

FADE IN:

INT. TUCK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - MORNING

We move slowly towards a bed, hearing the sound of movement.

TUCK (V.O.)

This is a story. About love.

We slide onto the bed where we meet VIOLET "TUCK" TUCKER, a young woman in her mid twenties. Middle class, constantly fighting her own demons by keeping herself tightly controlled

Tuck rolls over in the bed, unable to sleep anymore, but the almost unenthusiastic slowness with which she moves tells us she doesn't sleep much anyway. She looks at the alarm clock next to her bed (the clock should show us a DATE as well).

She stalls for a moment longer in bed, but then finally pushes herself up, very much like someone going through the motions. As she walks towards the bathroom, we hear:

BARRY (O.S.)

People, they always mean well, I think, but everyone just wants me to smile through it and feel better so they can feel better, too.

FADE TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT (PAST)

Depression Alliance - a meeting for those struggling with depression and the coping methods used to handle it (such as cutting, alcohol, drugs, etc). We see the circle of chairs but it's most empty now, the meeting pretty much over.

Tuck enters the frame. She looks far less emotional than she did before, more in control of the situation and herself. In this room, she's the veteran, the one that everyone goes to and can depend on. She's the one who has been through it all. Even so, we sense how tightly reigned in she is - how much she is desperately afraid of ever losing a bit of control.

She steps towards a young man - BARRY (20s) - who has a habit of chewing on his nails. He's who we heard speaking before.

TUCK

(gently)

Barry, how much of that is what you know and how much is what you fear?

He shifts anxiously, his hands twitching. It's early in the process for him and he still clutches at his cup of coffee.

BARRY

I don't know. Always been easier to do other stuff so I don't have to think about it. To drink and just forget. When it's happening, I feel like I'm alive. I'm not wondering what comes next. But then -

A door opens behind them but Tuck stays focused on Barry.

TUCK

But then you wake up.
(off his nod)
You're doing well. I know it's hard to see the progress that you're making when you're at the beginning of the road as you are, but every step that you take truly does matter. I hope you believe that.

Barry nods and they share an awkward smile before he leaves.

Tuck turns around, and that's when she sees the newcomer ASHLEY CONWAY (20s). Lonely, wild, always at war with the passions of her heart and the sad realities of the world.

ASHLEY

Guess I'm too late.

She shrugs her shoulders, like it doesn't matter, but Tuck clocks her arms - the CUTTING SCARS and the TRACK MARKS.

TUCK

They're locking up the room in a few minutes, but I have a free night if you'd like to talk.

Ashley looks around the room, at everyone else there (these aren't the kind of people a "normal" person would expect to see here - they're all very ordinary, not "freaks" at all).

Still, she's uncomfortable here, "talking" isn't her thing.

ASHLEY

Nah, that's okay. Not a big deal.

TUCK

I don't know about you, but I could really use some hot coffee right about now, and the pot over there is rather alarmingly empty.

They meet eyes and Tuck is putting herself out there for Ashley - for her own reasons certainly, but also because Ashley hasn't stopped fidgeting since she came inside.

TUCK (CONT'D)

Why did you come here tonight?

ASHLEY

Because if I didn't, I was afraid I might not be around in the morning. And part of me thinks that would be best for everyone. Especially me.

The implications of this land hard, and Ashley is immediately on-edge, sure that even here she'll be met with judgment.

TUCK

They have a wonderful toffee nut latte across the cafe across the way; it's open all night and they always have music playing. It's even half decent every now and again, too; I'd love company.

In spite of herself, Ashley smiles back at that, still wary, but taken by this woman who seems to be willing to listen.

CUT TO:

EXT. COFFE SHOP - NIGHT (PAST)

Ashley and Tuck at tables, nursing mugs of coffee. Ashley is intently listening to the music, seeming almost wistful. Her fingers drum the table, in rhythm with the guitar chords.

TUCK

You play?

ASHLEY

When everything is good, yeah.
(smiles wistfully)
When it is and I can find a stretch of cement to pull out my guitar on and just play...it's the sound and the beat and people seem so happy to have me there and I know it's cliché as hell, but it makes me feel like I'm supposed to be here.
(nervous laugh)
You must think I'm fucking crazy.

TUCK

Why would I?

ASHLEY

Well, everyone else - my mum, my doctors - they all seem to think I am. They all think I'm just sad and that the pills that they've got me on will make everything better. But they don't; they make me feel like I'm half asleep all the time and everything is just so quiet. But I guess that's better than feeling like I'm running too fast and I can't slow down, right?

