

Bad Coffee and Stale Donuts

Written by
Maya Young

Copyright (c) 2024

Defense date: April 12, 2024
Director: Dr. Rebecca Soares
Second Committee Member: Dr. Julie Amparano Garica

Maya Young (951) 790-3867
mayayoung5@gmail.com
13510 N 49th Ave
Glendale, AZ, 85304

NOTE: Characters are brief as it adds to the anonymity to honor the group aspect. Who they are will be revealed through dialogue and actions over the course of the narrative

ALFRED "AL": 43, Park Maintenance.

Glassy eyed with long brown hair. Average height and build, but slouches making him appear shorter. He wears a tan worn carpenter jacket with a red flannel underneath and dark blue jeans. Abrasive and emotionally wounded.

Elizabeth "LIZBETH": 19, Student and teacher assistant
Wavy long brown hair and average height. She wears basic pieces of a plain black shirt and blue jeans. Shy, scared, and ashamed.

THEO: 34, Support Group Leader

Riddled with folksy optimism of sobriety. Tall and aloof. Wears a blue button down shirt tucked into slacks. His external positive-peppy nature is a mask for his deep self-agony. Handles himself formally in group.

ABIGAIL: 38, Stay-at-home mother

Overly sweet and nurturing. Exhausted without complaint. Resilient and a Mama Bear. She wears a cardigan and warm tones. Wholly optimistic.

GREGORY: 25, Recent College Drop-out

Arrogant and greedy. Former frat member. Does not see a problem in his actions. Takes everything for granted. Curbs one addiction for another, food. Easily swayed on overall group opinion.

Thomas "BIG TOMMY": 27, Construction Worker

Not physically big, just a nickname given by his father. Quiet and keeps to himself, but will speak up against rudeness. Honest. Riddled with guilt. Wears dark heavy clothing that swallows him. Hard to form positive opinions.

FRANK: 60, Businessman

Abrasive and obnoxious. Man of wealth and position. Forceful and dominating in group discussion. Wears a suit, clean facial hair. Only concerned with the fact that attending meetings are court mandatory. Superficial snob.

VICKY: 32, Record Store Owner

Tough but vulnerable. Loves music. Resilient and fiercely loyal to those she trusts. A firecracker. Carries headphones with her. Quick to show temper when threatened.

HELEN: 56, High School History Teacher

Quite and thoughtful. Keeps to herself and values peace. On remission from breast cancer and is treasuring her moments. Longest sobriety out of the group.

MORNING ROUTINES

EXT. - COMMUNITY CENTER 6:30 AM

Camera lingers on the highlighted roof of the Community Center as the sun shines through the clouds. In the distance a car pulls into the empty parking lot.

AL (V.O.)

"Between the idea and the reality,
Between the motion and the act, Falls
the shadow. For Thine is the
Kingdom" - T.S. Elliot

The car pulls into a space, backs out, and realigns. The door prys open to check the alignment. A man exits and opens the trunk to carry stacked boxes. The top box slips off and falls to the ground

THEO

(sighs)
Dammit!

He struggles carrying the boxes to the front doors but manages.

A loud echo illuminates through the large gymnasium. Remnants of last night's basketball game remain. Loose basketballs all over the floors. Trash in the bleachers. Tables from the snack area are still set up, with the snacks left out.

THEO (cont'd)

(his head hanging low)
Just great

Theo places his large boxes on the left out bleachers and begins to gather the loose basketballs into the closet.

INT. - GREGORY'S BEDROOM 6:45 AM

His mother enters his room holding a breakfast tray with eggs and toast. Gregory is dead asleep on his bed. His mother walks through his messy room.

She places the tray on his nightstand next to his arrary of medication.

GREGORY'S MOTHER
(whispers)

Greg it's time. Wake up.

GREGORY
(rolls over facing
the wall)

GREGORY'S MOTHER
(muttered under
breath)

Little asshole

She slams the door on her way out. GREGORY jumps up.

INT. - HELEN'S HOME 6:50 AM

Helen is at the dining room table reading the newspaper that covers her face. She reaches from behind the paper to grab her coffee, black.

A wall full of boxes with cancer pamphlets flowing over the edges. The boxes read "Trash" written in sharpie.

EXT. - ELEMENTARY SCHOOL 7:12 AM

CAR ENTERS THE DROP-OFF LINE FOR THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL.
TEACHERS YELL FROM SIDEWALK GUIDING STUDENTS ON CAMPUS AND MOVING THE LINE.

INT. - ABIGAIL'S CAR

ABIGAIL grabs her children's lunches from the front seat and passes them to the backseat. Her eldest Charlotte, 4th grade, and her youngest Maggie, 2nd grade.

ABIGAIL
Here are you lunches..
(passes them each a
lunchbox)
Char remember you stay after school
for chess club, Kay'. Maggs I'll get
you normal time, at 2.

She moves the car to the front of the line. Charlotte opens the door.

ABIGAIL (cont'd)
Okay... Bye my loves... have a great
day-

The girls exit the car. Abigail's smile drops as she sits in silence.

She drifts off staring at the car in front of her.

THE CAMERA LINGERS FROM THE BACKSEAT FOCUSING IN ON THE REARVIEW MIRROR. ONLY HER EYES SHOWN IN THE REFLECTION.

A knock at the window scares ABIGAIL.

TEACHER
HEY YOU GOTTA MOVE, I GOT A LINE HELD
UP HERE. COME ON!

ABIGAIL jumps in her seat

ABIGAIL
SHIT!-
(Slams hand on chest
and catches her
breath)
I'm leaving-, I'm going-, sorry Joe.

ABIGAIL'S CAR DRIVES OFF SCREEN TRANSITIONING TO THE TRAIN ENTERING THE STATION

EXT. - TRAIN STATION 7:25 AM

Vicky stands on the platform waiting as her train slows down. She wears noise canceling headphones blasting music.

She finds her seat near the window and watches as the city passes her by.

Changes by Charles Bradley, The Budos Band plays in her headphones.

INT. - LOCAL COFFEE SHOP 7:48 AM

The bell on the door chimes as FRANK enters. The quiet empty shop is flooded by his obnoxious voice as he is on the phone.

BARISTA
Hi, welcome to/

FRANK

/Why don't you just stab me in the balls then James. I said that would end me! The meeting has to be this Friday, FRIDAY! Is that getting through your thick as plywood skull?-

(lowers his phone
from ear to order)

Hi doll, get me a medium flat white.
And a croissant. K'ay thanks-

(hands his card in
front of her as he
raises the phone to
his ear)

-Have you grown a brain cell or two
in that time? What did they *actually*
say?

BARISTA

(slowly takes card,
rolls eyes)

Heres your receipt.

FRANK

(takes receipt
without eye contact)

YES! GOD YES! Alright keep me posted
K'ay, I'll be in later today if I can
get out early. ... What I do in my
free time is my business, your
business is making sure that meeting
stays on Friday. ... shoot...
Funding? I have that handled you
don't need to--... yes, it's handled.
Consider it done. ..would you just
lay off on the logistics?

BARISTA

Sir, your order is ready. SIR!

Frank turns to grab his order without breaking from the call.

FRANK

MY GOD you're an annoyance! Now,
how's Ed with the team, do we have
people?

Frank exits coffee shop and gets in his car.

EXT. - COMMUNITY CENTER 7:55 AM

The rest of the members start to shuffle in. Walking alongside the building wearing a hoodie with a carpenter coat on top. His hood is up covering his face, he is on the phone listening to a voicemail.

WIDE SHOT FOLLOWING HIM AS HE WALKS WHILE ON THE PHONE. HE REMAINS IN CENTER FRAME FOR THE ENTIRELY OF THE SCENE.

BIG TOMMY'S MOTHER

"Hey sweetie, sorry I missed your call. I was with your idiot brothers yesterday. Can you believe they don't have ONE nice outfit for ...

(she pauses and lowers her tone)

... well I was going... um sweetie, I-... After everything, I just think it's best you skip this Thanksgiving. Y'know, your brothers haven't forgotten or forgiven. I can't say I have either yet... I didn't mean that, but... y'know what I mean. Anyway lo-...have a good day sweetie.

BIG TOMMY stride slows on that last sentence of the voicemail. He slows to a stop in front of the tall bushes that rest alongside the building to look at his phone, in disappointment.

He shoves his phone in his pocket as he walks inside.

