

Twenty one Winters

By

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Mostly framed through the lens of a hand held video camera, the images here, are at times unsteady and out of focus.

Nicholas shops for a Tuxedo. His Father, behind the shaky Video camera, documenting his every move. He browses the racks and racks of late eighties, early nineties colorful tuxedos. His Mother, beside him, attempting to help him, reaches for a Tux jacket, feeling it up, pleased with the fabric she motions for the sales persons help.

FATHER

My boy, getting ready for the big day. How's it feel, getting ready for the big prom? Magic, I'm telling you, the night's going to be magic, my prom, I took the sister, got into a huge fight with the brother, danced with your mother and ended up married a year later, I shook that family off of it's foundation. Remember that honey? Just call me the Weasel. I am the Weasel. The weasel.

He makes the sound of a "Weasel", imitating MTV Vee Jay, Pauly Shore.

NICHOLAS

Dad, please stop doing that, it's not cool. And turn that thing off. Do you really want it caught on camera for generations to come, of you, doing Pauly Shore? He doesn't even do that anymore. It's just embarrassing.

He continues making weasel noises, turning the camera on himself, capturing a CU of his face before returning to Nicholas.

MOTHER

Your embarrassing him dear. Try the Blue one on Nicholas, it matches your eyes. Such pretty eye's.

She motions to the sales lady to pull a Tux.

MOTHER CONT.

Let him try the Blue one in a thirty eight regular, please?

Shoots Edward a look as he continues making weasel noises from behind the camera.

MOTHER CONT. (cont'd)

Ed, Ed, he says your embarrassing him, maybe you should just stop it already, it is kind of weirding me out too. It's freaking us all out to tell you the truth ED. And you know I hate rodents. Gag me with a spoon already.

Nicholas shoots her a look, but she points out a sky blue Tuxedo for his immediate inspection instead, having landed her funny for the day, she moves on. He rolls his eyes and winces with fright over it all wondering away from them.

MOTHER CONT.

Well look at the thing at least!  
It's hip. I know it's nothing like that tee shirt tux over there that you keep eying. Who ever heard of such a thing? A tee shirt of a tuxedo painted on the front of it, as formal wear? A tee shirt?

He stops, looking briefly at the tux she points to, unimpressed, moving on to a another one with a plaid Kilt instead. She whips a Polaroid camera out, snapping a photo with a bright flash and then instantly sees the Plaid Kilted tux that has caught his attention. She is flabbergasted.

NICHOLAS

What ever happened to the classic black Tuxedo? Wow, I like this one too.

MOTHER

Nicholas Victor Salazar, you are not wearing a Kilt to your prom. What are you even thinking about? Hard enough getting young people to keep their **Genes** inside of their **jeans**, as it is! We certainly don't have to make it any easier for you. You're just lucky I don't tell her to show me one with a top hat, tails and spats, young people have a short attention span so I say the more you have to take off in the end, the more likely you'll loose interest with it all. And you know exactly what I'm talking about too!

(MORE)

MOTHER (cont'd)

And I don't care if you give that look all day either, you are not wearing a tee shirt, of a shirt and tie painted across the front of it, so just, stop looking back there already. Come on, what is wrong with you people? It's a big day for you. Never mind, what you can do, while I find you a nice Tux, since you want to be so helpful, is look for a nice new pair of shoes. Black please, patent leather. That's shiny in your language. And no tennis shoes that have been painted to look like patent leather either.

NICHOLAS

(He walks up to the camera's lens, within inches)

Did you ever notice how most of these things end up making the guy look like a really stiff penguin? I'm sure there's something to that. To be continued.

EDWARD

Your out of focus, move back some.

NICHOLAS

(To his Mother)

It's just another day Mother, please don't make me look like a penguin, let's just keep it simple and branch out from there. I'm thinking, some jeans, a nice shirt and maybe just, a tux jacket. It's just another day right?

She is flabbergasted at once.

MOTHER

Jeans?! Just another day! That's just crazy talk! When a woman gets all dressed up for a formal night out on the town with a man, you can best believe me, its not just a another day to her and the least you men can do, is treat it like the special occasion that it is for her. You know, it doesn't cost anything extra to make some sort of effort and an attempt, to at least,

(MORE)

MOTHER (cont'd)  
look your best! Clean underwear,  
combed hair, cut nails, matching  
socks, shaved face! For the love of  
God it's not like we're  
asking your entire species to  
coordinate your outfits with ours!  
Crying out loud.

They both shoot her a look at once.

EDWARD  
First of all, men don't wear  
outfits Helen, we wear clothes,  
just clothes. And you should let  
the boy pick some of his own.

HELEN  
Pick his own? Pick his own, I most  
certainly will not, I've let you  
pick your own for the last thirty  
five years and look where it got  
me, I will not make the same  
mistake twice!

Another look.

EDWARD  
On a personal note, just to let you  
know Helen, this thing is on, and  
I'm getting all of this on the  
video tape, might want to, tone it  
down, just a notch.

She takes a moment to recompose, his words sinking in.

HELEN  
All I'm saying Edward, is that, it  
wouldn't hurt him, or you, to look  
decent every once in a while. Just  
every once in a while. Decent.

EDWARD  
Yeah, decent. I think we got what  
you were saying, just fine dear.  
Decent. Nicholas, your Mother's  
right you know? You are a bit of a  
slob. Jesus, can't you just make an  
effort every once in a while,  
that's all we're asking?

She shoots them a look. They share a private giggle between  
them. She's not amused at all.

HELEN

Men. Nicholas, look around for a belt too. Black, please.

NICHOLAS

Patent leather?

HELEN

Just black! You'll be wearing a cummerbund. Don't you people know anything about style?

EDWARD

Go on Nicholas, answer your mother. You need to look up more, at the camera son. This thing cost a mint, it'd be nice to catch a glimpse of a face every now and then. Go wide, find a belt, and make sure you pick the right one or it'll be your ass.

He shoots a look.

NICHOLAS

Dad, turn the camera off! Turn it off!

He walks up to the camera's lens and covers it with his hand.

Black.

FADE IN:

MONTAGE: A series of "captured" image's flash before us, at just under breakneck speeds, they cover the approximate time span of 1980's- present, and are presented from a variety of different formats, including; 16mm- Super 8- and finally, Video. They include, School drama projects- Student award ceremonies, Graduations, Birthday parties, Cub Scout field trips etc. The images, are all of the same child, and cover him through young adulthood, they are the images of (Nicholas), and they SHOWCASE him as an outwardly happy, normal child.

WHITE OUT:

FADE IN:

2 INT. MORTON AND SONS, FUNERAL HOME.

2

The view now (MOVING), in a Grand, richly wooded room, surrounded by yellowing books and marble mantels, and then rows and rows of industrial chemicals and tiled walls which seem to turn into stainless steel sinks and bright surgical style lighting.

Close now, on a stainless steel table, of a YOUNG MAN being dressed; by what appears to be, two different set's of hands, the NAVY SUIT and RED TIE sparkle like new diamonds UNDER the LIGHT, as they primp and pamper their model right down to his GOLD LAPEL PIN. Before long however, it will become painfully obvious to us, that this is no ordinary wardrobe fitting, and the model, no ordinary YOUNG MAN, he is in fact a CORPSE. And we are in witness, to the final preparations for a home coming celebration. Before long, the hair is combed, brushed, styled and sprayed, the shiny BLACK SHOES are laced onto stockinged feet, the stiffly embalmed BODY is slowly HOISTED into the air with a leather coroners harness and laid gently - expertly - back to rest in what is now, in full focus, a beautiful, Metallic BLUE and SILVER-WHITE lined COFFIN. The coffin is wiped down and partially shut, face and upper body left exposed.

Close on the workers standing back, admiring their work. They observe a moment of silence as the CAMERA slowly lands the VIEW now, of the BOY (Nicholas); in the COFFIN, ready now to be viewed by all. He looks good, handsome, younger than his years, he looks in fact, as if he were simply a sleeping child.

BLACK:

SUPER: Over a black screen.

**"The life of the dead is placed in the memory of the living."**

**-Marcus Tullius Cicero**

WHITE OUT:

3 INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE PARENTS.

3

The parents nervously sit in front of a video camera on a tripod. At times the view becomes imperceptibly intermingled with the video camera and television monitor set up and the actual Film and it's Direction. The room and it's set up, at first glance could appear to be an interrogation room or

some type of hospital inquiry room, or perhaps even an Insurance Investigators Office. The fact is, it is a video album of remembrance to the dead and we are in fact, at the Funeral Home where the subject of the video taped conversation at hand, was prepared and eulogized just some few hours ago. The room is small, almost like a large closet, the set up is simple, the camera is turned on when the lights in the room go on and the door closes. There are two chairs, beside each other. A Black Curtain drapes the background and sides of the room, the lights are bright, the microphone hangs forebodingly above it's subjects. There are no operators for the strict privacy of the moment.

The Parents of Nicholas sit in silence for several minutes, unsure how to begin.

And then, she stiffens her spine, faces forward, looks directly at the camera and begins the journey.

HELEN

First, I just have to thank everyone who came to the service. It meant so much. We hope you enjoyed the great food that was prepared. We tried to have them serve all of the things that we knew he liked.

She Stop, thinks, begins to tear up, stops.

HELEN CONT.

After the funeral. After the funeral, we added it all up.

EDWARD

(Interrupting her)

You, you, added it all up. You can't just sum up a persons life like that. It's just not right, don't do this.

MOTHER

We added it up. It came down to twenty one winters. That's what we had with him. Twenty one winter's. Image, if you could only know ahead of time, that all you would have with a person, is twenty one years? Or six months, or fifty two years even, imagine how everything would change. How everything would take on a new meaning? Twenty one winters. And It wasn't enough time. So young.

EDWARD

He was so troubled. His whole life.  
Our son, our boy, Nicholas.

HELEN

He stopped taking his pills.

EDWARD

He was so depressed.

HELEN

Severe depression is what they  
called it. Severe depression,  
boarder line personality disorder  
and later, they added  
Post-traumatic stress disorder and  
OCD. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.  
The only good thing, there was very  
little trauma to the body. So, we  
had them open it up, the coffin.

EDWARD

He looked good. All things  
considered.

HELEN

Morton and Sons. They do a great  
job. They gave him his dignity  
back.

EDWARD

He should have thought about that  
before he hung himself. I'm just,  
so angry with him, I could pound  
him! Not just me either, all of his  
friends too.

HELEN

Well, the one's he had left. Most  
all of his friends abandoned him  
long ago. But I've forgiven them.  
He was so depressed. Now, he's in a  
better place. It's hard on a young  
man, to go through life without any  
friends. No contemporaries. He's in  
a better place now.

EDWARD

He's not in a better place, he's in  
hell! That's where people like him  
go, to hell. It's in the bible  
Helen.

HELEN

I don't think God stayed mad at him. I don't think he's in hell. God knew his plight. God understands people like him. They're troubled. Our son, was a very sick person.

EDWARD

There you go again, you are in your own world. He had everything handed to him. He was a selfish son of a bitch!

HELEN

Edwards still angry. Well, there was no note or anything.

EDWARD

You damn right I'm angry. Dammit I miss him. I miss my boy!

HELEN

It still hurts to really talk about it.

EDWARD

It's just a waste. Whole life, wasted. For what?

HELEN

I'm not even sure if he meant to take his own life. It could have just been a tragic accident. These kids, they have this thing that they do, I started reading up on it, after he died. It's called, auto erotic asphyxiation. And so, it could have been an accident.

EDWARD

Oh you are just rich Helen. Just rich!

HELEN

I can do without the sarcasm Edward. It's almost as if, you are happy our son is dead. Lord knows, when he was alive you ignored him.

EDWARD

I was terrified of him. Every other month, a new episode. He'd cut

(MORE)

EDWARD (cont'd)  
himself, or swallow a damn, handful  
of pills. You name it. And you  
don't think he meant to do it?  
That's just rich. He tried to kill  
himself every other week. It was  
only a matter of time before he got  
it right.

HELEN  
I simply refuse to believe that.  
And I think that you are a  
terrible, terrible man for saying  
that about your own son.

EDWARD  
Denial, it really isn't just a  
river for you, is it?

HELEN  
These nice people asked us here, to  
talk about Nicholas, they didn't  
ask us here to fight. Remember,  
Nicholas? Our son? Maybe we should  
honor his memory with kind words  
and the good he did.

EDWARD  
(A Beat)  
He had a heart of gold. He cared so  
much about everything.

HELEN  
That's what made him so sick. He  
wanted to fix the whole world.

EDWARD  
And when he discovered that he  
couldn't. He was shattered. That  
was my boy.

HELEN  
He wasn't meant to be here long. It  
was way too hard for him. Life.  
Everything. It was too hard for  
such a sensitive person.

EDWARD  
He never learned that life was just  
hard. He didn't get it.

HELEN

Yesterday. I went by his house.  
 Before I even knew what I was doing  
 there, there I was. I guess, I  
 just, wanted to see for myself,  
 where it was, that the world,  
 swallowed him up.

EDWARD

Don't cry Helen. He's safe now.

SMASH CUT TO:

4

INT. COLLEGE APARTMENT. NIGHT. FLASH BACK.

4

The air is heavy with cigarette and pot smoke, we are mid poker game. A very pregnant young lady makes her way through the place, refilling chips, emptying ash trays and cleaning, she is, it will later be revealed, Doug's Girlfriend and this is their apartment. Modest, it resembles a college dorm room mostly. Seated at the table are Nicholas and about five of his closet childhood friends. We will see them all through various stages of their young lives through out this film, but tonight, a rare occasion, is game night and the small crowd is a lively one. Seated are, Joe, Nicholas, Doug and Alex. Clearly visible around Nicholas' wrist, we see thick blood stained bandages. The radio, playing a mixture of pop and rock music in the background.

ALEX

Deal butt head. Five minutes and  
 you've just been sitting there,  
 staring into space.

JOE

I'm not staring into space, I'm  
 waiting on the great Nicholas to  
 answer my question. I'll repeat it.  
 So, after you bled profusely all  
 over my brand new sofa, three day's  
 in the hospital, three hours at the  
 this very table with me, were you  
 at least going to tell me, why you  
 tried to off yourself?

DOUG

Don't mind him Nick, he's just  
 pissed off that you're winning all  
 of his girlfriend's food stamp  
 money. Don't be a dick Joe. Deal  
 the fucking cards already, leave it  
 alone. Guy's been through enough.

(MORE)

DOUG (cont'd)  
Don't mind Joe, Nick, you know how  
he fucking gets. Deal!

NICHOLAS  
I never mind a thing Joe says, You  
should know that by now. Are you  
going to deal those or hold them?

She changes the ash trays out for fresh ones. Doug hits her  
lovingly on the ass every time she passes.

DOUG  
Thanks honey. I love you. Can you  
beer me, when you come back this  
way?

JOE  
But seriously. That was a brand new  
fucking sofa that you just  
destroyed. If I'd have known your  
fragile state of mind, I would have  
never let you stay with me. I mean,  
come on, your walking around like  
every thing's just fine and dandy  
and it's not fine and dandy, is it  
Nicholas? Why don't you tell them  
about how our little night went?  
The crying and the repeated  
slashing of the wrist, that parts  
the best, don't leave that part  
out.

DOUG  
Oh that is just fucking cold Joe.  
Why don't you just kick him too,  
he's clearly down. Or do you need  
us to hold him in place for you?  
That's much more your style, I  
forget.

JOE  
Tell them Nicholas!

ALEX  
So let me get this straight, the  
man bleeds on your new sofa, almost  
dies in the hospital and your ready  
to kick him out because he hasn't  
explained himself to you? Do you  
really need to hear the words come  
out of his mouth that bad, need to  
know just how fragile he's feeling,

(MORE)

ALEX (cont'd)

you need to hear him tell you, all about how he made one dumb mistake, you need to hear that right now from him, do you, before you'll deal him any more cards?

JOE

Listen sherlock, it wasn't even my sofa and stay out of it, nobody was even talking to you! Did you hear that Nicholas, It was Lucinda's fucking brand new couch. Seven hundred bucks worth of couch! And she's pretty fucking pissed off over the whole situation, and I don't blame her.

NICHOLAS

And for future references, just say your pussy whipped Joe, I promise, we won't laugh, lot's of us here in this room right now, have been whipped. I certainly have, hell, Doug still is, I mean, just look around. He let his woman paint his kitchen pink, for crying out loud. But I'll tell you what, I'll be out by tomorrow if it keeps you in the good graces of Lucinda Alvasario. Now deal the fucking cards, girly man.

