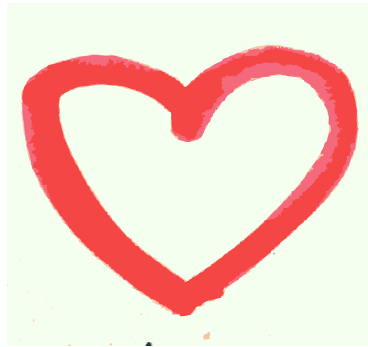


Heart House

Pilot Episode - "Powerless & Unmanageable"

A One-Hour Dramedy Series
Inspired by True Events



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FADE IN:

EXT. KELLEY RESIDENCE (WILTON, CT) - NIGHT

Red and blue police lights illuminate the scene as a patrol car slowly pulls up to the front of a house. The POLICEMAN gets out and slowly walks to the front door and knocks. A bedroom light comes on upstairs. It's 4am, JACK KELLEY (53, typical white collar Dad) opens the door. Inaudible words are exchanged. A look of bewilderment awashes his face. **CUT TO INT.:** His wife, MARY KELLEY (55, real-estate agent, worrywart) comes to the stairway railing and he looks up at her unable to find the words. She runs down the stairs to the door and the POLICEMAN must repeat the information he came to deliver. She bowls over and drops to her knees.

CUT TO: INT. KELLEY CAR - I-95 NORTHBOUND - NIGHT

Rain streaks across the windshield as headlights cut through the darkness. JACK grips the steering wheel tightly, his knuckles white. The clock on the dash reads 4:25am. No other cars on the road. MARY, staring out the window into the abyss, quietly prays between sobs. They don't say a word to each other. Just sitting in the silence and stillness of the unknowing. The sound of the tires on the highway underscores the long drive. The car races on. Its headlights illuminate a road sign: "Norwich - 12 miles." The clock on the dash now reads 5:53am.

EXT. BACCHUS HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT

JACK pulls the car into the hospital parking lot. A big sign on the front of the building reads "BACCHUS HOSPITAL."

INT. BACCHUS HOSPITAL - TRAUMA UNIT - NIGHT

JACK and MARY burst through double doors, stopping at the nurses station to check-in. The nurse leads them back into the trauma center. A DOCTOR (40s, clinical) stands waiting with a grim expression. Looking over a clipboard, the doctor is reading to them, struggling to make eye contact. CAMERON KELLEY (21, athletic, but looking barely alive) is in the background laying in a hospital bed. After a couple minutes listening to the doctor and crying, they rush into the room.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

CAMERON lies motionless on a hospital bed, hooked up to monitors. A neck brace supports his head; tubes in various places, an oxygen mask obscures his face. Bloody scrapes all over his body. JACK moves to CAMERON'S side and clasps his hand. Tears brimming in his eyes. MARY approaches, kneeling beside CAMERON and pressing her forehead to his arm. The rhythmic beeping of the heart monitor underscores the scene as JACK leans over his son, breaking down.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

SIX MONTHS LATER.

INT. COOPER / KELLEY RESIDENCES (STORRS/WILTON, CT) - MORNING

OPENING MONTAGE:

The sunrise filters through blinds onto a humble, tidy space. JOHN COOPER (48, ruggedly handsome and fit) sits at the edge of his bed, his elbows resting on his knees. A framed picture of two smiling teenagers sits on the nightstand. JOHN exhales deeply, proceeds to stretch for a bit, then meditates using a zafu.

CUT TO: CAMERON KELLEY being woken up in his room (a converted au pair suite above the garage) by his mom, MARY KELLEY. She brings him a heart healthy breakfast with fresh squeezed orange juice, which sits on his nightstand as he continues to sleep.

CUT BACK TO: JOHN meditating. The moment is broken by FIZBO (his golden retriever) licking his face and transitions into JOHN lacing up his sneakers to take FIZBO on a run.

CUT BACK TO: MARY is folding laundry and looks out the window to see CAMERON awake and helping his Dad mow the lawn. She carries a basket of fresh clothes into his room where we see boxes and bags of clothes being packed up.

CUT BACK TO: JOHN returning from his jog, he pours FIZBO a bowl of food and steps into a steaming shower. JOHN and FIZBO both jump in his pick-up truck and drive away.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - AA MEETING ROOM - MORNING

A row of folding chairs set up in a circle. Small meeting. Exactly six chairs and five bodies sitting in them. Men of varied ages and backgrounds. Coffee pots, doughnuts, styrofoam cups on a table in the back. JOHN sits among the men, listening attentively to BOB - THE GUEST SPEAKER.

BOB - SPEAKER

...You can't change the past, but you can live today in a way that honors the life you want tomorrow. Anyway, I think that's my time. Thanks for letting me share, guys.

MEN'S GROUP

(in unison)

Thanks, Bob.

BOB smiles and acknowledges the group. A basket is passed around the circle. A few men put in a dollar.

MATT - MEETING LEADER

Okay, thanks Bob. Great share. We have time for one more, if anyone has a burning desire.

JOHN raises his hand as he slips a twenty in the basket.

MATT

Yes, John. Go ahead.

JOHN

John. Alcoholic.

MEN'S GROUP

(in unison)

Hi, John.

JOHN

Thank you for your service, Matt.

MATT offers a nod and a smile.

JOHN CONT'D

I don't know. I guess I've been feeling a little extra anxious lately. School's starting back up today, which is always hard. I start thinking about my son, Casey.

(beat)

He'd be starting his senior year this year. Getting ready to graduate in the spring and start his life.

(beat)

You know, we do these steps. And it helps. It helps put the bottle down. But these feelings. Oh man. These feelings of regret and anger. The inability to forgive myself. And that burning pain that feels like drinking gasoline and setting fire to my insides. I don't know what step that is. Please. Someone tell me. Which step gets rid of this endless fucking darkness I feel. Is it Twelve? I guess it's 12, right? I don't know. Lately, it just feels like, how do I do a proper 12 step if there isn't anyone to carry the goddamn message to, you know?

(beat)

Maybe that's just what faith is. Putting my trust into this program. Trusting that somehow my Higher Power will deliver a solution.

(beat)

Trust God. Clean house. Help others. I'll keep coming back.

MEN'S GROUP
 (in unison)
 Thanks, John.

MATT
 Okay, that's all the time we have for
 today. We have a nice way of closing.

Everyone stands up, holds hands forming a circle. Meeting wraps with an inaudible serenity prayer. JOHN nods, thoughtful, and exchanges glances with his SPONSOR, PETER H. (65, retired cop, tall and commanding). PETER motions with his head towards the door. JOHN nods back.

EXT. DINER PARKING LOT - MORNING

JOHN'S truck speeds into the diner parking lot. He rolls down the window a crack, pets FIZBO and gets out.

INT. DINER - MORNING

JOHN enters the diner and sees PETER sitting at the counter, coffee and a seat waiting for him. JOHN sits down.

JOHN
 Good meeting.

PETER
 Better than waking up with a hangover
 and a hooker in my bed.

JOHN
 Amen, brother.

PETER
 So... what's going on with you?

JOHN
 Eh, you know... the usual, prepping for
 the new school year. Plenty of students
 needing community service hours, I'm
 sure. I just have no fucking clue if
 we're making a difference.

PETER
 Maybe the progress isn't in them, John,
 but (pokes John in the chest), in here.
 Either way, you can't expect these kids
 to become enlightened just because you
 hand them a copy of "Breathing Under
 Water."

JOHN scoffs, staring into the kitchen area.

JOHN
 I know. I know. It would just be nice if
 like one kid... just one... (he pauses)

PETER

Just one what?

JOHN slumps his head.

PETER CONT'D

What?

JOHN now looks back up at PETER intently.

JOHN

Just told me that I'm not wasting my fucking time here. That the work we're doing is helping. Just once I'd love to hear-- ahh fuck it. It's useless.

PETER

(laughing)

HA! Well, we can agree on that.

(beat)

You know what they say about expectations, right?

JOHN

Everybody has 'em?

PETER

No, that's assholes. Or maybe it's opinions. I don't know. It doesn't fucking matter. The point is expectations are like premeditated resentments. And a resentment is like lighting yourself on fire and waiting for the other person to choke on the smoke.

JOHN

Right. I'll remember that next time some kid gets referred to the House for playing Edward 40 Hands or some shit.

PETER

What in the hell is Edward 40 hands?

JOHN

It's a drinking game where kids tape 40s to their hands and... you know what, nevermind. It's not important. What I'm saying is these kids are just so goddamn young. And naive. Why did I think this would be a good idea? These kids aren't ready to get sober. I sure as shit wasn't at that age. Were you?

PETER

Fuck no, but this isn't about us, John. It's about giving back. Isn't that the whole reason you started the Heart

Program in the first place?

JOHN

Yeah, of course.

PETER

Alright, so just take it easy, brother. Easy does it. More will be revealed.

JOHN

Jesus, how many slogans are you gonna sling at me this morning? You sound like a freakin' AA pamphlet.

PETER

Hey, those idioms are slogans for a reason, pal. They're true. And they work.

JOHN

Yeah. Yeah. I know.

(beat)

Hey. By the way, did I tell you that Melissa finally decided?

PETER

Melissa, your daughter Melissa?

JOHN nods, holding his coffee mug.

PETER CONT'D

On?

JOHN

College. She's here. At UConn.

JOHN takes a sip. PETER'S face perks up.

PETER

That's great, man! Real great. See that. God is showing you the door already. All you have to do is walk through it.

(beat)

So that's why you're a little "extra anxious."

JOHN

Actually, no. I mean yeah, that certainly doesn't help, but it's something else. I'm just hoping I can trust my instincts on this one.

PETER

"This one" huh? You want to talk about it?

JOHN

Not really.

PETER

Alright. Hey! Just your fucking sponsor here, pal.

JOHN

It's not like that.

PETER

Yeah right, sell that bullshit somewhere else. Listen, I heard a lot of "I, me and my's" in that share this morning. Don't forget, this is a "we" program.

JOHN looks at his watch. It looks expensive.

JOHN

Okay, I hear you Peter. Listen, sorry I gotta get going or I'm going to be late.

JOHN gets up to leave. Throws a \$10 bill on the counter.

PETER

Okay, brother. (beat) Edward 40 hands, huh?

JOHN

I mean, at least they're Tim Burton fans, right? Same time next week?

PETER

You got it. Call if you need me.

JOHN exits the diner and jumps in his truck. Cruising through farm country, he drives into a big college campus. A sign reads "UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT."

EXT. THE HEART HOUSE - PARKING LOT - MORNING

JOHN exits his truck (FIZBO follows) and walks towards an old large Victorian house. It is badly in need of a paint job. The sign outside reads "HEART HOUSE" in big red letters and underneath in small black print it says, "Substance Abuse Prevention Center" with a logo of two hands in the shape of a heart.

INT. THE HEART HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

FIZBO runs through the back door into the kitchen area followed by JOHN. The kitchen is a whirlwind of activity. Plates clatter in the sink as half-empty coffee cups and crumbs litter every surface. A few students sit at the kitchen table.

MARTY

Fizbo! Come here boy. You want some water. Yeah, sure you do. Good boy. Who's a good boy?

