

# Beautiful Boy

Screenplay by Luke Davies & Felix van Groeningen

based on the books  
*Beautiful Boy* by David Sheff  
and *Tweak* by Nic Sheff

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**INT. MEDICAL OFFICE AT UCLA - DAY**

DAVID SHEFF - in his 40's and still a great looking guy - is seated with DR. BROWN (62), a passionate amiable man.

We stay close on David.

DR BROWN (O.S.)  
So this is for The New York Times Magazine?

DAVID  
No. I'm sorry... I freelance, I write for different magazines but this is a personal matter.

DR BROWN (O.S.)  
A personal matter?

DAVID  
Yes. I'm sorry, is that okay?

DR BROWN (O.S.)  
That's absolutely okay. May I ask what this is regarding?

DAVID  
It's about my son.

DR BROWN (O.S.)  
Okay how can I help?

DAVID  
There are moments that I look at him, this kid that I raised who I thought that I knew inside and out, and I wonder who he is? He's been doing all sorts of drugs, but he's addicted to crystal meth, which seems to be the worst of all of them. And I guess I am here because I just want to know all that I can about all of it. Know your enemies right? So... my two big questions are, what is it doing to him and what can I do to help him?

FADE TO BLACK.

**TEXT ON SCREEN:** one year earlier

FADE IN:

**INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David is walking in the hallway and peeks inside his son NIC's (18) room. The bed is made, Nic is not there. David turns off the light and closes the door.

**INT. BEDROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David can't sleep. He looks at the clock, it's 1 am. Silently he gets out of bed to not wake his wife.

**INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

Restless, David walks downstairs.

**EXT. SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

From the surrounding woods, we see a light on the first floor turn on.

**INT. DAVID'S STUDY, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

David is on the phone in his workspace. It's ringing.

HOSPITAL FRONT DESK (O.S.)  
Marin General Hospital, how may I  
help you?

David's study is the kind of space you'd love to live a creative life. David is a senior writer for *Rolling Stone*, *Playboy*, *Wired*, *Vanity Fair*. On the walls, artwork mixed with family photos - Nic at various ages - mixed with framed magazine covers, including David's own holy grail, the *Playboy*-cover featuring John Lennon's final interview from 1980.

DAVID  
Hi, my son went missing and I  
wanted to check if he was maybe  
brought in. Maybe an accident  
happened or...

HOSPITAL FRONT DESK (O.S.)  
Can I have name and a description,  
sir?

DAVID  
Nicholas Sheff. S-H-E-F-F. He's 18  
years old, just over six feet tall.  
About 130 pounds.  
(MORE)

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 Maybe less, I'm not sure. He has  
 shoulder length brown hair and  
 green eyes.

HOSPITAL FRONT DESK (O.S.)  
 Thank you, please hold.

DAVID  
 Okay.

As he waits it is excruciating. He looks around the room. At  
 the old photos of Nic. It takes forever.

HOSPITAL FRONT DESK (O.S.)  
 Mr. Sheff?

DAVID  
 Yes.

HOSPITAL FRONT DESK (O.S.)  
 There is no one by that name, sir.

DAVID  
 Okay. Thank you.

David hangs up.

**INT. NIC'S BEDROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David enters Nic's room. Turns on the light. What is he  
 looking for? He doesn't really know.

A little nervous he goes through some stuff, opens the  
 drawers and checks them.

He sits at Nic's desk and studies his drawings and writing  
 tacked to the wall.

On Nic's desk he sees a couple of books. He takes one, 'The  
 Beautiful And The Damned', by Fitzgerald. He takes the book  
 and flips it open at some random places, reads snippets here  
 and there.

**EXT. BACK YARD, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

David is walking around with his phone in the garden.

DAVID  
 He...  
 (a beat)  
 He's been gone for two days.

He is speaking to VICKI, Nic's mom.

They separated a long time ago, and Vicki is always a little uneasy when confronted with David.

VICKI (O.S.)

What?! What do you mean, he's gone?  
What's going on?

DAVID

Well, I don't know.

VICKI (O.S.)

Two days? Why didn't you tell me  
sooner?

DAVID

I didn't want to worry you I guess.  
I just--

VICKI (O.S.)

I'm his mother, David.  
(a beat)  
Didn't you see this coming?

DAVID

Uh, no.

VICKI (O.S.)

What?

DAVID

(a little upset)  
No. I didn't see it coming.  
(even more)  
If I had seen it coming I would  
have done something.

VICKI (O.S.)

It was just a question David. You,  
know I haven't been talking a lot  
with him lately.

In a split-second this conversation has turned into a fight,  
as many times before, probably.

DAVID

Well, maybe that's why you  
shouldn't be giving me advice on  
parenting, right? Fuck, Vicki.  
Could we just not blame each other  
right now? Thanks.

VICKI

Who's blaming who here? If I hardly ever see him, it's because he's supposed to come to LA for the holidays, but always finds a reason not to come.

DAVID

Well that's not my fault, is it?

They both hang up.

David watches his wife KAREN through the windows of her studio. She is the mother of their 2 younger kids, JASPER (7) and DAISY (5), and the stepmother of Nic. Together they also have two dogs, BRUTUS and MOONDOG.

She is a beautiful and artistic woman, self assured and a little neurotic at the same time. She's wearing a colorful paint stained overall.

Karen notices David, they look at each other. Karen stops painting and walks to David. They hug.

**INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

A younger David hands Nic (12) little wrapped-in- BABY JASPER. Nic stares at his little brother. A younger Karen watches Nic and Jasper.

DAVID

Nic. Here's your brother.

NIC

Hi Jasper. This is amazing, dad.

Nic touches Jasper's little hands. Karen and David watch them.

CUT TO:

David takes his jacket. He and Nic have to go. Karen and Nic hug and say goodbye.

KAREN

Bye mister. I'll miss you this summer. Write me.

NIC

Write me back.

KAREN

And work on your french.

NIC  
Oui madame.

A little laugh.

**INT. DEPARTURES, SF AIRPORT - DAY (FLASHBACK CONTINUED)**

David and Nic are in the departures hall, among other MINORS that will fly unaccompanied and their PARENTS, dropping them off. The minors are wearing pink paper badges with names written in Magic Marker. A couple of FLIGHT ATTENDANTS usher the kids to board the plane.

DAVID  
Have a great summer. Say hi to your Mom.

David is a little nervous. He kisses Nic on the forehead. They hug.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Everything.

NIC  
Everything.

CUT TO:

David watches through the glass, as the plane pulls back. He looks sadder than before. (he was putting on a show for Nic)

The plane takes off. David walks away.

**I/E. FAMILY CAR / ROADS TO INVERNESS/ DRIVEWAY, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Present time.

David is driving the family car, the kids are in the back.

David watches them being goofy but his mind is somewhere else.

They come home, David sees a Volvo parked on the driveway.

He parks behind it, gets out and takes a closer look at the Volvo. Nobody in the car. The front headlight is cracked.

Daisy and Jasper get out of the car too, but don't notice the car being home as something special.

They enter the house.

**INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

David approaches Nic's bedroom door. It's closed. He opens it.

**INT. NIC'S BEDROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

David sees Nic curled up in his bed. A moment of relief. He watches him, goes nearby, sits down next to him. Nic looks pretty bad. He's shivering.

DAVID

Hey. Where have you been?

Nic opens his eyes.

NIC

I just need to sleep.

DAVID

What have you been doing?

NIC

I just need to sleep, alright?  
Leave me alone.

David notices Jasper and Daisy standing in the door and watching. They see Nic who looks really wasted.

DAVID

Guys, could you go downstairs? I'll  
be there in a minute.

They hesitate a little, want to see what is going on.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Please.

They back off. David looks at Nic again, his eyes are closed again. Nic is calmer now.

David looks at him for a moment...

**I/E. VOLVO / INVERNESS ROADS - DAY**

A tiny Volvo in a wide landscape. The car drives towards us. David is driving.

Nic feels sick. David pulls over. We stay close on David.

From outside the car we hear the sounds of throwing up.

Nic reenters the car. David gently rubs his back.

**INT. VOLVO / GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - DAY**

David and Nic are driving. Nic watches the road and the clouds. He still feels sick. They cross the Golden Gate bridge.

**INT. VOLVO / ENTERING SAN FRANCISCO - DAY**

David and Nic enter San Francisco, they drive up a typical steep hill.

**I/E. VOLVO / OHLHOFF REHAB - DAY**

They arrive at a driveway to the rehab centre. David parks.

NIC

Dad I'm sorry. I fucked up and it was a mistake but it was a one time mistake. I learned my lesson. I don't want to go through this shit again.

David looks at Nic, feels for him.

DAVID

Let's just go inside.

NIC

No.

DAVID

They are professionals. Let's just listen to what they have to say.

In a split-second Nic just changes and becomes angry and aggressive. He screams out of frustration.

NIC

Look I'm 18! You can't force me.

David is taken aback. Nic's right, he no longer has a legal right to force Nic into rehab.

DAVID

This got out of hand, right? Don't you think? Come on.

NIC

Okay. I'm doing it for you.

He looks at David one more time and exits the car.

**EXT. OHLHOFF REHAB - DAY**

They walk towards the building. SOME GUYS - presumable addicts or ex-addicts - are smoking on the stairs leading to the entrance. Nic looks at them. They look back.

**INT. WAITING ROOM, OHLHOFF REHAB - DAY**

Nic sits in an austere waiting room.

**INT. ADMISSIONS OFFICE, OHLHOFF REHAB - DAY**

David is seated with the DIRECTOR of the program, an imposing woman.

DIRECTOR

He needs treatment and fast. There are still a lot of drugs in his system and worst of all, he is in denial.

David is watching Nic through the glass of the door.

DAVID

Can you help him?

DIRECTOR

Oh yeah. A lot of the people here are not here by choice and they have just as much a chance as anybody.

DAVID

OK.

Although all of this is alarming, David stays cool. 'We will fix this'.

DIRECTOR

We have one free bed, so if you want I can check him in for our 28 day treatment. Then we evaluate.

DAVID

Um. What is your success rate?

DIRECTOR

On the high end, 80 percent. On the low end 25 percent?

David nods.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)  
 Look, he will have daily  
 consultations with staff physicians  
 and a psychiatrist. We have daily  
 AA and NA meetings. He'll be  
 monitored very closely, ok?

David thinks, nods.

CUT TO:

Papers need to be filled in / Social security numbers /  
 Credit card information / Nic enters, he needs to sign too.

CUT TO:

David takes Nic in his arms, looks him straight in the eyes:

DAVID  
 Everything.

Clearly some reference loaded with history - though we don't  
 know what it means.

Nic looks at David. A little grumpy, ashamed too.

NIC  
 Everything.

Nic looks away, and walks off with a NURSE. The director and  
 David watch them walk away.

**INT. DINING ROOM, OHLHOFF REHAB - MORNING**

Nic, in PJ's, looking really bad and down, steps into the  
 rehab dining room and kitchen. 15 or so other Ohlhoff CLIENTS  
 are serving themselves breakfast. All kinds of different  
 people. Men, boys, women, girls. Some look as down as Nic,  
 others are pretty up. It's a mixed atmosphere.

Nic sits at a table and pours himself a glass of orange  
 juice. He takes a sip and looks up at the man eating next to  
 him, JOHNNY, 40-ish, who has lost most of his teeth.

Nic studies him and then looks back down.

DAVID (PRE-LAP)  
 Why are you always in this room?  
 You hardly ever come out of here.  
 It's like you're a vampire.

**INT. NIC'S BEDROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

Nic is on the floor writing in his notebook.

NIC  
I read. I draw.

David is standing at Nic's desk.

DAVID  
You know what we should do? We  
should go surfing.

Nic looks up from his notebook and smiles at David.

NIC  
Yeah?

DAVID  
Does that sound good?

NIC  
Yeah, well. I'm into other things  
now.

DAVID  
Reading misanthropes and seriously  
depressed writers...

NIC  
Ah, cmon. They're kinda great  
though, right?

David smiles, he is reminded of his own young years.

DAVID  
I get it. It'll pass, though.

Silence.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
It always does.

Nic looks back down at his notebook.

NIC  
What does?

DAVID  
The feeling of being alienated and  
isolated.

Nic chuckles.

NIC  
That really helps. Thanks for the  
advice.

David understands Nic wants to be alone.

DAVID  
OK.

He exits Nic's room.

NIC  
Sorry, dad, that was stupid. It  
came out wrong, I'm sorry.

A little smile. He closes the door.

**INT. OFFICE, OHLHOFF - DAY**

Present time.