JOE

That's not the point and it's got nothing to do with pussy. Listen, It's not me. It's Lucinda. And she's got a fucking valid point. She thinks your going to off yourself one night man. Right there, in the middle of the apartment, like, while were sleeping or making love or something. She's terrified that she's gonna' wake up, and your going to be a stiff. You kind of freaked us out that night, if you didn't know. Your lucky she went out to check on your ass, see if you were cold out there. You tried to kill yourself man!

NICHOLAS

Well, not to worry again, Joe, just like the last attempt, I'm pretty sure I'll fuck the next one up too, so don't worry so much. I'm kidding. Look, I'm not suicidal. That make you feel better? For the record, I wasn't thinking very clearly that night. I was drunk. It was stupid. I know that, I'm fine now. I'm fine. Let's play cards.

JOE

Never seen so much blood in all my life. You really freaked me out. Don't you ever do that to me again.

NICHOLAS

Scouts honor.

DOUG

(Looking at the blood stained bandages)

Does that shit still hurt, because, it looks painful as hell?

ALEX

Fuck are you talking about, he only did it for the pain killers. Have you seen what they gave this fucker? Morphine, Demerol, Vicoden, Dilaudid. Tell you the truth, I'm thinking about taking a taxi over to Joe's apartment right now, maybe taking a header off of the balcony myself, fuck it, just to see what they'll give me for the pain.

JOE

First of all, my apartment is not a suicide den. Although it kind of looks like that right now. Kill yourself at your own place loser.

ALEX

You're no fun. Nicholas, can I kill myself at your place? My Moms carpet is way too nice, she'd kill me. Oh wait, you just got kicked out, your place is your Mom's place too. Fuck that. It's gotta' be your place Joe, I'm sure we can work something out.

DOUG

Why don't I just kill you right here and now, save you the trouble of a cross town bus all the way to Joe's place.

NICHOLAS

I'm pretty sure there's not a jury in the world that would convict you for killing Alex. We'll be your witnesses, just go in and in plain terms and English, just, explain to them the very nature and personality that is Alex. They'll see the light.

DOUG

Justifiable homicide is what they'll say. Miserable fucker had to die.

ALEX

I resent that very much.

DOUG

No, you resemble that very much.

JOE begins to shuffle the deck. But he just can't get past it all.

DOUG (cont'd)

Finally, progress.

She puts a six pack down between them.

DOUG (cont'd)

Thanks babe.

He kisses her.

GIRLFRIEND

I'm going to bed, try not kill each other, and any one bleeding on this carpet, had better die. Night Baby.

DOUG

I'm not worried, I know you got my back honey. We'll keep it down. Just in case any of you fuckers get any bright ideas, she sleeps like a cat. And she's armed to the teeth, so, don't start none, won't be none.

She disappears.

ALEX

Of course she is, that explains why you don't go any where. Afraid of getting shot, I think she'd do it too.

Joe shoots Nicholas a look, unable to play nice, he adds gasoline to the fire.

JOE

Well, are you at least going to try and clean up some of the blood? Maybe help pay for a new sofa? Some thing. Lucinda thinks you should. Since, it is your fault after all. Whole fucking place looks like a goddamn crime scene. I still can't believe that you did that to me. You put my whole relationship in danger! And you still haven't even offered a... "I'm sorry..." or anything! You haven't really offered anything Nicholas. Just, looking at you, right now, I'm getting more and more pissed off over the whole thing. How you can just sit here and act like every thing's just fucking peachy? Well, it's not peachy to me, not by a long shot. Not with me!

NICHOLAS

People like you, Joe, are the reason there are people like me in the world. Fuck apologizing to you. Apologize to me, for just, being you. You make people like me, everyday, but what do you care?

JOE

What the fuck's that supposed to mean? I'm not the reason you're a fucking nut job.

DOUG

But you certainly are the biggest ass hole in the room. Chill out Joe, the guy just came out of the hospital, what are you going do now, whoop his ass, were trying to have a little celebration here man.

JOE

You know what, fuck you Doug, and fuck you too Nicholas, maybe you should have died, and then your boyfriend here could have had somebody to mourn and be at a total loss for. Fuck y'all, I'm out of here. Your shit will be outside by the back door. Try and get it while Lucinda's at work!

And with that, JOE Exits the Apartment, slamming the door with a thud. The room grows strangely quiet at once.

ALEX

What the fuck was that? He just like, melted down right in front of us. Don't ever let it be said, that everybody handles stress in the same way.

And with that, DOUG breaks out in perfect pitch and delivery- the song; "He ain't heavy, he's my brother", singing away!

The laughter that follows shakes the house.

5 INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE PARENTS. 5

The interview continues.

EDWARD

Even as his friends abandoned him, he acted like it didn't bother him.

HELEN

But it did.

EDWARD

Some of them since grade school. That's how they treated my boy. Like he was dirt!

HELEN

I told him, if that's how they are, who needs them.

EDWARD

I went over to his house one day, big day for him, he had planed this get together, with his friends. Found him sitting all

(MORE)

EDWARD (cont'd)  
alone in the dark. Just crying.  
Nobody came. That's when I said to  
him, that's it, you have to talk to  
somebody.

HELEN  
The nicest lady social worker came  
over to our house, and she  
explained it all to us. Left us  
some very informative pamphlets.

EDWARD  
But he wouldn't even look at em'.

HELEN  
He wasn't ready yet.

EDWARD  
When he took the pills....

HELEN  
Oh the pills. He over dosed a few  
times. He just took way too many  
pills. If the bottle called for  
two, he'd take a whole handful,  
that was just him.

EDWARD  
Two hundred and sixty Tylenol.  
Practically shut his entire liver  
down. He didn't try that route  
again. He started mutilating  
himself though.

HELEN  
That one was very close. Very  
close. They had to pump his  
stomach. That's when I believed  
he'd sworn off pills altogether.

EDWARD  
She never knew about it. I didn't  
have the heart to tell her. Our  
boy, our only child was mutilating  
his body like that. When I saw the  
scars, I nearly threw up. They were  
everywhere, at various stages of  
healing. He'd done a number on  
himself.

HELEN

But I did know. I would go to his apartment and clean and bandage them everyday, bring him food. He didn't know how to do it. He would have let them get infected. He was a cutter. He once told me, that when he cut himself. That was the only time he really felt alive. The pain of it all, made him feel alive. Imagine that.

EDWARD

I didn't know that.

SMASH CUT TO:

6 INT. NICHOLAS' APARTMENT. NIGHT. FLASH BACK. 6

He sits alone, naked, in the center of a darkened room. Tears streaming down his face, while he uses a blade to cut deep into his flesh. Close on his beautiful, azure eye's, staring at us, blank, as if he were far away and removed from the pain. In the b.g. an old record skips over and over.

FADE OUT:

7 INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE PARENTS. 7

The interview continues imperceptibly through a TV Monitor.

EDWARD

My God some of the things that Boy would do to himself! It was like, a whole other child was in front of me. There were times, when I would just pray to God, and I'd ask him, what did we do to deserve this Boy? What did we do to deserve such a sick Boy? I'm not proud of that.

CUT TO:

8 EXT. ROOF TOP. NIGHT. 8

The view now, below, as a teen aged keg party winds down in the wee hours of the morning, suddenly, the attention is diverted upward towards the roof.

9

EXT. TEEN AGED KEG PARTY. NIGHT. FLASH BACK.

9

A crowd of young drunken on lookers, left suddenly staring up at the roof.

VOICE

What the fuck? Who the fuck is that up there? That's so not cool. He's going to fall.

ALEX

Is that Nicholas?

GIRL

What's he doing? I can't watch! Man, your friend is lame.

KID 2

Dude, if he falls, my parents are going to kill me. He came here with you, get him down!

Calling up, nervously.

DOUG

Nicholas, buddy, what the fuck are you trying to do, scare the shit out of everyone? It's working, now get your ass off of the ledge!

Nicholas, responds O.C.

NICHOLAS

I like it up here. Did you know, that if I just closed my eyes right now, and let myself go, it would all be so quick. But mostly, it would all be over forever. No more fear, no more decisions. No more High school. No more worrying about what your going do, or who you'll become. Kids, no kids. Wife. Bills. Boss.

Thinking quickly.

DOUG

If you fall from there, you'll just break your fucking legs in twenty places you idiot! It's not that fucking high, look around, my uncle fell from a height two times higher than that, all he got was a

(MORE)

DOUG (cont'd)  
 permanent wheel chair and a shit  
 bag that he has to tie around his  
 waist everyday.

10 EXT. ROOF TOP. NIGHT. FLASH BACK. 10

Nicholas thinks about this, looking down, suddenly fearful  
 of the thought.

NICHOLAS  
 Your probably right, it's not that  
 high is it? I knew that.

Embarrassed now, he squirms out of it delicately.

NICHOLAS CONT'D.  
 What, can't you fucker's take a  
 joke? I was just joking.

Calling up.

DOUG  
 Hurry up then, we gotta' help clean  
 up this mess, it's almost three  
 o'clock in the morning.

NICHOLAS  
 Hold your horses!

He turns to jump onto the roof top, but twist his ankle,  
 falling from the secure roof top's ledge. Holding on  
 suddenly for dear life, below him, on the ground, the kids  
 scramble to save him from certain crippling danger. His legs  
 dangle in the air, his hands gripping tightly to a drain  
 pipe. Around him, drunk high school students scramble about  
 to save him. The comedy of errors.

11 INT. EMERGENCY ROOM. NIGHT. A YEAR LATER. FLASH BACK. 11

NICHOLAS being wheeled in bleeding on a gurney, as Emergency  
 workers prep him. Blood every where. Tubes, Monitors, he  
 spits and coughs blood as his eyes wonder the faces of the  
 seasoned ER staff. The scene is one of well organized chaos.  
 In the b.g. Edward, Helen and Alex nervously pace while  
 waiting for news of the battered young man's condition.

ALEX  
 (In a state of shock)  
 We were just sitting there and he  
 just, grabbed the knife and stuck  
 (MORE)

ALEX (cont'd)  
 it into his own stomach. What's wrong with him? Why would he do that? I kept yelling at him, but he just kept on stabbing it into himself. Oh God, the blood was everywhere! How could he do this? How could any one do this to themselves?

She makes an attempt to comfort him, but she is lost herself.

HELEN  
 Nicholas, needs help, Alex. He's a very disturbed person. We've been trying very hard for a long time now, to understand him. Trying very hard to find him the help that he needs. I'm so sorry that you had to witness what you did tonight. And thank you, again, for calling for help.

ALEX  
 I can't do this any more. I can't be a part of this. I'm sorry. I hope he gets well. But, I'm not going to be around this. I'm sorry. Tell him I'm sorry. I'm just, very sorry!

And with that, Alex runs out the Hospital's automatic doors. Helen and Edward are left stunned, worried, lost. The Camera tracks beyond them, through them, landing the view now, of Nicholas, as the ER Staff frantically perform their Interventions in an attempt to save this Boy's life.

12 INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE PARENTS.

12

The interview continues as if in a time vacuum.

HELEN  
 In a way, that was probably the best thing for him, that night. Because after that, I felt like, finally, maybe now he can get the help he needs. Maybe now, he can begin to get better. For a Boy like Nicholas, it's a process. Just like an Alcoholic or a Drug Addict. Everything is a process. They have  
 (MORE)

HELEN (cont'd)

to hit a bottom of some sort. This was Nicholas' bottom. When he found out about his friend Alex, leaving him like that. It was a bottom for him. He felt so embarrassed. Suddenly, everyone knew, all of his friends, that he had this, mental illness. And they couldn't deal with it. When they just thought, oh well, he's a dare devil, everything was alright. After they found out what was really going on, in his life? The everyday struggles that he was dealing with. It's like, they just couldn't face him any more. It destroyed him.

Angry, he lashes out at the camera.

EDWARD

The State Hospital kept him for two weeks. Two weeks! That's all! How do they expect anyone to get well in two weeks? I mean, the boy had just tried to take his own life! And they just put a bandage on the whole situation! Hell, the hospital that treated his wounds, kept him longer than that. Two weeks!

She tries to find a silver lining.

HELEN

But he did start medication after that. That's when he started taking Seraquil and I think it was, Zanex. But the Zanex, well, he could have done without that we later found out. Terrible drug. He never could stop taking them after that either. And then they had him on that, Prozac and every other kind of crazy pill that you could ever imagine. Zoloft, Lexapro, Depacote. Cymbalta. Effexor. So many. He even took Lithium for a while. When he really thought, that the medication was the answer to all of his problems, he'd take little trips to Mexico and buy them by the bag full. But he was always so secretive about his medications. He

(MORE)

HELEN (cont'd)

didn't want people to think he was crazy.

EDWARD

Night and day. You could always tell when he took them. His whole personality was different. I'd say, at first, for the first few years, the pills were working pretty good. He went back to work. He was a Waiter, and Bartender, and a good one too. And then he discovered cooking. Used to short order cook for this little place, near the campus. He wanted to go to Chef's School after that. I tried to talk it up, get him to go, anything to see him interested in something constructive for a change. And he did, for a minute. You have no idea how important it is, just to see your child interested in things. Things that could lead to something good for them. Well, when he took his medication, he had interest. His whole life was different on the pills, from what it was like throughout most of his junior high school days without them. But back then, we just didn't know enough about his condition. We didn't know there was help. Those pills helped.

HELEN

Happy. That's how I'd describe him.

Unable to hide the pride, swelling with the memories.

EDWARD

You could see it in his face. Life was worth living to him when he took his pills. Would come visit, the boy would be singing songs, his girl on his arms. He was buying stuff. Fixing himself up. Had his own place. I helped him buy a piece of a car. It wasn't much, but he sure took pride in it. A man needs the freedom of a car.

She drops the other shoe.

HELEN

But they kept changing his Med's.  
One month they had him so doped up,  
he couldn't even get out of bed.  
Poor thing. He dropped out of  
School. Got fired from his job. The  
State took away his license. The  
Zanex. They called it, DUI. Drugs.  
He went into debt. Each one of  
those DUI's was almost Two thousand  
dollars to clear up.

The light dies in his face.

EDWARD

That's when I said, enough is  
enough, we are just going to have  
to find you a new doctor. A better  
doctor. That's when we found Doctor  
Martin. He certainly tried his  
hardest.

HELEN

It wasn't cheap either.

EDWARD

We went through it all with  
Nicholas. A life time of Savings.  
The Stocks, the Bonds. Re Mortgaged  
the House three times. All For  
Nicholas.

HELEN

Every Dime we had.

EDWARD

Entire Savings.

HELEN

But, that's what you do, when you  
have a sick child.

EDWARD

You do what you have to do, for  
your child. That's your Blood. You  
hate to see your child suffering.

HELEN

And we would gladly do it again, if  
it would just bring him back. For  
one minute.

EDWARD

Then we could tell him that we loved him.

HELEN

Tell him, please, please, don't give up.

EDWARD

Dammit, parents aren't supposed to bury their children. It's supposed to be the other way around.

13

INT. COUNTY JAIL. CELL. DAY. FLASH BACK.

13

Nicholas dressed out in County Orange. Presently he yells and hollers at the top of his lungs for the attention of a guard, any guard.

NICHOLAS

I keep telling you people, I need my medication. I know my rights, you have to give me my medication.

GUARD

If you don't shut the fuck up, you're going to need a whole lot of medication kid, all day with this shit!

He approaches the cell menacingly, stopping at once to see that Nicholas has sliced into his arms. The Blood is everywhere. He calls for help on his radio, and in moments, the cell door is opened and he is violently extracted by a slew of guards. Enduring random blows to the gut and face in the process.

GUARD

Now your going to the nut house, stupid fucking kid! Get a Nurse up here, and a bus! So you wanna' cut yourself in my jail? You fucking dumb ass kid! Don't worry, we got a place for you, but your not going to like it. Get him up.

Random chaos around us, radios wailing. Over whelming jail house noise.

FADE IN:

14 INT. STATE HOSPITAL. RAINY DAY. WEEKS LATER. FLASH BACK. 14

Nicholas looks out a window on this dreary day.

Around him, the patients are restless. Everywhere he looks, there are deeply disturbed people acting out in various forms. Some are clearly psychotic, others appear to be violently detoxing and this, has Nicholas very troubled presently. His arm bandaged and in a cast, his eye's sporting weeks old shiner marks.

NICHOLAS

I shouldn't be in here with these fucking crazy people.

NURSE

First of all, you are one of these fucking crazy people. You tried to kill yourself, remember? And I didn't put you here. You did that on your own.

NICHOLAS

Yeah, but do you really think I'll get better, being in here with all of these, psychotics? I'm not psychotic, you know? I'm just depressed. Very depressed. This place is not conducive to my well being at all. It's full of crazy people.