MARTY (FEMALE, EARLY 60S, BUSTY, FIRECRACKER WITH A SHARP WIT, HOUSE MANAGER/MOM) grabs a bowl from the cupboard, pours water in and places it on the kitchen floor. A

frazzled INTERN 1- LOUIE (male, late teens) rushes up to JOHN waving a piece of paper.

LOUIE - INTERN 1

Hey Coop! Can you sign my hours sheet real quick? I gotta run this over to my RA before noon.

Before JOHN can respond, LISA (INTERN 2, female, early-20s, responsible) interrupts, calling out from across the kitchen.

LISA

Did you guys see the email about the Greek week event? Coop, are we still doing that panel? I need to let them know.

MARTY bustles around the kitchen. Her hands are full, emptying trash, scrubbing a spill on the counter, and barking orders.

MARTY

Can someone please put a new bag in the trash can? I swear to God, if you people don't clean up after yourselves, no one's allowed in here next week!

JOHN

I got it.

JOHN gets a garbage bag from the pantry and puts it in the can.

MARTY

And who left the fridge open? Damn it, the milk is warm!

LOUIE

My bad, Marty. Won't happen again.

Students sitting at the table are conducting a phone survey.

KIM

(INTERN 3, PARTY GIRL)

Hello! Hi, yes. This is Kim from the Heart House. Would you be willing to answer a few questions for an anonymous survey? Yes, the results get published in the Daily Campus.

(beat)

Okay, great. Did you drink last night? Okay. Did you get drunk last night? Got it. Okay, last one. Did you have sex last night?

(beat)

No, yourself doesn't count. (short pause, RYAN - INTERN 4, Irish Southie male, thick Boston accent - holds back a laugh) Great, thank you.

KIM hangs up the phone and looks at the other student interns.

KIM CONT'D

What a fucking prude.

RYAN

Called that shit.

KIM

Yeah, no kidding asshole. WTF. Does anyone at this school get hammered and have coital relations anymore?

RYAN

Obviously not. Bunch of fucking non-binary nerds at this place now. By the way, coital relations? What are you? Some kind of pearl clutching, easily offended Sheldon Cooper?

LOUIE

Who's Sheldon Cooper? Is that like someone in your family Coop?

JOHN sifts through mail standing in the kitchen barely paying attention.

JOHN

(responds w/o looking up)

No.

LOUIE

Who's Sheldon then?

RYAN

Big Bang Theory? The Nerd Genius?

LOUIE

Oh. (short pause) Aren't they all nerd geniuses?

RYAN

Yes. Beat it, dork.

JOHN

Be nice.

KIM

(Overlapping)

Yeah, like anyone is touching your disgusting limp noodle, you cuck.

JOHN

Take it easy.

RYAN

(Overlapping)

How dare you? I have a beautiful noodle,

hard as a rock too.

(beat)

Also, I don't think you know what a cuck is.

KIM (w/Boston accent)

Sure I do. You caulk-sucka.

The other interns laugh. JOHN raises his hand, signaling for quiet.

JOHN

Jesus. Can you all shut the fuck up for 5 seconds?

ALL INTERNS

Sorry Coop!

JOHN

Alright, gimme that (grabs sheet from LOUIE). I'll sign it now, but you better finish up those last 5 hours this week. I'm serious.

JOHN signs the sheet and hands it to LOUIE, who then bolts out the back door. Just then MAYA RIVERA (late 20s, female cop/counselor, grad student) enters the kitchen area.

MAYA

Coop, can I get five minutes with you in private please? It's important.

JOHN looks at MAYA, puts the mail back down and gives MARTY a quick nod.

JOHN

Hey Marty, can you keep these perverts in line for a few?

MARTY

Yeah go on, I've got this.

LISA

Coop! The panel?

JOHN looks confused.

LISA CONT'D

Greek Week! Are you doing it?

JOHN

Yes, yes. I'll do it.

JOHN pivots toward MAYA, and they exit the kitchen together. Ryan mocks MARTY'S giant breasts behind her back. KIM slaps him across the chest hard. MARTY could care less.

CUT TO: INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

JOHN sits on the front of his desk. The office is a mess,

but cozy and warm. Papers strewn about on his desk. A separate area contains a small table with a meditation bowl, incense, and candles on various surfaces. A comfortable couch in the corner that looks like a good place for a nap. MAYA is standing with a concerned look on her face holding a file.

MAYA

So when were you going to tell me about this (holding up a file)?

JOHN

What's that?

MAYA

This new client... CAMERON something. I just saw it on the calendar.

JOHN

Oh that. Today. I was going to tell you today.

MAYA

Does Flip know?

JOHN

No, why would he?

JOHN starts rustling around his office looking for something.

MAYA

Okay fine, but how long have you known about this kid? (Still holding the file)

JOHN

I don't even know if he's gonna show up.

MAYA

I get that John, but I'm looking at this file. And Jesus. This isn't just some underage drinking in the dorms.

JOHN scrambles around the office continuing his search.

JOHN

I know. But listen, the parents contacted me asking for help. And what? Am I supposed to just turn them away?

MAYA

No, but--

JOHN

I don't get it. This is exactly what we've wanted. Well, not wanted, but you know what I mean.

MAYA

More like YOU have wanted.

JOHN

Relax. It's going to be fine. When I spoke with his Dad over the summer, he said they're having trouble getting him to open up. They're not looking for a miracle worker. They just want him to talk to someone. Isn't that exactly what you're trained to do?

MAYA

Oh, don't blow smoke up my ass. Why aren't you taking him then? You're the one always complaining that we're not making enough of an impact on these kids.

JOHN

You don't want him?

MAYA

I didn't say that.

JOHN

Good. So what's the problem then?

MAYA

You're an asshole.

JOHN

Assholes are like expectations. They're premeditated and everyone has one.

MAYA

What the fuck are you talking about?

JOHN

Forget it.

JOHN opens a binder and throws it back in the drawer.

MAYA

All I'm saying is that this isn't a rehab clinic. And this (holding up the file) sounds like finding out you have cancer and going to urgent care for chemotherapy.

JOHN

I get it. You're nervous. You think this kid is going to hurt himself or something, right? But I really believe we can help this kid.

MAYA

Wait, you think he's suicidal?

JOHN

I mean, you read his file. Wouldn't you

be? I don't know. It doesn't matter. I shouldn't have said that. He's not gonna do that. Let me rephrase. I WILL BE INVOLVED. Okay? I promise.

MAYA

You're gonna meet with him too?

JOHN

Yes, of course. This isn't going to be all on you. I put together a detailed plan. If I can just find it. I know I left it here somewhere.

MAYA

(Calming down but skeptical)

So you DO have a plan?

JOHN

That's what I'm saying. Yes, I have a plan. I just need to...

JOHN pulls out a red binder from one of the cabinets.

JOHN CONT'D

Wait! Here it is.

JOHN hands the binder to MAYA.

JOHN CONT'D

Look. Read this.

MAYA starts flipping through the binder.

MAYA

(Concern in her voice)

And you're sure about this?

JOHN stands up and looks intently at MAYA.

JOHN

(With real sincerity)

Yes. I'm sure. We can help this kid. I know it.

MAYA takes a long beat while she thinks.

MAYA

Okay. I'll look this over, but we're not done talking about this Coop.

JOHN

Understood. Now go get some coffee or meditate or some shit. Would ya? (John smirks jokingly)

MAYA

Fuck off, you dick. (smiling sarcastically)

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

INT. CAMERON'S BEDROOM - KELLEY HOME - MORNING

The room is filled with packed boxes and bags of clothes. CAMERON KELLEY (21, lean, but athletic) is finishing getting dressed after a shower. MARY enters and begins refolding shirts that are already packed. Her hands tremble slightly.

MARY

Are you sure you haven't forgotten anything? Toothbrush? Phone Charger?

CAMERON

Mom, it's fine. I triple-checked.

MARY tucks a stray sock into the corner of the suitcase.

MARY

It's just... you've been through so much Cam. Maybe it's too soon to go back?

CAMERON

Mom, don't start with this again.

MARY

What?

CAMERON

I have to go back. I can't sit here forever. Most kids are already up there. In fact, I should have left last week.

MARY

I know, but those other kids aren't mine and they certainly haven't been through what you have.

CAMERON

Mom, I have to finish my degree. If I don't do it now, who knows if I'll ever be able to.

MARY

Oh please don't talk like that.

CAMERON

(Exasperated)

Mom--

JACK KELLEY enters the room, carrying a travel coffee mug. He notices the tension and sets it down on the dresser.

JACK

You ready to hit the road, kiddo?

CAMERON zips up the suitcase decisively and nods. MARY'S eyes begin filling with tears.

MARY

Promise me you'll call?

CAMERON

I promise.

MARY

Every day.

CAMERON

Every day? Mom. Be reasonable! (His Dad gives him a look) But yes, I promise. I'll call plenty.

MARY pulls CAMERON in for a tight hug. CAMERON stiffens at first, but then softens, holding onto her for a moment longer than usual.

JACK

Come on, Mary. You baby him too much. He'll be fine.

MARY sighs and releases CAMERON, wiping her tears away.

MARY

Yeah well, that's what you told me last time.

JACK

Don't start that nonsense. This is not like the last time. I didn't--

CAMERON is annoyed and cuts his father off.

CAMERON

We gotta go. I'll be downstairs.

CAMERON storms downstairs carrying a bag and his trumpet case.

JACK

Hey, Cam. Wait!

MARY

Let him go.

JACK

He can't just run away from this.

MARY

He knows that.

JACK

Does he?

MARY and JACK both give each other a look of desperation. JACK picks up a suitcase and they both head downstairs.

EXT. KELLEY RESIDENCE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

JACK and CAMERON finish loading boxes into the back of the

car. CAMERON takes one last look at the house. MARY stands at the door, clutching a tissue. CAMERON looks back at his mom and mouths the words "I'M SORRY." She gives a half smile.

MARY

Drive safe. Text me when you get there.

CAMERON

I will. Love you, Mom.

JACK gives MARY a reassuring wave before he climbs into the car.

CUT TO: INT. JACK'S CAR - I-95 NORTH - DAY

The highway stretches out for miles. CAMERON stares out the window. It's a while before either of them speak a word.

JACK

You've got the contact info for The Heart House, right?

CAMERON

Yep. I've got it.

JACK

Good. (short pause) Listen, kiddo. Your Mom and I are doing everything we can to help you, but you're gonna need to step up here too.

CAMERON

I know. I know. I'm sorry, Dad. I'm trying.

JACK

No excuses. Just do better. Okay?

CAMERON

Okay, Pop.

JACK

You HAVE to stay out of trouble, Cameron. That's the main reason I made these arrangements for you with The Heart Program. We'll talk to your lawyer soon too. I think we can get you involved with that other outfit he mentioned. The one out of Danbury Hospital.

CAMERON

Dad! Please. No.

JACK gives CAMERON a stern look.

JACK

Cam, this is your life. It's YOUR

future. I'm not gonna force you, but do yourself a favor for once. Please. Just do what I say.

CAMERON nods, but remains quiet. His gaze fixed on the blur of trees passing by.

JACK CONT'D

I don't know if you're an alcoholic. But I DO know you've got the GENE. So the counseling, the community service stuff, it's all important, alright?

CAMERON

I got it, Dad.

JACK

Also, don't forget. I'll come pick you up next month when we have to go meet with the lawyer.

