

"STEP SIX"

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. THE BRIDGE -- DAY.

1

A long thin bridge, blurred. TOM BALATRO, late 20's, in jeans and off-white T-Shirt, lies in the middle, his nose bloody.

Slowly opening his eyes, he turns and looks over his shoulder, down the walkway.

TOM (VO)
My mother always said that
hindsight is a wonderful thing.

A figure in brown boots APPROACHES at a fast walk, as Tom attempts, and fails, to get up.

TOM (VO)
But then, she was myopic, and
wore coke-bottle glasses, so
I'm not sure how invested she
was in the philosophy.

He winces as he touches his head.

TOM (VO)
At any rate, in hindsight, I
realize that contrary to what
most people say, the first
step isn't the hardest.

The figure reaches Tom and casts a shadow over him. Tom squints up.

TOM (VO)
See, I had 12 steps, and the
hardest one was in the the middle.

INT. RESTROOM OF THE RUSTY TROMBONE -- EVE.

2

A GOON holds Tom by his scruff and SMASHES his head between a toilet bowl and the lid. WORMWOOD, late 50's, in a dress suit, looks on.

TOM (VO)
Step one: Admit you have a
problem and that you're
powerless against it. No shit
I have some issues! Do I look
very powerful right now?
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

2

TOM (VO; CONT'D)

(Beat)

I admit it. I have a problem.
Give me the fucking Medal of
Honor.

A final SMASH. Tom is almost crying and unable to break free. Wormwood leans down beside his face, very calmly.

WORMWOOD

Respect, Mr Balatro, that's
all that I ask for. I'm an old
man. I don't have much to look
forward to anymore; I've
already got money, I lost my
looks years ago. Hell, I'd
need a splint on my dick just
to keep it up. I enjoy the
little things...

Suddenly, he reaches for the lid, and SLAMS it with every
shouted word.

WORMWOOD

Like..a little..fucking..respect!

Tom YELPS in pain.

TOM

Mr Wormwood. I swear to God, I
can get what you want. I just
need a ...

Wormwood SMASHES the lid again.

WORMWOOD

Fuck..up!

He DROPS the lid and the goon PUSHES Tom's head into the
bowl.

WORMWOOD

Fix it! Tomorrow, at the
bridge, have it taken care of,
or you're fucked.

He FLUSHES the toilet and leaves with the goon.

TOM

(Echoing)

Jesus Christ!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

2

Tom pulls his head out and SLUMPS back against the wall, wiping his face and head off.

TOM(VO)
Speaking of, step two; believe
in a force greater than
yourself.

(Beat)
Now the church and I never saw
eye to eye, so I had to get
inventive.

INT. NA MEETING HALL -- EVE.

3

WILLA's lips, mouthing slowly, NO SOUND.

TOM (VO)
She was sweet, pretty, and she
actually listened to my shit.
I worshipped her. She was the
perfect higher power.

WILLA
Did you hear what I said?

Tom is shaken out of ogling her lips, and looks beaten up. Willa is late 30's, girl-next-door pretty. They are standing by a refreshment table as people wearing name tags mingle around them.

TOM
What?

WILLA
I was asking if you had gone
six rounds with Tyson. You
look like shit, Tom.

Willa moves away from the table and is followed by Tom.

TOM (VO)
She could say the most
wonderful things.

TOM
I tripped.

WILLA
On anything specific? You
haven't been to a meeting in
two weeks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

3

TOM

And I haven't used in two weeks.

WILLA

Two weeks?

A pause from Tom.

TOM (VO)

Step three: Turn your will and life over to your higher power.

TOM

Two days.

WILLA

Well, at least you're back.
How's the soul searching going?

Tom fumbles around in his pocket.

TOM (VO)

Step four: Make an exact list of everything you've done wrong.

He pulls out a grubby and folded piece of paper, and hands it to her.

TOM

Finished it yesterday. It was a breeze.

She scans it briefly before handing it back distractedly and taking her seat in a large circle.

WILLA

You're not kidding anybody, a guy like you could fill a page in a day, and still have time to steal an old lady's purse.

Tom sits down next to her and starts to reply, but is interrupted by the FACILITATOR.

FACILITATOR

Welcome everyone, tonight we'll be focusing on some steps work. Now we all know that the first step is the hardest...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

3

The facilitator is heard faintly in the background as Willa turns to Tom and smiles.

INT. PAYPHONE -- EVE.

4

Tom dials and listens.

TOM'S FATHER (OS)

Hello you've reached the
Balatro's. Please leave a
message and we'll get back to
you. Have a good day.

Tom winces.

TOM

Hey Dad, Mom. Um, I just
wanted to call and say that...

A pause. Tom silently kicks himself.

TOM

I... met this girl. Well, no I
mean um, a woman, obviously.
I... I made this list...
Anyway, I'll try and get you
later. Tell Susie I said hi.

He drops the receiver onto the cradle and lights a
cigarette.

INT. NA MEETING HALL -- EVE.

5

People are filing out.

TOM

I tried to call my dad last night.

WILLA

And?

TOM

And nothing, I couldn't go
through with it.

Willa puts her hand on his.

WILLA

I'm sorry.

Tom grabs on, but Willa pulls her hand away slowly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

5

WILLA

What happened?

TOM

I don't know, I started to leave a message, then realized if I was going to apologize, he'd actually want me to stop using... then I started to ramble.

WILLA

You're good at that.

Tom gives a weak smile.

WILLA

Tom, you called him too soon, you're not ready to make amends yet because you haven't really accepted your faults. I mean, you haven't even made a serious attempt to stop using.

TOM

Willa...

WILLA

No, listen. You've got a foot in both worlds Tom, it's either one or the other. Go live that life, or live this one.

