

FRANK

"Frank's Best"

FADE IN:

MUSIC: "ANGELINA/ZOOMA ZOOMA" (LOUIS PRIMA)

INT. "FRANK'S BEST" DELICATESSEN - DAY - WINTER, 2001

A bustling Italian deli. Bundled-up customers come and go, as music pipes through the stereo. In the window, "FRANK'S BEST" can be read in reverse.

Behind the register, warmly greeting his customers, is FRANK DICENZIO, 49, old school in every way. Beside him, preparing the food with great care, is RICARDO MUNOZ, 32, a short, stocky immigrant from El Salvador. An old mutt sleeps at their feet while they work.

As Frank packs up bags for two women in their 70's, Mrs. EDINO and MRS. CLARK --

Start →

FRANK

Mrs. Edino, I'm gonna put in an extra side of roasted vegetables for you.

MRS. EDINO

Ricardo made them?

Frank turns to Ricardo, with feigned outrage.

FRANK

She won't eat my vegetables anymore!
Even if they're free, has to be you made 'em.

RICARDO

(smiles)
Sorry, Frank.

Just then two teen-aged boys enter the deli -- Frank's son, TOMMY DICENZIO, 16, quiet and reserved, and RICH "STUMP" FANELLI, 18, thuggish. Something creepy about Stump.

FRANK

(calls out)
There you are!

TOMMY

Hey, Dad.

Stump takes a seat at one of the tables, kicks back. Frank eyes him disdainfully.

STUMP

Tommy, see if there's any more of that meat sauce, the spicy stuff.

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TOMMY

Okay.

Tommy moves around the counter and starts checking out the food. Ricardo greets him with a pat on the back.

FRANK

(to the ladies)

I tell you about the night classes
Tommy's taking?

MRS. CLARK

Computers. At the junior college.

FRANK

(proud)

Kid's just in high school, but he's
thinking ahead. College level class!

MRS. EDINO

A smart boy.

MRS. CLARK

Frank, my daughter has a friend you'll
like. A divorcee, but very slender.

FRANK

I'm real busy right now...

MRS. CLARK

Lydia, God rest her soul, has been
gone over a year. It's time, Frank.
You need a wife.

FRANK

(shooing them away)

Have a good day, ladies.

The women cluck at him, then shuffle off with their bags.

TOMMY

Why not go on a date?

FRANK

I'm busy! That's why.

Frank leans down, gives the dog a nice piece of deli meat.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Here you go, King. Good boy.

RICARDO

(to Tommy)

That dog is the wife.

Tommy chuckles.



FRANK
Can it, you two.

Off Frank, affectionately patting the big dog...

INT. "FRANK'S BEST" DELICATESSEN - NIGHT - TWO WEEKS LATER

The deli is closed, lights are off. We move past the counter, where the register is open, and the cash drawer conspicuously EMPTY. Then, moving on, into the back...

INT. DELI KITCHEN AREA - CONTINUOUS

It's dark. Several pots and pans lie strewn across the floor. We move over them... finally find FRANK, lying on his side, head beaten and bloodied...

INT. PPD - STORAGE - 2001

A box is shelved. Reads: "DiCenzio, F. H01-233, November, 2001. Closed."

~~EXT. COURTHOUSE - MORNING - 2005 (DAY ONE)~~

~~VALENS crosses towards the courthouse.~~

~~GABBY (O.S.)
Detective Valens!~~

~~He, turns, sees GABBY FRIEDLANDER, 30, attractive but frazzled -- hair falling out of a ponytail, a stack of files in her hands.~~

~~GABBY (CONT'D)
Gabby Friedlander, Legal Aid.
Remember me, from the Lopes case?~~

~~VALENS
Yeah, sure.~~

~~She turns, gestures to a young LATINO MAN behind her, 33, kind-looking, determined to follow what she's saying.~~

~~GABBY
This is Paulo Munoz. I represented
his brother Ricardo back in 2001.~~

~~VALENS
(shakes Paulo's hand)
Scott Valens. Mucho gusto.~~

~~PAULO
Mucho gusto.~~

~~GABBY
Lost the case, back then. Ricardo
was convicted of robbing and killing
his boss.~~

END

FRANK

10.