David and Karen sit with the director.

The door opens. VINCE - one of the Ohlhoff counselors - and  
Nic enter. He looks a little better.

DAVID  
Hey.

NIC  
Hi dad.

David and Karen stand up and hug Nic. It's a little awkward.  
Vince takes some chairs, they all have a seat. Vince starts  
talking to break the ice.

VINCE  
So, we feel he's made great  
progress. Right Nic?

NIC  
Yes.

DAVID  
That's great.

KAREN  
That's great, Nic.

David pats Nic on the shoulder and leaves his hand there.

VINCE

So we should maybe talk about the coming weeks. Nic?

NIC

Yes.

David is surprised: where is this leading to? Nic takes a moment, then turns to David and Karen.

NIC (CONT'D)

I think I need a little bit more time in rehab. So if it was alright with you guys I was wondering if I could stay in the halfway house here.

David and Karen look to Vince.

VINCE

The halfway house is an open living facility, with follow-up every night. And we would help him find a job.

A beat. David is trying to figure out what this means... He looks at Nic.

NIC

I don't want to go to college right now, dad.

David didn't see this one coming, doesn't understand. Takes his time to let it sink in.

DAVID

Oh. OK. And do what?

NIC

*(takes his time, soft)*

I think I need to be independent. Dad, I'm telling you this is... it's going to be good.

David doesn't know what to say. A long silence.

**INT. VOLVO - DAY**

David is angry. He and Karen sit in the front.

DAVID

What is he gonna do? Make coffees the rest of his life?

Outside a strong wind plays with the branches of the trees aligning the street.

KAREN

Frederic told me they have friends that have a son who did a 4 week program, but it wasn't enough. He's doing a year program now.

David thinks about it... Knows she's right, but can't admit it.

DAVID

*(stung)*

I wish you wouldn't talk to everybody about it.

KAREN

What's that got to do with it?

DAVID

To protect Nic you know. At some point he's gonna want to get on with his life, and maybe it's best that not everybody knows about this.

Karen thinks about it, OK, point taken.

KAREN

OK.

But can we not make this about me?

*(back to the issue at hand)*

Look, Nic needs some more time. And that's fine. OK?

David nods.

DAVID

OK.

KAREN

OK?

DAVID

Yeah. OK.

He takes her hand. A beat. She lays her hand on his hand.

**EXT. BACK YARD, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

In the backyard Karen is body painting Daisy as an Indian. Jasper is running around in red socks and red underpants and already bodypainted as SPIDERMAN.

**INT. KITCHEN, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

David is preparing food. The phone rings, and immediately the dogs start barking very loud. David, a bit annoyed, looks around but cannot find the portable phone, so it keeps on ringing, and the dogs keep on barking. Finally he finds the phone and answers.

DAVID  
David Sheff.

One last bark by Moondog.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Shhht.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
Hi Mr. Sheff. This is Annie Goldblum from the Ohlhoff Center.

DAVID  
Oh, yes. Hi, hello.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
I'm sorry to disturb you, but I need to inform you about Nic.

DAVID  
OK?

DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
He left the facility today, during some free time, and he has not returned since.

DAVID  
Oh no.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
I'm sorry Mr. Sheff. But please don't despair, this happens.

DAVID  
But, I thought you said he was doing so well?

DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
 You should think of this as part of  
 the process. Relapse is a part of  
 recovery.

DAVID  
 Relapse is part of recovery?

DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
 It's part of Nic's learning  
 process.

DAVID  
 That's... that's like saying  
 crashing is part of pilot training.

DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
 Look, he'll be back. Probably  
 really quick.

DAVID  
 Is somebody out looking for him?

DIRECTOR (O.S.)  
 It's not our responsibility once he  
 leaves the facility. But he's  
 welcome to come back.

Of course. David hangs up angry. He watches the rest of his  
 family outside for a while, who are still oblivious.

CUT TO:

**I/E. VOLVO / PARKING AND ALLEYWAYS, SAN RAFAEL - DAY**

David is driving through San Rafael. The rain is pouring  
 down. David has opened his window and is looking left and  
 right, then turns and drives up on a parking lot...

INTERCUT WITH:

**E/I. ROADS NEAR THE OCEAN/ VOLVO - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

Younger David is driving with younger Nic.

The intro to "Territorial Pissings" by Nirvana is playing:  
 very wild drums, very wild guitar.

Nic knows it by heart and shouts along.

KURT COBAIN + NIC  
*When I was an alien... !!!*

David watches Nic, it's funny.

Nic continues to head-bang and scream along with the song. It's really wild. David is having fun, Nic too... (although he's screaming along so wild, it becomes a little scary).

**E/I. MIDDLE SCHOOL / VOLVO - DAY (FLASHBACK CONT'D)**

The song continues over young people exiting middle school.

David is waiting near his Volvo for Nic. Surfboards in the back of the car. David spots Nic. 12-year-old Nic looks like a typical nineties teen: grungy, a Primus T-shirt that is way too big, long hair covering his eyes, some pimples.

Nic stands out, because the guys who are walking next to him all seem just a little older, they all have short hair, everybody is dressed the same.

BACK TO:

**I/E. VOLVO / PARKING AND ALLEYWAYS, SAN RAFAEL - DAY**

David pulls up to a KITCHEN HELP smoking outside at the back door of a restaurant under an umbrella. The music softens.

DAVID

Excuse me, have you seen a kid  
hanging around here?

The guy shakes his head.

DAVID (CONT'D)

No? OK. Thank you.

David closes his window. He can't see a lot because of the rain. He drives towards an alley.

CUT TO:

**E/I. MIDDLE SCHOOL / VOLVO - DAY (FLASHBACK CONT'D)**

Nic and David walk through the parking lot. Nirvana now blaring, drowning out their conversation so we can't hear.

DAVID

Hey... how 'd it go?

NIC

OK, I guess.

DAVID

Yeah? Tell me.

NIC

Well, just different compared to San Francisco. The kids there were more into drawing and art and reading and stuff. It's not really cool here to be smart. But that's ok. I'll just get worse grades.

David laughs as they get into the car.

BACK TO:

**I/E. VOLVO / PARKING AND ALLEYWAYS, SAN RAFAEL - DAY**

David looks left and right, then slows down as he sees a shape appear.

It's Nic. He's in jeans and T-shirt and is soaking wet. He looks bad, has bruises on his face.

David walks over to Nic and when he reaches him, Nic almost goes limp in David's arms. He half carries him, opens the passenger door, drops him in the seat, closes the door.

David gets in at the other side, looks at Nic for a moment - he's shivering, almost passed out. What to do, what to say?

Nic turns and vomits, soiling himself and the seat.

The music STOPS.

CUT TO:

**INT. CAR/ GROCERY STORE - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

David and late teen's Nic just got some groceries in the local grocery store. The atmosphere is good, Nic's talking freely, David is enjoying. David is about to start the car, and reverse...

NIC

Hey dad, do you want to smoke this?

Nic takes out a joint.

DAVID

Hey! Woah, wait. What? Stop.

David nervously laughs.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Put that away.

NIC  
I think we should smoke this  
together.

Nic keeps eyeing David.

DAVID  
This is crazy. No.

NIC  
I know you smoke.

DAVID  
Yeah... No, no...

NIC  
You know what? You're right, I'll  
just light it here alone.

Nic doesn't get a yes or a no, as David is too surprised, so  
Nic puts it to his lips and takes out a lighter.

DAVID  
Don't! Stop it. Occasionally from  
time to time I will have a hit or  
two at a party but it has been  
awhile...

NIC  
Just have a celebratory joint with  
your son.

They laugh and David starts the car, backs up.

DAVID  
Oh, god. Come on.

**EXT. ROAD LEADING TO POINT REYES LIGHTHOUSE - DAY (FLASHBACK  
CONTINUED)**

The car is parked at a road with a spectacular view over the  
ocean and magnificent windswept trees. They sit on the hood  
of the car. Sunset. Nic takes a hit from the joint...

DAVID  
You're amazing, Nic. You applied to  
6 colleges and were accepted to all  
of them! Stop doubting yourself?  
Look at you. Gimme that.

Passes it to David. He takes a couple of hits. Nic laughs.

DAVID (CONT'D)

What?

NIC

That was a nice hit.

David exhales and they laugh together. He hands the joint back to Nic.

NIC (CONT'D)

Thank you, this is nice... thing to do.

*(intrigued, asking something he never asked before)*

You did a lot of drugs, right?

DAVID

I did my share. Sure. I experimented with different kinds of drugs. And had fun sometimes. I did.

David chuckles.

DAVID (CONT'D)

But not harmless, I had a friend that...

NIC

Is this the lecture part?

It makes David smile.

NIC (CONT'D)

You worry too much. Everyone does it.

DAVID

Yeah, well... Just be careful.

NIC

It's just pot. It's just once in a while. I'm just partying a little. I worked hard this year... I deserve to party a little now.

Nic is laughing, a bit stoned. David watches Nic with a smile. He's also a bit stoned, we notice now.

DAVID

Deserve to party...

Nic takes a last hit of the joint, throws the butt away.

NIC

It just takes the edge off things,  
you know. Of stupid all day  
reality.

David thinks about this. All of a sudden changes his attitude. Instead of the pot-smoking buddy, he's the worrying father again (but also, slightly stoned).

DAVID

What is stupid about reality?

Nic looks at David, wants to argue...

NIC

Well you know, like daily stupid  
things, that don't matter...

DAVID

Come on Nic, you cannot say dumb  
shit like that or you'll start  
believing it.

**INT. DAVID'S STUDY, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Back to present time.

David is at his computer. He's pulling up websites, gathering information, writing.

On the screen: *"Crystal meth - is a very addictive stimulant drug..."*

Another website: *"Meth can make a person's mood change quickly. For example, someone using meth might become angry and violent."*

David stops writing. He stares at the computer. He looks exhausted.

**INT. NIC'S BEDROOM, ST. CELINE REHAB - DAY**

Nic enters his bedroom followed by David and Karen. It's a simple, clean, white room with twin single beds and night-stands. David and Karen look around. Nic puts down a pile of folded clothes in a laundry bag.

NIC

Thanks for bringing this, Karen.

Nic puts up his arms.

NIC (CONT'D)  
This is my home.

David looks at Nic, then looks out of the window, vineyard view. Karen notices an 'Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book' on Nic's bedside table.

CUT TO:

David and Nic sit on the beds and face each other. David watches Nic for a moment.

DAVID  
A couple of weeks ago you told me  
that you had only done crystal meth  
once but the story has to be bigger  
than that, right?

Nic nods.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
There's more to it?

David's mood changes.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
*(firm)*  
Yeah?

KAREN  
David.

DAVID  
We need to know.

A beat. Nic is thinking, where to start?

NIC  
I think I always liked it.

DAVID  
What?

NIC  
Anything.

Karen takes a seat next to Nic on the bed. He's opening up.

NIC (CONT'D)  
Pot. Alcohol. Ecstasy. Cocaine.  
LSD.

A beat.

DAVID  
And you've been doing all that, for  
what, years?

NIC  
A couple of years, yeah.

DAVID  
And crystal meth?

NIC  
Just a couple months.

DAVID  
But why?

NIC  
I don't know... When I tried it, I  
felt, I felt better than I ever  
had... So I kept on doing it.

DAVID  
I was worried that you were smoking  
too much pot meanwhile you're out  
doing every drug on the planet?

Nic doesn't know what to answer. David is coming a little too strong at him. David goes on.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
And hiding it and lying. And why?  
Tell me.

NIC  
I don't know.

DAVID  
Why? Tell me why!

KAREN  
Ease up.

NIC  
I don't know!

Nic starts crying. Karen is comforting Nic.

DAVID  
I thought we were close. Closer  
than most fathers and sons.

Nic tries to defend himself...

NIC

I feel like you're just always disappointed in me. You're disappointed I don't go to college, you're...

...but this makes David really angry.

DAVID

Well can you blame me? Not too long ago you were reading and you were writing and you were on the waterpolo team. And look at us now! This isn't us. This is not who we are!

KAREN

Guys, please stop this. Dave, calm down! Stop it.

Nic starts sobbing.

David does calm down. He takes a moment to reset himself. Silence.

NIC

Dad, I'm really sorry about everything.

Another silence.

NIC (CONT'D)

I'm really sorry, dad.

DAVID

Nic, what you have you are going to find it again. You're going to get it back.

Nic looks up. They look at each other. David takes Nic half in his arms. Nic lets it happen. Karen takes Nic's hand, strokes it.

**EXT. BACK YARD, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

David sits in the yard playing catch with the dogs but his mind is clearly somewhere else.

