

## **Over The Hills And Far Away**

**A short story written by Donovan Russo**

**Bobby's Diner, Brownsville, Brooklyn. (1 Month Earlier)**

The times were tense. Giancarlo himself, was nervous to meet up with her. She walked in though, her hazel brown hair was done up in a bun and her makeup made her crystal blue eyes shine like stars in the night. She wore a brown leather jacket, underneath was a green blouse, and she wore a pair of Calvin Klein jeans as well. It had been about two months since Giancarlo and Natasha had talked. He was forced to return to Brownsville because his boss, Dean Jackson, didn't like what he and his pal/coworker, Tommy Le Macchione, were doing. Dean had made threats against Natasha; he even made it a point to show up at her apartment, to call Giancarlo from her phone. After a desperate plea from both Giancarlo and Tommy, Dean had agreed to allow the boys to make their movie. There was one condition though, Dean would become a producer for the film and would get 50% of the commercial profits. They accepted Dean's offer because it wasn't about the money for them. It was about creating something, making their mark on the world and finally escaping their mob filled lives. They were tired of all the crime. They were ready to become civilized people, to embrace the artists from within. This movie, "Always Tempting Fate", was their foot in the door. When the negotiations were all said and done, Giancarlo called Natasha to meet him for lunch.

"Did he fuck with you?" Giancarlo asked.

"No, but I don't understand why I'm still involved with your shit. We ain't dating no more."

"First off, that's never been fully agreed. And second..."

“Excuse me? Things ended two months ago when you set off for fucking Malibu.”

“Don’t fucking sit there and act like I just took off, Natasha. I was actually doing what you told me to do. You told me to go find myself, to pursue my dream in writing. Did you not say that? Am I just fucking hearing things now?”

Natasha glared at him. There was a glass of water on the table with a straw in it, she took a sip out of the water, sipping like she was sucking his eyeballs out.

“Don’t you give me that fucking look, Natasha. I’m not in the mood today.”

“Then what are we doing here, Gianni? Why’d you call me?”

“Because I want you to come to Malibu with me. When Dean called me saying he would harm you, I almost lost my fucking mind. The thought of him hurting you, if anything ever happened to you, I’d put a bullet in my head.”

She looked at him closely. His brown eyes were glassy, with thoughts of fear written all across his face. She didn’t want to let him down but she knew that she couldn’t do it.

“I can’t go to Malibu with you, Gian. And Dean didn’t do anything to me, he was just pissed that you were doing this behind his back.”

“That’s not the point. He had access to you quicker than I did. What if next time he isn’t just looking to scare me. What if he or anyone, wants to hurt you?”

Giancarlo grabbed her hand. He looked at her right in the eyes to show just how serious he was.

“Natasha, why won’t you come with me? You know my feelings toward you.”

“That’s not the point, Gian. I’m a senior now. I’m gonna leave Rutgers, all the hard work I put in, to be your fucking housewife?”

“Don’t act stupid, Nat. I know you won’t stand for that. You’ll transfer out there. They’re tons of good colleges out there. We’ll get married, spend the rest of our lives together.”

“Gianny, two months ago you were a pill popping mobby, now you’re acting like this writing career is gonna work out.”

“What the hell is that supposed to mean? It is gonna work out. You know that Tommy and I have talent. You saw what we have written before. Marty’s giving us a shot. We got Joe Sweden attached to direct and they’re even talking to Matt Damon and Ben Affleck for the leads. They been looking to work together again.”

“Gian, you’re missing the point. This life you’re tied up in, you can’t make it work with the mob. Dean will never let you escape.”

“I know that. For this project though, he’s going to produce. That’s the only way he’ll allow it. But if this project hits big and it will hit big, I’ll pay my way out of the mob. That son of a bitch loves money, if I offer him enough of it, he’ll cave in, I know it.”

“That’s the problem though. It’s all under his control. All under his allowance. You’re a misfit in your own reality, Gianni. This whole thing, it will only end badly and I don’t want to stand around to watch.”

Natasha went to get up but Giancarlo grabbed her hand.

“Do you love me, Natasha?”

She couldn’t answer, she became overwhelmed with tears and she was now trying to keep them in.

“If you love me like I love you, then don’t give up on us. Don’t let anyone fucking break us. You hear me?”

“Gian, please let me leave now. This is too fucking much for 11 o’clock in the morning.”

“Before you leave, just know I have a key and a paper with my address on it, just take it, just in case you change your mind.”

He put the key and paper on the table. She looked at him, trying to convince herself not to take it. To leave now and to save herself from the unknown risk of loving Giancarlo Hughes. But she couldn’t, this unstoppable force came over her. She had to have it, she needed to know exactly where he would be. And so she agreed, trying to hold herself together, while taking it.

“Fine, I’ll take it. But don’t expect to see me out there.”

