

BREAKING FREE

Written by

John Milton Branton

Based on Actual Events

FADE IN:

1

EXT. ROOFTOP - DAY

1

It's a clear, beautiful winter day, clouds streaking the blue sky and the snow crusted mountains in the distance.

Against this backdrop: ETHAN CARTER, mid-30's, lean and intense, kneels on the rooftop, dripping sweat as he hammers shingles into the roof with a steady beat. Bang, b-bang, BANG.

Across from him on the roof, his older brother, MARK, 40's, and heavier, moves at his own steady pace, shingling with a hammer gun. Bam, Bam, Bam. Beat.

Bam, Bam, Bam. Bang, bang, BANG.

The two beats mingle and counterpoint - work music.

Ethan starts to HUM to the beats, picking a tune through the hammering, then scratching the rough shingles with the hammer head between Bangs, like brushes on a drum kit's cymbal.

It's JAZZ on a roof - humming, brushing, hammer, hammer, hammer until --

MARK

Goddamn it, Ethan.

ETHAN

What?

MARK

Can you not?

ETHAN

Not what?

MARK

Do that thing with the hammer like we're at some kind of fucking, you know, rock concert.

ETHAN

As you wish. Boss.

MARK

I'm not your fucking --

Ethan stop him with a hand, stretches, stands, stares out at the sun over the mountain.

MARK (CONT'D)
I didn't say --

ETHAN
Yeah. You did.

Ethan drops his hammer with a THUD as --
A HORN honks below.

JIMMY (O.C.)
YO! E!

Ethan moves to the edge of the roof and looks down at -
JIMMY - his best friend since forever.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Time to -

JIMMY & ETHAN
Rock 'n ROLLLLLL!

MARK
No! We have to finish this.
Tonight. Rain's coming.

ETHAN
You're got this.

He moves to the ladder...

ETHAN (CONT'D)
And I'm gone.

MARK
ETHAN!

ETHAN
Love ya' bro'.
(to Jimmy in a whisper)
Not.

MARK
I heard that.

ETHAN
Kidding.

As he slides down the ladder.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Not.

MARK

Asshole.

ETHAN (O.C.)

I heard that.

MARK

Don't be late tomorrow.

ETHAN (O.C.)

No promises.

MARK

(under his breath)

Asshole.

Mark goes back to his nail gun.

BAM. BAM. BAM. Becomes --

2

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

2

The hard driving BEAT of Ethan's band ramping up.

Low ceilings. Sticky floors. Neon beer signs flicker behind the bar.

The STAGE is more of a platform, lit by colored spots.

ETHAN and his band are mid-song. ETHAN leads on guitar and vocals.

JIMMY holds down bass, backed by --

DEZ on drums and --

RICKY on rhythm guitar.

The song's tight but tense - like it's being held together by duct tape and grit.

ETHAN

(singing)

I was born with a voice I forgot
how to use...

He's good. Raw. Honest. But there's a crackle of something in the rhythm - like the gears don't quite mesh.

JIMMY glances over - concerned.

Ethan misses a downbeat by half a breath.

Jimmy compensates, adjusting the pulse.

JIMMY
You're dragging.

ETHAN
I'm feelin' it.

JIMMY
You're feeling it slow.

A GROUP OF REGULARS drink and chat over the music.

BASEBALL CAP GUY shouts out mid-verse:

BASEBALL CAP GUY
Hey! Assholes! Freebird!

Laughter from the table.

ETHAN glares at him but keeps playing. Pushes harder into the chorus. His vocals tear a bit, louder than they need to be.

ETHAN
(singing, almost yelling)
...and now I scream just to know
I'm alive!

A few heads turn. Some clapping. But the energy's chaotic.

Dez and Ricky exchange a look.

Dez rolls her eyes.

Ricky fakes a smile and keeps strumming.

The song grinds to an abrupt stop – no clean out.

A few claps. Mostly silence. A beer glass CLINKS on the bar.

MURMURS rise to BAR NOISE.

Ethan turns to the band.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Break. Take five.

Ethan unplugs his guitar with a sharp POP, walks offstage fast.

Jimmy follows him.

Dez and Ricky hang back. Neither looks thrilled.

DEZ
Jesus. Again?

RICKY
I need a smoke and a toke.

They exit the opposite way from Ethan and Jimmy.

3 INT. BACKSTAGE / STORAGE ROOM - NIGHT

3

The band's "green room" is a converted storage closet behind the bar - crates of empties, a busted vending machine, and two mismatched chairs.

ETHAN storms in, leans his guitar against the wall too hard. It slides. He doesn't care.

JIMMY follows, bass slung low.

JIMMY
You're chasing the beat, man. The whole second verse --

ETHAN
Don't start.

JIMMY
I'm not starting. I'm telling you. You're off, and you've been off for weeks.

ETHAN
Oh, so now you're my fucking band teacher?

JIMMY
I'm your friend - remember? I'm the one who shows up when you ghost everyone else.

Ethan opens a cooler. Grabs a beer.

ETHAN
You ever think maybe I'm carrying the rest of you?

JIMMY
Really? You're delusional, man.

Ethan turns away.

ETHAN
Crowd didn't seem to mind.

JIMMY

That crowd would cheer for a
dogfight if it came with a free
beer.

Ethan takes a long pull on his warm beer.

ETHAN

Bluh. Fuckin' beer's warm.

Jimmy walks toward the door, then stops.

JIMMY

Dez and Ricky are hanging with us
by a thread. You fuck up one more
gig, they're gone.

ETHAN

I'm doin' the best I can, Jimmy.

JIMMY

Do better.

He walks out.

Ethan sits in one of the rickety chairs, makes a face as he
takes another swallow of warm beer.

From the stage outside, someone strums a wrong chord, testing
- tuning.

The crowd MURMURS.

Ethan rubs his temples. Pulls a Sharpie from his pocket.
Scribbles on his hand:

"Stay inside the moment."

He stares at it. Takes a deep breath and blows it out.
Finishes the beer.

He picks up his guitar and heads to the stage.

4 INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

4

Lights dim again.

The crowd has thickened - barflies, a birthday group, and a
few people who might actually be listening.

ETHAN steps back onto the stage.

JIMMY adjusts his strap. Doesn't look at him.

DEZ sits at the kit.

RICKY tunes mechanically.

ETHAN

This one's... this one's new.

He strums the opening chords. The song is mid-tempo, a slow-burn. His voice comes in low, bruised.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

I built a house from broken
boards... Lived inside the
echoes...

People turn. It's good. Different. For a moment, the bar hushes.

Ethan grips the mic tighter. His left hand wavers on the frets.

His voice cracks.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

...and every time I called her
name...

He blinks.

The lights get brighter.

They flicker.

The chord progression stutters.

Jimmy picks up the slack.

Ethan misses the change.

JIMMY

Ethan -

Ethan tries to push through. One more line.

ETHAN

I - I can't -

His knees buckle.

The guitar lets out a low THUMP as it hits the floor.

GASPS from the crowd.

Dez leaps up.

Jimmy drops his bass, rushes over.

Ricky just stands there, frozen.

JIMMY
Someone call 911!

Ethan lies motionless. His chest rises – barely. His eyes flutter but don't focus.

All the noise ROARS.

Ethan's eyes close.

BLACK.

SILENCE.

5 EXT. CLUB – NIGHT 5

Flashing red and blue lights streak across the rain-soaked pavement outside the dive bar.

An AMBULANCE is parked at the curb.

A small crowd watches as EMTs lift ETHAN on a stretcher into the ambulance.

GLORIA rushes out of the crowd, pale and frantic.

GLORIA
That's my husband! I'm with him.

An EMT nods.

She climbs in after them.

The doors close and --

6 EXT. STREET – NIGHT 6

The ambulance SCREAMS down the night street, siren blaring, lights flashing, bouncing off the metal roof inside the ambulance.

7 INT. HIGH SCHOOL GYM – NIGHT (PAST) 7

Lights bounce off a mirror ball hung from the roof of the gym.

A high school dance in full swing.

A YOUNG ETHAN (17) stands under a spotlight with his electric guitar.

YOUNG JIMMY, bass guitar in hand, beside him.

A DRUMMER, sticks in hand, poised over his kit.

JIMMY

Time to --

JIMMY & ETHAN

-- ROCK 'N ROLL!

Girls SCREAM as they launch into some hard driving rock.

Ethan's eyes scan the crowd as he plays, landing on --

GLORIA --

Ethan's girl friend, 17, and glowing with first love, watches from the back.

Ethan starts singing - it's raw, but soulful.

GLORIA

(yells)

You got this, babe.

Ethan notices, his confidence growing.

Gloria gives Ethan a thumbs up.

8 INT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

8

Ethan lies flat, strapped in. Oxygen mask.

Monitors beep faintly.

GLORIA sits beside him, grips his hand like it might slip away forever.

GLORIA

Don't leave me, Ethan.

Her eyes never leave his face.

Ethan eyes open, focus on Gloria.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

You got this.

She forces a smile, gives him a thumbs up.

Ethan barely smiles back, his eyes close. He's out.

Tears well up in her eyes.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

You're okay, Baby. You're okay.
Stay with me.

Ethan's Chest rises and falls, shallow but steady.

9 EXT. AMBULANCE - NIGHT

9

The ambulance SCREAMS through intersections, weaving through dim-lit city streets. Siren echoing, urgent.

Red lights bounce off shop windows and the faces of people who stop to stare.

A full moon overhead.

A light RAIN falls.

10 INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOM - NIGHT

10

Ethan lies on a bed in a curtained cubicle, IV in his arm, pulse sensor on his finger, the bedside monitor scrolling away beside him.

Gloria stand in the corner.

A young, harried and clearly sleep-deprived resident, Dr. Williams, enters, picks up Ethan's chart and scans it.

DR. WILLIAMS

So, how are we feeling, Ethan?

ETHAN

I think I had a heart attack? Was it a heart attack? I don't know. I couldn't breathe and then there was this pain in my chest, really, really bad, and --

DR. WILLIAMS

You didn't have a heart attack.

ETHAN

I -- no?

DR. WILLIAMS

No. You had a panic attack. A good one.

ETHAN

So - I'm not... dying?

DR. WILLIAMS

Well, we're all dying. But not tonight.

He smiles.

ETHAN

Okay. So, now what...?

DR. WILLIAMS

I've given you clonazepam. It's an anti-anxiety medication. It will help you relax. And something to help you sleep.

ETHAN

OK.

DR. WILLIAMS

We're going to keep you overnight. For observation. And a counselor will come have a chat with you in the morning.

Ethan's eyes are fluttering. He's yawning and fighting to stay awake.

ETHAN

Thanks.

His head drops back to the pillow. He's asleep just as --

GLORIA

Is he okay?

DR. WILLIAMS

He's fine. I've given him something to sleep. And you are...?

GLORIA

His wife. Gloria. He thinks he had a heart attack?

DR. WILLIAMS

No. As I said. Panic attack.

GLORIA

Oh. That's good. I mean better. Than a heart attack.

DR. WILLIAMS

Yes.

He smiles his not quite a smile, smile.

DR. WILLIAMS (CONT'D)

We'll be keeping him overnight. For observation. To be safe.

GLORIA

Oh. OK. That make sense. So, I should...

DR. WILLIAMS

Come back in the morning.

GLORIA

I'd like to stay with him.

DR. WILLIAMS

He'll be in the observation ward. No visitors.

GLORIA

Oh. OK. So I should...

DR. WILLIAMS

Go home. Rest. Come back tomorrow.

GLORIA

OK.

DR. WILLIAMS

Right, then.

He moves towards the curtain.

GLORIA

Thank you.

Gloria stares at Ethan's sleeping form as Dr. Williams moves away.

She moves closer to the bed, stares down at Ethan, bends to kiss him when --

Two ORDERLIES wheel a bed into the cubicle.

Gloria watches, backing away, as they transfer Ethan to the bed and wheel him away.