She clocks the way Ashley scratches the scars on her arm; we notice that they're still reddish - healed, but not entirely.

TUCK

How long ago?

Ashley hesitates, can't hide her embarrassment, but admits:

ASHLEY

A couple weeks. My mum hasn't spoken to me since she took me to the hospital; she's so angry at me.
(hurt; confused)
You know, it always seems like a good idea when I'm doing it. When all I want is to feel something... loud. Does that make any sense?

TUCK

It does.
(off Ashley's surprise)
I haven't been sitting in those horribly uncomfortable chairs for five years for the terrible coffee.

ASHLEY

You seem so put together.

Tuck rolls up her sleeve, shows off the MULTIPLE SCARS ACROSS HER WRIST. She does it matter-of-factly, like someone who has accepted the scars as being a part of who she has become.

TUCK

The masks we wear, love. Some of us a little bit better than others.

Off them getting each other in this, in their mutual need to hide the dark and ugly things that hurt inside them far away from the eyes of those who might never be able to understand.

CUT TO:

INT. TUCK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

Tuck is preparing breakfast, almost robotically. She puts the plate down in front of herself, but doesn't eat it, just ends up moving the food around her plate for a few moments.

When she finally has enough, she gets up and empties the food out into the trash. As she does so, she sees a PICTURE on the ground stuck between the trash and the counter - one of her and Ashley together (it's a selfie). They look TRULY HAPPY.

Tuck picks up the photo and looks at it, tears in her eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. TUCK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (PAST)

The phone rings loudly. A light flicks on; Tuck answers.

TUCK
Hello?

ASHLEY (O.S.)
Hey Tuck.

TUCK
Ashley?

We can hear talking in the background, maybe some music.

ASHLEY (O.S.)
Yeah. I know it's late -

Tuck sits up and glances over at the digital clock -

TUCK
Are you all right? Are you hurt?

ASHLEY (O.S.)
I'm fine. And I'm sorry for waking you up and if you want to hang up, that's totally cool, but -

TUCK
Are you in trouble?

ASHLEY (O.S.)
No. For once, no. It's just... I've got something going on and I could... I would love some support.

Tuck climbs out of bed and starts to get dressed.

TUCK
Where are you?

ASHLEY (O.S.)
Down at the coffee shop. The one
with the toffee nut lattes.

That's not the answer that Tuck had been expecting, but:

TUCK
I'm on my way.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT (PAST)

Tuck enters to find Ashley sitting behind the microphone, a guitar in her hand. She's smiling and singing and just **happy**.

Ashley sees her and waves at her, the world not so heavy for a moment. She starts playing again, free as she can get.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALKING PATH - NIGHT (PAST)

Ashley and Tuck walking together, both clutching familiar cups of coffee in their hands. Ashley is still on a high.

TUCK
That was lovely.

ASHLEY
Yeah? It came so out of the blue.
There was a help wanted sign and I
figured what the hell and then...

TUCK
You were wonderful. But I admit, I
am curious. Why me?

ASHLEY
You're my sponsor.
(off Tuck's no "BS" look)
There was no one else and I... I
think you understand what a night
like this means. You know how hard
I have to fight to feel good and
why it matters.

TUCK
I do.

They share a warm smile and then keep walking together.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALKING PATH - AFTERNOON

The same walking path, but during the day now and we see a lot of intense sadness on Tuck's face, her mind in the past.

She looks to her side, like someone's there, then looks away.

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT (PAST)

Ashley plays at the front of the room, Tuck watches, eyes bright. The affection between them continues to grow into something strong and undeniable. Ashley's singing to TUCK.

When the set ends, Ashley comes down off the stage and goes right over to where Tuck is. Caught up in the moment, she surges forward and PASSIONATELY KISSES Tuck. Tuck returns it.

After a beat, they part and look at each other in wonder.

CUT TO:

EXT. WALKING PATH - NIGHT (PAST)

Coffee in hand as always, but a bit awkward. Finally:

TUCK

About what happened earlier -

ASHLEY

I know. But...I'm not sorry. I know I probably should be, but I'm not. Because I liked it. I like **you**.

TUCK

But I'm your -

ASHLEY

Sponsor. I know. But I can get another one. That's not what you are to me. Not anymore. You're my friend. You're the one person in this world who sees me when I'm sky high or gutter low and still looks at me like I might be beautiful.