**EXT. REMOTE BEACH - LATE AFTERNOON (FLASHBACK)**

David and Nic paddle out into the ocean with surfboards into a pretty wild ocean. It's a bit foggy.

In the distance we see rocks and big cliffs.

Nic paddles away as David gets hit by a big wave. David struggles to get back onto his board and starts paddling as fast as he can, but gets hit by another big wave. He gets thrown towards the beach.

A bit out of breath, David stands up and grabs his board. He watches over the ocean. We see his POV: big breaking waves, no Nic. David panics a little. He looks left and right.

DAVID

Nic? Nic?!

In the distance we see a surfboard? Or something? A wave crashes onto it. David steps further into the ocean, knee-deep, waist-deep, holding his surfboard, challenging big walls of whitewater coming in. More panic.

David starts paddling again. Again paddling hard, fighting against the waves coming in.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Fuck.

Finally he paddles and gets behind the point where the wave breaks. He sighs. Looks around again, still breathing hard. Meanwhile it's darker, and there's more fog. He pushes himself up his board to try and spot Nic again.

And all of a sudden there is Nic, standing atop a wave, and carving up and down. Coming into David's direction and hooting for joy.

NIC

Woo-hoo!

David watches Nic. Wow, he looks amazing.

**INT. DINING ROOM, OHLHOFF REHAB - NIGHT**

Back to the present.

Nic on his cell phone.

NIC

Hey dad. How's New York?

DAVID (O.S.)

Fine. Good interview today. How are you?

NIC  
Oh I'm doing good.

Nic fidgets with a glass of water.

CUT TO:

**INT. AMBASSADOR HOTEL - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

David is sitting in a fancy hotel room on the other end of the phone.

DAVID  
Yeah? You sure?

David stands. He paces.

NIC (O.S.)  
Yes I am.. It's just... Uhm...

DAVID  
What's going on?

David becomes a little nervous. He stares through the large window overlooking the NY skyline.

NIC (O.S.)  
We had this great group session and one of the guys here was saying he would do anything for a chance to go to college but he can't.

DAVID  
OK.

NIC  
And we were talking later and he said you can still go to college. Don't be an idiot. Go to college.

David walks up to the window.

INTERCUT BETWEEN DAVID AND NIC FROM HERE ON

NIC (CONT'D)  
I don't know. It's just crazy. I realized I don't think I should stay behind. I love writing and I feel like I'm good at it and I do it a lot but obviously there's still a lot for me to learn.

David smiles.

NIC (CONT'D)  
 Anyway, I would love to give it a  
 go... if it's alright with you  
 guys.

A beat. We see David's excitement reflected in the window,  
 which he doesn't express audibly to Nic.

DAVID  
 Yeah. I'll talk to Karen. And to  
 your mom.

**INT. PLANE - DAY**

Nic takes a seat in a crowded plane. David stands in the  
 aisle, looks at his boarding pass.

DAVID  
 Oh, I'm further down. I'll ask to  
 switch.

A STEWARD comes by in a rush, closing the overhead bins.

NIC  
 I'll be fine.

David walks further and takes his seat. Nic waves and smiles.  
 David smiles back and settles in his seat.

Between the seats he sees Nic, he watches him for a while, he  
 looks way better. Nic is talking enthusiastically to the  
 person next to him.

**INT. NIC'S BEDROOM, EAST HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE - DAY**

Nic is getting settled in his room, unpacking. In the HALLWAY  
 we sense other FRESHMEN KIDS and their FAMILIES. David sits  
 at a desk, takes the space in, looks at Nic. Silence for a  
 while. Nic sits at the other desk.

DAVID  
 Have you met your roommate yet?

NIC  
 Yeah, he seems nice. He was just in  
 the hall.

DAVID  
 I feel for you, though.

David is looking through a stack of CD's. We notice George  
 Michael, Celine Dion, Steve Miller Band.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Ouch.

They both laugh.

NIC

No worries, I'll educate him.  
Before you know it he'll be  
listening to John Zorn.

David puts the CD's back.

DAVID

You know, I better get going.

David gets up. They look at each other for a moment. Big moment. They hug.

NIC

Everything.

DAVID

Everything.

MUSIC RISES

David walks out.

**EXT. EAST HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE GROUNDS - DAY**

Nic - backpack over his shoulders - is gliding on a skateboard across the lovely campus grounds. Pale autumn sunlight. He seems carefree and confident.

**INT. TUTORIAL ROOM, EAST HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE - MONTAGE**

20 STUDENTS (19, 20) and a PROFESSOR (woman, 40) around a table. Nic is a little shy amidst all these new people.

NIC

So, this is a poem by Charles  
Bukowski. This man saved my life  
multiple times.

Some laugh. As Nic begins to read

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE - MEETING ROOM - DAY**

David in a meeting room talking and laughing with a couple of editors.

NIC (O.S.)  
*I changed jobs and cities,  
 I hated holidays, babies...*

**EXT. BACK YARD, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Karen painting a tree in their garden in very uplifting colors.

NIC (O.S.)  
*History, newspapers, museums...*

**INT. TUTORIAL ROOM, EAST HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE**

Eyes on Nic as he continues.

NIC  
*Grandmothers, marriage, movies,  
 spiders...*

**EXT. BACK YARD, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

The kids and David throwing balloons with paint towards a canvas. With every word of the poem another balloon splash.

NIC (O.S.)  
*Garbagemen, English accents, Spain,  
 France, Italy, walnuts, and the  
 color of range.*

Karen joins in on the family fun.

BACK TO:

**INT. TUTORIAL ROOM, EAST HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE**

People are listening, sometimes chuckling. JULIA (18, a sweet girl) thinks Nic is cool. Nic notices, goes on.

NIC  
*Algebra angered me, opera sickened  
 me, Charlie Chaplin was a  
 fake and flowers were for  
 pansies.*

**EXT. EAST HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE GROUNDS - DAY**

Nic and Julia sit on the lawn, they're talking, Nic is wildly explaining things to Julia. They seem in love and to only have eyes for each other, while masses of people stream by them, going from one class to the next.

**INT. LIBRARY, EAST HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE - DAY**

Nic sits at a computer. Typing. Focused.

**EXT. EAST HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE GROUNDS - DAY**

Julia runs her hands through Nic's hair. They kiss and playfully roll on the lawn.

**INT. LIBRARY, EAST HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE - DAY**

Nic and Julia sit in the library. As they have to be silent, they write little notes to each other. They giggle.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, JULIA'S HOUSE - DUSK**

They're sitting at the table, having dinner. JULIA'S MOTHER and FATHER and 2 younger BROTHERS, an OLDER SISTER and JULIA'S UNCLE.

They're all really nice and the atmosphere is pretty relaxed, yet we get the sense Nic doesn't fit 100% in this average middle class family, with his wild hair, torn jeans, worn sneakers.

Julia's family is chit-chatting away, going back and forth, LOUDER and LOUDER.

Nic is trying to follow the conversation and wants to make a good impression, but it all makes him pretty nervous actually.

NIC

*(to Julia)*

Can I use the bathroom?

*(she didn't catch it)*

Hey is there a bathroom I can use?

Julia's mother heard it.

JULIA'S MOTHER

Of course honey. Come, I'll show you.

Nic gets up.

**INT. BATHROOM, JULIA'S HOUSE - DUSK**

Nic enters a bathroom. He takes a moment for himself, then takes a piss.

While he is slowly washing his hands he sees a couple of medication bottles in the bathroom cabinet. He goes through them, sees a bottle of Percocet. He stares at it.

He dries his hands. He closes the cabinet.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, JULIA'S HOUSE - LATER**

Back at the table. It's after dinner, everybody still chatting quite loud, Nic is more relaxed.

**INT. NIC'S DORM ROOM, EAST HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE - DAY**

Nic is on his bed on campus, a little passed out. His cell phone rings, it says 'DAD'. Nic wakes up, and quickly gets up.

He takes a moment to gather himself before answering the phone.

NIC

Hey dad!

DAVID (O.S.)

Hey Nic. How you doing? What's going on?

NIC

Everything is going great. Hey, thanks for sending me that money. I really appreciate that.

**INT. LIBRARY, COLLEGE - DAY**

Nic sits at a computer and is surfing the web. We see a website that shows how to shoot yourself up.

He looks over his shoulder to make sure no one is watching.

**INT. NIC'S DORM ROOM, EAST HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE - DAY**

Nic is fighting with Julia.

**INT. NIC'S DORM ROOM, EAST HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE - DAY**

Nic is preparing the drugs, making it liquid, getting it in the syringe, prepping his arm. It's all a bit clumsy as he's never done this.

**EXT. EAST HAMPSHIRE COLLEGE GROUNDS - NIGHT**

It's cold outside, people are wearing warm winter jackets and caps. We spot Nic, zoned out, only wearing a T-shirt. He's really high. He stops, stands still.

Closes his eyes.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Some time later. Nic is arriving back home for the holidays. He is carrying a bag and enters the living room. David is behind him and talking.

DAVID

And Patrick and Phil are going hiking tomorrow. I told them we might join. They definitely want to see you.

They hear gentle shrieks of laughter. Nic looks around the living room, nobody there. David and Nic pretend to keep on talking while looking for the kids who've hidden themselves.

Nic discovers banners made by the kids to welcome him. One is a hedgehog saying 'BOOHOO I MISS NIC'. Nic is moved by it and expresses that to David inaudibly.

Nic then discovers where the kids are hiding but continues to play it cool.

NIC

Are Jasper and Daisy here?

DAVID

They're not here.

NIC

No? Oh they didn't want to see me?

DAVID

Nope, they didn't want to see you.

NIC

Oh that's tough to hear. I'll just have a seat on this couch and think about that.

Nic sits down and then rips off the cover revealing the kids. They now jump on Nic, he takes 'em both in his arms. They kinda crawl all over him. He holds them tight.

Karen enters the living room too, and smiles.

NIC (CONT'D)

You've grown so big guys! This is amazing!!! I can hardly hold you.

But he does hold them and then starts turning around his axis, like a human merry-go-round. Nic starts going faster and faster as the kids are cheering. David and Karen don't know whether to laugh, because it's so funny, or to try and stop them, because it does look a little dangerous. But they're all laughing so loud. When Nic slows down he almost starts losing balance, he's a little dizzy.

Nic smiles and hugs and kisses Karen.

**EXT. BACK YARD - DUSK**

The Sheffs are having a nice dinner outside. Enjoying great food. So much to talk about.

After dinner they play a wordgame. When someone snaps the other person has to tell the next line of the story.

Nic starts.

NIC

*(storytelling voice)*  
Denmark, 1632.

*Snap.*

DAVID

We like to look back at the history of hula hoops.

*Snap.* The little ones laughing uncontrollably.

NIC

So important to the culture of peace and wisdom.

*Snap.* More laughter.

DAVID  
A man named George--

A quick *snap*.

NIC  
Hoop Hula was--

*Snap*.

DAVID  
Thought I'm going to develop  
something...

The family loses it. The kids barely containing their joy.

**INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

Nic turns out the light in Jaspers bedroom. He closes the door. Alone in the hallway, he scratches his skin.

DAVID (O.S.)  
Hey.

NIC  
Oh hey.

Suddenly David is there.

NIC (CONT'D)  
Hey, um, I was wondering if I could  
use the car? I still want to go to  
a meeting tonight.

DAVID  
You have a meeting tonight? Yeah,  
sure.

David leans on the banister. He takes a long look at Nic.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
You good?

Nic motions towards the kid's door and laughs to dodge the question.

NIC  
Yeah... They're crazy.

DAVID  
They're really excited you are  
home.

Nic puts his hands in his pockets.

NIC  
I'll see you in the morning I  
guess.

DAVID  
OK.

**INT. VOLVO/ROADS HOME TO INVERNESS - NIGHT**

Nic is driving. He's shivering. Feels bad. He puffs a joint.

While he is driving, he dials a number. A car passes.

Muffled sounds. Image becomes blurry. Music blasts.  
Headlights on the winding roads.

**INT. NIC'S BEDROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Nic wakes up with a huge hangover. It takes a while before he realizes where he is, in his bed. He hears the kids fighting in the room next door.

JASPER (O.S.)  
Where is it? Where is it?

We hear Daisy crying.

**INT. KID'S BEDROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Big drama.

JASPER  
Give it back!

DAISY  
I don't have it!

They push each other around a little. More crying. David enters the room.

DAVID  
What is going on here?

JASPER  
I had 8 dollars. Daisy took it.