INT. "FRANK'S BEST" DELI - NIGHT - 2001

MUSIC: "BLUES IN THE NIGHT" (TONY BENNETT)

Frank and Ricardo, each carrying big bags of food, exit the deli from a back door and enter into --

INT. FRANK'S APARTMENT BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

A stairwell leading up to Frank's second-floor apartment. As they head up, struggling with the bags--

Start →

FRANK

Made too much food. Thought with holidays comin' up, we'd be busier.

RICARDO

Tomorrow will be more people.

(beat)

Your pasta salad is bad, boss. Too much garlic.

FRANK

What you don't know about pasta salad is a lot.

They reach the door. Frank unlocks it, they enter --

INT. FRANK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Frank and Ricardo set the bags down in the small, neat kitchen. Frank lets out a long whistle. No response.

FRANK

King sleeps like an old man.

As Ricardo starts to go--

FRANK (CONT'D)

You wanna stay, have some dinner?

RICARDO

I see you all day.

Frank smiles at Ricardo's bluntness.

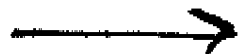
FRANK

C'mon, sit. Tommy's never around at night, it'd be nice to have company.

Ricardo sits. Frank pulls some deli food from the bags.

FRANK (CONT'D)

How's the family? You called 'em today, right?



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RICARDO

(sighs)
My daughter is angry with me now.
Because I'm so far away.

FRANK

She's too young to understand --
everything we do, it's for our kids.

Ricardo nods. Just then a small MOAN can be heard from the back of the apartment. They react, surprised.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(calls out)
King?

There's no answer. Ricardo and Frank look at each other.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(louder)
King?

Nothing. The two men move down the hall, and into--

INT. FRANK'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is pitch black. As Frank fumbles for the light--

FRANK

King, you here, buddy?

As the light is switched on, the two men JUMP back. On the floor in front of them is a bloody MESS of fur.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(shocked)
King...?

They stare for a beat, frozen. King lets out a small whimper.

RICARDO

Dios mio...

Frank falls onto his knees next to the dog, not sure where to touch him without hurting him.

FRANK

Good boy, King... oh Christ... what
the hell happened to you...

RICARDO

Frank, he needs a hospital.

Frank grabs a blanket off the bed, tucks it around King.

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FRANK
Yeah, yeah you're right. Vet on
Roosevelt is open all night...

Frank is panicked, fighting tears.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Who... who would do this?

Ricardo kneels beside him.

RICARDO
Let me help you.

FRANK
Good boy, King. Here we go, buddy...

Off the two men, as Frank struggles to get his arms under
the big mutt's damaged body...

INT. GRATERFORD PRISON - RESUME

Valens, Rush and Ricardo.

RICARDO
When I tell them, the police say
it's just a dog.
(beat)
But Frank thought it was a message.

RUSH
Why'd he think that?

RICARDO
Nothing was broken, nothing gone.
And the door was locked.

Valens reacts.

VALENS
So it wasn't really a break-in.
Someone had a key.

RUSH
His son, Tommy?

RICARDO
This is what I thought. Tommy had
problems, after his mother died.

RUSH
What did Frank think?

RICARDO
He said someone got a key somehow,
beat the dog to scare him.
(MORE)

END

FRANK

14.

Tommy turns suddenly defensive.

TOMMY

That's got nothin' to do with what happened to my dad.

VERA

And how do you know that?

Beat, then --

TOMMY

I know, okay?

And we're --

INT. VETERINARIAN'S WAITING AREA - NIGHT - 2001

MUSIC: "LOVE ME OR LEAVE ME" (BRYAN FERRY)

Tommy and Stump enter the waiting area; Tommy's anxious, Stump seems amused. They pause at the door, see Frank, King's blood on his shirt, talking to an attractive neighborhood woman, ANTONIA RIGHETTI, 35. A five-year-old girl leans against Antonia's arm, asleep.

Start →

ANTONIA

The cat went out onto our balcony, and p.s. we're on the third floor, so I figure she's not gonna jump...

FRANK

The cat jumped?

ANTONIA

Worse. She fell. How stupid does a cat hafta be for that?

(sympathetic)

What happened to yours?

FRANK

I think someone got into our apartment-- King musta barked at him, he's a brave guy...

ANTONIA

They hit the dog?

FRANK

Bad. Vet's operating on him now.

ANTONIA

Oh my god, I'm so sorry.

Antonia touches his arm, as Tommy and Stump finally approach.

