

WHERE WE ARE

Written by

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EXT. PICNIC GROUND - AFTERNOON

FADE IN on TITLE SEQUENCE

HIGH ANGLE of a busy park by a lake on a sunny Sunday. Picnic Lake is one of the main destinations for folks after church in the desert town of Show Low, Arizona. People are clumped together in groups, throwing Frisbees, swimming, sunning themselves on the cool grass, and socializing.

WE survey the grounds in the point of view of a fly, as it enjoys the smorgasbord of greasy pork ribs and potato salad.

We swoop down and land on a birthday cake belonging to a party of 6-year-olds. A parent guarding the cake shoos us off.

WE land in some red stuff on a plate next to a teen couple making out.

WE fly up and land on some macaroni salad. The owner is one of four elderly women.

ELDERLY WOMAN 1

I remember when they first came to town. You couldn't pry them apart. She was always pawing him in public.

ELDERLY WOMAN 2

(Aghast)

No.

ELDERLY WOMAN 1

Yes. But that's what you'd expect from Californians, I suppose.

ELDERLY WOMAN 3

I thought they were from Utah.

ELDERLY WOMAN 1

He was from Utah many years ago. But she was definitely LA.

WE are scooped up in a spoon, but escape moments before passing into the maw of one of the larger women.

WE land on a pink cherry cake belonging to a silent young family of three. The father is watching a game on his cell phone, while the mother shovels green stuff into a baby. WE move closer to the man. He sees US and SLAMS his fist down on the table.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PICNIC MOTHER
Good Lord, what was that?

PICNIC FATHER
A fly.

PICNIC MOTHER
My gawd, do you have to make...

WE survive and continue bouncing from one feast to another.

Finally, WE land on some red Jell-O belonging to ROBIN (7). His parents DAN and JUDY, and sister SARA (10) are sitting with him at a picnic table.

JUDY
You kids finish, so we can start packing up.

WE become so intoxicated by the gelatinous mound, WE don't notice a heavy object falling from above. There is a sudden deafening SQUISH and everything turns red, and then SILENT and BLACK.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON JUDY as she looks down in anger.

JUDY (CONT'D)
That is not funny.

ANGLE FULL SHOT

Robin pulls the butt of his toy gun out of the red goo. He and Sara laugh at the sight of the Jell-O and fly guts splattered everywhere. Dan looks at them askance, brushing chunks off his arm.

DAN
Robin, why did you do that?

ROBIN
There was a fly in my Jell-O.

DAN
Really. And this is what we do when there's a fly in our Jell-O?

ROBIN
Sorree.

DAN
That was not a good choice, pal.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROBIN
I said sorry.

JUDY
Honey, can you go rinse him off?
I'll get this.

Dan leads Robin to a faucet, as Judy starts wrapping up food.

ROBIN
Can I have some more?

DAN
I'll give you some more.

ROBIN
(Smiling)
Okay.

DAN
I was being sarcastic.

ROBIN
What does that mean?

DAN
It means you're not getting
anymore.

JUDY
What time does that game start?

DAN
That game starts at four.

JUDY
Oh. So I guess we won't have any
time for the boat.

DAN
Yeah, it doesn't look that way.
Sorry.

SARA
Mom! We never get to go in the
boat!

JUDY
I know.

DAN
Kids, you know I've been looking
forward to this for a long time.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

They stare at him.

DAN (CONT'D)
It's the play-offs!

SARA
So?

DAN
The play-offs! It's the play-offs!
It's very important!

Sara and Judy aren't hearing a convincing argument.

JUDY
(Applying guilt)
We'll go out some other time.

SARA
What other time?

JUDY
Maybe next weekend... unless
there's another game.

DAN
(Groaning)
Depends on what happens today.

JUDY
(Shrugging)
I don't see what the point of
getting a boat is if there's always
baseball.

DAN
There isn't always baseball.

JUDY
Can't you miss one game?

DAN
Judy...

JUDY
We spent all that time putting it
in the water. Now you have to pull
it right back out.

She stares at Dan with sad eyes.

DAN
What.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

JUDY

Nothing.

(Looks away and packs)
Instead of buying a boat, we
should've just got a bigger TV.
Would've been cheaper.