CAMERON

Okay.

JACK

Okay. Good. Just focus on school. I don't mind the driving. Gives me time to think... and pray (Cameron rolls his eyes).

EXT. CLUBHOUSE APARTMENTS - UCONN OFF-CAMPUS - DAY

The car rolls to a stop in front of a modest apartment complex. JACK steps out and opens the trunk. CAMERON follows suit, carrying his backpack and his trumpet case. JACK grabs a box out of the back and walks with CAMERON toward the building. They reach the apartment door. CAMERON fumbles with the keys, unlocking it and stepping inside.

INT. CAMERON AND WILL'S - CLUBHOUSE APARTMENT - DAY

The apartment is sparsely furnished, a couch but no TV. WILL'S (21, roommate) belongings are scattered across the kitchen table: a poker chip set, some protein bars, and a gym bag. JACK helps CAMERON finish unloading the car.

JACK

Alright, bud. I'll leave you to it. Unless you want to grab a bite before I leave?

CAMERON

Thanks Dad, but I really should just get settled in before classes start tomorrow.

JACK hesitates, patting CAMERON on the shoulder.

JACK

Yeah. Okay. Understood. Good. That's good. Focus on that accounting degree. Smart. Well, you know where I am if you need me.

CAMERON

Yep. Thanks again, Dad.

JACK nods, lingering for a moment. CAMERON gives him an awkward hug before JACK walks out the door. CAMERON watches him leave, then exhales deeply, surveying the room.

INT. CLUBHOUSE APARTMENT/BEDROOM - NIGHT

CAMERON starts unpacking boxes in his room. It's quiet, except for the faint sound of muffled music coming from the neighboring apartment. CAMERON hangs two framed posters: one of Miles Davis and the other is from the movie, Spinal Tap. He takes out his trumpet and begins to play a smooth bluesy song. CAMERON is talented. Segue to--

FLASHBACK: BACK IN CAMERON'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM.

CAMERON is playing the same song in his bedroom at home. We see the same posters on the wall in his bedroom in the Kelley residence. CAMERON'S friend, TIM (20, athletic, loyal best friend) is sitting in a chair listening to him play.

TIM

Dude! When did you get so good?

CAMERON

You think? I don't know man. I think I need to hit that B-line a little harder before the Turnaround.

TIM

I don't know what that shit means bro, but I think it sounds sick.

CAMERON

Thanks, dude.

TIM

You're gonna send in a tape with your application, right?

CAMERON

To what? Music school? No.(laughing) No way! I can't do that.

TIM

Why not? Of course you can.

CAMERON

I just... (beat) dude, most of our friends don't even know I play.

TIM

Yeah. Why is that?

CAMERON

C'mon man! You know why. Besides, my Dad's not gonna... I just can't.

TIM

Cameron, brother. Don't do that. (beat) You think any of our friends would hesitate for one second if they had half the talent you have. I mean dude, I'll fuckin' kill you if fuck this up for us. For real. (smiling)

CAMERON

HA! That's the biggest load of crap I've ever heard. First off, I know you. You'd sooner step in front of a train for me, but I hear what you're saying. And thank you! Secondly... us? What? You want to be my manager or some shit?

They both laugh. TIM takes the trumpet and very carefully puts it in its case making sure it's not scratched.

TIM

Maybe (laughs, then takes a beat) Just promise me you'll send it in.

CAMERON

We'll see.

TIM

Fuck that. Promise me.

CAMERON

Alright jeeze man. I promise.

CAMERON gives TIM a smile.

FLASHBACK ENDS.

INT. CLUBHOUSE APARTMENT - NIGHT

The front door swings open, and WILLIAM (WILL) WALLACE (21, fiercely loyal yet hot-headed) strolls in, carrying a bag of takeout. He doesn't acknowledge CAMERON immediately, setting the bag down on the counter. CAMERON puts the trumpet away and comes out from his bedroom. Slight tension and resentment exists between these two friends. (we learn more about the details in episode 102).

CAMERON

Hey man. Didn't know when you'd be back.

WILL grabs a beer from the fridge and cracks it open casually, finally glancing at CAMERON.

WILL

I heard someone playing horns before?

Was that you?

CAMERON

Yeah, just knocking a little dust off.

WILL

Cool. Just do me a favor. Play that shit when I'm not around. I got an ear thing.

CAMERON

Sure, no problem. I don't really play that much anymore anyway.

(beat)

You coming from your special lady's place?

WILL

Nah. I was at Foxwoods. Had a killer run at the tables. 22 hours of takin' it, takin' it, takin' it!

WILL drops onto the couch and puts his feet up.

CAMERON

Sick dude! What'd you play, hold 'em?

WILL picks up a poker chip off the coffee table, rolling it between his fingers absentmindedly like a professional.

WILL

Fuck yes, dude! Game was so soft. Flopped the nuts, then later I hit a gut shot on a monster pot. MMMHHM (Will grunts). I was like POW. Doesn't get any better.

CAMERON smiles yearning to connect with his friend.

CAMERON

That's dope dude. Good for you. (beat) You got classes tomorrow?

WILL

Uhhh yeah, but relax, man. School ain't shit bro. Besides, I've already got a gig waiting for me after this shit.

CAMERON

Seriously? What's that?

WILL

My boss at that hedge fund I intern'd at. Get this. He basically told me to drop out and start working for him now.

CAMERON

No shit? That's awesome, bro.

WILL

Hell yeah. I mean I'm not gonna do it

'cus my Dad would go freakin' nuts,
but... pretty badass right?

WILL stretches out on the couch, letting the chip clatter onto the coffee table.

CAMERON

Yeah, for sure. I mean... must be nice.

WILL exhales and finally meets CAMERON'S eye. His tone shifts slightly, bordering on cool detachment.

WILL

Look man. Don't be a little bitch. I know you're dealing with some shit, but c'mon, you're a smart guy. I'm sure you could do the same if you wanted to.

CAMERON

Yeah, no I know man. I'm good. I've got some things cooking too.

WILL

See! That's great, bro. You--

CAMERON

Anyway dude, do you mind leaving me like one drawer in the bathroom. I gotta put some of my stuff away.

WILL

Oh! Need some room for your make-up, huh?

CAMERON

Yeah man, I figure soon I'm gonna have to start turning tricks to help pay for your poker habit. So, you know.

WILL pushes up from the couch, grabs his takeout bag, and heads toward the door. He pauses briefly, his back turned.

WILL

Yeah whatever, dude. Just move any shit you need to. I gotta roll. I promised Ella I'd crash at her place tonight.

WILL exits.

INT. CAMERON'S BEDROOM APARTMENT - LATER THAT NIGHT

CAMERON lies in bed sleeping with a tense look on his face. A faint rustle of wind outside builds into the distant roar of an approaching car.

FLASHBACK: DREAM SEQUENCE.

CAMERON'S driving. The headlights of a car appear in the distance. Glancing over, another car appears beside him.

The sound of tires screeching, broken glass, disjointed and fragmented images. Sounds of car metal being crushed like beer cans. CAMERON tries to say something, but his voice is drowned out by the rumble of an engine.

The dream transitions to a surreal image: flashing red and blue lights, the sound of a walkie-talkie, an officer shouting unintelligible orders, and CAMERON'S own hands trembling as blood stains his clothes. He faintly hears the sounds of a helicopter approaching in the distance.

VOICE IN THE DREAM (V.O.)
WAKE UP! (The sound of a loud clap)

FLASHBACK: DREAM SEQUENCE ENDS.

INT. CAMERON'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - MORNING

Alarm Clock blares. CAMERON jolts awake, sweat glistening on his forehead. He checks the clock on his nightstand — 7:35AM. A flash of realization hits his face. He's late.

EXT. CLUBHOUSE APARTMENTS - BUS STOP - MORNING

CAMERON skids to a halt at the bus stop just as the off-campus shuttle pulls up. He squeezes on, clutching the overhead rail as the bus lurches forward. He finds a seat near the back.

INT. SHUTTLE BUS - MORNING

CAMERON staring out the window. The shuttle rolls past the chain-link fences of a nearby prison. Inmates shuffle in the yard. He deepens into a trance envisioning himself in the Yard walking among the other inmates dressed in orange.

The bus jolts over a pothole, breaking his trance. The bus arrives at his stop and he departs. He approaches a building, the sign above reads, "School of Business." He enters.

INT. SCHOOL CLASSROOM - TAX ACCOUNTING - MORNING

Rows of students tap on laptops. A PROFESSOR scribbles T-charts with debits and credits on the whiteboard, her voice steady but monotonous. CAMERON walks into the classroom late and slips into the back row. Beside him, GARY WILSON (21, tall, dark, blue collar vibe) leans over casually, clicking his pen.

GARY
Didn't want the weekend to end, huh?

CAMERON
No. I just didn't sleep well.

GARY
You missed the syllabus rundown. But I can make you a copy if you need one.

CAMERON

Sweet. Thanks man.

GARY

Just make sure you don't miss signing up for the tax simulations.

CAMERON

Shit, how do I do that?

GARY

Sign-up sheet's being passed around I think.

CAMERON scans the rows of students looking for the sign-up sheet.

GARY CONT'D

Did you hear about the career fair coming up? KPMG, E&Y, PwC, Deloitte. They're all headhunting for summer slots.

CAMERON

Summer internships? Yeah, I'm not sure about the Big 4 yet. I'm still weighing my options.

GARY

Yeah, I hear you man. I've heard stories about people getting carried out in stretchers during busy season. Fuckin' crazy!

The PROFESSOR drones on, her voice a distant hum compared to the noises in his own mind (sounds of the accident; jail doors slamming). Class finally ends and CAMERON packs up to leave.

CUT TO: EXT. UCONN CAMPUS

CAMERON walking across campus. We see the usual college campus environment: students walking everywhere, frisbees flying around, people jogging. CAMERON eventually sees a campus bus stop and hops on a bus.

EXT. THE HEART HOUSE - DAY

CAMERON exits the bus across the street from The Heart House. The front steps have a deck off to the side where we see students hanging out smoking cigarettes and talking. He approaches slowly, backpack slung across one shoulder. He pauses at the bottom of the stairs, staring at the sign that reads "Heart House" in bold red letters. Just then, MAYA walks by, holding a notepad and coffee. She pauses.

MAYA

Heading in or heading out?

CAMERON freezes.

CAMERON

Uhh yeah, I mean, I was just--

MAYA

It's okay. Tough first step, I know.

MAYA moves to the door, holding it open and nodding toward the interior. CAMERON hesitates again, his feet unmoving.

MAYA CONT'D

Tell you what. I'm heading in too. You walk in, I walk in. Deal?

MAYA's voice is calm, but without pressure. CAMERON exhales, stuffing his phone back into his pocket.

CAMERON

Yeah. Okay.

CAMERON walks past her into the entryway. MAYA follows, letting the door close softly behind them.

INT. THE HEART HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - DAY

CAMERON steps uncertainly into the space. The entryway is warm, hardwood floors, area rugs and people walking about. MAYA walks ahead toward MARTY.

MAYA

Hey Marty, found this one outside getting ready to make a run for it. Do you mind checking him in?

MARTY

You betcha.

MAYA

Marty, this is... sorry, I didn't catch your name?

CAMERON

Cameron. I'm supposed to meet with John Cooper, I think?