### **Giancarlo’s Apartment (Present Time)**

It was separated into four sections. It was stacked high, real high. All ten million of it. Right in the living room. They held Giancarlo tight side to side, as he stood on his knees by the front door. Don Perrignon was on his left and fat fucking Joey Ragusa was on his right. Dean Jackson stood in the center of the living room, while Rob Carrone stood by his side in the corner. Rob was holding a magnum .67 handgun and Dean held a green power drill. His men were dressed in black suits, with matching black shirts and red ties. A red tie was what you wore when you were going to off someone. Anyways, they were all dressed alike and their hair was even slicked back to resemble each other. But that fucking Joey Ragusa, that fat fucking slob that he was, his shoes were muddy. Giancarlo saw the mud violate his snow white carpet; the forever leaving of a stain by a complete and utter fat piece of shit.

“Gian? What in the hell are you looking at? Don’t you make me shove this power drill up your ass”, Dean said in his old, western sounding voice. He wasn’t a big fella but a damn powerful one. He never wore black suits though, maybe it was because he was black himself. He

wore a blue suit to this occasion, with a grey shirt and black tie. He didn't give a fuck about the color schemes of the Italian mafia, nor did he care about the actual respect patterns of it.

Clock! Dean punched Giancarlo right across his face. His nose started bleeding and swelling up.

“You're gonna make my hand bruise here. The next display of torture will not entail skin to skin contact. It's gonna involve this drill here. So I suggest you start preaching boy. Regain your focus and start informing, to save your white ass.”

Giancarlo spit the blood out of his mouth. He felt rage build from within him. But he had to keep his shit together, for all intensive purposes. He wasn't ready to get out of this yet.

“I'm sorry Dean. I just, I just keep looking at Ragusa's fat fucking muddy shoes on my carpet. I mean seriously, who wears muddy shoes on a white carpet? Ignore the fact that you're looking to kill me today. Every fucking Italian knows, you don't where muddy shoes on a white carpet.”

“Hey fuck you Gian!” Ragusa yelled. He then pulled Giancarlo by his hair and punched him in the face. He hit the floor hard.

“Alright, alright! I will be the one and only, who will dictate and determine the faith and everlasting of Giancarlo here! No one else, you fucking hear me, Ragusa?” Dean questioned.

“He fucking insulted me!”

“What? What did you say to me, boy?”

Ragusa saw Dean's dark eyes zero in on him. He put his hands up, showing Dean that he meant no disrespect to him.

“I am going to make it clear to all your white, mother fucking asses here in this room. The next person to disrespect me will take a power drill to their most private, vulnerable area. Do I make myself loud and clear?”

Everyone in the room shook their heads in agreement that they heard what Dean was saying.

“Now men, please help our boy Giancarlo here to his feet.”

As Giancarlo stood up, he tried to plead his case to Dean.

“I didn’t do this Dean. I know that looks ridiculously untrue right now but I didn’t do this. You have to trust me.”

“I got an anonymous call from one of the partners you betrayed, proclaiming that you did in fact steal the money. This person went on to inform me that if we came to your apartment, we would find the money. Where are we Gian?”

Giancarlo put his head down and started shaking it in disagreement.

“I asked you a question, Gian. Where the fuck are we right now?”

“My place. We are at my place.”

“And what lys here so glamorously in the living room?” Dean said, while pointing at the money.

“The money.”

Dean started to stroll towards the money now. He then started to look around Giancarlo’s apartment. He noticed the 70 inch flat screen TV that was mounted on the wall. The fancy frames of art that surrounded the TV. The black leather couch, with a matching reclining chair right next to it. He started to shake his head, approving of Giancarlo’s fashion choices.

“You got an eye for fashion son, I’ll give you that.”

“Dean, I didn’t do this. I wasn’t even home this morning or last night. I was...”

“I do not want to fucking hear it! You played me Gian, you played me good.”

Dean now grabbed Giancarlo by his jacket collar. He got real close to him, he was right up in his face.

“My whole life, I had to work for my success. The white man and all that he felt he was entitled too, he tried to stop me. He tried to throw me down into the dungeon. The dungeon of shame and dust. But I wouldn’t go Gian. I wouldn’t fucking go. Do you know how I broke the barrier? How I broke the glass ceiling?”

“How?” Giancarlo asked quietly.

Dean grabbed Giancarlo by the groin and he screamed in pain.

“I broke the glass ceiling by grabbing the white man by his most vulnerable area and refusing to let go until I was set free. Until I was set free to win and to never look back! Are you trying to push me back down, Giancarlo? Are you trying to place that damn cold ceiling over my head again?”

“No! No! Dean I didn’t fucking do this! I’ve worked for you for 20 years! I would never do this! I believed in this project!”

“Than why is the money here? Why the fuck is it not back at the studio, for the movie?”

Before Giancarlo could answer, he passed out.

### **The Warehouse**

Tommy brought Marty and Joe to this warehouse, about an hour out from Giancarlo’s pad. It’s walls were rusted and the windows were smashed. It hadn’t been active in years.