DAN

We don't need a bigger TV and we're
going to use the boat, just not
today.

He returns and helps her pack.

JUDY

(Looking OFFSCREEN)
Look at it. It's just sitting there
in the water doing nothing, all
alone.

ANGLE HER POV THE BOAT.

The boat has developed character over the years, but has a
small custom cabin and suits the family.

RESUME THE GROUP

DAN

You can stop trying to make me feel
guilty.

JUDY

I'm not trying to make you feel
anything. I'm just stating the
facts.

DAN

Well, so am I.

SARA

Why can't dad go home and we stay
here and go in the boat?

JUDY

(To Dan)
Why not?

DAN

What? No. I'm not going to drive
all the way back here after the
game just to pick you guys up. No.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (5)

JUDY

How about if we go out for just a little while?

DAN

I don't know. Why does everything have to get so complicated? We'll go out next weekend. Probably.

JUDY

I know. Sara and I will take the boat out for a few minutes, while you and Robin stay here and clean up. We'll be back by the time you're done.

SARA

Yeah!

ROBIN

I want to go too.

DAN

You might as well take them both.

JUDY

No Robin, you stay here and help your dad. We'll be back in twenty minutes. Perfect.

Judy starts to gather items to take on the boat.

DAN

(Reluctantly)

Fine. Come on, Robin. You help me and I'll let you steer the car on the way home.

ROBIN

Cool.

JUDY

I don't know about that.

ROBIN

Dad let's me do it all the time.

JUDY

All the time?

DAN

Just go get in the boat.

(Calling after her)

And remember to turn the gas on.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (6)

Judy and Sara run off.

DAN (CONT'D)
 (continuing; to Robin)
 Let's see, what can you do? Get a
 white trashbag out of one of those
 sacks over there.

ROBIN
 What does it look like?

DAN
 You know. One of those... trash
 bags. They're big and plastic and
 you put trash in them.

Robin looks through the sacks as Dan packs up. The boat
 starts. Dan looks up.

ANGLE HIS POV BOAT, as Judy and Sara prepare to launch it.

RESUME DAN

ROBIN
 I can't find it.

DAN
 Okay. They're rolled up and the
 roll is in a box, a red box, a
 little red box and it says trash
 can liners.

ROBIN
 Liners?

DAN
 L-I-N-E-R-S.

ROBIN
 Is this it?

DAN
 No, those are the matches.

ROBIN
 Is this it?

DAN
 That's the catsup. Are you just
 playing around?

ROBIN
 (Smiling)
 I'm being sarcastic. Is this it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (7)

DAN

Do I have to come over there and
show you?

Dan looks through the sacks.

DAN (CONT'D)

Don't tell me she forgot to pack
the damn-

He is cut short by an earth-shattering EXPLOSION. They look
up toward the water.

ANGLE THEIR POV IN SLOW MOTION, as a bright orange ball of
flame expands from the boat, propelling pieces of it out in
every direction at the speed of sound.

INTERCUT SLOW MOTION of Dan and Robin watching, unable to
move. The one moment is stretched absurdly, the orange glow
lasting forever. WE HEAR the SCREAMS and CRIES of the crowd
slowly emerge through the BLAST. Time loses all meaning, as
the single moment replays endlessly.

Then, suddenly, everything seems to come too fast.

EXT PICNIC GROUND - LATER

Dan and Robin are seated at a bench, surrounded by flashing
lights, frantic talking, and emergency activity. A PARAMEDIC
kneels in front of them.

PARAMEDIC

The question is, are YOU guys all
right?

DAN

(He's not)
Yes. I'm okay.

PARAMEDIC

You sure?

DAN

My wife and...

PARAMEDIC

They... they're gone, Mr. Byers.

DAN

They're gone? Where?

The Paramedic is distracted by something and leaves.

EXT PICNIC GROUND - LATER

Another paramedic loads a victim on a stretcher.

EXT PICNIC GROUND - LATER

As a helpful woman holds Dan's and Robin's hands.

HELPFUL WOMAN 1

Are you going to be all right?

DAN

Yes. Thank you.

HELPFUL WOMAN 1

If you need anything, anything at all, don't hesitate.

DAN

Thank you.