MAYA looks up quickly with a surprised look on her face.

MAYA

Cameron! Yes. John mentioned you might be coming by. So glad to meet you.

MARTY

Hi, Cameron, it's nice to meet you as well. I think I actually spoke to your Dad over the summer. Jack right?

CAMERON

Yes, ma'am.

MARTY

Well, welcome honey. I just have a little paper work for you and then Maya here can take you to see John.

CAMERON

Okay, thank you, ma'am.

MARTY

Okay, let me stop you. Lord knows I appreciate the manners honey, but you can cut the ma'am horseshit. I feel old enough as it is surrounded by all these walking hormones every day.

CAMERON chuckles nervously. MARTY hands CAMERON a clipboard and he takes a seat on one of the couches to fill it out.

MAYA

Cameron, I'm just gonna go let John know you're here. Okay?

CAMERON

No problem.

MAYA scurries down the hall.

CUT TO: INT. JOHN'S OFFICE

Maya pokes her head inside.

MAYA

(Whispers)

He's here!

JOHN

Who's here? And why are we whispering?

MAYA

Him! Cameron.

JOHN

Oh, fantastic.

MAYA

No, not fantastic Coop! NOT FANTASTIC! You still have not gone over this "comprehensive" plan with me.

JOHN

Okay, relax. We can all go over it together.

MAYA does not look amused. They both walk back out to greet CAMERON, but MARTY has already started to bring him down the hall.

INT. THE HEART HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

The narrow corridor is lined with framed group photos of

former interns and students. CAMERON catches sight of a motivational poster: "Progress, not perfection."

JOHN

Cameron! Great to meet you. I'm John.
Please, come sit in my office.

INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - THE HEART HOUSE - DAY

They step into JOHN'S office. MAYA joins them. She sees that CAMERON looks like a deer in headlights.

MAYA

You good?

CAMERON

Yeah. Just taking it all in.

MAYA shoots him a reassuring smile before JOHN takes a seat behind his desk. MAYA and CAMERON sit in the two chairs across from his desk.

JOHN

So Cameron, we're really glad you're here.

CAMERON

Thanks, but no offense, I really wish I didn't need to be.

JOHN

Yeah I - I get that.

CAMERON

My Dad thinks it's a good idea though.
For me to get some counseling. Ya know?

JOHN

Yes, that's perfectly understandable.

CAMERON

Personally, I think he's just hoping
someone can "fix me."

MAYA

Fix you?

CAMERON

Yeah. I mean... he's really just
following my lawyer's advice I think.

JOHN and MAYA share a concerned look.

JOHN

Yeah, that's not really what we do here.

CAMERON

Okay. What would you say you do do-here?

JOHN

Mainly, we educate students about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse.

MAYA

I like to describe it as we preach moderation, but we teach students about addiction prevention.

JOHN

And how to spot the warning signs.

MAYA

Exactly.

CAMERON

In that case, I think it might be a little late for me.

JOHN

Yeah? You think you already have a problem with addiction?

CAMERON

No, Sorry I... I didn't mean that. I just meant the damage has already been done. Ya know?

MAYA

Cameron. Let me ask you... How do YOU think we might be able to help you?

CAMERON

I honestly have no clue. I guess I was expecting you guys to tell me.

JOHN

Well, we've read your file. And--

CAMERON

I have a file?

MAYA

It's just a little info that your Dad shared with us about your situation. Like a copy of your arrest, hospital records, stuff like that.

CAMERON

I see. (beat) So then you know?

MAYA

Sorry, know what?

CAMERON

That I'm fucked.

JOHN and MAYA look at each other again with bewilderment.

JOHN

We don't think you're fucked Cam. Sorry,

is it okay to call you, Cam?

CAMERON
(imitating Jeff Spicoli)
"That's the name they gave me."

JOHN
(Smiling)
Ahh, wait... let me guess. FAST TIMES AT
RIDGEMONT HIGH, right?

CAMERON is impressed that JOHN got his movie reference.

CAMERON
"Hola, Mr. Hand."

JOHN
I'm more of a POINT BREAK fan myself.

CAMERON
"Utah, get me two!" (Cam holds up the peace sign)

JOHN
Exactly. Listen, maybe we can take a
break from the movie quotes for a
second.

CAMERON
Sorry, I thought we were on a roll.

JOHN
Oh, we're definitely rolling somewhere.
(beat) Maya, do you mind giving us a
minute?

MAYA
Of course.

MAYA exits the room and closes the door behind her. MARTY
sees her come out looking confused.

CUT TO: EXT. JOHN'S OFFICE - HALLWAY AREA RIGHT OUTSIDE

MARTY
Maya, everything okay?

MAYA
Honestly. I have no fucking idea.

INTERCUT TO: INT. JOHN'S OFFICE

JOHN and CAMERON sitting in the office. JOHN gets up from
his chair and circles around and sits on his desk right in
front of CAMERON.

JOHN
(Leans in close)
Mind if I ask you something?

CAMERON nods.

CAMERON

Sure.

JOHN

Where are you on a scale from 1 to 10,
ten being scared shitless?

CAMERON takes a long pause. Tears welling up in his eyes.

CAMERON

(A bit choked up)

I'd say, "these speakers go to eleven."

JOHN holds back a laugh and puts his hand over his face.

CAMERON

I'm sorry, I didn't think you were going
to tee me up so good.

JOHN

(Laughing)

No, it's totally fine, I just wasn't
expecting that response.

CAMERON

It's just... Spinal Tap is my all-time
favorite.

JOHN

Well, you have great taste in movies
then, but you gotta say it like this..
"But these go to eleven" (with a British
accent).

CAMERON laughs with tears still in his eyes. JOHN laughs
cautiously putting his hand on CAMERON'S shoulder to comfort
him.

INTERCUT TO: EXT. JOHN'S OFFICE - IN THE HALLWAY

MAYA is standing next to the door trying to listen. The door
pops open. JOHN and CAMERON both come out. It's apparent
that CAMERON got emotional, but MAYA kindly pretends not to
notice.

JOHN

Okay, I think we have an understanding.

MAYA

We do?

JOHN

Yes, I'll fill you in later. For now,
let's finish giving Cam the tour.

MAYA looks at JOHN still confused. He nods at her.

JOHN CONT'D

Just trust me.

MAYA

Okay Cam, let's show you the rest of the house.

CAMERON

(Still a little raw)

Thanks! I'd like that.

MAYA leads CAMERON back down the other end of the hallway as JOHN follows them.

INT. THE HEART HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Coming up the hallway, FLIP JOHNSON (late 20s, male, gay but you wouldn't know it by looking at him, a very devilish charm) strides up to the group, his demeanor a mix of casual swagger and practiced warmth. FLIP looks fashionably dressed for the environment.

JOHN

Where the hell have you been?

FLIP

Good morning to you too, Coop!

JOHN

It's 1p.m.

FLIP

I know that. I was over at the Drama Department, doing my other job. YOU KNOW. The one that pays me.

JOHN

I meant this morning. YOU KNOW, Men's group?

FLIP

Eh, I'll catch the Rush Hour meeting. The butt-crack of dawn isn't really my scene. Plus, I like to make sure my shit is soigné before I leave the house (gesturing at his outfit).

(beat)

Sooo, who's this tall drink of water? Ooh and check out those kicks... fresh, I like it!

JOHN

Flip Johnson, meet Cameron Kelley. Cam will be joining the House this semester.

FLIP

Nice to meet you Cameron.

CAMERON

Thanks, you as well. And I dig your Mambas too by the way.

FLIP

Ahhh, wasn't Kobe beautiful, man? Talk about soigné. Rest In Peace.

CAMERON shrugs and smirks at the same time. FLIP imitates shooting a basketball, but it's obvious he's never played.

MAYA

Are you sure you're good, Flip?

FLIP

Oh, I'm James Brown baby!

JOHN and MAYA give each other a concerned look like maybe FLIP has fallen off the wagon.

JOHN

Okay brother, just do me a favor, call your sponsor once in a while. Would you please?

FLIP

C'mon Coop! I'm fine. I don't know why you guys are all up in my shit today. I skipped one meeting. Big deal.

MAYA

We're just looking out for you, Flip.

JOHN

Yeah, I'd rather be stepping on your toes than on your grave.

FLIP

(less enthusiastically)

Don't be so dramatic. And like I said. I'm James Brown.

JOHN

Good. I'm glad to hear that.

(beat)

Okay, we've gotta finish showing Cam the rest of the house.

FLIP

A'ight! Listen, great to meet you, Cam.

(beat - FLIP about to walk away turns back)

Oh wait, before you guys go, Maya, I have a new one for you.

MAYA

Oh boy, here we go.

JOHN

Flip, we don't have time for this.

FLIP

Don't worry! It's a quick one, I promise. Have either of you ever heard

the one about the alcoholic and the
genie on the beach?

JOHN and MAYA both roll their eyes and shake their heads.

FLIP CONT'D

So this alcoholic is walking on the beach and he finds a lamp with a genie inside. And the genie grants him two wishes. For the first wish the alcoholic asks for a bottle of vodka that never runs empty. And Poof! A giant bottle of Tito's appears. The alcoholic slugs it halfway down and boom, it fills right back up to the top. Genie asks him, "and for your second wish?"

(beat)

The alcoholic says, "I'll take another bottle just like that one."

FLIP and MAYA laugh. JOHN smirks and discreetly watches CAMERON (laughing nervously) to see how he reacts to the joke. FLIP does a quick karate kick and then bows like he's Mr. Miyagi.

FLIP CONT'D

Sorry, I don't know why I did that. Good one though, right?

FLIP does the James Brown shuffle and turns to walk away. MAYA responds as FLIP is almost out of ear shot.

MAYA

I think you're almost ready for Late Night.

FLIP

You mean The Tonight Show! Fallon, he's got that soigné.

FLIP exits towards the kitchen area. JOHN and MAYA share a look.

CAMERON

He seems fun?

MAYA

Yeah, Flip's a real one alright.

JOHN

He's definitely one of the good ones. He's our other voluntary counselor here.

CAMERON

That dude is a drug counselor?

JOHN

Sure is. People in recovery often make the best ones. Plus... he's cheap!

MAYA coughs.

JOHN CONT'D

Sorry. Except for brilliant policewomen taking graduate courses specializing in addiction services of course like Maya here.

CAMERON glances over at MAYA looking impressed.

CAMERON

You're PO-lice?

MAYA

Yup, I don't typically advertise it around here though.

CAMERON

Huh, interesting.

MAYA

What? I don't seem like a cop to you?

CAMERON

Nah. Not really.

MAYA

Why 'cus I'm a woman?

CAMERON

No, it's just that most cops I've met are dickheads.

MAYA

Yeah, that's fair. Most cops I've worked with ARE dickheads (she winks).

(beat)

Okay, so now you've met everyone on staff here. Us three, you got Marty, and then all the student interns.

CAMERON

Wait, really? Students can intern here?

JOHN

Yeah, they're not paid or anything, but we have quite a lot actually. I'm sure you'll get a chance to meet most of 'em at some point.

The group continues down the stairs.

CUT TO: INT. GROUP RECOVERY ROOM - THE HEART HOUSE - DAY

They arrive at a large room lined with couches, recliners and folding chairs. A table sits in the middle with a funny looking stick sitting on it.

