

(Project: Final sequel to Saturday Night Fever, basic plot Tony is a successful director of films, and a woman has recently accused him of misconduct in a Me, Too group. Annette is in town doing publicity about an autobiography and they are meeting at a friend's business after hours that is closed to the public)

(Scene INT small café or coffee shop, late night)

ANNETTE walks in and spots TONY in the corner, and joins him. They hug in greeting.

TONY: Hey, Annette. It's great to see you. It's been awhile, when was it, the St. Jude benefit, right? That was awhile back. How long are you going to be in town?

ANNETTE: Just three days. I have a publicity thing for my book, and a couple of talk shows.

TONY: I actually read it. It's not my usual kind of reading, you know.

ANNETTE: I know. You must be pretty busy these days. I see your projects had quite a few nominations this year.

TONY: You keep up with the awards? I thought you were just interested in the red carpet fashions.

ANNETTE: I still am interested in that, but I'm also interested in the actors, directors, screenwriters. That reminds me, I remember you used to talk about a project where you would write, direct and act. Is that going to happen anytime soon?

TONY: Are you kidding? It would be a dream come true. But when you work with producers who are just wanting you to do whatever you did before that made them big money, it's hard to get them onboard for something that's in any way different.

ANNETTE: I could see you also producing. You could probably get investors.

TONY: I may end up backing it myself and cut the middlemen out, although my wife isn't too keen on that idea.

ANNETTE: How is she? I actually saw her a couple of weeks ago at the climate change march. She was one of the speakers.

TONY: She's great. That's been her passion now for years. She's doing another event in a couple of weeks in New Jersey.

ANNETTE: Her speech was amazing. She really had the crowd going.

TONY: She doesn't write a speech and rehearse it, either, it's all off the top of her head. She knows all the scary statistics. She says the message comes across better when it's more natural, like a conversation with a friend.

ANNETTE: That is exactly how it felt, like she was speaking directly to each of us.

TONY: So anyway, your book was amazing. It did get me into a little hot water, though, with my wife. I know that you and I haven't really talked much about what happened the night Bobby died, so I was surprised to see you wrote about it, without mentioning anybody's real name. I guess I should thank you for that, anyway. Still, my wife wouldn't speak to me for a week after she read it. She knew how Bobby died, but she didn't know about what happened to you. I tried to explain to her it wasn't like you were an innocent victim, though. You decided to do drugs and hop into a car with four guys. You didn't report it to the cops or anything. She just rolled her eyes at me, said something about mansplaining and victim blaming that I didn't really get, and I slept on the couch that night. I have no idea why she thought it was my fault.

ANNETTE: (Rolling her eyes) Oh, Tony, Tony. I thought by now you would have figured that out. You definitely had a starring role in that drama. You don't want to think so, I can understand that, but what I wrote about you in the book is how I truly feel about it. It's harder for me to talk to you about it than to write about it, but it looks like I'm going to have to try to help you understand.

Remember in high school when our drama club chose to do the play, High Society? I was Tracy Lord, trying to sound like Katherine Hepburn, and you were Mike Connor, trying to sound like Frank Sinatra.

TONY: Oh, yeah. I remember all those rehearsals trying to fiddle with our voices until the director -- who had a lot of common sense, that guy -- told us both to knock it off and talk normally. Except he did that My Fair Lady thing with you to lose the Brooklyn accent so you could talk like a debutante. That 's a handy skill, isn't it?

ANNETTE: Oh, yeah. I forgot about that. I don't know what I was thinking, a Brooklyn girl trying to sound like Katherine Hepburn in Philadelphia Story when we were actually doing the Grace Kelly version of it. But that's not the point I was just trying to make here. There was a scene in it where Mike is explaining to C.K. Dexter-Haven what happened the night he spent with Tracy. He told him that nothing happened. And the reason for that was because he would never have taken advantage of Tracy in that condition. Remember that line? It came right after you said you deposited Tracy at the house and returned, nothing happened, and my line was, "Why? Was I so cold? So forbidding?"

TONY: Let's see if I can remember it. "Not at all. On the contrary but you were somewhat the worse or the better for the wine and there are rules about such things."

ANNETTE: "There are rules about such things." (PAUSE) Whatever happened to those rules, Tony?

TONY: Those were the 50s, we were living in the 70s.

ANNETTE: Don't try to pretend men were better behaved in the 50s than the 70s. Although it was confusing because men who were exploring consciousness raising then seemed to translate it

only into the anti-war protests, not their social interactions with women. They still seemed to cling to the same roles no matter how enlightened they thought they were then. There would be lip service about not assigning roles based on gender, then they would ask the only woman in the room to go get them some coffee. And I know since the Me, Too movement cropped up the victim blaming has been amplified and some people feel justified doing that. They want the double standards to be put back into place or something. It's easier, I suppose, to cling to roles than to be honest and real. That can get messy and confusing and it's hard for some folks to just let people be people.