BIG TOMMY REMAINS IN CENTER FRAME UNTIL HE BEGINS WALKING, BUT THE SHOT LINGERS ON THE BUSHES ALONGSIDE THE BUILDING.

INT. - LIZBETH'S CAR 7:57 AM

ANGLE SWITCHES FROM FAR SHOT FROM WITHIN A CAR WATCHING BIG TOMMY.

LIZBETH sits in the car, frazzled.

LIZBETH

You can do this....

(exhales)

just go in. Accept it. And...

LIZBETH throws her head back

LIZBETH (cont'd)

...Go home! You don't need this/

LIZBETH motions to reverse her car when she makes eye contact with BIG TOMMY as he walks in.

LIZBETH (cont'd)
/SHIT-
(sighs)
No choice now.

EXT. - COMMUNITY CENTER 7:58 AM

She leaves her car and enters the Community Center.

CAMERA LINGERS ON DOOR AFTER LIZBETH ENTERS. IT MOVES TO THE RIGHT TO THE TALL BUSHES ALONGSIDE THE COMMUNITY CENTER

Everyone starts to enter the building, one by one. We remain outside the building focusing on the tall bushes.

We hear echos of the members moving chairs and conversing over coffee as we close in on the farthest bush. Buried deep, peaking through, are combat boots.

A man is sleeping in the bushes, but only his legs are shown.

INT. - COMMUNITY CENTER 7:59 AM

THEO circles around his chair, at the head of the circle. He is reviewing his flashcards and notes. Head down. Mumbling to remember.

FRANK just now enters, 1 minute to spare, and is in the corner on a phone call.

LIZBETH slowly walks around. Examining the set-up. Trying to see if she recognizes anyone.

HELEN and VICKY are near the coffee and donut table, laughing.

BIG TOMMY swiftly grabs a donut from the table and takes a seat.

GREGORY hovers at the donuts table with two donuts in hand, searching for another in the batch.

VICKY
Jesus, you would think two was enough

HELEN
Ya Greg, save some for our new member. We can't let her leave hungry
(MORE)

HELEN (cont'd)
(turns to LIZBETH)

Hello sweetie, this here is Vicky. My name is Helen. And the Hungry Hungry Hippo stealing our rations is Gluttonous Gregory/

GREG scolds HELEN with his mouthful

GREGORY
/Shut it will you
(swallows)
You love me, and you know it
(winks)

GREG chuckles as he takes his seat with his two donuts.

VICKY, LIZBETH, and HELEN laugh

VICKY
God he's insufferable.
(turns to LIZBETH)
Newbie huh?/

ABIGAIL creeps behind for some coffee.

ABIGAIL
/Newbie? Who's New?-

LIZBETH is on edge, ABIGAIL startles her.

ABIGAIL (cont'd)
-Oh sorry hun, didn't mean the jump.
First day? Don't fret.
(gestures towards
seats)
You can sit next to me.

The group members start to grab their seats.

THEO
Hey everyone, we are about to get started. If you haven't already, feel free to help yourself to the coffee
(looks at Greg)
Or donuts. Hello Greg. Now Do-nut go breaking my heart by leaving leftovers

THEO pauses for laughter, but no one chuckles. FRANK roles his eyes.

THEO takes his seat at the head of the circle. ABIGAIL and VICKY on both sides of him. Across from THEO is FRANK, to his right is BIG TOMMY, then GREG.

LIZBETH sits in between ABIGAIL and GREG. HELEN sits to the left of FRANK.

In between VICKY and HELEN is an empty chair.

THEO (cont'd)
 (notices empty chair)
 Al may be joining us a little later.
 He may be running late. Hopefully in
 a *sprinkle* of time-/
 (turns for others
 reactions)

FRANK
 /For God Sake!-/

ABIGAIL
 /Theo why don't we put a pin in the
 puns.

A silence fills the room. THEO shifts in his chair.

THEO
 Well... now it's like there's a *hole*
 inside me-/

The whole room groans, Frank gets up out of his chair and starts walking towards the door.

FRANK
 /Jesus!-/

THEO
 /Frank! That form is not gonna sign
 itself. Not til after the meeting.

Frank pauses. He turns and heads back to the circle.

FRANK
 Here I thought we came to an
 understanding. I sit and share, you
 sign without the annoying ass puns. I
 mean...
 (chuckles with big
 gestures)
 we aren't here to fund your comedy
 tour.

THEO
 You're right, I apologize. Just
 wanted to...I don't know...anyway
 lets jump in
 (MORE)

THEO (cont'd)
 (shifts in chair,
 glances at note
 cards)

Just a few announcements, more of a reminder really. When we leave today to make sure that we clean up after ourselves. All who use the community center are held to keeping it tidy
 (forces smile)

Um... like every week. The donuts and coffee are free for the taking, so please make sure you take some before you leave. Please. I would hate to waste. One last thing, we have a new member to our group, Lizbeth. Lets all welcome her.

THEO looks at LIZBETH, gesturing her to say a few words.

LIZBETH
 H-hi! I'm Elizabeth, but everyone calls me Lizbeth-/

Everyone joins together.

EVERYONE
 /HI LIZBETH!

LIZBETH stands intimidated by their call.

THEO
 Why don't you share a few things about yourself.

LIZBETH
 I-I'm alright... right now at least.

THEO softens his tone

THEO
 And that is quite alright, you share when you are ready to share.

(his voice raises
 with passion)

Isn't that what this is all about. Creating a space where we can share our deepest darkest parts of ourselves. Venturing deeper and deeper into the abyss, our abyss, only to find it's a path traveled by many. And-/

A loud bang against the wall of the community center echoes through the hollow gym startling the members.

VICKY
/What the hell was that!-/

GREGORY
/SHIT that was loud!

The members stand puzzled and murmur over the noise.

THEO
I-I am...I am going to be a hot sec.
I'm going to see what that was.
(turns to walk)
You guys stay here, I won't be long

THEO walks outside. The members glance at each other.

VICKY
I bet it was a bottle thrown.

FRANK
Please, not even. Definitely a wrench or something'

VICKY
Wanna bet?

The members make side eye's at each other

FRANK
(chuckles)
Hun' you ought' to know better than to bet with me. Alright, a hundred good?

HELEN
Vick! Don't!

VICKY
Good with me! Lets go see shall we.

VICKY leads the charge. The others close behind. LIZBETH stands frozen

BIG TOMMY
C'mon, it's fun to see FRANK get angry.

BIG TOMMY leaves, LIZBETH close behind.

EXT. - COMMUNITY CENTER 8:12 AM

The members turn the corner alongside the side wall of the community center to find THEO slowly investigating the bushes.

The members stay far behind, inching forward. THEO approaches the end of the wall where he finds smashed glass on the floor and an unknown liquid on the walls.

AL
Why... Why... WHY! GOD I CANT
BELIEVE-
(screams)

AL runs out from behind the community center, startling everyone, crying in anguish.

THEO slowly approaches him.

THEO
Al?... what-... are you okay?

AL
(murmurs incoherently
under his breath)

THEO
Are you...no, you can't be...Al? AL!

The members stand from afar, distraught to see AL in this state.

ABIGAIL
Oh my, is- is that Al?

VICKY
With a broken bottle, would you look
at that!
(turns towards Frank,
gestures hand out)
I prefer cash.

FRANK
God you're a bitch you know-/

VICKY
/I'M A WHAT?! You want to say that
louder, I don't know if your
probation officer heard you!

BIG TOMMY turns towards LIZBETH.

BIG TOMMY
Here we go.
(chuckles)

The members watch as VICKY and FRANK argue while in the distance THEO consoles a distraught AL.

THEO
Walk me through it.

AL
I... I DON'T-Just...I cant believe it! For FUCKS SAKE! I shouldn't be here, I gotta go-/

AL starts to stand.

THEO
/NO. You came here for a reason. Somehow, you wanted to come here. You knew to come here. You did the right thing.

THEO pauses then whispers into AL's ear. LIZBETH from the distance sees this through all the commotion.

FRANK
JESUS here
(pulls for his wallet)
I got... sixty on me. TAKE IT DAMMIT!

FRANK tosses the cash at VICKY.

VICKY
Easiest sixty I've ever made.
(chuckles)

FRANK
And you didn't have to blow anyone for it.

VICKY
Says the man arrested for fraud and tax invasion.
(turns to the group)
Tell us, how many men made their bitch in prison.