She follows as they disappear through a set of double doors, automatically closing behind them.

Gloria stares at the closed doors, pulls her coat tightly together.

She turns towards the exit and glances at the people waiting as she heads to the way out.

11 INT. OBSERVATION WARD - NIGHT

11

Rows of occupied beds line a long, darkened room. Various sounds of breathing, groaning, wheezing fill the air.

A MAN paces the floor, dragging his IV pole along with him. He's MUTTERING in some indecipherable foreign language.

A NURSE takes him by the arm, leads him to a bed. He sits on the edge, staring into space.

The Nurse moves to Ethan's bed, checks his chart, moves beside him and gently shakes him, waking him up.

NURSE GARCIA

Alright, Mr. Carter, this will just take a moment.

She pops a thermometer into his mouth and wraps a blood pressure cuff around his arm, pumping it up.

NURSE GARCIA (CONT'D)

Now, just relax.

She checks the meter, releases the pressure, makes a note on his chart as she pulls the thermometer and makes another note.

She takes a little white cup with a pill in it off her tray and hands it to Ethan with a cup of water.

NURSE GARCIA (CONT'D)

Here you go.

Ethan looks at the pill in the cup.

ETHAN

What is it?

She smiles.

NURSE GARCIA

Just something to help you sleep.

ETHAN

I was asleep. You woke me up to give me something to help me sleep?

NURSE
 Doctor's orders. Now, down the
 hatch.

He swallows the pill.

A WOMAN in another bed starts SWEARING.

NURSE GARCIA
 Uhhh, not again. I'll be back,
 honey. Try and relax.

The Nurse hustles off.

MARGARET (O.C.)
 FUCKIN' FUCK FUCK!

NURSE GARCIA
 Margaret! That's enough. People are
 sleeping.

MARGARET
 I need my medicine!

NURSE GARCIA
 You've already had your meds,
 Margaret.

MARGARET
 I need more. PLEEEEEEEASE!

NURSE GARCIA
 Margaret, if you don't calm down,
 I'm going to call the orderlies.

MARGARET
 Nooooo... no.no.no. Sorry, sorry...

Ethan lays back down and closes his eyes.

Margaret and the Nurse murmur in the distance.

12 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

12

Dim morning light seeps through slatted blinds.

Beeps and distant footsteps underscore the stillness.

The garbled sounds of announcements echo in the hallway.

RESIDENT (O.S.)
 Ethan... Ethan?

Ethan wakes up, disoriented.

DR. MEYERS, late 20s, the definition of capable but green, resident badge, Ethan's chart in hand, stands over him.

RESIDENT (CONT'D)

Good Morning. I'm doctor Myers. How are you feeling?

ETHAN

I don't know. Groggy.

RESIDENT

You had what appears to be an acute anxiety episode – a panic attack. Your vitals have stabilized and physically everything seems to be in order.

ETHAN

Okay.

RESIDENT

I've prescribed lorazepam to help in the short term. A low-dose benzodiazepine.

ETHAN

Uh-huh. So what does this benzo – whatever do?

RESIDENT

Stabilizes your autonomic nervous system and reduces hyperadrenergic activity.

ETHAN

You lost me at autonomic.

RESIDENT

Hyperadrenergic. Basically, it means high levels of adrenaline.

ETHAN

And...?

RESIDENT

It will slow your heart rate, so you can sleep and rest and no more panic attacks.

ETHAN

That sounds like a lot for some pills.

RESIDENT

It's just to keep your cortisol and epinephrine spikes in check.

ETHAN

If you say so.

The doctor scribbles on a prescription pad, hands the prescription to Ethan.

RESIDENT

Get this filled and ask your family doctor to book you a follow up with a specialist, alright?

Ethan nods.

RESIDENT (CONT'D)

Good. The Nurse will be along with some paperwork and then you're good to go.

The Resident leaves.

Ethan stares at the ceiling.

Silence stretches.

13 INT. ETHAN & GLORIA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

13

Muted light spills from the kitchen into the living room. The TV is on - volume low, some late-night news show.

ETHAN sits at the table, half-eating cereal. He's showered, but still wears the same loose hoodie from the hospital. His eyes are distant.

GLORIA moves through the kitchen, putting groceries away, not looking at him.

GLORIA

Did you fill the prescription?

ETHAN

Picked it up.

GLORIA

How many did you take?

ETHAN

I'm not a junkie.

GLORIA
That's not what I asked.

ETHAN
I took one, Okay. Just like the
doctor ordered.

Ethan goes back to his cereal bowl.

Gloria puts groceries away.

GLORIA
The doctor said therapy might help.

ETHAN
He was a resident, Gloria. Probably
did his psych rotation last week.

GLORIA
Still more qualified than you.

ETHAN
I had a panic attack. I don't need
a bunch of shrinks rummaging around
in my subconscious.

GLORIA
You didn't just fall down, Ethan.
You shut off. You collapsed. On
stage. You were unconscious.

ETHAN
Yeah. That was fun.

GLORIA
Something's wrong, baby. Really
wrong. You need help.

Ethan shoves the bowl away.

The clink of spoon against ceramic fills the room.

ETHAN
What? So now you're an expert?

GLORIA
I'm just worried about you.

ETHAN
Sorry. I'm just tired.

GLORIA
You've been tired for years.

He gets up, leaves the room.

Gloria stays behind, staring at the half-eaten cereal.

She pours it down the drain, flips a switch above the sink.

The harsh ROAR of the disposal fills the room.

14

EXT. ROOF - DAY

14

Underneath an overcast sky, a single-story family home in mid-renovation.

Shingles stacked, nail guns coiled like snakes, the usual chaos of a two-man crew.

ETHAN works half a section over from MARK.

Ethan's slower, less precise, wearing the same grey hoodie – now stretched at the neck, sleeves dark with sweat and grit.

Mark glances over.

MARK

Jesus, you living in that hoodie now, or what?

ETHAN

(without looking up)
It's climate control. And stylish.

MARK

You smell like a wet raccoon that fell in a bucket of slop.

ETHAN

I like it. It's comfortable. And the smell keeps the homeowners away.

MARK

Yeah? Well, it's starting to keep me away.

ETHAN

Good. Brother-repellant. It's working.

MARK

Wash it. Okay.

ETHAN

Whatever.

Mark shakes his head. Nails a few more shingles.

MARK
Seriously, bro. You okay? Cuz' you
look like shit.

ETHAN
Thanks.

MARK
I'm just worried about you, okay?

ETHAN
Yeah? Well, don't. I'm fine.

Ethan stands, walks to the pile of shingles.

One foot slips – then both. In a blink, he's on his ass and sliding toward the edge, shingles flying.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
FUCK!

Ethan's grabbing at the roof but there's nothing to hold on to.

His fingers slip across the newly laid shingles as he slides closer to the edge.

Mark drops his nail gun.

Ethan's feet are over the edge now and he's still moving.

Mark lunges, GRABS THE HOOD.

ETHAN's weight yanks Mark forward – hard.

MARK
Hang on!

Mark strains, half lying across the roof. as

MARK (CONT'D)
I gotcha.

He slowly hauls Ethan back from the brink.

Silence.

Just the wind and their labored breathing.

MARK (CONT'D)
Jesus, man. That was close.

ETHAN

Yeah. Thanks. You saved my ass.

They're both still, lying on the roof, catching their breath.

MARK

You're not right, dude. Whatever you're on - it ain't working.

ETHAN

I'm fine.

MARK

The fuck you are. You nearly took a header into the birdbath.

Ethan sits up, rubbing his hands. Avoids Mark's eyes.

ETHAN

I said, I'm fine.

MARK

Yeah? And I'm saying go home.

ETHAN

What - you firing me? You can't. We're partners.

MARK

And right now, you're a liability, partner. You need a day. Or three. However long it takes. Just go home and get yourself right, man.

Ethan exhales. Half a nod. Half a grudge.

ETHAN

Call it a sick day.

MARK

I'm calling it a I'm not scraping you off the sidewalk day. Now, get the fuck out of here.

Mark picks up the nail gun, returns to his row.

MARK (CONT'D)

Go write a song or something.

Ethan sits there a moment, breathing hard.

He drops his nail gun and moves to the edge of the roof a few feet behind him.

He flips around, lowers his feet carefully onto the ladder and slowly disappears.

Mark nails with a vengeance.

15 INT. KITCHEN - EARLY MORNING

15

Muted daylight filters in. The hum of the fridge, the ticking of the wall clock—too loud for this hour.

ETHAN stands at the counter in his hoodie, pale and twitchy. He stares at a TOASTER with two slices of bread already inside.

He presses the lever.

Nothing happens.

Presses it again. Still nothing.

ETHAN

(low)

Come on.

He jiggles the cord. Slaps the side of the toaster.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

What the f*** is wrong with you?

He SLAMS the lever again. The toaster doesn't respond.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

JUST F***ING WORK!

He yanks the toaster off the counter, slams it back down. Hard. One of the slices flies out and skids across the floor.

GLORIA appears in the doorway, startled. She takes in the scene —

Ethan red-faced, panting, fists clenched over a busted toaster.

She walks over. Looks down.

Unplugs the toaster. Then calmly plugs it back in.

The light on the front glows orange. It's working now.

GLORIA

You didn't plug it in.

ETHAN
 (quiet)
 It didn't—

GLORIA
 (cutting him off)
 This isn't about the toaster,
 Ethan.

She walks to the sink. Fills a glass with water. Turns back to him.

GLORIA (CONT'D)
 I can't do this anymore.

ETHAN
 (defensive)
 I'm just tired. I didn't sleep—

GLORIA
 No. You yelled at a toaster. You
 scared me.

Beat.

GLORIA (CONT'D)
 You need to see someone. *Today.* I
 don't care if it's a clinic or a
 hotline or some guy named Carl in a
 folding chair.

She puts the glass down in front of him. He doesn't touch it.

GLORIA (CONT'D)
 Get help, Ethan. Or I'm done
 watching you disappear.

She walks out. The sound of her footsteps up the stairs.

Ethan stays standing at the counter, shaking slightly. He presses the toaster lever.

This time, it clicks.

16 INT. CLINIC WAITING ROOM - DAY

16

A too brightly lit purgatory of exhaustion and paperwork.

Plastic chairs in rows. Hand sanitizer everywhere.

An old bulletin board with outdated posters: "Seasonal Depression," "STI Awareness," "How to Spot Stroke Symptoms."

ETHAN sits in the middle of it, hunched in his hoodie. He shifts constantly, squirming, tapping his foot. Hoodie sleeves chewed at the cuffs.

To his left: a rail-thin SUDANESE MOTHER with a crying INFANT in her lap. She bounces the child gently, murmuring to calm it.

To his right: a MIDDLE-AGED MAN who looks like he hasn't slept in a week and wants to be anywhere else.

In the far corner: a MUMBLING JUNKIE talks to someone only he can see.

Across from them all, an ELDERLY MAN stares at a blank wall.

The fluorescent lights flicker overhead.

The only sound is the infant's whimper and the buzz of cheap electronics.

Behind a scratched plastic COVID shield, a NURSE checks a screen. Then calls out:

NURSE
Ethan Carter?

Ethan stands too quickly, palms sweaty.

The Nurse waves him through.

NURSE (CONT'D)
Room four.

He walks past the others. No one looks up.

17 INT. CLINIC EXAM ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

17

The room is small, sterile, and windowless. A chart of "Recognizing Depression" hangs crooked on the wall.

Ethan sits on the paper-covered exam table, legs swinging slightly, heel tapping the metal frame like a metronome.

He scans the room. Notices a jar of wooden tongue depressors. Starts counting them under his breath.

The door opens quickly.

DR. LERNER, 40s, coat wrinkled, eyes tired, enters typing into a tablet.

DR. LERNER
Okay, Mr... Carter?

ETHAN
That would be me.

DR. LERNER
So, Nathan, what brings you in today?

ETHAN
Ethan.