Still, I'll never understand how you guys let what happened to me in that car happen. We weren't strangers. I knew you, Joey and Bobby all through grade school and high school. I know I wasn't completely innocent, I was using Joey to make you jealous, but I didn't expect Joey to treat me as if I was his property and to just hand me over to someone else. That was a side of him I had never seen. But you all just sat there and let Double J hop into the back seat. He was the only one I didn't really know or even like back then, but I never expected that to happen.

TONY: Oh, give me a break. That was 40 years ago. Do you expect me to go back and examine every little thing that happened back then? Isn't it enough that I changed after that night on the bridge? I left that sad, racist, dysfunctional, destructive life behind me. I left Brooklyn behind me. It looks like you've done the same, Annette. You've done all right for yourself. I think you need to just focus on the present, you have things pretty good now. Why not just leave the past in the past?

(MUSIC: Indigo Girls, Galileo, plays in the background)

ANNETTE: First of all, it wasn't a little thing. Second, I think we've both taken Brooklyn right along with us wherever we've gone. And that's not necessarily a bad thing. If nothing else, we lived through some great examples of how not to be. But what's changed if you never once look back and examine the really difficult things that happened? Socrates said an unexamined life is not worth living. You can't be free and transparent until you have done the work that needs to be done. Look at what's happening to you now. I don't know all the details about what that woman is saying or who she is, or what happened between the two of you. I don't make any judgment on that, although I've got to tell you, I do tend to believe women. It would be rare for someone to just make something like that up given the abuse that is heaped upon her for speaking out. Plus I do know a side of you that makes me think that there is some truth in her story.

TONY: She remembers things a lot differently than I do, that's for sure. But it was a difficult time for me. I was separated from my wife during that project and drinking more. I'm really not even supposed to talk about it until it's been handled. Still, even that was over 20 years ago. What is the point of these women dredging up the past now?

ANNETTE: I explained that in depth in my book. In fact, there is a whole chapter discussing why women are talking about these things now. Mostly it's because we want things to be better for

our daughters. In my daily life, I do mostly focus on the here and now. I have a great husband, my kids are amazing, and I've worked hard for a successful career, but it still was pretty unexpected. But I don't think I would have had any of that if I hadn't gone back to examine every moment of what happened the night Bobby died.

I know I made some bad choices, I was immature but I wanted to appear to be sophisticated, more free like some of the women I was meeting in my consciousness raising group back then. It took me some time to realize that incapacitating yourself with drugs isn't freedom, it's self-destruction. Some think it frees the mind, but what I experienced was anything but freedom. I have taken responsibility for my part in it, and I understand why I did it. It took me years, but I have forgiven myself. But I can't forget or quite forgive your part in it, Tony. I want to, believe me. You were someone I've always admired. I even had a pretty obvious crush on you at the time, and you knew it. I went from being your dance partner to being shoved aside with no warning.

I was big on people pleasing back then, and I was trying anything to be and do what I thought you'd want. But there was no way to do that because of the way you saw me, the way you saw women in general. You said I just wanted to be a married sister, so it was obvious you saw me as a good girl, and you also made it clear that wasn't what you wanted. Then you said there were two types of women, and even then I told you maybe I was both. I was starting to see more possibilities than besides being tied to stereotype roles of a good girl or a slut. Nobody really seemed to talk much or even to think that much back in Brooklyn, at least not in that club, that neighborhood.

But, Tony, there were so many times you could have stopped what happened that night. I can't help remembering each time you let me down, starting that night before I even got into the car. When Joey said to you, why did it matter, you didn't care about me, you didn't say a word. You could have said something, anything, like, "I'm not in love with her, but she's been my dance partner, she's my friend." But you said nothing. You could have reminded them of those lines you said as Mike Connor back in high school, that there are rules about such things and had them drive me home. You definitely could have stopped Double J. You could have shoved him back into the front seat and hopped in the back seat, yourself, instead. You could have said something, done something. You could have --

TONY: I wasn't really thinking clearly myself that night. I had a lot going on. We were all young and stupid. But what happened to you was not my fault.

ANNETTE: Let me finish, please. This is hard to say and I need to get it all out. Wait until I'm done talking, please.

TONY: Sorry. Okay. I won't interrupt. (Sarcastically) I'll consider you as the one holding the talking stick and will wait until you pass it to me.

ANNETTE: Thank you. I do have a problem with being interrupted, it throws me off track when I have something important to say.

After Double J came into the back seat, when I was crying and saying no, I could tell Bobby was freaking out, but he obviously didn't think he could do anything. You weren't doing anything, and he took his cues from you. Double J just made fun of me for crying, and ignored me. Then he raped me, while you three guys in the front seat just let me cry and scream. All of that was just forgotten after Bobby fell off the bridge. I can't help think that if he hadn't been upset by what all of you allowed to happen to me, he wouldn't have been so wired that he'd risk his life in the first place by climbing so high. He never did that before. I know he climbed it part-way, but not on that side, not where there wasn't a safe place to drop to or from a height where it would do any harm if he had fallen. I don't think that was all just about not wanting to marry his pregnant girlfriend. Guys got married, they got divorced later, it wasn't a prison sentence. Bobby falling from the bridge was truly a nightmare, and it changed just about everybody. Nobody in their 20s thinks, even when they take incredible risks, that it's going to end in death. A few days later, Joey came to me, crying and he apologized. I never saw Double J again after that night. He got deeper in with some pretty creepy guys, and ended up in prison last I heard for arson and murder. Then you, of course, went the other way, crossed the bridge and never looked back.