THEO walks up alongside AL.

THEO

Hole-y cannoli! Lets wrap this up
shall we. Alrighty folks, the break-
time is over. Lets go on and head
back inside-

FRANK

-Al. Buddy. The bushes, I mean...
your apartment must be better. At
least, I'm hoping.

VICKY smacks FRANK on his shoulder.

INT. - COMMUNITY CENTER 8:30 AM

The members regain their seats with AL trailing being
everyone. He heads to his chair, repositioning it as it
echos through the building.

He takes a seat. He is unable to get comfortable in his
chair.

THEO

(scoffs)

Alrighty then, where were we?

The room is quiet as everyone shares glances.

THEO (cont'd)

Lizbeth, you were about to share!

Startled, LIZBETH repositions in her chair.

LIZBETH

Well, I don't-/

THEO

/If not now, then when? C'mon start
us off with a nice introduction.

LIZBETH

OK. Hi everyone, my name is Lizbeth.

(looks at Theo)

And... I am an alcoholic-/

AL scoffs in his chair.

BIG TOMMY

Dude. Really

AL

I'm sorry, but... wait I'm not sorry.
 I mean C'mon she's a kid. A-like-
 baby, she's a child.

(breaks into laughter)

Ah Geez! Man, look. You told me to
 come in and listen, but I ain't
 listening to a kid telling me about
 my problems.

(looks towards
 Lizbeth)

What problems you got huh? Daddy's
 money came a little late? Your dog
 didn't come when called? That led you
 to a bottle didn't it?-/

BIG TOMMY raises his voice and leans in his chair.

BIG TOMMY

/Al! Cut the shit alright! We all got
 issues, none greater or less than the
 other. We learned that day one.

THEO

Thank you Thomas- I'm sorry, Big
 Tommy.

(directs attention to
 AL)

I don't know if you forgot how to
 listen Al, but your mouth is not to
 be involved in that process-/

AL jumps from his seat.

AL

/Man, I ain't no baby! Stop treating
 me like one!

AL pauses and scans the room. Everyone sits frozen in their
 chairs anxious for his next move.

AL (cont'd)

I see your stares, all of you. Judgey
 is what you are! Why you shocked,
 you've seen me. We'll this is the
 real me, 'kay!

(waving hands and
 raising voice)

You all making me the villain the
 second I walked in here. Your
 whispers and side-fucking-eyes.

(points to Frank)

I'm looking at you *Frank!* How's the
 business *Frank?*

(MORE)

AL (cont'd)

Scam anyone out of a house yet,
Frank? No? Oh I see, I see... making
 sure your hands are clean now so the
 Feds don't get you, again right.

FRANK starts to boil over with anger when THEO makes a gesture to stay calm. AL aims his eyes at BIG TOMMY.

AL (cont'd)

Thomas, hows the old man? Has your pop's invited you to the prison for some father-son time? I mean, you must have at least seen your brothers... or are they still trying to kill you.

(chuckles)

Figured that a happened when you drove your family's "business" off a cliff. Speaking of driving/
 (directs attention towards VICKY)
 /ever get your license renewed Vick?
 The judge got to understand you weren't aiming for your ex, ha, you were just aiming for the house in between him.

AL breaks into laughter. Wiping a tear from his glassy eyes. GREGORY lets out a slight chuckle under his breath.

AL (cont'd)

Ah Geez. Your laughing fat ass?
 That's a new one. The difference between me and you is that I didn't fuck up my body so bad that I moved back home. My mistake guys, *this* is the actual baby of group.

THEO intervenes with a stern tone.

THEO

You done?-/

AL

/Not quite? You still trying to hook up with your sister-in-law? Or only when you're too blacked out that you don't remember the beating your brother gave you.

(beat)

Luck-out with any of the college freshman at the bars? That'd be tough since your still banned from all of them in the area.

(MORE)

AL (cont'd)
OK, now I'm done.

AL walks over to the food table judging the donut selection. He picks a pink sprinkled donut and sits down, without a napkin.

The room is silent. Frozen by their past being unveiled in such fashion they couldn't think of what to say next.

THEO
I- Well... The only thing I could think about taking away from Al's rant was your license renewal Vicky. Last meeting you mentioned you would have the court appeal earlier this week. Do you want to share how that went?

VICKY
The court appeal?

THEO
Yes. Did they side with you?

VICKY
You mean, did they side with the alcoholic who drove her car into her ex's house. No.

VICKY settles in her chair and crosses her arms. THEO leans in.

THEO
What exactly did they say?

VICKY stares at the floor fighting the tears from her eyes.

THEO (cont'd)
Vick, this is a safe space.

ABIGAIL
Aside from Al's rants.

AL flips off ABIGAIL from across the circle with pink frosting on his finger.

THEO
Nonetheless, safe for an open honest discussion. All feelings are welcome.

VICKY
They said I was a liability since I am not a year sober yet.
(MORE)

VICKY (cont'd)

They denied me and my ex is going to win his case. It's a bunch of bull! His settlement is gonna go towards that bimbo and his new house. All I did was break the garage door and he's suing for physical harm. The asshole was standing outside nowhere near it!

(sighs)

I understand my mistake, believe me I can see it. But he's going for everything when he was the one who cheated. It pisses me off, I almost wish I did hit him! He's preventing me from getting my license while suing me! God! I get fucked over and I have to pay.

THEO

I'm so sorry Vicky, it's a terrible feeling of being misrepresented and unheard. This is a great segue, one I want to open to the group. Labels. Identity. How we are perceived to the world even in recovery.

(directs towards
whole group)

Vicky is still seen as a liability, an alcoholic, even with... what is it now ten months under your belt.

THEO's voice raises with passion.

THEO (cont'd)

All the work we put into this each week, gets undermined by a single person. One person who refuses to acknowledge our ability to change hinders our growth. A flower can't blossom in cloudy weather, neither can we grow under the labels of our past. It's destabilizing to our recovery.

HELEN, ABIGAIL, and VICKY nod in agreement. AL finishes his donut and licks the frosting off his fingers.

THEO (cont'd)

This loss of our historical self, or past self, is our way out of this abyss. Frank, do your investors or colleagues still see you as a liability? Even with your proposals for your business?

FRANK

(chuckles)

Once you've been to prison, you find
that people don't mess withcha.

HELEN

It was a white collar prison, *be real*. You all probably were each other's bitches by doing each other's taxes.

LIZBETH has a confused look on her face. ABIGAIL leans over and whispers to her.

ABIGAIL

About twenty years ago, he was a wall street guy drinking and getting high everyday. High off his ever-loving mind. Fudged a few number while he was at it.

FRANK overhears ABIGAIL.

FRANK

Wait a sec, your getting it wrong.
Remember, your *destabilizing* my past.
Geez, your telling it all wrong/

THEO sighs after FRANK misunderstood the lesson.

FRANK (cont'd)

I wasn't just some Wall Street guy, I was *the* Wall Street Guy. I had a buddy who had coke in the lining of his jacket on deck at all times. But I was the guy with the booze. I had a flask in my coat and one shoved in my sock. Until it was taken at a club during a search... I don't remember what for but it was my lucky flask. I worked in the tallest building in the city, overlooking all the posers walking by. Ha, it was the life. My floor of brokers would call me the "King". Not Mr. So-and-so, not Frank, King. One Christmas, our bonuses were one million each. Each!

FRANK is relishing in his past conquest. GREGORY sits at the edge of seat intrigued, no matter how many times he's heard this story. AL smirks in his chair.

FRANK (cont'd)

I had this nice Lambo, hot rod red, I called her Cece. Oh, I don't remember why I- oh wait I remember, I met Cece after a night in the Red Light District/

THEO

/Alright, I think we are getting a little off track. Frank. The question was if you face any challenges now reentering society after being released. Honest answer.

FRANK'S smile fades from his face. Before he can speak, Al interjects.

AL

Honest? Ha, That man being honest.
(beat)
I'd like to see the day.

BIG TOMMY

How was your night Al, huh?

AL's smile fades staring at BIG TOMMY, although he is unfazed.

BIG TOMMY (cont'd)

Mr. Talkative quiet now? Why don't you remind me, how many years were we gonna celebrate for you today? Wasn't it five-/

AL jumps from his chair and darts to BIG TOMMY.

AL

/You shut your ass up! I swear!