EXT PICNIC GROUND - LATER

Another paramedic helps a young girl with a deep cut on her face.

EXT PICNIC GROUND - LATER

PARAMEDIC 2 sits facing Dan and Robin.

PARAMEDIC 2

So, you think it was a problem with the gas?

DAN

Yes. It leaked.

PARAMEDIC 2

Uh huh. What, uh, where did it leak?

DAN

The engine compartment would fill up with gas fumes.

PARAMEDIC 2

So, you could turn it off or something?

DAN

Yes, when we weren't using it.

PARAMEDIC 2

You think it was left on then?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN
(Bravely)
I guess it was.

PARAMEDIC 2
And the heat today I'm sure had a
lot to do with it turning volatile
in that confined space.

DAN
Yes, yes.

PARAMEDIC 2
So, that's what you think?

DAN
Yes.

PARAMEDIC 2
How are you doing?

DAN
Okay. I'm doing okay.

EXT PICNIC GROUND - LATER

ANGLE ON a group standing around the smoking, melted hull of
the boat.

ANGLE ON a small girl staring at what could be the charred
fragment of a small arm on the grass.

EXT PICNIC GROUND - LATER

Dan and Robin are seated at another bench as Paramedic 1 and
two cops hover over them.

COP 1
So you say, you think it was the
gas?

DAN
Yes, gas would leak into the engine
compartment.

COP 1
I don't understand.

DAN
The gas would leak into the engine
compartment.

Cop 1 shakes his head.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PARAMEDIC 1

Floyd, they would normally turn the gas off. Dan thinks he must've left it on.

COP 1

(To Paramedic 1)

Okay, let me get this straight. It was normally left off?

COP 2

And then they would turn it on.

COP 1

Oh, I see. So it was normally off unless they were about to start the engine?

COP 2

Right. And they would keep it on as long as the engine was running.

COP 1

Okay, I see. Is that pretty much the way it worked, Mr. Byers?

DAN

Yes, yes.

COP 1

Sorry, you'll have to excuse me. I'm not very mechanical. So, your speculation is that you left it on and that caused the explosion?

DAN

Umm. It would seem so. Yes.

Cop 1 gives Cop 2 a suspicious glance.

COP 1

Mmm hmm. How are you doing by the way?

DAN

Okay.

COP 1

Good.

Cop 1 motions Cop 2 over for a private talk.

PARAMEDIC 1

You guys feeling okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN

Well, I have felt better. Is everything okay?

PARAMEDIC 1

Oh yeah. It's just routine stuff. I wouldn't worry.

(To Robin)

How are you doing, son?

Robin answers with a stare. His eyes tell it all - a distant stare, a mixture of a deep sense of loss, confusion, grief, and utter terror. It sends a chill through the paramedic. It's too much for him to deal with. This kid has been to another dimension and has not quite returned.

PARAMEDIC 1 (CONT'D)

Hang in there, okay?

Robin continues the stare.

INT HOSPITAL MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

A comfortable, but sterile room with glass windows, exposing the occupants to a busy hallway. A Counselor with a permanent smile, TAMMY, sits between Dan and Robin.

TAMMY

Dr. Crites tells me everything is okay. Are you feeling okay?

DAN

Yes.

TAMMY

How about you, uh...

(Referring to a chart)

Robin?

Robin gives her the stare.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

I want you both to know that you are in a safe place here. We're all friends... Daniel. If you want to, um, express your feelings, you can feel free to say whatever is on your mind. And you too, Robin. And if you feel more comfortable talking with me alone, that's okay, too. Okay?

DAN

Okay. When can we go?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TAMMY

Well Daniel, in cases like these, where there is quite a bit of trauma, we feel it's best if you are not alone for a day or two. We don't expect anything to happen, but...

(Quietly)

We want you to be safe.

DAN

I'm not going to kill myself. I just need to rest... and think about things.

TAMMY

Sure, you do.

INT HOSPITAL MEETING ROOM - LATER

Cop 2 stands over Dan and Robin.

COP 2

Mr. Byers, in cases like these, it's routine to... hold certain items for evidence. So, I just wanted you to know we will be impounding the remains of the boat for an examination. It's all routine. And then, you can pick it up later after we're done, unless we need to hold it for further investigation. Okay?