DR. LERNER
Oh, Sorry. Ethan. So - what's going on?

Ethan hesitates.

ETHAN
I can't sleep. Or I sleep fourteen hours. I can't tell anymore.

DR. LERNER
(clicking away)
Mmm-hmm.

ETHAN
Sometimes I feel like I can do everything all at once. Then I crash. No warning. Just... gone.

DR. LERNER
How long's that been happening?

ETHAN
A while. Years, maybe. I don't know exactly. But it's worse now.

DR. LERNER
Any racing thoughts?

ETHAN
Constantly. But they're not productive. Just noise. And dread, you know? Like something bad's about to happen.

DR. LERNER
(still typing)
Uh-huh. Mood swings? Agitation?

ETHAN

I yelled at my wife because the toaster wouldn't work. It wasn't plugged in.

DR. LERNER

(nodding)

Ever spend impulsively? Engage in risky behavior?

ETHAN

I'm in a band. Risky enough?

DR. LERNER

I'll take that as a yes.

He finishes clicking. Prints out a prescription.

DR. LERNER (CONT'D)

Your mood instability and energy fluctuations suggest Bipolar II disorder.

ETHAN

I don't think I'm... I mean my mother was, but I'm not like... that.

DR. LERNER

We'll start you on lithium carbonate and Seroquel. This should stabilize the manic cycling and suppress impulsivity. Help you sleep too.

ETHAN

Yeah. Ok. But I'm not manic. I just feel... off, you know? Like my brain's on a delay.

DR. LERNER

That's a very common symptom. The depersonalization effect will subside once the lithium reaches therapeutic levels.

ETHAN

And if it doesn't?

DR. LERNER

We adjust the dosage, consider augmenting with an antipsychotic.

ETHAN

I'm just... I mostly feel...
exhausted. Confused.

DR. LERNER

Yes. That's a symptom of mood
dysregulation. We need to get your
dopamine-serotonin balance under
control.

ETHAN

What does that mean?

DR. LERNER

Simply put, we need to manage both
your highs and your lows.

Dr. Lerner smiles, hands over a prescription.

Ethan nods, takes the prescription.

DR. LERNER (CONT'D)

Schedule a follow-up in six weeks.
And drink water. Lots of water. The
Lithium's hard on the kidneys.

Ethan opens his mouth to ask - something - then shuts it.

ETHAN

Should I --

But Lerner's already gone, door closing behind him with a
solid THUNK.

Ethan sits alone for a beat.

The paper crinkles under him as he gets off the table.

He leans over and takes a tongue depressor. Stuffs it in his
pocket.

18

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

18

ETHAN walks down a cracked sidewalk, hoodie up despite the
heat. He moves fast, eyes darting - hyper-alert but not
focusing.

The world is too bright, the sounds too sharp.

He holds a white prescription bottle in one hand, shaking it
in rhythm like a maraca.

SHHH-TIKKA-TIKKA-SHHH.

He pops the cap, dumps a pill into his palm. Pauses.

Looks at it. Looks around.

Nobody's watching.

He tosses it back dry, swallowing hard.

He keeps walking.

The bottle rattles as he tucks it into his hoodie pocket.

Ahead, a non-descript loft building. A faded sign beside a dented metal door reads:

****REHEARSAL SPACE - AVAILABLE BY THE HOUR****

Ethan stops, wipes sweat from his lip. Takes a breath.

He pockets the pill bottle, pushes open the door, and disappears inside.

19

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE - DAY

19

A narrow, low-ceilinged loft studio. Mismatched amps, scuffed hardwood, decades of sticker residue on the walls. Soundproofing foam peels at the corners.

ETHAN plugs in his guitar, distracted. Hoodie still on, hood pulled halfway up. He fidgets with the tuning pegs like he's never seen them before.

DEZ (drummer) stretches her arms behind the kit. RICKY (rhythm guitar) picks out a scale, eyes locked on his fretboard.

JIMMY watches Ethan—suspicious.

JIMMY

You good?

ETHAN

I'm fine.

DEZ

We gonna do "Bones" or "Rain Song"?

ETHAN

(too fast)

"Bones." Start heavy. Wake 'em up.

DEZ counts them in. One, two, three, four—

The song kicks off.

Dez pounds with precision.

Ricky's locked in.

Jimmy follows Ethan's lead...

But Ethan's off. His fingering is sloppy. He's behind the beat, then suddenly ahead. The dynamics are weird – too quiet, then too loud.

He sings the first line way off key.

RICKY

(soft)

What is this?

Jimmy tries to adjust but Ethan changes tempo mid-chorus.

JIMMY

Stop! Stop stop stop-

Everyone halts. A cymbal rings out in the silence.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

What the hell was that?

ETHA

I was trying something. Free-form feel.

DEZ

It felt like a disaster.

RICKY

Are you even hearing us?

ETHAN

I've been writing. I've got new ideas. Let me show you one thing.

JIMMY

No. You're not here. You think you are, but you're not. You're somewhere else.

ETHAN

Maybe I'm just ahead of you.

The room goes cold.

Jimmy steps forward.

Ethan instinctively steps back, stiffens.

JIMMY

You know what pisses me off most? I miss you. That guy who used to care if a song landed?

ETHAN

Maybe I'm just tired.

DEZ

We all are. Doesn't mean we mail it in.

JIMMY

You need to get your shit together. And we're not your rehab room.

Jimmy unplugs his bass. Ricky does the same.

RICKY

I gotta go. My shift starts in an hour.

DEZ

You okay to lock up?

Ethan doesn't answer. Just stands there.

JIMMY

Call me when you show up.

The door closes behind them.

Ethan strums once – wildly out of tune.

He smiles like it didn't happen.

20

INT. ETHAN & GLORIA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

20

ETHAN stumbles into the room, hoodie clinging to him like a second skin. He's still gripping his guitar – arms wrapped tight around it, like it's the only thing keeping him vertical.

GLORIA is folding laundry at the foot of the bed.

She looks up, surprised.

GLORIA

You're home early. How was rehearsal?

Ethan lowers himself onto the bed like his bones forgot how to bend. Still holding the guitar, he sits there a moment.

ETHAN

It was fine.

He takes out the pill bottle. Shakes one into his palm. Dry swallows.

GLORIA

You want some water?

ETHAN

No. I'm fine.

He curls onto his side, still fully clothed. The guitar awkwardly cradled in his arms like a shield or a favorite stuffed animal.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Everything's fine.

He doesn't cry. Doesn't speak. Just... shuts off.

His breathing deepens.

He's asleep.

Gloria gently pries the guitar from his arms.

She walks it to the corner and leans it upright, safe.

Then stands at the edge of the room.

Watches him.

Nothing left to say.

Just a wall of quiet between them, and the soft ticking of the pill bottle as it rolls to a stop on the nightstand.

21 INT. PHARMACY - LATE AFTERNOON

21

Bright and over-air-conditioned. Rows of toothpaste, tampons, and children's vitamins.

The PRESCRIPTION PICK-UP line snakes toward the back - four people deep. Everything is moving very slowly.

ETHAN enters, already twitchy. His hoodie sleeves are pulled halfway over his fists. He scans the store like he's expecting someone to jump out at him.

He heads toward the back. Slips into line. Fidgets. Foot tapping. Checking over his shoulder. Gripping a folded refill slip.

The MOM in front of him adjusts her stroller. The TEENAGER behind him keeps scrolling her phone.

Ethan exhales like he's been holding it since last night.

Finally, he reaches the window.

PHARMACIST (O.S.)
Hello, Ethan.

ETHAN looks up. The PHARMACIST, 30s, warm voice, kind face. She knows Ethan – and likes him. That's worse.

PHARMACIST (CONT'D)
Refill?

ETHAN
Yeah. Seroquel and um - lithium. I just need a few days' worth. I... dropped the bottle.

The Pharmacist types. Her smile dims slightly.

PHARMACIST
That refill's not available until next week, Ethan. Looks like you filled it, mmm... six days ago.

ETHAN
Yeah, yeah, but I, I dropped some. And I... lost the bottle.

PHARMACIST
Okay. I can message your doctor, but I can't override the schedule.

ETHAN
No. I'm out. I need it today. Like - I need it now.

The Pharmacist lowers her voice, leans in a bit.

PHARMACIST
Ethan, are you alright?

ETHAN
I'm fine, I just need my meds.

PHARMACIST
This isn't casual. You can't dose
it irregularly.

ETHAN
I know that. That's why I'm here.

People in line are watching now.

PHARMACIST
I'll call -
(checking screen)
Dr. Lerner's office and -

ETHAN
NO! I need my meds NOW!

PHARMACIST
Ethan, if you keep raising your
voice -

ETHAN
I'M NOT RAISING MY FUCKING VOICE.

Now everyone's looking.

The teen behind him quietly steps out of line.

PHARMACIST
Please, Ethan, lower your voice.

ETHAN
I lowered my fucking voice. I took
the pills. I did everything they
told me and now I'm in here begging
and you're treating me like a - a
fucking junkie.

PHARMACIST
Ethan.

ETHAN
And I'm trying really hard not to
fall apart in front of these
people.

PHARMACIST
If you don't calm down, I'll have
to call security.

Ethan's breath stops short.

He backs away from the counter, shaking.

ETHAN
Fucking forget it.

He turns and walks fast, almost knocking over a display.

He doesn't look back.

The Pharmacist watches him go. Then picks up the phone.
BEGIN MONTAGE

22 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT 22

Ethan stands at the counter eating hand fulls of dry cereal straight from the box, an unopened milk jug beside him.

There are cereal crumbs all over the counter and on the floor.

He doesn't notice. Or care.

Gloria watches from the doorway. Turns away without speaking.

Ethan senses her, turns but the doorway is empty.

He keeps eating.

23 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 23

Ethan sits on the couch staring at a turned-off TV screen.

He's holding the remote in his hand, thumb hovering over a button he never presses.

He's just sitting there, breathing, rocking forward and back, forward and back.

The room hums with a low refrigerator buzz and a ticking clock.

24 INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT 24

Ethan plays a first-person shooter on a giant flatscreen.

Gunfire and explosions echo through the walls.

His expression is fixed on the screen, body rigid, fingers flying over the controls, eyes flicking with the images on screen.

This is not escape - it's anesthesia.

25 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 25

Ethan is passed out on the couch, mouth open, hoodie pulled up, TV controller in his lap.

The TV glows, frozen on a streaming channel menu.

A half-empty pizza box lies half-crushed on the floor near his feet, a few pop cans beside it.

Gloria comes in, takes a long look at Ethan. She moves to him, takes the control from his hand, and turns off the TV.

26 INT. BASEMENT - NIGHT 26

Ethan sits on a stool, guitar across his lap.

He doesn't play. Just holds it like a childhood stuffed animal.

His fingers move without touching the strings, playing a tune only he can hear.

27 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT 27

Gloria lies in bed, turned away.

Ethan behind her, touches her shoulder.

She tenses.

He pulls back.

They don't speak.

Don't touch.

Don't sleep.

Gloria stares at the wall.

Ethan rolls back and stares at the ceiling.

28 INT. BASEMENT - MORNING 28

Ethan plays a wild, off-key, discordant mess of notes.

He grins like it's brilliant.

He nods to himself, eyes closed, manically playing.

Gloria watches from the top of the stairs.

She steps back and closes the door.
END MONTAGE.

29 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

29

ETHAN lies on the couch, hoodie up, staring blankly at a trashy reality show. The sound is grating, but he doesn't seem to hear it.

GLORIA paces behind him, holding a stack of mental health pamphlets, referral forms, and medication guides. Her energy is frayed to the edge.

GLORIA

You need to see someone else,
Ethan. This isn't working.

ETHAN

It's working fine. The meds just
need more time. The doctor said.

GLORIA

More? It's been three months and
all you do is lie on the couch
watching garbage.

Ethan grabs the remote. Turns the volume up, not dramatically
— just enough to make a point.