TONY: Can I speak now?

ANNETTE NODS

TONY: I can't say I never looked back. I felt bad about it, but I didn't see it as my fault at the time. I thought it was all on you for taking the drugs and getting into the car in the first place. But I have thought about it and felt bad about it. Maybe because I was there, you felt it was safe or something, but you didn't have to get into that car, Annette. Even if you were stoned, you could have still asked Joey to take you home in a taxi or something. Why would you get into a car with four guys?

ANNETTE: My judgment was impaired, and like you said, you were there and I didn't think it was unsafe. I knew you, Joey and Bobby pretty well. I just wanted to make you jealous. I wanted you to stop seeing me as just a good girl like my married sisters, see me as someone more interesting, like Stephanie. She just seemed --

TONY: Sorry, I just have to interrupt here. That's just rich. Just a few minutes before I met up with you guys, Stephanie kicked me out of the car when I tried to make it with her in the back seat. She had some self-respect. How did you think doing it with Joey, with three other guys in the car, would make me see you as anything other than a cunt?

ANNETTE: There's that word, salt and vinegar in the wound yet again, Tony? It's what you called me immediately afterwards when I was telling you that I had clearly said no. Is that "two kinds of women" limitation still a part of you? I told you even back then that I was both. I'm a human

being, I make mistakes. At that time, I was just learning to explore my own sexuality. The Catholic Church has a way of stifling women in that regard, well, every regard, really, at least the ones who paid attention to what they were preaching. I did take it pretty seriously all through school. You were an altar boy, yourself, as I remember. You had that deck of holy cards you used to carry with you and your brother went into the seminary.

But you're partly right, I made some terrible choices that night. I said that I had to work on forgiving myself for that, but I have because I know what was going on inside of myself then. I thought I was being free and in charge of myself, slipping the bondage of that stereotypical expectation that was imposed upon me mostly by men. I knew they were limited in their thinking, so it made no sense for me to accept their rules anymore in my own life, in my own choices. But that was what led me to be too stoned that night to know what I was doing. Again, I thought taking those pills was freeing my mind, letting go of the expected conventions to go beyond their limitations. It was the 70s, there was a lot of that going on. There was the philosophy that doing drugs expanded your mind, provided a deeper consciousness. That may have been true under more guided circumstances, but not the way I used them that night, to escape the pain of being pushed aside.

(PAUSE) (ANNETTE mimes handing a stick to TONY, who appears to be a little shook up)

TONY: I hate that that whole night happened. I had no way of knowing all that was going on inside of you. I didn't look beyond the surface, I guess. I just saw you lowering yourself and it disgusted me. But you're right, Annette. I could have stopped it. If I hadn't been so full of myself back then, maybe I would have done something differently. I am beginning to realize something now. I've never really thought about women's feelings that deeply. I never really thought to look beyond gender roles and just allow a woman to be a natural person, to make the kind of mistakes a man might make, like getting stoned and being a fool, without being labeled for it. I can see how unfair it all was to you, how you paid a much higher price than you should have for it. If I could go back in time and undo it, believe me, I would.

And I think you're right about Bobby. I never even thought to factor that in before. His hands were shaking on the wheel while Double J attacked you. He always was much more sensitive than the rest of us. I'm really sorry, Annette. I made things worse for you back then and again even tonight. You didn't deserve that, and I should have stopped it. I'm so sorry. If you could ever forgive me, I'd -- (chokes up)

ANNETTE: That's what I needed to hear. Thank you, Tony. Of course I can forgive you now.

TONY: It was abrupt the way I went after Stephanie and just dropped you. I didn't even think how it may have made you feel. I thought she was teaching me more about how life could be and at that point I just wanted things to be better.

ANNETTE: You know, she was pretty upset when you gave your first prize check away to the Hispanic couple. She used some racial slurs in the ladies room, and it was lucky it was just her, one of

her girlfriends and me in there at the time. It could have started a riot. She said she had plans for that money and you didn't even stop to ask her about it before giving her money away. In many ways, you were already way ahead of her. You were ready to stop that feud between the Hispanic guys and the white guys in the neighborhood, so you were already a notch above average back then.

TONY:            Yeah, I paid her back before we broke up. She wanted to buy a sofa bed for her new apartment. I went and got her one. She didn't seem happy about that either, because it wasn't the one she picked out. So then we had to return it and get the one she wanted. But we did end up parting on pretty good terms anyway. I haven't seen her in years. Last I heard she bought a vineyard near Tuscany and lives there most of the year now.

ANNETTE:       Really? Good for her. (Phone rings, glances at it). It's been great seeing you again, Tony, I've got to run.

TONY:            You, too, Annette. You've given me a lot to think about. Maybe I'll read the rest of your book. Truth is, I only read the one chapter.

ANNETTE:       I figured as much. Take care, Tony.

(EXITS COFFEE SHOP)