DAN

Are you... am I being charged or something?

COP 2

No, no, no, no, no. It's just routine in cases like this. I'm sure everything will be fine.

DAN

It was an accident.

COP 2

Of course it was. There is just the one small detail where you said you turned the gas on. That's all. That just sort of sent up a red flag.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

I didn't turn it on. I just don't remember turning it off. I would never-

COP 2

Mr. Byers, don't worry about a thing. Believe me, it's strictly routine. Okay?

DAN

Well... do I need a lawyer?

COP 2

You can do whatever you want. But at this point, it's just routine. Okay?

DAN

Well...

Cop 2 waits for the okay.

DAN (CONT'D)

Okay.

COP 2

Great. How are you doing?

Dan makes him wait again.

DAN

Okay.

INT HOSPITAL MEETING ROOM - LATER

They are sitting in different seats. Tammy has returned.

TAMMY

Daniel, I wanted you to know there are many excellent services available to help you through the grieving process.

DAN

The grieving process?

TAMMY

That is what you are in right now - the grieving process. There are professionals who can help you through these difficult times that you are going through. Okay?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dan nods, still confused.

TAMMY (CONT'D)
(Choosing her words)
And if you feel you are not comfortable taking care of your son, uh Robin, there are programs and help available for that too. For example, we could find Robin a temporary home or a foster home to help out or help you locate a close relative perhaps?

Bristling at the suggestion.

DAN
I'll be fine. We'll be fine.

TAMMY
(Not so sure)
Do you have someone who can be with you for a day or two to help you get through the worst of it?

DAN
No.

He's not going to make it easy on her, but then she wasn't expecting anything more from him.

TAMMY
A relative or friend?

DAN
All of our relatives are out of town, and, uh, we'll be fine.

INT HOSPITAL MEETING ROOM - LATER

After hours in the room, it is beginning to feel smaller. Cop 2 is back.

COP 2
We will need to do a routine autopsy of the deceased parties. Always routine in these cases. Happens all the time. We just need to know where you would like the remains sent when we are finished?

DAN
Hmm?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

COP 2
Your wife and daughter?

Dan slowly begins to lose it. Tammy steps closer.

DAN
Hmm?

COP 2
When we finish the autopsy-

DAN
Autopsy?

COP 2
We normally send the remains to a
funeral home or...

DAN
What?

He begins to cry in panic.

DAN (CONT'D)
What are you doing? Sara and Judy,
where are they? What are you doing?

Tammy steps in.

TAMMY
Daniel, would you like something to
calm you?

DAN
No.
(Standing)
I want my wife and daughter.
Where's Sara and Judy? What have
you done with them? Why won't you
tell me?

TAMMY
Daniel, let's sit down, okay?

DAN
Where are they? What have you done
to them?!

Dan loses it. Tammy nods to a nurse through the window. The nurse runs in with a syringe. Note that this is the first hint that Dan has had that his wife and daughter are dead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN (CONT'D)
I want to see Sara and Judy now.
Where are they?!

Cop 2 holds Dan as the nurse jabs the needle in him.

DAN (CONT'D)
What are you doing? Where is my
wife and daughter? My God. Where
are they?

Dan fades out and the cop lowers him to the chair.

ANGLE ON ROBIN. He has the same icy, dull expression.

INT DAN'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATE

Dan's eyes pop open. He looks around and panics. He's lying
in bed in a private room. He sits up and lunges for the door.
Then he crashes to the floor. His head is spinning. Still
panicking, he stands slowly and opens the door.

INT HOSPITAL HALLWAY NURSE'S STATION

A nurse looks up, rushes to Dan, and helps him stand.

NURSE
Why don't you go back in and rest?
You've been through a lot.

DAN
I can't sleep.

NURSE
I'll give you something.

DAN
No, please. Where is Robin?

NURSE
Your son?

DAN
Yes.

NURSE
He's doing just fine.

DAN
Did they take him?

NURSE
Yes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dan's panic grows.

DAN

Where? They can't take him.

NURSE

Mr. Byers, he's sleeping in the pediatric wing and he's fine.

He becomes more conscious.

DAN

Listen. I don't want to be a problem, but...

INT ROBIN'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

As Dan sleeps in a chair next to Robin.