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TOMMY
Dad. What happened?

FRANK
(gently)
King's in pretty bad shape, Tommy.
Be a while 'til we know anything.

TOMMY
I can stay.

STUMP
(laughs, then:)
You gotta be kiddin' me.

Tommy turns back to Stump.

STUMP (CONT'D)
Thought we were gonna hang, after
you saw your dad.

TOMMY
But he said King's real bad off.

Stump lets out a weird little chuckle.

STUMP
C'mon, you know that mutt got what
he deserved.

Suddenly Frank is right beside them, furious.

FRANK
What did you just say?

Stump just smiles at Frank pleasantly. It's creepy.

STUMP
Nothin', Mr. DiCenzio. It's all
good.

FRANK
You stay the hell away from my son,
and my dog.
(to Tommy)
I told you: I don't want you hangin'
around this punk, understand?

Tommy looks down at the ground. Another chuckle from Stump.

STUMP
Pussy.

Stump turns to go. Off Tommy, mortified...

END

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FRANK

20.

RUSH

We're taking another look at the case.

Stump absorbs this for a beat, then

STUMP

If Ricardo didn't do it with his own hands? Don't mean he wasn't responsible.

JEFFRIES

What're you talking about?

STUMP

Ricardo brought some serious trouble into that deli. Saw it myself...

EXT. BACK OF THE DELI - NIGHT - 2001

MUSIC: "MACK THE KNIFE" (BRIAN SETZER ORCHESTRA)

Stump comes around the corner, a cigarette in hand. Stops when he sees --

Just outside the deli, a bulky, off-kilter guy in his 30's, FELIX DAROSA, stands arguing with Frank. A car idles on the other side of the alley, and a bored-looking younger guy leans against it, waiting.

Start →

FELIX

Where's Ricardo, chummy?

FRANK

He ain't here. And he said he's gonna pay you, so lay off.

FELIX

Due date's long past. And I have to keep strict rules about that, y'know?

FRANK

Give the guy a break. He's just trying' to bring his family here.

FELIX

I'm a businessman, like you. But I got more flash, right?

(beat)

Ricardo don't pay me soon, I take action. That's how I keep my business running.

FRANK

(tough)

Yeah? Then I'll call the cops, tell 'em what you do to these people.

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→

Felix laughs in Frank's face.

FELIX

No you won't. 'Cause they'll just send your pal right back to El Salvador.

Frank knows this is true. Gets angry.

FRANK

You're just low-life scum, preyin' on other people's predicaments...

Felix transforms from odd to scary as he steps forward, shoves Frank back against the trash cans. As Frank stumbles ignobly to the ground, and Felix hovers over him--

FELIX

I don't get my money... there's two of you I'm gonna take care of, now.

And we believe him. He strides off towards the waiting car and driver, as Frank struggles to get to his feet.

Off Stump, amused...

END

EXT. LOW-RENT GARAGE - RESUME

Stump, Jeffries and Rush.

RUSH

Who was this guy?

STUMP

I never seen him before. But he was a bad-ass, I'll tell you that.

JEFFRIES

You tell anyone about it?

STUMP

Nah. Frank was on my case all the time back then. Figured he deserved a little heat coming his way.

Jeffries and Rush exchange a look. Classy guy.

RUSH

Okay, Stump. We'll be in touch.

STUMP

I'll be right here.

Stump smiles, lifts his pant leg to show an ankle-bracelet.

STUMP (CONT'D)

'Cause where else'm I gonna go?

FELIX

You guys aren't so good for business.

MILLER

You know a Ricardo Munoz?

FELIX

Ricardo. Hmm...

VALENS

Got put away for murdering his boss,
Frank DiCenzio.

MILLER

Owed you some money, from what we
hear.

FELIX

(fake humility)
I try to help out, when I can. Enrich
my community.

MILLER

Thing is, Felix, we heard Frank's
the one tried to help Ricardo out.

VALENS

And you weren't happy. Said you'd
have to "take care of two people."

MILLER

Ricardo's in jail, Frank's dead,
that's two people, taken care of.

Felix laughs.

FELIX

Frank was no problem to me. See, he
stopped helping Ricardo.

VALENS

And how do you know that?

FELIX

Because I saw it with my own two
eyes...

