

.PUSHTHROUGH

by  
Glen Rockwood

Adapted from the one-act play

by  
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FADE IN:

EXT. A MAIN ROAD - DAY

Rain. Traffic.

TONY PIKE (30) trudges along the side of the road, struggling with a knapsack on his back and a well-stuffed duffle bag. A large puddle of water lies ahead of him.

A road sign begins to grow out of the puddle, its image faint at first. Words appear on the sign: "Community of Pushthrough." Tony's boots appear at the edge of the puddle.

Tony judges the width of the puddle, and although he faces the road sign, he doesn't appear to notice it. He takes a few steps back, then breaks into a quick run. He jumps over the puddle--passes through the sign--and lands safely on the other side.

He continues down the road. The sign melts, disappearing back into the rain puddle.

EXT. BUS STATION - LATER

ROBERT SPARKS (30), dressed in expensive casual clothing, stands under the entrance canopy, smoking a cigarette. He watches as Tony approaches the station and walks through the main entrance.

INT. BUS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

PEOPLE read, talk to each other, and watch the television monitor while they wait for their bus.

Tony, wet and disheveled, stands at the ticket counter, talking to an attendant, NICHOLAS REID (38), who is busy with a computer.

Robert enters the station and watches the action.

TONY

What do you mean the bus is late?  
What happened? When's it going to  
get here? When do we arrive in St.  
John's?

NICHOLAS

All the information is on the  
monitor, sir.

Nicholas points to a monitor. Tony stares at it for a second, blinks, then looks back at Nicholas.

TONY  
I'm after breaking my glasses.  
Can't you tell me?

Nicholas studies Tony for a moment, then smiles to himself.

TONY  
What are you grinnin' about? Are  
you going to tell me or not? You're  
just standing there doing nothing.

NICHOLAS  
Excuse me, sir.

TONY  
Don't call me "sir." You got to be  
ten years older than me. At least.

NICHOLAS  
You don't say...sir.

TONY  
Look, I don't know your name, but I  
seen you before.

NICHOLAS  
My name's on my tag.

Tony glances at Nicholas's tag, blinks, then fixes his gaze  
back on Nicholas.

NICHOLAS  
Oh, right. You broke your glasses.

TONY  
Listen, bud, I'm after fixin' your  
old man's car more than once--and  
at a good price, too.

NICHOLAS  
And what's your point, sir?

Robert calls out before Tony has a chance to reply.

ROBERT  
Hey, dude!

Everyone in the station looks to Robert.

NICHOLAS  
(amused)  
"Dude"?

Everyone watches as Robert walks directly to the counter. He glances at Nicholas's name tag.

ROBERT  
Excuse me, Mr. Reid, you're obligated to answer this guy's questions. Is Larry Higdon here? I had drinks at The Inn with him last night. He's your superior, isn't he?

Robert points to a closed door behind the attendant.

ROBERT  
Is he in the back room there?

Robert begins making his way behind the counter.

NICHOLAS  
You're not allowed back here, sir!

ROBERT  
(calling out)  
Larry, you in there? We got a problem going on--

NICHOLAS  
OK, OK. God, help me.  
(to Tony)  
Look, the rain is slowing the bus down, and one of the passengers--

ROBERT

(to Tony)

One of the passengers got sick. The bus should be here in an hour, and we should arrive in St. John's by five. I'm headed into the city myself.  
(to Nicholas) The girl who served me earlier was much better than you.

NICHOLAS

If you knew this already, then why are you giving me grief?

ROBERT

Because I hate a small-town snot with a big-city attitude.

Robert winks at Tony.

NICHOLAS

Look, the monitors are there for a reason.  
(points to Tony)  
It's not my fault the "dude" here can't read. If he could, he might still be fixing my "old man's" car.

Nicholas glares at Tony. Embarrassed, Tony looks away, only to see that everyone in the station is looking at him.

INT. BUS STATION/MEN'S WASHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The door swings open. Tony marches in the room and throws his luggage on the floor. Robert follows, taking his time as he guides his luggage cart toward the sink. He places his overnight bag on the counter.

TONY

That smarmy little bastard! I'd like to smack his head in.

Tony moves to the automatic hand dryer and positions his head under the nozzle.

TONY

I got half a mind to grab the  
friggin' creep by his bald head  
and shove it right up his--

He punches the "start" button on the dryer. The buzz of the dryer drowns out his words as he tries to dry his hair. Robert smiles to himself as he takes a towel out of his overnight bag. The dryer stops.

TONY

--carburetor. He won't be so smart  
when he finds out he got no air in  
his tires! And no spark in his  
plugs!

ROBERT

Don't let him ruin your day, man.