JOHN

This is where we host our group sessions called "talking circles."

CAMERON

Cool, looks comfy.

ENTER: Two towering figures enter, DAN (21, very large build, affable, energetic) and MONTY (21, athletic, almost as large, and composed). They look like they could be on the Football Team. They're carrying books/binders and teasing each other about something indistinct.

JOHN

Ah, Cameron. Meet Dan and Monty. They're interns here, finishing up their second semester with the House.

DAN gives CAMERON an enthusiastic wave, while MONTY flashes a quick smile.

DAN

Hey, man! Great to meet you.

CAMERON

Yeah. Nice to meet you guys.

MONTY

You live on campus?

CAMERON

Uh, not too far. Clubhouse Apartments.

DAN

Oh sick. We're over there too in Building 3.

CAMERON

Sweet. We're practically neighbors.

JOHN gives DAN a look and a nod.

DAN

You should come hang out with us sometime.

MONTY

Definitely. We're always looking for another guy to join our poker game.

CAMERON

Oh, no shit? My roommate actually fancies himself a poker shark. He plays at Mohegan all the time.

MONTY

Okay, maybe leave him at home then.

MONTY and DAN Laugh.

DAN

He's just kidding. You're both invited anytime. We can let you know the next time we run a game.

CAMERON

Okay. Yeah, that would be great. Thanks fellas.

JOHN and MAYA look at each other, pleased to see CAMERON connecting.

JOHN

Alright, thanks guys. But we need to keep it moving.

DAN/MONTY

Of course. Later. Nice to meet you, Cam.

INT. THE HEART HOUSE - MAIN ENTRANCE - DAY

They end back in the main foyer area, which has less foot traffic than when CAMERON arrived. One STUDENT INTERN is still sitting on a couch watching soaps on the TV.

JOHN

Okay, let's wrap up the tour here. I got another appointment coming in and I think the only places we didn't cover are the office rooms upstairs and of course the kitchen area, but all you need to know about the kitchen is we have one rule: you use it, you clean it. Otherwise, you'll hear from Marty and you definitely don't want that.

CAMERON

Got it! Clean up after yourself. That's easy enough. Well, thank you both. It was really nice to meet you guys.

MAYA

Why does that sound like a "nice knowing you" goodbye? (laughing)

CAMERON

No no, not at all.

JOHN

Don't sweat it Cam. She's just teasing you. Okay, I'll email you the schedule that we talked about in my office.

CAMERON

Sounds good. Thanks.

MAYA

(glaring at JOHN)

Can you copy me on that email too?

JOHN

Of course.

EXT. HEART HOUSE FRONT STEPS - DAY

CAMERON exits The Heart House and lights up a cigarette as he walks towards the South Campus cafeteria across the street.

INT. SOUTH CAMPUS CAFETERIA - DAY

CAMERON steps cautiously through the bustling cafeteria. CAMERON'S attention briefly flicks to the conversation between the two students ahead of him in line.

STUDENT 1

Did you hear about last year's Career Fair? I heard Keith Davidson landed a job with Goldman in Boston, almost a six figure starting salary.

STUDENT 2

Are you fucking serious? Face Davidson? Fuck me.

STUDENT 1

I know. Fuckin' Face. You believe that shit?

CAMERON collects his food, a meager plate of meatloaf with mashed potatoes, and scans the room for a quiet table.

CAMERON finds an empty table near the cafeteria's corner and sits cautiously, unpacking his utensils and opening a bottle of water. He settles in, attempting to block out the noise around him and focus on his meal.

Suddenly, three large figures approach, their energy loud and magnetic. It's DAN, MONTY, and another unfamiliar guy (SKI - 21, large muscles, buzz cut, meathead type) with a sharp grin and a mischievous glint in his eye.

DAN

Yo, Cam, mind if we sit with you?

CAMERON is happy to not sit alone, but DAN gestures toward the chairs without waiting for a response. MONTY sets his tray down, and the unfamiliar guy drops into a seat with an air of theatrical confidence.

DAN CONT'D

This savage wearing a youth small is our boy, Ski.

SKI

(stroking his arms)

Dan-O, don't be hating just because I have these big, beautiful, bulging

muscles.

(beat)

Sup guy (to Cameron)?

CAMERON

Hey fellas, what's going on?

MONTY

Nada. Just grabbing a quick bite before we head home.

DAN

Yeah, you need a ride back?

CAMERON

Really? Oh, that'd be awesome.

MONTY

Of course, no sweat, man.

DAN

So, where are you from Cam?

CAMERON

I grew up in Wilton. How about you guys?

SKI

Wilton? Where's that?

CAMERON

Small town down in Fairfield County, closer to New York.

SKI

Oh, so you's a rich kid.

CAMERON

HA! Hardly. I wish. Although I guess a lot of my friends are, so I see your point.

MONTY

Don't listen to Ski. He's just bustin' balls. We're from Torrington, so everyone seems rich to us. Have you heard of it?

CAMERON

All of you?

DAN

Yep. Born and raised.

MONTY

(In Adam Sandler's voice)

Torrington? More like Borrington.

CAMERON laughs, but also seems a little confused.

DAN

Nice dickhead. He just says that 'cuz nothing exciting ever happens there.

SKI

Except us! We fucking rule. State fucking champions, son.

DAN

That's true. We did crush it our senior year in football. That's also when Ski got his tattoo. Show him dude (to Ski).

SKI leans forward, pulling down his lower lip to reveal a tattoo reading "SIN" inked on the inside.

CAMERON

Dayumm. That had to hurt.

SKI

Sheeeeeit! Pain is only a construct.

CAMERON

HA! THE WIRE, right? I love that show.

SKI

What's THE WIRE?

CAMERON

You've never seen The WIRE?

SKI looks at CAMERON with a blank expression. Long awkward pause.

SKI

Eh, I'm just fucking with you. Yeah man, probably the greatest show ever made.

MONTY

Dude! (turns to Cam) Don't listen to Ski. That animal huffed one too many aerosol cans as a kid.

SKI

Fuck off! They were large magic markers. My mom. She was an artist. It wasn't my fault. Shit was everywhere.

DAN

He's kidding.

MONTY

Yeah, maybe half kidding.

SKI

NOT KIDDING!!!

They all laugh. CAMERON chuckles, shaking his head at their

absurdity. The group's contagious energy begins to pull him into their orbit.

DAN

Anyway, we're heading to this lacrosse party Friday night. Full kegs, good music. You should come.

SKI

Should be tons of skirt too.

CAMERON

UConn has a lax team? Didn't even know that.

MONTY

Yeah, I heard the Club team got promoted a few years back. My twin sister, Katie, is friends with a couple guys on the team.

CAMERON

No shit? You have a twin? That must be wild.

SKI

She's pretty hot with slutty friends too. Just picture Monty with slightly smaller tits.

MONTY

Shut the fuck up, Ski.

DAN

Yeah, don't be an asshole, Ski.

SKI

Dude, relax. I'm just fuckin' with you.

MONTY

Anyway, it has its perks (to CAMERON).

DAN

So you'll come? We can pick you up to pre-game.

CAMERON

Yeah, let me think about it. I'll definitely let you know.

SKI

Dude, all you need to think about is how many drunk coeds are gonna be out trolling for dick.

DAN elbows SKI in the arm.

CAMERON

No, I get it man. It's just that I'm not

really--

MONTY

Don't sweat it, Cam. It's all good either way. Just text Dan or I if you want to come with.

CAMERON

Cool. I appreciate you guys, seriously.

The group finishes their meal, dropping trays onto the return belt, and head for the exit. CAMERON notices a table of volunteers with a sign that says "SUPPORT OUR TROOPS." He stops by on his way towards the exit and drops \$10 in the box. A volunteer chases CAMERON down as he moves toward the exit.

VOLUNTEER

Wait, don't forget your bracelet.

CAMERON accepts the Sergeant Knot bracelet from the volunteer and puts it in his pocket.

CUT TO: EXT SOUTH CAMPUS CAFETERIA - PARKING LOT - DAY

DAN

Cam, which building are you in again?

CAMERON

Six. It's the one all the way in the back, down the hill.

DAN

Alright. Hop in--let's roll.

SKI

Shotgun!

MONTY

Blow me.

SKI

Whip it out.

DAN

No way! Everytime Ski sits shotgun we have to listen to KORN on repeat. I'm not doing it.

CAMERON laughs.

SKI

Dude, you fuckin' love KORN.

DAN

Not full blast on a Tuesday afternoon you sick fuck.

SKI

Oh, well excuse me for having a

nutsack.

DAN

Just pick something else please.

SKI

No problemo, Dan-O.

KORN starts playing on the car stereo and SKI turns it full blast. The group starts head-banging as the car pulls out of the parking lot, their camaraderie filling the car. As CAMERON sits in the backseat of the car, a small smile creeps onto his face. For the first time at this school, he feels a glimmer of belonging.

CUT TO MONTAGE:

Over the course of the next few days we see:

CAMERON attending classes in school and sitting in on "Talking Circles" at The Heart House, but sitting in the back and not engaging in either.

WILL at the poker table grinding it out in the Mohegan Sun Casino.

JOHN attends his AA meeting looking for FLIP, but his seat is still empty. We see FLIP instructing a hip-hop dance class in the school auditorium.

DAN, MONTY and SKI lifting weights in the same gym as the Football team.

MARTY busting her ass and cleaning up the Heart House, while a bunch of interns are goofing around, watching TV, etc.

Finally, MAYA in her office reviewing the binder with the "comprehensive plan" and doing research.

INT. CAMERON'S APARTMENT - EARLY FRIDAY NIGHT 5PM

WILL is laying on the couch watching Rounders on the TV. CAMERON is sitting at the kitchen table eating some ramen noodles.

WILL

Hey man, what do you have planned tonight?

CAMERON

Nothing solid. Why? You going to run some cards at Mohegan?

WILL

Nah, I told Ella we could have a date night, so we're headed to the movies.

CAMERON

Oh, nice man.

WILL

It's Friday night. You can't just sit here in the dark eating Ramen noodles, bro.

CAMERON shrugs. WILL looks at CAMERON with pity. He doesn't want to invite him along, but he also has some lingering guilt about his situation.

WILL CONT'D

Why don't I ask Ella to see if she can find a friend, so we can try to double or something?

CAMERON

I appreciate it man, but honestly I'm waiting to hear from someone anyway.

Will pops up from the couch and begins gathering his things to leave for his date night with Ella.

WILL

Oh yeah? Did you meet a girl this week or something?

CAMERON

Not exactly. Some dudes from Torrington invited me to a party at the Lax House. I think they're on the Football Team actually.

WILL

Oh... cool man. Well, have fun I guess. Don't forget to collect money from your johns. I'm out. (Will laughs)

CAMERON

Later, dickhead.

CAMERON sits at his kitchen table, his phone resting in front of him, illuminated by the screen's glow. The faint sound of college students laughing outside breaks the silence. His fingers hover over the screen, indecisive.

The phone buzzes. A text pops up from DAN: "Yo, still down for the party? Starting pre-game now and planning to leave around 8. Monty's driving."

His hand moves to the phone and types out a reply: "Can't make it tonight, sorry." He hesitates, watching the blinking cursor, then deletes the message. He exhales heavily, conflicted.