And we're --

INT. RICARDO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT - 2001

MUSIC: "REPRESENT" (ORISHAS)

*A cramped basement apartment, overflowing with clothes,
kitchen items, personal effects. Felix and Ricardo are in
the middle of a heated argument.*



Start →

25.

FELIX

He sido muy paciente. Ahora estoy enojado.

RICARDO

¿Que puedo hacer? Digame!

There's a knock at the door, Ricardo crosses to answer it. He opens the door, finds Frank, looking tense.

As Felix hangs back, just out of Frank's sight--

RICARDO (CONT'D)

Frankie...

Frank holds up a key ring.

FRANK

You left your keys, and you're s'posed to open up, tomorrow.

There's something strained, in Frank's voice.

RICARDO

Everything okay, Frank?

FRANK

I just saw... you have a key to my apartment, on the key ring.

Frank points to a distinct, rounded key.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Where'd you get this?

RICARDO

You give it to me, when I start the job.

Frank pulls the house key off. Impatience building.

FRANK

No. I gave you a key to the deli. I never gave you a key to my house.

RICARDO

(frustrated)

Then I don't know how it gets there.

Something dawns on Frank.

FRANK

You took a long break, that day King got beat up.

(beat)

You go into my apartment, Ricardo?

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→

RICARDO

No! I was with you when we found him!

FRANK

But you were itching to get outta there, soon as we walked in.

(becoming more convinced)

And you were always sayin' I should leave the dog home, he gets in the way.

Ricardo's temper flares, and he loses it. Shows a whole different side of himself.

RICARDO

(furious)

Get outta here, Frank. This is crazy.

Frank looks at Ricardo as if seeing him for the first time.

FRANK

We're done, Ricardo. You're fired.

RICARDO

What?

FRANK

I don't know who the hell you are.

Frank's made up his mind. He turns and goes. As Ricardo, devastated, slams the door, then meets Felix's steady gaze...

INT. BEMBE SOCIAL CLUB - RESUME

Valens, Miller, Felix. Paulo still nearby.

VALENS

(thrown)

He fired Ricardo.

FELIX

That's right.

MILLER

Ricardo say anything to you, 'bout where he got the key to Frank's place?

FELIX

Nothing.

(beat)

But two days later, Ricardo paid me back. The whole loan.

Miller and Valens react.

END

FRANK

32.

TOMMY

No. Dad was lost, after mom died.
(remembering)
He'd make these bad news connections
like he had no common sense or
somethin'.

VERA

What kind of bad news connections?

JEPPIES

Anybody in particular you can think
of?

Tommy thinks, then--

TOMMY

There was one time I actually said
something. About this lady.

VERA

Who?

TOMMY

(thinking back; sad)
Dad was so excited about her.

And we're --

INT. FRANK'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - NIGHT - 2001

MUSIC: "AIN'T MISBEHAVIN'" (PETER CINCOTTI)

Frank stands in front of the bathroom mirror, preparing to
go out. He sorts through some aftershave bottles in his
cabinet, finally pulls one out, dusts it off. Tommy enters.

Start →

FRANK

(laughs nervously)
Been a while since I was on a date.

Frank looks down, dismayed, at the slacks he's wearing.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Shoulda bought a new suit. These
pants got a little small.

TOMMY

Nobody wears suits anymore.

FRANK

(stung)
I wear suits. It's respectful.

Tommy shrugs.

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FRANK (CONT'D)

Maybe just a good sports jacket. I got a navy blue one, with nice buttons. See if it's in the closet?

Tommy goes to check, as Frank finds a comb in the cabinet. After a beat, from the other room--

TOMMY (O.S.)

So you goin' out with the lady Mrs. Edino was talkin' about?

FRANK

(calling back)

Nah, it's the one I met at the vet. Antonia. Lives right around the corner.

Tommy appears in the doorway, looking concerned.

TOMMY

Her?

FRANK

Yeah. You know her?

TOMMY

I seen her around. She's... real loud, and flashy. Not like Mom was.

Frank looks at his son a beat.

FRANK

(gentle)

She's a nice lady, Tommy.

(beat)

And no one's gonna be like your mom. She was one in a billion.

But Tommy's not appeased.

TOMMY

Isn't she married? Every time I seen her, she was with some bruiser-lookin' guy.

FRANK

She's separated, now.

TOMMY

Musta just happened. Pretty soon to be dating.