Jasper holds his plastic mini-vault in his hands. It's empty.

DAISY  
I didn't!!

DAVID  
Calm down guys. Please calm down.  
Daisy, can you go down to your mom  
please?

DAISY  
I didn't take it, daddy.

DAVID  
OK, please go down.

Daisy goes down. David turns to Jasper.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Are you sure it was in there?

JASPER  
Yes. I had it yesterday.

**INT. KITCHEN, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Nic sits at the table and does not look great. David stares hard at him, and sees his trembling hands, his gyrating jaw. It looks like David hasn't slept a lot either.

DAVID  
Jasper's savings disappeared.

NIC  
Yeah? That's weird.

DAVID  
Did you take his 8 dollars?

NIC  
What?

DAVID  
You heard me.

NIC  
Why would I?

DAVID  
Well, it disappeared, so someone  
must have done it.

NIC  
Right, so it's me?

Nic slams down his juice.

NIC (CONT'D)  
This is fucking ridiculous!

He stands up.

DAVID  
Nic, are you using again?

NIC  
Am I using again?? No.

David examines him.

DAVID  
Are you high right now?

NIC  
What the fu... No... fuck you.

David is boiling.

DAVID  
Fuck you? Don't talk to me that way.

(a beat)  
Are you high right now?

NIC  
No.

DAVID  
You're not using right now? Are you using??

NIC  
No Dad I'm not fucking high right now!

DAVID  
OK.

He looks down. This is hard.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Listen it was a gamble to send you to college. Everybody supported it. I'm glad that you went. Relapse is a part of recov--

He can barely get the words out.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Relapse is a part of recovery. So--

NIC  
I'd better leave.

Nic heads off to his room. David doesn't know what to do.

**INT. NIC'S BEDROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Nic sits on his bed motionless, thinking for a moment.

Suddenly he starts filling a suitcase and his duffel-bag with clothes. Grabs some stuff that is lying on his desk. He takes his guitar and walks out.

**INT. HALLWAY, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Nic - with suitcase, duffel bag and guitar - sees David and Karen standing in the doorway.

DAVID  
Hey, just... where are you going to go? You can't just leave. This is ridiculous. Come on.

KAREN  
Can you talk to us? We just want to talk to you.

She takes a step towards him.

DAVID  
Please, try to help us understand.

KAREN  
Or just let us help you.

This makes Nic freak out.

NIC  
*(screaming)*  
I don't want your fucking help. Don't you understand that? No you don't? Jesus Christ, what the fuck is wrong with you then, huh? What the hell is wrong with you people?

Very aggressively he pushes David away.

NIC (CONT'D)  
You people suffocate me!! You  
fucking suffocate me!!

And now David loses it. He not only panics, but becomes  
furious.

DAVID  
Oh, it's us? We're the problem?  
No!!

Nic runs out.

**EXT. DRIVEWAY, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

David chases out after him.

DAVID  
You are the one who is doing it!!!  
You're the one causing it and  
you're the only one who can stop it  
and FUCKING solve it!!!

David closes his eyes. Fuck, so stupid.

**INT. NIC'S BEDROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David enters Nic's room. Everything is still the way it was  
when Nic left in a fury.

Some clothes scattered around. He sits on the bed, takes the  
room in. He turns on a lamp on Nic's night-stand as we

CUT TO:

**INT. NIC'S BEDROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - (FLASHBACK)**

Just earlier.

Nic storms into his room right after the 8 dollar fight in  
the kitchen. He wildly knocks books off of his desk, pounds  
the wall and screams, before grabbing his bags to pack and  
leave.

BACK TO:

**INT. NIC'S BEDROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David sees a notebook laying on the ground. He picks it up and flips through it. We see it's a journal, with short, and longer very personal writings.

Close on David as he starts to read. He flips another page. Scribbles, hard to read what is there. Another page. We read what he reads:

1 1/2 grams speed / Klonopin /  
Codeine / Valium / Hard to find  
meth here. Scored some heroin  
instead.

He flips to the next page, which is filled with chaotic small written text.

David looks closer at the nervous, crazy handwriting. This is the Disease talking. As if he can experience his son being changed by the drugs.

He reads a last sentence:

*So all I can do is move forward...  
and don't look back.*

He closes the notebook. David looks terrified.

**INT. VOLVO / GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - DAY**

David drives by himself back to Los Angeles.

**INT. MEDICAL OFFICE AT UCLA - DAY**

David is seated with DR. BROWN.

We have arrived back at the opening scene.

DR BROWN

So this is for the New York Times  
Magazine?

DAVID

No. I'm sorry... I write, I  
freelance for different magazines  
but this is a personal matter.

DR BROWN (O.S.)

A personal matter?

DAVID

Yes. I'm sorry, is that okay?

DR BROWN (O.S.)

That's absolutely okay. May I ask what this is regarding?

DAVID

It's about my son.

DR BROWN

Okay...

As David begins to talk we

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. HAIGHT STREET - DUSK**

David on the famous Haight Street in San Francisco, looking for Nic. We see the colorful shops. Kids with dreadlocks and dogs. Tourists with dyed hair. Tattoos. Older hippies.

DAVID (O.S.)

He has been doing all sorts of drugs but is addicted to crystal meth, which seems to be the worst of all of them. And I guess I am here because I just want to know all that I can about all of it.

Dr. Brown is now extremely precise in his use of language.

DR BROWN

So crystal meth gives the user a feeling of instant euphoria, at least when he takes it. But when it wears off with a depletion of as much as 60 percent of the dopamine the user has to up the doses.

David walking on Haight Street. Still looking.

DR BROWN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Double it, triple it. Just to feel something.

Back at UCLA.

DR BROWN (CONT'D)  
Causing even more nerve damage  
which increases the compulsion to  
use. Horrible cycle.

CUT TO:

**INT. DAVID'S STUDY, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David sitting in the dark at the computer. Karen walks in.

KAREN  
What's up?

She rests her hands on his shoulders. His eyes stay fixed on the screen.

DAVID  
Just doing some research.

BACK TO:

**INT. HAIGHT STREET - DUSK**

David hesitates then walks up to a girl DIANE (19), she shields her eyes, takes him in. He looks closely at Diane, she's still really young, but has clearly been damaged by the drug abuse too.

DAVID  
Hey, I... Are you hungry? You want  
to get something?

DIANE  
Most guys just ask me for a  
blowjob.

DAVID  
Yeah, well, I just want to offer  
you something to eat. And talk a  
little. If you're up for it.

**INT. MEDICAL OFFICE AT UCLA - DAY**

Dr. Brown and David are now watching a screen with brain scans. We see a lateral cross-section of a brain, with blue patches and yellow and red areas. The doctor points out the red areas.

DR BROWN

The meth changes the brain physically. Here we see the loss of dopamine receptors in a meth user's brain. Now I want to show you something else here. Do you see these two large red spots right here? What that shows is hyperactivity in the amygdala. The amygdala is a region of the brain that is linked with anxiety and fear. Here, the amygdala is screaming. What this shows us is that there is a biological basis that meth users may be unable, not un-willing, but unable to participate in normal treatment plans.

**INT. OLD DINER - DUSK**

David and Diane are sitting in a booth. Diane slurps her Sprite.

DIANE

I was in rehab too. 3 times. Ran away every time.

A waiter brings two burgers. Diane starts eating.

DAVID

Why?

DIANE

It was hell, I wanted to die.

DAVID

Why was it hell?

DIANE

All that God shit. Also, you just don't know how good it gets when it gets good.

David is listening intently.

DIANE (CONT'D)

It's hard to explain. It feels like cocaine but multiply it by 1000... Or like a million.

**INT. MEDICAL OFFICE AT UCLA**

David and Dr Brown are still at the computer.

DAVID  
What does this mean for Nic?

DR BROWN  
Look Mr. Sheff, I don't know who  
promised you what, but success  
percentage is in the single digits.

David looks down.

DAVID  
OK.

**INT. OLD DINER**

DAVID  
What about your parents?

No reaction.

DIANE  
What about 'em?

DAVID  
Don't you think they're worried  
about you? Shouldn't you let them  
know...

DIANE  
They don't care...

DAVID  
I think they do.

DIANE  
What the fuck do you know?

She stares at him. He stares back. It becomes uncomfortable.  
David realizes that she's right, what does he know?

Diane stands up.

DIANE (CONT'D)  
I gotta go.

DAVID  
Oh. Ok. I'm...

And before he can say...

DAVID (CONT'D)

Thanks.

...she's off.

David looks at his untouched burger.

**I/E. VOLVO / SAN FRANCISCO STREET/TENDERLOIN - NIGHT**

It's dark now. David drives through the Tenderloin, an area with strip clubs and cheap monthly hotel rooms, homeless people, hustlers, dealers and junkies. He cruises the streets and looks left and right. Heavy. He can't believe his son might be here? Hard to grasp it.

David parks his car and exits. He approaches to some junkies huddled on the sidewalk.

**INT. DAVID'S STUDY, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David sits at his desk for a while.

He stares at his wallet. He opens it up and takes out: crystalline powder. He watches it for a long time. His adversary. What is it with that shit?

He takes a credit card out of his wallet. Clumsy he cuts the drug a little. He takes a dollar bill and rolls it up.

He snorts the meth, stares in front of him.

We stay on his face. For a long time. He closes his eyes and tries to feel and understand what this drugs is doing to him.

His HEART is BEATING like hell. He feels as if Roman candles have been lit in his skull. We hear bits and pieces of MUSIC. And SOUNDS everywhere in the house. He hears a CAR PASSING by the house. He opens his eyes. He starts typing some thoughts.

Another sound. A garden light equipped with a motion detector flashes on. David gets up. Looks outside. Nothing.

David back at his desk. It's a mess. Papers and pictures and books all over. The sun rises outside.

David is on his back on the floor in his study. He opens his eyes, feels miserable, tries to get back to his senses, crawls up.

**INT. KITCHEN, SHEFF HOUSE - MORNING**

Birds are chirping. David looks out the window. He was awake the entire night.

**INT. CAFFE TRIESTE - AFTERNOON**

David alone at the window seat at Caffe Trieste in San Francisco (landmark coffee shop in North Beach). The empty coffee cup and glass of water suggest he's been there a while. David looks outside.

CUT TO:

**INT. CAFFE TRIESTE - AFTERNOON (FLASHBACK)**

A younger David and Nic (6 years old) settle in at a table. Nic is asking questions all the time. David lavishes his full attention on Nic. He answers Nic with great dedication.

DAVID

I'm going to try some Klingon on you.

He speaks in Klingon. Nic interprets.

NIC

Can I have a Coca-Cola?

DAVID

Exactly! That's exactly what I asked.

NIC

Can *I* have a Coca-Cola?

DAVID

If you ask me in Klingon maybe I'll get you a Coke.

Nic tries but it mostly sounds like gibberish. It's cute.

BACK TO:

**INT. CAFFE TRIESTE - AFTERNOON**

At length Nic appears, chalk-white, like a ghostly Egon Schiele self-portrait, debauched, wasted. They hug. Nic sits. His fingers tremble, his jaw gyrates, he grinds his teeth.

David looks at Nic. Nic can't look David in the eyes so he looks anywhere else.

NIC

This place hasn't changed at all.

David gets right to it.

DAVID

So how ya doing?

NIC

I'm doing great. OK. I'm just doing what needs to be done.

A pause. David doesn't believe it's true, it just can't be.

DAVID

What does that mean?

NIC

Being responsible for myself. I've quit on my own. I've got five days now.

*(pause)*

I feel like I'm doing well but I just need a few hundred bucks though.

It breaks David's heart. Ok, so that's why he called. But David swallows his pride, needs to find a way to get through to Nic. He stares at Nic, who can't seem to look in David's eyes. Nic now stares outside. David fiddles with his cutlery.

DAVID

Nic, I can't give you any money.

NIC

It's just a few hundred bucks. I just need to get some shit together. I want to go to New York.

DAVID

New York?

NIC

I need to get out of San Francisco, too many bad vibes here.

*(beat)*

I just need a few hundred bucks.

DAVID

Why don't we just have lunch. And talk. We can do that, can't we?

This makes Nic a little mad and fidgety. He calms down. He switches between being the old sweet Nic, and this unreasonable junkie.

NIC

How are Karen... and the kids?

DAVID

OK. They ask about you.

*(pause)*

Next week is their step-up ceremony. I'm sure they'd love you to be there. I'd love you to be there...

NIC

See, you're guilt-tripping me... Look, dad, I already feel horrible about myself.

DAVID

I know they wanted you to be there. That's all.

