

THE WOODS

written by

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FADE IN:

EXT. DARK FOREST - NIGHT

We're in a thick, dark, and wet forest. In the distance is a young man. We slowly close in on this man. We can hear a faint whispering that grows louder the closer the man gets to us.

The young man is ERIC. He's down on his knees, his hands are shaking, blood is splattered on his face and tears are riding down his cheeks. The whispering starts to grow into fully formed words.

UNKNOWN MALE SPEAKER (V.O.)
How well do I know ya? How well do
ya fucking even know me?

Eric grabs a handgun from the ground.

We start to hear the faint sound of a roller coaster speeding down the tracks and the cheers of the people riding it.

UNKNOWN MALE SPEAKER 2 (V.O.)
What are you doing here? What are
you doing here?

Eric's presses the handgun against his temple. His finger hovers over the trigger.

UNKNOWN MALE SPEAKER (V.O.)
I'm just full of shit. This
friendship is full of shit.

The roller coaster sounds amplify.

UNKNOWN FEMALE SPEAKER (V.O.)
Eric. Please. I love you.

Eric cries so hard that snot oozes from his nose. It hangs there and sways back and forth in the wind until it drops. The roller coaster sounds are now twice as loud.

ERIC (V.O.)
You love me?
(pause)
You love me?
(sniffles)
How could you love me?! Huh! You
selfish bitch?! How could you love
me!? How could you love me?!

Eric closes his eyes.

UNKNOWN MALE SPEAKER 4
END IT! JUST END IT!

The roller coaster sounds overpower everything. Eric puts finger on the trigger AND--

TITLE CARD:

"The Woods"

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Eric stands in front of a camera while RAFAEL, Eric's roommate, films him.

Rafael is a 19-year-old Mexican-American man. He's got thick black ungroomed facial hair that runs up the side of his face and casual clothing.

But something is a little off with the man's appearance. He's relaxed. Almost too relaxed. It's as if he is hiding something within his cool casualness.

Eric begins speaking.

ERIC
Hey guys! So today is the day
before Rafael and I go into the
woods.

The way Eric speaks seems very put on. He over-emotes his excitement and his smile couldn't seem phonier. It's clear he's reading lines from a script.

ERIC (CONT'D)
These woods are in the northern
part of California and it has been
reported that for years people who
go in this forest, have disappeared
without a trace. Even spookier, no
one knows what exactly happens
inside and if anyone has made it
out. We couldn't even find a map of
these woods. Tomorrow, we will be
going into these so called
"Demented Woods" and documenting
our experiences! Are these woods
actually haunted or is this whole
thing just a sham!?

RAFAEL

Cut! Eric man that was good fucking
shit man cause I'll tell ya, we
keep this quality up man, and we'll
be in the industry in no time.
(becomes inaudible)

Rafael's voice drowns out as we close in on Eric. His phony smile dissipates at the edges and his cheeks begin to tense. The fake Eric gives way to the real one. The light fades from his eyes as they turn back to their depressing and brown look.

Just from one look at this 19 year-olds disheveled appearance, we can tell he doesn't give a shit about himself. Eric's long uncut and unwashed hair is a prime example. He's also got dirty, ripped, and stained clothing on and he looks as if he's been awake the whole night.

Eric is only among the living for one reason. He has to find proof of life after death. He has to go to these woods. It's his duty.

EXT. SACRAMENTO - OUTSIDE MCDONALD'S - EARLY MORNING

Eric and Rafael make their way through the empty parking lot to the front door. The sun rises in the sky giving off a reddish orange.

INT. MCDONALD'S KITCHEN - LATER

Eric works in the kitchen preparing burgers and wrapping them up. He doesn't fully wrap the burgers. The MANAGER approaches him.

MANAGER

Eric! I need you going faster. I've got customers waiting. Okay?

Eric looks blankly at her and nods.

ERIC

Yep.

INT. MCDONALD'S - LATER

Rafael takes a cone and fills it with ice cream. A tattoo on his wrist reads "Remember" He proceeds to hand the cone to the waiting customer.

INT. MCDONALD'S - LATE AFTERNOON

Now Eric is on the cash register and the place is much busier than before. He completes the order and the CUSTOMER smiles at him.

CUSTOMER

You have a great day.

ERIC

(apathetic)

Yeah.

INT. MCDONALD'S BATHROOM - EVENING

Eric sloppily mops the bathroom floor in an attempt to get done as quickly as possible. When he's finished, he leaves the mop up against the wall and...

INT. MCDONALD'S - CONTINUOUS

...plods back to his position at the cash register. The manager waves at him

MANAGER

Bye.

Eric immediately clocks out.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

See you in a week.

Eric gets the hell out of there.

EXT. MCDONALD'S PARKING LOT - EVENING

Eric walks in a drunken manner to his car. Yelling erupts from the side-walk across the road. As Eric draws closer to his car, the yelling grows louder.

Eric takes his keys and unlocks the car door when, AAAA!

A loud painful scream rings out! Eric looks up across the road and sees it. A MAN delivers kicks into ANOTHER MAN sprawled out on the ground. It doesn't stop. The man keeps kicking as if he's planning on killing him.

Eric just stands there watching, not intervening. But he doesn't look afraid. It just looks like he's watching a movie. He can't change what happens.

Instead, Eric gets into the passenger seat, puts his chair back, and takes a nice long nap.

INT. INSIDE CAR - NIGHT

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK! Eric is plucked right up out of sleep. He unlocks the door and wobbles out. Rafael plops into the passengers seat and Eric - drivers seat.

INT. INSIDE CAR - LATER

Eric drives on the highway while Rafael sits in the passenger seat. Eric does not have his seat belt on. He never does.

Neither of them speak, but they're not sharing the silence. Eric is somewhere else. Somewhere you wouldn't want to be. Somewhere troubled.

He turns and looks at Rafael.

ERIC

You still going tomorrow?

RAFAEL

Of course man. I'm fucking ready for this. Cameras all charged an shit.

Eric nods, turns away and stares out the window. He's not looking at anything in particular. Just an excuse. A way to avoid what's scratching at his brain.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

Eric man.

ERIC

What?

He doesn't turn to look at Rafael.

RAFAEL

I know we're low on dead presidents an shit but

ERIC

(interrupts)

What?

RAFAEL

I think if we both slap some change together we could get some lighting equipment.

ERIC

No. I don't think so.

RAFAEL

Man, just listen to me. We stay on it. I've been looking at some cheap prices and shit for this equipment-

ERIC

(interrupts)

There's no money.

RAFAEL

Man! We can put a little money aside from each paycheck. Enough of this amateur homemade movie shit. Hollywoods laughing at our fucking asses man.

Eric says nothing. Silence for a bit. He then turns to look at Rafael.

ERIC

What if it's real?

RAFAEL

What?

ERIC

The woods. What if people really go missing?

Rafael believes it's possible, but he'd rather not think about it.

RAFAEL

God's got our backs man.

ERIC

So you believe it?

RAFAEL

(blows it off)

Ah fuck man. I believe we're gonna get some good ass shit in these woods and I'll tell ya when this doc is done ya gonna be fucking all those models ya like Eric. Like Margot Robbie an shit.

Eric says nothing for a few beats. There is a part of him that fears of taking Rafael to these woods.

ERIC
 Maybe you should stay here and work
 this week.

RAFAEL
 What?

ERIC
 Maybe you should just stay here
 and-

RAFAEL
 Ya fucking serious man?

Eric stares at him. Doesn't know what to say.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
 Don't shit out on me man.

Eric's getting desperate now. He's desperate, but he doesn't
 have an adequate excuse. Just pure desperation.

ERIC
 You should stay here just in case,
 um - It's just that, you know, you
 need the money and if you miss a
 whole week of work you'll be behind
 on-

RAFAEL
 (interrupts)
 What the fuck was in that fucking
 McDouble ya ate.

ERIC
 Look it's just that-

He stops there. A moment of silence. Eric knows in that
 moment he's going to have to say something. Something
 truthful if he has any chance of talking Rafael out of it.

ERIC (CONT'D)
 You could get hurt.
 (pause)
 Don't want that on me.

Rafael abruptly starts laughing. Crackling laughter.

RAFAEL
 The fuck man? Ya my fucking nanny
 now?

ERIC
 What?

RAFAEL

Ya worried about me. Cause I'm a big fucking boy man. Ya know man if shit goes down in these woods I'm gonna be like John fucking Bourne an Jason Wick an shit man.

ERIC

Just thought maybe you should stay back just in case - You know.

RAFAEL

Nothing is gonna happen in these woods cause we're gonna get our asses in there and make the best fucking documentary Hollywood has ever seen. Michael Moore's gonna be green as fuck.

(pause)

We're both in this shit together. Okay man?

Eric knows he's literally gotten nowhere. There's no convincing Rafael out of this.

ERIC

Yeah.

INT. APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

Eric sits on the couch. Moonlight flows through the window and paints the room a bright white. He stares over in a corner where there is a black case, an empty pizza box and a soda bottle.

He gets up, paces over to the corner, takes the black box, sits back down, and opens the case.

It's a clarinet.

Eric delicately assembles the instrument and puts the reed to his tongue. He starts to play *Amazing Grace*. Eric is a bit rusty at first, but it's still there, and he has the whole piece in his head.

Struggles begin to intrude. But he's not struggling with the music. It's something else. Something personal.

A tear collects at his eye and his breathing increases. The music becomes choppy. When the first tear falls, there are several more to take its place. Like a machine doubling its speed.

The music fades out. Eric holds his clarinet up against his chest and sobs.

The clarinet falls from his lap onto the floor and rolls away.

Eric looks up at the front door. Then he rises from the couch, grabs the camera case, and exits his apartment.

EXT. OUTSIDE APARTMENT COMPLEX - LATE NIGHT

Eric travels down two sets of stairs and makes his way across the parking lot.

EXT. CITY PARK - LATE NIGHT

Eric walks across the road with the video camera case in his hands.

He stops at an open city park. No one around. But the road is still full of late night drivers.

Eric falls to his knees and turns on the camera.

ON VIDEO:

He stares right at us. No hiding his feelings. No hiding who he really is.

Eric needs someone to talk to. Even if it's just a camera.

EXT. WOODED ROAD - MORNING

A car barrels down the road enclosed by thick woods on each side.

INT. CAR - MORNING

Eric drives and Rafael is in the passenger's seat. They both look determined - focused - READY!

RAFAEL

Ya ready for this man?

ERIC

Always been ready.

Rafael examines his camera and plays with the settings

RAFAEL

Bars full.

(pause)

Alright man. Let's fuck this duck.

Eric pulls up in front of the forest entrance and they both climb out of the vehicle.

EXT. OUTSIDE WOODS - SAME

Eric and Rafael spot a sign marking the trailhead into the woods.

The sign reads:

WARNING! DISAPPEARANCES REPORTED AROUND THIS AREA. ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK.

RAFAEL

(excited)

Oh, this is the bone man.

Rafael right then and there transforms into director's mode as he gets his camera ready.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

I'm gonna get a shot of this and then I want ya to stand by it. Just right next to it and shit.

Eric reluctantly stands by it. He just wants to go into the damn woods already.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Eric and Rafael trek down the dirt path. Eric seems more alert than before. His head is up - his chest forward! Not necessarily excited, but focused on the task at hand.

They both gaze at the forest that surrounds them. Absolutely beautiful. Thick brown thriving trees.

RAFAEL

Ah fuck man. This place can't be haunted.

The colorful leaves brings the trees to life. Autumnal. And the trees provide the perfect amount of sun and the perfect amount of shade.

ERIC

You never know.

Rafael gazes some more.

RAFAEL

Ya know man. I think we're gonna get some good shit in these woods.

ERIC

Hope so.

RAFAEL

Think about it man and it's possible we'll meet up with some other dogs.

ERIC

Dogs?

RAFAEL

People man. Maybe we'll find some lost soul and shit and we can get an interview. That'a be sick shit.

The more they advance, the thicker the woods grow. We can no longer see the entrance.

ERIC

It'd be better to find the dead.

RAFAEL

No shit man. No shit.

(pause)

Say Eric, ya got any girls you like?

ERIC

Not really.

RAFAEL

What man? I'll tell ya you've gotta get hooked up. See most people who come into McDonald's are fat as fuck and I just wanna vomit and shit but there was this one babe and she was just a stone cold fox and shit and she was the only ten in the crowd. I told her about my doc and our dangerous fucking mission and she blew on me for good luck.

Eric is unfazed by this.

RAFAEL (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 Maybe she can be your girlfriend
 man.

Eric says nothing.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
 No fuck that man. I think I want
 her.

Eric still says nothing. Rafael takes his water-bottle from his bag and gives it a good swig. Eric realizes he's thirsty and does the same.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
 Fuck man. This water's hotter than
 my fucking Hershey squirts.

Rafael takes another drink of the boiling water and wipes the sweat from his forehead.

RAFAEL (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 Ah fuck Eric. Maybe we outta stop
 here and take a -

ERIC
 (interrupts)
 No. It's too early. We need to
 keep -

Eric hears something.

