Scene 1.1: Inside the Father’s house.

NARRATOR: All of the doors in the house have matching doorknobs except this one. A man walks to the end of the hallway, past a few bedrooms, and reaches for his keys. He only has three keys, one for his car, one for the house, and this one. Behind him, is a young boy – “young man” as he prefers it. The man inserts a key, into the old brass knob, rattling it a few times till it opens.

FATHER: [He peers into a room lit only by what’s left of the day’s light.] Gosh has it really been that long?

[He sees his guitars exactly where he last left them. The strings once pulled tight, like the spine that keeps his mother standing, has since slackened. His drum kit remains untouched since the last time he was in the room – one stick on the floor underneath the snare and the other driven straight through the head of a tom-tom, stuck in place.]

SON: [Taking in his surroundings.] Dad did you not get this room painted with the rest of the house a few years ago?

FATHER: [He looks around, noticing cobwebs in the corners of the room.] Ah, no son. I uh...this room has been locked...anyways, son, I wanted to show you something.

[He searches through a dusty old shelf. He pulls out an old cardboard sleeve that reads “Shake/A Change is Gonna Come.”]

FATHER: [Hesitantly.] These...these are the records I played for your mom when we were dating.

SON: [Surprised] Dad. Records!? Those were outdated when you were my age.

FATHER: Well son they just don’t make things the way they used to.

[He puts the record down on the turntable, brushing away the dust hiding out in the grooves. He lets a hint of a smile out as the needle hits the vinyl. As it passes through the initial dead wax, his shoulders exhale and his hands release.]
FATHER: This guy, Sam Cooke, he is my favorite.

SON: [The boy quietly sits down at the throne of the drum kit, realizing he had actually never seen records played.] Can’t say that I’ve heard of him.

[“I wish somebody would come and ease my troublin’ mind. I wish somebody would come and ease my troublin’ mind, oh yeah. Why won’t somebody come and ease my troubling mind? I sure wish somebody would come and ease my troublin’ mind. Oh yes I do.”]

SON: [The boy looks above the turntable and sees a picture. It’s of his mom and dad – his father winking at the camera with a confident grin, his mother rolling his eyes at him with her arms around him.] Dad how did you and mom even meet? She never told me.

SCENE 1.2: Inside the father’s room containing records and instruments. (Year is 2037)

Persons

THE FATHER
THE SON

[THE FATHER looks up at the photograph of himself and his wife. He sits silently for a moment, pondering his next action.]

FATHER: I think there is something else I need to show you. [He pauses, and then proceeds to stumble on his words] And I really don’t know why I have never thought of showing you this before ya know, I really feel like this is something...well, anyways ‘cmon let me show you.

[The boy nods. They get up and exit the room, he locks the door behind him]

SON: Dad if you don’t want to talk about it –

FATHER: [Shaky] No no no, it’s about time.

[They enter the master bedroom and they go into a closet. In it, the father pulls on an old chain that turns on a light bulb hanging above]

SON: That’s a weird light.

FATHER: [Chuckles] Yeah you are just getting the grand tour of things older than your pops today aren’t you? [He pulls out a large book.] Here we go. This should maybe ease your mind a bit. It’s an old photo book your mom made for me before we got married.
[The boy opens the book.]

SON: [Excited laugh] Dad, what is with the shoes!? And your hair...

FATHER: 2012 was a bad time for everyone’s clothes son. Believe it or not, my old Sperry’s were pretty sweet back in college. And yeah I didn’t even like my hair then. Anyways go on, I want to show you a few pictures.

[The boy flips a few pages, stopping briefly to gently wipe away some of the dust that has accumulated over the years.]

FATHER: Stop here for a second.

[The boy looks down at the book. He sees a very young version of his mother. The caption under the picture reads “Giants World Series Parade, 2010.”]

SCENE: 2.1 San Francisco, 2010.

[The Father and his wife are riding the train. They are standing along with hundreds of others.]

YOUNG FATHER: [Laughs.] Classes are probably so empty today.

YOUNG WIFE: Well you know it’s a special occasion when your mom lets you ditch class.

YF: [He raises his right eyebrow, grinning the way only a seventeen year-old kid would after ditching his first class ever as a high school senior.] Well, you know me. I live the fast life [Winks].

[She rolls her eyes, smiling as she looks out on the crowd gathered on the train. The train speakers call out, “Next stop: Millbrae station.” Nobody steps off the train, just more people trying to squish on.]

YW: I’m so glad we are here.

