

JOHNNY is sound asleep in bed. Suddenly a huge bucket of water is dumped on him.

JOHNNY  
AAAAAAHHHH!!!

JOHNNY jumps out of bed to see Tara wielding an empty bucket.

TARA  
Did you forget something last night?

JOHNNY  
What, what, what?

TARA  
It was my birthday, Johnny.

JOHNNY  
It was?

TARA  
God damn you!

TARA turns and walks out.

LIVING ROOM

TARA sits at the table drinking a cup of coffee. JOHNNY enters getting dressed and sits down.

JOHNNY  
Why didn't you say anything about it last night?

TARA  
Because I wasn't gonna let you spoil EVERYTHING about last night. I had to at salvage at least some portion of the evening. But today is a different story.

TARA dumps a fat wad of cash onto the table.

TARA (CONT'D)  
What's this?

JOHNNY doesn't answer.

TARA (CONT'D)  
You're playing again aren't you?

JOHNNY'S look confirms it.

TARA (CONT'D)

So that's what was more important than me last night? That fucking game?

(pause)

I thought we were through with all that. What about your job with Jack?

JOHNNY

What about my job with Jack? It didn't work out, alright?

JOHNNY turns away.

TARA

Why?

JOHNNY

What, do I look like a construction worker to you? Give me a fuckin' Indian and a cop and I'll sing you Y.M.C.A. is that what you want?

(pause)

Keep me around as your guy from the other side of the tracks so you can still feel like you're in touch with the world, is that it?

TARA

Is that what you think?

JOHNNY

You're a smart woman Tara, you figure it out.

TARA

That's not fair! I work my ass off for my money. Nobody ever gave me shit! And how dare you resent me for where I come from. I've never taken anything from my family whether it was offered to me or not.

JOHNNY

Well then you should understand exactly how I feel!

(pause)

You think I like breakin' my back for peanuts while you pick up the check? Livin' up here with you like some kind of kept man?!

(pause)

I play pool, Tara. That's what I do.

JOHNNY picks up his wad of money.

(CONTINUED)

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

You know, I beat a pro last night? First time I've picked up a cue in forever and I sent him to the A.T.M. three times.

(pause)

My whole life I've been doin' what other people wanted me to do. You, Joe, everybody. Now I'm gonna do what I want to do.

JOHNNY starts to turn towards the bedroom.

TARA

Is that why you play? Is it for the money?

JOHNNY

You know me better than that.

JOHNNY disappears into the bedroom. TARA gets up from the table, grabs her briefcase and heads for the door. She calls to JOHNNY in the other room.

TARA

Well, I don't know how well I know you but you're gonna start to get to know my foot in your ass in a minute if you think you're gonna forget my birthday and then make me feel sorry for you in the morning. I'm thirty years old, Goddamn it, and I'll be damned if I'm gonna let-

TARA opens the door to her apartment only to see hundreds of balloons right outside the door and a huge sign painted on the wall of the hallway which reads "HAPPY BIRTHDAY TARA".

In the b.g. we can see JOHNNY coming out of the bedroom holding a small velvet box.

JOHNNY

It's not much but it's what I could afford.

He hands her the box and she opens it. Inside is a Claddagh ring.

JOHNNY (CONT'D)

Don't get any ideas. It's not like I'm asking you to marry me or anything. It's just... regardless of all the shit we're goin' through right now... you should know that I love you. And that you're my best friend.

TARA wells up with tears.

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JOHNNY (CONT'D)  
(smiles)  
Happy birthday, baby.

She kisses JOHNNY.

TARA  
You son of a bitch.

SLY STONE'S "IF YOU WANT ME TO STAY" softly rises.

27 EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY 27

JOHNNY and TARA fly down the road with the top down as they head toward the bay.

28 EXT. BAY - DAY 28

JOHNNY and TARA try to get a kite to fly but it keeps crashing. They both crack up laughing.

JOHNNY and TARA fish off a small dock. JOHNNY makes TARA laugh.

JOHNNY and TARA walk along the bay talking.

JOHNNY and TARA lay on JOHNNY'S car looking up at the sky and eating grapes.

TARA  
You know you can't play pool forever.  
Eventually you'll end up like Lucky or  
the Drummer. Playin' fools for gas  
money.

JOHNNY  
Not much different from where I am now.

TARA  
You said it. I didn't.

JOHNNY  
Except... now, for the first time in my  
life, things are different. I mean, now  
I can play. I never really had a chance  
to do that before.

TARA  
What do you mean? You played every day.

JOHNNY sits up.

JOHNNY  
Well... yes and no. I mean... yes I  
played but... in fifteen years with Joe,  
he never really let me play my game. I  
mean REALLY play.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)