ERIC (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 Hear that?

RAFAEL
 No man. What?

ERIC
 Think it's a stream.

Eric quickens his pace and Rafael follows until they come upon a little stream.

EXT. LITTLE STREAM - MIDDAY

The water is so clear that the two men's reflections look like they're in a mirror.

RAFAEL
 Holy shit man! We can probably
 drink this.

Rafael dumps the hot water out of the bottle, fills it with the fresh cold water, and takes another swig. Eric just stands there watching.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

This water is dope.

(takes another drink)

Come on man. Take a drink. It's clean.

Eric is about to empty his water-bottle when he sees an empty one propped up against a tree. He picks it up and examines it. It's a high quality stainless steel water bottle and...

...it's perfectly clean.

Eric is skeptical.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

Come get yourself some of this water man.

ERIC

Not thirsty.

RAFAEL

Well you got a steel rod jammed up ya ass.

Eric says nothing to this. He's just confused and anxious; he's nervous about what he's going to see in this forest. If anything.

Rafael is now dumping water out of his plastic bottles and filling it with the stream water.

EXT. WOODS - EVENING

Rafael takes a small shovel and stabs it into the ground

RAFAEL

You go find some of those little twigs and I'll make a pit here.

ERIC

Sure.

Eric ventures off into the woods, scanning the ground for kindling. He stops and a confused look grows across his face.

There is a large convenient amount of kindling simply stacked up against a tree.

It's plenty to start a fire with.

INT. SITE - EVENING

Eric arrives at the site, wood in hand and dumps it down next to Rafael whose still digging. Rafael digs slowly and clumsily like a toddler in a sandbox.

RAFAEL

Hey Eric man. I'm cashed as fuck,
so would ya finish this shit for me
man.

ERIC

Yeah sure.

Eric takes the shovel from Rafael. The pit looks to be halfway done.

RAFAEL

I'm gonna go look around an shit.

Rafael takes off to explore. Eric works the shovel through the dirt. Fast -- clearly faster than Rafael. Like a machine he's consistent in his task.

Rafael calls out in the distance!

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

Eric man! You gotta see this shit!

Eric immediately drops the shovel and takes off. He hopes that it's something supernatural, but once he arrives sheer disappointment runs across his face.

It's just a dead deer.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

Man! I just found this dead thing
and it looks fresh and good, cause
I think we might be able to use
this like the Native Americans and
shit.

ERIC

(doubtful)
It just died?

RAFAEL

It's still warm man.
(pause)
Fresh meat.

EXT. SITE - NIGHT

Eric and Rafael sit around the campfire with sticks in their hands. They're cooking the meat and it looks delicious, tender and juicy.

The trees eat most of the sky light which surrounds them in pure dark; the light illuminates the men's faces.

ERIC

How could all those sticks be together like that?

RAFAEL

I don't know man. Maybe someone left it there.

ERIC

The stream. And this deer.
(pause)
Don't you think this is all a little too convenient?

RAFAEL

It's because of the girl from McDonalds man.

ERIC

Yeah but -

Eric pulls the water bottle from his bag.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Found this water bottle where the stream was. This is one of the most high quality water bottles you can get.

RAFAEL

Ya know what I think.

ERIC

What?

RAFAEL

It's a gift. A sign from God that everything is going to be
(makes a fireworks sound
with his mouth)
...bang on.

Eric looks into the fire. Looks at that sizzling cooking meat. It looks delicious, but he can't shake this odd feeling.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

Anyway tell me Eric, my man I see this clarinet case that just's been sitting-

ERIC

(interrupts)

You didn't touch it did you?!

RAFAEL

No man, relax.

ERIC

How'd you know it was a clarinet case?

RAFAEL

Okay Eric. I opened the fucking thing. I've ne-

ERIC

Don't touch that!

RAFAEL

Jesus man! Ya really got some tight screws on your ass, cause I wasn't gonna break it. Just curious. I've never seen ya play it.

Eric doesn't want him to know. He lies.

ERIC

Yeah. Never learned how to play it - just thought it would be worth something you know.

Rafael nods his head.

RAFAEL

I gotta ask ya man. What's your interest in all this shit?

ERIC

What's yours?

RAFAEL

Ah, fuck man. Well, film-making always been a passion and I've always loved documentaries, so ya've got this interest in the dead see. So it's just kind of like BING! Fits right together.

(pause)

(MORE)

My fucking father never believed in what I could do. Didn't support me. He hated America too. He'd always say fat fucking lazy gringos. Yeah. Fucking airhead. That's why I'm here, with you man.

ERIC

What about your mother?

RAFAEL

She left my dad's ass when I was just a little kid. I don't fucking blame her.

(pause)

What about ya mother man?

Eric takes a moment of silence. There's a slightly pained look on his face.

ERIC

Just say one thing.

RAFAEL

Yeah man.

ERIC

Is this whole thing - just - Are we actually friends?

RAFAEL

No man. We're buddies. We're buddies that need each other. Like Batman an Robin. Or this fuckin' fire man. I'm the wood and ya that bad ass fire Eric.

Eric stares deep into the fire. An ironic metaphor that was. Because deep inside he's scared of hurting Rafael. Scared of burning him.

EXT. SITE - MORNING

Eric's eyes flicker open. He lays there slightly disoriented.

We can see that there is no tent and they both have a sleeping bag with a pad underneath. Eric climbs to his feet and observes his surroundings.

No Rafael.

Eric plops back down onto his pad and waits. He watches the distant trees. Waiting for Rafael to pop out from among them.

A tranquil breeze flows through the woods. Eric closes his eyes. It feels good. Just a moment of peace.

Then Rafael emerges from the trees. Something seems very wrong. Rafael's head is down and he walks with an exhausted limp. Eric just stares.

Where was he?!

Rafael arrives at the site. He looks like complete shit. Actually shit would be an understatement.

ERIC

Rafael? Where were you?

Rafael doesn't respond. Just stares out into space. His eyes have been drained since the last time we saw him. Now just wide and empty.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Are you alright?

Still nothing.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Rafael?

Rafael finally looks up at Eric.

RAFAEL

I think we should leave man.

ERIC

Why?

RAFAEL

We should just fucking leave.

ERIC

Rafael. Why?

Rafael had to have seen something.

ERIC (CONT'D)

What did you see?

RAFAEL

Nothing man. Let's just go.

There is a long pause. Eric knows something has to be wrong, but he's got to keep going.

ERIC
No. We've got to keep going.

RAFAEL
It's only a documentary man.

ERIC
To you.

Eric has to keep going. It isn't an option. Rafael nods. Just nods.

EXT. WOODS - LATE AFTERNOON

Eric and Rafael trudge up a hill, using branches to support themselves. Once they reach the top, they both bend over panting.

Neither of them say a word, not even Rafael, and that's strange.

EXT. WOODS - EVENING

The sun sets through the trees. Eric and Rafael stop at a small clearing. It isn't as open and nice as the last area, but it'll have to do.

ERIC
Should we stop here?

RAFAEL
(eyes on the ground)
Whatever you want Eric.

Eric clears branches and leaves from the dirt, sets his bag down, and looks up at Rafael concerned.

ERIC
Are you gonna dig a pit?

Rafael is clearly agitated.

RAFAEL
We don't need a fucking pit man.

Rafael turns, moves away from Eric, proceeds to lean against a tree, and looks out into the forest. His eyes are wide as if he is visualizing something in his head.

ERIC
Are you going to get wood?

RAFAEL

(not looking at Eric)
Hey Eric man, why don't you fuck
off a little bit and let me be just
to my fucking self.

ERIC

What's happening to you?

RAFAEL

Hey Eric! Why don't you get off my
fucking nuts man!

Eric knows something is wrong, but he can't turn back now. In that moment he realizes that maybe finding the truth and making himself feel better means more than his friend.

EXT. SITE 2 - NIGHT

Eric sits at the fire and Rafael is not there. It is apparent that Eric has built that fire for himself and Rafael has had no part in it.

Then we see Rafael emerge from the black woods with the camera in his hands. His face looks blank, but his eyes tell us something is boiling beneath. It looks as if he's just gone through a revelation.

Eric tries to make talk with him.

ERIC

So, what were you filming?

Rafael does not respond, but instead puts the camera back in the case and takes a seat by Eric.

RAFAEL

Eric man...

ERIC

What?

RAFAEL

...How well do I know ya?
(pause)
How well do ya fucking even know
me?

Eric doesn't know what to say, but inside he's worried. He's worried he saw the video Eric filmed.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

That's what I fucking thought man.

(pauses)

I don't even know why we do this
shit cause ya aren't like me with
this fucking screwdriver up ya ass
twenty-four seven and as for
fucking me. I'm just full of shit.

(scoffs)

This friendship is full of shit!

Eric still doesn't know what to say. But he knows it's true.
It's all bullshit.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

God's not gonna forgive me for this
shit Eric.

(pause)

And this documentary - this
documentary sucks a bag of dicks
cause neither of us know shit about
what we're doing.

ERIC

What? What are you talking about?

RAFAEL

Oh come on Eric. We've always known
man. We're both sacks of shit.

Eric can't handle this anymore. He can't hear this about
himself; not after he's bottled it up for so long.

ERIC

Stop talking.

RAFAEL

Why the fuck do ya think we're here
Eric!?

ERIC

(slams his fist into the
dirt)

Stop talking!

RAFAEL

Or fucking what Eric? What the fuck
ya gonna do!? You're gonna lie to
me?!

We can feel the tension shooting up.

ERIC

Shut up.

RAFAEL

You want me to shut up ya candy-ass, cause you can't take the truth for once!?

Eric can't take this anymore. He's trembling.

ERIC

Shut up!

Eric charges at Rafael, in a crouching position, and slams his back into a tree. Rafael cries out in pain and throws Eric off of him.

Eric topples over in the dirt and Rafael's on him - beating the shit out of him - repeatedly striking his face with his fist. Blood oozes from his nose.

RAFAEL

How's that Eric!? How's fucking that!? Does this shit turn you on!?

Eric pulls Rafael on top of him and they roll over multiple times in the dirt - headed right for the fire pit!

ERIC

Stop! Stop!

The two fighting men come to halt and Rafael rolls off of Eric. They both lie there in the dirt, catching their breaths. Once they've caught them, they lie there for a little longer; both confused.

Rafael climbs to his feet.

RAFAEL

I'm going to bed man.

Eric just lies there in the dirt.

EXT. SITE 2 - EARLY MORNING

Eric's eyes open and he just lies inside his sleeping bag for a moment. We can see from his baggy and red eyes that he hasn't slept well.

He climbs to his feet and over at Rafael. He's still asleep. A very uncomfortable sleep. Sprawled out.

Eric thinks of waking him, but instead ventures off into the woods a bit. He wants some time alone.

EXT. WOODS - EARLY MORNING

Eric is a way-bit from the site now, but he continuously turns his head, so he knows how to get back.

A BLOODY KNIFE! Eric spots a bloody knife on the ground and a faint trail of blood leading away from him. While Eric is a bit scared, curiosity trumps any fear he has. He has to know what's going on!

Eric follows the trail of blood, his pace quickening to slight jog. A BACKPACK! A backpack is up ahead. As he approaches it, he finds that it has been left wide open.

He quickly rummages through it and finds all the typical hiking supplies. Water, canned food, and a sleeping bag among other things.

Eric continues following the blood. The more Eric walks, the more scattered the trail of red seems to be as if the person was getting more frantic.

The trail of blood circles around a forked tree. A miniature ax appears to be lodged in the opening. As Eric follows the blood trail behind the tree, he sees the truth. Eric descends into horror.

The ax isn't in the tree; it's in a MAN'S head. The man's wrists have also been slit open.

ERIC

Rafael!

No response. Eric immediately takes off running in the direction of the site. He has to tell Rafael! As he gains momentum he goes faster until he is in a complete sprint. He flies right back past the backpack and bloody knife.

EXT. SITE 2 - MORNING

Eric arrives at the site, but something is different. It's Rafael. He's not there!

ERIC

Rafael!

He makes no response.

ERIC (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Rafael!

Eric examines the site. He opens Rafael's bag and digs through it. Everything seems to be there, but the knife case feels light. Eric pulls it from the bag and opens it. Empty.

From a distance, Eric spots a figure moving through the woods, a knife in the figure's hand. It's Rafael.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Rafael!?

Rafael turns to look at Eric. Then he takes off!

ERIC (CONT'D)
(screaming)
What are you doing?

Rafael doesn't stop. Eric knows he has no choice but to chase after him. Rafael's got a good head start, but Eric won't let that stop him!

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

Eric picks up speed, going faster and faster; the adrenaline kicking in! He's gaining on Rafael. He has to find out what is going on!

In the distance, Rafael trips over a log. It takes a few seconds for him to get up, giving Eric even more of a chance to catch up. Rafael screams at Eric before taking off again.

RAFAEL
You stay the fuck away from me!

ERIC
(broken up by panting)
Just stop running! Please!