THEO and HELEN jump to hold back AL while BIG TOMMY remains unfazed.

GREGORY starts laughing in his chair as he eats another donut.

THEO

Al! Take a lap.

AL starts to head to the doors

THEO (cont'd)

Not outside! But inside, please.

He slows his walk and stands in front of the door. Contemplating if leaving all together is the best option.

The rest of the members wait in silence for his next move. fearful for him to stay, afraid of what will happen when he leaves.

AL ends up kicking the door but turns around towards the group.

AL
You assholes ain't getting rid of me
that easy.

AL sits in his chair.

THEO
Did-Did you want to talk about it?
What made you relapse?

AL
Nope.

AL crosses his arms.

THEO
Eventually you will have to-/

AL jumps from his seat to the donut table once again grabbing a coffee as well.

THEO (cont'd)
/share...okay then. Gregory, how is
it with the parents?

GREGORY
The parents, more like the wardens.
They've become helicopter parents,
for real. On the hour, every hour
they come in checking on me. I'm a
grown man, I'm 23 for god's sake!

ABIGAIL leans over to face him.

ABIGAIL
They love you is all. I would do the
same for my chickens. Can you imagine
them having to see you covered in
your own vomit in the hospital?
Devastating.

AL
I don't know, ask your kids Abby.
they probably remember you like that.

HELEN slaps his shoulder

HELEN
That's enough!

AL
(sarcastically)
I'm sorry, truly. Greg you were telling us how hard it must be to have loving caring parents, go on, tell us your struggles.

GREGORY
Bro, chill alright. It's not fun. They have me up before the sun with my meds and shit. Then breakfast. Then I have to go with them everywhere. Everywhere! She signed me up for pilates so when she makes me come with her, she can keep an eye on me. And some shit about "how it's good for me". And, they won't let me talk to my boys! They be calling me like crazy, but they monitor my calls. It's whack, like actually! They keep saying, "You can't handle yourself", but I'm chill bro. Like actually.

GREGORY gets up to grab another donut. Theo notices.

GREGORY (cont'd)
Then my dad put timers on my phone so I won't forget. Meds, eating, when to call and check in. They have all my meals laid out for me almost every hour or so. This is the first alone time I've had in a week. Door open at all times, I have to sit in the living room and shit. Actually insane.

GREGORY continues to eat his donut.

THEO
How many donuts have you eaten?

GREGORY
What?

THEO
How many?

GREGORY

I don't know, what you counting too?
Did they tell you to- /

THEO

/no, no. No one told me. I- I just
noticed you had a couple is all.

GREGORY

Bro, Did you want to take them home
or something?

THEO

No, not that. Greg, may I ask again.
How often did you use to drink, in
your frat.

GREGORY

Man, I don't know. Hard to say. Maybe
every hour or so. But, that was just
me...

(chuckles)

It was crazy then. Bobby and I had
this thing where if the other dude
said "bet" we would have to chug- /

THEO

/What I mean is, you would drink
pretty regularly throughout the day,
yes?

GREGORY'S tone changes as he sits back in his chair.

GREGORY

I mean ya.

THEO

And you mention that your parents are
regulating your meals. Pretty often,
yes?

GREGORY

I mean ya. Whatcha getting at?

THEO

I don't know really, but-it sounds
like cross-addiction. Curbing one
addiction for another. I don't mean
to put you on the spot buddy, but I
noticed you looked a little different
from the last meeting. Have you, you
know?

GREGORY leans in his chair.

GREGORY

Have I what?

THEO starts to get uncomfortable.

THEO

Pardon me for overstepping but, have-
have you gained some weight since you
entered your sobriety-/

GREGORY immediately gets insulted.

GREGORY

/-You calling me fat! I have not! I
am perfectly fine! Why is everyone
walking on eggshells all of a sudden?
I'm the same, Jesus! Eat a couple of
donuts and-

(looks down at
himself)

-they...call you fat.

He looks down at himself. The shirt that used to fit a
little loose is snug on his stomach.

GREGORY (cont'd)

It...it must have shrunk in the
dryer. She won't let me do my own
laundry, you know. I...I guess I
never noticed.

THEO leans forward in his chair.

THEO

Gregory. Do you mind sharing what
your eating habits were before?

GREGORY

Um... I don't really remember. I...
Maybe just some snacks they had at
the parties but...I can't really
remember.

ABIGAIL

You didn't eat? At all?

GREGORY

Not that I can remember. I mean... I
must have right? I can't just *not*
eat.

GREGORY'S demeanor changes.

THEO

Gregory. I really am proud of you. In the past couple of weeks, I think we reached our first breakthrough. Recognizing the difference from our past selves to now is a huge step. Even your health issues might have been as drastic as they were due to your eating habits before.

He sits puzzled in his chair, trying to grasp this sudden realization placed upon him.

GREGORY

I mean... I guess. Ya, I do look a lot different. But, I just assumed it was just them feeding me a lot. But... I have been hungrier. More than usual.

THEO

This goes to all of you, not just Greg, but cross-addiction. We are addicts, through and through. Letting go of one addiction does not necessarily mean it's gone forever. If only it were that easy.

(beat)

It manifests in new forms. Addiction to food, addiction to nicotine. Not all are bad, some can be good. But it's being able to see it. Don't let the past steal your present. Say it with me now!

EVERYONE

Don't let the past steal your present! /

Everyone says in unison, with AL just barely saying the mantra.

AL

/steal your present.

THEO directs his attention to AL gesturing him to share. He gives him a side-eye glance signifying a hard "no".

THEO

'Nuff said. Lizbeth, you ready to share now.

LIZBETH

I guess. Do I start at the beginning again?

THEO

Where ever you feel comfortable.

THEO gives an intimidating stare to AL, hoping for no interruptions during her introduction.

LIZBETH

Hello, again. Um... My name is Lizbeth. Actually, it's Elizabeth but I prefer Lizbeth. Or Liz. Really anything, but Elizabeth. Nothing wrong with the name just... I feel it's not me...like I've outgrown it or I am not that person anymore...

LIZBETH looks up in embarrassment.

LIZBETH (cont'd)

I'm sorry. I'm rambling. I ramble when I'm nervous. I-/

ABIGAIL puts her hand on LIZBETH'S shoulder.

THEO

/Why don't you start by why you're here?

LIZBETH takes a deep breath in, then out.

LIZBETH

I-I feel lost.

A weight has been lifted from her chest uttering the words.

LIZBETH (cont'd)

For a while now. I can't really explain it but, I-I don't know what to do with myself. I don't recognize who I've become when I look at myself-/

This angers AL, he jumps forward in his chair.

AL

/-How old are you?

THEO

AL!

AL
Answer the question, how old are you?

Shocked, she answers.

LIZBETH
19.

AL busts into a loud laugh.

AL
19? 19! You're 19 and you feel lost?
(turns towards the
group)
How many of you guys felt lost at 19,
raise your hand?

FRANK and GREGORY are the only two to raise their hands. The rest too scared or angry at AL'S pestering.

AL (cont'd)
I'm sorry I tried to hold it in as long as I could! But you people are getting on my last nerve.

LIZBETH
You people?!
(her voice raises)

AL
Young people! You think you had it harder and want all the attention for it. *"My video game didn't load fast enough, now I'm crying"*, *"I lost WiFi and how will anyone know what I am doing at this moment"*. You're too young to know what real pain is. You not even 21 I-/

THEO
/You know very well we do not have an age limit here. And have you forgotten, this is Alcoholics Anonymous. She does not have to reveal her age if she does not want to. We accept anyone who is feeling lost or out of place in their addiction. Al, you know that better than anyone.

AL
Don't you lecture me you wanna-be-rapist-

ABIGAIL

AL! Stop this at once! You are drudging up everyone's past and rubbing it in their faces and I have had it up to here. You *can not* brush off her issues based on her age when you keep interrupting her trying to share! How else-/

AL

/No I will keep judging her! Let me guess, you started drinking at 16 at a party and started liking it. Then you started sneaking sips from daddy's liquor cabinet and now you think you have a problem. That's why you're here. To get "better" and tell your friends you went to AA and your "changed". You're not an addict, you're a fake!

(beat)

It's all fake. A facade! Sobriety is an illusion they tell you,

(points to Theo)

This one tells you. We all get sober out of our own selfish reasons, and we all come here to be selfish assholes together. But you,

(points to Lizbeth)

you! You want to see the attraction. The new freaks at the circus to see the realities of your "addiction".