Robert throws the towel to Tony. Tony catches it and begins drying himself off.

TONY

My day was ruined before it began.  
I wouldn't mind, but his folks make  
a fortune running their hotel and  
cafe. He got no worries.  
The nerd's got nothing else to do  
but pick his nose and gawk at  
people.

ROBERT

So?

TONY

Don't mind me, b'y. I'm just  
lettin' off steam.

ROBERT

I don't know if this is any  
consolation to you, but I had  
reading problems most of my life.  
And I come from a well-off family.

Tony stares at Robert, taking in the man's well-groomed look and nonchalant attitude.

TONY

Actually, it does make me feel better. How well off are ya?

ROBERT

My Dad owns and operates The Trinity General Store. The place has been doing well since day one. The tourists love it.

TONY

That's for sure. How long has he had the place? Thirty-five, forty years?

Tony passes him the towel. Robert folds it and places it back in his overnight bag.

ROBERT

About that...Dude, I'm sure I remember you. When you were a kid, didn't you pump gas at Jim's Garage?

TONY

Yes, b'y, that I did.

EXT. JIM'S GARAGE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

YOUNG TONY (10) stands at a distance from the garage. The garage doors are open, and Tony creeps closer to the building, trying to see inside, where JIM, the owner (38), is working on a vintage car from the fifties.

Tony begins to move closer.

TONY (V.O.)

I couldn't handle school. It did nothing for me, except leave me with the feeling that I was an idiot. I was always pippin' off and going down to the garage to look at the cars.

Jim looks up to see Tony standing in the doorway of the garage.

JIM

Don't you ever go to school?

Tony shrugs.

TONY

That your car?

JIM

I should be so lucky. Beauty, 'ent she? Belongs to Pete Barnes, actually. He brings it in every summer for a tune-up. Take a look.

Tony moves to the car and looks under the hood. Jim begins to point out various car parts.

TONY (V.O.)

That was the start of it for me. I was addicted to cars. Jim showed me all the parts: the transmission, the motor, spark plugs, how to tighten nuts and bolts. I caught on right easy. It was the first time I remember feeling anything like...pride...in myself.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The STUDENTS listen to the TEACHER as she gives them instructions. Tony sits at the back of the class, staring out the window.

A sports car approaches. The driver of the car revs up the motor, and Tony watches as the car speeds past the school and down the road.

TEACHER

I want you to open your textbooks to Chapter Six and read the first page. Then I want you to explain to me what you read. Give me a verbal summary in your own words.

Bored and irritated, Tony opens his textbook and flips through the pages.

TONY

Mom, Dad, the teachers...they thought I was lazy, or dumb, or something. It wasn't that...It was just when I tried to read, the words on the page looked like a...snowstorm. I couldn't make out any of it.

Tony looks at the students around him as they read and make notes. He looks down at his own textbook. The words blur and begin to move around.

TONY (V.O.)

They had my eyes tested and told me I had 20/20 vision, but, buddy, the words on a page...they'd always look like they were doing a dance. Apparently, I got some kind of condition.

INT. JIM'S GARAGE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Jim and Tony, their heads under the hood of the car, do some final tweaking on the motor, then step back from the car. Jim wipes his hands on a dirty towel and nods his head. Tony, his face smeared with grease, stands on tip-toe and reaches for the hood of the car.

TONY

I'll tell ya one thing: there wasn't any snowstorm under the hood of that fifty-seven Chevy.

Tony slams the hood shut. He smiles at Jim.

EXT. JIM'S GARAGE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A car pulls up to the gas pumps. Jim shows Tony how to fill the car's gas tank, pointing to the rolling numbers on the pump's meter.

TONY (V.O.)

Jim taught me how to work the gas pumps. He even taught me numbers so I could fill the car with the right amount. Funny how, like, when Jim showed me something, I caught on right away. But in school, I felt like a dope.

ROBERT (11) sits in the back seat of the car. He looks out the rear window, watching as Tony pulls the nozzle out of the gas tank and replaces the cap. Tony goes to the driver's side of the car. Robert's father, TOM SPARKS, rolls down his window and passes a ten dollar bill, plus a looney coin, to Tony.

TOM  
Keep the change.

ROBERT (V.O.)  
I thought you were really cool,  
man.

Robert gives Tony a thumbs up as the car drives off.

TONY (V.O.)  
Yeah, well, right now I feel about  
as cool as a hemorrhoid. You were  
lucky, b'y. I wish my folks had  
been well off. They were both born  
in Pushthrough. But, when they were  
young, the government pushed their  
families out of their homes and  
made them resettle here in the  
Trinity area.

INT. TONY'S HOUSE/LIVING ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Tony's father, LARRY (40), dressed in his work clothes and boots, lies sleeping on the couch.