NIC

I'm sorry, dad, I just need some fucking money alright. So please...

DAVID

And then what? Where does this end?

NIC

I don't know. It's kinda working out for me right now. You know, I gotta see this through. I got five days sober...

DAVID

It doesn't look like it's working.

NIC

Oh it doesn't look like it's working out? So what then? Therapy?

DAVID

You can come home. We'll make it work. Please Nic. Please.

NIC

That wouldn't... No.

DAVID

I've been doing some research.

NIC  
 Been doing fucking research?!  
 You've gotta be kidding me, dad!

DAVID  
 You think you have this under  
 control and I understand how scared  
 you are.

Nic gets mad.

NIC  
 I understand why I do things. It  
 doesn't make me any different. I'm  
 attracted to craziness and you're  
 just embarrassed because I was like  
 this amazing thing, like your  
 special creation or something, and  
 you don't like who I am now.

David looks at Nic... wondering where Nic is heading...

DAVID  
 Yeah? And who are you Nic?

NIC  
*(defiant)*  
 This is me. Here. This is who I am.  
 You don't like what you see?  
*(a long pause)*  
 You know, the more I think about  
 it, Mom should have gotten custody.  
 Because you always got to be  
 fucking controlling everything all  
 the time.

DAVID  
 Nic, you're allowed to be mad at  
 me. I made mistakes. I wish I  
 hadn't, but I did. But what you are  
 saying right now... it doesn't make  
 any sense.

NIC  
 You're doing it right now!!!  
 You are controlling me right now!!!

David stayed calm until now, but loses his cool here...

DAVID  
 This is not you. This is not you  
 Nic. This is the drugs talking.

NIC  
What does that even fucking mean?

DAVID  
Psychological terror! It's what  
addicts do.

NIC  
Yeah? And what the fuck are you  
doing right now, huh? What is this?  
What are you doing?

A pause. David looks at Nic, Nic doesn't dare to look back.

NIC (CONT'D)  
I didn't want it to go like this.  
*(another beat)*  
Alright. I should go dad.

David puts his hands up. A peace offering, 'please wait'.

DAVID  
Let me book you a room at a hotel  
for a couple of nights?

NIC  
No dad. No.

DAVID  
Why don't we just go get some food?

Nic puts on his hat.

NIC  
I gotta go.

He turns away from David...

DAVID  
Will you say goodbye at least?

NIC  
Bye, dad.

Nic rushes out of the cafe. David stays behind. Suddenly aware that a lot of people are watching him.

**INT. KID'S BEDROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David and Jasper lay on the floor. Jasper's head resting on David's chest.

JASPER  
Where does he sleep?

DAVID  
Don't worry about that sweetie.  
He's fine.

JASPER  
Maybe he has a friend and he sleeps  
there?

DAVID  
Maybe.

On the couch Karen stops reading to Daisy and looks over to the boys.

JASPER  
Can I call him?

DAVID  
I tried. His phone is disconnected.

JASPER  
Can I send him a message? Maybe  
he'll get it when he turns his  
phone back on.

DAVID  
Yes. That's a great idea. Let's try  
that.

David takes out his phone.

**INT. DAVID'S STUDY, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David sits at the computer. Karen is there too, sipping tea. She offers it to him. He declines. Starts reading.

CUT TO:

The next day.

David types into a word document, filling the page. He pauses for a moment to take a sip of coffee and review his work.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David stands by the fireplace. He hears the sound of a car nearby. He looks out the window. The car passes by without stopping.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

David sits on the couch, stares blankly in front of him.

KAREN (O.S.)  
Dave, we're coming out. Close your  
eyes!

DAVID  
OK!

He closes his eyes. We hear some noises, Karen and the kids are entering the living room.

KAREN  
OK! You can open them!

He opens his eyes and sees his kids, all dressed up. Jasper in white oxford, Daisy in a cute little dress.

DAVID  
Oh wow... Amazing guys!

He smiles, while the kids make funny poses.

**INT. AUDITORIUM, ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY**

We're mid-ceremony of the "step-up" ceremony, a long-standing tradition at Jasper and Daisy's elementary school.

All the CHILDREN are dressed up and standing in front of their chairs. The kids are singing and depicting the lyrics to "Catch a Falling Star" with simple movements. It's beautiful.

David stares straight ahead. He's emotional - struggling not to break down.

**INT. DAVID AND KAREN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

The phone rings, louder and louder. It's deep in the night. David slowly rolls over, awake, confused. He looks at the phone on the bedside table - ringing, glowing - like it's the most evil thing in the world. He knows what this call is, of course. He answers.

DAVID  
Hello.

VOICE ON PHONE (O.S.)  
 This is Julie Ford. I'm the  
 admissions nurse at Bellevue  
 Hospital, New York. Is Nic Sheff  
 your son?

**E/I. DRIVEWAY / LIVING ROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

David drives off in a hurry. Karen - from the living room -  
 watches him drive away.

**INT. DEPARTURES, SF AIRPORT - NIGHT**

David sits at the gate with his arms crossed. Still staring  
 straight ahead. There's hardly anyone there at this time.

**INT. PLANE BEFORE TAKEOFF - SOON AFTER**

David is in his seat, the plane almost fully boarded. He is  
 on the phone.

BELLEVUE DOCTOR (O.S.)  
 Mr. Sheff, sorry we missed each  
 other earlier. So Nic is still  
 experiencing some respiratory  
 depression but his vital signs are  
 returning.

A flight attendant comes to reprimand David, as the doors are  
 closed.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
 Sir? Sir! We are ready for  
 departure.

DAVID  
 OK. Okay...  
 (to the Doctor)  
 May I talk to him?

BELLEVUE DOCTOR (O.S.)  
 No I'm sorry but that won't be  
 possible. He's sleeping right now  
 and we shouldn't wake him up. Try  
 again in a few hours.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
 Sir I need you to turn off your  
 phone.

David holds his hand up...

DAVID  
Okay.

FLIGHT ATTENDANT  
Sir!

DAVID  
*(to the Doctor)*  
Would you please let him know that  
I'm on my way.

**INT. NY ST. AUGUSTUS HOSPITAL, NEW YORK - HOURS LATER (DAY)**

Nervous David walks to a NURSE at a busy nurses' station.

NURSE  
I'm sorry sir. He checked out.  
Against doctors orders.

DAVID  
What? No. No! He OD'ed.

NURSE  
I'm sorry sir. He pulled out the IV  
and catheter and left.

DAVID  
How long ago?

NURSE  
Ten, fifteen minutes. I'm sorry  
sir.

Damn. David sighs. What now?

**INT. JFK - DUSK**

David is waiting at a nearly empty gate. Again. His phone rings. He answers.

DAVID  
Yes...?

All we hear on the other end is a quivering voice.

**INT. DONUT SHOP - NIGHT**

David enters a rundown donut shop. He sees Nic sitting at a table inside, almost falling asleep, unaware of David. He looks the worst we've ever seen him. David watches him for a moment, then takes a seat opposite Nic, who opens his eyes.

David doesn't know what to say. Tears come down on Nic's cheek. David feels for him, he looks sad and vulnerable.

NIC

Look, I've thought about it and I'm done with drugs. Finished. This is it. I'm telling you dad, I'm done.

David thinks it's bullshit, but doesn't show it. He pauses. Instead he tries to find a way to get through to Nic.

DAVID

And how would that work? I mean, after what just happened.

Nic thinks about it, realizes his fantasy, starts crying.

#### **INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT**

A bland hotel room. The TV on local news. David on the phone with Vicki. Meanwhile Nic lays on the floor in his underwear. The rest of his clothes scattered across the room.

On the desk we see remnants of a pizza ordered in the room.

DAVID

So at 3 there is a conference call with the intake people of Mississippi. And 3:30 one in New Mexico. At 4 the one in Oregon.

VICKI (O.S.)

I did some research on the New Mexico one.

DAVID

Yeah?

VICKI (O.S.)

They charge \$40,000 a month.

DAVID

You know, it's not even that well rated. We'll just skip that one.

VICKI (O.S.)

Listen, if a spot opens up here in Los Angeles maybe that's the best solution for now. I'll hear back from them in an hour.

David looks over at Nic on the floor.

VICKI (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Give it a rest David. Why don't you  
 let me take over for now.

The phone call now over, David covers Nic with a blanket.

He looks at him on the floor. His thin and frail body. The  
 marks on his arms. He rubs his hair, 'good night'.

MATCH CUT TO:

**INT. NIC'S OLD BEDROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)**

A younger David rubbing 4-year-old Nic's hair as he lies in  
 his bed and is almost sleeping. David closes a book, just  
 finished telling a story. Nic's eyelids are dropping.

NIC  
 Daddy?

DAVID  
 Yes?

NIC  
 Will you check on me every 15  
 minutes?

David smiles, tucks Nic in.

DAVID  
 Yes.

Nic - perfectly safe - closes his eyes, drifts away in his  
 sleep.

Then, in his beautiful, slightly off-key, imperfect singing  
 voice, David sings the John Lennon song "Beautiful Boy" -

DAVID (CONT'D)  
*Close your eyes,  
 Have no fear,  
 The monster's gone,  
 He's on the run  
 And your daddy's here.  
 Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful -  
 Beautiful Boy  
 Before you cross the street,  
 Take my hand,  
 Life is just what happens to you  
 While you're busy making other  
 plans.  
 Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful -  
 Beautiful Boy. [etc.]*

David's singing continues as we

CUT TO:

**INT. NIC'S OLD BEDROOM - DAY (FLASHBACK, CONT.)**

Where he and Nic are now packing a Hello Kitty suitcase. Clothes and toys. Now Nic is silent, and David is talking all the time.

DAVID  
 Didn't you want to take your  
 trolls?

Nic shakes his head.

(in the background, David's singing is now backed by the original John Lennon track)

David walks to Nic's bookcase.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 How about a book?

Nic is pretty quiet. He shakes his head no.

**INT. DEPARTURES, SF AIRPORT - DAY (FLASHBACK CONT'D)**

David and Nic are at the gate. Nic is wearing a pink paper badge with his name written in Magic Marker.

A Delta flight attendant is waiting while David is saying goodbye to Nic. Other UNACCOMPANIED MINORS start to board.

David kneels to say goodbye to Nic. Nic is sulking.

The song softens in the background.

DAVID  
 Can I get a hug?

Nic shakes his head.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 What, no? No hug? Why not?

Indeed, no hug.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 Are you mad at me? Cos you have to  
 go?

An angry yes. The music fades.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
OK. But you'll be happy to see your  
mommy, right?

Also a yes. But also close to tears.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
I want you to know something, when  
you come back I'm going to be here.  
I'm going to be right here for you.  
OK? And call me when you miss me  
and I'll call you.

Nic nods.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
Do you know how much I love you?

Nic shakes his head hesitantly.

The airline attendant is watching, a little nervous, they  
need to go, but she doesn't want to come in between.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
If you could take all the words in  
the language, it still wouldn't  
describe how much I love you. And  
even if I could gather all those  
words together, that still wouldn't  
describe what I feel for you. What  
I feel for you means everything. I  
love you more than everything.

NIC  
Everything?

DAVID  
Everything.

Nic hugs David now. Then gets up. The airline attendant takes  
Nic's hand.

David nods. Nic walks away with the airline attendant.

### **INT. REHAB 3 - DAY**

Vicki walks into a new rehab. Less fancy this time. She finds  
Nic - looking just a little better - having breakfast with a  
couple of timid YOUNGER GUYS. Nic is a rehab sophomore now.

He looks up, sees Vicki standing there. She smiles when he sees her.

NIC  
Hey! That's my mom.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, REHAB 3 - DAY**

Nic and Vicki sit in sofas and are drinking tea. They're both pretty relaxed actually, considering the circumstances.

VICKI  
I'm really glad you came to LA. You know that right?

She looks Nic straight in the eyes before speaking through sobs.

VICKI (CONT'D)  
You just don't know what it is to be a parent.

Nic stares straight ahead.

NIC  
Please don't do this mom.

She fights to hold back her tears and pull it together.

VICKI  
All I could think about was you.

NIC  
I know this must sound meaningless, but I'm sorry. I really am.

VICKI  
Oh Nicky...

She puts her arm around him and pulls him in closer.

VICKI (CONT'D)  
You're such a darling. You know that, right?

Nic shakes his head. He doesn't believe it.

She kisses his forehead 3 times, short, longer, longest.

MUSIC RISES.

**EXT. ROADS, TOPANGA CANYON - DAY**

Nic appears in the distance, riding his 10-speed through Topanga Canyon. Although he is drenched in sweat and grunting he looks pretty great actually.