YF: [Looking at some old guy who fell asleep on the train. He giggles at the sight.] Ya me too. You tell me in April that I’d be going to the Giant’s World Series parade in November and I’da laughed at you.

YW: [Firmly] Babe.

[He looks over, realizing she wanted more than his ears. Along the way, his eyes catch a sea of orange and black, young and old. He finally arrives at her eyes. Blue. They lock in and for that moment there is only silence.]
YF: [Reaching one arm around her waist] Kate, I wouldn’t be here without you.

[“Next stop, San Bruno.” The young Kate rests her head on his shoulder and their hands come together – the finger in-between finger kind of way.]

SCENE 2.2: Inside the father’s bedroom. (Year is 2037)

FATHER: You know how whenever we take grandma to the Giants games, she always talks about the how they won the Series in 2010 and again in 2012?

SON: [Sharply] Do I remember? Yes. She always tears up and starts telling that story. Sheesh. I think I remember it better than her now...I wasn’t even there!

FATHER: Well your mom and I would go to a lot of games as well. We’d be out in the left field bleachers and your mom...[he pauses and rolls his eyes], your mom would always be the one to start the chant in the bleachers. “What’s the matter with Matt Kemp!? He’s a bum!” I’d throw popcorn at her and she’d just stick her tongue out at me.

SON: She sounds like true Giants fan. [He grins proudly, and then sneers. He nods his head in approval.] My mom was awesome.

FATHER: Yeah we were quite a team to say the least. Keep flipping.

[The boy flips a few pages and then stops on one picture in particular. He covers his mouth with both hands. He laughs and pounds his foot down.]

SON: Dad. [He laughs a few more times. He tries to seriously collect himself.] Dad. Just two quick questions. Um...first, is this your car? [Points to a picture.]

FATHER: [Preparing himself for the impending insult.] Yes.

SON: [He laughs, this time really hard.] What is that thing!? It’s huge!

FATHER: It’s one of the last Ford trucks they made. You laugh now, but those things could haul just about anything. Jeez, you and your comments. You are a lot like your mother ya know that?

SON: Okay okay okay. Question two. What are you doing!?

FATHER: [Embarrassed.] I was planking.

SON: [He raises both eyebrows in disbelief of what he heard.] Planking?
FATHER: Yeah, we thought it’d be cool to… look like a plank of wood lying on things.

SON: If this is kids thought was fun back in the day, it’s no wonder you went through the Great Recession.

FATHER: [He looks up, surprised and slightly offended.] Hey now! That was when I was growing up, not when I was an adult! Alright, just keep flipping.

[The son flips a few more pages. It is of his parents dancing. His mother has her curly brown hair in a ponytail and she is wearing a blue dress that goes to the top of her knees. His father is in a gray suit with a bow-tie. His hair is combed back, reminiscent of the early 1960’s. The caption reads “Oh man there ain’t nothin’ like Twistin the Night Away – Sam Cooke.”]

SON: Dad isn’t this the name of the guy on that record?

FATHER: [Looks over.]

SCENE 2.3: Outside the house. (2022)

[Kate and the young father arrive to the house by car. The doorknob on the house has a big red ribbon on it.]

KATE: [Looking from the car window toward the house.] Chris is that a ribbon on the door!? Did you put that there?

CHRIS: [Acting innocent, smirking and looking away. He smiles sheepishly.] I may or may not have.

KATE: [She blushes and giggles.] You are too cute. [She leans into Chris’ face seemingly to kiss him. Instead she looks him sternly in the eyes.] Too cute, motherfucker.

[The couple stares each other down for a moment.]

KATE: [She smiles and then kisses his cheek.] Alright! I want to see what you did to it!

[Kate runs excitedly out of the car to the door. There she attempts to open it, but it is locked.]

KATE: [Yelling over to Chris] Ugh! Open the door already! Also, this doorknob is ancient. I think somebody forgot to fix something [winks.]

CHRIS: What!? I think it’s cool!
[Kate runs over to Chris, wrapping her arms around him without giving him a chance to hug back]

KATE: [Sincerely.] I’m just kidding. It’s retro. It’s wonderful. All of it. [She kisses his cheek.] Now open the door!

[Chris only has two keys, one for the car and one for the house, yet he fiddles with them anyway.]

CHRIS: Alright, close your eyes. [He unlocks the door as she covers her eyes with both hands.]

KATE: Go go go go go!

[They step inside. The light from outside is a peeping-tom, peering through the blinds in the window, lighting up the living room just enough to reveal a vase of freshly cut roses on a side table.]