TONY (V.O.)  
All Dad ever knew was fishing, and  
odd jobs, and some part-time work  
at the fish plant.

Sound of a screen door slamming shut. Young Tony rushes in the room, stopping abruptly when he sees his father.

Tony's mother, ALICE, enters the room, her finger to her lips.

ALICE  
Shh.

She reaches for Tony's arm and leads him into the kitchen.

INT. TONY'S HOUSE/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS (FLASHBACK)

A pot is boiling over, and Alice runs to take it off the burner. As she talks, she puts potatoes in the pot and sets about preparing dinner.

ALICE

Tony, your father's not feeling well. He got to take it easy from now on. No more hard labour. And he can't fish anymore. Not that there's much fish to be fishin'. It's all wearin' him down, and he's feeling sad about it. Now, he's after hearin' about you skipping school and going down to Jim's Garage.

Tony shrugs. He opens a half-empty fridge and reaches for an open tin of pop, shaking it to determine how much is left. He moves to the table.

ALICE

He don't like that, honey. He don't want you makin' the same mistakes he did. You got to promise me you'll stop skipping school.

Tony slides his hands in his pockets, then places a small pile of loose change and bills on the table.

TONY (V.O.)

I came home with about twelve dollars that day. Jim gave me some money for helping out, and I made a few bucks in tips. But, I'll tell ya, in our house that twelve bucks was like twelve hundred.

Alice stares at the money, then looks to Tony, who smiles at her from ear to ear. She sighs to herself as she begins counting the money. Tony takes a drink of pop.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS STATION/MEN'S WASHROOM - DAY (PRESENT)

Robert sits on the counter, watching as Tony combs his wet hair.

TONY

Jim, some of my teachers...they knew Dad had health problems and we didn't have much money. I think that's why they stopped pressuring me to be at school. They knew we needed the cash. Year after year, the teachers pushed me through the school system--until I just dropped out altogether.

ROBERT

They all told me I was spoiled and lazy. They were right, in a way. I used to hear the older students complain about school all the time.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCIPAL GREENE'S OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Young Robert, Tom and Robert's mother, MAISIE, sit listening to PRINCIPAL GREENE (40).

PRINCIPAL GREENE

I suspect Robert's been influenced by some of the older students--the ones who drop out of school in favor of work. Robert sees them driving cars, wearing new clothes, and he thinks they're cool. But, eventually, the drop-outs regret leaving school. Now, Robert here is well behind the other students. But he's smart. He can make up for lost time, if he puts his mind to it. But he'll have to work hard.

All heads turn to Robert.

MASIE

You hear that, Robert?

Robert nods his head "yes," an earnest expression on his face.

TOM  
(to Greene)  
Keep an eye on him. He'll sit there  
all innocent like, and say "yes,"  
but then he'll go off and do  
whatever the hell he wants.

ROBERT (V.O.)  
Which is exactly what I did.

CUT TO:

INT. PRINCIPAL GREENE'S OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

ROBERT, now seventeen, sits, angel-faced and quiet, as an angry Principal Greene,  
glares at him.

PRINCIPAL GREENE  
You've got your gall coming back  
here.

ROBERT  
But I need a second chance, sir.

PRINCIPAL GREENE  
Don't you mean a thirtieth chance?

ROBERT  
My father says he'll disown me if I  
don't go back to school.

PRINCIPAL GREENE  
And I don't blame him one bit.  
We've all spent the last six years  
trying to get you to see the light,  
but you live in your own little  
dream world. I worked hard for my  
education. And I firmly believe  
everyone has the right to a free  
education, but you...college,  
university...right at your  
fingertips...and you throw it away.  
This is so typical. Too many  
students don't realize what they  
have until it's too late.

ROBERT

Yes, I know. But I'm trying to get myself together--

PRINCIPAL GREENE

It's too late for you here. You're over sixteen.

I'm not under any obligation to take you back. Try adult education. Considering your track record here, you might get your high school equivalent by the time you're forty.

Principal Greene opens the office door before Robert has a chance to respond.

PRINCIPAL GREENE

Good day and good luck.

Robert nods a "good-bye" and walks to the door.

PRINCIPAL

I will say, Robert, that of all my recalcitrant students, you are the most polite--if not the most shifty.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS STATION/MEN'S WASHROOM - DAY (PRESENT)

Robert places his overnight bag on the luggage cart and heads for the door.

ROBERT

I thought that comment was a bit unfair, don't you think?

Tony's face clouds over, and he looks away, reaching for his knapsack.

ROBERT

"Recalcitrant." It means having no regard for authority. Anyway, I figured, "Shag it all. I don't need anyone. I'll take care of myself." By the end of that week, I was on a plane to Toronto.