SLOW DISSOLVE
TO:

INT ROBIN'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Dan is still asleep. Robin is lying on his side, staring at him.

Dan startles. His eyes pop open. As soon as he realizes he has returned to hell, he starts to panic again. Then, he looks over and sees Robin. They stare into each other's souls for a long time, without moving. Then, Robin reaches through the bars on his bed. Dan knows what to do. They hold each others hands for a long time.

INT ROBIN'S HOSPITAL ROOM - LATER

Tammy sits by Robin's bed facing Dan, who stares at her with a blank expression.

TAMMY

(Smiling)

Daniel, I spoke with the person you listed as your emergency contact, and she gave me the names of some of your close relatives. So, I took the liberty of giving them a call - your sister-in-law, your brother, and your mother. I also took the liberty of scheduling the hospital therapist to talk to you and, uh, Robin. So... I just wanted you to know that I'm getting the ball rolling on a few things, while you're busy processing everything.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He doesn't react.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

Is there a church you belong to? If you would like a visit from a pastor or rabbi, I can help arrange that too.

Again, no reaction.

TAMMY (CONT'D)

How are you feeling today?

Dan tries to smile.

INT HOSPITAL PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE

The office is dark. Dan and Robin sit on a sofa across from the psychologist. They listen with the same detached emptiness as before.

PSYCHOLOGIST

The grieving process can be especially overwhelming when the death of a loved one or ones is unexpected and sudden. But what you must remember is that your feelings are valid and okay. You may have heard of the five steps of the grieving process - denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and then finally acceptance. Others have it as four stages - disbelief, protest, depression and recovery. Then, there's misinterpretation, belligerence, then coming to terms. The process you go through will be very different from that of your son. He may have a long denial stage, a short anger stage, and skip the bargaining stage altogether. I'm not even sure a child would understand what it meant. I mean bargaining, for what?

(small smile)

But in the end, we all accept what has happened and get on with our lives. If you have any questions about what you're feeling and the stages of grief, this pamphlet has some really good information.

She demonstrates the pamphlet.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PSYCHOLOGIST (CONT'D)

On the back is a list of books and Web sites that can help you through these tough times. "Time for Grieving" is a good place to start. It goes into the process in depth and provides charts and tables, so you can sort of plot your course. Also, "Grieving for Everyone" is another book by the same author, and "Good Grief" is, well, it's not for everyone. So, do you have any questions about the grieving process or grief in general?

DAN

No, it's pretty clear.

PSYCHOLOGIST

Are you sure?

DAN

Yes.

PSYCHOLOGIST

Well, if you need anything at all, my name and number are on the back of the pamphlet. Okay?

DAN

I do have one question?

PSYCHOLOGIST

(Looking at her watch)

Sure.

DAN

When can we go home?

She gives him a syrupy smile.

INT DAN'S CAR - DAY

As Dan and Robin drive in silence with worn, distant expressions. They drive through several green lights, all the while waiting, staring out the windshield.

Then, Robin turns and looks at the empty backseat. Everything is bad and wrong, and yet they keep driving, as if on autopilot. Finally...

ROBIN

(Flat)

They're gone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They come to a stop light. Dan looks at the backseat, then turns back. Then, the dam bursts. Dan completely falls apart. The tears flow. He can't stop them, and he can't do anything else. They seem to come right from his soul. Robin watches him and then starts to weep. He is more confused and frightened than sad.

The car behind Dan begins to HONK, then more cars. But Dan can't move. He is paralyzed and shaking.

INT DAN'S LIVING/DINING ROOM - DAY

The dining room table in this modest home is lined with casseroles, seven-layer dips and homemade pies. Even though the mood is somber, the air is filled with the energy of neighbors and relatives all packed into the small space, talking quietly and eating.

Dan is standing with FRAN, a neighbor, as she fusses over the table.

FRAN

(Chipper, as usual)

If you're feeling tired, just let me know. Don't worry about the mess. We'll take care of everything. You just relax.

DAN

Thanks.

FRAN

How are you doing, by the way?

DAN

Okay.