CHRIS: Keep your eyes shut for one second, this has to be perfect.

KATE: Quickly then!

[He leads her to the center of the living room. She sneaks a view between the openings in between her fingers as he runs over to a cabinet. There he turns on his turntable and keeps the needle hovering above the record.]

CHRIS: Alright, before you open your eyes, this is what is going to happen. We are going to dance. But you can’t open your eyes until we start moving.

[He drops the needle. It crackles a few times as the needle gets in place. He runs over to Kate and they begin to sway back and forth.]

CHRIS: Alright open your eyes!

[They are slowly revolving in the middle of the room. As they do this, Kate sees her new world for the first time and gazes around, her head on Chris’ shoulder.]

[Let me tell you ‘bout a place, somewhere up-a New York way, where the people are so gay, twistin’ the night away.]
Scene 3.1: Inside the house Chris and his son are looking at the photo album. (2037).

Persons

FATHER (CHRIS)
SON

FATHER: Ya, I played Sam Cooke for you earlier. This picture was from your Aunty Liz’s wedding. If I recall correctly, one of your mom’s cousins requested the DJ play “Twistin the Night Away” by Sam Cooke. Goodness, I remember your mom and I heard that opening horn section and we looked right at each other and then hopped right up and started swing dancing on the dance floor. Everyone at the wedding were so amazed that we knew how to swing dance that they all kinda watched us and started snapping pictures. I think this was one of the better ones.

SON: [Impressed] Dad you could swing dance?

FATHER: Oh sure, I took lessons before your mom and I’s wedding. She could dance before that but I wanted to surprise her. [He pauses.] Anyways, I...I think that’s enough of this for now. I’ll tell you what, if you want, you can go check out that room with instruments some more. You can play that record again if you want. Just click the “queue” button. I need to go make some food before your grandma comes over.

[The father puts away the photo album and heads over to the kitchen. The son walks into the dusty room turns on the record player once more and sits at the drum throne again, looking at the drum set.]

[The father gathers a few fruits around a cutting board. He begins slicing up an apple into a bowl to make a fruit salad.]

[The son reaches under the snare drum and picks up the drum stick. He begins tapping drums and exploring each drum’s reaction to him hitting it.]

SCENE 3.2: Inside the music room. (2030)

CHRIS: [Checking his watch.] Kate should be home at four with Andrew. [He waits for a moment, pondering what to do to pass the time. It is three o’clock.] Maybe I’ll go drum a bit.

[He walks down the hallway from the living room and enters his music room. He turns on his record player, setting the needle down on Sam Cooke’s rendition of “Tennessee Waltz: Live at the Copacabana.” He sits down on the drum set and picks up his sticks, begins a syncopated jazz rhythm on the large ride cymbal to his right as the song begins to pick up. He adds the left hand]
in, filling in the space left empty by the right hand. His right foot beats the bass drum at the beginning of each new measure. The song begins to reach its peak as he leads into the next section of the song with a fill that sweeps across the four drums in front of him. He loses himself in the drums – closing his eyes for a period of time, imagining himself in the band at the Copacabana Club. He’s played at his kit so many times that he does not need to see where the drums are to hit them. He looks over at ol’ Sam who is wooing some young girl in the first row. Mr. Cooke turns around to come back to the center of the stage and looks up at Chris, winking at him with a hidden thumb up by his waist. His daydream gets interrupted by a series of buzzes. The dream continues but the buzz gets louder and louder. It’s not coming from the drums, nor is it feedback from Sam’s mic. He opens his eyes and looks under his floor tom, realizing his phone is buzzing. He has one new text and 4 missed calls.

CHRIS: Oh shit! [He grabs his phone and opens the text. He reads it as the last song on the record comes to an end. The needle floats into the dead wax and creates an audible scratching. Opening the voicemails, he looks noticeably stressed. As the messages play he puts his sticks to rest on the snare, his free hand now alternating between swimming through the waves of his hair and anxiously pulling them. He finally drops the phone and grabs a drumstick, furiously driving it into the drumhead of a tom-tom. As he does this, there is a quick sharp whistle as the air rushes out of the drum.]

Scene 3.3: Inside the house. (2037).