Gloria throws the papers onto the coffee table. They scatter
like dead leaves.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

I can't keep doing this.

30 INT. CHILDHOOD LIVING ROOM - NIGHT
FLASHBACK

30

YOUNG ETHAN, 7, sits on a sagging couch, watching TV in a dim
room. A woman's voice rises behind him --

MOTHER, speaking to someone we don't see.

MOTHER

I can't keep doing this.

She walks toward the front door with a suitcase.

BACK TO PRESENT

31 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY 31

Ethan blinks. Shakes off the echo.

Gloria walks towards the front door, suitcase in hand.

ETHAN

You think I like this? You think I don't hate what's happening to me?

GLORIA

To us! Fight it, Ethan. Fight for us.

He doesn't answer. His eyes drift back to the TV.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

That's it?

She grabs her coat.

GLORIA (CONT'D)

Nothing?

ETHAN

I don't have anything left.

GLORIA

Then neither do I.

She drops her keys on the table, walks out.

SLAMS the door behind her.

32 INT. CHILDHOOD LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 32
FLASHBACK

The front door slams shut.

Young Ethan stares at it, frozen. Silent.

YOUNG ETHAN

(soft)

Mom?

BACK TO PRESENT

33 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY 33

Ethan stares at the closed door.

ETHAN

Glo?

Beat.

He turns back to the TV.

Click. Click. Click

34 INT. ETHAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

34

Low light. The room is still, thick with silence.

ETHAN sits hunched on the couch, staring at a prescription bottle on the coffee table.

His hands tremble as he tries to open the childproof cap.

It pops off suddenly and bounces across the room.

Pink-and-white capsules scatter across the table.

ETHAN

Fuck me.

He starts gathering the pills, chasing a few that roll to the edge. Pours them back into the bottle with shaking fingers.

Then he picks one up and pops it into his mouth.

Swallows dry. No hesitation. Head back. Swallows. A practiced move.

He leans back into the couch. Closes his eyes.

A moment of stillness then - a spark ignites.

He bolts upright.

Grabs a yellow legal pad from the armrest and searches for a pencil. He finds one under a cushion.

He begins furiously scribbling, muttering half-thoughts to himself and humming off-key.

Scratched lines, frantic curves.

The rhythm builds, hand racing across the page.

He stops. Stares at what he's written.

A tangled, indecipherable mess.

He rips it off the pad. Crumples it. Hurls it at the wall.

It lands in a pile of yellow paper balls, scattered like spent shells.

He stares at the wall a moment. Then --

Throws the pencil against the wall.

35

INT. PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

35

Functional but lifeless. A tan couch, two chairs, generic landscape art.

Soft instrumental music hums from a white noise machine in the corner.

ETHAN sits in one of the chairs, hoodie sleeves pulled halfway over his hands. He's twitchy but trying to hold it together.

Across from him, DR. KAPLAN, 40s, glasses, a decent man fraying under workload.

He scrolls a tablet as Ethan talks.

DR. KAPLAN

So you said this is your third diagnosis?

ETHAN

Technically my fourth, if you count the ER guy. Bipolar, then PTSD, then... something with "schizo" in it.

DR. KAPLAN

Okay. Any history of trauma?

ETHAN

Depends how you define it. Childhood crap, maybe. Nothing war zone level.

DR. KAPLAN

Substance use?

ETHAN

Weed, sometimes. Nothing serious. A little Adderall when I was younger. Mushrooms.

DR. KAPLAN
Any hallucinations?

ETHAN
Just the stuff my head plays back
on loop.

Kaplan glances at the clock.

DR. KAPLAN
How's your sleep?

ETHAN
Inconsistent. Either I can't, or I
crash too long and wake up worse.

DR. KAPLAN
(typing)
Sounds like a mood disorder with
some cognitive fog.

ETHAN
So what's that – diagnosis number
five?

DR. KAPLAN
We don't count them. We treat what
we see.

Kaplan finally puts down the tablet. Meets Ethan's eyes.

DR. KAPLAN (CONT'D)
I'll recommend cognitive-behavioral
therapy. Twice a week. We can start
next Tuesday, or I can refer you if
you feel you need something sooner.

ETHAN
I'm cool. That's it?

DR. KAPLAN
No – there's an "and."

He reaches for a pad, scribbles a prescription.

DR. KAPLAN (CONT'D)
We'll add a low-dose atypical
antipsychotic – this one's
generally well-tolerated. Also an
SSRI to stabilize the base mood
level.

ETHAN
So what's the drug of choice today?

DR. KAPLAN
Risperidone, 0.5 mg at night. And
sertraline, 25 mg daily. We'll
titrate as needed.

ETHAN
Titrate?

DR. KAPLAN
Sorry. Adjust the dosage.

ETHAN
Great. Another cocktail.

DR. KAPLAN
It's about balance. Not sedation.
You'll need to give it two weeks,
minimum.

He tears the sheet and hands it over.

DR. KAPLAN (CONT'D)
It's the best we can do.

Ethan takes it. Stares at the paper.

ETHAN
What if this doesn't work?

DR. KAPLAN
Then we adjust. And keep adjusting.

ETHAN
And if I run out of things to
adjust?

DR. KAPLAN
Then my work is done.

Kaplan picks up his tablet again.

DR. KAPLAN (CONT'D)
In the meantime, we'll see you next
week. See Monica at the front.
She'll set you up with an
appointment.

Ethan walks out. Quiet.

The door clicks behind him.

36 INT. RECEPTION - DAY

36

Monica, 30-something professional assistant, head phones on, keyboard clicking, glances up at Ethan, checks her screen.

MONICA
Ok, Mr. Carter, you next
appointment is --

She checks her screen, looks up.

Ethan's walking out the door.

MONICA (CONT'D)
Mr. Carter...

The door closes behind him.

37 EXT. MARK'S HOUSE - EVENING

37

A quiet street.

Domestic warmth spills from curtained windows.

Blue TV lights dancing with the muted sounds of distant shows.

Ethan stands on the porch, guitar case in hand.

He knocks.

Waits.

Knocks again.

Mark opens the door but doesn't step aside.

MARK
We have a doorbell, you know.

Ethan stares at the button.

ETHAN
Oh, yeah, I see that now.

Mark looks from the doorbell to Ethan.

MARK
Ethan, what are you doing here?

ETHAN

I've been working on something. A new song. Thought maybe I could play it for the girls.

Mark steps out onto the porch, softly closing the door behind him.

MARK

Now's not a good time.

ETHAN

Come on, man. It's not some breakdown thing. It's actually good. I thought they'd like it.

MARK

I'm sure they would. But I can't let you in.

ETHAN

What? Seriously?

MARK

The kids... I can't risk it.

ETHAN

Risk what? I'm not dangerous.

MARK

You don't know that. I don't know that. One minute you're calm, the next you're...

ETHAN

I'm what?

MARK

All over the place. I have to think about my family.

ETHAN

I'm your family too.

MARK

I know that. And you need help.

ETHAN

I'm getting help!

MARK

Well, it's not fucking working, is it?

MARK'S WIFE (O.S.)
Hon - who is it?

MARK
It's nobody. I'll be there in a
sec.

ETHAN
Nobody? Now I'm fucking nobody?

Mark opens the door.

MARK
I gotta go. Sorry.

He steps inside and closes the door.

Ethan stares at it. Breath catches.

The door LOCKS with a definite CLICK.

Ethan KICKS the door.

ETHAN
Fuck You, Mark.

Another kick. Harder.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
FUCK YOU!

38 INT. MARK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

38

Mark stands at the door, motionless, hand on the doorknob.

A third kick rattles the door in its frame.

ETHAN (O.C.)
FUCK YOU, MAN!

From the next room --

CHILD (O.S.)
Daaaad! Come on. It's your turn!

MARK
Coming!

Mark turns away.

39 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - NIGHT

39

Ethan waits, staring at the closed, locked door.

ETHAN
(softly)
Fuck you.

He stumbles off the porch and walks down the sidewalk.

Guitar case in hand. Hoodie pulled low over his head.

The golden-hour glow has faded.

It's night.

40 EXT. STREET - NIGHT

40

Ethan walks. Hoodie up. Guitar case in hand.

The night folds around him like a shadow.

He passes house after house - each window glowing with different kinds of warmth.

He looks in one window and SEES --

A golden-lit kitchen. A family eating dinner. Laughter through glass.

A little further on and across the street, through the front window he SEES --

A couple on the couch, bathed in TV-blue light, laughing at something on the screen, their heads tilted toward one another. The woman lays her head on the man's shoulder. Easy.

Ethan looks away, pulls his hood up higher, picks up the pace. Turns a corner and SEES --

In the driveway, two kids shoot hoops with their dad under a motion-sensor floodlight. A lazy, beautiful rhythm of play as the ball glides fluidly between them.

Ethan stops, watches - unseen.

Dad senses his presence and turns. Ethan hurries away into the darkness.

41 EXT. EMPTY PARK - NIGHT

41

Ethan sits alone on a swing. Guitar case on the ground.

He sways gently, humming softly off key.

The creak of chain and his foot scraping gravel underscore the almost song.

42 EXT. RENO HOUSE - NIGHT 42

Ethan looks up at the roof he almost fell off of.

There it is - Quiet now. Moonlit.

In front of it the house, a wooden sign:

COLE & SONS - ROOFING

Ethan stares at the name.

Then looks up at the roof.

He looks down and sees a ladder on the ground.

He smiles.

43 EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT 43

The moon hangs full overhead. Wisps of cloud slip past.

Ethan straddles the peak of the half-finished roof, legs dangling either side. Guitar in hand. Hoodie down.

He slaps at the strings - loud, dissonant, primal. A wall of sound.

ETHAN

AAAAAAAHHHHHH - NIGHTTIME

BULLLLLL-SHIIIIIT - SER - EEEEE -

NAAAAAAADE!!!

From the sidewalk below, a GOLDEN RETRIEVER barks.

A DOG WALKER, mid-40s, looks up. Stops. Pulls the leash tight.

DOG WALKER

Easy, girl... what the hell...

The golden growls now, uneasy - staring up at the roofline. Tail stiff.

DOG WALKER (CONT'D)

Shhh, shhh. What is it? What do you see?

Then he sees.

DOG WALKER (CONT'D)
HEY! What are you doing up there?

ETHAN
Rooftop concert, man! Sold out! You
got a ticket?

DOG WALKER
Are you high? You could fall and
break your neck!

ETHAN
That's the encore!

Ethan laughs hysterically.

The golden lets out a weird, low HOWL.

Ethan HOWLS with him.

The Dog Walker yanks the leash again, unnerved.

DOG WALKER
Shhh. Down. Hey - I'm calling the
cops.

ETHAN
Go for it. Maybe they'll bring a
mike. I could use a mike.

The Dog Walker pulls out his phone.

Punches the screen.

OPERATOR (O.S.)
911 - What's your emergency?

The Dog Walker and his dog head down the street, away from
Ethan.

He lowers his voice.

DOG WALKER
Yeah, there's some crazy guy on a
rooftop yelling at the moon.
Guitar, screaming - he's gonna fall
of and kill himself... Uh, yeah,
it's 309 Alexander Street...

He hurries into the darkness, dog trotting anxiously beside
him.

44 EXT. ROOFTOP - NIGHT

44

LATER

Ethan lies flat on the roof. Guitar across his chest. Fingers idly strum. A soft, tuneless melody.

Below, a patrol car pulls up quietly. Red and blue lights wash silently over Ethan.

No sirens. Just the soft whir of the engine. And the turning lights.

TWO OFFICERS step out -

FEMALE OFFICER (30s, firm) and

MALE OFFICER (50s, measured).

FEMALE OFFICER

Sir, we need you to come down from the roof.

ETHAN

I'm good. Just getting some air.

FEMALE OFFICER

Not really optional, sir. We don't want to have call the fire department to get you off the roof. Now are you okay to make it down?