MUSIC is BIG now.

Changing gears, up a hill, down a hill.

We now see he is chasing SPENCER (40's), his sponsor. He's pushing it 200%.

As they arrive at a steep hill, Nic, younger and lighter, overtakes Spencer.

NIC  
Come on old man!

SPENCER  
*(playful)*  
You are being so disrespectful!

Spencer catches up to him.

SPENCER (CONT'D)  
I'm coming for ya! You about to look at my ass!

NIC  
Motherfucker!

CLOSE on Nic who's in pain but does not give up. PRIMAL AGONY, pedalling HARD:

NIC (CONT'D)  
Aaaaaarrrrrgggghhhhhhhh!!

Nic reaches the top. In the background Spencer falls over in defeat. Nic wins. They stop, laugh at each other.

Nic rides back to Spencer and helps him up.

SPENCER  
So that's what I get for helping you out? Thanks man.

NIC  
Sorry old man. I'm ruthless!

Puffing. They enjoy the view.

**EXT. GARDEN NIC'S STUDIO - DAY**

Vicki and Nic are carrying Nic's stuff towards his studio, which is located above a garage in the back of a garden of a large house.

**INT. STUDIO NIC - DAY**

They enter the studio. Drop the stuff. Nic looks at his new place. It's not huge, but his own. Nic opens a window and looks outside.

When done, Nic sits down and watches his shelf with all his stuff. Vicki watches him.

VICKI

How does this feel?

He smiles.

NIC

Like I'm a real human being.

**INT. CHURCH - DAY**

A 12-step meeting. Quite a lot of people. Lots of young and hip people in LA.

Nic looks good. He takes in the space and speaks to the group.

NIC

One day I tried methamphetamine and I thought, this is what's been missing. I felt complete. And I've been chasing that high ever since. No matter how much meth or whatever else I can find to shoot up into my body, I knew it's never enough. I went to a couple of rehabs, a detox, we would talk about disease. Sure. But it never clicked. Until one day I woke up in a hospital and someone asked me, what's your problem? I said I'm an alcoholic and an addict and he said no that's how you've been treating your problem.

People nod 'that's right'. We see Vicki and Spencer seated together in the back. Vicki watching. Spencer nodding.

NIC (CONT'D)

I know now I need to find a way to fill this big black hole in me. Anyway. I'm 14 months clean. I have a job at a rehab, and it's fulfilling to help other people get sober. I have a sponsor, Spencer, he shows me how great my life can be sober. I still have a family. My mom has been amazing. My dad has been amazing too... I want them to be proud of me.

**I/E. MAZDA / VARIOUS LOCATIONS - DAY**

Nic is driving a \$500 Mazda on Inverness roads. "Heart of Gold" by Neil Young plays. He opens the window and hangs his arm outside. Enjoys this so so much.

**INT. ROOM, HOUSE KAREN'S PARENTS - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

A younger David is getting dressed, suit and bowtie. Nic, 8 years old here, sits on the bed, he is wearing a shirt that is slightly too big, blue trousers and All Stars.

Nic is dangling his legs up and down.

DAVID

You alright? What's wrong? Are you nervous.

NIC

Yeah.

**EXT. TERRACE, HOUSE KAREN'S PARENTS - DUSK (FLASHBACK CONT'D)**

David, Karen and Nic stand on a terrace, where they have gathered with some friends and family for a cosy wedding. The terrace has a great view of hills and trees. It's a beautiful day.

Karen wears a simple white dress.

KAREN

*(to David)*

Thank you for marrying me. Thank you for being a perfect partner in an imperfect world. Thank you for introducing me to your amazing son. I'm here for you and I'm here to stay.

People cheer.

DAVID  
 (to Karen)  
 Karen, thank you for loving me.

David looks at Nic.

DAVID (CONT'D)  
 And thank you for loving him.

They kiss. Karen gestures Nic to come in between them. Nic holds hands with both of them. He smiles, although still nervous. They kiss again.

Cheering!

CUT TO:

Drinks afterwards. It's joyful and informal. A couple of musicians are playing music on their acoustic instruments. Talking, laughing.

David is talking to a friend about Nic who stands a few feet away dancing to the music.

The friend laughs. David and Karen look over at Nic. Still dancing.

**EXT. DRIVEWAY, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Back to the present.

Nic arrives home. He parks on the driveway. Steps out of the car.

David appears. Then Jasper, Daisy, Karen. Everybody is excited but also nervous. The dogs are BARKING LOUD, a little aggressive.

Nic hugs everybody separately.

NIC  
 Dad. Good to see you.

CUT TO:

NIC (CONT'D)  
 Dayze.

CUT TO:

NIC (CONT'D)

Jazzy Jeff. I missed you more than  
the sun misses the moon at night.

Jasper hugs him back, but is a little silent. They haven't  
seen each other for such a long time.

NIC (CONT'D)

Hi Karen.

KAREN

Hey.

Somehow it's really tense when Nic and Karen hug. They both  
have tiny tears.

NIC

Thank you for inviting me.  
Seriously.

**INT. NIC'S OLD BEDROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - DUSK**

Nic enters his bedroom, which has been transformed into an  
adjunct playroom with lots of LEGO-creations, easels, and art  
projects.

He puts his bag on the floor, sits on his bed, looks at all  
the toys.

Nic takes his laptop out of his backpack, and opens it. He  
starts typing hesitantly, sometimes going back, correcting,  
then continuing.

**EXT. BACK YARD, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

A glorious, sunny day. A lush green garden.

A garden sprinkler starts spraying water up in the air. It  
moves from left to right. Nic, Jasper, and Daisy run and play  
around it. They come close to it, yet try to avoid to get  
wet. Laughter. Shrieks. Of course they get wet. Bright  
colors, sunlight piercing the ropes of water splashing  
through the air, the children's skin glistening.

David sits in a deck chair. He is trying to read the New  
Yorker, but keeps looking up at his kids with a big smile.

Nic picks up Jasper in one arm and then Daisy in the other.  
He spins them both through the sprinkler, the kids laugh as  
hard as they can. David calls out.

DAVID

Hey! Easy.

But he can't help but laugh too.

**INT. DAVID'S STUDY, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

David is reading an e-mail to Karen.

DAVID

'... If the marker is depleted in meth addicts' brains, it's likely that there is a loss of nerve terminals, and the brain damage is irreversible. However, when I tested for V-MAT2, I found normal levels.'

KAREN

So there is cause for optimism?

DAVID

Normal levels is optimistic. Yes.

Karen looks at him.

KAREN

I was just checking!

He continues.

DAVID

Basically Nic's 'fried' nerve endings can grow back. They say it can take two years.

KAREN

Two years. Well, that's great David.

Tiny smile from David.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David sits at the fire place. He has a book in his hands but isn't really reading. He hears a car stopping in front of the house. He looks up.

CUT TO:

Nic walks in. Takes a seat. Watches David.

DAVID  
You're pretty late.

NIC  
Yeah. It was a great meeting. After we went to this speaker's house and watched a video. Some of my sober sponsoring bro's were there.

David puts his book down.

DAVID  
No phone?

NIC  
My cell was dead.

DAVID  
*(hates to ask)*  
Would you be OK to do a drug test?

Nic becomes silent and angry too, but swallows his pride.

NIC  
Yeah. Sure dad.

David stands up, goes to the kitchen, takes a plastic cup, gives it to Nic.

DAVID  
You understand why, right?

NIC  
I should've called to let you know.  
So...

DAVID  
I trust you, but we just need to have some kind of proof, ok?

Nic is a little down.

NIC  
That's about as contradictory as it gets. But I know. I'll do it, no worries, nothing to hide.

A beat.

DAVID  
Hey. You're doing great.

NIC  
Yeah...

DAVID  
 You really are. By my count you're  
 at 485 days clean.

Nic nods.

NIC  
 I'll just leave it in the bathroom.

Nic walks away waving his plastic cup in his hands. He stops  
 and hugs David.

NIC (CONT'D)  
 Goodnight dad. I love you.

DAVID  
 I love you too.

Nic disappears in the dark.

**INT. BATHROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David checks the drug test. He turns off the light.

**EXT. REMOTE BEACH - DAY**

The family is walking on a path that leads to a beautiful  
 remote beach. Everybody is carrying something, stuff they  
 brought to spend a couple of hours there. Jasper and Nic are  
 carrying a surfboard. They're both really excited and teasing  
 each other as they walk.

They arrive at the beautiful beach, look at the pretty big  
 waves out there. Jasper and Nic run towards the water and  
 play a little in the water in the incoming waves.

Meanwhile, David and Karen install themselves on the beach.  
 Karen looks a little worried.

Nic and Jasper are strapping the leg ropes of their  
 surfboards on and making their way to go in the water and  
 surf.

NIC  
 Alright Jasper, you ready?

JASPER  
 Yep.

NIC  
 Let's go, let's go, let's go!

They run towards the water. Karen chases after them.

KAREN

Hey no, no, wait! Jasper I don't want you to go out there.

JASPER

Mom, we won't go far. I swear!

KAREN

The waves are too big. It's too dangerous.

JASPER

But I'm a great swimmer. I've been in waves that were way bigger than this.

KAREN

Yes I know that but--

Nic joins the conversation, he is sweet.

NIC

I'll stay close...

JASPER

Nic will stay close, you see?

Karen is emotional about it, primal fear kicks in. David is watching and senses it. He gets up from his seat.

NIC

Karen, I'm going to stay close.

KAREN

Nic can go in. That's fine, but you, no. And that is final.

JASPER

*(jokingly)*

We'll see about that!

KAREN

Hey!

David takes a few step closer towards the boys. Nic tries to stay positive.

NIC

Ok, it's fine. It's fine.

They all just stand there and look at the waves. They are indeed quite big.

NIC (CONT'D)  
*(to Jasper)*  
 Shall we play a game instead? Yeah?

Jasper is taken aback a little. He nods.

JASPER  
 Yeah.

Nic playfully bumps his head into Jasper's chest to cheer him up. They head back up the beach.

CUT TO:

A little later. Karen, Daisy and David are building a castle. Jasper and Nic are laying on the beach, face to face, playing a wordgame.

NIC  
 Are you a hurfboard? No? Are you a hicycle?

It makes Jasper laugh. He shakes his head.

NIC (CONT'D)  
 OK, uhm, are you edible?

JASPER  
 Not really.

NIC  
 Not really?

JASPER  
 Not really.

NIC  
 So sort of... Are you a house?

JASPER  
 Yes. How did you know?

NIC  
 Just, you know, I can read your mind.

Jasper laughs. Nic sees David is following their conversation.

NIC (CONT'D)  
 Hey... I know you're a great swimmer. I'm going to be there to cheer for you at your next swim meet. How does that sound?

Jasper smiles. A silence. Nic looks at Jasper.

NIC (CONT'D)

Hey is it weird to see me after  
such a long time or no?

JASPER

I guess it was at first. I thought  
maybe you might be different. But  
you're the same old Nic.

Now Nic smiles.

MUSIC RISES.

**INT. KITCHEN, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Next morning. Bright sun through the windows. Nic walks in  
and hugs David.

NIC

Thanks. It was a great weekend.

DAVID

Take care.

Nic nods.

**EXT. DRIVEWAY, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Nic steps into his Mazda. The family gathers at the door.  
While Nic drives off, they wave.

David is watching Nic drive off. And, isn't there a sad look  
on Nic's face?

**I/E. MAZDA / INVERNESS ROADS - DAY**

Nic is driving on the Inverness roads.

**EXT. MARIN VALLEY SCHOOL, SAN RAFAEL - DAY (FLASHBACK)**

It's Nic's graduating class on the lovely grounds of Marin  
Valley School. A BRASS BAND starts playing. YOUNG STUDENTS  
start to walk up the grounds in a row. PARENTS, FRIENDS,  
LOVED ONES are taking seats on the bleachers.

Amongst them the whole Sheff-family. David, Karen, Jasper,  
Daisy.

David is talking to the FATHER of one of Nic's fellow students. Karen, Daisy and Jasper are trying to spot Nic among the students.

David and the whole family cheer now as Nic goes towards the stage. Even other people are cheering for Nic. Little Daisy is enraptured. David is really really proud.

DAVID

Go get'em!

Nic steps up - kisses the Principal - looks out and grins wickedly to his family. David laughs.

While making his way down the stage, Nic shakes hands with teachers standing in line with a big smile, he even hugs one of them, the teacher is surprised.

As other student's names are called, OTHER FAMILIES are cheering too. For David it feels like everybody is cheering for Nic.