TONY

If you flunked out of school, how come you talk so good?

Tony slips his knapsack on his back, grabs his duffle bag, and opens the washroom door with his free hand.

ROBERT

You want the long story or the short one?

TONY

Short.

ROBERT

Long it is.

Robert pushes the cart out of the washroom. Tony follows.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WAREHOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Robert (20) pushes a cart loaded with boxes of various sizes.

ROBERT (V.O.)

I got a job right away installing sprinkler systems. I liked it. The company was all right. Worked there almost ten years.

He checks the number on each box, then stacks the boxes in their appropriate section.

ROBERT (V.O.)

Sometimes I worked in the company warehouse. I couldn't read all the labels. Like, if the word had more than three or four syllables, I was screwed. But, like you, I didn't have trouble with numbers, and all the parts we ordered were numbered. Not that it mattered too much. I knew where everything went after my first week, anyway.

EXT. THE WAREHOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Robert shuts the back door of a company truck. He moves to the driver's side, opens the door, then reaches in his back pocket and takes out several sheets of instructions.

ROBERT (V.O.)

If I knew what the job was, I'd know what parts were needed. A lot of times there was a blueprint or a diagram. Easy enough to follow.

He begins to flip through the sheets; there are no diagrams, only written instructions.

ROBERT (V.O.)

But if I didn't have any pictures or diagrams to help me, I'd go ballistic. Felt like I was trying to read Japanese or something.

Frustrated, he looks to the warehouse, then back to the instructions. He slams the truck door shut, kicks a wheel, and starts to crumple up the pages.

The warehouse door opens and a WORKER walks out. In the blink of an eye, Robert pulls himself together and waves to the worker.

ROBERT (V.O.)

Dude. What's up?

The worker waves as he moves toward his truck. Robert tries to smooth out the instruction sheets.

ROBERT (V.O.)

I refused to ask anyone to read the sheets for me. I'd just struggle through the job myself. It'd take forever to get the work done, but I'd do it.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS STATION - DAY (PRESENT)

Tony and Robert move to a small concession stand, passing the ticket counter on the way.

ROBERT

I was too proud to ask for help. It'd make me feel like a total moron. I mean, it is embarrassing, isn't it?

Tony nods, then steals a look at Nicholas, who is serving a CUSTOMER.

ROBERT

But it didn't seem to matter if I lagged behind the other guys a little. I still got my share of nudges up the ladder, a few extra bucks. And I traveled a lot, dude: Alabama, Niagara Falls, Pennsylvania, all over Ontario.

TONY

So how come you're not still doing it?

ROBERT

Ah, the mistake that changed my life--for the worst. See, we were doing a job for an office building.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Robert, standing on a scaffold with a narrow beam, moves with caution as he reaches for a panel on the front of the building.

ROBERT (V.O.)

It was a complicated job. I had to remove this panel from the front of the building. I was walking along a three-inch beam to get at it. Never made it. I fell, dude. Eleven and a half feet.

Robert slips and falls off the beam. He lands on his feet.

ROBERT (V.O.)

At first--for, like, a split second --I thought I was lucky because I landed on my feet.

Robert looks down at his feet, amazed by his landing.

ROBERT (V.O.)

But then the pain set in. It shot straight up my spine and wouldn't stop. I thought the top of my head was going to blow off.

Robert screams in pain.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS STATION - DAY (PRESENT)

Robert reaches for a take-out coffee cup.

ROBERT

Did therapy for a year and a half.  
Been on painkillers ever since.  
Haven't been able to work, either.  
You want a coffee? My treat.

Tony nods his head "yes." Robert pours two coffees.

TONY

But you look right healthy--like you stepped out of a magazine or something. I looks like I stepped out of the Farmer's Almanac.

ROBERT

Yeah, well, I was a mess for a long time. And I was lonely, too. You like tuna?

Tony nods again. Robert places the coffees and sandwiches on a tray and moves to the CASHIER.

ROBERT

My girlfriend left me. She hated the sudden change in our lifestyle. I mean, I was out of commission for a long while, if you get my drift. It's taken me five years of hard work to get to this point. My doctor told I'd have some serious arthritis when I got older.

TONY

Wow, buddy...that's the worst.

ROBERT

Easy for you to say. Anyway, I'm on a strict exercise and diet regime. Some days it's not too bad. I'm like, you know, feeling kind of lucid. Other times, no matter how I stand, sit, or lie down, I can't get comfortable.

TONY

You went back to school, didn't you? That's why you talk so good.

ROBERT

You're sharp, dude. Yes, I did, in fact, get my high school certification.