(suddenly sharp)

For the both a' you.

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FRANK

Whoa, you're the one said I should go on a date.

TOMMY

(honest; pissed)
Didn't think you'd do it.

Frank takes the jacket Tommy's holding, meets his son's gaze.

FRANK

Ain't so easy for me either, tell you the truth. But I'm gonna try.

Tommy looks away. Frank's heart goes out to him.

FRANK (CONT'D)

(with difficulty)
Listen, I been too wrapped up in work, since Mom. Haven't been home enough, and I'm sorry 'bout that.
(hopeful)
Maybe we could start spendin' time together again. Like the old days.

Tommy brightens a little.

TOMMY

We could do the father-son hockey league again, maybe.

FRANK

There you go.

Frank pats Tommy warmly on the shoulder. Starts to go.

TOMMY

Just... be careful, okay?

FRANK

(touched)
Don't worry about me, T. I'll be fine.

Off Tommy, watching him go, not so sure --

EXT. SUPERMARKET LOADING AREA - RESUME

Tommy, Jeffries, Vera.

JEFFRIES

This Antonia is the woman your dad met at the animal hospital?

TOMMY

Yeah.

END

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FRANK

36.

ANTONIA (CONT'D)

Ray had two new girlfriends before
I'd packed up my last suitcase.

(beat, leery)

What's this about?

MILLER

You remember Frank DiCenzio?

ANTONIA

Of course I do.

RUSH

We heard you and Frank mighta had
some problems.

ANTONIA

Those problems were Frank's, not
mine.

MILLER

How so?

ANTONIA

He seemed like such a gentleman. So
I got his number from a friend, worked
at the vet.

RUSH

And what happened?

ANTONIA

Things went sour, real fast...

INT. GARDI'S STEAKHOUSE - NIGHT - 2001

MUSIC: "STORNELLI AMORISI" (CLAUDIO VILLO)

A nice neighborhood restaurant -- red leather chairs, white
candles. Frank, clearly nervous, holds Antonia's chair out
for her as they take their seats. Antonia, wearing a fitted
sweater and colorful make-up, smiles at the gesture.

Start



ANTONIA

You're sweet, y'know that?

(beat)

So how's King doing?

FRANK

Better. Got home a couple days ago.

ANTONIA

Bootsie's doin' better too, but she's
missing all her front teeth, which,
p.s., is not a pretty picture.

Frank smiles, starts perusing his menu.

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ANTONIA (CONT'D)
So your son is Tommy, right?

FRANK
Yeah.

ANTONIA
Hard being a single parent, huh?
Caitlin wears me down sometimes.

FRANK
My wife was the one knew how to talk
to Tommy. I try, but I can't hold
the family together like she did...
(beat)
I'm gonna do better.

Frank just shrugs. Disappointed in himself. Antonia is touched, wants to comfort him, somehow.

ANTONIA
Teenagers can be tough to handle.

FRANK
He had a tough time, this year. But
he's a good kid.

Antonia takes this in, then:

ANTONIA
(cautious)
I think I should tell you something,
about his friend Stump.

Frank looks up sharply from his menu.

FRANK
You know him?

ANTONIA
I take Caitlin to skate on Monday
nights, see him and Tommy playing
hockey.

FRANK
What?

ANTONIA
Thing is, that kid Stump races around
on the ice, bullies the smaller kids.
(reluctant)
Sometimes Tommy does it with him.

FRANK
You're mixing 'em up with somebody
else. They got computer class on
Monday.



ANTONIA

(apologetic)

I'm sure, Frank.

(beat)

And I heard Stump stole money from the snack stand, beat up the kid who works there.

FRANK

(jaw set)

Stump ain't that bad. Tommy wouldn't put up with it.

Antonia isn't the type to back down. But she can see she's hit a real nerve. Hoping to salvage the evening--

ANTONIA

Sorry if I... let's just forget it. It's none of my business, anyway.

Frank's voice is suddenly low, and threatening.

FRANK

You're damn right it's none of your business.

ANTONIA

(eyes wide)

Excuse me?

Frank seems to snap -- he abruptly stands.

FRANK

You don't know what the hell you're talkin' about.

He throws cash down on the table as Antonia watches, stunned.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I gotta get outta here.

Then Frank grabs his coat, and leaves the restaurant. Off Antonia, as other patrons turn to check out the commotion...