FRAN

Good. It helps to have people around at times like this, don't you think? I know when my dad passed - hell, I was about Robin's age - I wouldn't have been able to handle it, if we hadn't had lots of people around. Helps take your mind off things. By the way, I talked to Sylvia, the Potters and the Garcias, and some of the others in the neighborhood. And we'd like to know if we could make dinner for you guys.

DAN

Uh, sure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRAN

The last thing you're going to feel like doing is cooking, right?

DAN

You got that.

FRAN

We can bring dinners over for a couple of weeks, until you have a chance to get organized? Actually, make it a month.

DAN

Wow, that would be wonderful. I don't know how to thank you.

FRAN

It's the least we can do. I'll set it all up. You just relax.

She squeezes his arm and runs off.

INT DAN'S LIVING/DINING ROOM - LATER

The wake continues. Dan is standing with his sister-in-law TRUDY.

TRUDY

I can't believe it, Dan.

DAN

Neither can I.

TRUDY

How are you holding up?

DAN

I don't know. How about you?

TRUDY

My little sister.

She starts to weep. Dan puts his arm around her.

TRUDY (CONT'D)

This shouldn't have happened. It's not fair. It's just not fair.

DAN

I know, Trudy.

TRUDY

I can't believe it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN
Neither can I.

INT DAN'S LIVING/DINING ROOM

Dan is with a male friend.

MALE FRIEND 1
I'm really sorry man. I don't know
what to say.

DAN
You don't have to say anything.

MALE FRIEND 1
How are you doing?

DAN
Okay.

INT DAN'S DEN/KITCHEN

Robin is sitting by himself holding a small paper plate with
a few grapes. A young friend TYLER approaches him.

TYLER
Hi.

ROBIN
Hi.

TYLER
Umm, I'm really sorry about your
mom and sister.

ROBIN
It's okay.

Tyler pats him tenuously on the shoulder and turns back to
his mother. The mother smiles at Robin. Tyler just holds his
mother's hand and stares.

INT DAN'S LIVING/DINING ROOM

Dan stands with another friend.

MALE FRIEND 2
Do you have any idea what caused
the, uh, you know?

DAN
I'm pretty sure it was a gas leak.
We turned the gas line off when we
weren't running the engine.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN (CONT'D)

It must've uh... must've been left on, and the gas...

MALE FRIEND 2

Wow. One fucking detail. I guess you're probably kicking yourself now for not getting it fixed.

It hits Dan like a ton of bricks.

MALE FRIEND 2 (CONT'D)

Man, I'm sorry.

The friend pats Dan's shoulder.

INT DAN'S DEN/KITCHEN

Dan with a female neighbor.

FEMALE NEIGHBOR 1

Have you had a chance to start thinking about what you're going to do?

DAN

No, not really.

FEMALE NEIGHBOR 1

Are you going to take time off work?

DAN

A little.

FEMALE NEIGHBOR 1

What about a funeral?

DAN

I guess.

FEMALE NEIGHBOR 1

I know there's a lot to think about. How are you going to take care of Robin?

DAN

I don't know.

FEMALE NEIGHBOR 1

Do you have any relatives nearby that can help?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

No, they're all in Utah. Judy's sister lives in Phoenix. It's just me and Robin for now.

He begins to crack.

FEMALE NEIGHBOR 1

Well, it's going to be tough. You have to be an example to Robin. Be strong. But take care of yourself too. It's not going to be easy.

He manages a small smile.

INT DAN'S LIVING/DINING ROOM

Dan in a small group.

FRIEND 1

It's too early to think about, but you could always sell the house and move into something smaller.

FRIEND 2

A condo maybe.

FRIEND 1

It would save you money.

FRIEND 2

It's hard though. Too early to start thinking about all that now.

FRIEND 1

Yeah, you have time. You need to assimilate all of this first. Take some time off work. Maybe take a short trip. Go camping with your boy. Get away. Let it, you know, sink in.

FRIEND 2

Yeah. Two or three weeks.

FRIEND 1

Do you have a cabin or something?

FRIEND 2

Hell, he could go to Hawaii for that matters. Take advantage of the time off.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

FRIEND 1

I think the best thing for you right now is to listen to your heart.

FRIEND 2

Right.

FRIEND 1

Follow your heart. Go with your gut feeling. Listen to your heart.

DAN

My heart doesn't know what to say. It's just as confused as the rest of me.