Rafael is already at sprinting speed again. As the young men run, we can see that Eric is faster than Rafael and he's slowly but surely gaining on him.

Up ahead is a...

EXT. RAVINE - MORNING

...wide ravine filled with dirty water. It's almost overflowing.

Rafael slides down the dirt and begins to frantically wade through the water.

Eric's almost there! He's running so fast now that his feet hardly touch the ground.

Rafael is now at the other side and he's clawing at the dirt - pulling himself up to flat ground again.

Eric doesn't even bother to slide down to the water. He just jumps and -

SPLASH! Water flies in every which direction. Rafael's almost out of the ravine now, with Eric right there below him.

ERIC

Rafael! Just stop!

Eric begins to climb after him when - SLAM! Rafael delivers a kick to Eric's face which sends him back into the water.

Rafael's like a wild animal that cannot be reasoned with. He pulls himself out of the ravine and bolts off.

Eric climbs up out of the ravine, his fingers covered in dirt. He manages to haul himself up onto flat ground.

Rafael is nowhere to be seen. Eric scrambles to his feet and takes off, hoping to see Rafael somewhere in the distance.

EXT. HILL - MOMENTS LATER

Eric sprints up a hill. He's tired, but unable to stop. Once he reaches the top, Eric spots Rafael at the bottom of the hill.

His back is turned to Eric and he holds the knife at his side.

Eric cautiously approaches him as they speak.

ERIC

Rafael?

Rafael raises the knife to his throat.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Put down the knife.

RAFAEL

(quietly)

You weren't supposed to see this
shit man.

ERIC
Put down the knife! Don't do this!
Please.

Eric is now right behind Rafael.

RAFAEL
You weren't supposed to see this!

ERIC
You don't have to do this. Maybe
they're here Rafael!

Eric chokes up for a moment. He's projecting himself onto Rafael to try to save him. Rafael becomes emotional. He tries to hold it in, but he can't.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Look at that tattoo. What does it
say?

Rafael stares down at it. A long moment passes and the tension drops. How could he forget? Rafael releases his tight grip on the knife and it falls to the ground.

RAFAEL
I'm so sorry man. I don't know what
I'm doing.

Rafael turns around and this is the first time we can clearly see his face. He looks awful; his face is pale, discolored and smeared in dirt.

He wraps his arms around Eric who does the same. Rafael hides his face in Eric's shoulder and begins to sob.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
I'm so sorry.

Eric just hugs him until the sobbing stops. Then there is silence. Nothing but silence.

INT. SYNAGOGUE - AFTERNOON - FLASHBACK

A small congregation sits in the front pews in mid prayer; they're reading *Psalm 23*.

CONGREGATION
I will fear no evil, for you are
with me; your rod and your staff,
they comfort me
(prayer continues)

The doors quietly open and in walks Eric. As we can see, he is not dressed appropriately; he has no head covering and he's wearing a red shirt that pops out.

Eric advances quietly down the aisle. He looks terrible. Large bags hang under his eyes, tears sit in them, and his face seems to be locked in a dismal frown.

Eric discreetly takes a seat in an empty pew behind the last full one. The congregation is so deep into their prayer that they don't notice him.

CONGREGATION (CONT'D)

...and I will dwell in the house of
the Lord forever.

The congregation shifts from bowing to a regular sitting position. A man stands up and slowly makes his way to the bimah. When he arrives there, he just takes a moment of silence before speaking.

This is DAVID RODNEY. He is a devout Jewish man in his mid-forties. He looks twice as bad as Eric; He has the same huge bags under his eyes, his lips are trembling, and his eyes are drooped over.

David begins speaking, his words trembling a bit.

DAVID

When we are dead, and people weep
for us and grieve, let it be
because we touched their lives with
beauty and simplicity. Let it not
be said that life was good to us,
but, rather, that we were good to
life.

(pause)

What I have just read to you all
was a quote-

(another pause)

- a quote from Jacob P. Rudin - a
quote that I think perfectly
encapsulates my feelings and your
feelings.

The congregation is completely silent, listening with the full most attention. There is not a single person looking away or distracted. Eric fights to keep his emotions in.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Aaron...

(chokes up for a moment)

(MORE)

...was a bright beautiful light in
my life and many others. I remember
once...

A smile grows across his face thinking of the memory.

DAVID (CONT'D)
...a few years ago...

David looks up over the congregation and spots Eric. His
smile dies.

DAVID (CONT'D)
...a few years.....ago

David begins to choke up and his lips tremble at twice the
speed. Emotions consume him and he can't even speak

DAVID (CONT'D)
A few.. a few..
(several beats)
What are you doing here?

Several congregation members turn their heads and after a few
seconds several more until all eyes are on Eric. Some look
offended. Eric just sits there paralyzed, too afraid to
speak.

DAVID (CONT'D)
What are you doing here?
(silence)
What are you doing here?

Slowly but surely the emotion starts to build. The anger
toward Eric. He can't hold it in any longer.

DAVID (CONT'D)
(screams)
What are you doing here!?

David steps off the bimah towards Eric. The RABBI approaches
David.

RABBI
Calm down David. This moment is
about your child.

David pushes the rabbi aside in blind anger - His attention
locked on Eric.

DAVID
What are you doing here!?

David eyes explode and tears stream down. Eric, shaking in fear and guilt, climbs from his seat and starts to back up. Eric's eyes hit the floor. He can't bear to look at David.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Get out!

Eric begins crying as well. He can't take it anymore. Both men are at the rawest emotions possible.

DAVID (CONT'D)

(screams at the top of his
lungs)

GET OUT!

EXT. SITE 2 - MIDDAY - CURRENT TIME

The sun rays squeeze in-between the trees. Eric rolls up his sleeping bag and stuffs it into his back pack while Rafael watches at a distance.

Eric breaks the odd silence.

ERIC

Could you help with this?

Rafael doesn't respond or even react in the slightest way. He might as well be deaf. Eric takes in a deep breath, lets it out as a sigh and continues without him.

EXT. SITE 2 - MIDDAY - LATER

Rafael is now looking out into the endless trees. He looks completely blank as if he's not even there. It's as if he's already dead, but his heart is still beating. Eric approaches him from behind him.

ERIC

Here's your bag.

Eric tries to hand the bag to Rafael, but he won't extend his hand, so Eric sets the bag on the ground.

ERIC (CONT'D)

What's happening to you?

(no response)

Please.

Rafael just won't talk. Utter silence falls on them.

Eric looks back at the way they came. Maybe they should go back, but he can't.

EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON

The two young men are on the move again, but it wasn't like it was before. Both are downright quiet. But it is not just them that are quiet. The woods themselves seem to be exceptionally quiet.

Eric walks in front; Rafael walks behind him. Eric carries his bag on his shoulders and Rafael's bag in his hands. His steps are long trudges as he struggles to move with the heavy weight.

Rafael's head is in the dirt. He's walking so slow that he is somehow lagging behind Eric. We can see a series of heavy scratches over Rafael's tattoo as if he was desperately trying to remove it.

EXT. STEEP HILL - AFTERNOON

The two young men slowly work their way up the steep hill. They're both caked in sweat. Eric continuously switches the bag from one hand to another, and sometimes he carries it with both.

EXT. CLIFF - AFTERNOON

At the top of the hill, Rafael stops for a moment to breathe. Eric continues, then turns back to wait for his friend. He's bent over, hands on his knees until he's breathing normally again. Now they continue at the same slow speed as before.

Rafael stops following Eric and walks over to the cliff and looks out over the trees below. There is no end to be seen. Just a sea of trees.

It takes a bit for Eric to notice Rafael is not behind him, but when he does, Eric stops and turns around.

Rafael gazes out over the cliff for a bit longer and then turns to look at Eric.

He gives him one last long hard look. Eric doesn't understand why he's looking at him like that. Then it occurs to him, but it's too late!

ERIC

NO! NO!

Eric drops the bag and runs at Rafael as he falls backward off the cliff. The instant after, Eric's body freezes up mid-run from shock and he plummets to the ground.

Eric just lies there on the ground, hyperventilating, unable to move. Desperately trying to catch his breath! Through struggle, Eric manages to climb to his knees, then forces himself to his feet, dashes over to the edge of the cliff, and looks over.

Far below we can make out Rafael's body. He's not moving.

He's dead.

Eric tries to hold his vomit in, but it shoots out of his mouth and flies everywhere. He tries to cry out! He can't! He's too busy gasping for air.

Eric scans the edge of the cliff for a safe way to get down. From a distance, Eric spots a hill side. He runs for it!

EXT. BLURRY FLASHBACK -- NIGHT

Eric sprints down a flight of stairs picking up speed.

PRESENT DAY

Eric gets closer and closer to the hill, his arms thrashing violently through the air.

FLASHBACK

Eric sprints across the pavement, throwing people aside that are in his way.

PRESENT DAY

Now at the steep hill, Eric frantically makes his way down it. He's moving so fast that he loses his footing and flips over.

FLASHBACK

Eric approaches a group of people that are gathered in a circle. Ambulance sirens ring up.

PRESENT DAY

Eric rolls uncontrollably down the hill, crashing into trees, and busting himself up. The backpack comes sliding off of his back.

FLASHBACK

Eric struggles to push through the crowd of people.

ERIC (CONT'D)
MOVE! MOVE!

PRESENT DAY

Eric hits the bottom of the hill, climbs back to his feet, and is at it again.

FLASHBACK

Eric continues to fight through the crowd, slowly advancing to the center.

PRESENT DAY

Eric is almost there. We can see Rafael's body up ahead.

FLASHBACK

Eric fights through one last person. He throws them aside and utter terror swallows him whole.

He drops to his knees - eyes glued to something in front of him. We never see what's he's looking at.

EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON - PRESENT DAY

Eric arrives at Rafael's body and the sight drives him to his knees. The same countenance that we saw in the flashback.

ERIC
Rafael! Please!

Eric desperately feels for a pulse, but there's nothing.

ERIC (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
You can't leave! You can't!

There surprisingly isn't much blood. Rafael looks like he's in good condition from the outside apart from the back of his head which looks bashed in, and his limbs in an unnatural position.

Tears begin to stream from Eric's eyes.

ERIC (CONT'D)
You can't leave!
(a long sob)
I need you!
(another sob)
Rafael!
(pause)
Rafael!

He's gone and inside Eric knows he's not coming back, but he can't believe it. He digs into his pocket, brings out his phone and dials 911.

It sounds as if someone answered the call, but there is no one speaking.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Hello!

There is nothing.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Hello!

Nothing. Eric is so desperate that he screams repeatedly into the phone.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Say something! Say something! Say something! Say something!

The call abruptly ends and screen goes blank. Eric tries to turn the phone back on. The battery is dead.

ERIC (CONT'D)

NO!

Eric leans over Rafael's body as the sobbing intensifies. There seems to be no sign of him stopping anytime soon.

EXT. WOODS SITE 3 - LATE AFTERNOON

The sun is past its peak, but there is still plenty of sunlight left. Eric sits there with his backpack. We can see Rafael's body maybe 10 yards away. He's been covered from head to toe in a blanket.

Eric just stares deep into the endless forest as if he's still trying to get his mind to accept what's just happened. He then proceeds to remove all of his bags contents.

The water-bottle he found earlier catches his eye, and he picks it up before throwing it against a tree in a burst of anger. It's almost like he's telling the woods to take it back, but inside he's angry at himself for letting Rafael die.

He should never have taken him to this place.

The young man spots the mini shovel, picks it up, holds it in his hands, and his gaze drifts to Rafael's body. He knows what he must do.

EXT. RAFAEL'S BURIAL SITE - LATER

Eric drags Rafael's body over to the flattest ground in the area where the mini shovel has been stabbed into the dirt. He carefully places Rafael's arms by his sides, clears an area in the dirt, picks up the shovel, and begins to hack away.

VIDEO: INT. SACREMENTO TUNNEL - NIGHT

Eric stands in a long dark tunnel while Rafael films him. The image quality is filled with grain since the night vision feature is on.

They both slowly advance down the tunnel.

RAFAEL
(whispers)
Man! I've gotta-

ERIC
SHHH!

Eric puts a finger to his lips silencing Rafael. There's something at the end of the tunnel.

INTERCUT BETWEEN VIDEO FOOTAGE AND WOODS

Eric works the shovel in and out of the ground. We can see his raw energy in each dig as if he is trying to exhaust the emotions out of himself.

A bright circular light sits in the air at the end of the tunnel. Eric, transfixed by the light, carefully approaches it. Suddenly the light dashes away out of their view! Eric starts after it and Rafael a split second later. Neither of them say anything.

There's a small hole in the ground now, but there's still a significant amount to go.

Eric and Rafael rush to end of the tunnel and turn the corner. Disappointment grows on Eric's face. It's gone.

The hole is slightly wider now, but not much deeper. Sweat coats Eric's face, but he's too determined to even stop to wipe it off.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Eric and Rafael walk back to the car in silence.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

They both climb in and shut the doors. Eric - driver's seat
-- Rafael - passengers. They sit there for a bit; they both
look like they've seen a ghost. Maybe they have.