INT. PPD - WITNESS ROOM - RESUME

Rush, Miller, Antonia.

ANTONIA

If my daughter was acting up outta my sight, I'd wanna hear about it.

(shrugs)

Some people don't, I guess.

RUSH

You saw Stump and Tommy every week?

END

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FRANK

41.

RUSH

"His?"

STUMP

(nods)

Tommy's.

JEFFRIES

From what we hear, Tommy just did whatever you said.

Stump really doesn't wanna go here. But he's trapped.

STUMP

That's what everybody thought, 'cause a' the way he acted. You never seen a better liar. I swear to god.

(beat)

After his mom died, it's like the switch got flipped, or something.

RUSH

So Tommy was the ringleader.

STUMP

(nods, burdened)

Tommy robbed the snack stand. And Tommy came up with plan to skip classes. Tommy did... everything.

RUSH

You saying he killed his father?

Stump doesn't respond.

JEFFRIES

Time for you to stop protecting Tommy. He's no friend of yours.

RUSH

What happened night Frank was killed, Stump?

STUMP

(hates doing this)

We snuck out of class, were gonna snag some beer from the deli, then play a little hockey.

Rush and Jeffries wait. Finally--

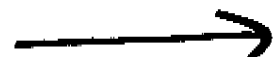
STUMP (CONT'D)

But things didn't go like we planned.

INT. "FRANK'S BEST" DELI - KITCHEN AREA - NIGHT - 2001

MUSIC: "LOSE YOURSELF" (EMINEM)

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Stump and Tommy move stealthily in through the back entrance, still carrying hockey equipment. They cross to a cooler, when suddenly they hear VOICES from the front of the deli.

STUMP

Damn -- your dad's here.

TOMMY

He can't hear us. Just shut up.

They move quietly to the doorway, see Ricardo and Frank, sitting at a lunch table, talking. Frank is upset, showing visible signs of strain.

Start →

FRANK

I'm sorry, 'bout everything. You've been nothin' but good for this place.

(beat)

I get real emotional when it comes to King. Got him with Lydia, y'know?

RICARDO

It's okay, Frank.

FRANK

Y'know, someday maybe we can be partners in this deli.

RICARDO

(touched)

You make a great deli, Frank. I'm proud to work here.

FRANK

I had big plans it was gonna be a family business. It's why I worked so hard...

Frank's voice cracks with emotion, he stops to gather himself.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Thought Tommy was gonna be my partner one day. But now, I'm not so sure...

(beat)

Heard some things, made me think I gotta find a better school, for him.

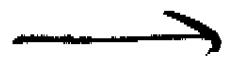
Ricardo pats Frank's shoulder.

RICARDO

You are like family to me, Frank. So it is family business.

Frank is overwhelmed with gratitude. Finally --

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FRANK
 I feel the same way. Fact is, I
 feel closer to you than my own kid.
 (shakes his head)
 That nuts or what?

END

ANGLE ON

Tommy and Stump at the doorway, as Tommy jerks away from the door. Stump watches Tommy grab a full case of beer.

STUMP
 Your dad's gonna notice that.

TOMMY
 (flat)
 Who cares.

Stump feels for Tommy. Knows what it's like.

STUMP
 It's messed up, man. What your dad
 said...

Tommy turns to Stump, stone-faced.

TOMMY
 (cold as ice)
 Doesn't matter to me. Long as I get
 what I want.

Tommy takes the case of beer and heads out. Stump stares after him a beat, then finally follows.

INT. INTERVIEW A - RESUME

Rush, Jeffries, Stump.

STUMP
 It was like Tommy didn't feel
 anything.

RUSH
 That normal, for Tommy?

STUMP
 There was no such thing as normal,
 with him. He was different depending
 on who he was talkin' to.

JEFFRIES
 But you were his friend.

STUMP
 At first, it was mutual -- we both
 got a thrill from doing bad stuff.
 (MORE)

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FRANK

47.

VALENS

So you musta done somethin' pretty messed up to make him give up on you like that.

The page that's usually hidden starts percolating to the surface, as Tommy meets Vera's eye.

VERA

(pushing)

C'mon. Whadcha do to break your dad's heart, Tommy?

Tommy jumps up, agitated.

TOMMY

What the hell did I do?

Vera goes face to face, a dare.