INT. ROBERT'S BEDROOM - EVENING (FLASHBACK)

Moving with care, Robert approaches his desk and eases himself into a chair which he has padded with extra cushions.

He reaches for a textbook, but a flash of pain causes him to pull back. He takes a deep breath and reaches for the book again. Not so much pain this time. He opens the book, places it on a bookstand, and begins to read, doing his best to hold his back straight.

ROBERT (V.O.)

I figured I had to do something useful or I'd crack up. I was used to being active, right? Getting the job done. I was never that into watching TV, like some couch potato. I had to put my head somewhere. Principal Greene's voice used to echo in my head. He was right. I didn't know what I had...till it was gone. Anyway, I found studying helped somehow. I'd get lost in the work, and the pain wouldn't be so bad.

EXT. BUS STATION - DAY

Robert and Tony sit at a table, eating their sandwiches and drinking their coffee.

ROBERT

And, well...let's face it, an illiterate knock-about like me, with a serious back problem, ain't gonna get no girlfriend.

TONY

No, b'y...I s'pose not.

Lost in thought, Tony glances away, only to find himself looking directly into the eyes of Nicholas. Tony looks away, embarrassed. Nicholas holds his gaze for a moment or two longer, then looks back to the computer monitor.

ROBERT

Katherine Penny.

Surprised, Tony looks back at Robert. Robert gives Tony a devilish smile.

TONY

You know her?

ROBERT

No. Not really. I know everyone called her "Kit." You went out with her, right?

TONY

Yeah, off and on for about eight, nine years.

ROBERT

I remember you guys coming in the store. I had a bit of a crush on Kit. She was sweet looking, dude.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TRINITY GENERAL STORE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Tony and KIT PENNY, both about sixteen, approach the check-out. Tony places a heap of chips, soft drinks, and other snacks on the counter.

Robert's father, Tom, rings in the merchandise. Some distance away, Robert stands on a ladder, watching the checkout as he stacks a top shelf with potato chips.

Kit picks up a large bag of chips.

KIT

Tony, I said "salt and vinegar" not "sour cream and vomit." How come you're always getting them mixed up?

Kit takes the bag and walks toward Robert and the chip display.

Robert stretches his arm out, snatches the bag of chips from Kit's hand, then places the bag in its appropriate section. He then grabs a large bag of salt-and-vinegar chips and hands it to her.

Kit stares at the bag, then looks to Robert, her face expressionless. She ignores Robert, takes a bag of chips from the shelf, then makes her way back to the counter

ROBERT

You'll get fat eating them.

KIT  
I'd rather have a fat stomach than  
a fat head.

Kit reaches the counter and hands Tom the chips. Tony spots a small jewellery display and picks out a pair of earrings.

TONY  
You like them?

KIT  
Yeah, I do, actually.

TONY  
Check 'em out.

He passes the earrings to Kit, and she puts them on.

TONY  
(to Robert's father)  
Punch them in, too, buddy.

TOM  
That'll be twenty-two fifty.

Kit kisses Tony on the cheek. Tom smiles as he rings in the merchandise. Tony flips open his wallet and passes money to Tom.

TONY (V.O.)  
I can't believe it. You hit on my  
girlfriend and I didn't even know  
it.

ROBERT (V.O.)  
Whatever. It wasn't hard to tell  
she really dug you.

Tony pockets his change, and Kit takes the shopping bag from Tom. Robert watches as Tony and Kit walk out of the store.

TONY (V.O.)  
It's amazing we were together all  
that time. We got along really well  
together. But I knew she'd leave me  
someday. Deep down, I knew.

INT. KIT'S BEDROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Tony sits on the bed, watching Kit as she packs a large suitcase. They are both in their late-twenties.

TONY

You're just moving to St. John's with this guy 'cause he comes from a rich family.

KIT

They're not rich, Tony.

TONY

Well, they're not poor, either.

KIT

What have you got against the rich, Tony?  
Whatever Brad's family have, they worked hard for. Brad's a good person. He's smart, relaxed. We'll have a good future together.

TONY

You didn't tell me you wanted a future.

KIT

Gentle Jesus, Tony, you can barely read.

TONY

But I've been working all these years. I'm making money. Mechanics make good money.

KIT

But you're not a true-blue mechanic. Jim can only get you to do so much.

TONY

I bet Brad can't fix a car.

KIT

He can fix a toilet. That's good enough for me. He's alert to life, Tony. In ways that you're not. He's up on current events. He's thinking about studying journalism. He's got some "go" to him.

Kit removes clothes from a drawer and places them in her suitcase.

KIT

I'm tired of trying to help you...encourage you. It's like my words don't mean anything. You just pretend like there's nothing wrong. Like it's OK if you can't read your own bills.