Rafael breaks the silence.

RAFAEL

What the fuck was that?

ERIC

No idea.

RAFAEL

Ya think we might've found some
proof man?

ERIC

It's not good enough.

RAFAEL

No man and we keep going an shit,
but this coulda been a sign. Like
maybe it was some fucking angel or
some shit.

ERIC

Yeah. Maybe.

EXT. RAFAEL'S BURIAL SITE - LATE AFTERNOON

It's a bit darker than before and Eric is still at it but
finally, he's made some good progress. He's getting there.

INTERCUT BETWEEN CAR AND WOODS

ERIC (CONT'D)

There's a place we could go next.

This grabs Rafael's attention.

RAFAEL

Where man?

ERIC

It's this amusement park. A bit out
of the city.

RAFAEL

That sounds like a fucking circle
jerk.

ERIC

What?

RAFAEL

Why there man?

Eric can't answer that question. He lies.

ERIC

Heard rumors about it you know.

Eric is almost done digging. The sun is starting to set. His hands are covered in red, but he keeps going.

RAFAEL

We've gotta find better shit to film than some fucking kid's amusement park.

ERIC

Where do you think we should go?

RAFAEL

Well, man, I've got this place and like you it's a bit out from the city but it's bomb man and it's just on this road in my hometown-

ERIC

(confused)

Why there?

RAFAEL

Cause I've seen some creepy shit there man. I'll tell ya - we gotta go over there.

ERIC

That sounds like a waste of time. We go to the amusement park.

RAFAEL

No man! Why some fucking random ass amusement park? So you can be fucking amused Eric?

ERIC

Why a random road?

Rafael sighs and they both stare at each other in frustration.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Not driving you there.

RAFAEL

Well, I'm not paying for fucking
gas man.

They both stare at each other again. Both liars. Both unable
to express themselves, but they need each other.

ERIC

Fine. We'll find another place to
go.

EXT. RAFAEL'S BURIAL SITE - EVENING

Eric has finished digging the shallow hole and is now
dragging Rafael's body over to the pit. The sun sets through
the trees.

Eric drops Rafael's into the pit and begins ferociously
covering his body in dirt.

Dirt piles up over Rafael's body and he slowly disappears
until only dirt remains.

Eric stands up and solemnly looks over Rafael's grave. The
sun is directly behind Eric which casts his body in a
silhouette.

He just stands there looking at Rafael's grave letting the
fact soak in that's he's dead before finally walking back to
his site.

Almost all daylight is now gone.

EXT. SITE 3 - NIGHT

We stare at the roof of the trees violently dancing above us.
A small glimmer of moonlight makes it through the thick
branches that cover the sky.

Eric doesn't even try to sleep. He just watches the wind blow
the branches back and forth.

In the distance, Eric hears faint sounds. CLICK CLACK CLICK
CLACK. The sound immediately makes Eric uncomfortable and he
covers his ears for a moment. Then removes them.

CLICK CLACK CLICK CLACK! Louder now! It sounds a bit like a
train moving across tracks.

Eric covers his ears again, desperately trying to get it to
stop, but it's too loud to be silenced now.

The sound is driving him crazy.

That's when he sees it. A roller coaster cart, on its tracks, zips over him through the trees. Eric doesn't believe what he's seeing. He closes his eyes, rubs them, and reopens them.

Now he can clearly see roller coaster tracks above the trees and he can hear the CLICK CLACK in the distance. Eric lies there in fear. Too afraid to do anything.

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Eric, eyes closed, feels for the mat. He can't feel it under him. Where is it? Where did it go?!

The terrified man opens his eyes. The trees above him look different. We can see more of the sky. It registers!

Eric is on the ground! He's no longer on his sleeping mat.

Eric jumps to his feet and rapidly looks around. He's not at his site! He's just somewhere in the trees. A bright white light pops in from the darkness.

About 10 yards away is a single roller coaster cart, just sitting idle on its tracks as if it's waiting for Eric to get in. The young man approaches it, just one step at a time. He's terrified of it, but he doesn't know what else to do.

Eric arrives at the cart and peers into it. It's a typical roller coaster cart with safety bars and a buckle.

Eric finds himself in the cart! We never even see him get in. He instinctively tries to get out. He's glued to the seat! The carts starts to move down the tracks, but he's not secured in.

EXT. ROLLER COASTER TRACKS IN WOODS - NIGHT

The tracks incline. Eric trashes around in his seat as he gains altitude. He reaches for the safety bar - right out of reach. Up and up and we're almost at the top. His fingertips are at the safety bar, but he just can't grab it.

The cart sits idle on top for a brief second and then shoots down which throws Eric against the seat.

The cart flies down the tracks and then back up twice as quickly. Eric leans forward to avoid getting hit in the face by a branch, but it scrapes his back and Eric cries out in a burst of pain.

The tracks go up and down and they twist all over the place. The carts speed increases until it's going so fast that Eric has trouble breathing. Up ahead Eric spots an upside-down loop. He doesn't have enough air to cry out, but we can see the fear intensify.

Again he reaches for the safety bar - GOT IT! He yanks it down - jammed! The bar is jammed. We're almost at the loop.

Eric fights with the stubborn bar. It won't budge. It's too late! The cart shoots up the loop AND --

EXT. RAFAEL'S BURIAL SITE - MOMENTS LATER

...Eric finds himself clawing at the ground with both fingers like a wild animal. It takes him a few seconds to realize he's no longer on the cart. When he does, he just stops and stares.

Eric can barely make out the site from the distance. Only a few sparks from the fire Eric made give it away.

Eric holds his fingernails to a crack in the sky where moonlight has squeezed in, and he can see dirt wedged in his nails. That's when it occurs to him.

He's right at the place where he buried Rafael, and he's been clawing at the dirt!

Eric turns his head and spots Rafael's grave. It's been dug up! Eric peers into the grave. It's so dark out that we can't see the bottom.

Eric jumps to his feet and darts for the site!

EXT. SITE 3 - NIGHT

Eric rips through his backpack for a flashlight. He locates it and sprints back to Rafael's grave.

EXT. RAFAEL'S BURIAL SITE - MOMENTS LATER

Eric arrives with his flashlight already on. He leans over into the grave and shines the light into the pit.

GONE! Rafael's body is nowhere to be seen. To make things more absurd the pit is five times deeper than the shallow pit Eric dug.

OUT OF NOWHERE, Eric goes flying right into the pit!

EXT. INSIDE GRAVE - MOMENTS LATER

He lies at the bottom of the pit for a moment in pure shock. The flashlight flickers and dies.

Eric tries to sit up. He can't. He can't move!

From above a WOMAN looks into the grave with a shovel in her hand. We can see great sorrow on her face. She stabs the shovel into the ground, and lets the dirt fall into the grave.

Then comes another person who does the same thing. And then another and another. They all have one thing in common. They're in pain.

Eric tries to open his mouth. Only loud painful muddles come out. MRRRRR! MRRRRR!

The dirt continues to pile up over Eric. They're burying him alive! Only his eyes remain uncovered now.

Another man steps up over the grave. It's David Rodney. The father at the funeral.

Anyone else's grief is nothing compared to what we see on his face. He looks physically sick. Eric lays there consumed guilt. He can't bear to look at the man. He does anyway.

David fills the shovel with dirt and lets it descend into the grave. The dirt falls over Eric's eyes leaving us in complete darkness.

We sit there in the darkness. The only sound we can hear is Eric's rapid breathing. In and out. In and out.

THEN --

EXT. SITE 3 - NIGHT

Eric gives a long horrified cry. Everything falls quiet. He's sitting there against a tree next to his sleeping mat, rapidly breathing in and out. All night.

EXT. SITE 3 - MORNING

Eric sits against the tree. He's so exhausted now that he looks a bit like a zombie.

Eric stands up and moves sluggishly back to his sleeping mat. He grabs his bag, about to pack, when suddenly any energy he has evaporates, and he plops onto the mat.

Eric just sits there. He doesn't know what to think. What to do. Eric looks in the direction of Rafael's burial site. He has to check something!

EXT. RAFAEL'S BURIAL SITE - MORNING

He arrives at the site and looks for the empty grave, but it's not there. There's no hole to be seen.

Eric looks at the ground and doesn't know what to believe. He's going crazy.

EXT. WOODS - LATE MORNING

Eric treks across the woods with one bag over his shoulders. He's left the other one behind. We don't know where he's going and neither does he. He just walks.

EXT. SMALL CLEARING - AFTERNOON

Eric steps out into a small clearing. It's the most open Eric has felt since he went into the woods and it relieves him a little. This is the first time Eric can clearly see the sky. He looks up and...

...there it is! A huge towering rocky cliff.

It's at least 150 feet. There's something a bit odd about this cliff. It looks artificial as if someone placed it there.

Eric looks up at this phenomenon. A part of him doesn't even believe it's there. He needs to get closer. Eric gets moving immediately.

EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON

Eric's back in the deep woods again. Over the roofs of the trees, he can see the cliff and he gradually grows closer.

EXT. BASE OF CLIFF - AFTERNOON

He's arrived! Eric reaches out and touches the rock. It feels too real to be anything else. Eric grabs hold of the rock.

That's when an idea crosses his mind. But it's dangerous.

EXT. ON CLIFF - AFTERNOON

Eric's on the cliff and he's climbing. He reaches for a rock, grabs it and pulls himself up.

It's not the easiest cliff to climb. However, there are enough places to grab onto.

He climbs slowly. Hands shaking. He's not comfortable with heights, but he persists.

Eric can see the top branch of a tree above him. The next thing he knows, he's climbing above the trees.

Eric looks down - dizzy - almost loses his balance. He takes a deep breath and continues.

The climbing gets a bit more difficult. Eric can see a thin ledge above him. Risky. He checks his surrounds for another way. There is none.

Eric JUMPS -- makes it. His hands turn red from the life or death grip. The rest of his body hangs there - legs dangling below him.

With all the strength Eric has, he pulls himself up onto the ledge. Stabilizes himself. Continues climbing.

EXT. ON CLIFF - LATE AFTERNOON

Eric's pace on the cliff has been so slow that the day is dying, but he's over halfway. We can tell Eric is exhausted. Exhaustion isn't enough to stop him.

He turns and looks at the sun in the sky that's past its prime. He's terrified of not making it to the top by nightfall.

He goes even faster! It's incredible that he's not falling. It's almost as if something wants him to get to the top. Like something is protecting him.

The clifftop is right there! Eric reaches for it, grabs onto it, and pulls himself up with all his might.

Now on the top, Eric stands up and looks out over the trees below him. Shock fills his face. Then it turns to hopelessness. We see what he sees.

There is no end to the woods. Just a sea of trees with no ending in the horizon.

Just a sea of trees.

The sun sets in the sky. The very thing that gives Eric any semblance of safety leaving him, and it won't stop. The sun is so cold.

Eric watches the sunset, waiting. Just waiting. The sun is now completely gone and it is growing darker by the second.

Eric turns around and sees more trees behind him. They're just sitting there. Waiting for him to enter. Waiting to swallow him into terror once again.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - UNKNOWN

Eric sits at a small metal table. His head is down for most of the scene, but when he looks we see he has baggy teary eyes and his lips are curved into a frown.

At the other side of the table sits an INTERROGATOR. He's a slim bald man in his mid-forties who's staring at Eric with an "it's alright you can talk to me" look, but we can see the demanding glare in his eyes.

When they start talking, it's clear they've been talking for a bit.

INTERROGATOR

Hey, bud, I really appreciate you coming down here and all, and I think really that you've been nothing but honest with me, but we're not getting anywhere.

ERIC

What else is there to know?

INTERROGATOR

Well, what would you say your condition was on that night?

Eric says nothing as the interrogator closely examines him.

INTERROGATOR (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Anything to drink? Did you maybe take a few hits?

ERIC

No.

INTERROGATOR

You sure bud?

ERIC

Yes.

INTERROGATOR

So help me out with this bud. You were completely sober and you made a conscious choice. So what were you thinking? What was going through your mind?

ERIC

I already told you. I was just - I was frustrated.

INTERROGATOR

Frustrated. Eric, did you even stop to think what might happen?

ERIC

No. I mean I was-

Eric stops mid sentence. There is a long silence that follows. This isn't working. The interrogator switches his tone.

INTERROGATOR

Did you personally know the victim Eric?

(pause)

Did you know Aaron Rodney?

ERIC

No.

INTERROGATOR

So why?

ERIC

I already told you I was -

INTERROGATOR

Eric! I've got guys checking out all your social media, your Twitter, your Facebook, your Instagram. All your photos. So, I'll ask you again. Did you know Aaron Rodney?

Eric wrestles with his emotions.

ERIC

No I didn't know him. I didn't know him.

Tears begin to leak from Eric's eyes. The interrogator uses the emotion to his advantage.

INTERROGATOR

A young innocent child is dead.

The tears continue to increase. It takes a while for Eric to muster up and speak.