NURSE

Well, when you become Governor, you can change all of that sweetie, but right now, we don't have the budget to separately house the different levels of people's mental illness'. It's one size fits all honey. All I care about, is will I get my over time hours or not, Christmas is right around the corner.

NICHOLAS

If I were you, I'd be worried about my personal safety if I worked in this dump, fuck staying longer hours. Don't this place scare the b'Jesus out of you?

NURSE

That's what this whistle is for. We keep the dangerous ones under

(MORE)

NURSE (cont'd)  
 control. They're housed in a whole  
 other unit. But trust me honey,  
 if I blow this whistle, they'll  
 come running, believe me you, you  
 do not want a shot of they're  
 serving.

PATIENT  
 (Out of the blue he joins in  
 the conversation, his eye's  
 like a wild man, clothes  
 disheveled, bare footed)  
 They call em' stingers. One shot of  
 them, and you feel real good for a  
 long time. Make some people sleep,  
 makes me wanna just dance. I had a  
 shot last night. Took six of em' to  
 give it to me too!

Shooting him a look.

NICHOLAS  
 I'm sure you did, looks like you  
 might need another one, about,  
 right now too.

NURSE  
 (She shoots a wicked grin  
 before pointing towards a lone  
 patient standing in the  
 corner, talking to himself,  
 laughing, reaching out towards  
 air.)  
 Leave him alone Jeffrey, no,  
 Jeffrey's alright, he's harmless.  
 But I don't ever take my eyes off  
 of that one, over there. killed  
 both his parent's, his sister's,  
 and the neighbor's dog's. And then,  
 they say he ate them. Whole  
 neighborhood of missing pet's  
 because he's going around eating  
 them. He's as far gone as they  
 come. This place, is the last stop  
 for some of these people. At least  
 you've still got your mind. Now, if  
 you just stay on your Medication,  
 you'll be alright. I can tell these  
 things, ten years of working here,  
 you're going to be fine. I know you  
 don't wanna' come back to this hell  
 hole?

NICHOLAS

You can say that again. I'm scared straight. I'll never try and off myself again, you can bet on that.

NURSE

Now your talking like somebody who's getting better. I like to hear that. I like you, but, I don't want to see you come back here, you got that? Some of these people, just a revolving door.

JEFFRY

I come here a lot. The foods good too. You want your cake at lunch? We're having chocolate cake, hamburgers, tater tots, mixed garden salad, and milk. You want your milk? Can I have it, can I have your whole tray?

He rolls his eyes towards Jeffry, disgusted, turning now to the Nurse, dead pan.

NICHOLAS

Please give me something right now that will knock me the fuck out.

She is unable to escape a giggle, shooting him a look of understanding.

NURSE

I got something for you baby.

And with that she goes into a small medicine closet and returns momentarily, with a pill cup, giving it to Nicholas.

NURSE (cont'd)

This is some strong shit right here. Sometimes I'm tempted to take one or two my damn self. I have to see you take it in front of me though.

He swallows the pill and downs a small cup of water.

NURSE (cont'd)

Lift up your tongue. Um...Hmm.

NICHOLAS

Oh trust me, I took it. Now if I could just sleep through the entire

(MORE)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)  
rest of the ordeal, that would be wonderful. Think I'll sleep through the chocolate cake and the tater tots too, yay!

NURSE  
They won't let you out like that. They want you to socialize, eat all of your vegetables. Visit the day room every now and then. Go to classes. Participate in things, invite visitors.

NICHOLAS  
You just keep those pills coming and I'll, fake the participation part. Then we'll all be happy. I'm telling you, I gotta' get out of here, soon. Visitors? I wouldn't do that to my worse enemy, look at this place.

NURSE  
You're parents come here all the time. You need to stop sending them away. Lot of people don't have that, somebody that'll come and see them. Bring clean clothes, books, outside food.

NICHOLAS  
Yeah but, they're old and they're gluttons for punishment.

NURSE  
(She purses her lips, shoots him a look)  
Um hmm, be like that.

15 INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE FRIENDS

15

ALEX  
I really just finally got to the point that I couldn't deal with him any more. I mean, the guy wasn't even the same person I'd known for all of those years. Plus, I think he might have been gay, because, one time, I kind of caught him, starring at my box. But he wasn't gay when I hung out with him. I  
(MORE)

ALEX (cont'd)

mean, like back in middle school and stuff. Or when we were in the Cub Scouts and stuff. Yeah, I think he started queering out in High school. But not with me. He never touched me. Guy was just weird. But I still talked to him and stuff. When I saw him. Which wasn't much.

16

INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE FRIENDS.

16

DOUG

I really tried hard to be Nicholas' friend through all of it. But he just, made it so hard. Sometimes he'd just disappear, for like months on in. No sign of Nick, and then, like nothing had happened, he would just, reappear. I'd be like, yo' buddy, where the hell have you been? And then, he'd get this crazed look on his face, like he wasn't really there. Almost like he was scared of me or something. And you could just like tell, there was nobody home. Later, I found out from Angelina, his chick, that they had, forced this electric shock treatment on him. I mean, that shit is just like a lobotomy. It is a lobotomy, modern day. After that, I just didn't see him that much anymore. Anyway, he never returned anybodies phone calls anyway. I'd call him up and leave messages, invite him to parties and shit, even tried to tell him about this really great job, working with me, never heard back from him. After a while, I just, figured he didn't want to be my friend any more. So, the hell with him. Right? I mean, sorry the guy died and all, but, you just kind knew it was coming after a while. When his girlfriend left him, I knew, he must have been pretty fucked up, cause, they were in love for fucking years. I mean, they were always side by side. And then one day, I saw her out at this club, and she was with this really

(MORE)

DOUG (cont'd)

old guy. He was all over her. So, I just knew, my friend was probably pretty far gone. It's not like he didn't try to do it enough times. I mean, you would get the impression that his parents must have like, been horrible to him or something, abused him or something. But I knew them, they were cool. They used to let us practice, in their garage. None of the other parents would. We had this band back in middle school. "The lost Boy's", well, sort of a band. I played keyboards and Nicholas was pretty decent on a pair of skins. Alex thought he was the next Neil Pert. We'd sing. New Kids kind of shit. We were going to be the New kids on the block. Man, he was so normal back then. Except, his wild ideas and theories on God and stuff. He had some strange thoughts on some pretty deep shit. Nick was deep, even back in the day. I miss him too. The last time we hung out, I think we got in trouble. Almost spent a night in jail. Damn. It's tough, thinking about it all. I mean, what am I suppose to say? I mean, my friend is dead. He just fucking hung himself at twenty one years of age. That's hard. That hurts. And I can't help but somehow feel like we, let him down some how. And then, at the service. The music? There should have been a lot more music. I mean, Nick loved music. We let him down. What little we did for him, was too little too late. Pal bearers. What a joke. That guy was like, our best friend. And we just let him slip way from us.

17

INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE FRIENDS.

17

JOE

I hadn't really seen or heard from him in so long. And then, out of the blue, I heard that he had hung himself. I cried for two straight

(MORE)

JOE (cont'd)

days when I heard that. Sometimes, even now, after the fact, when I think about him, I just get really sad. He was a very serious person in life. He took every thing so serious. For a while, years ago, when he thought I was really mad at him, I mean, I was pretty steamed at him, but, it was only because he'd tried to kill himself before, at my house, and I had this really mean girlfriend at the time, Lucinda, what a bitch, anyway, I wasn't mad at him at all. Truth was, I scared for him. I was really scared for him. But at the time, I didn't know how to just, tell him that. I didn't know how to sit him down and talk to him. Truth is back then, I didn't know shit. I certainly didn't know how to just, be his friend, or anybodies for that matter. I'm just so opposite of him. I don't open up like he did about shit. I mean, everything that he went through for so long, and he still could be the best friend a guy could ever have. He cared about people and things so passionately. It just made you look at him and want to be around him. I really miss him too. He was a friend of mine. The funeral was really sad. I just kept thinking about him, laying there. I wanted him to get up, you know, get up, let's go have a beer. But of course, he couldn't because he was dead. I kept thinking to myself, he looks like he's sleeping. So calm and peaceful. I talked a bunch of the guys, at the last minute, into being pal bearers. I just thought we at least, owed him that. We were his friends. Our friend Doug sang for him. That was kind of cool. They used to have this band. Back in middle school. So, I'm sure if Nicholas was listening, he got a real kick out of hearing Doug, sweating it out in front of all of those strange people.

## RICKY

He was the funniest person I knew. He could crack me up with out saying one word. He had this thing, that he used to do with the corners of his mouth. I can't do it, but it was so funny. I couldn't even bring myself to go to the funeral. I went to the viewing though. The night before. The wake, they call it. Food was good. I thought he was gonna look real bad and all, you know, because it was a suicide? But he looked real good. Like he just went to sleep or something and never woke up. Since he was five, I knew that guy, and I never even knew he was depressed. Whole time. He hid it well. He fooled a lot of people that guy. He fooled me. And I certainly know about fooling people. But he was the master. If he had told me, I would have tried to help him. You know, be a better friend to him. Most people just need someone they can talk to, you know? But, I didn't hang out with those guys. My lifestyle makes them uncomfortable. Not Nicholas though. He never gave a shit one way or the other, after I came out, he didn't care. It was like he didn't have any prejudices about anything. We lived next door for all our our lives, until I moved out at sixteen. I guess you could say I gave up on him. Florida, is just one big small town. When your here, you just wanna' run away, when your gone, you just wanna' come home. I didn't visit much after I left, but, when I heard the news, about what he had done. I had to come home. Back to the same small town with the small minded people. But this time, I didn't care about any of that. I had to say goodbye to someone who I really looked up to. My Friend. He was a one of a kind.

He takes a big swig from a silver flask, pours a few drops on the floor, a drink for the late Nicholas.

RICKY CONT.

To my friend. Nicholas, sorry I'm late man.

He cries.

19 INT. STATE HOSPITAL. DOCTORS OFFICE. DAY. FLASH BACK. 19

Nicholas sits in front of his Doctor, his expression almost menacingly comical, his bruises almost healed, his arm free of bandages and the cast.

DOCTOR

So, how have you been sleeping? I heard you were having some trouble with that, do you want to talk about it?

NICHOLAS

Talk about what? That one of my room mates Masturbates all night long and he's really loud and messy? And that I think that he's probably a sexual predator on top of it all?! He's always staring at me, saying "Let's Masturbate!" "Come on, Masturbate!" Not to mention the Spooge stains all over my fucking room. I go in there, and I don't touch a thing. It's safer that way. My other room mate, who would be kind of cool in another life, except, he's a severe head injury case, who's currently coming down from every illegal street drug on the planet and unfortunately, what ever it is that you people are giving him, on top of it all, makes him incontinent, so, he gets up in the middle of the night, every night, and finds closets and corners and bed's all over the room, and then he pees all over them, then, there's the real nut job in the bed closest to mine, this guy's a real piece of work Doc. He goes around and gets into every bodies space and just laughs and laughs, the problem is, he's about a quarter of an inch away from your face when he's doing it, he's got one tooth in his head, and

(MORE)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

he's not even taking care of that one! And, on top of it all, he's also a kleptomaniac. That's right, he keeps taking every bodies shit. He's stolen my socks, my walkman, a sweat shirt and my hair brush, he stole my other room mates underwear and his toothbrush the other night. Why any one, would even want another man's used toothbrush is beyond me, but he went and told the nurse, so then, the goon staff came in and confronted him about it, and it got real ugly, and they had to take him to the floor, hard, and they had to give him a shot. And then, after all of that, he cried at the top of his lungs in his bed until five in the morning. And I know that you told me that this new medication would make me kind of sleepy and that if it did, that I should just stay in bed and rest, but that's not the memo that your people give to the staff, because every morning at six sharp, they wake every one up for breakfast, and they make you get up, even if you don't want breakfast, but you must get up and go into the day room, which, by the way, is when they immediately lock you out of all the rooms and you can't get back in to go back to sleep until after the morning medication is given out and every one has taken theirs, and that's not until well after nine thirty in the morning, mean time, your heavily drugged, you've had no sleep and your left wandering around the halls and the day room, like a zombie, looking like a crazy person. So, yeah, I guess you could say, I'm having a little trouble sleeping. And then, when I do get to go, I try to do it with one eye open, that's for sure.

DOCTOR

Any other problems? How's that new Medication I gave you? Any more side effects? Sleepy I know, what else?

NICHOLAS

You mean, other than that major side effect of my testicles swelling up to the size of soft balls? No, I'm perfectly fine. Let's double the dose at once.

DOCTOR

My problem, is that I can't seem to get you interested in your treatment. I can't let you leave here until your interested in your own treatment. We have to want to get better before we actually get better. Now, are there any questions for me?

NICHOLAS

Yeah, when do you foresee me leaving here?

DOCTOR

I'm thinking weeks, not months. I don't think you're a danger to yourself or others any more. That's a good thing. I mean, you don't want to hurt yourself any more, do you?

NICHOLAS

And come back here? Not on your life. I don't want to do anything to jeopardize coming back to this place.

DOCTOR

That's what I like to hear. So, go on back to your room or to the day room and I'll give your nurse orders for a new sleeping pill for you tonight. We'll follow up in a few days, see how your doing. Are you getting enough to eat?

NICHOLAS

Yeah.

DOCTOR

Then we'll see you in a few days. I'll check, but I think, when I sign off on you, Mister Salazar, you'll be a free man once again. The courts just want to know that

(MORE)

DOCTOR (cont'd)  
 your not going to hurt yourself or  
 others and they'll let all of that  
 other, unpleasantness go. So, we'll  
 see you in a few days and you'll  
 probably get to go home. Is that  
 alright with you?

NICHOLAS  
 Thank you, that's the best news  
 I've ever heard. And listen. About  
 giving you such a hard time, I'm  
 sorry.

DOCTOR  
 Well, I thank you for that, Mister  
 Salazar, but, I'm pretty used to  
 it. I can handle it. Have a good  
 day.

And with that, Nicholas exits the office, once out, he is first hand witness to a group of orderlies in the process of physically retraining an unruly patient. The altercation leaves him visibly shaken as the patient is taken to the floor and given a shot with a force of violence which is hard to witness for anyone.

20 INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE PARENTS.

20

The interview continues.

HELEN  
 He was never the same boy after the  
 State Hospital got through with him  
 that's for sure.

EDWARD  
 That's when he started with the  
 sleeping pills every night too.  
 Said he couldn't sleep. Drinking,  
 pills. God Knows what else.

HELEN  
 He had terrible night mares after  
 that place. Right up to the end.

EDWARD  
 And then there was the incident. At  
 the State hospital.

Spines stiffen.

HELEN

Those places are supposed to keep people like Nicholas safe. He was defenseless.

EDWARD

They didn't do their jobs.

HELEN

After it happened. He just crawled into his own little world. Withdrew from the whole world and everything that used to matter to him. He didn't really ever bounce back after that either. He'd put on a good show, but he'd changed. He became jumpy. Nervous and uneasy. He started watching his back. Never trusted again. For Nicholas, that was like a Nun, losing her faith in God. It was all he had. It was what made him special. The way he viewed the world. That hospital, they took that away from him.

21 INT. STATE HOSPITAL. SHOWERS. FLASH BACK. 21

Nicholas is in the process of showering when suddenly, he is attacked by a deranged patient and violently beaten and sexually assaulted with a hair brush. A Shocking scene to witness and it only ends when hospital staff intervene using equally violent force against his attacker. A shocking scene to witness.

22 INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE PARENTS. 22

The interview continues imperceptibly through the TV monitor.

EDWARD

He couldn't even bring himself to tell us. He had his Nurse make the phone call. And even then, after she told us, when she tried to put him on the phone, to speak with us? He wouldn't pick it up. He wouldn't talk to us. Can you imagine the shame he must have been feeling? And he sat there, in that cold exam room. He was black and blue. But that Nurse, she befriended him. She

(MORE)

EDWARD (cont'd)

stayed with him, even after we got there. Holding his hand. She even managed to make him laugh a couple of times, I remember that. I don't know what she said to him. But, they had something between them, a real friendship. You could just tell.

HELEN

She liked him. She's the only one who treated him like a person in there. She talked to him like a normal person he said. I wish I could remember her name, a black women. She was older than him by years, but she really took a liking to him.

EDWARD

When she called us, to tell us what had happened to him. I was devastated. When I got to him, I couldn't even look at him, I didn't want to see his shame, inside. I didn't want him to look at me, my eyes, and see in them, that I could see in him, his shame. For a man, that's the worse thing that could ever happen to him. Because it's the end. I didn't know what to say, or do for him anyway. If things had been different. As it was, they were what they were. Deep down inside of me, I just knew, that that would be the beginning of the end for him. A father knows.

HELEN

That's when we signed him right out of there too. The Doctor couldn't even object, he knew, we had to get him out of there. The Ridge was a much better place for Nicholas. It had a wonderful reputation. And for a while, he really did well.

EDWARD

Six thousand dollars a month.

HELEN

We really couldn't afford it. But, what are gonna' do? He was sick.

EDWARD

Nicholas had many problems in his life time. But, in the end, where ever he went for help. For real help, hope? He only found more trauma. And then, his Girlfriend quit him, right after she graduated college.

HELEN

He was so devastated. He help put her through that school, supported her, every thing she wanted. He even sold his car so she could do an internship. She needed the money for her bills. She couldn't work and do the internship. So, he sold his car. Then she up and sleeps with one of her Professors, and she didn't even try and hide it from him. He couldn't get out of his bed for three whole weeks. Maybe it was longer, I can't remember now. He wanted to marry her.

EDWARD

She knew how it would affect him. She didn't care. She went through so much with him, to abandon him in the end, when he needed her the most.

HELEN

I'm not saying any one should stay with a person out of pity, but she knew just how fragile he was. She'd known Nicholas since the Fifth grade. She gave him hope, and then took it away.

EDWARD

That time, twelfth grade, in a shop class, he had cut his wrist so badly, making her a bird house, the doctors thought they might have had to amputate his hand. And she was there, through it all for him. Every day, at the Hospital.

HELEN

But they didn't amputate. Somehow, he managed to keep his hand. And his love for this girl, was just blooming. Even the nurses would talk about them, how they made the whole hospital seem alive. The two of them. That was love. They were happy.

EDWARD

She was kind to him. At the time, we thought his injuries were just, a terrible accident in a shop class. But, later, I doubted that. Still do. You hate to think of your child in that way, but, with Nicholas? Every hospital trip was suspect. Every slip, every fall.

HELEN

After so many late night phone calls, you just get to the point that, you're numb with it all. Used up. After so long, you never really expect it to ever be for real anyway. I never really ever, thought that he'd actually, ever, get it right. The truth is, I just figured they were always cries for attention. Acting out. But, even that, now we know, you have to take it seriously. Don't ever ignore your child. Because when you do, it might just become, the last thing you ever did for them.

Her tears stream down now.

EDWARD

Nicholas was such a fine, happy child. I just don't understand it all. He was so normal for so long. Mental illness robbed him of all of that. And that's just what it is, mental illness. Depression. All of it. It's mental illness, plain and simple. It robbed him of everything.

HELEN

And It robbed us of everything too. It robbed him of a happy, healthy

(MORE)

HELEN (cont'd)  
 life, it robbed us, of watching him  
 grow up happy and healthy. It  
 robbed us of grandchildren and  
 peaceful nights, and so much more.

FADE IN

23 EXT. BACK YARD. SUMMER DAY. SUPER 8. FLASH BACK. 23

Nicholas, as a younger child, running around playing in the yard. His parents nearby watching, beaming with pride. At times the tape goes in and out of focus, shakes, fails to capture it's subject, but all in all, it shows a happy, healthy normal kid.

SMASH CUT TO:

24 INT./EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD DRUG HOUSE. NIGHT. DRIVING RAIN. 24

FB. (Flash Back)

The front door swings wildly open, to reveal, a den of young people gathered around in this, untidy, lawless house. Smoking and eating drugs of all types. EDWARD burst in, going from huddled crowd to huddled crowd of young stoned bodies, looking for NICHOLAS. Before long he finds a young, long haired Nicholas, smoking pot, he grabs him by the arm and pulls him out kicking and screaming. Nicholas looks bad, real bad, these are his Grunge days.

Moments later.

25 INT. CAR. NIGHT. RAIN. FLASH BACK. 25

Inside the car. They sit in silence for a moment.

EDWARD

You can do anything you want with  
 your life son, but this?

NICHOLAS

What do you care about my life?  
 What do you even know about my  
 life?

EDWARD

What, you think I don't know how  
 you got the money? You're Mother's  
 purse? You steel from your own

(MORE)

EDWARD (cont'd)

Mother now? I had to tell her that I took the forty dollars. And you'll never say a word of this, do you hear me?

NICHOLAS

I'm sorry. I just, I can't make it stop. These thoughts. I'm so sorry. I think I'm going crazy.

EDWARD

Your not going crazy. You don't know crazy. But this place? Drugs? This is not the answer to anything. These kids are not your friends son. I know your friends, I didn't see one of them in that dump. Come on, what are you doing?

NICHOLAS

Truth? It helps me, turn it off. Do you think I want to feel like this? Every day? Do you think, that I like this? Feeling like this, where every things all screwed up Dad? I don't know if I'm coming or going, I just feel like something really bad is coming, and there is nothing I can do to stop it. Hell, I don't even know if it's worth it, to try and stop it anymore. I should just get it over with, it's coming anyway. In a hundred years, nobodies going to give a shit about any of this anyway. Not you, not them, and certainly not me. What's the point?

EDWARD

(After a long pause)

You've had a rough year. High schools rougher than middle school. Your just making the change, give it time. You'll get through this, but not like this. This place won't help.

NICHOLAS

How did you find me anyway? That was so not cool of you, busting in there, like that, that guy's brother, once shot a man. Did four

(MORE)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)  
years in prison for it too. Guy was  
eye ballin' his bitch, he had to  
shoot him.

He shoots Nicholas a look.

NICHOLAS (cont'd)  
That's what he told us. Sounded  
pretty cool in seventh grade I'll  
tell you. Lucky for you, he's back  
in jail right now too.

EDWARD  
You don't come between a man and  
his kid. Lucky for him. One day,  
you'll understand what I mean, when  
you have a family of your own. Look  
at this dump, most popular kid in  
town, for all the wrong reasons,  
all the kids hang out with him too  
I'll bet, parents never home.  
Typical. You were too easy to find,  
young Nicholas, you forget, I was  
young once too.

NICHOLAS  
So, what now? I know I'm in  
trouble.

EDWARD  
No. No trouble. Just, don't ever  
come back here.

NICHOLAS  
I can do that. God, I'm so hungry,  
you have no idea how hungry I am.

EDWARD  
Well, let's go get something to eat  
then. Can't take you home like this  
anyway. So, was it at least, good  
bud? Or was it that crappy shake  
shit, that's all seeds?

Nicholas shoots him a look.

NICHOLAS  
I'm so not having this conversation  
with you. Get a life.

There is suddenly the threat of a tender moment, eye contact is briefly made, a connection is found, spines stiffen avoiding the awkward moment and then, the car pulls out of the drive.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

26 INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE EX- GIRLFRIEND. 26

Angelina composes herself before speaking, her eyes behind dark shades. It's obvious she's been crying.

ANGELINA

When I heard the news, I couldn't believe it. Nicholas, was probably the most sincere, honest and caring person that I've ever known. He was always in my heart. He will, always be in my heart.

SMASH CUT TO:

27 INT. NICHOLAS' BEDROOM. NIGHT. FLASH BACK. 27

The camera angles on the full moon, it's light, casting strange but wonderful shapes and patterns through the trees, the wind moving their branches and casting the images onto the bedroom's walls, leaving the room aglow. Close up, on the bed; A young Nicholas and Angelina, make love. The passion here is enough to light forest fires.

SMASH CUT BACK TO:

28 INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE EX- GIRLFRIEND. 28

The interview continues.

ANGELINA

He was the best, most passionate lover I've ever had. I think, somehow, I always thought that at the end of all of the madness, somehow, we would find ourselves together again. I always wanted to give myself to him. Every time I saw him. But the fact is, he never asked. Maybe he couldn't. Sometimes, after we'd made love, I

(MORE)

ANGELINA (cont'd)

would hold him, and I could just feel him, shaking like a scared child. Sometimes, he'd even cry. And there we'd be, alone, in the dark, just crying for no reason at all. One time, I walked into the bathroom, and there he was, hanging by his neck. He'd tied a pair of my stockings around the shower rod and his throat, when he finally looked up and saw me standing there, the nylon broke the shower rod and he landed hard, on the cold tile floor. I went back to bed, and I think he just lay there all night, on the cold floor, crying. In the morning, he acted as if nothing in the world had happened. Said he'd drank too much Vodka. But I knew, I saw it in his face that night. Some people have to ask themselves why should I do this or that, why should go on after everything that's happened, but for Nicholas, it wasn't a question of why, for him, it was always a question of why not? Why shouldn't I? And that's what scared the shit out of me about him. It's also what drew me to him. I'd never met anyone so brilliant and so beautiful and yet, so frail. He was child like, but he wasn't a child at all. He was probably never really a child. He used to say, he had an old spirit and it longed finally, for rest.

SMASH CUT TO:

29

EXT. CIVIL WAR CEMETERY. DAY. FLASH BACK.

29

A beautiful cemetery on a sunny day. The trees are as majestic as the Headstones that tower in every direction. Walking hand and hand, Nicholas and Angelina, share a bottle of red wine. His fascination with the dead is visible to all in witness as they read the stones and wonder aloud about the dead in this cemetery, some dated pre-Civil war.

NICHOLAS

This place is so fantastic. These people have eternal life, right

(MORE)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

here. Just think, they'll never get any older, never get sick, never get hurt, again. They'll never miss any one, or fear death. Or lose a loved one. And every time we walk through here, they'll live on, through us, through our curiosity. Our fascination with them. Who were they? How did they meet their end? Were they alone or was somebody holding on to their hand when that final moment came? Was there fear, or relief?

ANGELINA

These people are dead. Dead is just, dead. It's not a club Nicholas. You make it sound like the YMCA or something. Death is a scary thing, it's not cool.

NICHOLAS

Then maybe the beauty of it should be, in controlling the how and when? For ninety percent of the worlds population I promise you, life, just isn't what it's cracked up to be anyway. And when you really think about it. For some people, even right here, in the so-called richest nation in the world, it's down right painful and at times, excruciating. Because we, as a mass, are sheep. We fear the unknown more than the everyday hell that we do know. When I become too unhappy with it all, I will not be a sheep led to slaughter like the rest of you.

She watches him closer now as he begins to wonder on, ahead of her, stopping to lay down under a magnificent old oak, on his back, he stares up at the heavens in his own world.

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

I could get used to this. The view is perfect, there is a beautiful expectation of a peace here, a closure that escapes and prepares the body for the coming transition, a transition that is inescapable and yet, so very feared in its

(MORE)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

present form, but I'm sure, the greatest of all adventures it'll be for all. The difference for some people, the difference for me, is as simple as the undeniable feeling of peace that I have when I take my own destiny under my own control, it provides complete protection from the ordinary dangers and the unspeakable sinister violence of the human condition as a whole. A condition wrought and faced by virtually every human born. To free yourself from that. It's an incredible freedom of heart and soul that forces itself into the mind and heart of the lonely, old souls like mine, that seek nothing anyway from the very world that most other people, are terrified to part with. For me, I think the constant thoughts and hopes of one day being with the angels replaces the sheer terror of the every day cruelty of life itself. And the longing for release from it all, is, both exciting and scary at the same time. But It takes over, sustains, and calls out to you. It becomes, both a kind of hope for new frontiers and a fear of the unknown. To even entertain it, even for one day with any serious thoughts? Brings with it, a pain and a fatigue and a longing for rest and quiet that sweeps over you with a strength beyond control, one that begins quickly, if your not careful, to sweep your whole miserable soul up into it, and you can never fully or even almost understand it. So you invent cute, non scary word phrases for it, like, "The spooky unknown goodnight for which there is no return". I've always enjoyed that one. But in the end, it means the same, no matter what you call it. The destruction, by the simple, or, for some, very complicated destruction, of your own life. To sweep it all utterly away from everyone and everything

(MORE)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

that ever touched or was affected  
in anyway by it. Including  
yourself. The hopes, the dreams.  
The fear, pain.

ANGELINA

I don't think you'll think about  
any of that when your dead. I look  
around, and I'm sure that everyone  
in this place, if they could, would  
rather be on this side of the dirt,  
walking around like we are right  
now.

NICHOLAS

I don't know, maybe. But what you  
don't understand is, there are  
worst things in life, than dying.  
Sometimes, there is just no reason  
for living, when you really think  
about it. Look at the starving,  
AIDS infected children of Africa.  
Why do they exist, to make us feel  
better about our own miserable  
lives, or maybe just to suffer? I  
could go on.

ANGELINA

Don't. You stopped taking them  
again, didn't you? Every time you  
do that, you know what happens to  
you. Do you want to end up being  
forced back into treatment because  
you know, they can do that now  
Nicholas? Your certifiable now.  
They can do anything that they feel  
they need to do. Don't force them  
to do it. I'm on the side of you  
getting better, even if it means.  
You know what I'm saying. You just  
have to take the Medication. You  
have to take it every day. For the  
rest of your life, you have to take  
it. It's a part of you now,  
Nicholas. Take the medication.  
Don't make them do that to you  
again.

NICHOLAS

They don't need me to take them to  
do that. Fuck it, maybe I should be  
locked away, taking that shit every

(MORE)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

day. When I take them, it's good  
bye orgasm anyway. Or did you not  
notice the six months straight that  
I went without an erection? Well, I  
certainly did. I'm too young for  
this shit ANGIE.

ANGELINA

It's alright, when we have kids,  
you'll loose your hard on for me  
anyway. So I'm told anyway. All men  
do. At least for their wives  
anyway. My Dad did, yours too I'm  
sure.

NICHOLAS

Kids? Why would we ever do that to  
another human being, create  
one? This place sucks. Famine,  
War. Rape. Slavery. Senseless  
murder. Cruelty. Child abuse. The  
Rich, the Poor. Needless pain and  
suffering. Homelessness. Sexism.  
Racism. Class ism. Elitism.  
Injustice. AIDS. Cancer. Mental  
Illness.

ANGELINA

I get it already. Those things have  
existed since the beginning of  
day's, but in the mean time, right  
here, in Tallahassee, life goes on.  
We, go on Mister Man. You're sick  
Nicholas, it's really not a choice  
for you anymore, you have to take  
the pills. Everyday. And I need you  
to know that. Do you see what's  
happening to you right now? It's  
like, you want to stop feeling,  
stop living and breathing,  
everything because of what could go  
wrong with it, some, imagined  
fixation with death that you carry  
around like a badge of honor. But  
you, on your medication, the real  
you, is not like this at all. Your  
kind, and gentle. Your a dreamer, a  
planner. Organized. Hopeful.  
Loving. That's who you are, not  
this. I don't even know this person  
here, spread out on the ground of a  
graveyard, calling on Death's dark

(MORE)

ANGELINA (cont'd)

angels to come and take him away. Like a crazy person. The person I know, as Nicholas, doesn't long for death or pity himself. He longs for sanity and justice in the world. He's an artist with everything he touches. People and small animals adore him. Children swing from his limbs like he's a carnival ride, and when they do, his laughter fills the room like a BOSE stereo system. And everyone looks at him, and they all want to know him. Men want to be like him, women want to be with him. Mother's and Father's want their poor excuses for children, to be more like him. That's the Nicholas that I know. That, is the Nicholas that I fell in love with, the Nicholas that I still love. But where is he?

He stops, sizes her up, cheering up at once. Walks over and kisses and hugs her.

NICHOLAS

I love you so much. Thank you. Don't worry. I'll take the pills, for you and only you, for you, I will live dammit! At least, for another day. I just, couldn't bear losing you today. Besides, no ones ever described me in that way before. Those things that you just said? It was incredible. Wish I knew that person, he sounds cool.

He pulls her in closer, holding on to her tightly now.

NICHOLAS

I'm so scared of loosing you. Please don't leave me.

ANGELINA

I'm not going to leave you. Just, stay with me in the here and now. I mean that. I need you here, I don't want to be the grieving widow. I'm far too young for that. Besides, life really is wonderful with you in it, even when it sucks.

NICHOLAS

Even when it sucks? I feel so much better now.

ANGELINA

Well it's true, even when it sucks, it's better with you in it! You know what I mean.

NICHOLAS

Even when it sucks! Do you hear that dead people? Life is wonderful, even when it sucks! What if Noah, had gone off on a final trip into the woods, in search of two spiders for the Arc, and they had all missed the boat? Man and spiders. Sorry, that was my lack of Medication speaking. Ignore that.

And with that, he kisses her passionately, bundles her coat shut, downs the last of the red wine and playfully, they run after each other through the cemetery until they can't run anymore, falling into and onto one another in a heap. It is here, that they will make love, under the oaks and amidst the headstones. The scene can best be described as impatiently passionate, and they tear into each other with a force and speed best left to the young of age.

30 INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE EX- GIRLFRIEND. 30

The interview continues. The tears fall like a mighty river now, and she is lost in the memories.

ANGELINA

I made him do ECT. It was the last step for us. Electro-convulsive Therapy. Nothing else worked for him anymore. In the end, even that failed him. He became so distant. So empty. He wasn't interested in sex any more. He had no self-esteem, he wouldn't shave or shower. He couldn't even remember to eat. I mean, how hard is it to remember to feed yourself?

Her tears quickly turning to anger now.

ANGELINA (cont'd)

He couldn't concentrate on anything, not to mention the

(MORE)

ANGELINA (cont'd)  
 cutting. He was a cutter. He  
 wouldn't sleep for weeks at a time,  
 wouldn't eat, lost all of his  
 weight. What was I suppose to do? I  
 am not a monster, but I had to get  
 out, before I became just like him.

There is a hard pause, with deep thought, remembering.

ANGELINA (cont'd)  
 I saw him four months before he did  
 it. He had gained all of this  
 weight. I was surprised, but hey,  
 at least he was feeding himself  
 right? And then, at the funeral?  
 His weight was back to almost  
 normal. That was just like  
 Nicholas, never to be consistent  
 about anything. It's funny now,  
 before he came into my life, I  
 don't think I'd ever really even,  
 heard of depression. A week ago, I  
 was diagnosed with chronic Anxiety  
 disorder. I wonder now. Who made  
 who sick?

The Camera moves in closer on her tears as they return.

ANGELINA (cont'd)  
 Can you turn that off now?

Realizing there is no camera person, she stands now, leaving  
 the room in a huff.

BLACK.

Music now: Requiem in D Minor, K.626:Sequence:VI. "Lacrimosa  
 dies illa".

FADE IN:

31 EXT. SOCCER FIELD. MIDDLE SCHOOL. VIDEO TAPE. DAY. FB. 31

Game day. Mid game. Nicholas, normal, happy, healthy and  
 athletic. He plays forward on the schools soccer team. The  
 Camera tracks the game, closely following Nicholas and his  
 team mates, a young Alex and Doug among them. Included in  
 the bleachers, Joe, Angelina, Ricky, Edward. This scene,  
 despite the somber music, shows better times, humor, grace,  
 and should reflect such on screen.

The six thousand dollar a month Ridge Mental Health Center, is a plush, supplely leathered, deep in the suburbs type of Treatment Center. Adorned with fire places, grand staircases, leather bound books encased in wall shelves, and well dressed, mostly well mannered young patients. It is Christmas Eve and every one has gathered in the TV/Entertainment room to decorate the twenty plus foot tree, they sing carols etc. Nicholas, not immediately visible, is found moments later; he has bonded with a young man his own age and they position themselves just off of the action in the large room, stretched out across a Rich Brown Leather Sofa eating the decorative pop corn.

NICHOLAS

If they sing one more fucking Carol, I'm going to puke right here on this, rich, Corinthian leather sofa.

KYLE

This is nothing grasshopper. Wait until tomorrow, Christmas. Tomorrow it'll really be a fucking joke, a grand spectacle of the highest order. Tomorrow is parents day, and they have to justify, to all of the little rich kids' parent's, just why it is, that their children aren't getting any better, yet, and they still, have to collect the checks before the rich bastards walk out the front door, thus insuring another month, of excellent, expert, Doctor supervised care. You watch, the good Doc himself will be over there by the fire place, bent over in the prone position and farting jingle bells, anything for the money. Such a fucking joke. Every year, like clock work. Look at them, the big kid over there, Kankles the clown? The one who never eats with us? He's here because he's a fat son of a bitch who's eating his folks out of house and home. He's on a fourteen hundred calorie a day diet. But, his counselor is on the take, he sneaks him in all kinds of food and shit, the fat kids paying him, three fifty a week. That one,

(MORE)

KYLE (cont'd)

over there? Looking like the televised early childhood version of Wally Cleaver himself, he likes to go on hard core Meth binges and fuck four year old boys. Sick fuck. Next year, if he doesn't get any better, his ass is going to be charged as an adult. And that's just for the shit he's already been caught for. He's fucking his roomie even in here. He's about to turn thirteen, sick fucker. You heard about the kid that shot his little brother in the head over a fight about a dog? It was in the news, that's him, right there. The smallest one. Meanest fucking ten year old you'll ever meet, don't ever piss him off, he's really into revenge. He pushed one kid down that flight of stairs over there, they took him away in an ambulance, never seen or heard from the kid again. They say he's like that because of his little size, I say, he's just a little fucking off in the head. The rest of these pricks are just depressed like you. Depressed with a few other fucked up features thrown into the mix, just to make it interesting and keep their parents screwed up and on their toes.

NICHOLAS

You want to see a real joke, try visiting the State Hospital. It's almost the same, but they have the psychotics too. Running around, laughing for no reason. Reaching out for shit that's not really there. Another cesspool of hypocrisy and grown people with their hands out, begging for money and more authority.

KYLE

They're all the same, maybe we should start one of our own. We're certainly qualified. And just like them, the only thing we'll have to worry about, will be keeping them

(MORE)

KYLE (cont'd)

well medicated so they don't freak out on family day. One ill timed fit in the middle of the room, and boom goes the dynamite. Every year, I keep thinking of new and improved ways to bring it all crashing down. But, I always chicken out in the end. Who knows, maybe this is the year.

NICHOLAS

Are your folks coming tomorrow?

KYLE

Two years so far, they haven't made it yet. Don't expect tomorrow to be any different. Although, this year, my dad promised. Which, even for him, was a new little number, don't see that one often. Maybe he'll surprise me. If not, than, his promises will become just like his threats. Empty. His new wife, is going to Zürich. Say's he'll be here. "I promise" is what he said. Anyway, we'll see. I don't really care anyway. I mean, fuck it right?

NICHOLAS

I thought you said you've only been here eight months?

KYLE

I'm on the escape watch. If you escape, they start your treatment all over. I like to get out every now and then. You know, see the world. Get a little recreational pharmaceuticals going on, not these crap drugs they got in here. That's why I'm here, too many drugs. You name it, I've done it. Throw in a little manic depression? It's a great combination. I like to tell them that I'm seeing leprechauns. They avoid me for a few days. And then I make my move. It's not so hard to get out of here either. The trick is, to go in the mornings. Never at night. At night, they're expecting it. Anything you need to do outside of here, you do it

(MORE)

KYLE (cont'd)  
before five in the morning. Raid  
the kitchen, sneak over to the  
Girls wing, have a smoke break,  
score some quick crack, you name  
it. Before five.

Just then they are interrupted by a young staff member.

STAFF MEMBER  
Yo Kyle, you have a phone call. Why  
don't you take it in my office,  
it's Christmas right? Ten minutes.

He perks up, almost sprinting off for the phones.

KYLE  
It's probably my Dad, guess he's  
coming after all.

And with that, Kyle trots off to the phone.

STAFF MEMBER  
(Taking a seat next to  
Nicholas.)  
You know, if you want, we like to,  
let you guys leave campus on  
Christmas day. I mean, with your  
Parents of course. Spend the whole  
day. Nine O'clock curfew. Pretty  
liberal right? It's our way of  
saying, Merry Christmas. If you  
want, I'll put you on the day pass,  
because, I noticed your name wasn't  
on it?

NICHOLAS  
Cool. Thanks.

Just then Kyle storms past them on his way to the stairs  
mumbling, cursing, knocking pictures off of the walls along  
the way, everything in his path becomes far game for  
destruction.

KYLE  
Every fucking year! And he fucking  
promised. I fucking hate this  
place! I fucking hate all of you  
people!

NICHOLAS  
What's up Kyle?

But he doesn't answer, storming up the steps in a huff and slamming a door shut behind him.

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

I was going up in a bit. I mean, what should I do, he's my room mate? I have to sleep in there. I just, don't want him to be mad at me, for going to sleep. Should I go up and talk to him?

STAFF MEMBER

Just give him a while before you go up to bed. Hang out a while. Let him fall asleep first, or at least calm down a little. If he feels like talking, just, be supportive and listen. Just like in group.

NICHOLAS

What the fuck is his problem, what just happened?

STAFF MEMBER

My guess, his old man's not coming. Again. You should thank your lucky stars that your family takes such an active interest in you and your recovery. They really care about you. Come on, don't sit over here alone, help us out with the tree. Give Kyle some space, he'll be alright.

And with that, he pulls Nicholas up off of the sofa and they begin to decorate the very large Christmas Tree.

SMASH CUT TO:

33

INT. NICHOLAS' PARENTS HOME. CHRISTMAS MORNING. FB.

33

The house, decorated in the joys of Christmas, reveals them scrambling about this morning, hurried, taking care of last minute things, packing shopping bags full of food and wrapped gifts to bring Nicholas.

EDWARD

Come on, we still have a two and a half hour drive. Let's go, let's go! We should have left an hour ago.

HELEN

Stop rushing me, I always forget things when you rush me. Just think, he's taking all of his pills, it's Christmas Morning. It's going to be just like old times for a change. Did I pack the camera?

EDWARD

I packed it. When I talked to him last night, he did sound good Helen. Real good. Upbeat. And get this, he made a friend too. He asked me something, I was going to run it by you on the way there, but, I guess now is as good a time as any. This friend of his, he hasn't got anybody to spend the holiday with. So, Nicholas thought, maybe, he asked, maybe, if we would let him come with us. For the day, on our little outing?

HELEN

But I didn't shop for him, this boy. I don't have anything to give the poor thing. And it being Christmas? It wouldn't be right that he had to sit there and watch Nicholas opening up all of these gifts and he, with nothing. I mean, just think about it. I certainly wouldn't feel right.

EDWARD

We'll, same age, I'm guessing, same interest, maybe about the same size, maybe we, could just, give him a few of Nicholas' things. He's got plenty of stuff here. Six bags of stuff. Most of it he'll hate anyway. How many packs of underwear and tee shirts does a boy need? Some of this stuff, I'm not even sure if it's age appropriate anymore for Nicholas. He's almost Seventeen. He's growing up. Maybe his friend would like a lot of this stuff.

Thinking about it.

HELEN

It is Christmas day. And It'll make him so happy. He needs his friends. Maybe if he still had his friends things would be different for him.

EDWARD

We should do it. We'll take them out, eat some good food. Let them buy some of that music that they like so much, open up some gifts. It'll be wonderful. Christmas is for the kids, right?

HELEN

It's good he made a friend. Everything is looking up finally Edward.

A tear wells up before Edward forces her to hold it for later.

EDWARD

It's real good. Looks like it was worth the money. Come on, none of that, hurry up already! We gotta' go, there waiting.

34 INT. THE RIDGE MENTAL HEALTH FACILITY. X-MAS DAY. BATHROOM.  
34

FB. (Flash Back).

A shock to all of a young mans senses at once. Nicholas, and about five or six other boys stand peering into the open bathroom, they are between thresh hold, hall and bathroom. Their eyes fixed on the image three feet in front of them. Neither able to move a hair. Nicholas, watches silently, his eyes welling up slowly. He has no words, none of them do. The Camera Pans beyond them into the bath, landing the image now, of Kyle, in the bath tub, pale beyond belief, the blood red water. His slashed wrist' hang partly in, and partly out of the bloody water. A mess. He is dead of a suicide. Before long, the staff will arrive and huddle the Children out, pulling the body from the water and vainly attempting CPR. A scene of chaos and disbelief.

WHITE OUT:

The interview continues.

HELEN

Truth is, we were too old when we had Nicholas. But we were finally ready to have a child. We wanted a family. I should have known.

EDWARD

We weren't too old, don't say that.

HELEN

I was too old. I was Forty one years old. Maybe, he never had a chance. Maybe it's all my fault, that's what you live with.

EDWARD

It's nobodies fault. He just got dealt a bad hand. If anything, it was me. I didn't want him to be like that, I fought it, tooth and nail. By the time I realized that, he was, that way, mentally ill, it was too late for him. I wasted a lot of time, not getting him help. He should have had help when he was twelve. That's when I first really started to notice it. When he was twelve years old, he came to me one night, I thought he'd been asleep for hours, he came to my bed side, in tears, he woke me up at four in the morning and asked me, if anybody in the family had ever owned slaves? And to look at him. He was so upset, so serious. He was literally in tears. He couldn't, wouldn't, eat for three days over the whole thought of it, slavery. Three days! Of course, at the time, I told him no. But, I didn't know. How could I know such a thing? Imagine that, a twelve year old boy, carrying around such guilt? The guilt of his fore fathers. I should have known right then. Something wasn't right about him. And it just got worse from there.

The Interviews continue.

Avi, a rather wiry young man takes a seat in front of the Camera, closing the door to the video room and it instantly turns on. He fidgets and shuffles about, as if he were heavily medicated. He speaks with a slow southern drawl. Clearly suffering from drug and mental disorders of the most extreme type.

AVI

My names AVI. I'm not really supposed to be here. I kind of snuck away from um'. But I thought it was important, you know, for Nicholas? I was with Nick. At the State Hospital for a while. We were kind of there for the same thing but not really the same thing. I'm post traumatic too and some other stuff. Some other things, Nick used to help me with my English. That's not important though. I just came to say, that Nick was the coolest guy I ever met. He really understood me. Which was kind of cool, because, he was like, the only one who ever did. The only one who really ever tried. We would stay up for hours and just talk. Even after lights out. About everything. He knew God like the back of his hand. Cars. War, all kinds of stuff. About why some people are just different and don't quite fit in in the world. He used to tell me, that we weren't the crazy one's, that the world was the crazy one's. He's the only one who didn't laugh at me when things would get too loud and I'd have a fit, or a seizure as he would call it. Loud noises make me kind of scared. After a real loud noise? Sometimes, I wake up and I'm on the floor or the ground if I was outside. And I don't remember a thing about why. They say, it's because when I was a little kid, my Daddy, he shot my Momma and Me, when I was about eight months. I was still inside her. He was

(MORE)

AVI (cont'd)

shootin' at her and some Man, somehow, I got it too. Everybody got it I guess. And from then on, I can't stand the sound of no loud bangs. But one time, at the state hospital, this last time, on the fourth of July, and I just couldn't stand it no more, but, he held me, and he told me, every time I heard a pop, I could just squeeze his hand and I did. As hard as I wanted. And he stayed inside with me, the whole time. He didn't go out to see the fire crackers or nothing. And for the first time, I didn't feel scared no more. I realized, what I felt, was lonely mostly. Cause, I never had nobody but me. But then, Nick came along. Like the brother I never had. And we would talk about my folks, and all of the foster people I been with, girls, people that we liked, because they were nice to us, stuff like that. First time I'd done that. And he said it was alright to miss people that used to be in your life and wasn't no more. Like my Momma. And then, I didn't miss her as much no more. And I still don't, I didn't really know her anyway, I mean, I never really met her, she was dead when my Daddy shot us that day. Nick used to say, that he was glad he didn't kill me too. No, I don't miss her no more. But I sure do miss him. He was the kindest friend to me. He was my best friend ever.

He begins to slowly cry.

AVI

I miss my friend so much. Everybody  
I know, keeps dying on me!

And with that, he breaks down into non understandable tears and mumblings.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

37

EXT. NICHOLAS' PARENTS HOME. PROM NIGHT. FLASH BACK.

37

Chaos in the house. Nicholas barley dressed. Hair disheveled.

NICHOLAS

I didn't even want that tux, she made me get it. And anyway, If it's that important to you, then you go!

EDWARD

What the hell is wrong with you? It's your prom!

NICHOLAS

I'm not going and you can't force me too! In fact, I think I'm going to puke just thinking about it. I just, don't feel right.

EDWARD

The Tux, the shoes, the tickets to that Rush concert, the limo? Even your car, If you don't go, you'll pay for all of it, every cent, you'll pay it back! I've had it with you and this non sense!

NICHOLAS

Then I'll pay you back. And you can have that piece of crap car back too, but either way, I'm not going. The last thing I want, is this right now. Let it go, I just need to be alone right now.

The door bell rings. Helen answers. It's Angelina. She enters dressed and ready for the prom. She's beautiful. Her dress is incredible, make up and hair perfect. The house suddenly calms. Nicholas left stunned at her beauty.

NICHOLAS (cont'd)

What are you doing here? The limo picks you up and then we go. That's how it's suppose to work, remember? Plus, I'm not quite ready, I still had, four minutes left.

ANGELINA

I know how it supposed to work. I also figured you would probably be in one of your, melt downs. I know how easily overwhelmed you are with

(MORE)

ANGELINA (cont'd)  
 things like this. So, I decided, to  
 come to you. Look, we don't have to  
 even go to the stupid prom. But you  
 are not going to stand me up, for a  
 date. So, what do you want to do?  
 Watch TV?

And at that moment, he looks at her with the deepest  
 respect. There is a pause as he considers her and the  
 question posed.

NICHOLAS  
 I don't know, I think my Ritalin is  
 wearing off, what do you want to  
 do?

EDWARD  
 I think your Ritalin wore off last  
 year. Ask him if he was even  
 planing to go?

ANGELINA  
 Were you, even planing to go? Were  
 you at least going to call me?  
 Look, it doesn't really matter if  
 you don't want to go. I just, want  
 to spend my night with you  
 Nicholas. I mean, that is what the  
 plan was, right? We can do that  
 right here.

He thinks a moment.

NICHOLAS  
 And you would just give up your  
 prom, just like that?

ANGELINA  
 Just like that.

NICHOLAS  
 (After a beat.)  
 Let's go to the prom then. I just,  
 have to finish getting dressed.

Relieved, she takes control now.

ANGELINA  
 Not a chance, if we're going, we're  
 going right now. I can't risk you,  
 flaking out on me again, the next  
 time, you'll be locked in the

(MORE)

ANGELINA (cont'd)  
bathroom or something worse, up on  
the roof or something.

EDWARD  
(To Nicholas)  
Give her the corsage Nicholas.

ANGELINA  
Give me the corsage Nicholas.

But he doesn't hear them, right now all he sees is this  
beautiful young woman before him.

NICHOLAS  
My God, you're beautiful.

She shoots him a look.

ANGELINA  
Then let's do this. Mister Salazar,  
Mises Salazar? Good night then.  
Come Nicholas.

HELEN  
Good night honey, you look so  
beautiful. Tell your Mother to call  
me.

She snaps a photo of them. Blinding them with the flash.

NICHOLAS  
Can I at least get my Jacket?

ANGELINA  
I planed ahead, knowing it was you.  
Just something you learn you have  
to do. I have a tuxedo waiting for  
you in the car. It should fit, the  
shirt and little bow tie are  
painted perfectly onto it.

Amazed. He's speechless.

NICHOLAS  
Is this Sadie Hawkins day?

EDWARD  
Times a fleeting son.

Edward puts the corsage on her instead, joining their hands  
together, he pushes them towards the door.

EDWARD (cont'd)  
 Absolutely stunning. Say Goodnight  
 to the love birds Helen.

HELEN  
 Good night, have fun.

She snaps another photo, the flash again blinding them.

EDWARD  
 Keep him as long as you want.

He opens the door, helping them out, slamming it shut behind them.

EDWARD (cont'd)  
 Yes!

38

EXT. NICHOLAS' PARENTS HOME. BATHROOM. FLASH BACK.

38

Close on Helen, with the look of a truly worried woman splashed across her face. As the view begins to loosen, Nicholas, submerged under the water in the bath tub comes slowly into view. However, as we look closer, the tub is full of Ice Cubes which float in the Water with a naked Nicholas. He comes up for dear air, greeted by his Mother standing over him shaking her head in disbelief.

HELEN  
 I just don't understand why you're  
 doing this to yourself.

NICHOLAS  
 (Freezing his ass off,  
 shivering)  
 And I don't understand why my  
 Mother is standing over me, a fully  
 grown man, while I try and take a  
 bath. It's no wonder I'm screwed  
 up, did you ever think of that?

HELEN  
 Honey, get out of the tub, it's  
 freezing cold, you'll catch your  
 death.

NICHOLAS  
 No. I'm not done yet.

She looks worried for him, she sizes him up, one fighter to another. Shoots him a look.

HELEN

I'm calling your Father back.

NICHOLAS

You want me out of the tub, fine.

And with that he stands, and steps out of the tub. Helen, embarrassed turns away quickly.

HELEN

For Gods shakes, put some clothes on. Use a towel, something.

He stands before her naked.

NICHOLAS

For Gods Shakes, if you don't want to see anything, get out of the bathroom while your grown son tries to take a bath.

She exits the bathroom, almost running out.

HELEN

I'm still calling your father back, somethings got to give. You don't want to take your pills, you don't wanna' listen. I'm fed up with it all!

He slams shut the door behind her and begins to shiver and shake and cry like a wet puppy, wrapping himself in a plush robe. Standing, he goes to the mirror, staring at the image before him. In a moment, without warning, he spits on his own image and punches the mirror hard, smashing it to pieces in an instant. His fist a bloody mess. In the b.g. Helen is heard from a distance.

HELEN (cont'd)

I'm calling the Doctor too!

39

EXT. CIVIL WAR CEMETERY. DAY. FLASH BACK.

39

The Camera sweeps over and through the massive scape, adorned with beautiful sprawling oaks and towering crypts and headstones landing the view now, of Nicholas and Angelina in the throws of labored passion. The sparks not flying here, and suddenly there is an even bigger problem, Nicholas is unable to rise for the performance. He grows angry and storms off, name calling along the way, leaving her behind. He walks through the plots, soon stopping at a simple, small gravestone. He takes a seat on the ground in

front of it, as if to pray. In a moment, Angelina will catch up to him and return the barrage of insults, approaching from behind. Ad Lib.

ANGELINA

I'm going home now. I have class anyway, I certainly don't have time for this anymore. We're too old for this Nicholas. If you don't even want to get better for yourself, then why am I trying so hard? I don't need this shit!

NICHOLAS

Say hello to him for me, when you get there.

ANGELINA

(A Pause)

What do you want to hear from me? You left me a long time ago Nicholas. You quit yourself, you quit us, not me. I don't even know you any more, if I ever really did at all. So, I'm just going to go now.

NICHOLAS

Then go, get the fuck away from me! Now! Trust me, I won't miss you as much as you think I will. I'll be just fine, you'll see. Bitch!

She is hurt at once and it shows.

ANGELINA

That's just it, you won't be fine. You never were and you never will be fine. You don't want it anyway, you want what you want, misery and despair and all of that shit that goes along with it! Well, there you go, you win, have it. Have it all.

NICHOLAS

Just go. Go! Leave me alone! If you don't go, I swear, I'm going to hit you with a rock. Go! Let me find a rock. You wait.

There is an unsure moment and then, he begins to look for rocks, she turns and walks out of his life. He is left behind, sitting here, on the ground among the trees and the dead. Alone.

FADE OUT:

40

INT. NICHOLAS' APARTMENT. DAY. FLASH BACK.

40

The dark apartment, Nicholas asleep on the sofa. His mother enters the apartment with her spare key. She brings him his weekly Groceries and fresh bandages for his newest self inflicted wounds. At once she opens the curtains flooding the tiny space with sunlight. He barely stirs, but omits a sound of annoyance with it all anyway.

HELEN

I brought your mail. Are you still alive?

NICHOLAS

Very funny Mother. You go away now, you can clearly hear me talking to you, therefore, I'm obviously not singing with the choir invisible quite yet, am I?

HELEN

I bought you some lunch and some dinner, in case you feel like eating something later. I'll put it in the fridge for you. I still don't understand why you wont just come back home. Lot's of young men your age, live at home. It's economical these days, with everything so expensive.

She joins him on the sofa, forcing him to make room.

HELEN (cont'd)

Why are you out here? Why didn't you go to bed last night?

NICHOLAS

I went to bed, I just, did it out here. What's the difference? Why are you here again?

She takes his hands. And now we see the horrible blood soaked bandages around his wrist. She slowly unwraps them.

The wounds are horrifying to see, sutures that extend upward and sideways on the wrist and inside the forearms. She begins to slowly, methodically clean the wounds, pouring hydrogen peroxide over them to loosen the old bandages. Her conversation as normal as any, continues.

HELEN

I made your favorite again. Your Father's just going on and on, "Lasagna, again, why do you make so much lasagna?", I just told him, your lucky I cook at all, always complaining. You want to try and get dressed today, maybe get out of the house for a little bit?

She begins to wrap his wounds with fresh gauze.

NICHOLAS

I don't want to go anywhere. Could you, close the curtains back like I had them, please?

HELEN

I was thinking about that all week, and I couldn't quite put my finger on it, what was wrong with this dreary apartment and then, it just hit me, all of a sudden. I bought you some new curtains. I thought I might put them up for you this afternoon. Sunshine yellow. I like yellow, it cheers you up. You wake up, open up those bright yellow curtains and the world just, screams at you, "Good Morning!" That's just what this place needs I think.

NICHOLAS

What ever ma. Do you have to keep shouting? Use your indoor voice. And do we have to do this everyday, because, it's kind of like, one hand clapping for me.

HELEN

I saw your landlord as I was coming up the stairs, such a nice man, I didn't go looking for the man, I swear, as I was coming up, there he was. I wrote him a check, so, at least that's out of the way. And your Father talked with that lawyer last night, and he says, he's certain that your disability will go through. Now we just have to come up with the Five thousand dollars to pay him so he can get it

(MORE)

HELEN (cont'd)  
 started. But don't think about that right now, today, I want you to get in that shower and shave that stubble off. And then, I'll wrap your hands up better, and I won't take no for an answer, you got it? Five weeks is long enough to sit around moping after any one girl, don't you think? Hell, if your father killed over today, I'm pretty sure I'd be over it within a weekend. Life goes on.

He shoots her a look, sizes her up in an instant, he's in no mood for this woman's cheerfulness this morning.

NICHOLAS  
 I'm in hell. I'm literally, in hell right here on earth. Take her lord, she's ready, and if it's her that you favor, then please, take me, away from her, we'll do it like that, how's that Lord? Either way, one of us has got to go.

She shoots him a look before choosing to ignore him, moving the conversation along anyway.

HELEN  
 By the way, before you come by the house looking for it to kill yourself with it, or, get high, or something, what ever it is that you do, I just wanted to let you know, I threw your little stash away the other day.

He shoots a look of disgust and total confusion towards this woman who continues to talk to him.

NICHOLAS  
 What the hell are you talking about lady?

HELEN  
 Why you feel the need to hoard and stock pile so many pills, like a damn squirrel, is simply beyond me? Reds, blues, yellows, whites. Really Nicholas?

NICHOLAS

What pills are you talking about?  
 What the hell are you ever talking  
 about? You're making my brain  
 bleed!

He has the blankest expression, clearly not following her.

HELEN

The pills you hid from us at the  
 house? In the guest bathroom's  
 linen closet? On top of the towels?  
 The good towels that I don't use!?  
 It was a good spot, I'll give you  
 that, but you know I try and clean  
 every room now, at least once, for  
 the spring anyway.

NICHOLAS

I hate to tell you this Mother, but  
 I didn't have any pills stashed at  
 your house. Why the hell would I, I  
 have my own house? Not my pills  
 crazy lady.

She stops, thinks for a moment as her face begins to  
 register what he's really saying, the truth. And before long  
 she realizes what she's done.

HELEN

Oh good lord I've thrown your Grand  
 Paw and Grandma Kathleen's pills  
 away. What have I done? Mother  
 Salazar is just going to scream!

NICHOLAS

Happy dumpster diving.

HELEN

But, but I flushed them down the  
 toilet. Oh shit!

Laughing his ass off, he sits up now. Soon, walking for the  
 shower, his spirits suddenly lifted.

NICHOLAS

Now that's worth getting up for,  
 don't even think I'm not calling  
 Grandma Kathleen! I am so telling  
 on you!

HELEN  
You wouldn't dare!

NICHOLAS  
I dare, I dare!

He runs into the bathroom with her hot on his trail.  
Slamming shut the door before she reaches it.

Through the door.

NICHOLAS (cont'd)  
Mother's in trouble, Mother's in  
trouble. There is a God after all!  
This one's for you Dad! All for  
you!

She looks like a deer in headlights. Laughter is heard  
through the door.

41 INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE GRANDPARENT'S. 41

The Interview continues.

The Grandparent's sit in front of the camera, looking  
confused at what to do or say. Grandfather, hard of hearing  
and a bit gruff, shouts.

GRANDFATHER  
What the hell are we suppose to be  
doing here? I thought they were  
serving cake? Are we waiting on  
Helen? She said there was cake.

GRANDMOTHER  
You had cake already, two days ago  
at the wake. We were suppose to  
come into this little room and talk  
about Nicholas. But there's nobody  
here to talk to. Maybe were early.

GRANDFATHER  
Who are we suppose to talk to,  
about who?

GRANDMOTHER  
Nicholas!

GRANDFATHER  
Nicholas? The crazy one?! Well he  
died!

GRANDMOTHER

I know that. That's why we were suppose to come in here and talk about him. Say some nice words.

GRANDFATHER

Well theres nobody here yet.

GRANDMOTHER

I know that, do you think I don't know that. I'm not blind. And quit yelling at me.

GRANDFATHER

Well, I'm ready to go home now if there is no cake.

GRANDMOTHER

There is no cake!

42 EXT. ONE ROLF PLAZA BUILDING. AFTERNOON. FLASH BACK. 42

Nicholas EXITS a taxi, looking up in wonder and awe at the twenty plus floors of the Rolf Plaza Building just before descending into it's maze of elevators and open spaces.

43 INT. ONE ROLF PLAZA. DOCTOR'S OFFICE. MOMENTS LATER. 43

FB. (Flash Back)

Nicholas, stretched out across a plush leather sofa, dozing off, a few feet away, his Doctor. Doctor Martin, rolls his Mont blanc pen between his manicured fingers, back and forth. On the wall, the clock ticks on and on. Through this entire meeting no words are spoken, just silence between men. A bell goes off, and Nicholas rises off of the sofa with a quick but familiar spring to his step.

NICHOLAS

As always, it's been real fun Doc. Same time next week, or should I just, drop my parents check on your desk right now, and can we skip the whole session?

DOCTOR MARTIN

I want you to start thinking and working on your PTSD for next week. When you come in, we'll see where you are with it at that stage.

NICHOLAS

You're the Doctor aren't you?

He reaches a hand out for Nicholas to shake, he hesitates but shakes it anyway.

DOCTOR MARTIN

Thanks again for coming in.

NICHOLAS

Doc, you being in this very tall building, you ever worry about one of your patients jumping ship on you? Long way down.

He takes a moment to consider and think about the question.

DOCTOR MARTIN

Let's just say, I don't worry about you jumping ship. Let's face it Nicholas, in all of your attempts at suicide, never, not once did you ever disfigure your facial features. Your looks are your personal capital, they're what you spend everyday. Without them, where would you be in the scheme of it all? Pretty people pout and they get what they want, ugly people pout and nobody really gives a shit. It's vanity. You're not a jumper Nicholas. You'd never do anything to hurt your looks. Jumping is way too messy for you. It's also far too final for you I suspect as well. You understand far too well, that once you achieve sky, that's it. There is no coming back. And that's just not your style. Because you will always reserve the option, to come back, won't you?

Left to ponder this, it quickly gets under his skin leaving him uncomfortable and it shows.

NICHOLAS

And here I was starting to wonder why you made the big bucks. Silly me again, right?

And with that, he EXITS the Office.

44 EXT. ONE ROLF PLAZA BUILDING. ROOF TOP. FLASH BACK. 44

Moments later.

The view now, below, the city and traffic twenty stories down. As the Camera widens, it will reveal Nicholas standing too close to the edge, looking down. Contemplating the jump and the landing. His face streaming with tears. But in the end, he steps carefully down, unable to do it. Left with the words of the Doctor in his head, his mood is somber, defeated.

45 INT. TAXI. MOVING. NIGHT. FLASH BACK. 45

Much later.

The long ride home. The Taxi winds through the streets, as Nicholas quietly weeps in the back seat. The driver, nervously keeps an eye on him in the rear view, never asking or offering an ear, he watches him like hawk.

FADE OUT:

46 INT. NICHOLAS' APARTMENT. NIGHT. FLASH BACK. 46

He stands in his underwear, at the bathroom vanity, his image framed in the large mirror as he burns into the flesh of his hand with a disposable lighter. His face, blank, empty, removed, the pain simply not registering.

47 INT. RESTAURANT. DAY. FLASH BACK. 47

A Family gathering. Edward, Helen, Nicholas and the Grandparent's. Nicholas' hand, bandaged now. The waiter leans in and pours him another glass of wine, Helen's spine stiffens at the sight of it.

HELEN

Careful dear, that's your fifth glass. We don't want any hang overs do we? Nicholas will be starting culinary school this week, Mother Salazar.

GRANDFATHER

Is that right? Maybe he'll be able to teach the ladies in this family how to cook. Mother, the boy's going to be a gourmet chef. I wish I could get you to cook me a big

(MORE)

GRANDFATHER (cont'd)  
 pot of Menudo when you finish. I  
 haven't had good Menudo in years.  
 None of these woman can make it,  
 Don't clean it right. It's a shame.

Edward, of course chuckles at this.

GRANDMOTHER  
 What happened to your hands dear?

He turns on, in an instant. The great pretender.

NICHOLAS  
 Never try to light an old stove,  
 let me tell you. I am a victim of  
 my own clumsiness. But on the other  
 hand, my lemon pepper tilapia is  
 outstanding.

There is more laughter.

NICHOLAS CONT'D.  
 But you should see my kitchen, it  
 didn't fare so well, which reminds  
 me Dad, do you have any spare fire  
 extinguishers laying around the  
 house anywhere, because, I think I  
 could use a few of those for my  
 first year?

And the table is rolling in laughter.

GRANDMOTHER  
 It's so good to see you so happy  
 Nicholas. Why I can't remember a  
 time when I've enjoyed myself more  
 Edward.

HELEN  
 And, he's starting at that new  
 little restaurant downtown. Watch  
 out high society Florida, next  
 stop, he'll be in his own  
 restaurant cooking for the stars.

GRANDFATHER  
 Is that right? We'll have to come  
 and see you then, right Mother? Now  
 where is it, this new place you'll  
 be starting at? Make sure you write  
 it down for us later Helen, you  
 always forget.

GRANDMOTHER

We certainly will come and see you. We'll invite Gladys, her grandson John Jay, just started serving a seven year prison term. Poor thing, really needs to get out of the house. You remember I told you about her last Christmas, her grandson, the big shot investor? Turned out to be a big crook. Took her and half of the neighborhood for millions. I never trusted the kid, had really beady eyes and they were too close together.

NICHOLAS

Excuse me Grand mother, Dad, don't forget, I still have to pick up my knives before next Friday. School starts Monday and the store doesn't open on the weekends.

Almost bragging, beaming with pride at this moment.

EDWARD

How could I forget, Nicholas has to have a new case of chef's knives.

GRANDFATHER

How much is that little investment?

EDWARD

Everything is over priced these days you know that. A week ago, the text books, Six hundred dollars. The knives, what, how much are they again Nicholas?

NICHOLAS

Nine hundred dollars. But I can get the used ones for Five hundred.

EDWARD

You see what I'm talking about?

GRANDFATHER

Well, let me help the boy, he's my Grandson. Tell you what, I'll make you out a check for four hundred and fifty dollars. And you come by the house next week and help me with the pool and I'll pay you another Fifty dollars. And if there

(MORE)

GRANDFATHER (cont'd)  
 are any Alligators in it, I'll  
 double it for you. Hundred bucks.  
 How's that, our little gift. But  
 don't tell your old man, when he  
 was your age he only got five  
 dollars. You do well in school now  
 you hear me, Nicholas?!

NICHOLAS  
 Yes Grandfather. Thank you  
 Grandfather.

GRANDMOTHER  
 When are you really going to come  
 down and see us Nicholas? Lake  
 lands not really that far you know?

NICHOLAS  
 Soon as I can Grandma, I promise. I  
 miss the water so much.

GRANDMOTHER  
 Well it's a big ocean and it's  
 always there for you. Right  
 out back. What, two hundred feet?

NICHOLAS  
 Soon Grandmother, I promise.

GRANDMOTHER  
 Good. I'm sure they have cheese  
 cake here poppy.

GRANDFATHER  
 That's just what I was thinking  
 Mother, let's all have cheese cake  
 now.

48 INT. NICHOLAS' PARENTS HOME. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT. FB. 48

Nicholas' Parents and Angelina gather quietly in the living room, almost huddled, their conversation at a whisper. Their nerves clearly frazzled, their movements and facial expressions deeply troubled. Before long, the glow of flashing red light's become visible as they shine through the living room curtains illuminating the room with their ever brighter, glow.

49 INT. NICHOLAS' PARENTS HOME. NICHOLAS' BEDROOM. NIGHT. 49

FB. (Flash Back)

Moments later.

Nicholas asleep in bed, beside him on the night table, a bottle of Vodka and prescription pill bottles.

50 INT. NICHOLAS' PARENTS HOME. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT. FB. 50

His Father opens the door to the waiting view now, of two serious eyed Paramedics, a Nurse and two large hospital orderlies in white.

MEDIC

Where's the patient?

EDWARD

Come in. He's sleeping. Right this way. Don't hurt him.

51 INT. NICHOLAS' PARENTS HOME. NICHOLAS' BEDROOM. NIGHT. 51

FB. (Flash Back)

Nicholas asleep, the door swings wildly open, two male orderlies seize him at once, as the paramedics strap him to a board, he fights with all of his might to no avail, as they quickly over power him. He screams for dear life, truly scared shit less kicking and screaming all the way, until the nurse gives him a shot in the ass, it calms him with amazing speed, the fight in him, now gone, his eyes fixed on his loved ones watching from the hall. He tries to make a last ditched effort, begging and pleading his Parents and Angelina not to let them take him, but they cower in the hallway, trying hard to be strong, choosing instead to turn away from him, huddled together, each, near tears as the team begins to move the back board with Nicholas attached, from the bedroom to the waiting Ambulance outside.

SMASH CUT TO:

52 INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE. ELECTRO-CONVULSIVE THERAPY. DAY. 52

FB. (Flash Back)

Much later.

One Rolf Plaza. Doctor Martin's office.

A young Nicholas, strapped down to a table. A bit between his teeth. His eyes nervously search the room for familiar faces. He is injected with a syringe and it is lights out.

He is hooked up to the machine, it is turned on in intervals and each time, the body tenses, jolts, shakes and then relaxes. It looks almost mid evil. When it is done, he is injected again, only this time he returns to life. His demeanor is that of extreme confusion and fear. He doesn't recognize anyone around him immediately and it shows in his terrified eyes. He looks like a frightened child.

Waiting for him, are his Doctor Martin, his Parents and Angelina.

He rises with help from the table, exhausted. He looks like he's just gone through twenty rounds against a Heavyweight boxer. He even requires assistance walking, his mood, calm, confused, co-operative.

53 INT. NICHOLAS' PARENTS HOME. NICHOLAS' BEDROOM. NIGHT. FB. 53

His Mother brings him soup, Angelina sits with him on the edge of the bed. He needs help eating, at times, drool runs down his face. His Father, looking on from the doorway, disgusted with it all, walks out, slamming the front door with a thud behind him. Angelina and his Mother, clean him up and feed him, doting on him. He doesn't speak, but his eyes can't hide angry, hurt tears.

54 INT. COLLEGE BOOK STORE. DAY. FLASH BACK. 54

Nicholas stands at the counter with a back pack.

NICHOLAS

I heard you guy's buy text books?

CLERK

Did you buy them here?

NICHOLAS

No, I brought em' on line, but, somebody said, that you guys bought them here?

CLERK

Let's see what you got.

He takes the books out showing them to the young clerk.

CLERK (cont'd)  
How much you looking to get?

NICHOLAS  
I just want to take my Girlfriend  
out, it's her birthday man, I just  
got fired, shits just, fucked up  
right now..

CLERK  
Did you quit or get kicked out?

NICHOLAS  
I'm just, not going to be needing  
them anymore.

He thinks about it for a minute.

CLERK  
I don't need that one, got too many  
already. I'll give you a hundred  
for the rest of them, but you  
gotta' have a student ID card.

NICHOLAS  
A hundred bucks? A hundred bucks,  
are you kidding me? It's six  
hundred bucks worth of books.  
They're still brand new. Look at  
these two, they're still wrapped in  
the original plastic. Never opened.

CLERK  
The plastic says Mc Clanes, this is  
Burkenstocks, the plastic doesn't  
really help your case. And you  
didn't even purchase them from  
Burkenstocks anyway, so here, at  
Burkenstocks they're worth one  
hundred dollars! Or fuck it man, go  
back to your room, make the bitch  
some peanut butter crackers and a  
pitcher full of kool aid for all I  
care. Every bodies always trying to  
get me fired.

NICHOLAS  
Chill out, a hundred bucks is fine.  
Do you know who'll buy this one?

CLERK  
If the store you brought it from  
wont even take it back? You could  
(MORE)

CLERK (cont'd)  
 always try your Parent's, you  
 remember them, the guys that paid  
 for all of this shit that your  
 trying hawk here today?

NICHOLAS  
 Just give me the money.

CLERK  
 ID.

He produces an ID card, takes his cash.

NICHOLAS  
 You know, maybe you should just  
 quit, go work for the phone company  
 or something. Someplace where you  
 don't need people skills.

CLERK  
 Everyone's got jokes after they get  
 the cash, never before. Damn the  
 luck. Next!

He shoots him a look before Exiting.

55 EXT. DOWNTOWN BAR. NIGHT. FLASH BACK.

55

Nicholas walks into the crowded bar, Doug, at a table, spots  
 him, flagging him down in an instant. Nicholas, already  
 drunk, is pulled into the fold.

DOUG  
 Nick, where the fuck have you been?  
 You don't return phone calls, I  
 haven't seen you in, hell, I  
 haven't seen you in ages, hell, I  
 haven't even heard rumors about you  
 in, what? How's Angelina? You guys  
 still goin' strong, she's way too  
 good for you, you know? She's  
 classy and you're, you.

NICHOLAS  
 She's good. She's great, she just  
 cursed me out in that bar right  
 across the street over there. I  
 think she's fucking some old guy.  
 She went home. Fuck her. How have  
 you been, long time no see?

DOUG

How do you do it? You have the unexplained ability to piss people off where ever you go. Even the ones who love and somewhat like your ass the most. Good work. Bartender, another one, and get my friend here, the ghost, a drink as well. What are you having? I insist.

NICHOLAS

Two of what your having.

DOUG

A man not afraid to mix his booze, I like that. One at a time tiger. Two more! So, let's play catch up, haven't seen your ass in about two months, but you got a Girlfriend, I can understand that. I remember when we used to hang out like that, do you remember when we used to hang out like that? Like we were friends? With our girlfriends even? A foursome? Game nights?

NICHOLAS

We still hang out. Your still, like, one of my best friends that I desperately try to avoid at all cost Doug, you know that.

DOUG

Well, I remember when we used to be best friends that desperately tried to avoid each other at all cost. But you've changed. Do you remember when we used to be friends? Avoiding each other? Before you changed?

NICHOLAS

What's to remember, we're still friends, avoiding each other. High schools long gone right? Things have just, really been crazy lately. I'm getting sloppy I guess. Don't worry, I'll avoid you much better in the future, I promise.

DOUG

That just warms the cockles of my heart. I remember when we used to be really sloppy and crazy, do you remember that? So, I heard you got kicked out of school, fell head first into a life line addiction of prescription drugs and head shrinks? Bummer. Me, I got it much worse. Jen's working on baby number four. Can you imagine that, the bitch won't stop? She's like a fucking professional baby maker. I'm sorry they kicked you out of school, but at least you got a chance to go. There's just not enough room at the old hardware store anymore for me and the old man. It's him or me, but one of us has got to go, he said it was all mine, a year and a half ago. He's still fucking there, everyday.

The bartender serves a fresh round.

NICHOLAS

I didn't get kicked out of school. I just stopped going. Who needs chef's anyway? Dime a dozen. As far as the rest of that, that was dead on. That's me. Booze, pills, head shrinks, all of it. You should come on over to the dark side with me Luke.

And at that moment, Karaoke is announced on the back stage.

DOUG

Oh we are so singing Karaoke. Give me a pill, anything. I know you got pills fucker head, don't hold out on me.

Nicholas drops a few pills into his hand, he swallows them at once, and with that Doug grabs his shirt sleeve and they rush to the stage, taking over.

Later.

They're all over the stage, song after song they sing like drunken fools. Ad-lib. Several songs.

later.

56

EXT. DOWNTOWN BAR. NIGHT. FLASH BACK.

56

Nicholas and Doug, outside the bar, laughing and puking. It's disgusting.

NICHOLAS

Now do you see why I don't hang out with you?

DOUG

Me? You had no right to insist on those last four shots, and that song, what made you even think that that was your key? You are the worst fucking singer I ever heard. You always were, you just got worse with age. We should have won. I always win when your not around.

NICHOLAS

I fucking nailed that song, they cheated!

DOUG

To the side of a building you nailed it!

NICHOLAS

I need a taxi.

DOUG

Hold up, I gotta' take a leak. Nature calls. God I don't want to go home to that bitch! I think, I'm going to walk down and sleep in the store tonight. No screaming kids, just me and the hardware.

NICHOLAS

Four kids, your just mister fucking nature boy aren't you?

And he begins to urinate in the parking lot, on the side of the building, before long, Nicholas joins him. Just then, a Police cruiser rolls slowly up on them, his spot light framing them both, pants down to their knees urinating on the clubs wall, nothing to explain. Nicholas turns to Doug.

DOUG

I hate you.

NICHOLAS

I hate you.

57 INT. CITY ANNEX BUILDING. NIGHT. FLASH BACK. 57

Edward meets Nicholas and Doug as they are brought down into the lobby.

EDWARD  
Not a word.

DOUG  
Yes sir. You understand, my wife,  
she just wouldn't understand sir.

EDWARD  
Go home Doug.

DOUG  
Thank you sir. And you just come by  
the store any time. It's on the  
house.

And with that, Edward signs some paper work and the two of them, are released by the deputy, and the three of them EXIT the Building quietly.

DOUG (cont'd)  
Good night.

Edward and Nicholas get in the car, Doug walks off into the darkness.

58 INT. CAR. NIGHT. FLASH BACK. 58

Moments later.

They sit quietly nothing to be said. Until.

EDWARD  
Does he need a ride home?

NICHOLAS  
No. He's got keys to the store.  
He'll sleep it off there.

EDWARD  
You are getting too old for this  
drinking. You've got to cut it out  
son. You've got enough problems as  
it is, don't you think?

NICHOLAS  
Can you, just, take me home please.  
I'll drop by tomorrow and you can  
(MORE)

NICHOLAS (cont'd)  
 tell me all about it. About how  
 much of a fuck up I am, and all of  
 the rest of it.

EDWARD  
 Your still drunk I see. So, let's  
 just, get you home then.

He starts the car, puts it into gear and pulls out of the  
 Police parking lot.

FADE IN:

59 INT. DOWNTOWN SOUP KITCHEN. DAY. FLASH BACK.

59

A Teen aged Nicholas, feeding the hungry. As the line moves  
 through, he notices a Young man with only a tee shirt on,  
 shaking with cold, nervous.

NICHOLAS  
 How come you don't have a coat?

YOUNG MAN  
 They stole it. Look, I'm really  
 hungry, could I just, eat anyway, I  
 know, I don't have a ticket, but I  
 was just hoping.

He pours the Young man a bowl of soup, wraps him a few  
 sandwiches to go, gives him two sandwiches to eat now.

NICHOLAS  
 I don't care about tickets. If you  
 sit over there, where I can find  
 you later, I'll come and talk to  
 you, see if I can find you a coat.  
 You have to have a coat, it gets  
 kind of cold at night these days.

YOUNG MAN  
 Thank you.

He moves along, and so does the line.

Later.

Nicholas goes to the back of the kitchen, searches the  
 donation closet, finding summer clothes only, he rifles his  
 back pack, pulls out his extra clothing, but he has no extra  
 coat, deciding to give up his own coat which hangs on a  
 chair. He goes to the Young Man and gives him the bounty,

not satisfied, he gives him twenty dollars and a stack of meal tickets too.

He sizes Nicholas up.

YOUNG MAN (cont'd)

I'm not queer you know? I mean, I don't do much...

NICHOLAS

Look, I'm not coming on to you. Just, get yourself a shower or something. A bed, for a day or two. I know they charge money over at the Y. But, I think the Salvation Army is a few bucks cheaper. There's some meal tickets there for you too. I know how some of these guys are real ass holes about those meal tickets.

YOUNG MAN

I'm not a bum man, I just, fell off of my feet a little bit. I'm from Texas. Wish I could get back there too. Florida's colder than I thought it would be.

NICHOLAS

Yeah, well, it's winter time. Your thinking way down south Florida. They get the weather, not us.

YOUNG MAN

I'm not a bum you know?

NICHOLAS

I don't think your a bum.

And with that, he goes for the door.

YOUNG MAN

(Calling out stopping him)  
Hey, where's your coat?

Nicholas stops briefly, turns back, shoots him a look and continues out the door.

YOUNG MAN (cont'd)

(Under his breath now)  
Thank you, may God bless you.

60 INT. NICHOLAS' PARENTS HOME. TENTH BIRTHDAY PARTY. VIDEO. 60

A small family Birthday celebration, recorded on a shaky hand held video recorder. Edward is the Camera man. The Birthday sleep over guest are, Doug, Joe, Alex, Angelina, Ricky and a couple of other, unknown children. The very picture of childhood happiness. The adults have cocktails in their hands, the children have sugar. They play pin the tail, bobbing for apples. Ad-Lib.

As the view begins to loosen, we see Nicholas alone, in his darkened apartment, watching the taped Birthday party on a small Television. His eye's moist with memories.

FADE OUT.

61 INT. EMERGENCY ROOM. NIGHT. FLASH BACK. 61

Nicholas (15-16) years old. Sits up on the gurney, his wrist superficially cut. The Doctor, steps in and draws the curtain shut preparing to suture the wounds.

DOCTOR

Luckily for you, these are not deep. If they were I'd have to call the police Young man. These are, what we call, hesitation wounds. If I thought you really were trying to hurt yourself, that would be a different story. Now, is there anything you want to talk to me about, before I close these up?

NICHOLAS

No sir.

DOCTOR

I'm not going to lie to you, I'm going to stitch these loosely, and that's going to leave a permanent scar. I'm doing this for your own good. So, every time you look at your wrist, you'll be reminded of what you tried to do here tonight.

He readies a needle.

DOCTOR (cont'd)

Alright, you're going feel a big stick. And we're done. Let's let that numb the sight for a second, while I go out, and talk to your

(MORE)

DOCTOR (cont'd)  
 parents. Then I'll come back in a  
 minute, and sew you up. Be right  
 back champ.

And with that, the Doctor steps out of the curtain.  
 Nicholas, falls back on to the gurney, staring off into  
 space, lost in thought. Around him, the sounds of the busy  
 ER. His Mother in tears. Is this a dream?

SMASH CUT TO:

62 INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE PARENTS. 62

The interview continues.

HELEN

I read, after Nicholas died. That  
 Anti-depressants, like those that  
 Nicholas took everyday, can  
 actually be the cause of suicidal  
 thoughts. Zoloft, Lexapro. Young  
 People's minds, just can't handle  
 all of those chemicals forever,  
 with out it, taking it's toll.

EDWARD

He was taking so much of the stuff.  
 That's what finally sent him over  
 the edge. It was like his poor mind  
 was just, putty. And did they stop  
 prescribing all of that mess to  
 him? They wanted him to take more,  
 new improved, untested drugs  
 even. Turned my boy into the  
 poster boy for just say no. He had  
 his problems, but some of that  
 wasn't his fault. It was the drugs  
 they had him on.

63 INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE GRANDPARENT'S. 63

The interview continues.

GRANDFATHER

It was a nice service.

GRANDMOTHER

Very nice.

GRANDFATHER

Young people got no staying power these days. In my day, you just had to lump it! We didn't go around shooting ourselves that's for sure!

GRANDMOTHER

Hanging ourselves!

GRANDFATHER

What?!

GRANDMOTHER

He didn't shoot himself!

GRANDFATHER

I you thought you said he killed himself?!

GRANDMOTHER

He did. But he hanged himself.

Grandfather thinks about this for a beat.

GRANDFATHER

Well what kind of wild west crap is that?! Who the hell hangs himself these days? That was some ballsy shit! That took balls! Never knew the kid had it in him, and here, I always thought he was kind of queer. Grown man, cooking. He showed us! Got those balls from my side of the family!

She shoots him a look.

GRANDMOTHER

Stop talking now Hank.

64

INT. CHURCH. NICHOLAS' FUNERAL. DAY.

64

The church is packed this afternoon, the tears flow freely down many faces. The open coffin lay front and center, a large photograph of Nicholas sits beside the coffin. In the pews, we will find both familiar and un-familiar faces. In the b.g. a Church Organ plays through much of the services. The Reverend, a big, black bear of a man, conducts the services in what is best described as a non traditional, southern baptist style, with a slight leaning towards the youth. A personable man, he directs this service with style and flare.

## REVEREND

There is, no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the laws of sin and death. The law of the spirit heals all those who condemn themselves feeling like failures and hopeless vagabonds. Even today, that is, that must be the message of freedom that we can take home with us, even from here, this joyous of places on this sad sad day, and it can help us all, to find, that much needed release from these feelings that we have this afternoon. Even as we try to be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed at this shell that you see, laid out before you, for the Lord God is with him now, the Lord God is with us all, wherever we shall go. Yes, Jesus was with our dear Brother Nicholas, even in his most important hour of need, I promise you, Christ was there! And he took that boy by the hand and he shouted in his ear, come on HOME, your father is waiting, our father will receive you today! You'd better know, that God doesn't call his children home until it's time for them to come home. Amen. The bible teaches us, that there are are many rooms in his house! I said, there are many rooms in my fathers house! And I want you to know, that Nicholas, has made a bed in one of those rooms. Amen. Let us pray; The Lords prayer.

65

INT. NICHOLAS' APARTMENT. NIGHT. FLASH BACK.

65

Nicholas distraught, alone, in the throws of a major depression. He destroys everything in his sight. On the table a half empty bottle of Vodka and prescription pill bottles. The Radio blaring loud Rock Music. In the b.g. the home movies play with out sound.

SMASH CUT TO:

66 EXT. LOCAL SWIMMING HOLE. DAY. FLASHBACK. 66

Nicholas and friends (Teenagers) in and around the cool water. They swing from a tire rope, smoke pot, skinny dip, etc. (The usual suspects, Doug, Alex, Joe, etc. all present.)

SMASH CUT TO:

67 INT. NICHOLAS' APARTMENT. BATHROOM. NIGHT. FLASH BACK. 67

Nicholas stands at the mirror, transfixed with the image before him, motionless.

SMASH CUT BACK TO:

68 INT. CHURCH. NICHOLAS' FUNERAL. DAY. 68

The funeral continues.

REVEREND

Only God knows what this boy was going through at that terrible hour. And it's God now, who will guide our son Nicholas to his final place in the after life. We don't proclaim to have all of the answers but we pray to the good lord just the same. We pray for mercy and peace at the end of such a troubled journey. We pray for the family and the friends left behind. We pray that the suffering has come to an end for this dear boy. We pray for all of those souls left behind, who may be going through tough times themselves, and we hear your answer lord, we hear your voice lord when you say to each and everyone of us, that tough times don't last, but tough people do! Amen. Praise be to glory. When Nicholas was just a boy, he would come to me, after services, and we would end up, debating the good and the evils in the world until my wife would have to pull me away. And I'll tell you, thank God for faith, and if you knew Nicholas, you understand exactly what I'm talking about right now. Praise God.

There is brief laughter from those who did know him.

69 INT. NICHOLAS' APARTMENT. BATHROOM. NIGHT. FLASH BACK. 69

Nicholas at the mirror, transfixed with the image before him. Tears streaming down his face. In his hands, an extension cord.

70 INT. CHURCH. NICHOLAS' FUNERAL. DAY. 70

The Choir, in mid song; singing (Precious Lord).

71 INT. NICHOLAS' APARTMENT. BATHROOM. NIGHT. FLASH BACK. 71

He fashions a noose from the cord. On his face, the look of determination not usually seen by him.

72 INT. CHURCH. NICHOLAS' FUNERAL. DAY. 72

The Choir continues (Precious Lord).

73 INT. NICHOLAS' APARTMENT. BATHROOM. NIGHT. FLASH BACK. 73

He secures the cord to a fixed object, a large bike hook, wraps the other end loosely around his neck.

74 EXT. OPEN MARKET. DAY. 74

Helen and a friend out shopping, it's a beautiful spring afternoon at a local open air farmers market.

HELEN

I should pick up some fresh fruit for Nicholas, he never buys any for himself, my son is so hard to shop for.

WOMAN

From what you've told me lately, what he really needs is a Girlfriend.

HELEN

Well, I don't think they sell those here. I wish they did. I'd love to just, see him move on and be happy again.

WOMAN

How about that young lady, Shelly,  
Diane's daughter?

HELEN

She got married last September, to  
a young Doctor no less. Met him at  
school.

WOMAN

Well good for her.

75 INT. NICHOLAS' APARTMENT. BATHROOM. NIGHT. FLASH BACK. 75

Close on Nicholas, as he contemplates the noose around his  
neck. He even models it in front of the wall mirror.

76 INT. CHURCH. NICHOLAS' FUNERAL. DAY. 76

The service continues as Nicholas is eulogized.

ANGELINA

When Nicholas walked into the room,  
the whole world walked in behind  
him. When he walked into my life.  
The first thing that comes to mind,  
is how serious and sad he was. But  
the second thing that springs to  
mind, is his unwavering faith in  
mankind. He always believed in his  
heart of hearts, that deep down  
inside, all people were good. And  
he took that with him wherever he  
went. Nicholas went to California  
one summer, right after high  
school. And even though he got  
mugged in the first hour of his  
journey, I can still recall the  
phone call with him. He wasn't mad  
at the person who'd just mugged  
him, or desperate, even though he  
didn't have one red cent left.  
Instead, he was so excited, and he  
called me, just to say that when it  
happened, he was standing on the  
Hollywood walk of fame star, for  
Curt Cobain. He thought that was so  
incredible. Leave it to Nicholas to  
make even a mugging seem cool. He  
used to dream about his family and  
what he always wanted the most for

(MORE)

ANGELINA (cont'd)  
 them, he'd say, was to one day give  
 them, the gift of a well and,  
 normal son. And today, if I could  
 go back, I'd have to say. I wish,  
 he could have realized that dream  
 most of all. Because everything  
 would have been so different.

But she breaks down. Soon, helped away from the podium.

77 INT. NICHOLAS' APARTMENT. NIGHT. FLASH BACK. 77

Nicholas drinks from the bottle of Vodka, swallowing a handful of pills, on the television screen, the old home movies of him and his friends and family continue to flicker. His eyes tearing up more and more.

78 INT. CHURCH. NICHOLAS' FUNERAL. DAY. 78

The funeral continues, his friends continue to eulogize him.

DOUG  
 When we were eight years old. We  
 already had every badge, just  
 about, that was available in the  
 Cub Scouts. You see, Nicholas and I  
 were secret crime fighters. Always  
 righting the wrongs of the evil  
 doers around us. And as we grew up,  
 we discovered that you couldn't  
 right all the wrongs of the world.  
 I stopped trying, long ago. But my  
 friend Nicholas, ever the crusader,  
 continued the battle. And he never  
 tired of the good fight. Weary,  
 worn down, battle scared. He pushed  
 forward, alone. Like Atlas, he had  
 the worlds troubles always on his  
 shoulders. And if I could, I would  
 go back in time, gladly, and I  
 would fight that good fight with  
 you Nicholas, one more time. Just  
 the two of us. Just like old times.  
 I don't know what was going on with  
 my friend these last few months.  
 Years really. And I am deeply  
 shamed, and troubled by that. But  
 today, I'm here, once again. For my  
 friend. And in your absence now, I  
 promise, to keep up the good fight

(MORE)

DOUG (cont'd)  
 for you, just like old times. Thank  
 you for your friendship. And now,  
 I'd like to sing a song. For my  
 friend Nicholas.

Doug, teary eyed walks over to the organist, she begins to play "Tears in heaven" but he stops her, he plays acoustic guitar and sings the song alone instead.

79 INT. NICHOLAS' APARTMENT. NIGHT. FLASH BACK. 79

Nicholas, standing on a chair for leverage, the noose secure around his neck, under his feet a stack of books prevent him from hanging presently. He begs aloud for forgiveness.

80 INT. CHURCH. NICHOLAS' FUNERAL. DAY. 80

A long line of mourners slowly march single file by his open coffin, each stopping just long enough to say a goodbye or gaze at his corpse, some leave mementos, others stop just long enough to say a short prayer, still, others find it hard to contain their grief and openly weep in front of the large framed photo of him.

81 INT. NICHOLAS' APARTMENT. NIGHT. FLASH BACK. 81

Nicholas standing in the chair, kicks off and the stack of books fall to the floor in an untidy heap. He hangs now, from his neck.

The Camera angles on the body, suspended in the air by the noose, swinging, the cord tight around his neck, the fear and then calm in his eyes. He convulses shortly after it begins, shakes momentarily, spits up a small amount of blood and finally, there is calm again.

On the Television which still plays however, he lives on. His images flashing across the screen in waves of smiles and giggles.

82 INT. CHURCH. NICHOLAS' FUNERAL. DAY. 82

Close on Doug, singing.

83 EXT. HELEN'S CAR. MOVING. DAY. 83

She drives through Nicholas' neighborhood, going to his apartment, bringing him food.

84 INT. NICHOLAS' APARTMENT. DAY. FLASH BACK. 84

Helen Enters the darkened apartment this afternoon. She brings groceries, slowly making her way in and through the apartment, calling out for him. She puts the groceries away, soon searching for Nicholas, still calling after and talking to him, finding him of course, hanging, dead. The fear of God stuck in an instant in her throat. Her first instinct here, is to rush to the body and pick it up, creating slack on the noose. But soon, her common sense floods back to the brain and she knows instantly, it's too little to late. His body, cold and stiff with Rigor, clothes soiled, color drained from his face. In an instant she drops to the floor, unable to speak or cry, shaking like a leaf. She holds on to his feet and weeps. The images beaming toward her, of him, in happier times from the Television which continues to play in loop fashion.

85 INT. CHURCH. NICHOLAS' FUNERAL. DAY. 85

REVEREND

O Lord God of my salvation, I have  
cried day and night before thee;  
let my prayers come before thee;  
incline thine ear unto my cry, for  
my soul is full of troubles and my  
life draweth nigh unto the grave, I  
am counted with them that  
goeith down into the grave before  
me. Hear my prayer, O Lord, let my  
cries come unto thee this day. Hide  
not thine face from me in the day  
when I am in trouble; incline thine  
ear unto me this day when I call,  
and answer me speedily. The sorrows  
of death compassed me and the pains  
of hell gather hold of me, I have  
found trouble and sorrow, then  
called upon the name of the Lord; O  
Lord, I beseech thee, deliver this  
soul. Gracious is the Lord, and  
righteous; our God is merciful. The  
Lord preserveth the simple among  
us. He watches and takes hold of  
the most troubled of souls among  
us, and here we pray, his will be

(MORE)

REVEREND (cont'd)  
done here today, in this, his house. Amen. As we lay our dear brother Nicholas to his final salvation, we take comfort in Jesus' name, and as we repeat these words once again in his holy house, ashes to ashes, dust to dust, we take with us a comfort this day, that the Lord God will forgive and speed his soul. And so it is. And now, we grant a special request, from those who knew and loved Nicholas so well, gentleman, if those of you who asked me before this service began, will take your place up front. Come on up, don't be shy you know who you are. He won't bite. And for one week only, in the Steely Building, across the street, at the Morton and Sons service's wing, please, we invite all of you who knew Nicholas, to go over there, and leave a video memorial. It's something we think helps in the healing process. For those of you who attended the wake yesterday, it's in the same building. Gentleman, come on up here.

And with that, Nicholas' friend's gather at his coffin side and assume the responsibility of pal bearers.

REVEREND (cont'd)  
Gods grace is good. Look at that, such fine young men. In life, we don't always know, how blessed we are and in death, our eyes are too late to open and behold the beauty of who we really were to the people around us. Young people, hear me this day and know this, this day, you are blessed, where ever you are with your life, and who ever you are. You are all loved I tell you.

The Church doors open at the rear, to let the light of day in, the Boys, lift the coffin, and march it towards the brightness of the sunny day and into the darkness of the rented Hearse. Once outside, the first thing we see, across the street, is a Scout Troop, saluting the coffin as it descends the churches steps on it's way to the opened doors of the big black hearse. Behind the coffin, the Parents, the Reverend and the Mourners. They stop to take in the sight of it all and soon, a decorated Cadillac speeds by, it's occupant's just married, their horn honking, can's dragging and clanking.

He looks out at the world and these streets this afternoon, refreshed suddenly, taking it all in at once.

REVEREND

Gods grace is good everyday.  
 Everyday. Look at the young people.  
 Praise God. Praise God. The young  
 newly married couple, the scouts.  
 Praise Jesus. Oh, the Lord is good  
 this day. His grace is upon us all  
 here this day. He's walking right  
 beside us. There is peace. There is  
 peace. Thank you Jesus.

He feels the need to address the mourners on the very church steps as they spill out into the streets.

REVEREND (cont'd)

Now saints, go out this day, look  
 around, Gods grace is everywhere.  
 His grace is upon us all. We are  
 the living. Do not turn back and  
 wallow this day, for this is a day  
 to behold. God's grace is  
 everywhere today. Today our brother  
 has truly awaken and served out his  
 greatest purpose on this earth. He  
 has bought us all together here, so  
 we could witness the beauty that is  
 right here in front of us all.  
 Praise God. Amen, God is good  
 everyday.

The pal bearers close the hearse's door as the beauty begins to fill the screen, birds flying, cars driving by, kids playing, trees and flowers blooming, beautiful strangers out for a stroll, etc. The Camera pulls out and upward, away from the action until the entire neighborhood is slowly visible as if from near space. And it is, at once, beautiful.

THE END