Tommy only knew about it because they considered using it for an actual warehouse scene in their movie. When he got them to the warehouse, he tied them to wooden chairs with old pieces

of rope. The small amounts of blood than ran from Marty's nose and the bruise under Joe's left eye showed that Tommy didn't get them there under their free will.

"Now I don't want to hear any fucking comments from none of you's!" Tommy demanded as he paced back and forth.

"This is fucking bull shit! What the fuck is this shit, Tommy?" Marty questioned.

Tommy stopped pacing when he heard Marty speak. He took off his leather jacket and threw it in frustration.

"Hey! I don't want to fucking hear it! You hear me, Marty? I do not want to fucking hear it! I'm under enough fucking stress!" Tommy spoke these words with great intent and you could hear the true authenticity of his heavy Brooklyn accent start to pour out of his mouth.

"Oh Tommy, you're scaring me here. I'm one of you's. You, me and Gianni boy wrote this baby together. Untie me, please. I gotta use the bathroom, I don't know how much longer I could hold it. We had Chinese last night and..." Joe said before he was cut off.

"Joe, I swear to God, if you shit in that chair, I'll fucking kill you. Now just shut the fuck up and be quiet", Tommy said.

"We didn't do anything wrong. Why would we frame Gian for this? You know us and you know me, Tommy", Marty said.

"I don't know anything yet. But we'll find out soon enough, we'll find out which one of you fucks did this", Tommy said.

"The mob life isn't us, we're in the business of making movies", Marty said.

Tommy was now getting agitated that Marty refused to stop talking. He turned to Marty, his lip curled and disgust. He slowly walked over to him and pulled out his sharp silver hand

gun. This thing was decked out with a leather handle and had the ability to provide you with a full reflection of your face. Tommy knelt down to Marty and looked at him right in his blueish gray eyes.

“Oh God, I need a glass a gin”, Joe said when he saw Tommy with the gun.

“Shut up!” Tommy yelled at Joe. He then refocused on Marty and asked, “You know why Dean never picked you when we were kids?”. Marty glared at Tommy, as if he knew why Dean didn’t select him to be apart of the Dean Jackson gang, but he wanted to hear Tommy’s philosophy on it so he said no.

“It was your inability to appreciate the idea of family. When you do the type of work that Gian and I do, you embrace and accept those that you work with as your family. You could never do that Marty, there’s just something strange about you, something twisted. You, you got the eye of an evil death monkey in ya. It’s just waiting to come out and that can’t be tolerated in what we do.”

Marty bursted out in laughter. “What the fuck are you talking about, Tommy? Dean never picked me to be apart of his gang because he didn’t think I was tough enough. And he was probably right. I wasn’t street smart, there was and is just to book in me. And that’s why I couldn’t have fucked with Gian or with the money.”

Tommy glared at him for a moment. He then turned to Joe, who was staring at a crack in the ceiling.

“What are you looking at?” Tommy asked.

“That crack, it’s mesmerizing. I mean there’s the ceiling and sliced right through it is a crack. Without any choice, without any word, it’s just there. How’d it get there you think?”

“You’ve been doing a lot of coke lately, Joe?”

“No, just as much as the next guy in Malibu,” Joe laughed.

On the surface, Joe looked like he had his shit together. Despite being in his early 60’s, he had fresh blonde hair that contrasted nicely with his baby blue eyes. Despite being heavily dependent on anything that could get you fucked up, his face still looked rather young too. He had very few wrinkles and he was always clean shaven. His lips were also bright red but not artificially red, an organic red. He even always dressed nice. On this particular occasion, he had on this blue, plaid suit and a white, V-neck tshirt underneath.

“When was the last time you got high?” Tommy asked.

Joe was silent. He thought about his answer, as if he didn’t want to be too revealing. After a few seconds of thinking and a deep breath, he looked at Tommy and gave him an answer.

“Last night.”

“Why’d it take you so long to answer?”

“Because last night feels like a long time ago. Gianni boy and I decided to have a little pity party. I invited some sweet gals over and we all partied a little bit. Yeah there was some drinking involved, a little cocaine and other narcotics. You were invited to come though, I called you, you never called me back.”

“I was praying that our money would be found. And it was, but not the way I wanted it to be.”

“Because you’re in denial,” Marty intervened.

“Hey!” Tommy yelled as he walked over to Marty and pushed his chair to the floor. The fall actually cracked the chair and Marty screamed in pain.

“I’m getting real tired of hearing you talk!” Tommy yelled, as he waved his gun in Marty’s face.

“Then fucking shoot me! I don’t know what else to tell you!”

Marty stood up, he was able to because the broken chair made him untied. Tommy pointed his gun at Marty and demanded he sit back on the floor. But Marty didn’t want to hear it.

“Marty sit back down! This fucker’s gone crazy!” Joe yelled.

“No, I’m tired of this shit. I won’t be treated like a prisoner! You’re either gonna have to shoot me or cooperate with me, Tommy! The choice is yours.”