Tony makes an attempt to say something, but stops. He walks to the door.

KIT

You don't seem to want to better yourself. I love Trinity, too, Tone, but I don't want to live my whole life here. Not like you do.

Tony reaches in his pocket for his keys.

TONY

Call me when you're finished. I'll drive you to the station.

Tony walks out of the room. Kit sighs and sits on the edge of the bed.

Sound of an ambulance siren.

CUT TO:

EXT. TONY'S HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

The siren continues. An ambulance sits in front of the house. Paramedics carry Larry on a stretcher and place him in the back of the ambulance. Alice, older, her hair grey, rushes out of the house, pulling a sweater on. Tony's uncle, MURRAY (42) follows her.

TONY (V.O.)

While I was bringing Kit down to the station, Dad had a heart attack. My mom and my Uncle Murray were there at the time.

Distressed, Alice begins to climb in the back of the ambulance.

MURRAY

I'll take my car and meet you at the hospital. Don't worry about Tony. I'll leave him a note. He can meet us at the hospital.

ALICE

What?...Oh. Forget that, Murray. A note is a waste of time. He don't read that well. We'll have to call from the hospital.

She turns to her husband and takes his hand. An attendant closes the back doors of the ambulance. Murray shakes his head, bewildered.

MURRAY

He can't read?

Siren blaring, the ambulance moves down the street. Murray runs to his car as he fishes his keys out of his pocket.

CUT TO:

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Larry lies in a casket. Tony looks down at his father.

The image of Larry begins to blur, slowly changing to reveal Alice lying in the casket.

TONY (V.O.)

Mom died a year later.

Tony stares at Alice for a long time, then sighs suddenly. Tired and sad, he kneels by the coffin.

MURRAY (O.S.)

Tony...You OK?

Tony turns to see Murray standing in the room.

MURRAY

We should talk. There's some things  
you need to know.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A waitress places two coffees on the table.

MURRAY

Are you sure you don't want  
anything to eat? You should have  
something.

Tony shakes his head "no."

MURRAY

Tony, your dad had to take out a  
second mortgage on the house.  
Unless you can pay it, the bank's  
going to take it.

TONY

But I've been giving Mom money ever  
since I was thirteen. That was half  
the reason I left school. To help  
pay bills.

MURRAY

Alice never told me any of this. I  
had no idea. I would have tried to  
help.

TONY

I don't want to leave the house,  
Murray. I spent my whole life  
there.

MURRAY

There's nothing we can do. You'll have to be out soon. I guess you could stay with your Aunt Joan...sleep on her couch. Or you could stay with me in St. John's. You need your upgrading, Tone. You need to be tested...see what level you're at. I can arrange all that for you.

TONY

School never worked for me. I couldn't cut it.

MURRAY

But you were a kid then. You're all grown up now. Adult education is a good environment. There's lots of people just like you who--

TONY

Forget it. I got no intention of moving. I got my job at Jim's. I'm happy there. I'll get my own place.

MURRAY

But if you went back to school, you'd have a more promising future. I don't mind helping you out. I wish I could ask you to move in with me, but we just don't have the space. I'd be more than happy to help you find somewhere to live, though. You might have to take a rooming house at first, but--

TONY

Forget it, Mur. I'm not living in no rooming house.

INT. JIM'S GARAGE/OFFICE - DAY (FLASHBACK)

Jim opens a filing cabinet as he talk with Tony.

JIM

Tony, I feels right bad about your folks. They were some good people. But I got to let you go. I hates to do it, but I got no choice.

TONY

But I been working here my whole life practically. I been here longer than any of the other guys.

JIM

I know, I know. It's just I get guys coming in here all the time lookin' for work. A lot of 'em not only got experience, but got computer skills, too.

Jim points to a computer on his desk.

JIM

You haven't shown any interest in that.

Tony glares at the computer as Jim takes a manila envelope from the cabinet.

JIM

This is your severance pay and your record of employment, so you can file for your EI. I'm sorry, Tony, but it seems like the world is moving faster by the minute. I got to keep up with the times or I'll lose business.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BUS STATION - DAY (PRESENT)

Robert takes a gulp of coffee.

ROBERT

Dude...that's rough. Your parents...your job...one thing after another...

TONY

Yeah, it's rough all right. Mom and Dad got pushed out of Pushthrough, I was pushed through school...got pushed out of my job, and now my folks are six feet under, pushin' up daisies.

ROBERT

Dude, now there's a metaphor.

TONY

Yeah, there it is...

Tony doesn't understand Robert's comment. He crumples his take-out cup and pitches in into a nearby litter bin.

ROBERT

Well, I've been pushed around myself...I came home with the plan to hang here in Trinity for a few years. Try to get better, spend quality time with my folks, go back to my roots kind of thing.