ETHAN

I'm a roofer. I live on roofs.

Ethan's on his feet, staggering a little.

FEMALE OFFICER

Take it easy, Sir. Nice and slow.

ETHAN

Roofs are my life.

He picks up his guitar case and steps - carefully - towards the edge.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

You see that sign?

He points to the Carter and Sons sign.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

I'm the And Sons. Well, half the and sons.

FEMALE OFFICER

Uh-huh.

MALE OFFICER

Come on, man. Careful with the guitar. We'll take the B-side next time.

Ethan exhales.

Swings his legs around, climbs down the ladder – guitar slung awkwardly on his back almost throwing him off balance.

The Officers both move towards the ladder but Ethan steadies himself and jumps the last 4 feet to the ground.

45 EXT. STREET BELOW - NIGHT

45

Ethan touches down. The Officers approach, warily, flanking him, just in case and like the training says.

FEMALE OFFICER

Sir, I'm going to do a quick pat down. Needles or anything sharp I should know about?

ETHAN

Nope. Only my wit.

FEMALE OFFICER

Okay, sir. Turn around.

Ethan complies. She pats him down – quick, professional, pulls his wallet, opens it and takes out his Driver's License.

FEMALE OFFICER (CONT'D)

I'll call it in.

Male Officer nods and she strides back to the cruiser.

The Male Officer stays with Ethan, gives him a once-over – reading more than just clothes and posture.

MALE OFFICER

You okay?

ETHAN

Not really.

MALE OFFICER

You on anything?

ETHAN

Prescription. Bad idea to mix anything in.

MALE OFFICER

That why are you up there?

ETHAN

Acoustics.

The Male Officer chuckles – a beat of silence between them.

MALE OFFICER

I've seen worse. Just... don't go back up, alright?

ETHAN

I won't.

The Female Officer returns.

FEMALE OFFICER

He's clean. No priors. Nothing outstanding. We're letting you off with a warning. Technically, you're trespassing – even if it is your job site – and there's a noise bylaw.

ETHAN

You calling my music noise? You wouldn't be the first.

FEMALE OFFICER

No, sir. I'm letting you know there's a bylaw and you're infringing.

MALE OFFICER

(cutting in)

It's a warning, not a charge.

ETHAN

OK. Thanks. Won't happen again. Pretty sure it was a one-off.

FEMALE OFFICER

Make sure it doesn't.

MALE OFFICER

You need to call someone. You got anyone to come and get you.

ETHAN

I got no one. No. One.

MALE OFFICER

You want a ride somewhere?

ETHAN

No. It's a nice night. I'll walk.

MALE OFFICER

OK. But no more midnight serenades.

ETHAN

You got it.

The officers nod. They get into the cruiser – but don't drive off yet.

Ethan adjusts his guitar, waves, turns, and begins walking.

Once he's moving, headlights sweep over him as the cruiser rolls away into the night.

Ethan disappears into the darkness.

46 EXT. ETHAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

46

Ethan walks the dark, quiet street. The glow of his porch light spills weakly onto the sidewalk.

He slows. Up the steps. Fumbles for his keys.

A small folded note flutters slightly, wedged in the crack of the door. He pulls it out.

In black Sharpie:

"MISSED YOU. I'LL BE BACK."

Ethan stares at it, looks around.

The street is empty.

He unlocks the door. Pushes it open. Hurries inside.

47 INT. ETHAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

47

Ethan closes the door behind him. Holds the note in his hand.

The house is quiet. Stale.

He steps into the kitchen. Stops.

It's not disgusting. Just... lived-in.

Dishes in the sink. Laundry basket on the table. Dust along the baseboards.

One slipper halfway under the couch.

He moves through it like a ghost.

Picks up the hoodie from the floor, folds it neatly, places it on the arm of the couch.

Puts the laundry basket at the top of the stairs.

Ethan hums softly. Almost under his breath.

He's humming "Gloria."

Not belting it. Not ironic. Just... remembering.

Goes to the sink.

Stacks the dishes. Fills it with hot water. Adds soap.

Watches the bubbles rise.

ETHAN

G. L. O.

He starts to wash. Slowly. One plate at a time.

Scrapes off dried food. Runs water. Wipes.

Sets it on the drying rack with care.

Another plate. A bowl.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Glo-oo-oria

Steam curls up around his face.

His breathing slows.

He picks up a dish towel. Starts drying a plate.

His hands move gently. Familiar. Like he's done this a thousand times before.

He turns slightly, listening, the plate forgotten in his hand.

Something tugs at him.

48

INT. ETHAN'S CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT

48

A small, quiet kitchen. Dim light. Clock ticks.

YOUNG ETHAN (10) stands by the sink, holding a damp dish towel.

He's drying a plate, carefully - too carefully.

His MOTHER (40s), tired but trying, leans against the counter. Eyes red. She's not angry. Just worn out.

There's an untouched glass of wine on the table behind her.

MOTHER

You don't have to do all that,
honey.

YOUNG ETHAN

I don't mind.

He keeps drying.

MOTHER

I know it's been... a lot lately.
With me and your dad... and
everything.

She trails off. Looks at him.

He doesn't say anything. Just keeps drying the already dry plate.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

It's not your job to fix it.

YOUNG ETHAN

I know. I just want you to feel
better.

She steps forward and takes the plate from him. Sets it down gently.

Then hugs him. A long, aching hug.

Her voice barely above a whisper:

MOTHER

Mommy loves you, Ethan.

She kisses the top of his head.

YOUNG ETHAN

To the moon and back?

MOTHER

To infinity.

She hugs him tighter.

YOUNG ETHAN

And beyond.

He lets her hold him.

49

INT. ETHAN'S KITCHEN - DAWN

49

Ethan stands at the sink, drying a plate.

A tear rolls down his cheek.

The plate slips.

ETHAN

Fuck—

CRASH.

It shatters on the tile.

He crouches, sweeping the pieces into a dustpan.

KNOCK KNOCK.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Fuck.

He dumps the broken shards into the trash, slams the cabinet shut.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Hang on.

Scans the room.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

I'm coming.

Kicks a slipper under the chair.

Grabs a dish towel and wipes the counter fast, as if it matters.

Heads to the door.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

We have a doorbell, you know—

Opens it.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Glo-

It's not Gloria. It's Jimmy.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Oh.

JIMMY

You were expecting...?

ETHAN

Yeah. I thought... You didn't sign the fucking note, man.

JIMMY

Sorry to disappoint.

ETHAN

All good. You're here now. So, what brings you out at the crack of dawn's rosy asshole?

Jimmy holds up an Extra Large coffee and a box of Tim Horton's.

JIMMY

I come bearing gifts.

ETHAN

In that case, get your rosy ass inside.

Jimmy steps inside. Takes in the room.

JIMMY

Huh.

ETHAN

What?

JIMMY

You ever notice how you tend to clean when you're falling apart?

ETHAN

I thought Gloria was coming, so, you know, I had to clean the place up. For her.

JIMMY

Well... mission accomplished.
Place looks almost livable.

ETHAN

Thank you, Mr. Better Homes and
Insults.

Jimmy smiles. Sets the coffee and Tim's box down on the table.

Ethan grabs his coffee and a donut.

They eat and drink in silence, then --

JIMMY

Mark called me.

ETHAN

Oh, really. And what did my former
brother have to say for himself?

JIMMY

Yeah. Said you came by banging on
his door. Said you were pretty
upset and then you took off.

ETHAN

Fuckin' coward. I didn't "take
off" - asshole slammed the door in
my face. Wouldn't even let me in.
I kind of lost it. I admit that.
But he had it coming.

JIMMY

So then what? Where'd you go?

ETHAN

I walked.

JIMMY

Where?

ETHAN

I don't know. I just walked. Ended
up at the Job site.

JIMMY

At one in the morning?

ETHAN

Yeah. Climbed on the roof.
Started singing, playing my guitar.

JIMMY
Seriously?

ETHAN
I just... needed some space, man.
No walls pressing in.

JIMMY
Yeah. I get it.

ETHAN
Some guy walking his dog start
yelling at me. Next thing I know,
cops pull up.

JIMMY
Probably thought you were a jumper.
Or some crazy homeless.

ETHAN
Yeah, I guess.

JIMMY
Were you?

ETHAN
What?

JIMMY
Going to jump.

ETHAN
Fuck, no. I wasn't up there to say
goodbye. I just wanted some space...
to play.

JIMMY
Okay. So, the cops show up, then
what?

ETHAN
They ran my ID. Patted me down. Let
me go with a warning. They were
actually kind of nice about it. For
cops.

JIMMY
You got lucky.

ETHAN
You think? They told me to call
someone. I told them I didn't have
anyone to call.

JIMMY
You could've called me.

ETHAN
I thought you were done with me.

JIMMY
Have you lost your mind? Friends
for life, buddy.

ETHAN
Thanks.

JIMMY
Don't thank me. Get better.

ETHAN
I'm trying, man.

JIMMY
Try harder.

ETHAN
I don't know what to do anymore.
They keep saying something else is
wrong with me and giving me more
drugs and I keep getting worse. I'm
lost, man. I don't know who I am
anymore.

JIMMY
You're Ethan Carter. My best
friend. And you will never give up.
You hear me? Never.

Jimmy reaches into his pocket, pulls out a card and lays it
down on the table.

ETHAN
What's that?

JIMMY
Your future.

50 INT. DR. HAYES' OFFICE - DAY

50

Soft natural light filters through half-drawn blinds. No
fluorescent hum. No ticking clock. Just the hush of a quiet
room designed not to provoke.

Ethan sits on the couch - upright, guarded. Hands clenched in
his lap.

Across from him, DR. HAYES (50s), observant, soft-spoken, notebook closed on her lap.

A beat.

DR. HAYES
You're not in trouble.

Ethan doesn't answer.

DR. HAYES (CONT'D)
I'm not here to fix you. I don't believe in fixing people.

ETHAN
Great. That makes two of us.

Hayes smiles lightly. Not offended.

DR. HAYES
I've read your charts. The hospital notes. The ER visit. And I'm going to ask you something I already know the answer to. How are you doing on your current meds?

ETHAN
You mean the chemical sleepwalk I'm taking twice a day?

DR. HAYES
That's the one.

ETHAN
I feel like someone unplugged my brain and forgot to tell me. No highs, no lows. No music. Just... static.

DR. HAYES
Sounds familiar.

ETHAN
So why do they keep pushing it?

DR. HAYES
Because they're trying to mute the alarm instead of looking for the fire.

Ethan watches her now – a flicker of attention.

DR. HAYES (CONT'D)
I'd like to taper you off what
you're on. Start clean. See what
happens when we stop muffling the
noise.

ETHAN
And then what?

DR. HAYES
Then we listen.

Hayes finally opens her notebook – but doesn't write.

DR. HAYES (CONT'D)
Has this happened before?

ETHAN
What, the breakdown? The cops? Or
the part where I clean the house
like a psychopath?

DR. HAYES
Any of it.

Ethan doesn't answer. The silence stretches.

DR. HAYES (CONT'D)
Tell me about the first time you
remember feeling like you couldn't
breathe.

Ethan blinks. That lands.

HARD CUT TO:

51 INT. CHILDHOOD BEDROOM – NIGHT 51

A suitcase on the bed. Half packed.

Muffled arguing from down the hall.

A woman's silhouette – back turned, methodical, silent.

YOUNG ETHAN (O.S.)
Mom...?

FLASH CUT TO:

52 INT. DR. HAYES' OFFICE – DAY 52

Ethan's eyes stay locked on the floor.

ETHAN

I don't know.

DR. HAYES

That's okay. We'll find out.

Hayes closes the notebook again.

DR. HAYES (CONT'D)

Same time next week?

ETHAN

You mean we're not done?

DR. HAYES

Not even close.

A beat.

Ethan - despite himself - nods.

53 INT. ETHAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

53

The door SLAMS.

Ethan wanders in, jacket half off, keys clatter to the floor.