ERIC

I know. I know. It was an accident.

INTERROGATOR

Accident. Whose accident Eric?

In that moment the hard fact begins to sink into Eric's mind. It was his actions that caused this.

ERIC

Mine.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Black. Pitch black! Loud breathing pierces the silence. In and out. In and out like a panting dog. Then brushing on the ground. Eric searches for something. Anything. A zipper sound. Searching through a bag. Then!

Light fills the frame and we can see Eric holding a flashlight.

He frantically looks around slowly coming to the realization that he's deep in the woods again.

He grabs his head and squeezes it. He's losing his sanity. How did he get here?

Eric climbs to his feet and darts the light beam around. The woods are different then they were before. They're darker. Thicker. Heavier.

Eric shines his flashlight to the sky, but there is no sky. The thick branches and the array of leaves devour the sky from sight.

Eric begins to move. It is so dark that the beam is practically useless.

A voice penetrates through the silence.

RAFAEL (O.S.)

Eric! Over here man!

Eric stops for a moment. NO! That couldn't have been real. He keeps moving.

The leaves and branches crackle beneath him with each step. It's like the woods is sucking the energy right out of him. He's already practically out of breath.

Eric steps on something and almost loses his balance. The young man shines his light to the ground and spots a silver rail. It's a part of a track, but the rest is missing.

He begins to follow the rail. Eric continuously darts the light from the rail to in front of himself.

Right then! Eric hears something dragging across the dirt. It sounds like it's coming from straight in front of him.

Eric's afraid - NO - terrified, but he's got to face it!

Eric continues - whole body shaking. The dragging stops right as Eric reaches the end of the rail.

Eric stands right in front of a tree. The base of the tree is so thick that even several people couldn't wrap their arms all around it.

Eric slowly makes his way around the tree.

A head! Someone's head. He's terrified of who it may be. Eric stands in front of the body, but then cups his flashlight with his hands. He can't look, but he knows he has to.

He takes a few breathes and then shines the light on the person's face.

It's Rafael! His face is bloody, his jaw dislocated, and his legs are broken.

ERIC

Rafael!?

No amount of words can describe the look of shock on Eric's face. How did Rafael's body get here?! He isn't even able to speak.

Eric notices that Rafael's shirt is off and bloody text has been carved in his skin. It fills his chest down to his stomach.

And it reads...

You brought me here. You killed me.

Eric can't take seeing that. He doesn't want to be responsible for anything. Not again. And certainly not his friend's death.

ERIC
 (struggling to speak)
 No. No. You wanted to come here!
 No.

Then something begins carving letters on Rafael's forehead and then on his throat.

You killed me.

Tears begin to escape Eric's eyes. Eric cries out, but even he doesn't believe what he's saying.

ERIC (CONT'D)
 I tried to stop you from coming!
 You wouldn't listen!

Eric's screaming rings across the woods and echoes back as if the woods is feeding off of his pain.

Rafael's body falls straight forward as if something pushed him revealing his backside. We can see that his spine is broken. Something begins carving words on his back.

You've only burned others. That's it.

Eric's crying has become so strong that he can't even speak. When he's not crying, he's gasping for air.

End it. End it. End it.

Rafael's body then flops back up against the tree and his eyelids open revealing his bloodshot eyes. It's like he's being reanimated for just a moment.

RAFAEL
 You were never my fucking friend
 Eric. No man cause real friends
 fucking listen to each other. A
 real friend would have gone back
 when they could see that something
 was obviously fucking wrong. No.
 You were just some piece of
 worthless shit that helped pay my
 fucking rent. That's what ya
 fucking are man. You are nothing
 but a fucking murder. JUST END IT!

Rafael's body than loses all life and falls face first onto the ground. Eric shrieks out in emotional pain and uncontrollably begins to run.

He just wants to get away from Rafael. Away from it all. His flashlight sways back and forth in the darkness.

The forest grows less dense and the sky reveals itself.

In the sky, Eric can see a roller coaster riding on the tracks. He turns his head away, runs even faster, and continuously dodges the trees in front of him.

To the right is a slab of pavement instead of dirt. A dead bloody body lies in the middle of it. The sounds - LOUDER.

Eric isn't even paying attention to what's in front of him. He just runs.

A bright yellow appears next to Eric. He turns his head -- A MASSIVE FIRE extends for miles parallel to Eric -- It's moving with him.

When Eric increases his speed, so does the fire as if it's running with him. The roller coaster sounds grow louder still. CLICK CLACK CLICK CLACK!

Eric desperately tries to get away, but no matter how fast he runs he can clearly hear the sounds. And they're getting louder and louder!

The flame stays with Eric. It burns everything in his path.

All we can hear is the CLICK CLACK CLICK CLACK. Eric runs and runs and runs trying to escape his past, but it stays with him. It's always with him. Eric can't even see what's in front of him when -

Eric falls right off a cliff! He's in the air! Arms thrashing! Shooting down!

A tree branch - right below him - he crashes onto it! It breaks his fall a little. Another branch! Another! CRASH! CRASH! CRASH! His backpack goes flying off!

He's in the air again - headed right for the ground! Everything goes dark.

INT. MCDONALD'S KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING - FLASHBACK

Sizzling. Burgers are sizzling on the grill. Rafael presses the spatula into the burger to flatten it and then waits.

Eric puts condiments on the burgers and wraps them up. Neither of them speak. Rafael spins the spatula in his hand in an attempt to entertain himself. He then turns to see Eric wrapping the burgers incorrectly.

RAFAEL

Na man. Ya wrap the burger edge to edge.

Rafael wraps one as an example.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

Ya see that shit?

ERIC

(meekly)

Yeah.

RAFAEL

My first day was a pain in the ass but trust me man this shit is as easy as getting a prostitute in bed with ya. Ya know what I mean?

ERIC

Yeah.

RAFAEL

Really man?

Eric doesn't answer. Rafael begins to grill burgers again.

INT. MCDONALD'S KITCHEN - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Eric wraps burgers yet again. Correctly this time. Rafael casually enters the kitchen with a bag of ketchup.

RAFAEL

Eric my man! Ya got that shit down.

Not a word from Eric.

RAFAEL (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

So whatdoya like to do man?

ERIC

Not much.

RAFAEL

Shit man. Ya gotta find yourself a hobby cause I'll tell ya, I kinda like to these docs.

Eric has no idea what he's talking about.

RAFAEL (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Ya know, documentaries.

Rafael pauses a beat for Eric to react, but he says nothing and Rafael continues.

RAFAEL (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Anyway man I've been trying to save
up some dough so I can get my
cameras an shit but I don't know
how long it's going to be in this
fucking place with the minimum wage
shit their giving me.

Rafael waits again for Eric to respond. Eric has nothing. A long moment of silence passes. Rafael looks at this tattoo on his arm and when he speaks, he continues to look at it.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
Do you believe in ghosts? Life
after death?

This piques Eric's interest. He even stops wrapping burgers to look at Rafael.

ERIC
What do you mean?

RAFAEL
Like you ever think there was a
monster under ya bed or something?

ERIC
Yeah. When I was little I'd always
look under my bed actually.

RAFAEL
That's what I'm talking about Eric
cause see, when I was a little man
I'd always see this weird ass shit
in my closet. I always thought it
was a ghost or some shit. My dad
always told me it was just my
imagination playing tricks on me.
Fuck man it probably was. But. What
if it's not? What if our family and
friends and shit are out there
watching us man?

ERIC
No idea. Wondered some times - done
some looking - a lot of looking
actually.

RAFAEL
Really man?

ERIC
(more enthusiastic)
Yeah. Visited the Historic cemetery
last week.

RAFAEL
Ah fuck man. Ya see anything?

ERIC
No. It was actually really peaceful
there.

RAFAEL
Ah man cause I'll tell ya I went up
to that spooky ass place a couple
months back at 3 am an shit and I
heard some weird ass noises man.

ERIC
Wow.

RAFAEL
Anyway man that's what I wanna make
the doc about.
(pause)
So tell me Eric my man, what are ya
hoping to find. Dead loved ones?
Shit like that?

Eric knows he can't tell him that.

ERIC
No. Just something to do you know.

A moment of silence between them.

RAFAEL
You gotta place man?

ERIC
No. Just live in a car right now.
Trying to save some money up. What
about you?

RAFAEL
A fucking dump man. I got a place
with a few other guys. Smoke
fucking weed all days those guys
man. Place smells like onions and
there's fucking rats and shit
everywhere. Eric man, I'd chop my
fucking arm off and sell it on
fucking eBay to get outta that
place.

ERIC

Wow.

Another moment of silence. Eric has an idea, but he's hesitant.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Um.

RAFAEL

Let it out man.

Eric hesitates for a moment longer. He's unsure if he should say it.

ERIC

Maybe, um, if your need some help with the documentary...

RAFAEL

(interrupts)

Shit man? You'd do that?

ERIC

Yeah.

Right at that moment Rafael comes up with an idea.

RAFAEL

Fuck man!

Rafael stops mid-sentence realizing he may have sworn too loud. No one seems to have heard it, but he lowers his voice anyway.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

We both need a place man cause what if you and me put our money together an shit man and get ourselves a little spot? That'a be some sick shit man.

ERIC

An apartment?

RAFAEL

Yeah man.

ERIC

Don't know. Maybe.

RAFAEL

Think about it man. We get a place together.

(MORE)

You don't have to get a stiff fucking neck on that shitty car seat and I don't have to live in the fucking smelliest place on Earth. Come on Eric my man! Think about it and we could work on the doc and shit. Eric man, we could explore some creepy ass places like the fucking Ghostbusters an shit. It'a work man.

There is a long silence. Rafael eagerly awaits Eric's response.

ERIC

Do you know where the bathroom is?

RAFAEL

Yeah man. Go take a shit or whatever ya gotta do. We're not fucking busy. But just think about it man.

Eric says nothing more to Rafael and makes his way to the bathroom.

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Eric stands there in front of the mirror, but he's not looking at himself. He doesn't look at himself once. He just stares down at the floor.

He's afraid. Afraid to acknowledge himself. Afraid of coming into this young man's life. Afraid of how he might destroy it. But several words play in his head, and he can't help but see the connection.

RAFAEL (V.O.)

Do you believe in ghosts? Life after death? What if our family and friends and shit are out there watching us man?

Eric knows he has to say yes even if he doesn't want to.

EXT. WOODS - BEFORE DAWN - PRESENT DAY

Eric is on the ground unconscious. We can tell from the sky that it's still dark out, but that the sun will be up in under an hour.

Eric's eyes flutter and then fully open. His eyes are completely lifeless, but are suddenly reanimated. He works his way to his feet as quickly as possible and grabs his backpack off the ground.

About 100 yards away, we can see a clearing in the trees. Maybe it's a way out! Eric begins to lightly jog; he's still too disoriented to full on sprint.

Eric steps out into the clearing and the ground pulls Eric's feet to a halt. Eric face fills with amazement.

EXT. CIRCULAR CLEARING - BEFORE DAWN

The clearing is a perfect circle. Almost too perfect. That's not what's got Eric's attention.

Above him float hundreds of ghostly figures. We can see that they're people. People that have lost all their color and turned so pale white that they are transparent.

They all float around. Soulless. Dead. It looks as if all hope is gone except for a small sliver. They've all come to this area for a reason. They're searching for something.

Eric steps out into the clearing and makes his way through it observing the spirits above him.

They all turn and look at him, and they all have the same expression on their pale white faces. It is one of deep sorrow and pain.

Eric examines each and every one of their faces looking for the comfort he has long wanted. It's not there. Any hope Eric ever had begins to drain, and he stops looking at their faces.

This is it? This is what he's been looking for!?

He looks at the ground. He looks to the sky. He doesn't know where to look. Maybe there is nowhere to look.

Eric breaks into a sprint. A hopeless sprint. He races to the other side of the clearing, both arms pumping widely.

He's over halfway across the clearing now and we can see a sliver of orange in the sky. Eric reaches the other side and the woods devour him again.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

That's when Eric sees it in the distance. A lodge! He doesn't know how it could be there, but he is too desperate to question it.

EXT. OUTSIDE LODGE - DAWN

Eric makes his way to the lodge and peers inside a window. There is no one there. Eric opens the door and steps inside.

INT. LODGE - DAWN

Dust. The inside of the lodge is covered in dust as if no one has stepped foot in there since it had originally been built.

It's shockingly barren with only one room, an old torn couch and an empty fire place.

Eric lumbers over to the couch and drops onto it. The young man just stares into space with nothing on his mind. Just a feeling of dread and hopelessness.

At that moment we can hear a creaking sound from behind Eric followed by what sounds like footsteps. Eric hears it, but doesn't even care to turn around.

Rafael nears Eric. He looks similar to the other spirits, but he has a tad more color in his skin.

RAFAEL

Eric. I was wrong man.

Eric doesn't turn to look at his dead friend.

ERIC

You're not real.

Rafael takes a seat next to Eric.

RAFAEL

(calmly)

Look at me.

(pause)

Look at me Eric.

