. He BEAR HUGS Danny, gets in the car, and ZOOMS off.

Danny watches him go, then heads for his cab, when:

MARY (O.S.)

Wait!

Mary runs out, catches up to him. They stand there in silence for a moment, looking out at the street.

MARY (CONT'D)

Did you mean what you said?

DANNY

About the soap?

MARY

Obviously.

Danny smiles.

DANNY

Best soap I've ever seen. And I've seen a lot of soap.

She NODS. They stand there in silence.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I'm grabbing a cab.

MARY

I see that.

DANNY

I gave Nicky my Maserati.

MARY

You're fucking crazy.

DANNY

It's been said, yes.

Danny turns to her.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I called Frank this morning. I'm going back on tour.

MARY

Oh.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DANNY

I need the money. I have a family now. They hate my guts, but I'm told that's just what families do.

MARY

I've taught you well.

He smiles.

DANNY

I'm gonna play my new songs. On the tour. At least some of them. We'll see what happens.

MARY

I know what will happen.

DANNY

They'll throw tomatoes?

MARY

Onions.

DANNY

Better.

Danny loads his suitcase into the TAXI.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Tour comes back through New York in a few months. I'll leave you a ticket if you'd like.

MARY

I'd like that.

DANNY

Maybe I could take you to dinner after the show?

MARY

(with a smile)
You're relentless.

Danny gets in the taxi, lowers the window.

DANNY

I left you something in the room.

MARY

You left me a big mess is what you left me.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

DANNY

Hey, you know us rock stars.

Danny takes her in one last time, smiles.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Another life, huh?

MARY

You never know.

Danny smiles, winks, and taps the window. He came to the Woodcliff Lake Hilton in a red Maserati. He leaves in a yellow taxi.

INT. DANNY'S HOTEL ROOM - LATER

Mary ENTERS the room with TWO CLEANING LADIES. But the room...

Is immaculate. Danny has cleaned it himself.

On the bed, sits the LENNON LETTER. Next to it, a SECOND NOTE, from Danny:

It reads: "What do you think about that, Mary Sinclair?"

Mary LAUGHS.

CUE SONG: *Norwegian Wood* written by John Lennon.

INT. ARENA - ONE WEEK LATER

We check in with Danny, as he rehearses with his band in the empty arena.

DANNY

Okay, from there we go into one of my new ones. I'll just grab the stool, you guys hang tight for five, cool?

INT. TOM AND SAMANTHA'S HOUSE - MORNING (DAYS LATER)

Samantha lies in bed, now WILDLY pregnant, barely able to move.

Tom takes her hand, kisses it. He goes to pull away but she won't let him go. She has tears in her eyes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He nods at her: a solid, steadying look. He kisses her again, then EXITS.

EXT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - LATER

Tom pulls up to the doctor's office, alone. Parks. Takes a deep breath. EXITS the car.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - LATER

Tom ENTERS the waiting room, turns a corner only to see...

Danny. Sitting there. Alone. Waiting.

Tom shakes his head, SIGHS. He checks in with a NURSE.

TOM

Tom Donnelly. Here for Dr.
Silverman.

NURSE

Just have a seat, Mr. Donnelly.

Tom sits two seats away from Danny. They sit in silence for a long beat. Finally:

DANNY

Was she pissed?

TOM

No, she was thrilled. It's been a
great few weeks, thanks.

DANNY

I'm truly sorry, Tom. It's no
excuse but it was a horrible night
for me.

TOM

Yeah, well, it was a worse night
for me, so...

Silence. Long beat.

DANNY

Why isn't she...

TOM

She's any day now, can barely even
move from bed.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOM (CONT'D)

Plus, whatever the news is, I want her to hear it from me. Not some doctor she doesn't even know.

A beat, then...

DANNY

Tom, I--

VOICE (O.S.)

Mr. Donnelly?

The NURSE beckons. They STAND, interrupted, and follow.

INT. EXAMINATION ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Tom and Danny wait, on an EXAM TABLE, side-by-side.

Danny looks at Tom's foot. It's TAPPING, relentlessly. They sit there for a while like this. Finally:

TOM

If the news is bad...

Tom stops, gathering himself.

DANNY

Tom, c'mon--

TOM

No, listen to me. If this goes bad, Samantha, and Hope, and the baby--

DANNY

Will be taken care of. You don't need to worry about that.

Tom nods. He's starting to cry but doing the best he can to hold it back.

TOM

Okay. Good. Thank you.

A beat. Tom speaks, almost to himself:

TOM (CONT'D)

I am not ready to leave them. I am not ready.

Danny puts his hand on Tom's knee, steadying his shaky leg. Danny takes a deep breath himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DANNY

You know... this doctor, whenever he comes in here, he either calls you Mr. Donnelly or Tom? Ever notice that? Always one or the other. When he calls you Mr. Donnelly, it's never good news. Next thing you know he's shooting you with something that makes you throw up, or telling you he doesn't like your levels. I'm serious, I've taken notes, he literally does it every time.

(then)

But when he calls you Tom, it's always good news. Like that time he liked your white cell count, remember that? He called you Tom. So that's what we want right now. We want him to open that door, come in here, and call you "Tom." That's all we want. Let's focus on that, okay?

Tom nods, takes a deep breath.

TOM

Okay.

DANNY

It's going to be alright, Son. Everything will be alright.

TOM

(choking up)

You promise?

Danny looks at his son.

DANNY

Have I ever let you down before?

Tom CRACKS UP through his tears. Crying now...

TOM

You're a ridiculous man, you know that?

DANNY

I've been told, yes.

Tom considers the man sitting next to him, then, giving in to it... he puts his hand on top of his father's.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

The camera swings behind them, slowly, till it lands on their backs (facing the door). As it swings around, Danny continues talking, soothing.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Yep, he's just gonna open that door, call you Tom, and it will all be alright. I promise you, it will all be alright.

We're behind them now, father and son, touching hands in silence. And just then...

The door OPENS. Their heads jolt up and we...

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END.

But not before we hear, over black:

DOCTOR (O.S.)
Okay, Tom, so here's where we are...

A NOTE TO THE READER:

In 1971, John Lennon read an interview in a small music magazine. The subject of the interview was a twenty-one year old musician named Steve Tilston. In the interview, Tilston admitted wondering if future wealth and fame might one day hinder his ability to write powerful songs.

And so... John Lennon wrote Steve Tilston a letter.

In the letter, Lennon offered Tilston advice and friendship, as well as his home phone number.

Steve Tilston did not receive the letter until 2005. He was nearly sixty years old at the time.