All you young teenagers are all the same in- in- wanting to feel damaged but you haven't experienced damage! Damage is us, we are damaged. Even that fat ass pounding back the donuts, hell his organs are damaged-/

ABIGAIL stands from her chair.

ABIGAIL

/What happened to you? I know you are always mad but you're bitter. A bitter person! We are not selfish, none of us are! We are here to better ourselves. I am not selfish, AL.

ABIGAIL sits back down in her chair.

ABIGAIL (cont'd)

I am here for my kids! Everyday, every week I am here I do it for my children.

(MORE)

ABIGAIL (cont'd)

I failed them early on, something that haunts me to this day. And you rubbing it in my face is disgusting. Yes, I own up to my faults in my past. I remember it all. The countless casinos. The smoke filling my lungs the second I stepped foot in there. Every touch, smell, sensation I still remember to this day.

(beat)

Even the cries of my darling Charlotte from under the table when I-

ABIGAIL starts to tear up. THEO placed his hand on her shoulder.

ABIGAIL (cont'd)

When... When I would forget to feed her all day. I remember the cries of her from inside the building when I left her there six hours after I went off with some guy.

I remember- I- I remember placing a bet on my youngest Maggie until the cops showed up.

ABIGAIL wipes the tears from her eyes.

ABIGAIL (cont'd)

It would kill me if my chickens saw me in that state. I would not recognize myself if I saw me today. I was consumed by greed. I am here *for them*, not some selfish reason you dick!

AL

You're wrong.

ABIGAIL

Excuse me!

AL

It is for a selfish reason. You said, "It would kill me if my chickens saw me in that state". Selfish. You are afraid of what they would think of you so you change because of that.

THEO

No, she is saying-/

AL

/I heard what she said, "For her chickens", but out of fear. Fear of what they think of you. Hence, selfish.

ABIGAIL

Were you not listening?! I am here for my children! For them. For a better life for them. The way I wronged them is unforgivable, and

(beat)

And... each day I try and try to make up for it. I will be here until I'm as old as you. But we differ on one thing-/

ABIGAIL'S tone falls stern while pointing at AL across the circle.

ABIGAIL (cont'd)

/I have something to fight for. Something to change for. You sit across from me relishing in my past mistakes, but at least I am atoning for them. You are reliving them.

LIZBETH reaches her hand towards ABIGAIL. The two holds hands.

AL sinks in his chair. Biting his tongue.

THEO

Abigail. Thank you so much for opening up. It was incredibly moving. You being one of the longest members here in your sobriety inspires me, and hopefully inspires the rest of you. One thing I liked that you said, something you both brought up, was our reason for being here.

(beat)

Why are we here? Are we here for ourselves, as Al put it. Are we here because the courts make us? Why?

The room falls silent. THEO looks around for any volunteers.

FRANK

I'll go. The courts. It's a part of my probation.

THEO

Apart from that, do you seek any other form of rehabilitation? For your self?

FRANK

Not necessarily.

THEO

Do you think you *had* a problem?

FRANK

Nope. Just got caught during all the fun.

(Chuckles)

I never let it get too far.

THEO

Frank...Do you remember when they arrested you?

FRANK

Sheesh, that was long ago. Wasn't it at my house or some shit.

THEO

They arrested you in your office. You were stripping your clothes off running down the aisles of the desks asking for a contestant on your "Game Show". You had coke residue on your nose and empty glasses in your office. It was two in the afternoon.

FRANK stares off in the distance trying to remember.

THEO (cont'd)

Do you even remember this?

FRANK

Can't say that I do. A lot of that time was a blur, and my age ain't what it used to be son.

THEO

But- Don't you see that as a problem? Not your age affecting your memory, but the way you acted during that time?

FRANK gets defensive.

FRANK

Look. I can't changing who I was, and I don't plan on change me anytime soon. Sure I'll stop the drugs and alcohol but I will never loose my sparkle son, alright. I'm still the life of the party, just ask any lady in a ten mile radius.

VICKY audibly gags.

THEO

'Kay. Anyone else.

ABIGAIL raises her hand.

ABIGAIL

I already said it, but
(looks at AL and
Frank)

I am here for my children. Everything I do is for them. I want to change.

THEO

Good. Good, Abigail! Who's next?

GREGORY raises his hand.

GREGORY

My parents make me come.

THEO

But, I'll ask you as well. Do you think you had a problem

GREGORY

I don't know. I felt I was doing the same as everyone. Honestly. I felt no different.

FRANK

You felt like the life of the party right?

GREGORY

I mean... ya I sort of did.

THEO

Well... whether you did or not, you have to face the repercussions because of it. You with your probation and you with your underlying health issues. Who's next?

VICKY raises her hand up high.

VICKY
For myself! And to prove to that
scumbag that I can change. But mainly
for myself.

THEO
Excellent! Liz?

LIZBETH is confused on her reason, she ponders.

LIZBETH
I don't know yet. I'm sorry.

THEO
Don't be! It does not come quick, it
takes time for us to find what we are
passionate about enough to fight for.
(looks at BIG TOMMY)
How 'bout you?

BIG TOMMY
I guess... for someone and myself. I
want to prove to my dad.
That it was a mistake.
What I did.
And to myself.
(beat)
That I have it in me to change.

THEO
Wow. That was very groundbreaking for
you, truly.

HELEN raises her hand.

THEO (cont'd)
Yes, Helen. Go right ahead.

HELEN
I am here for myself.

THEO
Wonderful Helen! What motivates you
to better yourself?

HELEN
After I went on remission, I told
myself that drinking was not going to
keep the cancer away. So I changed
everything. Abandoned everything.
(MORE)

HELEN (cont'd)

God wasn't gonna help me, no matter how many times I prayed for the poison to be gone. So when the chemo finally did it's fucking job, well... I intended to keep it that way. I've been sober ever since. Seven blissful years.

THEO applauds HELEN, the others join there after.

THEO

And we love to see it! Sobriety is one of the toughest unspoken challenges out there. And it's not easy.

(beat)

A lot like riding a horse. If at any moment it feels comfortable, you're probably doing it wrong.

THEO chuckles, but no one else laughs.

THEO (cont'd)

You get my point though, only us in this room will understand the struggles you face. Once we walk out those doors. We are on our own. How will we stay focused? How can we honor ourselves?

(beat)

A higher power-/

AL

/Aww hell!

(sighs)

HELEN

Theo, none of this bull

Everyone groans at the thought.

THEO

Now hold on a second. You know me better than to pull up preaching. But hear me out.

Helen, you mentioned how you used to pray. Do you still believe?

HELEN

Nope.

THEO

Do you mind me asking why?

HELEN

Felt like no one was on the other end. I stopped wasting my time, what little time, I had on a dead end.

THEO

What keeps you grounded then?

HELEN

How you mean?

THEO

(Directs to whole group)

When I mean higher power, I don't mean God. I mean a larger, more permanent force, only unique to us that keeps us grounded. For some, it can be God. But, it does not have to. Abigail's higher power is her children. They remind her of her goal. Her sobriety. The reason she is here every week.

(beat)

Vicky's higher power is... retribution! She is trying to seek vengeance, in a more constructive, less violent way. It reminds her.

HELEN

I guess myself. In a way, I view myself as God.

AL lets out a laugh from his seat.

HELEN (cont'd)

I'm being serious! I saw God as a way to help me through my life. From Catholic school to marriage. But then I got divorced and started drinking. I got cancer and drank some more. Drank and drank and drank until I couldn't take it no more.

(beat)

I saw my remission as a sign, not from him. I don't believe in that crap no more. But a sign none the less. I answer my own prayers. I change my fate. I am in charge of my life, for what feels like the first time.

(beat)

So in my life, I am God. All powerful motherfucker.

VICKY, THEO, and ABIGAIL cheers her on.

THEO

EXACTLY! These are all great examples of higher power! You don't have to think of one right now, but take the time this week to think of one.

(Beat)

What is pushing you, motivating you, leading you through and out of this dark and depressing hell.

(beat)

Rising you up from the bottom of the abyss to the top out of...this...Limbo!

THEO finds himself risen from this chair. He pauses frozen in air viewing the stares of the members. Shocked by this passionate statement, the members ponder higher power.

LIZBETH

My father.