Eric looks at Rafael. For a moment neither of them have a clue what to say. They just stare at one another.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

Ya found the dead man. Ya found it.

You can go now.

All Eric can do is stare.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)

Eric. Look at me. You can go.

Eric stares for a moment longer. Then wills himself to speak.

ERIC

Nothing is different now. Nothing.

Another long moment of silence. Rafael has to help Eric. Somehow. Maybe the truth.

RAFAEL

I killed someone Eric.

ERIC

What?

RAFAEL

I fucking killed someone. My best friend. My best fucking friend man.

This has Eric's attention. Even if he doesn't want to listen.

RAFAEL (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I was driving with him. We were fucking around. Speeding. Sticking our asses out of the window like crackheads. We're both drunk as fuck.

Eric just listens.

RAFAEL (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Next thing I know the car's rolling like a fucking tennis ball. I can't see shit and there's fucking smoke everywhere.

Rafael begins to get emotional.

RAFAEL (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Ah fuck man. And then - and then I look at the seat next to me and he's not there. And then I turn and he's - he's there in the back seat. Half of his body crushed in. And he lays there calmly looking at me. Too shocked to even be scared man.

Rafael begins to cry.

RAFAEL (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
And then I look at myself. I'm like
mother fucking superman. Not a
single scratch man. So I called the
police and I waited. I just sat
there. I just sat there and
watched my best friend die. And
there was nothing I could fucking
do about it.

Eric becomes emotional too.

RAFAEL (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
How come he died and I got to live.
Not a fucking scratch man. How was
that fucking right?! I killed him.
And God spared me. There had to be
a fucking reason. There had to be
man. I had to find him in the
afterlife. I had to say how sorry I
was.

Tears run down Eric's eyes. He tries to fight the emotion.
It's no good.

RAFAEL (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
The instant I went off that cliff I
knew I was wrong man. But I just
kept falling and falling and
falling. Next thing I know you're
weeping over my dead body Eric. I
fucking let you down man. We were
supposed to be there for each
other! And as I floated around I
saw the other people that did the
same fucking thing I did. And all I
saw was hopelessness. That's all I
saw man.
(pause)
Hopelessness.

Eric knows what Rafael's trying to say, but he can't let him
in. Not now.

RAFAEL (CONT'D)
There's nothing here man. It's out
there.

Eric dangles on the edge of emotional explosion.

ERIC
No. No. You're wrong.

RAFAEL
All I've done is fucking lie to you
man but for once I'm telling you
the truth.

ERIC
You're wrong.

Rafael becomes desperate.

RAFAEL
Eric man ya need to listen to me!

ERIC
It's my fault you're dead. Mine!

RAFAEL
I saw the video man! I know-

ERIC
Shut up!

The young man runs for the door...

RAFAEL
ERIC! ERIC!

...and crashes right through it.

EXT. WOODS - DAWN

Eric keeps running. The forest is lit with orange from the sky. He's running like a wild animal. Like a wild animal that has poison in its veins and will die if it stops.

Everything is a blur. He can't even make out a majority of the objects in front of him. Voices infiltrate his mind.

RAFAEL (V.O.)
You brought me here! You killed me!

Eric turns his head while sprinting and spots a cliff. Rafael stands at the edge. Eric cries out, but is running too fast to speak.

RAFAEL (V.O.)
YOU KILLED ME!

Eric tries to turn his head away from what he knows is about to happen, but he can't. He tries to outrun it! There isn't enough time. Rafael turns and looks at Eric before falling to his death.

The young man turns his head away from the terrible sight and runs.

DAVID (V.O.)
GET OUT! GET OUT!

Eric runs and runs and runs; his heart about to burst out of his chest. Everything becomes such a blur that we can't make anything out.

EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON

Eric frantically crawls on the ground. Fingernails scratching at the dirt. His clothes completely black.

Time has passed, but everything is such a blur that we can't even tell.

It's like he's been possessed. His mind gone.

EXT. RIVER - MOMENTS LATER

Blue. Eric spots blue in front of him, and then catches his reflection in the river. He's too out of it for his own appearance to shock him.

Out of nowhere, Eric jumps to his feet, strips his backpack off and tosses it into the river. Down the river the bag floats away. Food. Clean water. Flashlights. Survival. Gone. Everything gone.

EXT. WOODS - LATE AFTERNOON

Eric is frantically running again. A strange relaxation falls upon him and his feet come to a halt.

An unusual looking plant sits there. It's thick - green and it circles around itself before shooting straight up to a wide opening like a venus fly trap.

An odd force draws Eric toward it. He approaches this plant - about to touch it WHEN --

...CRACK! There's a crackling in the distance. Eric's focus transitions from the plant to this sound, and he begins to advance the direction of it.

That's when we see it. An UNKNOWN PERSON slogs in the distance. Even from a distance, we can tell this person is in a similar situation as Eric. A hopeless case.

Eric just stands there watching this person pass. He says nothing. He does nothing. Just watches. Just like before.

There is not even a small part of Eric that wants to cry out to this person. He is truly lost. Truly hopeless.

Eric stands there and waits until the person is out of sight. Then he continues. He does not even know why.

EXT. WOODS - SUNSET

Eric still walks. An exhausted hobble. From a distance, he looks like a zombie.

His walk has no purpose anymore but to delay the inevitable.

The bright sun sinks through the trees. Eric isn't even looking at it. His eyes are glued to the ground.

This is most likely the last time he'll ever see daylight.

EXT. WOODS - STARRY NIGHT

Eric still walks.

The trees are spaced out now exposing the starry night sky. We've never seen stars in the sky once before this.

But Eric doesn't once look up at the night sky and its beauty. He probably doesn't even know its there.

He focuses on his feet, hitting the ground one after the other. PLOP PLOP POLP. Eric then gets the sensation that someone else is there. He looks up from the ground for the first time and glances around.

Nothing.

Eric spots something up ahead. It is too dark to make out what it could be. He moves toward it.

Once there, he realizes it is several roller coaster carts just sitting there on the ground. Completely out of place.

Full sized ventriloquist dummies of different looking ages and genders fill up the seats. Every seat but one is filled.

Eric is laser-focused on that one empty seat. In his eyes we can tell he is not in the moment but somewhere long ago.

CRACKLE! Leaves crackle from behind Eric. He simply stands there facing away from the noise.

It grows closer and closer until it stops. Eric still hasn't turned around, but knows something is right behind him. With all his life he doesn't want to turn around.

He has to turn around. He does so. The sight shocks him!

There stands AARON RODNEY. The young man's death that Eric was responsible for.

He stares at Eric; his eyes burn through the man responsible for his death. Neither of them speak. They both stand there facing one another.

AARON

Say something, you motherfucker.

Eric doesn't know what to say. What can he say?

AARON (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Say something!

Eric's mouth is clamped shut.

AARON (CONT'D)

You came here looking for me. You found me. So why don't you go ahead and just make everything all better.

Eric can't even talk right.

ERIC

(suttering)

Just came to say how sorry for-

AARON

(interrupts)

Eric! Do you know how fucking pathetic you are!? You want to talk to me? Well I'm here!

ERIC

J-j-j-just so sorry.

ARRON

Shut the fuck up Eric! You came all this way to say you're sorry. You dumb fuck! You think you could just make it all better?!

Eric begins to tear up. He's there. At the breaking point. Finally! He can't even bear to look at Aaron anymore.

AARON (CONT'D)

Look at me Eric! You fucking fuck!
You waste of space!

(MORE)

I had just fucking graduated high school with good grades and a future! I had the college all picked out! I had people who loved me! I had a girlfriend. A FUCKING FUTURE. And some dumb useless fuck took everything I ever had away and expects to just say sorry. SORRY!?

Aaron's screaming does not seem human. He drones on like a machine programed to be angry. It is like the woods is using this simulated anger to break Eric down.

AARON (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
 What did your future hold? Huh Eric? You useless inept pathetic fuck! You should be fucking dead because you know how many lives your death would save. I just wished you'd done it sooner. Before you fucking had the chance to kill me!

Tears are streaming down Eric's eyes and his whole body was shaking.

ERIC
 It was an accident! It didn't mean to happen!

AARON
 It didn't mean to happen?! It didn't mean to - You can't even fucking say it!

ERIC
 It was a mistake!

AARON
 No Eric! It wasn't just a mistake! It was your mistake!

ERIC
 Maybe you should've just let me put the thing down!

AARON
 Eric! You wanna show you're sorry! Then do what you did to me! Spare everyone else! End it! Just end it!

Eric can't take it anymore. His mind is going in circles.

He cries out and BOOM - strikes Aaron in the face. He goes flying backward to the ground - Eric's right there beating the shit out of him. His fist pounding his face!

BLOOD! Everywhere! His fist covered with it and his face splattered!

Eric stops to catch his breath and he stumbles backward and falls onto his bottom. His face light up in horror!

Aaron is dead again!

Eric opens his mouth and shrieks! It echoes through the trees in a strange way as if the woods itself is trying to preserve the moment.

Silence follows. Total silence.

Eric climbs to his feet and staggers.

He then notices a line of people. They've enclosed him on both sides. And they are all standing there with their arms extended.

They're all pointing right at Eric. The screaming continues.

There stands Eric's FATHER. He looks at him as if to say just how disappointed he is in him.

Eric turns his head away from him to see David standing on the other side. Tears are rushing down his eyes. All he wants is his son back.

Next stands Rafael. We see the same anger in his face as if he blames Eric for his death. For leading him to this horrible place.

Lastly stands Aaron. Any anger or hate on anyone else's face is nothing when compared to what we see on his. He wants Eric to do it. To just end his life!

Eric can't take it for one second longer. He's broken. Completely broken.

The broken man drops to his knees. Right in front of him sits a handgun. It is just waiting to be used.

Eric takes it in his hands. He cries so hard that snot is forced out of his nose. It hangs there and sways in the wind.

He puts the gun to his temple, places his finger on the trigger, and closes his eyes.

Then we hear it. The definite sound of Eric's terror. A roller coaster on the tracks. CHUG CHUG CHUG CHUG CHUG.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A roller coaster cart climbs the inclined tracks. When it gets to the top, the cart stays put for a moment before speeding down. We can hear screams of excitement and joy.

EXT. ROLLER COASTER CONTROLS - NIGHT

Eric and a close friend DANIEL stand at a panel that controls the roller coaster. Daniel looks to be in the same age range as Eric. They chat with one another.

Right away we can see Eric is not the same person that we're used to seeing. He seems so much younger here. So full of dreams.

DANIEL

So did I tell you about the French story dude?

ERIC

The French story?

DANIEL

Yeah so I'm doing this project with this other kid where we gotta have one of those small talk conversations. So the kid wrote out the script.

ERIC

You made him write it?

DANIEL

Shut up.

Eric laughs.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

So we went up to front to present it and in the middle of it the teacher just started freaking out.

Eric's got a grin on his face. A weird sight within itself for us.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

It turns out - he had me say that I had a trench coat in my locker and I was planning on shooting up the school.

Eric bursts out laughing. Even more weird.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Got suspended for three days. What a fucking douchebag.

ERIC

That's hilarious.

DANIEL

Yeah bro. To you maybe.

ERIC

Yeah well, I wanted to play *Only the Good Die Young* in a church. Almost got away with it.

Daniel misses the joke. The mood changes.

DANIEL

You know bro I saw you play that solo Amazing Grace - fucking amazing. You gonna go to college for music?

ERIC

Yeah. I want to but my dad. He thinks it's a waste of time.

DANIEL

Who gives a fuck what he thinks?
(pause)
You know where you wanna go?

ERIC

Yeah. It might sound stupid but the Thornton School of Music. I'd really like to go there. Supposed to have some of the best programs in the country.

DANIEL

Shooting for the stars bro.

ERIC

Yeah. It's only a dream. I mean even if it wasn't a dream my dad-

DANIEL
 (interrupts)
 I mean seriously man who gives a fuck what he thinks?! You think fucking Micheal Jackson did?

ERIC
 Yeah I don't know. I've always liked Artie Shaw.

Daniel doesn't know who that is.

DANIEL
 Oh yeah.

ERIC
 Yeah. He always had the most original compositions. Like Nightmare. That's one of my favorites. He'd go up to a concert A and -

DANIEL
 (in a light manner)
 Okay Eric. You're making me feel fucking stupid. Go off on one of these tangents with one of your geek music buddies.

ERIC
 What? I'm not a geek!

The roller coaster cart is back. All the old passengers get off and the new ones climb in. Eric straps people in and pulls the bars down.

ERIC (CONT'D)
 Just hold on. I'm gonna get the bars down for you.

Eric and Daniel work their way to the front. Eric approaches the next person. It is Aaron and his FRIEND who is about the same age as him.

He reaches over to pull down Aaron's bar down, but he slaps his hand away.

ERIC (CONT'D)
 Hey, you need to have the bar down.

AARON
 I don't need you to put the bar down. I'm not a little bitch.

His friend laughs and Eric reaches for the bar again. SLAP. Aaron pushes his hands away.