“You don’t want to make me choose, Marty. Now I suggest you sit the fuck back down.”

“I actually do want to make you choose. I’ll take the chance because I know it will turn out my way. We’ve been friends since were five. I know that you’re to decent of a person, to actually shoot me.”

“You don’t know that, Marty! You do not fucking know that! When you left Brownsville for this place, things changed! Gian and I became made guys. We weren’t serving to the thugs and dealers. We became the fucking thugs and dealers! I’m so fucking far from being your friend! And you’re far from being mine!”

Tears were now starting to drip down Tommy’s face. Somewhere in his little speech, he allowed himself to open up to face the flaming emotions that had begged not to be revealed. He was still pointing his gun at Marty but his hands were now shaking. Marty put his hands up, not because he was afraid that Tommy would shoot him, but because he thought Tommy might misfire the trigger due to his shaking hands.

“I’m far from being your friend? Are you kidding me, Tommy? There’s too much history between us for that to be remotely true,” Said Marty.

Tommy stood silent for a moment. He started to look at Joe, who was simply observing what was being presented to him. He then looked back at Marty, as if he was trying to see the boy he once knew. But he couldn’t, all that he saw was a corporate man in a vintage black suit, with a white shirt and dark blue tie underneath. He shook his head and then put his gun down.

“What the fuck am I doing here? How the hell did it get this way?” Tommy spoke, not directly to anyone, but to himself.

“I don’t know, but it did. And we have to deal with it now,” Marty said.

“Forget it,” Tommy said. Marty stood with his hands up, watching his distressed friend wipe away the tears that were trying to release from his eyes. Tommy then grabbed his leather jacket and put it back on over his shirt. It was as if the jacket professionalized him; it was as if the jacket allowed him to refocus.

“I’ll untie you Joe, then you’s can get the hell out of here,” Tommy said calmly.

“Hot dog! Hey Tommy look, we’ll figure it out. I’m sure of it,” Joe said.

“It’s over Joe,” Tommy said as he untied Joe with a pocket knife he had in his back pocket.

“Where do we go from here?” Marty asked.

“I don’t know, Marty. I really don’t know,” Tommy said.

“We need to think of something, we need to do something,” Marty said.

Tommy looked at his watch and then took a deep breath. He watched as he cut the ropes loose on Joe and Marty watched him as well, waiting for Tommy to respond.

“Do you really think he did it?” Tommy asked Marty.

“I hope not. But I don’t know the full story. You came into my condo this morning and dragged me out by force. How did Gian even know that they were in his apartment?”

Tommy turned to Marty and looked at him in his eyes. He said, “He got a text from Natasha, she decided to come out after all.”

### **Giancarlo’s Apartment**

He felt as if his lungs were going to collapse. They were violent, aggressive and unsympathetic with him. Joey Ragusa was the one doing it too. He lifted his head from the toilet and Giancarlo took in as much air as possible. Ragusa then slammed his head back down in it. The toilet bowl was now filled with blood. Giancarlo’s forehead was slashed because of Ragusa’s aggressiveness. Dean stood in the bathroom too, while Don Perrignon and Rob Carrone guarded outside of the bathroom.

“Give in, Gian. Proclaim your defeat and reveal to me where Le Macchione and the others are,” Dean said.

As Ragusa lifted his head, Giancarlo yelled, “I’ve been framed! I’m telling you the fucking truth!” Dean ordered Ragusa to stop immediately, so he threw Giancarlo to the floor.

“The words you spoke, you cursed at me?” Dean questioned.

“I was just trying to get your attention, so we can talk this out,” Giancarlo said, out of breath.

“Talk this out? Boy, if I was in your position, being a man of color, I would be feed to the fucking dogs of wrath! I have given you too many chances and now you will start cooperating with me!”

Dean ordered Ragusa to hold Giancarlo up. Ragusa agreed and held him up, locking out his arms.

“I want to know where Le Macchione is. I want to know where Sweden and Bale are too.”

After speaking, Dean grabbed his green power drill that he had placed on the floor. He looked at it with great intent. He wanted Giancarlo to be afraid of it but he wasn't. Giancarlo knew too well that this was just a scare tactic. He, himself, had used this tactic several times before too. The truth was, nobody wanted drill into somebody's face, that's just nasty. But Dean got real close to Giancarlo and put the drill to his face.

“I don't know where any of them are,” Giancarlo said.

Dean glared into Giancarlo's eyes, searching for the truth. He was a human lie detector and he was easily able to see past Giancarlo's false claims. Dean screamed with anger and started drilling Giancarlo in the side of his left leg with his power drill. As Giancarlo screamed his head off, chunks of his skin, bone and blood started flying everywhere. When Ragusa got some blood on his face, he passed out and this caused Giancarlo to fall to the floor, which got Dean to stop stabbing him, but he still stood over him.

“You know who I am Giancarlo! You know what I am capable of. The world has tried to take from me far too many times before. I put \$5 fucking million into your production. I believed in you, I thought you were capable of something. But now I have realized that you're white ass isn't no more than a fucking crook. It upsets me though.”