He moves to the kitchen, opens the cabinet. Finds the pill bottle.

Hold it in his hand, staring at the label, SEROQUEL, 100mg - then --

His eyes drift back to the cupboard.

He grabs the half-empty whiskey bottle, opens it and takes a long pull.

He eyes the pill bottle. Pops the cap. Stares at the pills inside. Then -

He upends the bottle into the trash, watching the pills float down into the trash can in slow motion.

He takes another long pull on the bottle of whiskey. And another.

He drains the bottle, drops it in the trash can, watches it fall onto the mound of pills.

He dives into the trash, frantic. Grabs the pill cluster - lint, coffee grounds, and all.

Pops it all into his mouth and dry swallows, gagging.

He turns on the tap and sticks his head under the running water, open-mouthed, washing it all down.

He staggers into --

54

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

54

Sinks onto the couch.

His guitar rests nearby. He picks it up. Tries a chord.

CLUNK. Strings buzz like a dying engine.

He tries again. And again. And again.

Nothing but noise.

SMASH!

He SHATTERS the guitar against the coffee table. Strings coil and snap. Wood splinters.

Ethan, breathing hard, stares into the wreckage.

Then looks up and sees a flicker of light reflected off a glass picture frame on the shelf by the TV.

He drags himself off the couch and staggers across the room, picks up the frame, stares at --

Him and Gloria. Smiling. At the beach. Frozen in time. Happy times.

He studies it like they're strangers, then -

ETHAN

GLORIA!

He hurls the frame against the wall.

CRASH.

Glass shards everywhere.

Ethan's breathing hard, trembling. He stares at the wreckage, then drops to his knees and crawls to the picture's remains on the floor.

He tries to retrieve the picture - hand slips and - SLICE.

Blood. A shallow cut along his palm.

He clutches the picture, bleeding onto the photograph.

Tears now. Hot. Silent.

He cradles the bloodstained photo, stares at it through his tears.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Fuck you...

He RIPS the picture in half – then in quarters – until it's nothing.

Stares at the pieces. Tries, hopelessly, to put them back together.

His hand leaves bloody red smudges on Gloria's face.

He curls up on the floor. Shaking. The bloody shreds of the photo crumpled in his fist.

He brings his fist to his face and licks the blood from his hand.

Opens his fist and licks blood from a piece of Gloria's face.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

Glo...

He lays down and curls up into a ball on the floor.

55

INT. LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

55

FLASHBACK

Young Ethan sits cross-legged on the floor, working on a jigsaw puzzle on a glass coffee table.

His mother stands in the doorway, screaming at someone off-camera.

MOTHER

FUCK YOU, JAMES!

She turns – sees --

Ethan looking up at her – eyes wide, frozen.

She hesitates, torn, then bolts out the front door.

SLAM. The front door rattles shut.

Ethan SLAMS his fist down on the glass table.

The table SHATTERS!

A jagged piece of glass cuts across his palm.

Blood drips onto the puzzle pieces.

He lifts his hand. Brings it to his mouth.

Licks the blood.

Holds it there, eyes wide, staring at - the empty doorway.

56 INT. ETHAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

56

Ethan, curled on the floor, stares at an old, small, white scar on his palm.

He rubs his thumb along the scar.

He gets up slowly, wipes his eyes - leaves streaks of blood on his face.

He wipes his palm on his jeans and walks to the kitchen.

Opens the cupboard.

Takes out a fresh bottle of whiskey.

And finds an old, half-full orange bottle.

Adderall - 20mg

He stares at it. Decides. Opens the bottle and pops three with a whiskey chaser.

Breathes deep through clenched teeth.

He walks to the door, opens it, and steps out into the night.

57 EXT. GLORIA'S MOTHER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

57

A quiet residential street. Midnight hush. Porch lights glowing. Street lights create pools of light.

Ethan stands at the curb, breathing hard - sweating from the inside out. The Adderall has him buzzing, the whiskey makes it weird. A volatile cocktail..

He stumbles toward the house.

Stops at the lawn. Tilts his head back. And howls:

ETHAN
 (singing, off-key)
 "G-L-O-R-I-A... Glooooooriaaaa...!"

A porch lights flicker on down the block.

A dog barks.

He steps onto the porch. Pounds on the door.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
 Just wanna talk, Glo! HEY!

The porch light comes on. The door opens a crack.

GLORIA'S MOM stands there – robe and judgment in full force.

GLORIA'S MOM
 Go home, Ethan.

ETHAN
 Please. Just a minute.

GLORIA'S MOM
 She's not talking to you, Ethan.

ETHAN
 One minute. Just one fucking
 minute.

GLORIA'S MOM
 It's the middle of the night and
 you're drunk.

Go. Home.

She closes the door.

ETHAN
 No. Wait!

The door locks and the porch light goes off.

Ethan staggers back, takes a long pull on the whiskey bottle
 in his hand, mutters.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
 Fucking bitch.

He staggers down the street.

A soft light comes on at an upstairs window.

.

GLORIA, backlit, framed by the window like a ghost, watches him.

Ethan doesn't see her.

He staggers on.

Spins theatrically. Arms out like a drunk prophet.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
"G-L-O-R-I-A... Glooooooriaaaa..."

He lurches into the dark.

58

EXT. CITY STREETS / BASKETBALL COURT - NIGHT

58

Ethan staggers along the sidewalk, bottle in hand, pupils like pinholes.

The city hums around him - neon, heat, shadows.

He hears it before he sees it -

The SLAP of sneakers,

The THUD of a ball,

A ricochet of curses.

Floodlights blaze overhead.

A public court.

Three TEENAGERS mid-game, shirtless and sweating.

Ethan veers toward the gate -

Pushes it open and stumbles onto the court.

Intercepts a pass like he owns the place.

Dribbles once, twice, clumsily.

One hand on the ball, the other holding the bottle.

ETHAN
And Shaq pulls up from half court --

He hurls the ball.

It misses the basket by a goddamn zip code - sails over the fence and bounces down the street.

Silence. Then --

TEEN #1
Yo, what the fuck, man?!

TEEN #2
Are you DONE now, old man?

TEEN #3
We will fuck you up.

Wobbling.

Sizing them up like a cartoon samurai.

ETHAN
Come on. Bring it.

Ethan drops into a defensive stance.

TEEN # 2
You a dead man.

The trio advances.

ETHAN
I don't wanna fight you boys. But I
will outrun you.

Adrenaline surges. He bolts, down the sidewalk, bottle sloshing.

Spots the ball still rolling, turns, steadies himself, sort of, and --

Soccer-kicks the basketball up the street – straight at the teens.

They catch the ball, tossing it back and forth between them..

He slips. Falls hard on his ass. Bottle held high, intact.

TEEN #2
Stay off our court, tweaker!

TEEN #3
Next time, we ain't playin' with
ya'.

They head back up the street.

Ethan lies there, laughing – uncontrollably, hysterically.

He gets up, stumbles. Adrenaline seeping away.

ETHAN

(sings)

I heard there was a secret chord
That David played and it pleased
the Lord...

(shouts)

But you don't really care for
music, do ya', assholes.

(mutter)

Well, it goes like this - the
fourth, the fifth - the fifth!

He laughs and takes a long drink from his bottle.

He fades into the night.

The street grows quiet behind him.

Then, faintly - drifting from the darkness:

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

(sings)

Hallelujah... Hallelujah...
Halle-lujah... Halle-luuuu-jah...

The last "hallelujah" echoes - turns into a laugh - turns
into a hacking cough.

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

(shouts)

Hal-le-fuckin'-lu-jah mother-
fuckers.

Then gone.

59 EXT. RENOVATION HOUSE - NIGHT

59

Ethan stumbles up the side of the same half-renovated house
he's worked on for weeks.

The aluminum ladder lies flat in the grass.

He grabs it, fumbles it upright with one hand - crooked,
unstable, leans it against the fascia.

ETHAN

Nailed it.

He climbs. One handed, the other grips the half-empty whiskey
bottle.

One rung.

The ladder shifts.

Two.

Slides.

Three --

And topples.

Ethan flies backward – lands hard in a pile of shingles.

The bottle in his hand shatters.

Shards and whiskey spray.

Ethan groans – then settles into the pile of shingles and broken glass, soaked with whiskey.

His eyes close.

60

EXT. RENO HOUSE – DAWN

60

Ethan stirs, open his eyes.

A golden retriever stands over him, licking his face, tail wagging.

 ETHAN
 (slurred)
 Hey, buddy...

He tries to sit up – fails. Laughs once. Passes out again.

The DOG WALKER jogs up, leash in hand.

 DOG WALKER
 SADIE! COME!

The dog trots over.

He sees Ethan crumpled in the shingles. Shakes his head and pulls out his phone.

The Dog Walker heads down the street, Sadie trotting at his heels.

 OPERATOR (O.C)
 911. What's your emergency.

61 EXT. STREET - MINUTES LATER

61

A cruiser pulls up. The same two cops get slowly out.
They cross the yard, look down at Ethan.

FEMALE OFFICER
Jesus Christ. It's the same guy.

MALE OFFICER
Yeah.

He leans over, checks for a pulse.

Ethan stirs.

MALE OFFICER (CONT'D)
Well, he's alive.

Ethan blinks awake. Sits up slowly, covered in dirt and fiberglass. Sticky with booze.

He focuses on the cops.

ETHAN
Hey! I know you guys.

They haul him up.

FEMALE OFFICER
Okay, let's go.

She turns him around, cuffs him.

ETHAN
Hey!

MALE OFFICER
It's for your protection. And ours.

ETHAN
Are you arresting me?

FEMALE OFFICER
What do you think?

MALE OFFICER
Come on. Ethan, right?

Ethan nods.

He leads him to the patrol car, opens the back door and pushes his head down and slides him in.

Female Officer gets in the front, turns back to Ethan.

FEMALE OFFICER

You throw up in my back seat, I
will personally throw you off a
bridge.

The door slams.

And Ethan throws up.

62 EXT STREET - MORNING

62

The cruiser pulls away from the curb.

FEMALE OFFICER (O.C.)

Goddamn it!

The cruiser disappears around the corner to the sound of the
Male Officer LAUGHING.

MALE OFFICER (O.C.)

Sorry.

FEMALE OFFICER (O.C.)

Shut up.

63 INT. POLICE STATION - FRONT DESK AREA - EARLY MORNING

63

Fluorescent lights hum. A plastic chair creaks as Jimmy
shifts. He waits near the front desk, still, coffee in hand.
Bare walls, stale air.

A SLEEPING DRUNK mutters in the corner.

The release door BUZZES.

ETHAN appears, escorted by a bored-looking COP. His hoodie is
streaked with dried blood and dirt.

A clear PLASTIC PROPERTY BAG dangles from his fingers.

COP

You're free to go.

Ethan nods, wordless.

Jimmy stands.

JIMMY

Give me that.

Ethan hands over the bag. Doesn't meet his eyes.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Come on. Let's get out of here.

They exit together.

64 EXT. POLICE STATION PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS 64

The morning is gray, breath-visible cold. Jimmy leads Ethan to his battered pickup. No small talk.

He opens the passenger door.

Ethan climbs in slowly, wincing.

Jimmy tosses the bag in the back, walks around to the driver's side.

65 INT. JIMMY'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER 65

They sit in silence. Engine running. Defroster hissing.

JIMMY
You okay?

ETHAN
No.

Beat.

JIMMY
You wanna talk?

ETHAN
No.

Jimmy nods.

He pulls out of the lot.

66 EXT. RESIDENTIAL ROAD - DAY 66

Suburban sprawl rolls by. Still early. Still quiet.

Ethan stares out the window, gaunt. His temple bandaged.

JIMMY
You remember sophomore year? After
Amanda dumped you and you jumped
off the bleachers?

ETHAN
It was a symbolic gesture.

JIMMY
You sprained both ankles.

A small breath escapes Ethan. Almost a laugh.