Friend 1 smiles at that.

INT DAN'S LIVING/DINING ROOM

Dan with a male friend from work.

MALE FRIEND 2

When will you be back at the shop?

DAN

That depends.

MALE FRIEND 2

Well, we miss you there and think about you all time. It could've been anyone of us. It's so fuckin' random.

DAN

Yeah.

EXT DAN'S BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

The wake continues. Dan is with a couple. The man just stares at him.

WOMAN 2

Judy was such a wonderful person. And of course Sara was so pretty and smart. They were so young. We all feel the loss, Dan. We're all with you. You know that? We're all with you. If there's ever anything you need. Anything. If you just want to talk, whatever. I know what you must be going through.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOMAN 2 (CONT'D)

Just know that we're here for you
and Robin.

DAN

Thank you.

WOMAN 2

How are you holding up?

INT DAN'S LIVING/DINING ROOM

By the dining room table with some old man.

OLD MAN

(Speaking as much to
himself)

Makes you think. You only go around
once. You got one chance and
there's no going back. One life,
that's it. You gotta live it to its
fullest. You know what I mean?
Because you never know when... you
know. Life is good. Life is
precious. Don't waste it.

DAN

I'll try.

OLD MAN

You got your whole life ahead of
you.

DAN

Yup.

INT DAN'S DEN/KITCHEN

With another neighbor couple. The woman holds his hand firmly
and dramatically.

WOMAN 3

We're so sorry about what happened.

She stops and stares in his eyes, firmly.

DAN

Thank you.

(beat)

I... uh... thank you.

Another pause.

WOMAN 3

So sorry. It's such a tragedy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She waits again for some response.

DAN

I know.

WOMAN 3

Such a tragedy.

(beat)

I wish there was something we could do to bring them back. Make it all go away.

Waits.

DAN

It's okay. There's nothing you can do. There's uh...

WOMAN 3

If you ever feel the need to just talk about it, we're here.

Waits.

DAN

Thank you.

(wait)

I don't know what to say right now-

Waits.

WOMAN 3

They were so young. So young. We're so sorry. Such a tragedy.

Waits.

DAN

I know.

EXT. DAN'S BACKYARD - AFTERNOON

The wake continues. Dan and a smart woman wearing glasses are sitting in plastic chairs holding plates.

SMART WOMAN

Your wife and daughter cannot be helped now. They're doing fine. It sounds harsh, but it's true. They're in a better place.

(smiles smartly)

Do you know what I mean? You are the one who needs the help now.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SMART WOMAN (CONT'D)

It's time to take care of Dan and,
uh...

DAN

Robin.

SMART WOMAN

If I were you I'd see a therapist.

DAN

I don't know. I think we'll be
okay.

SMART WOMAN

I know you think everything will be
okay, and it probably will. But it
couldn't hurt.

She puts her hand on his knee and keeps it there.

SMART WOMAN (CONT'D)

You've been through a terrible
ordeal. You're suppressing a lot of
anger and fear and depression.
You're angry with the world and
yourself and everything, and you're
afraid for the future. All those
feelings are in you and they need
to get out, be free, escape. A
therapist can help you understand
what you're feeling. Because right
now, you're confused, you don't
know what is going on inside your
mind with your emotions, and maybe
you can't deal with those emotions
on your own. A therapist would
know.

DAN

Well. It's something to think
about.

SMART WOMAN

Don't just think about it.

INT DAN'S BATHROOM

Dan finally gets away. All the helpful, well-meaning people
are taking a toll. He looks in the mirror. He's rung out,
drained. He picks up a perfume bottle and cries. He runs his
hand over her things. It's all too much.

He opens the cabinet below the sink and pulls out a small
trashcan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Then, he slowly throws out the perfume, then the toothbrush, then a hairbrush, and as he does, the tears flow heavier and heavier. His heart is breaking. He has to stop. He takes the things out and sets them back on the counter.

He washes his face with cold water and tries to stop shaking. He looks in the mirror and tries to smile.

INT DAN'S LIVING/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Dan is seeing the last guest out.

FRAN

I got everything put away. The dishes are in the washer. Just hit start when you're ready. I'll come by tomorrow to see how you're doing.

DAN

Thanks, uh, I'm sorry I forgot...