CUT TO:

INT. TOM AND MASIE'S KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Tom and Robert sit at the table. Masie pours up rum and cokes and hands them each a drink.

MASIE

It's not that we don't love you,  
Robbie, my darling.

TOM

It's just that we don't like you.

MASIE

Tom!

Masie takes a gulp from her drink.

TOM

You're a pain in the neck to have around.

MASIE

He doesn't mean it like that, my honey.

TOM

Yes, yes, I do.

MASIE

Robert, when you were young, you...you never listened to anyone. You just went ahead and did what you wanted.

TOM

But at least you were quiet about it.

MASIE

Well, this is the thing. You were so busy working on the mainland, we never got to see you grow into a man. We'd see you at Christmas, of course, but it's only since your accident we're getting to know you again. And it seems like...it's, like, ever since you got your high school and started reading all them books and magazines...well, you've changed. You're more...

TOM

Opinionated. You always got something to say. From the minute you gets up till the time you goes to bed, you're shooting your mouth off about something. You thinks you're an expert about everything.

MASIE

And the stuff you talk about:  
legalizing prostitution...safe...  
you know...

ROBERT

Safe sex.

TOM

Then there's that thing about the  
women in Africa...

ROBERT

Vaginal mutilation.

MASIE

Robert, please.

ROBERT

You brought it up.

TOM

Do you have to say the friggin'  
word? See how it upsets your  
mother?

ROBERT

But I saw it on TV. It's a serious  
issue.

TOM

But we're never going to be in  
Africa, so shut up about it.

MASIE

That's all big-city talk, Robbie.  
We're not used to that here. You'll  
be better off in St. John's or in  
Toronto.

TOM

I'll say. You been away so long,  
you don't even sound like a  
Newfoundlander. "How can you watch  
those sitcoms, dude?" "Don't the  
laugh tracks irritate you, dude?"  
What about that friggin' techno  
crap you listens to? Thump, thump,  
thump. I don't even call that  
music.

MASIE

Listen, Robbie, honey. Tom and I  
wants our time alone now. You'll be  
OK. You got your workman's comp,  
thank God. And me and your father,  
we'll see that you're comfortable.  
You'll never be without anything.  
And there's always Christmas.

TOM

Now, I got no problem with that. A  
couple of days over the holidays.  
Way to go.

Robert raises his glass in a toast.

ROBERT

Way to go, dude.

They all clink glasses.

INT. BUS STATION - DAY (PRESENT)

Robert and Tony continue chatting as Nicholas strolls by, headed for the concession stand.

ROBERT

When I was younger, they gave me  
hell for not going to school. Now  
they're giving me hell for being  
too smart. The irony.

TONY

You know something? I can picture you driving your parents crazy. I mean, you seem like someone who always got something to say.

ROBERT

That right?

TONY

I'm not trying to make fun of you or nothing.

ROBERT

Of course not.

TONY

But you do have a bold way about you. "Dude" this and "dude" that.

ROBERT

OK.

TONY

Don't mind me, b'y. I'm just getting you on the go. I know one thing, though: you got the stars working for you. I mean, I know you got your back thing, but your worker's comp is coming in. Mom and Dad'll help with your bills. You'll be warm in the winter. You got no real worries.

Robert studies Tony for a moment, then stands and picks up the litter from the table.

ROBERT

You know something? I think Kit was right. You do have something against people with money.

Robert throws the litter away.

TONY

No, no...I got nothing against you.

ROBERT

Your sure now?

TONY

What do you mean by that?

Nicholas, holding a coffee cup, approaches Tony and Robert.

NICHOLAS

Excuse me, guys, but the bus'll be here in a few minutes.

(to Tony)

If you want to get your ticket, you better do it now.

TONY

That's fine, buddy. I changed my mind. I'm not going to St. John's. I'm going to see what I can do here in Trinity.

Nicholas nods at Tony, then makes his way back to the ticket desk.

ROBERT

Well, the rains stopped. You'll be dry walking back to your Aunt Joan's house.

Robert slowly pushes his luggage cart toward the exit. Tony follows him.

TONY

Hey, what's that supposed to mean?

ROBERT

Nothing. What are you in a knot for?

TONY

The way you said it...like, "your Aunt Joan's house."

ROBERT

Look, dude, my back is killing me. I don't want to take another painkiller. I'm trying to cut them out of my life.

TONY

Oh...I didn't know...

ROBERT

Whatever. There is one thing, though. I don't understand why you let Kit go.

TONY

Weren't you listening? Kit left me.

ROBERT

And who could blame her? She tried to help you, but you couldn't get your ass moving. You should have done more with your life. She'd be with you now.