ETHAN
This wasn't that.

JIMMY
What was it?

ETHAN
Classic cry for help?

JIMMY
Well, I'm here, bud. You ready to
get your life back?

ETHAN
I don't know.

JIMMY
The correct answer is, "Hell,
yeah!"

They ride in silence.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
You hungry?

ETHAN
Starving.

JIMMY
Too bad. Cuz I didn't bring shit.

Ethan exhales through his nose. The faintest smile.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
IHOP?

ETHAN
Let's do it.

JIMMY
Remember Junior Prom?

ETHAN & JIMMY
IHOP!

They drive on, laughing.

67 INT. IHOP - MORNING

67

Empty booths. Syrup bottles half-stuck to Formica. The hush of a restaurant between rushes. Light spills through slatted blinds, cutting across Ethan's face.

He sits hunched over a mug of black coffee. Still wearing yesterday's hoodie. Temple bandaged. Hands trembling slightly.

The Server arrives at the booth with warm plates - eggs, bacon, short stack.

JIMMY

Try.

ETHAN

Not hungry.

JIMMY

You gotta eat something.

Ethan stares at the food. Picks up the fork. Pokes at a piece of egg.

ETHAN

I thought I'd be stuck there longer.

JIMMY

What, like a sabbatical?

Ethan exhales a short, humorless breath.

ETHAN

Part of me hoped they would.

Jimmy watches him.

JIMMY

Yeah. I get that.

They sit in silence for a moment. The weight of the night still on Ethan's shoulders.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

You scared the shit outta me, man.

Ethan nods.

ETHAN

Yeah. I scared the shit out of me too.

JIMMY
So what now?

ETHAN
I don't know.

JIMMY
Okay.

Jimmy sips his coffee.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Dr. Hayes has an opening at ten.

Ethan looks at him.

ETHAN
You called her?

JIMMY
I made a call. Yeah.

ETHAN
You shouldn't have done that.

JIMMY
Why not?

ETHAN
Because it won't work. It never works.

JIMMY
We'll see.

ETHAN
You think I haven't done the rounds? I've done the goddamn rounds 'til I'm dizzy. They stare, they nod, they scribble in their little notebooks or tap away on their iPads. They give me pills. Maybe I sleep for a week. Maybe I can't sleep at all. I eat less. Or more. But the hole's still there. And I can't play. I'm... empty.

Jimmy sips his coffee.

JIMMY
It's not about the pills.

ETHAN

That's what they all say – until they get that clipboard in their hand. Then it's "Have you tried lamotrigine?" or "Let's up the dose, see how that works." Like I'm a fucking lab rat or their science experiment.

He pushes the plate away. Voice rising.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

I don't need more meds. I don't need another beige room with a couch and a scented candle and someone pretending to give a shit.

JIMMY

She's not like that.

ETHAN

You don't know that.

JIMMY

Actually, I do.

ETHAN

What – you read her Yelp reviews?

Jimmy, slowly, without a word, rolls up his left sleeve.

Track marks. Faded, but deep. Not one or two. A history. A life.

Ethan stares.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

What the fuck.

Jimmy doesn't flinch.

JIMMY

That's why I disappeared. Not Thailand. Not a backpacking adventure.

ETHAN

You told everyone you --

JIMMY

(interrupting)
I lied.

ETHAN

What?

JIMMY

Heroin. Mainlining. Every day.
All day. I lost it all. My wife. My
job. My house. My mind.

He takes a long sip of coffee, looks out the window.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

I OD'd. In a bus station bathroom.
In Chiliwack. Fucking Chilliwack,
man. I don't even know how I got
there.

ETHAN

So, how did you...?

JIMMY

Get back? Dr. Hayes. She called me
out. Hard. And she was there. One
thousand percent. Present.

ETHAN

You never said.

JIMMY

Why would I?

ETHAN

Fuck, man.

JIMMY

Yeah. I'm telling you now because
you're one step away from the same
ledge I was on. And -- I need you
to hear this -

He leans forward, elbows on the table, eyes direct.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

There's a version of you that makes
it out. But there's also a version
that doesn't. And you die. So, you
choose. Right now. Today.

Ethan looks at the track marks again. The half-empty plate.
The yellow egg yolk pooling in the corner of his plate.

ETHAN

Ten?

JIMMY

Yeah.

ETHAN

You drive me?

JIMMY

What are friends for?

ETHAN

Thanks.

JIMMY

Eat up. You're gonna need your strength.

Ethan nods. Picks up his fork.

68 INT. DR. HAYES' OFFICE - MORNING

68

Soft light. No music. Just the faint hum of the air system.

The door opens.

ETHAN steps in. Hoodie from the night before. Dirt under his nails. Sweat still clinging to him. The faint trace of whiskey and asphalt lingers in the air.

DR. HAYES looks up. Calm. No smile.

DR. HAYES

Ethan.

He shuffles in. Drops into the chair. Doesn't make eye contact.

ETHAN

Thanks for making the time.

DR. HAYES

Jimmy said it was urgent.

ETHAN

Yeah. He's... persistent.

She waits.

DR. HAYES

So - why are you here?

ETHAN

Because people get worried when you wake up in a holding cell.

(MORE)

ETHAN (CONT'D)
They start using words like "rock
bottom" and "wake-up call."

DR. HAYES
And do you think they're wrong?

ETHAN
I think I smell like IHOP bacon and
regret.

Beat. She doesn't crack a smile.

DR. HAYES
That's not an answer.

Ethan shifts, uncomfortable.

ETHAN
I don't know why I'm here. Jimmy
thinks you're a magician. I guess I
figured - why not.

DR. HAYES
Why not?

ETHAN
Yeah. It's either this or another
nap on a cot that stinks of piss.

Dr. Hayes leans forward, folding her hands.

DR. HAYES
Ethan - I'm not here to convince
you to save your own life.

ETHAN
I'm not asking you to.

DR. HAYES
Good. Because I don't do rescues.
(Beat)
Right now, you are still
metabolizing whatever cocktail got
you arrested. You're tired. You're
fragile. And you're pretending to
be curious about getting better
because it's easier than admitting
you're scared shitless.

Ethan blinks. Doesn't argue.

DR. HAYES (CONT'D)
I don't do performative healing.
And I don't reward people for
showing up half-alive.

(beat)
So here's the deal.

She reaches for her calendar.

DR. HAYES (CONT'D)
I have one slot left today. Five
o'clock.
(beat)
Come back if you're sober. If
you've showered. If you've eaten.
If you're ready to actually do
something terrifying - like change
your life.

Ethan sits in the quiet. Looks at his hands.

ETHAN
You always this warm and fuzzy?

DR. HAYES
Only on Tuesdays.

ETHAN
It's Thursday.

DR. HAYES
Yes.

Ethan nods.

ETHAN
So. Five?

DR. HAYES
Clean. Sober. And ready to work.

He gets up. Still slow. Still aching.

ETHAN
I can do this.

DR. HAYES
We'll see.

Leaves without another word.

Dr. Hayes watches the door close. Then turns back to her
notes.

69 INT. ETHAN'S APARTMENT - DAY 69

The key turns. The door creaks open.

Ethan enters, hollow-eyed. The air is stale. Blinds drawn.

He drops his bag, stands still.

Then moves with purpose.

70 INT. KITCHEN - DAY 70

MOMENTS LATER

He opens the cabinet. Bottles of liquor. Orange prescription bottles. A shot glass.

He lines them up. Pours a shot. Shakes a pill into his palm - Alprazolam (Xanax).

He stares at them both.

Then - dumps the shot down the sink. Tosses the pill after it.

Grabs the rest of the bottles. One by one, pours them out. Pills down the disposal. He runs the water. Flicks the switch. The disposal groans.

He grabs a cloth and wipes down the counters around the sink, focuses on a stubborn stain that won't come out. He scrubs it furiously, then stops, his head tilts back, staring at the ceiling as --

71 INT. ETHAN'S CHILDHOOD KITCHEN - DAY 71

FLASHBACK

Midday light. Too bright.

A younger ETHAN (10) stands in the kitchen doorway, silent.

Inside his MOTHER furiously scrubs the same spot on the counter. Over and over and over. A Bleach bottle beside her.

The room is already spotless.

A half-empty wine glass sweats beside the sink.

The TV is on in the next room - too loud, canned laughter bleeding in.

Her breathing is shallow. Robotic. Scrub. Scrub. Scrub.

MOTHER
Clean. Clean. Got to...

YOUNG ETHAN
Mom?

She doesn't turn. Doesn't stop.

MOTHER
If I can just get it clean... it'll
be okay.

YOUNG ETHAN
Mom?

She doesn't answer, just scrubs, mumbling under her breath.

He backs away.

72 INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY 72

Ethan backs out of the kitchen into the living room.

He wipes surfaces, carefully.

Picks up and folds clothes.

Gathers trash into a black garbage bag.

A slow-motion exorcism.

73 INT. BEDROOM - DAY 73

It's a wreck. Clothes. Food wrappers. Empty containers.

He breathes it in, shakes his head.

ETHAN
Fuck me.

Then starts working.

Strips the bed.

Opens windows.

Bags up the garbage.

Grabs the alarm clock off the floor, sets it for 4:30 and
puts it on the bedside table.

74 INT. BATHROOM - DAY 74

Steam fills the air.

Ethan scrubs his body under scalding water. Fingers rake through shampooed hair.

He breathes in ragged gasps.

He wipes a circle into the fogged mirror.

With a finger, writes:
YOU ARE AN IDIOT

Then stares at it.

Stares at himself.

And wipes the images away.

75 INT. BEDROOM - DAY 75

Ethan lies down on clean sheets. Hair damp. Breathing soft.

He stares at the ceiling.

Then - sighs and finally - closes his eyes. Breathes deeply,
Sinking into blessed sleep when --

And the alarm goes off: 4:30.

ETHAN

Damn.

He groans and slowly rolls out of bed and starts dressing.

76 INT. DR. HAYES'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON 76

Late sun knives across the floor.

Ethan sits in the chair, freshly showered, hair still wet, hands restless in his lap. The exhaustion is showing - under the eyes, behind the clenched jaw.

Dr. Hayes sips tea. Calm. Watching.

DR. HAYES

You made it.

ETHAN

Cleaned up, like you said. On time.

DR. HAYES
You take anything?

ETHAN
No.

DR. HAYES
That's a start.

ETHAN
Came close. Poured a shot. Had some
old Xanax in my hand. Dumped 'em
both.

DR. HAYES
Why?

Ethan considers a long moment.

Dr. Hayes waits. This is what she does.

ETHAN
Didn't wanna start over tomorrow on
the floor and no clue how I got
there.

DR. HAYES
That's a reason. So what kept you
moving?

ETHAN
The mess. Place was disgusting.
Like I'd been squatting in my own
life.

DR. HAYES
And cleaning helped?

ETHAN
Didn't fix anything. But it gave me
something to do with my hands. And
now, you know, the place looks
like, I don't know, a person lives
there. Not a squatter. Or a junkie.
(beat)
Maybe I was trying to scrub myself
out of the mess that's my life now.

DR. HAYES
Seem familiar?

ETHAN
What?

DR. HAYES
Cleaning like that. Trying to erase
a feeling instead of allowing it.

Ethan shifts in his chair.

ETHAN
My mom... she used to clean like
that. Always scrubbing. One day I
asked her "Why"? She said, if you
keep the outside spotless, maybe
the inside will stop hurting.

DR. HAYES
Did it?

ETHAN
I don't know. She stopped talking
eventually. Just vacuumed. And then
one day she disappeared.

Dr. Hayes sets her tea down.

DR. HAYES
You're not your mother, Ethan. You
don't have to disappear.

ETHAN
I'm not disappearing. I'm sitting
right here.

DR. HAYES
You know what I mean. Don't avoid
facing it. You get any sleep?

ETHAN
Barely shut my eyes and the alarm
went off.