CAMERON'S fingers slide across the screen, typing: "Absolutely. I'll swing over in a bit." With a quick tap, the message is sent.

INT. DAN AND MONTY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

DAN, MONTY and SKI are doing shots when CAMERON knocks on their door. MONTY finishes his whiskey and opens the door.

MONTY

Whatsup Cam? Come on in, brother.

CAMERON

Hey fellas, sweet place.

SKI

Dude, you missed a delicious pre-game sesh. We already have a solid base going. You ready to party?

CAMERON gives SKI a half-assed salute.

DAN

Perfect timing. Let's roll.

SKI

Shotgun!

DAN

Goddamnit!

The four guys head out of the apartment.

INT. MONTY'S CAR - FRIDAY NIGHT

The guys jump in MONTY'S car, SKI in the front. KORN plays in the background.

SKI

Oh yeah, I'm getting hammered-bombed-WRECKED tonight!

DAN

HA! What else is new?

MONTY

Ski, you should get another tattoo that says "HBW."

SKI

You think? Where? Upper lip?

MONTY

No, on your ball bag. That way girls know exactly why your pecker ain't working.

DAN and MONTY crack up laughing.

SKI

Okay, fuck you guys. Like you degenerates aren't total booze bags?

CAMERON immediately starts to regret his decision.

DAN

Hey, sure we're degenerates, but at least we have some couthaa.

MONTY

Yeah, at least we don't shit where we eat, pal. (Turns to Cam) Ski has slept with half of the cheerleaders.

SKI

What can I say? They know who's holding.

(beat)

Monty, you're just pissed 'cus your sister is a better wing man than you.

MONTY

Oh Cam, that reminds me. Just a heads up, I told my sister to introduce you to her hot friends. So be ready to break out that Wilton rich-kid game.

CAMERON

But I'm not rich.

SKI

Dude, they don't know that. And don't worry bro, I'll point out the ones that have tasted my ball bag.

DAN

Oh, how chivalrous of you.

SKI

I know, right? Can't let poor Cam know what my dick tastes like.

DAN and MONTY shake their heads. CAMERON laughs and his overall attitude towards the night starts to change a bit.

CUT TO: EXT. LACROSSE HOUSE - FRIDAY NIGHT

MONTY'S car pulls up to the curb. Cars are lined up and down the street. The party spills out onto the lawn. Music thumps from speakers as clusters of students drink and laugh under string lights. CAMERON, DAN, MONTY, and SKI step through the crowd, greeted by MONTY'S sister, KATIE (21, small blonde, cute as a button).

KATIE

Oh, would you look at these sexy-ass mothafuckas!

SKI

Girl, you still got your great stuff!

MONTY

Shut the fuck up, Ski.

KATIE

Yeah, eat a dick, Ski.

SKI

God, I love it when you talk dirty to me.

KATIE grabs CAMERON immediately by the hand and pulls him away.

KATIE

You must be Cameron. Come with me. I have a friend I want you to meet.

SKI

Damn. What about me? That's cold-blooded, Katie.

KATIE

Suck my dick Ski. I know you gave Lauren the clap last year.

SKI

That is such bullshit! That skank gave that shit to me.

KATIE

(laughing)

Not what I heard (yelling, but almost inaudible as she leads Cameron away). (Turns to Cam) She probably did give it to him, Lauren is a class-A hoe-bag, but don't worry... Alex is classy.

CAMERON

Who's Alex?

INTERCUT TO: SKI turns to MONTY and DAN, who are laughing at him.

SKI

Dude, you need to check your sister, man. I can't have that shit being spread around.

MONTY

That sounds like a YP, bro... like I've told you a million times, don't shit where you eat.

DAN

Check it out! (points towards some kids over by the keg). Keg stands.

MONTY

Oh, hell yeah.

DAN and MONTY wander over in the direction of the keg, while SKI walks in a different direction muttering to himself.

CUT TO: KATIE takes CAMERON by hand to a group of girls chatting near the house. She introduces him to ALEXANDRA

"ALEX" ROMANO, strikingly confident and beautiful, yet approachable. She looks up and their eyes meet. Instant connection.

KATIE

Alex, this is my brother's friend,
Cameron.

ALEX

Hi, Cameron.

CAMERON smiles, collecting himself. After making introductions, KATIE starts chatting with the other girls.

CAMERON

Hey. It's nice to meet you, Alex. (big smile)

(beat)

Wow, I'm like, so stunned right now.

ALEX

Why's that?

CAMERON

Everyone has just been so nice to me. Yesterday, I felt like I didn't know anyone at this school and today... (stops himself)

ALEX

And today what?

CAMERON

I guess I just wish I could go back in time to High School, when I just got dumped by Jennifer Cashen, and tell 15 year old me not to worry, 'cus in six years he's gonna meet a super hot cheerleader with an amazing smile. (cheesy, but smooth)

ALEX laughs, her eyes sparkling as she blushes a little.

ALEX

You're so sweet, but I'm not a cheerleader, silly. I'm just friends with Katie from our freshman year dorm. I leave all that school spirit stuff to your boys over there (pointing at Dan and Monty- who are doing keg stands).

CAMERON is confused and a little embarrassed.

CAMERON

Wait, what do you mean? 'Cus they're football players?

ALEX

(laughing)

Is that what they told you? That they're on the football team?

CAMERON

No, not exactly. I guess I just kind of assumed...

ALEX

HA! I guess I'm not totally surprised they didn't tell you. They can be a little sensitive about it. (beat) They're all on the cheerleading squad together. I think they've been doing it for a couple of years now.

CAMERON

Get the fuck out.

ALEX

Please don't tell them I told you.

CAMERON

I promise, I won't say a word. I'm just shocked. They don't seem like the type.

ALEX

Why 'cuz they're not gay?

CAMERON

No, because they're complete savages. Lovable, but just total animals.

ALEX

Yeah, that checks out. Pretty sure they just do it to meet girls. Plus they're die-hard Husky fans I guess.

CAMERON

Hold up. Is Ski a cheerleader too?

ALEX

Yep. Sure is.

CAMERON

Goddamn! That is wild.

Alex laughs.

CUT TO: DAN and MONTY doing keg stands. They're both so big that folks have trouble holding up their giant legs.

CUT TO: A noisy game of beer pong is happening nearby. It catches SKI'S eye and he shouts to the guys.

SKI

Yo, fellas. Check it out (pointing at the table) Game on.

CUT BACK TO: CAMERON standing with ALEX.

CAMERON

I better get over there.

ALEX

Yeah, no worries. Just remember. You heard nothing from me. (Smiles)

CAMONER gives ALEX finger guns and immediately regrets it. She smiles and thinks he's cute.

CUT TO: DAN, MONTY, and CAMERON join SKI by the beer pong table where a group of lacrosse players are mid-game, throwing banter back and forth.

LACROSSE PLAYER 1

Ok double-backs, full contact, racks at 6 and 3. Let's fucking go!

LACROSSE PLAYER 2

Please. You pussies can't handle this smoke (shirtless and flexing his arms).

Their game goes on for a bit, while the guys(DAN, MONTY, SKI and CAMERON) watch nearby.

LACROSSE PLAYER 3

(Directed at the guys)

What's the deal? You guys want next or are you just gonna sit there and cheerlead all night?

SKI freezes, misinterpreting the comment, his expression hardening.

SKI

What the fuck did you just say?

The lacrosse player #3 looks confused and stunned. Before anyone can intervene, SKI throws the first punch. Chaos ensues. DAN and MONTY leap in to back him up as fists fly among the players. CAMERON tries to intervene, pulling SKI back, but he catches a sucker punch to the face.

The clash intensifies and CAMERON elbows someone in the nose by accident. Looking around he can see that the guys already put most of the lacrosse players on the ground. Bloodied and panting, the guys regroup and CAMERON drags a still-swinging SKI toward the street.

CAMERON

Let's get the fuck outta here!

The group stumbles away from the house, down the sidewalk, laughing hysterically at the absurdity of it all.

CAMERON CONT'D

What the hell happened back there?

SKI

That may have been my bad.

DAN

You think?

SKI

What? I thought he was making fun of us.
I had to protect our rep, bro.

MONTY

Dude, you always do this. You throw
hands and then ask questions later.

SKI

What do you want me to say? I enjoy a
little dust up to kick-off the night.
Gets the blood in my loins pumping.

DAN

Hey, what's the worst part about playing
lacrosse?

CAMERON

I don't know. What?

DAN

Having to tell your coach the entire
team got their ass beat by a bunch of
fuckin' cheerleaders.

The guys pause for a moment. Brief silence. Then laughter
erupts.

MONTY

Oh shit dude, my sister is gonna be
pissed.

SKI

Just blame me.

DAN

Oh, trust me. We will, asshole.

SKI

I'm sorry guys. You know how I feel
about those prep-school fucks. What can
I say? They triggered me.

The guys walk towards MONTY'S car laughing about the fight.
SKI shouts out, "SHOTGUN!" They pile into the car, heading
toward the local pub right off-campus.

INT. PUB - LATE FRIDAY NIGHT (HOURS LATER)

The pub is loud, packed with students. CAMERON sits at the
bar sipping on a Bud heavy.

BRIEF BAR SCENE MONTAGE: Guys playing pool. A DJ playing Top
40 hits. The bartenders are busy and everyone around CAMERON
is having fun, while he just sits there in a bit of a daze
remembering the last time he was in this pub.

FLASHBACK: Cameron is with his friend, Tim. They are playing pool, drinking beers and generally just having fun together.

CUT TO: ALEX cozies up beside CAMERON at the bar, breaking his trance. The memories fade into the background.

ALEX

Hey stranger. Are you having fun?

CAMERON

Oh wow! Yeah, of course (he lied).

ALEX

(Smiling)

Well then, you should probably tell your face!

CAMERON

Yeah, my bad. Deep in thought I guess. I didn't know you'd be here. I'm sorry about earlier. Not exactly how I wanted to make a first impression.

ALEX

Please. I'm used to it with those guys. And honestly, I've seen a lot worse.

CAMERON

Really?

ALEX

Oh yeah, for sure. This one time I saw their friend, Brochu, head-butt some poor kid and his nose just started leakin' everywhere. It was so gross.

ALEX flips her hair back flirtatiously, leaning in closer.

CAMERON

Yikes, that's rough. (beat) Well, I'd still really like to make it up to you.

ALEX

That's really not necessary... but just out of curiosity, how exactly would you do that?

CAMERON

I don't know. Maybe I could take you to lunch sometime?

ALEX studies him, her smile growing.

ALEX

Hmmmm. (eye balling him up and down for dramatic effect) Alright. I guess you seem harmless enough.

ALEX snatches CAMERON'S phone off the bar and begins typing

her number into it. She hands it back to CAMERON. He looks at his phone. We can see she typed her contact name as "HOT ALEX - GREAT ASS"

CAMERON

Wow! Someone thinks pretty highly of herself (laughing).

ALEX

Well, I can't have you getting confused with a different Alex in your phone, can I? (she winks)

CAMERON

No, I guess not. Okay, so I'll call you. Maybe next week?

ALEX

Balls in your court, handsome. Don't drop it (she smiles).

CAMERON smiles big. The BARTENDER shouts, signaling last call. DAN, MONTY and SKI do final shots of the night. The guys regroup, all visibly drunk except CAMERON. They all start shuffling towards the exit.

