

The End

A well-dressed young man sits by the bedside of a very old, sickly man, who is propped up into a sitting position.

FATHER
You don't have to stay, you know.

NICK
I know, pop. I want to.

FATHER
What about your job?

NICK
It's my company, pop. Whose gonna turn me in? Me?

FATHER
I'm just saying –

NICK
I know. And it's okay.

The mother walks in.

FATHER
Who is that? Is that Joey?

NICK
No, pop. It's just ma.

MOTHER
Thanks a lot.

FATHER
Tony, is that you?

NICK
Pop, I told you. It's ma.

MOTHER
He's been like this for the past few hours, asking for your brothers.

FATHER
Where are my boys?

NICK
I'm here, pop.

FATHER

Tony? Joey?

NICK

No, pop, it's just me. It's just Nick.

MOTHER

(Crossing to Nick) Can we not do this now, please?

NICK

Come on ma, what am I doing here? Aside from being a good son?

MOTHER

You're supposed to be the responsible one. Act like it.

Nick and his mother don not see that two good-looking young men, both dressed casually, enter and stand behind them.

FATHER

Joey! Tony!

NICK

I told you, pop, they're not here.

JOEY

Hey, who says we're not?

MOTHER and NICK turn and see JOEY and TONY

MOTHER

Thank God. Where have you boys been?

TONY

We've been out.

The Mother gives him a stern look

On business, ma. *(To the Father)* So pop, how ya doing?

JOEY

Yea, how ya doing?

FATHER

I'm doing fine, now that my boys are here.

Nick looks helplessly at MOTHER

TONY
So pop, how're feeling?

JOEY
You look great, pop.

Nick, Tony, and Mother look at Joey like he's crazy)

Hey, what am I supposed to say?

NICK
How about nothing?

TONY
Yea, that way you won't say anything stupid.

FATHER
Boys, I'm very glad you're here. I have something important to tell you.

JOEY
You were right, Tony.

TONY
(To JOEY) Shut up, moron. *(To FATHER, with mock sincerity)* Sure pop, yea. What is it?

FATHER
A man learns things. So many things. And often after it's too late.

TONY
Yea? Like what?

JOEY
Yea, tell us.

TONY
Quiet.

FATHER
Listen to me. I only have so much time left.

TONY
And it's important, pop, that you get it out.

JOEY
Yea, get it out.

TONY

Shhhh.

NICK

Boy, you two are something else.

TONY

Hey, mister executive, don't you have a memo to write or something?

NICK

At least I've got a job.

TONY

We don't need jobs. We're entrepreneurs.

JOEY

We are in business.

NICK

A business that gets wire-tapped by the FBI.

TONY

That was one time. Your fancy B-school pals are all choir boys?

NICK

What is that supposed to mean?

TONY

It means I read the papers.

FATHER

Enough! *(Coughs uncontrollably for a few seconds, as NICK and his MOTHER attend to him, give him a glass of water, after which he stops and calms down)*

NICK

You okay now, pop?

TONY

There was something you wanted to say?

FATHER

Yes, that's it. I'm trying to give you something.

JOEY

Oh boy, this is it.

FATHER

You see... I know what the answer is.

TONY

The answer? The answer to what?

FATHER

It's something more valuable than money, Tony.

TONY

What the hell is he talking about?

With Tony and Joey's disinterest comes Nick's sudden interest. They say nothing.

FATHER

Are you listening to me?

NICK

They're listening pop. We're all listening. Go ahead.

FATHER

When you're at the beginning you're too young to understand. And you boys can't see it because you're right in the middle of it. But here at the end... it's all so clear.

NICK

What is, pop?

FATHER

Don't you see? Every day, without even trying, we all learn something. I don't mean the crap they were shoving down our throats in school like who was our fifteenth president or the atomic weight of Carbon, but important stuff.

NICK

Important? Like what?

FATHER

Like how to hammer a nail into a board without splitting the wood. Exactly how fast can you go through the toll booth so you can drop your money in the basket and make it past the gate without the alarm going off. How to talk to a beautiful woman without her realizing you're only talking to her because she's beautiful.

NICK

You figured all that out, huh, pop?

FATHER

I have.

NICK

(Gently) Then why do you look so sad?

FATHER

Because had I only known all this stuff when I was your age, I could have prevented making so many mistakes. I could have split fewer pieces of wood. Maybe gotten to know a few more beautiful ladies...

MOTHER

Thanks a lot.

FATHER

...But the only way I could learn those things was by making all those mistakes in the first place.

NICK

You did all right, pop.

FATHER

Could have done... better.

NICK

You got nothing to be ashamed of...

FATHER

Got to hold on...

NICK

What?

FATHER

There's one more piece... Give you everything you need... Must hold on... (*His breathing is becoming labored*) Tony, Joey, are you listening?

NICK

Pop, what do you mean? One more piece?

FATHER

Got to hang on... for you boys... (*A bit frightened*) The white light...

NICK

What?

FATHER

Just like they said.

NICK

(*Frightened*) Dad?

MOTHER

Pappa...

TONY

(Has had it) Forget the white light pop. Tell us what you wanted to tell us before.

FATHER

Don't you see? The white light. It's that last piece of information. The piece that completes it all. The one that makes it all make sense. I... I can see it now. My God... it's... it's beautiful. *(Awed by what he sees before him. Then, complete understanding)*
Of course.

FATHER smiles serenely, then drops back in the bed, dead. MOTHER crosses herself, and silently weeps. Nick lowers his head and crosses himself. Then...

TONY

Of course what? Pop, of course what?

NICK

Forget it, Joey. He's gone.

TONY

But... he didn't tell us anything.

NICK

I know, Tone. He was sick.

TONY

But we was gonna get... He was gonna tell us where the... Pop, how could you leave without telling us anything?

NICK

He was... old, Tone. What are you gonna do?

TONY

Shit. Yea, I guess you're right. Damn it.

JOEY

(Trance-like) You're both wrong.

TONY

What you talking about, you idiot?

JOEY

He did.

NICK

Did what, Joey?

JOEY

I think I understand what he was trying to say.

TONY

You dumb ox, you don't understand shit –

JOEY

That's enough, Tony. I'm not gonna take that from you no more. I got stuff to say and you never let me say it.

TONY

So whattya wanna say?

JOEY

That I got my own ideas about things. That you never let me say them. You always dismiss what I got to say, Tone, and that ain't right.

TONY

So what does this mean?

JOEY

It means I don't need you, Tony, to tell me what to do, anymore.

TONY

What are you gonna do, start your own business?

JOEY

And why not?

NICK

Hey, listen Joey, I love you man, you're my brother and all, but –

JOEY

– But you don't think I'm smart enough to tie my shoes, let alone make it out there in the real world.

NICK

I never said –

JOEY

Never mind what you said. I know what you meant. *(To Mother)* Are you okay?

MOTHER

Yes. Are you?

JOEY

I've never been better. You stay here with dad. I'll call the funeral home and get Father Malone from the parish over here.

MOTHER

Thank you, Joey.

JOEY

I love you ma. (*Starts to exit. Stops at the door*) Oh, by the way, Tony? Nick?

They look at Joey

James Buchannan. And twelve.

Joey exits and after a few seconds the lights go to black.