DR. HAYES
I know today felt like a win. And
it was. But you haven't hit the
really tough part yet.

ETHAN
So what do I do now? Wait to fall
apart?

DR. HAYES
You've already started. But
tonight's going to be rough.

ETHAN
What's "rough"?

DR. HAYES

Restlessness. Muscle spasms. Heart racing. Cold one minute, sweating the next. You won't sleep.

ETHAN

I can't wait.

DR. HAYES

You're coming off lithium, Seroquel, benzos – your whole system's recalibrating.

ETHAN

What will that even feel like?

DR. HAYES

Like panic. Like your chest is caving in. Like the ER.

ETHAN

I thought it was a heart attack.

DR. HAYES

It wasn't one then and it won't be one now. But your brain doesn't know that. It just wants the drugs.

ETHAN

So I'm supposed to just ride it out?

DR. HAYES

Pretty much. Stay present. When the fear kicks in, and it will, take deep breaths. Hum. Sing.

ETHAN

Seriously? Sing?

DR. HAYES

Stimulates the vagus nerve. Calms the body, so the brain follows. Doesn't matter if you're off-key – just make sounds.

ETHAN

And if it doesn't work? If I start looking?

DR. HAYES

Call me. Before you reach for anything. Any time. Day or night.

ETHAN

For real?

DR. HAYES

For real.

She hands him her card.

ETHAN

OK. Thanks.

DR. HAYES

Get your guitar. Don't play it. Not yet. Just... take it out. Put it where you can see it. You need something real. Something that was yours before all this.

ETHAN

That's it?

DR. HAYES

For now. We'll get through this. But not by pretending you're fine.

ETHAN

I'll try.

DR. HAYES

There is no try...

ETHAN & DR. HAYES

There is only do or do not.

They both laugh.

ETHAN

OK, Yoda. I'll do my best.

DR. HAYES

That's all any of us can do.

Ethan nods.

77 INT. ETHAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

77

Dark. Too dark. Every shadow feels like a threat.

Ethan lies on the living room floor, curled in a tangle of blankets and sweat.

A small desk fan whirs nearby - pointless.

He's drenched. Shivering.

His hand claws at the floor, searching for... what?

Control? Calm? A way out?

JUMP CUTS:

78 INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT 78

Ethan in the kitchen, staring at the open fridge.

Empty.

79 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT 79

Ethan on his hands and knees, head in the toilet bowl,
vomiting bile.

80 INT. BEDROOM - DAY 80

Ethan on the floor again, curled tighter.

His phone buzzes nearby.

He looks but doesn't reach for it

His teeth chatter.

His legs twitch.

Ethan MOOOOOOOOOOOOANS.

FLASH CUT:

81 INT. ETHAN'S CHILDHOOD HOME - NIGHT 81

Young Ethan sits at the top of the stairs looking down into
the living room.

His mother vacuums furiously. Back and forth. Back and forth.

No dirt. No noise. The vacuums not turned on.

She's smiling and singing to herself under her breath.

Ethan hugs his knees tighter and watches.

BACK TO PRESENT:

82 INT. ETHAN'S BEDROOM - DAY 82

Ethan bolts upright with a gasp.
He staggers to his feet. Strips off the drenched T-shirt.
Stumbles toward the hallway - and collapses.

SMASH CUT TO:

83 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT 83

Ethan lies on the cold tile floor. Face against the porcelain.

He begins to hum. Low. Soft. Instinctive.

ETHAN

Mmmm... mm-mm-mm-mm...

A shaky rhythm. A note. A breath.

DR. HAYES (V.O.)

When the fear kicks in, and it
will, take deep breaths. Hum. Sing.

He HUMS again. Longer. Deeper. Rocking slightly.

ETHAN

Not dying. Not dying. Not dying.

His hand reaches out - searches - grabs a towel from the edge of the tub. Pulls it to his face.

The worst of the shaking slows.

He breathes. Hard. But slower.

Then, he hears -

A GUITAR STRING PLUCKED, RESONATING.

From the next room.

He freezes.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

No fucking way.

He crawls out of the bathroom and -

84 INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT 84

Literally drags himself - down the hallway, humming all the way.

85 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 85

The guitar is still in its case, unopened, leaning against the wall.

Silent.

He stares at the case. Then -

He crawls over. Unzips the case. Pulls the guitar out. Carefully. Reverently.

Sets it down across his lap.

He doesn't play it.

He just rests his hand on it.

Like it's the only thing keeping him tethered to the world.

ETHAN

Still here. Not dead.

He wraps his arms around the guitar and hugs it like a lost stuffed animal from his childhood.

He HUMS.

86 EXT. ETHAN'S HOUSE - MORNING 86

Jimmy knocks gently - once, twice - then harder.

JIMMY

Hey! Sleeping Beauty - you in there?

Jimmy pulls out a key and let's himself in.

87 INT. LIVING ROOM - MORNING 87

He steps in. Takes in the space - cleaned. Trash bag by the door. Fan still running.

Then he sees Ethan - slumped on the floor, guitar across his lap. He's hugging it like a long lost reddy bear.

Jimmy kneels beside him. Sets down a paper bag and a thermos.

JIMMY

I brought ginger chews. Coffee. And a clean T-shirt. You look like you could use all three.

ETHAN

You're my hero.

JIMMY

I know.

Jimmy sits beside him.

JIMMY (CONT'D)

Also – crackers. The good kind. The ones with too much salt.

He pulls out a pack of crackers, opens it and offers one.

Ethan takes a bite. Dry as hell. Perfect.

ETHAN

Tastes like fifth grade.

JIMMY

Field trips and vomit.

ETHAN

You remember?

JIMMY

Oh, yeah. You ruined my brand-new Batman runners.

Ethan shakes his head, smiles, sips from the thermos.

ETHAN

Oh my god, that's good.

They sit, sipping coffee.

JIMMY

That was the hard part, man.

ETHAN

Yeah?

JIMMY

Yeah. Doesn't mean it's all
unicorns and rainbows from here.
But the worst is behind you.

Ethan nods. Tries to sip. Hands shaking slightly.

ETHAN

How long before I stop feeling
like... a ghost?

JIMMY

Hard to say. Everybody's different.
First week, I felt like I was
floating three feet above the
ground. Second week, I started
crying at daytime talk shows. Third
week - I wrote a song that didn't
suck.

ETHAN

That's the cure?

JIMMY

Fuck no. There's no fucking cure,
man. But there's the music.

He hands Ethan another cracker. They sit.

ETHAN

Why are you always like this?

JIMMY

Like what?

ETHAN

Steady. Kind. Showing up.

Jimmy shrugs.

JIMMY

Because someone showed up for me
once.

ETHAN

Who?

JIMMY

Guy in rehab. Played cello, of all
things. Taught me how to make
coffee with a sock and a candle.

ETHAN
That's... weird, but oddly
beautiful.

JIMMY
It was a clean sock.

Ethan chuckles, sips coffee, nibbles another cracker.

Ethan stares down at his guitar.

ETHAN
I don't know if I can play anymore.

JIMMY
Play anyway. It'll come back. Like
riding a bike.

Ethan nods. His hand gently strums the strings. Just sound.
Not music.

Jimmy sits beside him, sipping coffee.

Ethan strums a chord, looks at Jimmy.

Jimmy nods.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
Like riding a bike.

They sit there as the morning light creeps across the floor,

The guitar humming faintly as Ethan's fingers move over the
strings.

Music.

88 INT. BASEMENT - DAY

88

There are lyrics taped to the wall. Dozens of them. All caps,
scrawled:

"BREAK THE STATIC"

"SOMETHING IS STILL ALIVE IN HERE"

"EVERY GHOST WANTS A CHORUS"

Ethan sits cross-legged on the concrete floor, a legal pad in
his lap, guitar across his legs.

He's unshaven. Wired. Focused.

His guitar humming – he plays some rough chords, fragments of melody, all raw.

He scribbles lyrics on the pad. Hums under his breath.

Strums a fresh chord on the guitar – notates the chord.

Scratches some words out. Starts again.

Head nodding, humming, a word or two slips out – a phrase. He is it now and --

He starts singing full voice. Rough. Raw. Honest.

The DOORBELL RINGS.

He ignores it. Humming, nodding, strumming, writing.

RINGS again.

Still writing.

RINGS a third time.

ETHAN

Fuuu-uuck.

He puts the guitar down. Exhales.

Heads upstairs.

89

INT. FRONT DOOR – DAY

89

Ethan opens the door.

GLORIA.

They both freeze.

ETHAN

Hey.

GLORIA

Hey.

Beat.

ETHAN

You wanna come in?

GLORIA

Well, yeah. That's why I'm here.

ETHAN

Yeah. Of course. Come in.

He steps back and clears the door.

90

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

90

They sit. Awkward space between them.

ETHAN

You want something to drink?

GLORIA

Sure.

Ethan hurries to the kitchen.

Gloria looks around, taking in the neat, clean room.

ETHAN (O.C.)

Uh, I got apple juice, orange juice, cranberry...

GLORIA

Geez, you opening a juice bar? Water's fine.

ETHAN (O.C.)

No. I quit drinking.

He comes back in, hands her a glass of water.

ETHAN (CONT'D)

No alcohol in the house.

GLORIA

Really? Cuz' you don't look so good.

ETHAN

I know. I look like shit. I've been on a writing binge. No sleep, but the music's good. I think.

GLORIA

That's good.

She smiles. Kind of.

Then the silence hits. Heavy.

ETHAN

You staying?

She hesitates.

GLORIA
No. No, I... Jeannie's outside in
the car. Waiting.

ETHAN
Yeah? Oh. OK.

GLORIA
I just wanted to make sure you
were, you know, okay.

ETHAN
Yeah. Thanks.

GLORIA
I should...

She stands.

ETHAN
Yeah. Sure.

She moves toward the door.

Ethan follows.

She stops at the door. Turns. Goes for a quick kiss on his
cheek.

Ethan turns his head away, steps back.

She hesitates in the doorway, not sure what to do.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
Gloria?

GLORIA
Yeah?

ETHAN
Don't come back.

Beat.

ETHAN (CONT'D)
... unless you plan to stay.

She starts to speak, but doesn't.

She nods, turns away.

Ethan watches her walk down the sidewalk to the waiting car.
As she starts to turn back --

He closes the door.

91 INT. ETHAN'S BASEMENT - DAY

91

Jimmy walks down the stairs slowly, holding two coffees.

He freezes at the bottom step.

Ethan's at the mic, mid-verse - looping guitar and vocals,
layering textures.

It's raw. Messy. But alive.

Ethan finishes the verse. Turns. Sees Jimmy.

ETHAN

Thought I locked the door.

JIMMY

You did. I have a key. Remember?

ETHAN

Oh yeah.

Jimmy holds up the coffees.

Ethan takes one. Sits on a crate. Sweaty but calm.

Jimmy takes in the lyric wall. The scrawled pages taped
everywhere.

JIMMY

You've been down here for how long?

ETHAN

Three days. Maybe four.

JIMMY

You sleep?

ETHAN

A little.

JIMMY

Jesus, man. You've been busy.

ETHAN

It's all shit. But it's coming and
I can't stop it.

JIMMY
Uh-huh. We'll see.

Jimmy walks to the spare guitar, picks it up.

JIMMY (CONT'D)
We playin'?

ETHAN
Fuck yeah.

Ethan starts noodling.

Jimmy joins him, loose and low, picking it up.

They fall into a groove – half memory, half jam.

A few minutes pass in music.

Then --

JIMMY
You ready?

ETHAN
For what?

JIMMY
Rehearsal. Dez is in. Ricky's still working nights, but he'll show. You say the word – we light this fucker up.

ETHAN
I don't know if I'm any good anymore.

JIMMY
You're good. You sound like you give a shit again. That's a start.

ETHAN
What the fuck. Let's try.

JIMMY
There is no try.

ETHAN
Shut the fuck up, man. Let's play.

And they do.

CREDITS ROLL.