CUT TO: EXT. PUB PARKING LOT - LATE FRIDAY NIGHT

DAN

Hey Cam, you seem pretty sober. Do you mind driving us back to Clubhouse?

SKI

SHOTGUN!

MONTY

Fuck that! It's my car, dude.

CAMERON hesitates. He does not want to do this, but seeing their expectant faces, he nods reluctantly. He doesn't want to let his new (and really only) friends down. They pile into the car. MONTY sits in the front.

SKI

Dude. Did I see Alex Romano giving you her digits? Nice work, broseph. She's a dime. Bangin' ass too. I've never bagged a ten myself, but I have banged five twos.

The guys laugh and pile into the car to leave.

EXT. CAMPUS ROAD - LATE FRIDAY NIGHT / EARLY MORNING SATURDAY

The car cruises toward Clubhouse Apartments. CAMERON focuses intently on the road as the others chatter in the back seat.

Up ahead, red and blue lights flash, a police roadblock. They're looking for drunk drivers coming back toward campus.

CAMERON
(to himself, under breath)
Shit. Not now.

A POLICE OFFICER approaches the driver's side.

POLICE OFFICER
Where are you boys coming from tonight?

CAMERON
We just left the Pub, sir. Heading back
to the Clubhouse Apartments.

POLICE OFFICER
Have you been drinking tonight?

CAMERON
(Very nervous)
No, sir. I mean not really. Just a beer,
maybe two. That's it. I promise.

The POLICE OFFICER shines his flashlight into the car. He notices CAMERON'S Sergeant Knot bracelet on his wrist.

POLICE OFFICER
Are you a ROTC?

CAMERON
No, sir. I uhhh. These guys. They had a
table set up in the South cafe earlier
this week. I donated ten dollars to
support the troops... sir.

The POLICE OFFICER pauses, clearly considering CAMERON'S fate. Finally, he lowers the flashlight.

POLICE OFFICER
Just driving to Clubhouse, right?

CAMERON
Yes, sir.

POLICE OFFICER
Alright, go on. Get the fuck outta here.

CAMERON exhales deeply, driving forward. He's stunned. They all are. They reach the apartments without further issue in silence.

DAN
Holy shit dude! I can't believe that
just fucking happened.

CAMERON
I'm so fuckin' stupid.

MONTY
Cam, you got balls, bro. I can't believe
how honest you were.

CAMERON

I'm an idiot, guys.

SKI

Shit man. It wasn't your fault. I'd hold on to that bracelet though. Got a freakin' horseshoe up your ass, my man.

CAMERON

(trembling)

You don't know the half of it. Listen, I'm sorry, I gotta get home.

MONTY

Yeah, sure thing, Cam. Don't sweat it. We're really sorry you almost got jammed up there. We had no idea--

CAMERON

Yeah, no worries. I'll catch you guys later.

CAMERON'S gone before MONTY can finish his apology. He quickly walks away disappearing into the darkness. As soon as CAMERON walks around the corner, he immediately vomits onto the street.

CUT TO: INT. CAMERON'S APARTMENT - 2:30AM SAT MORNING

CAMERON steps inside, the adrenaline wearing off. He barely makes it inside before collapsing onto the floor, shaking. Tears stream down his face as he stares at the ceiling.

CAMERON sits slumped against the base of the kitchen cabinet, his knees pulled tightly to his chest. Suddenly, his mind pulls him back, images begin to blur and distort as we transition into a flashback.

FLASHBACK: CAMERON grips the steering wheel of his car, his hand wet with condensation from the beer can he's clutching. His best friend, TIM, sits in the passenger seat, half laughing, but fully singing along to Neil Diamond's "Cracklin' Rosie" blasting from the car stereo. They're wearing the same clothes from the earlier flashback in the Pub. An open six-pack tumbles on the floor between their leg space.

TIM

C'mon, Cam! You know the words...
 "Cracklin' Rosie, make me a smile. Girl,
 if it lasts for an hour, that's all
 right, 'Cus we got all night, to set the
 world right"

TIM playfully shakes him, causing CAMERON to grip the wheel even tighter. CAMERON laughs, singing along as he takes another sip of his beer.

CAMERON

Dude, I'm a little banged up.

TIM

Yeah, no shit. Me too, brother.

TIM and CAMERON raise their beer cans to toast a legend.

TIM CONT'D

TO NEIL!

CAMERON

THE JEWISH ELVIS!

CAMERON and TIM seem carefree as dissonance builds in the soundscape. A pair of headlights suddenly flicker in the distance, growing larger far too quickly. Suddenly another car comes flying around them from behind causing CAMERON to lose control of the vehicle and spin out into the other lane. His voice breaks through the escalating panic.

CAMERON

SHIT! HOLD ON TIMMY!

The headlights engulf them in a blinding white light. The impact comes swiftly. Metallic screams. A cacophony of broken glass and twisted metal.

TIM'S face turns toward CAMERON, his expression blank as his body is ripped from the car through the passenger seat window and flung into the darkness of the night. The car flips half a dozen times. The chaos fades into silence.

FLASHBACK ENDS.

CAMERON sits on the kitchen floor. Tears freely fall down his face as he mutters to himself in the reflection of the oven.

CAMERON

You stupid motherfucker. (beat -
continuing to sob) I fucking hate you.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

INT. CAMERON'S APARTMENT - 9AM SAT MORNING

CAMERON stands by the sink, pouring coffee into a mug with trembling hands. His face is pale, and his eyes carry the weight of the previous night.

He sets the coffee down and picks at a slice of toast, barely eating. After a long beat, CAMERON straightens, grabs his backpack from the couch, and heads out the door.

CUT TO: EXT. THE HEART HOUSE - DAY

The Victorian house looms in front of CAMERON. His pace slows just before he reaches the steps. He looks up at the sign, "Heart House," and exhales sharply. CAMERON ascends

the stairs and enters.

INT. THE HEART HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - DAY

The house is quiet. MARTY sits alone at her desk, surfing the internet. She looks up, surprised to see CAMERON.

MARTY

Well, look who's here bright and early.
And on a Saturday, no less. You okay,
kiddo?

CAMERON

You work on Saturdays?

MARTY

I wouldn't call what I'm doing work,
darling.

MARTY flips her laptop around and shows CAMERON she's shopping on Amazon.

CAMERON

Do you know if Coop is around?

MARTY gestures down the hall with her pen.

MARTY

Go on, honey. He's in there. He might be
meditating though.

CUT TO: INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - THE HEART HOUSE - DAY

JOHN sitting on a meditation pillow. He hears a knock at the door and glances up as CAMERON steps inside, his posture uneasy.

JOHN

Cam, what are you doing here?

CAMERON is visibly shaken.

CAMERON

I was hoping we could talk for a minute?

JOHN

Of course. Hey. You okay? You're
shaking. Why don't you come sit down?

CAMERON falters, and takes a seat on the floor. Head between his knees.

CAMERON

Okay. Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck.

JOHN

Just relax. Breathe. (beat) What's going
on?

CAMERON

I fucked up.

JOHN

Okay... How bad?

CAMERON

Bad. Real bad. Well, nothing bad happened. I mean, it could have. But, I'm okay I think.

JOHN

Okay, just take it easy. (beat)
Why don't you start from the top?

CAMERON

Fuck! I almost got arrested last night.

JOHN

That doesn't sound like the top.

CAMERON

No. You're right. It's not. Sorry.
(beat) I drove into a DUI checkpoint last night.

JOHN

Okay... And I take it you'd been drinking?

CAMERON

I mean barely. (beat) I was driving Monty's car and... he let me go. The cop. He just let me go. I don't get it. I mean, I was exactly the type of idiot they were looking for.

JOHN

I don't know. Sometimes we just get lucky, I guess. (short beat) Or...

CAMERON

Yeah, or what?

JOHN

Or maybe your higher power was lookin' out for you.

CAMERON

You really believe that?

JOHN

Sure. I mean I believe in a Higher Power. I don't necessarily think he or she is up there pulling our strings or anything.

CAMERON

That would be pretty fucked up if you ask me.

(beat)

All I could think about was Timmy.

JOHN

Yeah, I'm sure. Who else was in the car with you?

CAMERON

Dan, Monty and their friend, Ski.

JOHN nods. His expression softens.

JOHN

And they're okay? Why were you driving?

CAMERON

Yeah, yeah, they're fine. They asked me to drive at the end of the night 'cuz they got wasted and I only had like two beers. Please don't get mad at them. It wasn't their fault. They didn't know. Plus, they're the only friends I have on this campus right now.

JOHN

Don't worry. I would never do that.

CAMERON

What the fuck is wrong with me, Coop? Why am I so fucked up? Am I an alcoholic? My Dad keeps telling me I am, but... I don't know. My life just feels really unmanageable.

JOHN sits back, carefully choosing his response.

JOHN

I hear you. No doubt you've been through a lot. And you're carrying this heavy, HEAVY load. So here's the thing...

(beat)

You can't carry it alone anymore. You need some help.

CAMERON'S head is down. He can't look JOHN in the face, but he's nodding along.

JOHN CONT'D

I don't know if you're an alcoholic. That's not for me to decide. But I do know one thing. This place (John holds up his arms). This place can help. You don't have to do this alone, Cam. And if you decide that maybe you do have a drinking problem, I know another place that can help with that too.

CAMERON nods silently and his eyes get watery. The air between them grows heavy with unspoken understanding.

CAMERON

It's not even just the drinking, you know. I keep asking why I survived. Why didn't God or this Higher Power as you call it, just take me instead?

JOHN

Yeah, I get that. Trust me. I really do.

CAMERON

Ahhh, it's fuckin' brutal man... I just don't want to do this shit anymore. This anger I have is just eating me from the inside-out.

JOHN

What exactly are you angry about?

CAMERON

Oh, myself for sure. I can't look in a fuckin' mirror without wanting to smash it to pieces.

A flicker of deep empathy crosses JOHN'S face. He exhales, shaking his head faintly.

JOHN

Yeah, that sounds about right. Be careful. That anger will consume you. It can be a drug like any other.

(beat)

You know, I lost someone too, and I didn't handle it well, like at all.

(beat)

First, I turned to alcohol to numb the pain. Until that stopped working. So I found something else. And after a while, nothing worked. Soon, I didn't even recognize myself. I had ventured so far into the wilderness of moral turpitude that I didn't know how to find my way home. (beat) Finally someone taught me that it just takes twelve steps.

(beat)

But first, you have to find the willingness. You have to hit the bottom so hard and become so desperate that the pain you feel is greater than your fear of changing.

CAMERON

And then what?

JOHN

Then all you have to do is change ONE thing.

CAMERON

What's that?

JOHN

Everything.

JOHN gets up and sifts through his book shelves, pulling down a worn book. He places it in CAMERON'S lap.

JOHN CONT'D

This isn't AA literature, but it helped me a lot spiritually. It helped me begin the process.

CAMERON

The process?

JOHN

Healing. Recovery. Redemption. All of it.

(beat)

Take it. And when you're ready, maybe it will help you too.

CAMERON stares at the book contemplating his own recovery.

CAMERON

(Head down - ashamed)

What if I can't be healed?