Giancarlo was laying on his tile floor, grasping his now disabled leg, just looking at all the blood pouring out of him, staining his floor. Dean sat on the floor with Giancarlo now, he put his finger in Giancarlo's blood.

"Isn't it astonishing to think that this pure red substance, is what keeps us alive? It keeps our motor running," Dean said with a laugh.

"You won't kill me, you need me to much. You want to know where they are, you're dying to know where they are," Giancarlo said.

Dean took his finger out of Giancarlo's blood and put his finger in his mouth to see what the blood tasted like. He then stood up, shaking his head, acknowledging what Giancarlo had just said.

"Yes well you make a very intriguing point, Giancarlo. A very intriguing point. But you know what makes me the hot damn best at what we fucking do?"

"You're fucking nuts?"

"No, no that is not it. I'm not insane. I just refuse to stop at no fucking cost. For example, if there is a ceiling with a crack in it, a crack so big, that it can bring down the fucking roof. Do you just sit back and embrace the pounds of cement that are gonna fucking crush you? No! You fix it!"

Dean hustled back over to Giancarlo, and starting drilling his leg again. As he did it and as Giancarlo screamed, Dean said, "What you do Gian, is starting jamming in what you can, to stop the fucking roof from collapsing. Even if that means shoving people in the crack."

Dean stopped, his face was now covered with Giancarlo's blood and skin. He left it on his face, embracing every last degree of it. He stood up.

“You see, you can sit there and act like a fucking tough guy but I will stop at no cost to make you give in and to tell me what I want to know. And it starts with your bitch, Natasha. You see, I’m sending some men over to Brownsville to kill her right now. To burn her fucking body, while she is alive.”

Giancarlo looked at Dean with disgust. The very thought of them hurting his precious Natasha made Giancarlo furious on the inside. But he wasn’t nervous, because he had already won.

“Dean, she’s not in Brownsville.”

Dean looked at Giancarlo like he had two heads. But before he could ask why, Giancarlo screamed, “Light it up!”. Within a second, a combustion of some sorts could be heard and the entire apartment was filled with gunshots. Dean started to panic but before he could pull out his gun, a bullet came right through the door, blazing through his skull; he dropped to the floor dead within a second.

Giancarlo screamed for the gun firing to stop and the door was then kicked down. And there stood Natasha, in tight blue jeans, a white blouse and a brown leather jacket.

“Did I get any blood on me?” She asked, as she turned in a circle.

Giancarlo couldn’t get up from the floor and his leg was spilling out blood. When Natasha saw this, she started to panic.

“Oh my God, Gian! What the fuck did he do to your leg?” She ran over and sat next to him on the floor.

“He fucked it all up. Just like everything else.”

“What do you mean?”

“Dean stole the fucking money, framing me was his way of doing it.”

“But why would he do that? I thought you said he was an investor?”

“It was all an act I guess, just a dream. But they’ll all be coming now.”

“Who, Tommy?”

“No, from Brownsville. The entire fucking gang. Knowing Dean and knowing this piece of shit business, he convinced all the other guys I stole the money too. When they find out he’s dead, they’ll come after me. You can’t stay. You can’t...”

“I came here to be with you. You told me once that we couldn’t let anything fucking break us, you...”

“Natasha, look at my fucking leg. Do you see what these men do? What they are capable of? There not even men, there vultures. I love you, I love you so fucking much. But keeping you around will only kill you in the end.”

She saw how tired he was now. His head was sweating profusely. She looked into his eyes and then kissed him.

“We need to get you to a hospital, Gian.”

Giancarlo grabbed the gun that was in her hand. He touched her face and ran his fingers over her mouth. Tears were now in his eyes, it was as if her beauty was torturing his soul.

“Leave, Natasha. Don’t ever come looking for me. When the time is right, when the day is right, I’ll find you. I promise.”

She was now filled with tears but she understood why they had to separate. She made him promise and he did. They kissed one more time and then she stood up and started to walk

out of the bathroom. She stopped when she was in the doorway and turned around to look at him one last time.

Bang. Joey Ragusa had awoken secretly and shot Natasha right in the throat. Blood spewed out of her and she fell to the floor, choking to death. Giancarlo screamed, “Natasha!”, as Ragusa stayed on the floor, firing bullets like crazy in the bathroom. Having Natasha’s gun on him, he shot Ragusa four times in his head. Two of Ragusa’s bullets hit Giancarlo, one in the shoulder and one in the chest. He watched as Natasha choked to death on his floor. Her body twitched and trembled. Tears streamed down his face like a waterfall. The moment itself became to surreal for him. He thought briefly about the movie and what his friends and partners would think. As much as he cared, his love became blinded and soul was soiled. Having the gun in his hand, he looked at it and the stains of blood that stained it. With barely a moment to think about it, he put the gun to his head, wheezing his last few breaths.