TUCK

You are. But this is against the program. This is against...this isn't what you need from me. You need a sponsor and a friend not a -

ASHLEY

What are you afraid of?

TUCK

The same thing that you should be afraid of. Why aren't you afraid?

ASHLEY

Because sometimes it's nice to get swept away. You're always so much in control, Tuck. But love isn't supposed to be like that. **Let go.**

She spins Tuck around, like they're dancing together. Like this is the kind of madness you're not supposed to resist.

TUCK

I'm not good at being out of control. Bad things happen. And this...we know this is a mistake.

She's not just afraid - she's terrified. But Ashley is so much alive, and so very sure of them. She pulls Tuck close.

ASHLEY

It's not.

She leans in and they kiss again; there's a pause as Tuck struggles with her control, but then she lets go completely.

CUT TO:

INT. TUCK'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT (PAST)

The two of them just dancing. So intense and all-consuming.

They move towards the bed and then onto it together.

CUT TO:

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

It's the same night, but a bit later on now. Tuck's sitting at a table. From inside, music plays. Tuck closes her eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. TUCK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (PAST)

There are couples pictures (including the one from earlier) all around the kitchen, a young relationship in full bloom.

Tuck is getting ready for breakfast. As she moves around, pushing clutter out of the way, she sees Ashley's backpack and picks it up. The pocket is open and as she moves it, a full pill bottle falls out. Tuck picks it up and looks at it.

ASHLEY

Hey, babe. Whatcha -

She stops when she sees Tuck holding the pills.

ASHLEY (CONT'D)

Okay, I know what you're thinking right now, but it's not...okay, you know what? It is what you think.

TUCK

You're not taking your meds.

Ashley reacts defensively for a moment, like she's about to fight, but then she changes tactics and goes for charming.

ASHLEY

I don't need to. They're only to help me through the bad times. But those are all behind me now. Now that I have you and the music and everything is good.

TUCK

That's not how it works. You need these to help you stay in control.

ASHLEY

You help me stay in control.

Tuck reacts badly to that - her worst fears bubbling up.

TUCK

I can't be your crutch.

Ashley steps forward and kisses her, all passion.

ASHLEY

You're not; you're the woman that I love. More than anything, Tuck.

TUCK

Then, please?

She holds up the pills. There's a pause, but then Ashley smiles, and takes the pills from her. Shows them to Tuck.

ASHLEY
Okay. For you.

TUCK
For you.

ASHLEY
Sure.

It's a lie and so many warning bells are going off right now, but Tuck wants this feeling and so she ignores them all.

She lets Ashley kiss her again and again. And of this, we...

CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Tuck is inside now, in the position that we have seen her standing in before. Slowly, she opens her eyes and we see her watching a different MUSICIAN stepping towards the mic and -

MERGE TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT (PAST)

The previous musician merges into Ashley, becoming her. She's playing, but we can see something is off about her. She's manic, losing her words. Wild. Excited. Fast. Out of control.

The normally docile cafe patrons start turning their heads, drawn to the meltdown that's happening in front of them.

The Cafe Owner starts to move towards her to stop her, but Tuck puts a hand up as if to ask him to give her a chance first. He backs off and Tuck approaches, reaches for Ashley.

ASHLEY
What are you doing? Let me go!

She puts her hands on Ash, tries to hold her.

TUCK
Ash, love, stop. You're -

Ashley shoves her away.

ASHLEY
No, I'm fine.

TUCK

You're not. You're going too fast right now, love. Let's - let's just, let's get some air. Please.

ASHLEY

I'm breathing fine. And I'm going just fast enough. You're just taking too long to catch up.

TUCK

Everyone is watching. Let's -

ASHLEY

I don't care! Everyone is always watching us. Everyone is always judging us and telling us what we should do or shouldn't. Who we should love. Well watch this!

She spins around, loose-limbed. And then she's breaking and smashing and everything is just crashing down for Tuck.

CUT TO:

INT. TUCK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY (PAST)

It's been a very long night. Tuck and Ashley are on opposite sides of the counter, tense and upset and emotional. Tuck is pacing back and forth, anxious and close to her own meltdown.

ASHLEY

Are you going to talk to me or -

TUCK

(angry; betrayed)
You want to talk? Okay, fine, let's talk. Start with telling me what the hell happened tonight?

ASHLEY

Nothing happened. I'm fine, Tuck.

TUCK

Bullshit! You got yourself fired!