Before he steps off the stage, Nic waves to his family one more time.

**EXT. DRIVEWAY, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

And we cut back to the moment when Nic gets in his Mazda and drives off from the Sheff house.

Nic does look a little sad. He watches the family wave in his rearview mirror.

**I/E. MAZDA / FREEWAY - DAY**

Nic is driving on the freeway. He's nervous. He takes an exit.

**I/E. MAZDA / PARKING - DAY**

Nic sits in his car, close to the freeway, cars passing by in the background.

He's out of sorts. He takes his phone and dials a number.

SPENCER (O.S.)

One day at a time, man.  
Congratulations. Welcome to the  
real world, I'm glad you made it.

NIC

I don't want to live in the real world. I'm so sick of living in the real world.

SPENCER (O.S.)

Bullshit. That's your disease talking, man. Wanting to isolate you, so it can kill you.

NIC

I don't feel like I have a disease, Spencer. This is not like fucking cancer. This is my fucking choice. I put myself here.

SPENCER (O.S.)

Yeah you did. You did put yourself here. Now are you going to let me talk? Or what?

A beat.

SPENCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

OK. You're a writer, right? So write. You're good at it. This is your day--

Nic puts down the phone. He is struggling. He picks it back up.

SPENCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Once you get high though, you lose everything. So you've gotta keep choosing the right way.

Nic exits the car. He stands hunched over the open door.

NIC

Right.

He clenches his teeth.

SPENCER (O.S.)

That's right. Choose the right way.

Nic seems relieved.

NIC

Hey listen, I'm going to give you a call a little later, alright? I feel like I'm going to do alright.

SPENCER (O.S.)

You blowing me off now? Don't waste my time. I'm here for you man. You know what, I'm having some steaks tonight. Why don't you come over for dinner?

NIC

That sounds great. I'll see you then. Yessir. I'll see you then.

Nic's lips start quivering, as if he's about to cry. Spencer can feel him teetering in the silence on the phone.

SPENCER (O.S.)

Nic. Nic! Nic--

NIC

Alright, bye-bye.

Nic hangs up, but starts crying again. He closes the car door and paces back and forth, swaying in every direction.

We now see where he is, he's at a parking lot overlooking the Golden Gate Bridge and San Francisco.

**EXT. MAZDA / HAIGHT STREET - NIGHT**

Nic sits on the hood of his Mazda, parked in the colorful Haight Street. A sixpack on the passenger seat, Nic takes a can of beer and opens it. His eyes are on fire. He drinks. He's smoking a cigarette. This is obviously just the beginning, the beast is loose.

He downs the can of beer. Opens the next. He is looking at his arms, making a fist, making his veins stand out.

He notices LAUREN walking by on the sidewalk (19, thin, fragile girl). He knows her, but where from? She notices him, and recognizes him too. She comes towards him.

LAUREN

Nic Sheff!

NIC

Hi...

Lauren...!

There's something strange about her, but she's also really cute.

LAUREN  
God it's been a long time. What are  
you doing here?

NIC  
Well...

Nic is thinking. Should he tell the truth?

LAUREN  
What?

NIC  
I've been sober for a while, but  
I'm seriously looking to party  
right now.

**I/E. MAZDA / SAN FRANCISCO STREETS - MONTAGE**

Nic drives while Lauren drinks a beer in the passenger.

They cruise through the shady Tenderloin. Nic parks. He takes  
out another cigarette as two DEALERS walk over to the car.

He rolls down the window.

DEALER  
I got what you need!

The dealer shakes two baggies. Nic reaches for both.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, LAUREN'S PARENTS HOUSE - NIGHT**

Nic and Lauren enter Lauren's house. A fancy place  
overlooking Baker Beach. Nic sits on the couch and  
immediately throws two syringes onto a glass coffee table.

NIC  
Can you get me a cup of water and a  
spoon?

LAUREN  
Mmmhmm.

She exits. Nic sits and looks around the room, fiddling with  
a baggie in his hand. She returns. He smiles.

LAUREN (CONT'D)  
Here you go.

She hands him the water and puts the spoon on the table.

Nic prepares the drugs like a pro. Crushing the meth, heating it up. Pulling it up a syringe. And another one, with a little less. Lauren is watching, a little nervous.

Nic finds a vein and shoots up. He coughs, almost choking. (happens when the chemicals reach the brain). His eyes water up. His breathing intensifies.

NIC  
Goddamn.... Goddamn.

CUT TO:

Now Nic shoots up Lauren.

NIC (CONT'D)  
There it is. That's it.

She coughs too. A lot. Hard breathing.

LAUREN  
Wow.

Nic smiles at her.

NIC  
You see? I told ya.

They sit there staring at each other. Not saying a word. He starts kissing her. She kisses him back. He kisses her harder.

**INT. BATHROOM, LAUREN'S PARENTS HOUSE - NIGHT**

They have sex in the shower. It's wild and sexy. Nic looks cool. They go on for a long time. Kissing, moaning, fucking.

Lauren comes. Nic keeps on going.

CUT TO:

**INT. LIVING ROOM, LAUREN'S PARENTS HOUSE - DAY**

Nic is sitting on the couch in his underwear next to his belt still tied in a loop for his arm. He looks bad. He's been throwing up.

He looks out at the coffee table. It's a huge mess. Bottles of wine. Drug paraphernalia layed out. Crystal meth. Heroin. Not much left.

He starts to cry. He curls into the fetal position and grabs hold of the nearest pillow.

While he cries we hear David leaving him a voice-mail.

DAVID (O.S.)  
It's dad again. I feel like you might have been a little down when you left, Nic. So I'm here to talk if you need to.

CUT TO:

**INT. DAVID'S STUDY, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

David hangs up the phone. He sits in his study. Thinking.

**EXT. BACK YARD, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

David is on the phone. Making another call.

DAVID  
So you have no idea where he is?

VICKI (O.S.)  
Spencer told me he heard from him. He was having a difficult time but was pulling through. But, yeah, he's not at work. Not at home. Unreachable on his cell.

DAVID  
Damn, Vicki. He left here two days ago... Why haven't you checked on him since? You're supposed to be taking care of him, right?

**[INTERCUT WITH VICKI IN HER OFFICE IN LA]**

Vicki looks out of sorts.

VICKI  
What the fuck, David. Who's been taking care of him the last year?

DAVID  
You could've checked on him! What the fuck is your problem?

VICKI

What do you think I do all day? And besides that, we can't run surveillance on him 24/7.

DAVID

*(not listening to Vicki)*

I think you need to go to the police right now and file a missing persons report. OK?!

VICKI (O.S.)

Stop YELLING at me!!

DAVID

No I'm not going to stop yelling at you! Because you are just... what are you even doing there!

VICKI (O.S.)

You're being unfair David.

DAVID

Listen to me!

Vicki is grasping for air, it's too much for her. She starts crying. She hangs up.

ON DAVID: his eyes like black saucers of rage.

All of a sudden he flings his phone across the lawn, into the trees beyond the yard.

DAVID (CONT'D)

FUCK.

CUT TO:

David angrily rummages around in the foliage, looking for his phone. Karen finds him.

KAREN

Dave?

David turns and sees her.

DAVID

*(anguished)*

Can you call my phone, please?

KAREN

What's going on?

DAVID

He's gone.

David is shaking his head. Karen too. What now? David starts looking for his phone again. Karen too.

**INT. BEDROOM DAVID & KAREN, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David is throwing UNDERWEAR, SHIRTS, a TOILETRIES POUCH and other items into a TRAVEL BAG. Karen enters, giving David the a 'what's-going-on'-look.

KAREN

How do we even know he's in LA? I mean he could be in San Francisco. He could be in fucking Mexico for all we know.

DAVID

I need to go.

KAREN

And I need you to stay.

DAVID

I told you, Vicki can't handle it.

KAREN

I don't care about Vicki. This isn't about Vicki!!

DAVID

Why don't you just relax and try to be reasonable.

KAREN

What? You be reasonable!

DAVID

I am being reasonable.

KAREN

IS THIS REASONABLE?

DAVID

NO IT'S NOT! How can I be? My son is out there somewhere and I don't know what he's doing. I don't know how to help him!

KAREN

YOU CAN'T!

David lets that sink in. It hurts but it might be true.

Karen is silent for a moment. Then sits on the bed.

Jasper enters their room in his PJ's, still sleepy.

KAREN (CONT'D)  
Hey big man. What's up?

JASPER  
I can't sleep.

She picks him up and carries him out of the room.

JASPER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Good night daddy.

DAVID  
Good night.

**EXT. ROAD LEADING TO POINT REYES LIGHTHOUSE - DAY - MONTAGE**

David is walking his dogs at the beautiful vista where he once shared a joint with Nic.

**EXT. BACK YARD, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Daisy and Jasper play on the swings. Carefree.

**INT. KAREN'S STUDIO - NIGHT**

Karen focuses on her work. Looking for the next brush stroke.

**INT. DAVID'S STUDY, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David types and edits his work. Focused.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David can't sleep. He picks LEGO's up off of the floor.

**INT. KID'S BEDROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Karen gets the kid's dressed, ready to go out.

**INT. ROLLING STONE MAGAZINE - MEETING ROOM - DAY**

David in a meeting room with a couple of editors. David is trying his best to not constantly check his phone.

**EXT. PATHWAY LEADING TO INVERNESS AQUATICS CENTER - DAY**

David, Karen, Daisy and Jasper just parked the car and walk to the entrance of the swimming pool. A lot of kids and parents are arriving and entering.

Both Daisy and Jasper have a bag with their bathing suits.

JASPER

I thought Nic was gonna be here today.

DAVID

Something came up.

JASPER

Can I call him?

DAVID

That's not going to be possible.

JASPER

Why not?

DAVID

Because it's not.

Silence. Jasper hesitates.

JASPER

Is Nic back on drugs again?

Wow. Karen looks at David. They both don't know what to say. A long silence. Karen is honest.

KAREN

We don't know, honey.

Jasper nods. He walks off, takes Daisy along.

**INT. KITCHEN, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

The phone rings throughout the house. No answer. It clicks through to an answer machine.

**EXT. DRIVEWAY, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Nic and Lauren arrive at the front door, Nic lifts a pot plant, nothing there. He tries another pot, again nothing.

It makes him angry. He throws the pot to the floor. He kicks the solid door, nothing happens.

**EXT. BACK YARD - DAY**

Nic goes around the back. He creeps along different doors and windows, and checks if one of them is open.

He starts banging and pounding on a back door, until it breaks open and he slams to the ground. He bounces right back up. If he weren't high, his limbs would hurt after this.

**INT. SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

We follow Nic who walks through the house and gathers stuff he can take along.

In a storage he takes a jacket, a Nintendo console, some bottles of wine. An old laptop. From the kitchen a bottle of Vodka. He dumps some stuff into a woven laundry basket.

Meanwhile Lauren is looking at art books, etc.

**INT. DAVID'S STUDY, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Nic enters David's study. He opens drawers of his desk, looking for stuff he can take. He's progressively angrier and angrier.

On David's desk Nic sees print-outs of stuff David is writing. He looks at it, his own name appears quite a few times.

He reads the top line: *Nic didn't come home last night.*

Then the last: *Have you seen my son? Have you seen my beautiful boy? Tell him I miss him.*

**INT. INVERNESS AQUATICS CENTER - DAY**

The competition is on. BOYS and GIRLS of all ages in their bathing suits. Different TEAMS, amongst them Jasper's team 'Angry Tuna'. Jasper is just about to get on a starting block, while David and Karen stand to the side of the pool. Karen waves, but Jasper doesn't see her.

Behind Jasper we notice a large banner from the local swim team that says: 'Nothing in life is so complicated that it cannot be achieved by discipline and hard work'.

And GOOOOOOOO! Jasper dives into the water, and swims as fast as he can. Karen is watching and cheering. David looks pretty stressed out.

A little later, David walks out checking his phone. Karen sees him walking out. She's angry. She focuses on Jasper again.

**INT. LIVING ROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

Nic is watching the basket and the stuff he wanted to take with him . . . What a stupid idea.

At that moment we hear a car pull up in the driveway.

He rushes to a window. It's the family arriving. Nic, instant panic mode.

NIC

Oh fuck.

*(loud whisper)*

Hey Lauren.

LAUREN

What's going on?

NIC

Let's go. We gotta go.

They rush out of the back.

**EXT. DRIVEWAY, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

In the driveway David, Karen, and the kids all get out of the car. Jasper is wearing a medal around his neck. The back of the car is filled with bags of groceries. David and Karen pick them up and carry them.