Persons

FATHER (CHRIS)
SON (ANDREW)
GRANDMOTHER

FATHER: [In frustration, edging on tears] Goddamnit Kate! You were my best friend. Who am I supposed to talk to now!? If you are out there God, if you are real, then why? Why. What the hell did I ever do? I know, I’ve made mistakes, but really? Were they really that bad that you let this happen? I had it exactly how I dreamed of. I had my high school sweetheart, a new born son, a house I built with my own two hands but no, even in all my humbleness, even in my awareness of how lucky I was, I couldn’t be allowed to keep it. And now I’m left with reminders of her. She was my best friend! Fuck! [He clenches his knife and stabs straight through the pomegranate sitting on the cutting board. The red juices ooze out of the top of the fruit and run down the side, pooling up on the edge of the cutting board.]

[The son reaches for the stick lodged inside the tom-tom, wrapping his hand around it. He thinks for a moment about his actions. He decidedly tightens his grip and pulls the stick out quickly. As he does this, the dust gathered on the end of the stick is brushed as it comes out of the drum. The dust almost sparkles in the light as it floats around his face.]

[At the door, there is a knock.]

[He wipes the juice off of his hand and runs to open the door. His mother walks in and they hug as she kisses his cheek. He motions to her to sit on the couch with him. She is slow to move and her back worn out, her spine slackened over time. They sit on the couches across from each other.]

FATHER: Where’s dad, mom?

GRANDMOTHER: Oh Chris, you know he plays softball on Sundays. He always comes home and tells me how he kicked those young kids’ butts. I think he’s getting tired, but you know your father, he probably won’t ever stop playing.

FATHER: Yeah the old man is a proud one. I remember when he cussed out that other dad at my little league game. I think I was nine?

GRANDMOTHER: [Rolls her eyes] Yeah. Did I ever tell you he got angry at the mailman once?! I thought he’d stop givin us our mail after that. Oh yeah, he used to yell at everyone.

FATHER: Are you implying he doesn’t yell at everyone anymore?

GRANDMOTHER: Well. He’s an old man now. He gets home from softball and just eats and sleeps. Actually that’s most of what he does anyways.

FATHER: At least you two aren’t arguing anymore.

GRANDMOTHER: Oh we still argue, but it’s all silly. [Impersonating her husband] “Can you change this crap show? Did you put mayonnaise on this!?”

FATHER: You both need to stop bickering. It could be worse. [Pause]. Anyways mom, how are you feeling?

GRANDMOTHER: [She gives him a look but ignores the first part of his statement] I feel pretty good. The doctor said I’m the healthiest I’ve been in years. He says it’s cause I’ve been eating better, but I don’t think he knows what he’s talking about...I’m not eating any differently!

[The table in between them starts shaking. They both notice his phone buzzing on top of it. Chris looks at it for a moment.]

GRANDMOTHER: Are you going to pick that up? Who is it?

CHRIS: [Looks at his phone, then hesitantly] It’s Kate.
GRANDMOTHER: [Somewhat surprised] Well are you going to answer? I can wait, that’s all I do anymore anyways...

CHRIS: The phone number is still Italian.

GRANDMOTHER: [Disapprovingly] So what? Pick it up, what if she wants to come back?

CHRIS: The number is still Italian.

[Inside the music room, the son turns back around from the drum set and looks up over the record player at the picture of his parents.]

SON: He’s never going to tell me is he?

[They tell me when you tell somebody your troubles, trouble fly away from you. I’m looking, I’m looking I’m looking for somebody I can tell my troubles to. Why won’t somebody come and ease my troublin’ mind? I sure wish somebody would come and ease my troublin’ mind, oh yeah]

[Chris and his mother both sit in silence now, watching the phone buzz. Chris has his back against the couch and one leg over another. He stares emptily at the phone.]

Scene 4.1 Text and voicemails. (2030).

[Hey man its Nick, I told Kate I wouldn’t text you yet, but I’m dropping her off at the airport right now. She’s leaving man. Pick up your phone already. Fuck man, I’m so sorry.]

[You have four. New voicemails. You have no. Saved voicemails. First voicemail:]

[Chris it’s me, can you call me back as soon as possible?]

[Next voicemail:]

[Chris it’s really important, I need you to pick up. Call me back.]

[Next voicemail:]

[Jesus Christ Chris, can you pick up the damn phone. I’m leaving. For Italy. I’m gonna stay at my grandpa’s old place. And I don’t know if I’m coming back. I need time. Chris, we’ve been together since junior year of high school. It’s been over 25 years. I never got to learn what it’s like to be without you. I’m so sorry. I just want to see things with my own eyes. You did everything and more for me. I just need]
to go now. I’m so sorry. I’ll call you when I get to my grandpa’s house, cause I know you will have questions. Goodbye.]