ASHLEY

You're making too much of this. I just had a weird night and yeah, I kind of lost it, but I'm okay. I didn't need that job. I can find something better. It's all good -

TUCK

No, it's not. And don't tell me
you're okay because you're not!
You're not on your meds anymore.
Goddammit, you lied to me!

Ashley moves aggressively, grabs Tuck by the shoulders like she means to shake her; it's a surprising move for both of them and then they're both retreating, both very upset now.

TUCK (CONT'D)

I told you this was a mistake.

ASHLEY

What? What's a mistake?

TUCK

You and me. This. All of this. I
worked so hard to be...healthy and -

ASHLEY

And I make you not healthy.

TUCK

No, you make me want to lose
complete control of my life. And I
can't. And I can't be someone who
wants that. I can't be with you.

ASHLEY

Don't say that. It's you and me.
You understand me. You get me.

She surges forward and kisses Tuck. Hard. Desperate.

TUCK

I do. I love you. But I can't do
this. I'm sorry...it's...I can't.

Ashley reacts like Tuck's just struck her.

ASHLEY

You're giving up on me, aren't you?
Just like everyone else has.

TUCK

I'm giving up on **us**. I can't.

ASHLEY

(defiant)
You can't or you won't?

TUCK

Does it matter?

ASHLEY

No, I guess it doesn't. Fine, you want this over? Then it's over. But you know what? I might be unhealthy for you but you need to face the truth, too- you're wound so goddamn tight that you don't even know how to live anymore. I might be a mess, but so are you. The only difference is at least I don't hide that behind a mask of pretend control. My problem might be that I want to feel too much, but yours is that you don't want to feel at all. I don't know how you live like that.

She leaves, slams the door, the finality of it overwhelming.

CUT TO:

EXT. COFFEE SHOP - NIGHT

Tuck is sitting at one of the tables just outside. We can hear instrumental guitar music playing softly behind her.

TUCK

(to herself?)

I suppose it's time now.

She gets up and walks slowly across the road.

CUT TO:

INT. TUCK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT (PAST)

It's been several weeks since the break-up and Tuck has been kind of in a daze, going through the motions, barely living.

She steps in, tosses her work bag, cell phone and keys down on the counter (we see the picture of her and Ashley from before there), opens and closes the refrigerator and then as she's turning, her CELL begins to ring. She answers it.

TUCK

Hello?

JEAN CONWAY (V.O)

(in tears)

Violet? It's Ashley's mother, Jean. Something... terrible has happened.

FADE TO:

INT. TUCK'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - SAME (PAST)

We don't hear anything, just see Tuck on the phone. Then we see the phone drop from her hand, shock all over her face.

After a beat, her knees give out and she crumbles to the ground, sobbing violently, the picture of Ashley and herself in her hands. As she continues to cry, we see how it ended up under the counter as it falls out of her hand and floats away, lodging just between the garbage can and the gap.

CUT TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - NIGHT

The picture of her and Ashley clutched tight in her hand again, Tuck takes a breath, puts it into her pocket and then walks into that old familiar room with the chairs and the coffee. No longer the veteran in control of everything.

She sees Barry standing next to the coffee pot and he nods at her, understanding and without judgment. He hands her a cup.

FADE TO:

INT. CLASSROOM - SAME

TUCK

Against my better judgment, I allowed myself to fall so madly in love with her because she burned so bright. I loved her because she helped me to see these vibrant colors that I had forgotten even existed. I loved her enough to forget everything that I worked so hard to be and to become. Enough to let her down when she needed me to be her friend. She failed me by refusing to find control and I failed her by refusing to recognize how her spirit needed to be free.

(beat; emotional)

It's been a year exactly that's she been gone and today is my first day of remembering who it is that I want to be and making myself healthy again. Today is my first day of remembering how to live.

BARRY

It's a beginning.

While he's speaking, we focus on Tuck as she looks across the room, but not at Barry. We pan to see who she's looking at.

ASHLEY - a ghost Tuck can't allow herself to let go of.

The room claps for Tuck. It's humbling and it's not where she wanted to be, but she's here and she is focused on this now.

Tuck and Spirit Ashley share a look. So much love still.

TUCK (V.O.)

This is a story. About love. But
it's also about loss, guilt and
Forgiveness. And maybe, most of
all, **living**. This is our story.

Ashley smiles wistfully at her and then fades away.

Tuck rises and pours herself another cup of bad coffee.

FADE OUT: