Twenty one Winters

By

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INT. TUXEDO SHOP. STRIP MALL. DAY. FLASHBACK.

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:
INT. MORTON AND SONS, FUNERAL HOME.

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 coroner’s 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:

INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE PARENTS.

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, border 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:

INT. COLLEGE APARTMENT. NIGHT. FLASH BACK.

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)
Do you 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? Something. 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.

INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE PARENTS.

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.
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.
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.
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.
A crowd of young drunken onlookers, 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.

EXT. ROOF TOP. NIGHT. FLASH BACK.

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.

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

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
correct 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.

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:
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 Jeffry, 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

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.

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,
ever 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.

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 without 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 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.

INT. VIDEO ROOM. INTERVIEW WITH THE PARENTS.

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.
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.
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.
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.
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.
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. You 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.

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.

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.

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:

EXT. CIVIL WAR CEMETERY. DAY. FLASH BACK.

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 loose 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 world’s 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
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
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,
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:

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

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.
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.

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

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.
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:
EXT. NICHOLAS’ PARENTS HOME. PROM NIGHT. FLASH BACK.


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.

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.

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:

INT. NICHOLAS’ APARTMENT. DAY. FLASH BACK.

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 won’t 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.

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!

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

INT. ONE ROLF PLAZA. DOCTOR’S OFFICE. MOMENTS LATER.
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.
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.

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:

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.

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.

INT. NICHOLAS’ PARENTS HOME. LIVING ROOM. NIGHT. FB.
Nicholas’ Parents and Angelina gather quietly in the living
room, almost huddled, their conversation at a whisper. Their
nerves clearly frizzled, 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.
Moments later.

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

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.

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 overpower 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:

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.

EXT. DOWNTOWN BAR. NIGHT. FLASH BACK.

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

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.

INT. CAR. NIGHT. FLASH BACK.

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.

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
coin, 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.
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.

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)
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.

INT. CHURCH. NICHOLAS’ FUNERAL. DAY.

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.
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:
EXT. LOCAL SWIMMING HOLE. DAY. FLASHBACK.

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:

INT. NICHOLAS’ APARTMENT. BATHROOM. NIGHT. FLASH BACK.

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

SMASH CUT BACK TO:

INT. CHURCH. NICHOLAS’ FUNERAL. DAY.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.
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.
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.
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.
Close on Doug, singing.
EXT. HELEN’S CAR. MOVING. DAY.

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

INT. NICHOLAS’ APARTMENT. DAY. FLASH BACK.

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.

INT. CHURCH. NICHOLAS’ FUNERAL. DAY.

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 goeth 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