All heads turn towards her.

LIZBETH (cont'd)

My father is my "higher power".

THEO

Go on.

LIZBETH shuffles in her chair.

LIZBETH

His perception of me. It's important.

(beat)

Oddly enough, this is my first time saying this out loud. But I hold his word above anything.

(beat)

He doesn't know about my drinking, and he wont...ever. Which is why I am here. I don't want to disappoint or tarnish my dad's idea of me.

(looks around)

The goal of maintaining this...image in his head is driving me. It pushed me here. It pushed me out of the car when I wanted to turn around and ignore it...

(looks towards Theo)

...my addiction.

THEO relaxes his shoulders and concentrates on LIZBETH.

THEO

Wonderful! Truly wonderful! We appreciate you sharing with us. If you're willing...

(looks towards AL)

...and with no interruptions, did you want to tell us *why* you are here. You mentioned what drove you here, literally

(chuckles)

pushed you into the building, but... what sounded the alarm to get in the car in the first place?

LIZBETH starts to fidget her hands in her chair.

LIZBETH

Well, I have been drinking for a couple of years. On and off. But mostly on. I would sneak into my mom's liquor cabinet and take swigs.

(beat)

Over time, the swigs got bigger. Turned to shots, glasses full, and as I got older, bottles. I won't sit here and say I had a terrible life which drove me to this, because I didn't. Not in the traumatic sense, but more of a stressful way.

LIZBETH shares while fidgeting with her fingers with intense concentration.

LIZBETH (cont'd)

I put a lot of pressure on myself... well I guess my parents put the pressure and I added more to it. I want myself to be good, perfect, the fucking best at anything I do. It was agonizing. One flaw and the house of cards crumbles to shit.

(beat)

When I got to college, I thought I had it all figured out. Until I didn't. Then I got in my head. I'm always in there. Yelling at me to fix my mistakes, to fix my problems. To stop feeling lost. So I drank to drown out the voice. I didn't feel lost, but I also didn't feel anything.

LIZBETH looks up at the members. Hanging on to every word she is saying.

LIZBETH (cont'd)

Only thing was that my roommates caught on to my drinking and my grades started slipping. An "intervention" was held on my behalf and the threatened tell the school.

BIG TOMMY

But that didn't do it, did it? Spook you into sobriety, I mean.

The two lock eyes.

LIZBETH

Not necessarily. More so... if it gets to my school, it will get to my father. But that's the shitty part. The school wasn't my concern, fuck it for all I care.

LIZBETH reverts back to staring at her hands.

LIZBETH (cont'd)

I don't know what I care about. Everything felt somehow guided for me. My parents dreams someone became my dreams, but I don't know what my dreams are! But I just feel...

BIG TOMMY

Lost?

LIZBETH

Yes! Lost! I have no clue what I am doing, how I got to this point, where I'm a go. I just know that drinking was a temporary fix not a solution.

ABIGAIL places her hand on her shoulder.

THEO

Thank you Lizbeth...

THEO motions to the rest of the members for the mantra

EVERYONE

We accept you and your past...

THEO

...So lets rebuild your future!

THEO starts applauding, the members follow with a slow clap.

THEO (cont'd)

Moving this train along, Lizbeth, you mentioned something that raises a question for the group that we have been inching towards this meeting...

Directs attention to all members

THEO (cont'd)

Stay with me now.

(beat)

We discussed how we are perceived, how we felt, who we wish to become and what will push us. The only thing left is those who knew us. If we are on the path of rehabilitation and following all of the steps, what is next?

(beat)

Well, the "next" is unfortunately out of our hands. This leads to my question. Can we regain our lost identity after years of addiction? Are our former selves still salvageable or are we doomed from the beginning as most people think?

(beat)

"Once an addict, always an addict". I'm sure y'all heard that once or twice, but is it true? Do you feel that this best represents you and all the work you have put in so far?

BIG TOMMY

I hope so.

THEO motions for him to continue.

BIG TOMMY (cont'd)

I hope it paid off in the end, ya know. That this, all of *this*, has been beneficial. Not for myself by for my family, at least. To prove that I was not who I was before.

(beat)

Not the guy with a flappy mouth. Not that drunk asshole in the bar. Not the son who sent his father to prison. Not the black fucking sheep of the family, but someone who...who can... not be a traitor.

HELEN

Sweetie, has it worked out? Any progress?

BIG TOMMY

Nope. Disinvited me to Thanksgiving. Brothers still pissed. Tried to visit the old man but he declines each time.

(sigh)

I'm not tripping though. I known it takes time, what I did while...it wasn't something small. I can see that, but just...I don't know.

THEO

Just what?- /

BIG TOMMY

/Hurts! It hurts 'cause it's ya own family. Which I guess is karma or some cosmic intervention type shit which hurts more.

(sighs)

But yes I hope it changes.

AL who has been surprising silent during this time looks deeply connected by the discussion. Sobering up, less aggressive, AL'S face falls with thought.

BIG TOMMY takes notice.

BIG TOMMY (cont'd)

What about you big man?

This startles AL.

AL

Huh?

BIG TOMMY

Perceived? do you care how other perceive you?

AL

No... At least I never noticed.

(beat)

I did, at one point.

THEO

When?

AL

With Carol. She- She meant the world.

THEO
Was that why? You- you know?

AL
How she saw me, I would have moved
mountains, ya know?

AL sits back in his chair. He has visibly sobered up.
A hush falls over the room.

THEO
Al?

AL
(sighs)
Ya.

THEO
What- um how did you get here last
night?

AL'S head falls into his hands

AL
I- I don't know. Couldn't tell ya.

VICKY
C'mon man, what happened?

AL
(beat)
Nah, it's not that deep. I'm good.

AL crosses his arm. The members heads turn.

THEO
Al, you were suppose to receive you
five year chip today?
(beat)
Walk me through it?

AL
I said I don't wanna talk about it!
Jesus lay off Theo!

LIZBETH
(whispers under
breath)
Selfish.

AL
Huh? Sweetie I couldn't hear ya. A
little louder.

LIZBETH
Selfish! I said selfish.

VICKY
Damn.-/

ABIGAIL
/Liz don't start with him-. /

AL
/Selfish? Selfish! You bit- you know nothing!-/

LIZBETH
/Selfish! I know that you interrupted me speaking, not once but TWICE! For what, your own sharing? No! Just to rant about how you hate me when you don't know me! You won't let me share based off... off of... I actually don't know but its immature.

(gestures to the members)

We have been giving you a chance to speak, but you don't take it.

(beat)

I know that I am new, I apologize for my outburst. For a group about acceptance, you have made it really hard for me to be accepted here. You hijack our meeting by you throwing shit against the wall, your temper tantrums, and your presence! Its annoying and selfish!-/

AL begins to get agitated.

AL
/Your the annoyance! You people are always so annoying and selfish!-/

The members murmur

FRANK
(chuckles)
/Oh shit!-/

VICKY
/You people?!-/

LIZBETH
/Excuse me?-/

THEO
 /Al! Lets not go there./

AL
 No, not a race thing. Get over
 yourselves. These young folk. These
 twenty-somethings think the world
 revolves around their bloated heads
 its revolting-/

LIZBETH
 /Again with my age!-/

AL
 /Yes! You have have no respect! None!
 Everything is a joke or a bit! You
 guys act like idiots out in public...
 AT PEOPLES JOBS! Ridiculous is what
 it is!

AL takes a breather.

THEO
 Jobs? Al...did something happen at
 work? Is that what happened?

AL
 I don't want to get into it! Its
 stupid.
 (beat)
 I was weak. I gave in. I have no
 hope. Go on, say it. Y'all are
 thinking it.
 (beat)
 I relapsed. Wasted the past five
 years over something so small. If it
 wasn't them kids it was probably
 something else.

THEO
 AL, the work you have put in to this
 program, to your sobriety is not to be
 glossed over. You showed up to every
 meeting. Every meeting. More than I
 can say for the rest of you guys.

(beat)
 Tell us? What happened yesterday,
 from the top.

AL grows hesitant. About to brush it off, he gives in.

AL
 I was on Facebook yesterday morning.

The members hang on to every word AL is sharing. AL speaks slowly, as if it pains him to open up.

AL (cont'd)
 I was just scrolling through. When I
 saw a message from my brother. He
 sent me a recent post from Carol...
 announcing her engagement...to
 Daniel.