VERA

Yeah, you little ingrate. What'd you do?

Tommy finally explodes, shoves Vera backwards. Vera comes right back at him, Valens by his side. A flash to younger Tommy, as --

YOUNGER/OLDER TOMMY

(enraged)

You don't know anything! It was my dad who messed everything up!

VALENS

How, Tommy? What'd he do?

TOMMY

(outraged, still)

After everything we been through... he was gonna ruin my life all 'cause of that prickhead dog!

And we smash into --

INT. "FRANK'S BEST" DELI - KITCHEN AREA - NIGHT - 2001

Frank is cleaning up in the back of the deli, King by his side, when Tommy comes in with all his hockey equipment, clearly drunk.

Start →

FRANK

You back for more beer?

TOMMY

Huh?

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FRANK

There was a whole case missing. You
musta known I'd see that.

TOMMY

Sorry. It was Stump's idea, I told
him not to...

(beat)

Listen, I need some money. Wanna
get some new equipment.

Tommy sticks out his hand, takes a drunken step towards his
dad. Just then, King starts to growl. Not just a warning --
it's a hateful, pissed-off kind of a sound.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

Shut up, dumbass.

Frank looks down at King, then back at Tommy. A horrible
realization coming over him.

FRANK

He won't come outta my room, since I
brought him home.

(beat)

I hadda drag him down here.

TOMMY

(annoyed, now)

What's the big deal?

FRANK

You beat up King.

TOMMY

No, I didn't!

(beat, lame)

Stump did it.

But Frank knows, now. It's all adding up.

FRANK

(anguished)

This is my fault. I been a bad
father, didn't reach out to you
enough...

TOMMY

It's fine, Dad.

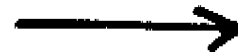
FRANK

No, it's not.

(with difficulty)

I think there's something wrong with
you, Tommy.

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TOMMY

(frustrated)
I lost my temper, okay? He jumped
up, grabbed the sandwich I'd just
made right off the table...

He looks at Frank like Frank might understand this. Frank
is appalled.

FRANK

Jesus, Tommy. King was almost dead
when I found him.

TOMMY

(losing it)
It's just a stupid dog!

FRANK

(gentler)
Look, there's places where they help
kids with your kinds a' problems.
You had a hard year...

Tommy stares at him in utter disbelief.

TOMMY

You wanna send me away to some school
for freaks?

FRANK

It's not for freaks. It's a place
you can go to get better.
(hopeful)
Then you can come home. We'll work
at the deli together, have a future.

TOMMY

But I got Stump, here!

FRANK

It'll be good to separate the two of
you for a while. Trust me.

TOMMY

No! It's not fair! You have things --
the dog, the deli, Ricardo... and
now I'm gonna have nothin'!

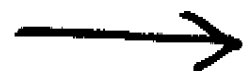
FRANK

You got me! And I got you. No matter
what, T.

TOMMY

(seething)
I don't care about that.

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Tommy stumbles forward, inches from his father. The energy building inside of him makes him bounce slightly as he stands.

FRANK

Tommy, you need help. You'll see --
it's for the best.

Tommy grits his teeth, furious.

TOMMY

You can't do this. You can't.

Frank swallows his fear, firmly stands his ground. Hoping this is the way he can be a better father.

FRANK

You're my son. You'll do what I
say.

As Frank turns away, Tommy's rage takes over, and he grabs the nearby hockey stick. Raises it over his head.

TOMMY

No. I. Won't!

Tommy SWINGS the hockey stick down on Frank's head. Frank falls into the rack of pots and pans, they CRASH to the floor.

As Tommy raises up the stick, and brings it down again...

MONTAGE:

MUSIC "I WILL LIVE MY LIFE FOR YOU" (TONY BENNETT)

INT. PPD CELLS - NIGHT

Tommy, remorseless, is walked into the cells by Rush. Flash to younger Tommy, and resume --

INT. PPD - NIGHT

Jeffries types on an old typewriter -- changing the paperwork on Frank's murder. He finishes typing in Tommy's name, and then, under "Relationship to Victim," he types "Son." As the paperwork DISSOLVES into..

INT. PPD - NIGHT

Paperwork on a desk. The top of the form reads "ADOPTION APPLICATION."

PULL BACK, revealing Vera, on the phone with his wife, hard at work on the application...

END

26 + 26