AARON (CONT'D)
I can put it down myself, you
fucking dyke.

Eric reaches again, annoyed as hell now. Aaron shoves his hand away and flips him the bird. His friend laughs even harder, but silences himself when Eric glares at him.

ERIC
Fine. Put it down yourself.

Eric finishes strapping people in and putting bars down before heading back to the control panels.

DANIEL
We're all good?

ERIC
Yep.

DANIEL
Alright! Let's get this going.

He clicks a few buttons and the roller coaster cart begins the incline.

Eric stands there silently. Slightly worried. He may have made a mistake.

The roller coaster is at the top of the incline and it goes flying down. We can hear the excited screams from a distance.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
You good bro?

Eric wants to say something, but he doesn't.

ERIC
Yep.

They both stand there silently. Neither speak. The roller coaster cart shoots up the upside down portion and right at that moment...

...The joyful screams convert into terrified ones...

..SHOUTING! We can hear shouting, but we can't make out what they're saying. Eric stands there horrified. Unable to move a muscle.

What happened?!

Daniel hasn't seemed to notice yet. The roller coaster is almost back now.

People are staring to notice on the ground. We can hear shouting, screaming.

Daniel looks around confused.

DANIEL
Eric? What's going on?

At that moment, Eric just takes off running.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
Eric!? What are you doing?! Eric?
Eric!!

The roller coaster cart is back and we can see the look on the passengers faces. They're terrified. Daniel runs up to an YOUNG WOMAN sitting at the back.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
What happened?

She's in shock and the words tremble from her mouth.

YOUNG WOMAN
Som-som- one in fr-fr

Another passenger yells out from the front.

PASSENGER
Someone fell out! A guy at the
front fell out!

Daniel is immediately on his feet, racing to the front and there it is. An empty seat! Aaron's friend is in the next seat in tears.

DANIEL
What happened?

FRIEND
The bar! It wouldn't go down! The
guy didn't put the bar down!

Daniel reaches for the bar and gives it a push. It's jammed. Stuck right in place.

DANIEL
Oh my god.

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK STREETS - NIGHT

Eric races through the crowded streets, shoving people aside. He looks physically sick, like everything he ate is about to come back out.

Someone shrieks out as if they've just seen a terrible sight. Two SECURITY GUARDS are on the move.

A large circle of people is formed up ahead. The security guards throw people aside.

SECURITY GUARD

Move! Move! I need everyone to back off!

We can see an ambulance slowly making it's way through the crowd.

LOUDSPEAKER

Everyone disperse! We need to make room! Everyone disperse!

People start to back off which thins the circle, but there are so many people that it's like trying to get somewhere in a traffic jam.

Eric shoves people aside left and right until he is at the the back of the circle.

ERIC

Move! Move!

Eric works his way through the crowd. Pushing, pulling, squeezing, ducking -- He's almost there!

He can see a clearing with no people ahead -- just one more person. -- AND!

Horror fills Eric's face and he falls to his knees. Tears form in his eyes. We've seen this facial expression before.

Right before him in a pool of blood is Aaron. His head looks like raw meat. Its been cracked right open.

Eric stays right there on his knees, horrified by the sight but unable to look away. He knows he's never going to be the same again.

His life is gone.

INT. BASEMENT - EVENING

Eric stands there, breathing heavily. Then he goes berserk. He takes a chair and -- SMASH -- right into the widescreen TV which shatters and then falls of its stand.

Then -- BANG - he smashes the chair into the wall - There's a big hole -- a chair leg goes flying off.

He then finds himself standing next to the bathroom door which is open and he can see his own reflection in the mirror. He doesn't like the sight. He hates himself.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Eric steps into the bathroom and begin to ram his fist into the mirror. Red fills his knuckles and the mirror smashes into pieces; his reflection completely demolished.

We then hear Eric's father traveling down the stairs and then he sees the damage.

Shock overwhelms him and he takes a deep breath to control it.

FATHER

Eric. It's okay.

Eric just stands there; tears stream down his cheeks - his fists bloody.

Eric's father slowly approaches.

FATHER (CONT'D)

It's okay. Just take a breath.

Eric is overwhelmed by the plethora of emotions. All he can do is stand.

Eric's father wraps his arms around his son. Eric does not do the same.

FATHER (CONT'D)

I love you.

He can't take it. The love he doesn't deserve.

ERIC

Stop it.

Eric's father continues to embrace him. Inside, Eric's emotions begin to build.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Please stop it.

It doesn't stop.

ERIC (CONT'D)
Stop it!

Eric pushes his father away. They both stand there in pure silence for a moment.

Eric doesn't know what to, so he does what he always does. Runs.

He takes off away from his own father.

FATHER
Eric! Eric!

Eric's father breaks into tears and collapses.

INT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Eric throws several bags into the back seat and climbs into the car.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

We can see Eric's father emerge from the house.

FATHER
Eric!

The kid slams on the accelerator and zooms away leaving his past in the rearview mirror.

The only thing we can hear is Eric's rapid breathing and the hum of the engine.

Eric's phone rings out!

He ignores it. A few seconds later it rings again.

Eric slams on the breaks and the car snaps back! He grabs the phone and picks it up. It's his girlfriend.

GIRLFRIEND
Eric? I heard what happened.

Nothing.

GIRLFRIEND (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
Are you alright?

ERIC
Does it matter?

GIRLFRIEND
Of course it matters.

ERIC
No. What about the kid's family?
Did you think about what they're
going through?

GIRLFRIEND
Eric. I wanna see you?

ERIC
Why?

GIRLFRIEND
Because I love you.

Eric seems taken aback. How could she still love him.

ERIC
You love me?
(pause)
You love me?
(sniffles)
How could you love me?! Huh! You
selfish bitch?! How could you love
me!? How could you love me?!

Eric hangs up and throws and phone which hits the window and then falls on the passengers seat. He sits there, fighting back the tears.

EXT. COUNTY ROAD - NIGHT

A car zooms down the road.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Eric sits behind the wheel, his eyes glued to the road ahead of him.

We can tell he's trying to simply focus on driving and not the emotions forcing their way to the surface.

The road is practically empty with only cars and trucks passing here and there.

Eric's phone which sits on the seat next to him vibrates. A friend has sent him a message, and we can see several old ones sitting underneath it that Eric has not responded to.

"Where r u"? "Are you okay?" "Why aren't you responding to my messages?"

Eric doesn't even turn his head to look at the phone. The blue light disappears leaving the car dark again.

It's practically silent except for the humming of the car engine and Eric's long but quiet breaths.

He turns and catches his dim reflection in the window. He stares at it for a moment, but the sight of himself begins to bring out emotions so he turns away.

He just tries focus on driving. Just driving. The farmland slowly begins to convert to more populated areas.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - SACRAMENTO

He's now on the outskirts of the city. Driving. Getting closer to the cities center.

It's getting to him. The emotion. Tears fill his eyes which obstructs the view ahead of him.

He pulls the car to the side of the road. Eric takes a deep breath and then another. In and out. In and out.

Just desperately trying to hold the emotion in. He then stops believing he's pushed it down. And maybe for a split second he has; but it shoots right back up and takes Eric off guard.

Tears stream down his cheeks and he cries out in emotional pain.

Right in that moment, he truly realizes the gravity of his situation. He's all alone in a big city cut off from everyone and everything he's every known. The life he knew and wanted utterly destroyed.

EXT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

We float away from Eric until we can see his emotions in simplest form. Just bobbing up and down.

INT. PUBLIC SHOWER STALL - NIGHT

Hot water drenches Eric. His head is arched up as if he is trying to simply wash the pain away. Extinguish it. Maybe for a moment it has.

But once he turns off the water we can see the pain plastered to his face. He dresses. He doesn't even bother to dry himself off. He exits the stall.

INT. PUBLIC SHOWER AREA - CONTINUOUS

The room is darkly lit. Near closing time. No one else is around. Eric makes his way through the room. Head down.

Brighter! The room is suddenly twice as bright as it was before. Eric slowly looks up. A bright white circle is floating there. It's like an orb.

Eric stares at it. Unsure if it's real or a figment of his imagination. The light begins to move through the air. Eric follows.

It turns a corner. Eric quickens his pace after it! Turns the corner.

Gone! Where is it? Eric turns looks for it. Spots something. A bright light coming from a shower stall. The light squeezed through the cracks.

Eric approaches it - transfixed on that door. He turns the handle, and opens it. The light is gone. Just a normal shower stall. We're back to the dark light of before.

Eric just stands there - mystified. What was that? Was it real? His imagination? He doesn't know any of those answers. He only knows one thing.

If that was real it had to be other worldly. If that was real maybe Aaron is still out there. In some capacity. We close in on Eric. His emptiness begins to fill.

He knows what he has to do.

INT. APARTMENT HALLWAY - LATE NIGHT

We're floating down a small hallway and only just slightly can we hear a clarinet. The music becomes choppy until it fades out and crying replaces it. We turn the corner and...

INT. MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

...there is Eric sitting on the couch with both hands over his eyes, sobbing. Once it stops, he looks up at the video camera over on the counter with that intense look we've seen before.

He then rises from the couch, grabs the video camera, and exits his apartment.

EXT. OUTSIDE APARTMENT COMPLEX - LATE NIGHT

Eric travels down two sets of stairs and makes his way across the road. He walks in a way that shows such emotion exhaustion that he looks as if he could fall face flat on the pavement.

EXT. CITY PARK - LATE NIGHT

He stops at an open grassy city park. At this time of night, no one is around but the road is still full of late night drivers. Unable to stand anymore, he falls to his knees, turns on the camera and looks up straight into it. He needs someone to talk to. Even if it's just a camera.

ON VIDEO: Eric's face is jarring. He eyes red from exhaustion but wide open with emotion, his cheeks colorless, and his mouth shaking.

It occurs to us that we've seen this face before.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

It's the expression he has now. Here Eric is about to kill himself in the same position as in the park. The same facial expression and he's down on his knees.

But one little thing is different. Drive.

The little bit of life in Eric's eyes in the park are completely gone now.

INTERCUT BETWEEN VIDEO AND WOODS

Eric gives that intense look into the camera for a moment longer and begins to speak.

ERIC

Everything. Everything just gone.
Thought that just could keep it in
but

(struggles to say it)

(MORE)

I can't. I'm here now for only one reason. That's it. But I'm so afraid of what I could do to someone - while I search.

(pause)

Rafael. He's been there for me. Helping me search. I want to tell him the truth. I don't want him to leave though. But I don't want to hurt him.

All of Eric's guilt and pain begins to shoot out.

ERIC (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I've hurt so many people! My father, my mother, all my friends, my girlfriend. The family of the child I killed! And I'll probably hurt Rafael too!

(catches his breath)

All I do now is try to find a sign. To see if Aaron is still out there. Somewhere. That's why I'm here.

(pause)

I wish it was me that died that night. Because I've done nothing good for anyone.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - UNKNOWN

ERIC (V.O.)

Once I had a dream. I had something that could make the world better. Music.

There is Eric playing his clarinet. The way he moves his fingers. Just simmering with passion. Passion of which the likes we've never seen from Eric.

The song ends and Eric removes the mouth piece and holds the clarinet at his chest.

An applause roars out over the gym and Eric looks so happy. So accepted. It's almost like we're at looking at someone other than Eric.

BACK TO VIDEO AND WOODS

Eric spots the handgun in front of him and reaches for it.

ERIC

But now I see that for the joke that it is.

(MORE)

I can't make the world a better place. I know it! Because when I came out of work today. I saw a man getting beaten and you know what I did - nothing! I got into my car and slept! Just like Aaron - I sent him right to his death.

Eric places the gun to his head. He's crying so hard that snot is forced out of his nose. It hangs there and sways in the wind.

ERIC (V.O.)
Because that's what I did!

EXT. AMUSEMENT PARK STREETS - NIGHT

There Eric is -- running, pushing people aside, moments before the horror hits him. He sees the body - falls to his knees.

ERIC (V.O.)
Because that's who I am!

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Eric's there - on his knees - in his final moments.

ERIC (V.O.)
But I can't give up now. I have to find Aaron. I just have to. I have to.
(pause)
And I can't give up. I can never give up. Never.

But he is giving up. Right in this moment. The gun at his head. Any moment now. Any moment.

He's not doing it. Why is he not doing it? Eric's still has the gun to his head, but he should've done it by now. He's staring intensely at something.

There floats Rafael. A ghost. A spirit. Just like all the others before him. He looks hopeless, lost - any chance he has at getting out demolished.

Eric stares at Rafael and Rafael stares back. He's begging. Begging for Eric to put down that gun. Begging for Eric to avoid his terrible fate.

The gun is still at his head, but it's like an after thought still lingering in his mind. Then we see what he's thinking.

INT. FATHER'S HOUSE - EVENING

Eric's father sits on the couch talking to Daniel. His voice quivers with emotion.

FATHER

I let Eric go. I wish I could simply invite him back into my life but he's gone.

DANIEL

I'm so sorry. He was my best friend.