TONY

But things were going OK. I worked really hard. I put in a lot of overtime.

ROBERT

But in eight years, you couldn't find time to better yourself?

TONY

I worked a lot of nights, b'y. There wasn't time for other stuff.

ROBERT

Yeah, I guess. All I know is I'd love to meet someone like Kit right about now. But I'm not sure what I have to offer a girl like her. There's so much I haven't done with my life...so much I can't do anymore because of my back. I can't drive. If I could, I wouldn't be here in this station right now.

Sound of the bus's motor. They look to the window and watch the bus approach the building. The other people in the station collect their belongings and head for the exit. Robert turns back to Tony.

ROBERT

Your devotion to living here...I'm not sure I buy it. I think you're afraid.

TONY

Afraid? Afraid of what?

ROBERT

The unknown. Of failing, maybe. I don't know. Take care, man. Good luck. I wish you the best.

Tony, lost for words, watches as Robert pushes his cart through the automatic doors.

Tony turns around to see his knapsack and duffle bag over by the table.

A hand reaches out and taps him on the shoulder. Tony spins around to see Nicholas.

NICHOLAS

He's absolutely right, you know.

TONY

What's it to you? Were you listening all this time?

NICHOLAS

It's called eavesdropping. And he's one hundred percent correct.

Nicholas hands Tony a bus ticket.

NICHOLAS

It's a ticket to St. John's. One way. On the house. Well, on me, actually.

TONY

Why are you doing this? I don't want nothing from you.

NICHOLAS

Oh, for Christ's sake. If you stay here, you'll go from EI to welfare, and you'll never get off Aunt Joan's couch. But if you go to Sin City, you'll have a few memories for when you're old and ugly. Dad used to say you did great work on his car. Lots of people did. But, face it, those days are over...

As Nicholas talks, Tony, dazed, imagines his life in years to come.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BUS STATION - DAY (TEN YEARS LATER)

Tony imagines standing outside the station talking to a WELL DRESSED MAN in his early forties.

NICHOLAS (V.O.)

No matter how much people think you're a good worker, they won't be able to help you.

TONY

(to man)  
I don't suppose you could spare some change for a coffee.

The man takes some change from his pocket and hands it to Tony.

KIT (O.S.)

Tony? Is that you?

Tony turns to see Kit. She looks great and gives him a warm friendly smile. Tony is immediately embarrassed.

NICHOLAS (V.O.)  
Dad used to say you might end up  
regretting your past.

Panicked, Tony drops the change on the ground and runs away.

KIT  
Tony?

Tony slows down, turning briefly to see Kit link arms with the well-dressed man and walk inside the station.

CUT TO:

INT. BUS STATION - DAY (PRESENT)

Nicholas slips the ticket in Tony's pocket. Tony, lost in thought, makes no move to stop him.

NICHOLAS  
There are people out there who die  
from regret, you know. Me and Dad  
would hate to see that happen to  
you. If I were you, I'd take your  
uncle up on his offer.

TONY  
Well, I...

NICHOLAS  
Just do it.

Nicholas moves to Tony's knapsack and duffle bag and picks them up.

NICHOLAS  
The "dude" out there is right: I am  
a small-town snot with a big-city  
attitude. I'll admit that.  
I also admit that I'm jealous of  
you. You're footloose and fancy  
free. And I'm not.

Nicholas hands the knapsack and duffle bag to Tony.

NICHOLAS

But, despite my snotty attitude and  
my jealousy of your freedom...I'm  
not a prick.

EXT. BUS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

The wide door of the bus's luggage compartment opens with a bang.

The BUS DRIVER, an overweight man in his fifties, looks around the bus platform ready to help passengers who are waiting to store their heavy luggage.

The bus driver looks Robert up and down, then shifts his gaze to a WOMAN in her sixties. Robert watches the bus driver tip his hat to the woman, then effortlessly slide the woman's large suitcase into the luggage compartment.

Robert sighs, then reaches for his own suitcase, wincing in pain as tries to lift it off the cart. He lets the suitcase drop to the ground.

Robert closes his eyes, takes a deep breath, then reaches inside his pocket for his painkillers. He opens his eyes to see Tony reach for the suitcase.

ROBERT

Dude.

Tony winks at him.

TONY

What are ya at, b'y?

Robert slips the painkillers back in his pocket.

Tony places Robert's suitcase into the luggage compartment, then throws his knapsack and duffle bag in, as well.

Nicholas walks out of the station in time to see Tony and Robert step into the bus. Through the bus's window, Nicholas can see Tony and Robert walk down the aisle and take a seat. Tony looks out the window, sees Nicholas, and waves to him.

The bus pulls away from the station.

FADE OUT.