HELEN
 Daniel? Daniel!
 (beat)
 Who's Daniel?

VICKY leans over to HELEN and whispers.

VICKY
 His best friend, the one he grew up
 with. Remember the homeroom story?

FRANK
 That dog! Slimy!

AL
 Imagine my surprise to see the guy
 who she "hated", and the guy that
 helped me move out when she divorced
 me is the one she's marrying.
 (beat)
 Here's the kicker. The caption read a
 bunch of bull like, "soulmate" "one
 true love" type shit. But it said
 together for seven years...Seven
 years!

AL starts to get angry.

AL (cont'd)
 We were married for ten years. We've
 been divorces for roughly five. A
 decade and she saw him while...while
 I was...you know.
 (beat and stares into
 the floor)
 During that time we were having
 problems. I've mentioned that. I wont
 deny it, it was all me. I mean...
 (beat)
 Now that I know why, it makes sense.

THEO
 What makes sense?

AL

Why she was so distant. I felt I couldn't hold on to her. A fucking ghost ya know. The recession hit and I couldn't accept it. We fought like crazy. Nearly every day. Eventually she won and left.

(beat)

Anyway, I saw that and it got me PISSED. I was fuming as all hell. Then I went to work/

THEO

/The park maintenance, right?

AL

/Yes, and it was fine, I guess. But these kids. These fucking kids were there. It was around one o'clock, I was nearly done with my shift, when they came. It feels so stupid even saying/

THEO

/Go on, they came at night.

AL

/At least seven-eight of them. college kids from the looks. They brought booze and were hanging on the benches. At first I left them, ya know. I was minding my P's and Q's. They were rowdy. All men. Frat guys I think. yelling at each other, making the other do shit. It was annoying.

(beat)

But they started fighting and pushing each other where they broke the bench and the bottle flung and broke on the playground. I ain't gonna take that shit, so I walked over. I said, "Hey! Go on clean it up!". They said it was my job, not theirs.

(beat)

So I walked over some more. I said, "I don't clean up after dumbass fuckers who break benches! Clean it up!". But this got them mad. I was ready to knock their head in before I walked over-/

THEO

/Were you looking for a fight?

AL

Looking?

THEO

Yes? Your shift was almost done, you could have saved it for the next person. Especially since alcohol was involved. Were you looking for a fight?

This takes AL by surprise, he gathers his words.

AL

I- I couldn't tell you. Maybe. They caught me at a time where I was- I felt...

BIG TOMMY

Weak?

Stung by the word "weak", AL agrees.

AL

Yes. God! I hate feeling this way! But yes, I felt weak and... vulnerable. I would have done anything.

THEO

You were saying, things were getting heated.

AL

Right! So, I start walking over there and they start getting closer. All the guys are standing up and start surrounding me. They saying shit like, "Old man you do it", or "I ain't cleaning shit". Basically we were all yelling back and forth. Calling me names and shit. I was saying that kids are gonna play their in the morning and they got to clean it. One guy that I should lick it up.

The members hang on to every word.

AL (cont'd)

They agreed, and started circling me. I was fighting and shit. Swinging, and everything. I was getting a few licks in on them, but one guy came from behind and grabbed me.

(MORE)

AL (cont'd)

He was huge. The rest got me, carried me over....and....held my face down in the slide with the dripping tequila. I wasn't gonna give them shit. I wasn't licking.

(beat)

They said if I didn't they would drag me in the broken glass. So I did. I started licking. And as shitty as it felt, it tasted good. I shouldn't say that but it did. Like a refreshing glass of water on a hot day.

Something you needed.

(beat)

After I drank it. I started crying. They dropped me. Left my ass there on the slide. They ran off, but they left a bottle.

(beat)

It hit me and I sat there for what felt like hours, I don't even know. Crying.

(beat)

I- I got up and... grabbed the bottle. I don't know. I don't know, but in the moment. Man, I felt nothing. And then, everything felt better. For that first sip. I forgot about Carol, I forgot my shitty job, my bitch ass friend, those kids. For that first sip...

(sighs)

...I enjoyed it. Even thought I could, you know manage it.

(beat)

Then I went in again. And again. I- I ended up at a gas station. I spent my last few dollars on snacks or something. I don't know. Somehow I found my way here and slept.

(beat)

Carol, those kids, the park, *this*, everything! It all boiled over in one evening. One evening! Its... frustrating.

THEO

How so?

AL

I mean...Trying to stay away from it. Telling myself its bad for me, basically lying. I know the feeling, the warmth of it down my throat.

(MORE)

AL (cont'd)
 How it let's me forget about
 everything. It's all too familiar.
 It's frustrating 'cause I know I feel
 better with it.

THEO leans in towards AL and whispers softly.

THEO
 But are you happy?

AL stands puzzled by this question.

AL
 Happy?

THEO
 Yes, happy?

AL crosses his arms and gets defensive.

AL
 Have you? Since you've been sober?

THEO
 Can't say I have.

AL
 There you go-/

THEO
 /But I will say I have been better
 off. I know that.
 (beat)

I can't say I am happier now, because
 I don't know if I was before. I drank
 because I wasn't happy, at least
 somewhere deep down knew that about
 me. Now, I'm more aware. More
 attentive. I am accountable to my
 action. I am still riddled with
 guilt, something I will carry for
 many years, but I can own up to my
 actions.

(beat)
 For me, and the same goes for the
 rest of you all, but I know more of
 myself now than before. I know joy,
 pain, boredom, sadness. I feel more
 than before. I experience more than
 before. So I can not say that I am
 happier, but I... feel more alive.

(beat)
 I ask again, are you happy?

AL

No. Not before, and not after.

THEO

Do you think alcohol was the reason.

AL ponders the question.

THEO (cont'd)

I open that to you all, are you happy? Or rather, were you happier before?

GREGORY

No not now, but not really before either. It was fun, but the pain the next day was too much.

ABIGAIL

I am happier now, because of my life change. If I was back where I was years ago, the life I grew for my kids would... would not exist.

FRANK shifts in his chair. His demeanor changes from overtly confident to anxious.

FRANK

Not happy. Look, I had a bunch of fun. It was great. I just don't remember most of it, or all of it. I got all that from the court hearings and other shit.

(chuckles)

Definitely not now. I gotta be honest, I fucked everything up. My connections, money, everything. I can't get loans or anything. My business is underwater. It's a whole new time. Everything is different. They see my record and kick me to the curb.

HELEN

Well I was not happy before. More of an existential dread. I was lost. Had no path, no sense of direction. I questioned everything.

(beat)

Now...now I know. I know my body. I know my worth. I know my...not to go back to that abyss. What did we call it before?

THEO
Limbo-/

HELEN
/Right, Limbo.
(beat)
But yes, I am happier now. I have a better sense.

THEO looks to VICKY.

VICKY
Oh, my turn. Um...Not happy before. I don't know. I drank because a number of reasons, but I drank to ignore my relationship problems, that idiot.
(beat)
In hindsight, a toxic relationship led to my toxic relationship with alcohol. So, my fault I guess.
(beat)
Somewhat happier now. Happy that I am rid of him, but not happy of what I got to deal with. Like, all the stuff I did is biting me in the ass.

BIG TOMMY
Not happy. Either. Same as you said, I wasn't happy before. My father was up my ass at the business. He didn't believe in me, didn't trust me, and had me doing side jobs that didn't mean shit.
(beat)
But...I know it was deeper than that. He just...I don't know, like he was disappointed or something. I wasn't as tough as he was or cutthroat as he was. But he was harder on me than my brothers. They got to run the business, they got to have more responsibilities, they got it all. I wanted to be the one by his side. Its a lot of "I want", but I deserved it. I was there for him when my brother weren't and they come and swoop in and take my place.
(beat)
I'm sorry, I got off track. But ya, I wasn't happy before. After I... did what I did-/

THEO
/Tommy, we talked about this.

BIG TOMMY sighs and repositions in his seat.

BIG TOMMY

Right. After... I got my father arrested by accidentally telling our..."competitors" in the business. I mean, how was I suppose to know?

BIG TOMMY raises his voice and gets angrier with each word.

BIG TOMMY (cont'd)

How was I suppose to know they would go to "war" and the cops would be on them? How was I suppose to know that it was a sting? How was I suppose to know when my father never told me shit or trusted me with anything!