KAREN

Honeys, can you help us out here?

They all take something - David the bulk. They walk to the front door, Karen opens it. They enter.

**INT. LIVING ROOM AND KITCHEN, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

They pass the living room.

Dump the groceries in the kitchen.

Karen starts unpacking. Jasper takes a banana and starts eating it, just hanging a little in the kitchen.

Daisy goes up the stairs to her room.

David heads back outside.

**EXT. DRIVEWAY, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

As David enters the house again with the last groceries, he notices the broken plant pot at the entrance.

**INT. LIVING ROOM AND KITCHEN, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

David enters again with the last groceries.

JASPER  
I think I just saw Nic...

KAREN  
What hon?

JASPER  
I think I just saw Nic and a girl.  
Running away.

Dumbstruck for a moment... David rushes outside.

**EXT. DRIVEWAY, SHEFF HOUSE / AND STREETS SURROUNDING- DAY**

David runs onto the street, sees Nic and Lauren, but they're pretty far away. They're running.

DAVID  
Nic, Nic!

CUT TO:

Nic, white as a sheet, sprinting. Lauren beside him. They go around a corner into a bush.

NIC  
Fuck! Fuck!

CUT TO:

David runs on the street now, but doesn't see Nic anymore.

Karen, Daisy and Jasper run to the front door. Daisy calls out.

DAISY

Nic!

Karen spins around.

KAREN

No! Stay inside. I am not kidding.

She shuts the door.

CUT TO:

Nic and Lauren clamber into the Mazda, try to be as quiet as possible, though they're gasping for breath.

LAUREN

What do we do?

He kisses her and tries to calm her down.

NIC

It's alright. It's alright.

Through the bush they see David running past them.

NIC (CONT'D)

Oh fuck.

They wait just a little more until David is further along. Nic starts the engine, hits the gas and rushes into the other direction.

CUT TO:

David turns around as he sees and hears the Mazda drive off in the other direction.

DAVID

Oh no...

Nic has to drive past the house. Nic sees Karen. She is distraught. She looks at Nic, wild and scared at the same time.

Close on Karen: what now? She jumps in the car, starts the engine.

JASPER

(from inside)

Mom?

Karen simply gestures again - *Stay there!* - as she reverses it onto the street, takes off, disappears. It's wild and loud and scary.

CUT TO:

Back to David, who is walking back - out of breath - and now sees Karen in the car speeding off, going after Nic...

DAVID

No! No!

David loses it, everything just seems to slip out of his hands.

**I/E. MAZDA / STREETS OF INVERNESS - DAY**

Nic driving, looking behind him. And then there's Karen in the distance gaining ground.

NIC

Ah, no!

He floors it.

Nic turns a corner. Karen not far behind it.

**I/E. MAZDA / STREETS AROUND INVERNESS - DAY**

On a stretch of Marin County road, Nic powers along.

LAUREN

*(looking behind)*

I think we're losing her...

Karen way back there.

**I/E. CAR, STREETS AROUND INVERNESS - DAY**

Karen is slowing down. Suddenly realizing this is crazy. She comes to a stop in the middle of the road.

She watches the Mazda ahead in the distance. Stares blankly. Motionless.

And suddenly: she's weeping. It all comes out, floods of tears, huge gulping sobs.

**EXT. DRIVEWAY, SHEFF HOUSE - DAY**

David walks up to the driveway. Daisy is crying.

Jasper is consoling her.

DAVID  
I'm sorry guys.

David looks at them... doesn't know what to do anymore. He comes closer to his kids. Sits on the ground near them.

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

**EXT. PORTRERO HILL, SF - NIGHT**

Nic is taking a walk and smoking a cigarette by himself. He drops the butt and walks over to his Mazda on a quiet street on a hill. In the distance we see the city of San Francisco.

**INT. MAZDA - NIGHT**

Nic steps into his Mazda. As the light turns on, we see Lauren is lying in the passenger seat, passed out.

Nic watches her a little closer, is she OK? He shakes her.

NIC  
Lauren?

She actually looks a little blue.

NIC (CONT'D)  
Lauren?!

He checks a pulse. None. He slaps her face.

NIC (CONT'D)  
Lauren!

He panics, searches her phone, finds it, dials 911. Meanwhile tilts the backseat, and starts to do some CPR. Mouth to mouth. Chest compressions.

NIC (CONT'D)  
*(in phone)*  
Hello. Yeah, I'm with a friend. She just OD'd. I need an ambulance. We need some help!

911 VOICE (O.S.)  
Sir, do you know CPR?

NIC  
I'm doing it. Please come quick.  
You have to send an ambulance.

911 VOICE (O.S.)  
What is your location?

NIC  
I don't know. Trace the call.

Nic drops the phone, keeps on doing chest compressions. All of a sudden:

Lauren gasps, and jerks awake. She blinks twice and bursts into tears.

Nic is relieved. He holds her.

**EXT. PORTRERO HILL, SF - NIGHT**

An ambulance has now arrived and routine examinations have been done.

EMT  
We need to take you to the ER.

LAUREN  
I don't want to. I'm fine.

EMT  
*(firm)*  
We need to take you to the ER.

NIC  
Can't you hear what she's saying?  
She doesn't want to go.

EMT  
Otherwise I need to inform the  
police. Up to you.

NIC  
Godammit.

Nic and Lauren look at each other. They don't want police.

LAUREN  
You're going to come meet me right?  
You promise?

NIC

Yes.

Nic nods. Lauren is crying.

LAUREN

I love you. Come get me, Nic.

NIC

I love you too.

LAUREN

Please come get me. You promise?

Nic gets angry.

NIC

Yes I said I will! What do you  
fucking want from me?

Nic can't look Lauren in the eyes. This is the end, but  
Lauren is too fucked up to see that.

CUT TO:

The ambulance drives off. Nic feels miserable. Worn out,  
fucked up, done. Nic still has Lauren's phone. He dials a  
number. It's ringing.

DAVID (O.S.)

David Sheff...

NIC

Hey dad. It's me.

DAVID (O.S.)

Nic.

Nic is crying. Standing in the middle of the street.

NIC

Please don't hate me, dad. I know  
what I did wrong. I... Listen, I  
want to stop. But please, please,  
please no rehab. Let me come home.  
I realized I actually need to be  
home. You guys will give me the  
strength to stop. Alright?

A beat.

DAVID (O.S.)

That's not going to happen.

**INTERCUT WITH INT. LIVING ROOM, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David is seated on the edge of the couch.

This breaks David's heart.

DAVID

I wish I could help, but I can't do that. I can't.

NIC

Please help me dad. I just need a little bit of help.

*(crying, pleading)*

Please help me. I want to come home.

DAVID

All I can tell you is what you already know. Call your sponsor.

NIC

I don't want to talk to my sponsor. I want to talk to you.

DAVID

Get help. I love you and I hope you get your life together.

NIC

I love you too.

David hangs up.

We stay on David's face for a while.

**EXT. PORTRERO HILL, SF - NIGHT**

Nic looks out at the city. Alone.

**INT. DAVID'S STUDY, SHEFF HOUSE - NIGHT**

David enters his study. It's a mess, papers everywhere. Books, printouts, etc. He starts cleaning up his desk. Makes it all neat and tidy.

He looks around and watches the pictures hanging on the wall. We've seen them a couple of times now. David walks to the wall.

Looks at the picture of him and Nic, 12 years old, both in wetsuits.

He takes it down. He then takes down a couple of other pictures with Nic in them too. He steps to his desk, opens a lower-down desk drawer. He puts the photos in there. He closes the drawer.

He walks out and switches the light off.

**EXT. BEAR VALLEY TRAIL, ARCH ROCK - DAY**

David, Karen, Daisy and Jasper together with ANOTHER FAMILY WITH KIDS are walking over the Bear Valley Trail.

They arrive near the ocean. It's really beautiful. Daisy, Jasper and the other kids are playing pretty wild, running and jumping. As they arrive closer to the edge of the cliffs Karen is a little worried about it, but she let's them be. David too.

David's phone buzzes. Caller ID says 'Vicki'.

David distances himself a little from the rest of the gang and takes the call.

**INTERCUT WITH INT. HOUSE VICKI LA - DAY**

DAVID

Hello?

VICKI

Nicolas called. He sounds desperate. He is going to die if we don't do anything.

David takes a deep breath.

DAVID

And he's going to die even if we do. Nothing we do has any effect on him.

A beat. Karen looks back at David.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I failed.

VICKI

I know you feel ashamed. OK? So do I.

Silence.

Vicki takes a deep breath and starts talking, takes her time to make her point.

VICKI (CONT'D)

But you have done great, David.  
And Karen too. So thank you for  
that. You were up for it, when I  
wasn't. And I'm not giving up now.  
Never. But I can't do this alone. I  
need your help.

David thinks about it. It hurts.

DAVID

I don't think you can save people,  
Vicki.

A beat.

VICKI

No, but you can be there for them.  
Can't you?

David let's it sink in, breathes heavily. He watches Karen and the other couple. He watches the cliffs and the rocks and the ocean.

DAVID

I'm done. OK?

Vicki is crying. Crushed. She hangs up.

**INT. CAFFE TRIESTE - DUSK**

Nic sits in Caffe Trieste, again. He is writing some stuff in a notebook. His eyes look like he has cried for hours.

**INT. AL-ANON MEETING, CHURCH BASEMENT - NIGHT**

David and Karen enter a dingy room. Neon tubes flicker, a fan is ticking in a corner. A dozen people are there, serving themselves coffee and donuts.

The meeting is called to order, people take seats in plastic chairs set in a circle. David and Karen too.

We see people talking, but don't hear them. David and Karen are listening while also checking out the people. What to think of this? Do they belong there?

David reads an AL ANON sign that reads the AL ANON THREE C's:  
'You didn't cause it, you can't cure it, you can't control  
it.'

CUT TO:

Mid-meeting.

MEETING LEADER

Rose, would you like to share?

A woman, clearly distraught, sits up straighter in her seat.

ROSE

Thank you. I'm Rose.

THE GROUP

Hi, Rose.

ROSE

I, well... I had a rough week. Some  
of you know, some of you don't. I  
lost my Frances this week -

- a real gasp of dismay in the room -

ROSE (CONT'D)

- she died of an overdose on  
Sunday.

She herself alternates between being very matter-of-fact and  
having great trouble holding it together.

ROSE (CONT'D)

I guess that means I'm in mourning.  
But I realized something else. I've  
actually been in mourning for  
years. Cos even when she was alive,  
she wasn't there.

Her friends continue to stroke her. Some PEOPLE are in tears.  
David is listening but not looking. Karen closes her eyes.

INTERCUT WITH:

**INT. CAFFE TRIESTE - NIGHT**

Nic stops writing, gets up and walks to the bathroom. He  
leaves his notebook on the table.

**INT. AL-ANON MEETING, CHURCH BASEMENT - NIGHT**

Rose continues.

ROSE

You mourn for the living. That's a hard way to live. So in a way, it's better, I guess. She was a dear, dear young woman. I always felt I needed to stay strong. There'd be some future event, and I'd need all my strength for it. But there are no events after this one. I hope she's not in pain now. Oh, my Frances.

And now Rose weeps, and weeps. It's a full-fledged weeping, the kind you don't often see, even in meetings. But the room just lets it happen. Lets it flow. Lets her be.

David takes Karen's hand. Karen lets it happen. She's cried, she doesn't look at David.

**INT. CAFFE TRIESTE**

Nic's injecting himself in the bathroom.

As it comes on it's not slow motion, but it might as well be.

Nic, jaws slack, eyes closed, unfurls backwards in his own SLOW-MO. In a beautiful, haunted arc of ballet he fully reclines, until his head slowly touches the ground as if it's a feather-down mattress. PEACE descends. His lips are turning blue.

**INT. CAR / WINDING ROADS INVERNESS - DAWN**

David is driving the winding roads. As he drives through the woods it's pretty dark outside. Focusing on the road, he looks blank-faced. Frozen. Conflicted.

As he takes a turn, and exits the woods, he arrives in an open valley, where the sun manages to shine its first rays of light. He watches the gentle hills of Marin.

**INT. HALLWAY, RECOVERY HOUSE - DAY**

David walks into a white hallway.



**CARDS:**

Drug overdoses are now the leading cause of death for Americans under 50.

Through an incredible amount of support and hard work, Nic has been sober for 8 years - one day at a time.

While addiction treatment is massively under-funded and under-regulated, there are those working tirelessly in all communities to combat this epidemic.

The help is out there - for those struggling with the disease, their loved ones, and for those who grieve.

**ROLL CREDITS.**