TOM

I don't know if I...

WILLA

You're here with me right now, right?

Tom smiles brightly, and takes her hand. She doesn't resist.

TOM

You're a good friend.

Willa chuckles.

WILLA

Well, this is the new me. I used to live a double life too.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

5

WILLA (CONT'D)

Fucked up, practically a crack-whore, living in New Mexico with an extremely dangerous and abusive man.

(Beat)

And still trying to go to NA?
You wouldn't have even recognized me!

Tom stares at her a moment and his face falls. He's staring at Willa, as if for the first time. She continues.

WILLA (CONT)

But I made the choice to get out. I had to. I couldn't fix my life and keep doing that to myself. That's what you need to do... Are you OK?

Tom is still staring. Willa looks a little worried.

WILLA

I'm sorry Tom, I didn't mean to unload on you. I don't normally tell people, but.. well, I'm your sponsor.

Tom gets up in a daze, fumbling with his chair.

TOM

I have to go, Willa.

Willa is more annoyed now.

WILLA

Tom, don't get freaked out.
This isn't impossible.

TOM

I can't talk about this right now.

Tom walks away without looking back. Sitting silently, Willa looks both frustrated and worried.

INT. RESTROOM OF THE RUSTY TROMBONE -- EVE.

6

Tom is sitting on one of the bowls. Wormwood bursts in and stands in front of him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

6

WORMWOOD

Balatro, you need to pick a better meeting place. If I hang around in anymore restrooms, my clients are going to think I'm a tutti-frutti.

TOM

I'm sorry Mr Wormwood. It's the quietest and easiest place I know.

WORMWOOD

Queerest, more like.

They stare at each other.

WORMWOOD

Well?

TOM

I came to tell you that I should be able to get you what you want.

WORMWOOD

It's about fucking...

TOM (OVER)

I need more.

WORMWOOD

...time. Fuck Balatro, do I look like the fairy godmother? Did you want me to wave my wand and turn you into a fucking pumpkin?

He smacks Tom hard in the face. Tom turns with the hit and turns back.

TOM

It's not that easy.

WORMWOOD

Really, well maybe if you weren't fucking around with Narcotics Anonymous, you'd be able to get some work done. Why are you bothering with those candy-asses? They can't help you.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

6

TOM

Can I get more time or not?

Wormwood hits him again.

WORMWOOD

No way fuckhead. Do or die!

Wormwood storms out. Tom drops his head into his hands.

EXT. THE BRIDGE -- DAY.

7

Tom stands on the bridge, his head in his hands, looking down over the side. He RUNS a stick along the bars.

Willa approaches from the far side.

A few feet away, she joins Tom in looking over the side.

WILLA

So, meet me at the bridge, huh?
If you're gonna jump, make
sure and leave your wallet
behind, I've had a hankering
for HÄAGEN-DAZS all morning.

Tom throws the stick over the side.

TOM

I should jump. I don't
deserve to be here. I'm a
total fuck-up!

Willa moves closer.

WILLA

OK, where'd that come from?
Who doesn't fuck-up some times?

TOM

Yeah, but I was born a fuck-up!
I can't help it, I always find
myself in these situations.

WILLA

Aww, poor little Tom. No
control over his life. Always
somebody else's fault. Maybe
instead of whining you should
start taking some responsibility!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

7

Tom turns and faces her, teary.

TOM

For what? Getting fired! Fine, I'm responsible for that. I'm responsible for losing contact with my family and friends. I'm responsible for global warming, SARS and the fucking mice in my apartment.

Willa puts her hand on his shoulder.

WILLA

Tom, you're getting help for yourself now. It's not about beating yourself up, it's about being honest about what you've done.

TOM

You don't get it.

WILLA

No, it's OK...

He turns and grabs her, looking into her eyes intensely.

TOM (VO)

Step five: Admit your faults.

TOM

I'm not a good person. I've done terrible things in my life, things I can't change.

Tom grips Willa harder. She looks at him, frightened.

TOM

I replace one bad decision for another. I give up coke, and I find Ketamine. I join NA, then I fall in love with my sponsor. How fucked up is that?

A beat, then he pulls Willa to him and kisses her hard.

Willa STRUGGLES to get free.

She PUSHES Tom off and they stare at each other for a moment.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

7

WILLA

Fuck you!

She PUNCHES him hard on the nose.

He STUMBLES back and loses his balance, FALLING to the ground.

POV from the ground of Willa walking away, in brown shoes.

FADE TO BLACK.

FADE IN:

EXT. THE BRIDGE -- DAY.

8

Tom is on the bridge, squinting up at the shadow-casting figure. A stubby hand reaches down.

WORMWOOD

Get up, you dumb shit!

Tom accepts his hand and is pulled up to Wormwood's level.

WORMWOOD

I gotta hand it to you Balatro,
I really didn't think that NA
shit was good for you.

Tom looks over Wormwood's shoulder. The goon is DRIVING Willa away in a car. She is pressed up against the window, a mixture of fear and disappointment is on her face as she stares at Tom.

WORMWOOD (OS)

But it looks like it was good
for something.

Tom looks back to Wormwood, defeated.

TOM

Why did you need me? Why
didn't you just go find her
yourself.

WORMWOOD

Where's the fun in that? She
never would have come to meet
me here anyway. She's a
weasely fucked up little bitch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

8

Tom stares at his feet.

WORMWOOD

Shit, Balatro. Don't look so
upset, she was no fucking angel.

Tom lifts his head up and stares him dead in the eye.
Wormwood puts his hand on his shoulder.

WORMWOOD

Come on, I'll buy you a drink.

Tom reluctantly turns around and walks across the bridge
with Wormwood.

TOM (VO)

Step six: Acceptance.

FADE OUT.