[Next voicemail:]

[Hello Mr. McCowan, your wife didn’t pick up your son at the end of the regular school day like she usually does. He’s fine right now, he’s with the rest of our after-school kids right now, but I just wanted to let you know just in case you needed to come get him. Thanks, have a nice day.]

Scene 4.2 In the living room. (2037).

[The son gets up from the drums and heads to the living room where he hears chatter.]

ANDREW (SON): Hey Grandma! [He walks over to her arms wide open. He bends over to hug his grandmother so she doesn’t have to get up. On his way down, she gives him a peck on the cheek.]  
GRANDMOTHER: Heya sonny! What’ve you been up today?!

ANDREW: Well, dad showed me some stuff about mom. He’s got this old photo book he showed me. That, and a bunch of old records and things.

[The grandma peers over at Chris before speaking, giving him the look that clearly says, “You showed him pictures of his mother, and yet you didn’t pick up the phone?”]

Grandmother: Oh yes, that’s right. A little blast from the past today eh?

ANDREW: Yeah...[he stops and remembers that his grandmother and his mother both loved the Giants.] Grandma, did you go to many Giants games with my mom?

CHRIS: Mom, I made some fruit salad, let me get that. [He starts to get up.]

GRANDMOTHER: Sit down, maybe you can help me with this story.

[Chris sighs and the sits back down.]

GRANDMOTHER: I think it was your father’s junior year of high school, and we took a trip into the city to go watch the Giants play the Cardinals. Of course we offered Kate to come too, so she came along. I remember your father and your mother hopped in the back seat of the van for the ride up and gave your uncle the middle row all to himself – which never happened because your father always got the middle row. I kept a close eye on those two, cause I had a feeling they were getting frisky in the back. Anyways...[the Grandmother is visibly talking but the audience cannot hear her anymore.]
Chris: [Why are you talking about this...Ya, you’re damn right I was getting frisky back there. Didn’t bring a blanket just cause it was cold mom. Shit. We got frisky around adults a lot. How’d we never get caught? Ah who cares. Wait. I care. I haven’t gotten any in over seven years. I really should meet new people. Who am I kidding? I’m in my forties. Do women still dig that salt and pepper look? They did when I was a kid. George Clooney. That man is still getting more than me.]  

[Chris realizes his thoughts are all over the place and he gets up.]  

CHRIS: Mom, I’ll be right back.  

[The grandmother dismisses him, and continues telling her story until he leaves the room.]  

GRANDMOTHER: Alright sonny. Listen up cause I only have a few minutes before he comes back in here. I’ll admit, your father has a lot to tell you about your mother, but he married her, so that is his story to tell. But goddamnit, I gave birth to that big ol’ head of his so I can tell you about him.  

[Andrew cringes at the slightest thought of his grandmother giving birth.]  

GRANDMOTHER: Your father was a funny, strong, and loving young man. Goodness did he love your mother. I will tell you, I was not a huge fan of your mother at first. She was raised with money and we didn’t have quite as much. She was from the “other side of town.” Your father got so mad at me one day when I said something a bit rude about your mother. That was new for me. I think that was the first time he ever yelled at me over something that wasn’t about getting grounded. I think from then on, I came around and your mom started to grow on me. The point is...the point is, your father has not been the same without your mom. I don’t think he ever got over losing his best friend...  

Scene 5.1 In the living room. (2037).  

Setting: It is nighttime, Chris is watching the game in the living room.  

[Andrew walks in from the hallway.]  

ANDREW: Hey dad.  

CHRIS: Hey son.  

[Andrew sits on the couch next to his dad. They both are eating chips and are mesmerized by the game. It is dark, and the lights on the T.V screen project onto their faces, changing every few seconds. They continue talking, only interrupted by exciting moments in the game.]  

ANDREW: Where was grandpa today?...Ah c’mon blue that wasn’t a strike.
CHRIS: He was playing softball... *strike is called where the ball crosses the plate, not where the catcher catches it.*

ANDREW: [Nonchalantly] Oh that makes sense. I was just wondering. I didn’t hear any arguing when I came into the living room – I usually come in and it sounds like two pissy cats screeching at each other.

CHRIS: [Chris contemplates what Andrew just said. He looks over at him, but Andrew just keeps watching the game. Chris fails at holding back a smirk and a bit of a laugh.] [Under his breath] *Apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.* [He smiles. The father and son spend the rest of the night watching the game together.]