(sighs)

I'm sorry, I raised by voice. I didn't mean to get that heated. I- I am just frustrated that- that in the end its my fault. I- I blame him, but him getting arrested is all me. My drinking is my fault, my loose lips are my fault, me starting something was my fault. Its all my fault.

(beat)

I was not happy before, it led me to drinking, and I am not happy now because of my drinking. My family doesn't talk to me, not even my mother. I am pretty sure people are following me. I was the only one who didn't get jail time. Like my brothers they got a couple of years but my father... my father is in there for life. And- I just haven't felt a day of peace.

(beat)

I hope that one day I will be happier in my sobriety, but now I am consumed by guilt.

THEO

Thank you for sharing Big Tommy, to all of you. Its going to take time for us to be *happy* in our sobriety. Not an overnight thing, something y'all heard me say.

THEO directs his attention to AL.

THEO (cont'd)
 I wanna ask you again Al, are you
 happy?

AL takes a second to think of his answer. Then whispers softly.

AL
 No. I am not happy.
 (beat)
 I live on pins and needles watching
 out for everything. But- I know. I
 know that I created the hell I am
 living in. I'm not dumb! But I just-
 I don't like this feeling. The one
 I've had ya know, sober. I...feel...
 everything. I feel everything. highs
 and lows, but the lows are what get
 me. The lows are the hardest.
 (beat)
 My lowest was yesterday. I was weak.
 Alone. Lonely. I don't wanna put it
 on Carol, but I just felt alone since
 she left.

THEO
 But your not alone. Alfred, you have
 all of us. Remember that. You are not
 lonely, because you are *never* alone.

THEO directs his attention to the whole group.

THEO (cont'd)
 Say it with me..."Not alone, never
 lonely".

The rest of the members join in on the new mantra,
 reluctantly.

EVERYONE
"Not alone, never lonely"

THEO
 Perfect! But yes, you all are not
 alone in this because of each and
 everyone of you. Sharing each and
 every week about experiences or
 circumstances that *only* we would
 understand is what makes this
 special. This journey out of limbo.
 Most times, people can't travel up
 from this hell we created, but we are
 the ones making that journey.

(MORE)

THEO (cont'd)
I appreciate you all taking this
journey with me.

(beat)

it's accepting and knowing for
yourselves that carry's you up. I
can't force it upon you, it up to
know to know and apply that. That is
what my job here is. To help you
understand and make that transition.
I am not here to lecture you.

Defiantly not here to judge you. But
to show you a familiar face in the
situation. That you are not alone in
this.

THEO sighs and grins.

THEO (cont'd)
Alrighty, I have lectured enough.

(looks at watch)

We are just about done with our
meeting today. I wanted to open this
open to any comments, last minutes
notes, or anyone who wanted to get
something off their chest before we
wrap.

THEO's watch reads 9:55 AM. The members sit in their
thoughts.

AL

I'm sorry.

The members head turn in shock towards AL.

AL (cont'd)
I was out of line. I let my feelings
out on you all.

(turns to Lizbeth)

Especially you. Its your first day
and all. What I said was terrible. I
apologize. That's no way to start
over.

LIZBETH

Thank you.

THEO

Alright, well that concludes our
meeting this week. Quite eventful,
deep stuff guys. Donut stop believing
in me-/

FRANK
 (stands up from chair)
 /That's my cue to leave!

THEO
Donut hate me because I bring
 positive vibes.
 (chuckles)
 Fine, but please take the donuts. If
 you can please fold up for your chair
 its very helpful. I will see you next
 week.

The members stand up from their chairs. Theo leaves to grab a broom and dust pan from the storage room.

GREGORY makes his way to the donut table. About to reach for a donut, he pauses. He turns to the group and looks back at the donuts.

GREGORY
 Alright, I'm a head out. Later.

GREGORY makes his way to the doors. Just through the opening of the door, GREGORY'S mother is parked out front to pick him up.

BIG TOMMY goes outside for a cigarette.

VICKY and HELEN help fold up the chairs.

FRANK places a call in the corner of the community center.

FRANK
 "Hey James... any word on the
 approvals?...Yes! Alright, we can
 work with that! Great new, um...
 then... I'll head to the bank for a
 loan, or at least work something
 out...yes a loan, geez James you
 think so little of me. That's not me,
 anymore at least...
 (grabs coat and heads
 towards door, he
 waves past the rest
 of members)
 Send out the newsletter on job
 posting to the boards...All the
 boards James! We need applicants."

FRANK brushes past ABIGAIL and exits the community center.

ABIGAIL checks her phone.

ABIGAIL

I'll see you all next week!

(faces lizbeth)

Oh sweetie, I'm sorry your first day was a wreck. I'm sorry for Al, hes not usually like that. I mean...hes always angry, but not like that.

LIZBETH

It's alright. You've been nice about this whole thing.

ABIGAIL reaches in for a hug from LIZBETH.

ABIGAIL

I hope to see you next week. Don't let him scare you off. I gotta run, got make the house clean before the kids get home. Have a good weekend darling.

ABIGAIL leaves. LIZBETH is close to leaving when AL taps her shoulder.

AL

Liz, got a sec?

LIZBETH

(nods head)

AL

Look. I can't leave without speaking to you. I am deeply sorry for today. Its unlike me. I promise. Its your first day, a day of many I hope, and I don't want to ruin that for you.

(beat)

You keep coming, I'll find a new group. You deserve to be here, everyone does.

(beat)

I don't know if any of this would matter in the end, or if I am making this worse, but I'm sorry.

LIZBETH

It matters. Don't find a new group. I can't kick you out any more than you pushing me out.

(turns towards door,
then pauses)

Earlier, when you were outside. What did he whisper to you?

AL
That? He said, "Would you want Carol
to see you like this?"
(beat)
And that got my ass in the doors.

LIZBETH nods and turns back towards the door.

LIZBETH
(beat)
I'll see you next week.

LIZBETH exits the doors.

AL stands at the doorway puzzled. He makes his way to the coffee table for another cup.

VICKY and HELEN are finish putting the chairs away when AL reaches the table.

VICKY
I'll see you next week Al?

AL
Ya, I'll see you next week.

VICKY
(puts headphones on)
OK then, take care. Please.

VICKY plays her music and leaves the building.

AL
Hey, Helen.

HELEN
Yes.

AL
Can I ask you a question?

HELEN
I don't see why not.

AL
When you said you were your higher power, how did you know? Or how did you find yours I mean?

HELEN

(beat)

Well...I don't wanna give you a dumb answer, but I will. I just knew. As simple as that.

AL

Bull!

HELEN

No, seriously. There's no magic behind it. Defiantly not any divine intervention or spiritual message. More as it felt right. Listen to you, the best I can tell you. See you next week.

HELEN pats AL on the shoulder before leaving the building.

AL stands in the empty community center when THEO returns.

AL

You need a hand?

THEO

(elated)

Well I could learn a thing or two from a pro. Here take this.

THEO passes AL a rag and spray. THEO begins sweeping up the floor while AL wipes down the table.

THEO (cont'd)

I appreciate you coming today.

AL

It's not like I had a choice. I don't even know if I made that choice.

THEO

I'd like to believe some part of you did. Deep down.

(beat)

You made it here at some time last night. Stood the night. And somewhat woke up on time. Sure you were a little drunk and hungover, but you remembered. To me, that means something.

AL pauses his wiping.

THEO (cont'd)

It means you value this. That's why I pushed you today. I know you cherish this, a lot more than most of them. Especially Frank. You never missed a meeting. Especially today and all. You want this. Now you get to start fresh. A clean slate.

AL

A clean slate huh?

THEO

Yep.

AL

Theo.

THEO

Yes.

AL

I think I know what my higher power is?

THEO turns towards AL eager to hear.

AL (cont'd)

This. This group. You. All these other losers.

THEO

(smiles)

I glad to here it.

(reaches his hand towards AL)

I wanted to introduce myself, I'm the group leader here. My name is Theo.

AL reaches his hand forward and shakes his hand.

AL

Hello, my name is Alfred. I am an alcoholic.

THEO

Welcome to day 0. We accept your past/

AL reluctantly joins in.

AL

/so lets rebuild my future.

AL and THEO proceed to clean up the community center. AL packages up the stale donuts and walks out with them.

THEO follows closely behind with a bag of trash. He turns off the lights and closes the community center doors.

THE END.