(long beat)

JOHN

Cam, hear me when I tell you this. No one is beyond redemption. Nobody.

CAMERON stares at the book for a beat.

CAMERON

Thanks, Coop.

JOHN nods, walking towards his office door.

JOHN

Of course. That's what we do here.

(beat)

One day at a time, Cam. Today was about showing up. And that's a good start. Do some reading. And maybe try journaling if you can.

(beat)

When you're finished with that one, I have a whole library of other gems for you to sink your teeth into.

CAMERON rises slowly as he meets JOHN'S gaze. Without another word, he walks out of the office, as JOHN opens the door for him to leave.

EXT. THE HEART HOUSE - FRONT STEPS - MOMENTS LATER

CAMERON steps out of the Heart House, clutching the book

tightly in one hand. He exhales deeply, pulling a cigarette from his pocket and lighting it with trembling fingers. He leans against the bannister, his posture tense, as the smoke curls into the warm afternoon air.

FLIP sits a few steps below, already smoking a cigarette. He notices CAMERON wiping away some tears and offers a half-smirk, folding his hands together and giving him a quick bow jokingly.

FLIP

Shit is hard, isn't it?

CAMERON glances down, somewhat confused.

CAMERON

What's that?

FLIP

Life.

FLIP takes a drag from his cigarette, exhaling slowly before gesturing casually toward CAMERON'S hand.

FLIP CONT'D

Let me guess. Cooper give you that?

CAMERON looks at the book, then back at FLIP, nodding.

CAMERON

He seems to think it'll help.

FLIP

If he picked it for you, then I'm sure it will. It's kind of his love language.

CAMERON chuckles lightly, an air of curiosity lingers.

CAMERON

Dude really seems to care, huh?

FLIP nods, flicking the ash from his cigarette.

FLIP

You're damn right he cares. He might be the only one who truly does. At least, in my case. He kept welcoming me back. Over and over again. No matter how many times I relapsed.

CAMERON

What made you stick with it?

FLIP'S smile fades as he takes another pull from his cig.

FLIP

The interns like to spread rumors that it's because I have a thing for Coop, but that's ridiculous. He's not even my type. The truth is much more simple and

less salacious. It's because I wanted it.

CAMERON

Wanted what?

FLIP

A sober life. A life without constant chaos. Without waking up trying to figure out who I need to apologize to. All of it. I got sick and tired and being sick and tired all the time.

(beat)

Sobriety isn't for people who need it. It's for people who want it. And I've got my own people. People who count on me. And that was enough.

CAMERON processes this, takes a deep pull from his cig.

CAMERON

Sounds like a pretty good reason.

FLIP

Yep. I'll also say this...

CUT TO: INT. JOHN'S OFFICE - JOHN meditating, then to MARTY cleaning, a wide-out of the House.

FLIP CONT'D (V.O.)

This House. This program that John started. It's a pretty special place. Not every college campus has something like this. And John gave up everything to build it from scratch. He left a pretty cushy life on Wall Street to come here. To this little nowhere farm town. You gotta respect that kind of passion.

CUT TO: CAMERON offering FLIP a look of surprise, extinguishing his cigarette under his shoe.

CAMERON

No shit. That dude worked on Wall Street?

CUT BACK TO: JOHN sitting in his office staring at a picture of his two children in deep thought. (Flashback images of his son, CASEY, smiling at JOHN making the shape of a heart with his hands).

FLIP (V.O.)

Yes, sir. He was some kind of financial wizard apparently. But he walked away from it all, after his son, Casey, died. Things got pretty dark for him. Like real dark. Finally, he found AA. Pulled himself out of the abyss. After

that, I guess he just wanted something more real. Something that gave his life purpose, ya know. This place isn't just a job for him. It's a calling.

CUT TO: CAMERON nodding slowly, absorbing FLIP'S words. He gazes down at the book in his hand, its cover now catching the sunlight. The title of the book reads, "BREATHING UNDER WATER" by Richard Rohr.

CAMERON

A calling, huh?

CAMERON stares at the book contemplating his life circumstances.

FLIP

You'll see for yourself soon enough, kid. Just stick with it. And for the love of God, don't quit before the miracle happens.

FLIP tosses his cigarette butt into a nearby ashtray and gives CAMERON a pat on the shoulder as he steps back up the stairs. CAMERON watches him go back into the house, a faint sense of conviction building within him, gripping the book firmly as if it's more than just words. It's the start of something.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

FINAL MONTAGE: CAMPUS LIFE - SUNDAY

Men's basketball team is practicing and we see KAREEM (19, athletic, tall) for the first time and his COACH, LUKE MURRAY (UConn Asst. Coach). Something seems a little off with KAREEM at practice and the coach notices.

ALEX is studying in the library and she's checking her phone for messages/calls from CAMERON, but nothing yet.

CAMERON is at home staring at ALEX's contact info on his phone.

FINAL CUT TO: LISA - INTERN 2, she's helping the Greek Council prep for the kick-off event at Greek Week on Monday.

EXT. UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM - MONDAY

Lots of students wearing various Greek letters and colors mill about entering the auditorium. A few Heart House interns and staff walk over together to watch JOHN on the kick-off panel and organize a table for community service sign-ups.

INT. UNIVERSITY AUDITORIUM - MOMENTS LATER

The large auditorium buzzes with college students, fraternity and sorority members decked out in their colors.

The stage is set with four panelists seated behind a long table. JOHN COOPER, slightly dressed up, sits at one end, somewhat disconnected from the jovial energy swirling around him. The MEN'S ASST. BASKETBALL COACH (LUKE MURRAY - Bill Murray's son), charismatic and dressed sharply, entertains the crowd with amusing anecdotes about team victories. The HEAD of the DRAMA DEPT rambles enthusiastically about the importance of creativity. The DEAN of the BUSINESS SCHOOL boasts about a record number of successful interns at Fortune 500 firms. JOHN sits still, watching the crowd with reserved intensity. He's disenfranchised with the superficiality of the event.

A STUDENT MODERATOR, (President of the Greek Council, early 20s, overly cheerful), takes the microphone.

STUDENT MODERATOR

Thank you, panelists! Now let's open it up for questions from the audience!

Hands shoot up across the sea of students. The first few questions are inaudible and target the Basketball Coach, Drama Department Head, and Business School Dean: light-hearted questions that garner laughter and applause, while we zoom in on JOHN'S face staring off into nothing. Deep in thought, JOHN glances down at his notes, then scans the crowd with a distant look, as though anticipating rejection. Finally, a reserved-looking STUDENT (LOUIE - INTERN 1) raises his hand and speaks, cautiously yet curious.

LOUIE - HH INTERN

Mr. Cooper, could you tell us more about The Heart House? What, what would you say is the purpose of the program?

JOHN straightens in his chair, clearing his throat. He looks directly at LOUIE, then at the wider audience. He sees MAYA, FLIP, and CAMERON, all there waiting to see how he responds. There's a shift in his demeanor. He seizes the moment.

JOHN

Thanks for the question, Louie. For those that don't know, the Heart House is a substance abuse prevention center located right at the end of Greek Row. That big Victorian desperately in need of a paint job, that's us. Anyway, our purpose?

(beat)

I guess you could say our purpose is to civilize this campus. (laughs hesitantly).

Awkward silence from the crowd. JOHN takes a long pause after his joke doesn't land with the crowd. Debating if he should go hard. He looks directly at both MAYA and CAMERON.

JOHN CONT'D

Sorry... Bad joke. (beat) Our purpose is to stop preventable tragedies before they become scars you will wear for the rest of your life.

The crowd quiets slightly intrigued, but hesitant.

JOHN CONT'D

Let me give you some context: nearly half of all full-time college students in America reported drinking alcohol last month. Out of those, one in every three engages in binge drinking. Another 14% will develop some sort of alcohol abuse disorder. Did you know, alcohol-related incidents among students ages 18 to 24 include an estimated 1,500 fatalities each year from unintentional injuries and another 700,000 people will experience assaults by the hand of someone that's been drinking. Thousands more will use drugs: opioids, stimulants, and a large portion of those students won't survive the consequences.

JOHN pauses for a moment shaking his head as some students shift uncomfortably in their seats. Others scoff under their breath. Flash to JOHN'S daughter, MELISSA, squirming in her seat in the audience. She drops down trying to hide.

JOHN CONT'D

There are several factors that contribute to substance abuse on college campuses: peer pressure, the accessibility of these substances, stress, and... And the perception that getting fucked-up is normal and cool. It pains me to say it here, but that last part is mainly perpetuated by the Greek system.

Murmurs from the crowd (longer beat).

JOHN CONT'D

But that doesn't surprise anyone here, does it? Why would it? Because somewhere along the way, someone convinced you this was just all part of the college experience.

JOHN'S voice rises, commanding attention. The PANELISTS are looking at him nervously, except for the BASKETBALL COACH, who leans forward slightly, eyebrows raised, intrigued. The STUDENT MODERATOR looks visibly uncomfortable.

JOHN CONT'D

We romanticize self-destruction as

bonding and we brand addiction and substance abuse as youthful mistake-making. But please, make no mistake: addiction and substance abuse are merciless, they tear families apart and can end futures before they even have a chance to begin. And college culture, OUR CULTURE, enables it.

JOHN scans the crowd radiating raw honesty.

JOHN CONT'D

The truth is, we need to do a better job at protecting our future generations. So what do we do? (beat) Well, we can start by educating those that are at risk. We can counsel students that need extra help. We can connect students to the resources they need to be successful.

(beat)

I started The Heart House because I know too well that waiting until it's too late: a body in the morgue, a shattered future, is never the answer. And the good news is we are not powerless. There are solutions. Tools that can be taught. Help that can be provided. So my question back to you, to all of you, is how many of your friends need to die before you realize the stakes?

Dead silence fills the auditorium. STUDENTS stare back at JOHN with blank awkward expressions. A subtle fizz builds in the audience, polarized reactions breaking out. MELISSA finally gets up and walks out the building. JOHN sees her at that moment. The STUDENT MODERATOR quickly interjects, attempting to recover.

STUDENT MODERATOR

Okay, thank you, Mr. Cooper. That was a lot to take in. We appreciate your candor. Alright, everyone, let's keep the questions rolling. Who's next?

JOHN gets up and chases after MELISSA. The BASKETBALL COACH scribbles something on his notepad. JOHN busts through the doors to outside, but he's too late. She has run off into the distance. JOHN stands outside the auditorium scanning the horizon for MELISSA when MAYA comes outside. Just the two of them standing there alone.

MAYA

Shit Coop! Where did that come from?

JOHN

I'm done!

MAYA
Done with what?

JOHN
Pretending!

MAYA
What does that even mean?

JOHN
Our kids are dying out there Maya! And
no one wants to acknowledge it. I can't
do it anymore. The cost is too high.

MAYA looks at him totally confused, shaking her head.

MAYA
I get that, but I'm still not sure
what YOU can do about it?

JOHN
They can't ignore me anymore. I won't
let them. I'm a man on a mission now.
It's time to start making some noise
around here.

JOHN and MAYA both staring off across the landscape in the
direction that MELISSA ran off to.

MAYA
That's great John, but don't let that be
your only mission here (pointing in
Melisa's direction)?

JOHN stands there staring off into the distance thinking
hard for a while.

JOHN
Fuck.

THE END.

FADE OUT