FATHER

And he was the best part of my life. I just didn't know it yet. I used to sit there and listen to him play. The house is so quiet now.

(pause)

I wonder where he is now. I hope he's all right. I wish he knew how much I loved him.

INT. DAVID'S HOUSE - MORNING

David sits forward in a living room chair flipping through a picture book filled with memories. He doesn't look any better than he did the day of the funeral. He's worse.

David stops at a picture of Aaron as a baby and holds his gaze on it.

If only had he known his time with Aaron was so limited. If only.

EXT. OUTSIDE MCDONALDS - EVENING

Eric makes his way through the parking lot. He doesn't even look at the man getting beaten on the side walk across the road. Instead, he climbs into the passenger's seat and puts his feet up.

INT. CAR - EVENING

Eric might as well not be there, so he disappears right out of the frame. The car is empty. Eric is no longer there. Nothing has changed.

But he was there! He reappears inside the car, his feet on the dashboard, and his eyes closed. A cry rings out and Eric eyes dart open and worry crosses his face when he sees the crime in front of him.

He takes his feet off the dashboard, pulls his phone out and dials 911.

EXT. OUTSIDE MCDONALDS - EVENING - MOMENTS LATER

Police cars and an ambulance rush to the scene. A POLICE OFFICER pins the attacker down and arrests him. AMBULANCE WORKERS put the man on a gurney and put him in the back of the vehicle.

RAFAEL (V.O.)

There's nothing here man. It's out there.

Eric stands there with the officers, proud of his good act. This could have happened. It should have happened!

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Eric now knows he can't kill himself. It's not the way. His death grip releases and he lets the gun drop to the ground.

Rafael still floats there - now a glimmer of relief in his ghostly pale eyes. Eric gives Rafael a pained smile, wishing Rafael could avoid his fate, but thankful for what he's done. Very thankful.

Rafael and Eric share the moment for a bit longer before Rafael floats away into the trees. Eric knows he'll never see him again.

In that moment a wave of fear and pain releases from Eric and he arches his body up and backward and breaths out. With his head up, he notices the stars glimmering through the canopy of trees.

This is the first time he's seen it.

So beautiful. It gives him hope. Something he only noticed now.

It was always there.

EXT. WOODS - BEFORE DAWN

Eric is on the move again. There is no end in sight to the trees. But unlike before, he knows why he walks now.

He walks with the same exhausted limp as before, but he has something he didn't before. Hope!

His eyes have been unlocked from the ground and he's free.

The woods themselves haven't changed. They're still thick, dark, and no matter how far we see ahead, there's still more. But the woods are longer playing ticks on Eric.

The young man begins to trudge through mud and his eyes fall to the ground to examine what he's stepping in. However, it's a bit too dark to see.

LIGHT!

Light fills the ground right beyond Eric's feet.

Eric slowly pulls himself up from the ground and his jaw literally falls open, and then a look of disbelief mixed with joy runs across his face.

Then we see what he sees.

EXT. HUGE CLEARING - DAWN

This is by far the biggest clearing we've seen yet. There are no trees in sight and long natural grass covers the land. But up ahead is tall grassy hill obstructing the view beyond.

The question is: Is it just a clearing or is he out?

Eric looks back down at his feet, still submerged in darkness. He rises his foot up and light climbs onto it.

Now the next foot. Up and up and - He steps out from the darkness, and light fills his body.

He continues to move even faster than he did before. Eric turns his head to the east. And there it is! The sun is rising in the sky.

And at this moment it seems like it's rising for him.

This inspires him to go even faster. It's like that limp never existed.

As Eric walks to freedom, the sun rises behind him pitching his body in a silhouette.

He advances toward the steep hill. He realizes he may not be out, but he's got hope and that's what matters.

He's climbs the steep hill. One foot in front of the other. Simple as that. Just keep going. Fight for it.

He's almost at the top.

Just a few more steps AND --

A road! Far below Eric can see a road. He's so high up that the passing vehicles looks like a miniature toy cars. But it's there! And it's real!

Still out of breath, Eric cries out in joy. A long powerful cry for all those to hear below. A cry of triumph!

He then turns and looks at the ground next to him. A part of him wishes Rafael were standing there. But Eric won't forget him. Or how he helped him.

The yellow and orange sky is so beautiful and Eric can't help but gaze at it for a long moment.

Eric turns and looks down the side of the hill. It's steep but Eric isn't planning on taking it slowly. He's too excited.

He gallops down the hill toward civilization, becoming further and further away from us until he looks miniature just like the road.

He's left us in the dust along with all his hopelessness.

EXT. OUTSIDE WOODS - MORNING

Eric is on the road now. It turns out it's the same place he entered the woods. He's not sure how that's possible but it is.

There sits his car. Right where he parked it. And there's that sign. Still warning people.

WARNING! DISAPPEARANCES REPORTED AROUND THIS AREA. ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK.

Eric approaches his car and digs into his pocket. Not there. That's when he realizes his keys were in the bag he threw in the river.

But there they are! They're sitting right on the hood of the car. As if someone placed it there for him. He doesn't know how this is possible either, but it's there.

He takes the keys in his hands, climbs into his car, starts it, and drives away from this life changing place.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - UNKNOWN

Eric sits talking to INTERROGATOR 2. She drawls in a calm manner as if she understands what Eric has been through. Eric speaks mid sentence.

ERIC

And uh, he looked at me for a moment and that's when he did it.

INTERROGATOR 2

Mmm. I'm so sorry Eric.

Eric nods back solemnly.

INTERROGATOR 2 (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

Sooo - how long ago would you say this happened?

ERIC

(lies)

This morning.

Interrogator 2 stops for a moment and thinks. Sympathetic. She has nothing to hold him on and no reason to be suspicious of Eric.

INTERROGATOR 2

So why did you think Rafael did this?

ERIC

I don't know I

(pause)

I guess Rafael always just wanted more.

INT. MCDONALD'S KITCHEN - MORNING

Eric works in the kitchen preparing burgers. Unlike before he fully wraps them and he's going a steady, but fast speed. The manager approaches him. She still finds something to criticize him for.

MANAGER

Eric! Don't forget your belt to work. Okay?

ERIC

Yes ma'm. I'm sorry about that.

MANAGER

Just don't let it happen again.

She coldly turns away from him, but stops and turns around.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about Rafael. He was a good worker.

ERIC

Thank you.

INT. MCDONALD'S - LATE AFTERNOON

Now Eric is on the cash register and the place is much busier than it was before. CUSTOMER 2 is ordering from Eric.

CUSTOMER

So, what's the damage?

Eric gives a smile at his joke and responds with emotion. For a second he even makes us believe he likes this job.

ERIC

That will be 6.24 sir.

The customer hands Eric his credit card, he swipes it and hands it back.

ERIC (CONT'D)

Would you like a receipt sir?

CUSTOMER

No. I don't need one.

ERIC

Alright, and you have a great day sir.

CUSTOMER

And you as well.

The next person approaches and Eric begins to take their order.

INT. MCDONALD'S BATHROOM - EVENING

Eric delicately mops the bathroom, squeezing the mop in-between places he'd normally not care to get.

When he's finished, he takes the mop in hand instead of leaving it against the wall.

INT. MCDONALDS - MOMENTS LATER

Eric waits at the cash register for any more people. The place is dead at the moment.

MANAGER

Eric! You're free to go. See you tomorrow.

ERIC

Sound good.

Eric clocks out and exits the building.

ERIC (CONT'D)

You have a good night.

EXT. PARKING LOT - MOMENTS LATER

Eric makes his way through the parking lot and climbs into his car.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

The young man buckles himself in when the sidewalk across the road grabs his attention. He stares at it and remembers what happened one week ago. How he did nothing.

He didn't help, but in that moment he knows there's someone he could help.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD ROAD - LATE MORNING

A car slowly advances down the road until it stops in front of a smaller sized house.

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Inside sits Eric. He no longer has that disheveled appearance.

His hair is still undeniably long, but he's washed and combed it. The clothes he wears aren't spotless, but they look like they've been washed.

Eric leaves the engine on and he just sits in the car and stares at the house through the window.

He can get out of the car and do something to help the poor man and himself or just sit in the car like he did before. He's nervous, afraid of how David will react, but he has to do this.

EXT. OUTSIDE DAVID'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Eric advances up the driveway, knocks on the front door, and silently waits. Nothing. He's about to knock again when the door opens just a crack.

It's David and immediately when he recognizes Eric, confusion draws on his face and he slams the door shut.

Eric doesn't leave yet. He patiently stands there and waits for David to come around. If he does at all.

We can see David's face pop into a window near the door. He watches Eric wait. He simply can't understand why Eric is here. WHY!?

When he realizes Eric won't leave, David opens the door again.

DAVID

Get away from my home, or I'll call the cops.

ERIC

David. I really need to talk to you. I don't even have to come in. Just let me talk. Then you won't ever have to see me again.

DAVID

Get away from me.

ERIC

Please.

Inside David needs to talk to someone. He hasn't talked to anyone for a long time. He lives all alone in sorrow.

DAVID

Come in.

David fully opens the door and lets Eric step in.

INT. FRONT ROOM - LATE MORNING

The house is a complete mess. Dirt among other filth covers the entrance carpet and the floor. Eric follows David to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Books and magazines clutter the floor and a must fills the air. David sits down on a dirty couch and...

DAVID

Sit.

...Eric takes a seat next to him

DAVID (CONT'D)

What do you want?

ERIC

Just to talk. To explain things.

DAVID

To explain what?

ERIC

Are you okay?

DAVID

(taken aback)

What?

ERIC

Because I wasn't and I don't even know your son.

DAVID

Do I look okay?

ERIC

No. Your home looks just like my apartment.

(pause)

You look just like I did.

David reiterates the question.

DAVID

What do you want.

ERIC

All I wanted to do was find your son. In the afterlife. I searched and I searched. I just wanted to say how sorry I was.

David is listening now, but he is bottling all the emotions he possibly can.

ERIC (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

But he's dead and nothing I can do can change that. And nothing I could do could make me feel right again. I came so close to killing myself. I never thought I would make it out and that's when I found out the truth.

David is struggling to hold his emotions back now. A tear leaks from his eyes and his breathing is becoming unsteady.

But this is also happening to Eric. He's never told anyone the truth like this. Not even Rafael.

ERIC (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

How could another death make the world a better place? I can't believe the world would be better off without me. I can't believe the world would be better off without your son. Who knows what he could have done with his life. The things he'll never get to do.

(pause)

I know I can't fill your son's shoes but - I have to try. I have to try to make the world a better place. I have to try to help you. Because you're still here.

David covers his face in his hands for a moment.

Eric wipes a tear.

ERIC (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I'm not asking you to forgive me. How could you? I just want you to know, I'm sorry.

(pause)

I'm so sorry.

David removes his hands from his face and looks straight into Eric's eyes. He mouth trembles but he gets it out.

DAVID

No. No.
(pause)
I forgive you.
(pause)
I forgive you.

David is weeping so heavily now. He opens his arms and falls into Eric. They embrace for a long powerful moment.

Neither of them know how this moment is even possible. How David could forgive Eric. But it's happening. It's real.

EXT. OUTSIDE DAVID'S HOUSE - LATE MORNING

Eric walks back to his car in relief. He is filled with more hope than ever before.

David watches Eric climb into his car from his window. Still a little shocked that the man responsible for his son's death helped him. He knows he's got to get his life back together.

INT. CAR - MOMENTS LATER

Eric starts up the engine and is on the road again.

EXT. OUTSIDE ERIC'S APARTMENT - DAY

Eric carries a few boxes in his hands. It's clear he can no longer pay the rent for the apartment. He loads the boxes into his car and opens one. There is the clarinet case. He takes it up and holds it in his hands.

EXT. OUTSIDE ERIC'S FATHER'S HOUSE - DAY

Eric knocks on the front door and after a moment of waiting, the door flies open. There is a moment of disbelief on his face and then he goes in for a hug. Right there in the doorway.

EXT. ERIC'S FATHER'S BACKYARD - EVENING

Eric stands at a fire which glows behind the twilight sky. A set of film books lay on the ground next to the fire. Eric burns them one by one.

He's saying goodbye to Rafael. A little bit of him going at a time.

Eric takes a photograph of Rafael and holds it above the fire -- about to drop it -- he stops -- holds it in his hands a moment longer. He can't burn this. He's burned too many people.

Eric pockets the picture, takes a bucket of water, and douses the fire. It crackles and dies out. Smoke rises into the sky. Eric no longer believes he's burning peoples lives.

There's something else now he wants to do instead.

INT. HOMELESS SHELTER - AFTERNOON

Homeless people gather around at tables as Eric plays his clarinet for them. They seem to appreciate what he's doing. And Eric is so immersed in the music that his eyes are squeezed shut, and he's swaying the clarinet back and forth.

INT. BATHROOM MIRROR - UNKNOWN

Eric stands in front of the mirror with his head down. He looks up at himself for the first time in a long time. This is who he is. And he's here right in this moment.

He's ready!

FADE OUT.