“I’m coming for you, baby.”

Bang.

### **The Drive**

Although it seemed dangerous and stupid, Tommy, Marty and Joe decided they would travel back to Giancarlo’s apartment. They needed clarity on what had happened with the money and they were willing to face Dean as a cost. They travelled back in Tommy’s black, C350 Mercedes Benz.

“I’ll tell you one thing, these mob cats have banana's for brains. I don’t know how you fucking doing it, Tommy. Did you hear about that one guy down in Mountain Lakes, New

Jersey? He was some restaurant tycoon who got in too deep with the mob and he ended up burning his house down, with himself inside.”

“No, I didn’t hear about it,” Tommy said in a irritated voice.

“Thinking about it now, I don’t know if it’s the mob people that are nuts, or just the Mountain Lakes people themselves. Thirty years ago, before I hit it big, I started banging my best friend’s wife. Now she had a real zest for life, but she was fucking nuts. She…”

“Hey Joe, do me a favor and shut the fuck up,” Tommy said, with his eyes glaring through his rearview mirror, at Joe, who sat behind Marty.

Marty and Tommy paid no more attention to Joe and his ramblings. The car ride after that altercation was mostly silent. After a while, Marty finally broke the silence, when he brought up a comment that Tommy had made to him earlier.

“You said earlier that we weren’t friends anymore, that we were far from being friends. Tommy, I know that over the years we separated a bit, but I never forgot about you guys. You know that right?”

Tommy kept his eyes on the road. He looked tense, as if his mind was in another world. He grabbed his face with his hand and started rubbing it, to think about how he was going to respond.

“Forget about what I said. I’m just a jealous guy, Marty.”

“Jealous?”

“No kid grows up looking to be a fucking thug. You were the one who got out. The one who escaped it all. I just thought that this movie could drive me out too. But I realized something real important today. Something real haunting, but true.”

“What’d you realize?”

“I’m trapped. There’s no escaping it. I’m nothing more than a misfit in my own reality. And it’s not like an escape can’t be done. You did it, you turned the tables. And it doesn’t matter that Dean didn’t pick you, you still found a way to be successful. You were able to avoid all the evil,” Tommy said with a sigh.

“Evil?”

“We all have it in us. Gian and I, we took the easy way. We embraced it, allowed it to guide us to what we thought was happiness. But it’s all bullshit, all of it.”

They pulled up to Giancarlo’s apartment complex and Tommy parked the car. He then pulled out his gun and told Marty and Joe to stay in the car until he called them. When he got out of the car, Joe started up his ramblings again.

“You think we’ll still make this movie still?”

Marty rolled his eyes, as if he didn’t want to talk. “No, no I don’t.”

Joe shook his head, accepting Marty’s answer. “So what’s your next move? What are you going to do next?”

Marty turned around to face Joe in frustration. “I don’t know, can I just get through today alive first?”

“Would you be interested in producing another movie?”

“What? What the hell are you talking about, Joe?”

“I got something in the works. Something real big.”

“Right now, I just want to get my money back and beg for my old job back. I just want to get out of this mess.”

“Let me just ask you one more question, Marty. One more question, then I’ll shut up.”

“Fine, but then you better shut up.”

“Is this realistic enough for you? Everything that’s going on here? Do you feel enough energy?”

Marty turned to face Joe again.

### Up In The Apartment

Tommy was quiet walking up the stairs. When he got to Giancarlo’s door, he saw Don Perignon’s dead body on the living room. As he entered the apartment, he held his gun out firm but was quickly distracted by the mountains of money he saw in the living room. He then started to look around and he saw that Rob Carrone was dead as well, his body was in the corner, by the kitchen.

Tommy then walked into the bathroom and saw the mess that had occurred. He started to tear up when he saw Giancarlo’s dead corpse lying against his bathtub. He ran over to Giancarlo, feeling his face and the blood that continued to drip out of him. He grabbed Giancarlo and held him tight. While holding him, he realized that Dean, Ragusa and Natasha were all dead too. Feeling overwhelmed by all the dead bodies, he went back into the living room and started staring at all the money that was in front of him. He started thinking about his life and how he had never been able to escape the mafia. That \$10 million was in front of him and it was the closest he had ever been to that sum of money. He actually started to touch it, just to make sure it was real. He then went over to the window in the corner of the living room. From that view, he was was able to see his car. Marty and Joe were now out of the car, looking as if they were having an argument. Tommy was annoyed because he told them to stay in the car. But his

attention then turned back to the money. He fell in love with it, studying it's milky smooth texture and it's warm green color.

He was knocked out of his daze when he heard Marty and Joe running up the stairs.

"Don't shoot, I'm coming up! I know who fucking caused this shit", Marty yelled.

Both men entered Giancarlo's apartment with their hands up but were surprised not see anyone but Tommy. They were also amazed at the money that Tommy stood next to and were a little shocked to see the two dead bodies.

"Everyone's dead", Tommy said quietly.

"I know who did this Tommy, It..." Said Marty.

"Don't let him sweet talk you, Tommy!" Joe demanded.

"It was fucking Joe!" Marty said, as he pointed at Joe.

"What?" Tommy said with confusion.

"He told me in the car, it was a puppet project. To see how everyone would react. He wanted to be inspired to write another script," Said Marty.

"Is that fucking true Joe?" Tommy said with rage in his eyes.

Joe stood silent for a moment, with his head down. "We had real gold here!"

Tommy put his head down and started rubbing his face. He was now pacing.

"Are you fucking kidding me?" Tommy yelled.

"He framed Gian, he got him super fucked up last night, and had the money put in his apartment while they drank. He then called Dean in a disguised voice, blaming Gian for this."

"Oh come on! Marty's acting like I'm some sinister dick! I was doing it for all of us! Our next big project!"

Tommy threw a right hook at Joe's face. Joe's nose started bleeding and fear filled out into his face. Tommy then grabbed him by the shirt.

"Do you know what you fucking did? Everyone's dead! Everyone!" Tommy yelled.

Marty walked over to the bathroom and vomited when he saw that Giancarlo and Natasha were dead. "Holy fuck!" he screamed, when he could murmur out the words.

"I'm sorry, Tommy! I'm sorry!" Joe screamed.

"You destroyed it for all of us. You got Gian and Natasha killed! You almost got Marty killed. You almost got me killed!" He started punching Joe continuously in the face. Joe was now spitting blood out of his mouth.

"Please Tommy, I'm sorry! I'm just deranged, that's what it is. You said you're a misfit in your own reality, I'm a misfit in my own reality too!"

Tommy threw Joe to the floor and started pacing again. He saw Marty bent over, puking his brains out and then he looked back at the money. He could smell its crispness in the air. His stress immediately returned when he looked over at Joe again. Joe continued to lay on the floor, scared shitless.

"You did this because you wanted to see what would happen. What the outcome could be, right?"

"Yeah, the experience of life is just so fucking pure, I had to seize the moment when I saw it," Joe said with an innocent smile, as if he were a toddler who had tasted ice cream for the first time.

"Well you wanted to see what would happen," Tommy said as he pulled out his gun. He pointed it at Joe. "Well Joe, I'm gonna show you what fucking happens."

“Tommy stop!” Marty yelled as he ran and jumped on Tommy. Marty’s jump made Tommy fall to the floor, which made him misfire and shoot Joe straight in the head. His blood spatter everywhere, Giancarlo’s white walls now looked like they were splattered with red paint.

“No!” Marty yelled from the floor, he was now crying.

Tommy stood up and pointed his gun at Marty. He said, “Don’t ever fucking jump on me again.”

“Is this what it has come to? Just voracious killings. Heartlessnesses?” Marty asked.

“Maybe Joe was right in a sense,” Tommy said. He was now examining the money.

“What? What the fuck are you talking about, Tommy?”

“He was a great observer. That’s what made Joe so smart, he knew that this couldn’t work out. Apes working with kittens, we all should have seen it coming.”

Marty stood up from the floor, concerned over Tommy’s new founded philosophy.

“So why’d you want to kill him then?”

“Because what he did was still fucked up. Really fucked up actually,” Tommy now pointed his gun at Marty. “And you were the one who brought him on this. Maybe I should shoot you too.”

Marty rolled his eyes and said, “Oh come on, Tommy. I knew Joe for 20 years. I never expected him to do this. You know that’s not fair to blame me!”

Tommy shook his head in agreement and put his gun down.

“Get out of here, Marty.”

“What?”

“I said leave, get the fuck out.”

“But what about the movie, the dead people, the money?”

“The dead people are dead, nothing you can do about them. The movie is fucked and I’m taking the money.”

“Excuse me?” Marty’s eyes widened.

“I’m leaving. The remaining members of the Dean Jackson gang will go on a fucking manhunt for me. The rest of my life is gonna take place on the run. I’m gonna need all \$10 million.”

“What? Tommy, my investment in this movie was all the money that was in my savings! You can’t do this to me!”

“I don’t want to hear any bit of your sob story. You escaped, lived the good life, now it’s my fucking turn. You hear me?”

Marty put his head down in disbelief. “I can’t believe one of my oldest friends is gonna rob me. That he’s gonna take the money that I invested into his fucking dream, the only money that I had left! I betted it all on you guys, Tommy! This is how you’re gonna repay me?”

Tommy walked slowly over to Marty and handed him his gun. “Here,” Tommy said.

“You’re gonna give the guy you’re robbing your gun?” Marty asked.

“If you can work up the balls to shoot me, then go ahead and do it. I don’t have the balls to commit suicide, if I did, I would have done it a long time ago.”

They stared at each other, it was a timeless moment. A moment that came once in a lifetime. A moment that had the ability to define who you were and what you stood for. They continued to look at each other deep, deep in the eyes.

**Ed’s Diner- Three Hours Later**

Marty walked into Ed's Diner with just a white t-shirt and blue jeans on. His hair was wet, because he had showered beforehand. His body was shaking and his knuckles were all cut up. They looked like they have punched glass or maybe a face. He sat in a booth and ordered a cup of black coffee and a piece of coconut cluster cream pie. Before he went to Ed's, he stopped by a dollar store and picked up a blue sketch pad and some colored pencils. As he ate his pie and drank his coffee, he started sketching these hills. They were steep, powering and green. Green like the money he saw today. When he finished sketching the hills, he started drawing these people. They were small, twig figures actually. They looked up at the hills, like they wanted to climb over them but they couldn't. They were just too big and if they were to try, they would fall and tumble back down. To finish off his drawing, Marty drew a bright yellow sun. It was warm and inviting, it gave off this scent that everything in life was going to be okay. He then drew another stick figure, gazing at this sun. Like this sun was the prize to eternal happiness. The prize to a rewarding, fulfilling life. He smiled at this drawing and he looked at it, as if he wanted to be apart of it. Like he wanted to find a way to climb over those hills and to run far, far away. To go to a place without murder, money, love, crime, sex, ambition or anything motivational. He just wanted to be at peace. He would do anything for peace. Oh how he begged for peace.

He got up to go to the bathroom. When he was done urinating, he stared at himself in the mirror. Just how Tommy tried in the warehouse, Marty tried to find the boy that was in himself. But he couldn't. All that he saw was a man who now breaking out in hives, a man whose eyes were blood shot, a man who saw in one day, what another man usually never see's in one lifetime.

He went back to his booth but something felt off. The crust from the pie was still on his plate, how he left it. And he had exactly  $\frac{3}{4}$ 's a cup of coffee left and that was still there. His drawing was there too. But the colored pencils, the fucking colored pencils were missing. He started to search his booth, he then got on his knees and started crawling on the floor, searching for them. He was then meet with the feet of the manager. When he saw the manager standing over him, he got up.

“Are you okay sir?” The manager asked, adjusting his glasses and bull shit wig.

“Uh no actually. Someone took my colored pencils.”

The manager looked at Marty like he was crazy. “Colored pencils?”

“Yeah, yeah, I looked every where for them. Do you think maybe you can give a little announcement for them. Lock down the diner, so we can get this situation handled?”

“Sir, you want me to lock down the diner for some colored pencils?”

“Yeah, I need those colored pencils. I can not lose those colored pencils.”

The manager started to crack a smirk, he couldn't believe what he was hearing.

“What, you think this is funny?” Marty asked as he pushed the manager.

“Sir, don't push me again. You hear me? Now why don't you just pay your bill and get out of here?”

“Pay my bill and get out of here?” Marty now pulled out the gun that Tommy gave him; it was strapped to his leg. He raised his voice loud and said, “Excuse me, has anyone seen a pack of colored pencils? Multiple colors, red, blue, green, yellow, fucking purple! Anyone seen them?”

Everyone panicked when they saw that Marty had a gun. He was pissed that no one was answering and he started going table to table, pointing the gun in people's faces, asking them if they have seen his pencils.

"Sir, I can give you the money that it's in the register and you can go by some new pencils," The manager said.

Marty stopped his interrogation and looked at the manager with insult. "Are you fucking serious? You think I'm a criminal?"

"You're holding us at gunpoint!" The manager said with panic.

"No, I'm no fucking criminal. I'm just a man who is tired of things being taken from him.

You have no clue what I've fucking been through today. The lessons I learned. Do you want to learn what I learned today?"

Marty started walking slowly towards the manager and the manager put his hands up, tears were now running down his face. "Please have mercy on me."

"Mercy? There's no such thing as mercy."

He grabbed the manager and started massaging his shoulders.

"What's your name?"

"Charlie," He said stuttering because he was scared.

"Charlie, I learned three big lessons today. Lesson number one, dreams are unreachable.

Even when you think you have reached them, you haven't. There's just no fucking way. People will do anything in their power to deprive you of your happiness. We're all miserable, we're all deprived and we're all evil."

The manager was now full out crying.

“Lesson number two, friends, family, it’s all fucking bull shit. Nobody cares about you, the world is just one big yarn of selfishness! Take, take, take, take, take and fucking take. Even when you fucking give, it’s still not good enough.”

Marty pulled off Charlie’s wig and threw to the floor with aggression. As he started to massage Charlie’s scalp, he went on with lesson number 2, “People have one goal in mind, one standard form of motivation. That’s taking your guts and ripping them the fuck out. And your soul? Well there’s no such thing as a soul.”

“Please don’t hurt me, sir,” Charlie said.

“And the final lesson that I learned today Charlie, in order to get what you want, you gotta fucking take it!”

Marty shot a bullet through the roof and everyone screamed.

“Until I get my colored pencils back, Charlie stays with me!”

Marty put the gun to Charlie’s head and escorted him out of Ed’s Diner.

**The End**