FRAN

Fran Finkle. A few houses down, on the right. Airstream parked in the driveway?

DAN

Oh yeah. Fran, I'm sorry.

FRAN

Don't worry about it. You've got enough on your mind. Give me a hug.

They hug.

FRAN (CONT'D)

Get some sleep.

DAN

You too. Thanks again for everything.

FRAN

No problem. Night. Say good night to Robin for me.

DAN

I will.

He closes the door after her. Then, he takes a big breath and walks into the kitchen. The place is spotless.

INT DAN'S DEN/KITCHEN - NIGHT

He sees Robin half-watching some animated movie, curled up with a stuffed animal on the couch.

DAN
Tired?

ROBIN
No.

DAN
Me neither.

He sits next to Robin.

DAN (CONT'D)
What a day, huh?

ROBIN
Yeah.

DAN
How you feeling?

Robin shrugs.

DAN (CONT'D)
Hungry?

Shrugs.

Dan goes into the kitchen and opens the fridge. It's filled with neatly organized Tupperware. He grabs one and opens it. Cheese sticks. He pops one in his mouth.

A DOOR CLOSES down the hall. He turns. A tall, burly man, HOWIE, peers into the kitchen.

HOWIE
Wow, everybody's gone. That's weird. I wouldn't go in the bathroom for awhile, if I were you. Sorry. I'm Howie Steele, by the way.

(Offers his hand)
I don't know if we've ever officially met.

DAN
You're, uh, Patrick's dad right? Soccer team?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWIE

Yeah. Hey, I'm real sorry, man. It sucks. It really does. Sucks.

(looks around)

Hey, I'm all turned around.

DAN

What do you need?

HOWIE

Front door.

DAN

That way.

HOWIE

Oh right.

INT. DAN'S LIVING/DINING ROOM

As they head toward the door.

HOWIE

Nice selection of ales. Love that Lumberyard.

DAN

I didn't get any.

HOWIE

Too bad.

DAN

Where's your son?

HOWIE

Staying with his aunt for the weekend. Robin still going to be on the team?

DAN

I don't know.

HOWIE

Well, we could use him.

Howie checks Dan over.

HOWIE (CONT'D)

Hey, almost forgot. I got something in the car you guys could use. Do you mind walking me out?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

Sure.

EXT. DAN'S FRONT YARD - NIGHT

As they walk to Howie's car on the street. Howie looks Dan over again, checks his eyes.

HOWIE

Dan, you got the look of someone who's been to the edge.

DAN

(Smiling)

Yeah.

HOWIE

So, you know about the edge?

DAN

I'm not sure.

HOWIE

How do I explain? It's this place you end up at when you've been through some incredible, horrible, awesome, all-encompassing, life-changing event of some sort. When you suddenly feel like everything is gone, and you're standing there and you don't know where to turn and you don't know what to do. You're just standing on the edge of this cliff and you can't turn back, you can only go forward, but forward leads you right into this massive abyss.

DAN

That sounds familiar.

HOWIE

It's a desperate, terrifying situation, and there's no way out. And what happens is you find yourself reduced to nothing, to the very core of existence. You know what I mean. I know you do. You haven't had much time to think about it, but you know. You know you're there when nothing else matters, except where you are. Everything else seems trivial and meaningless.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWIE (CONT'D)

But you have this fear, this raw, intense fear. Everything in your world has fallen apart, suddenly, for no reason - completely out of your control. You're on the edge and there's only one way to go and you know you have to go that way, but you're terrified as hell because everything you know, you've ever learned, deep in your mind, tells you that jumping off the cliff into that abyss is wrong, that the most unimaginably horrible things will happen if you do. So, you're stuck and the feeling is overwhelming. Nobody knows the feeling unless they've been to the edge. It's not about sadness and compassion and worry and all that crap. Nobody gets it, unless they've been there. And I see you have.

DAN

Yeah. I don't know. You've been there?

HOWIE

Patrick was only three when my wife Lenny died. Auto accident. I was driving. Same thing.

DAN

I'm sorry.

HOWIE

Thanks. I just wanted you to know, I understand. All those people here today? None of them know about the edge, none of them have been there. You're an edger man. I can see it in your eyes. Welcome to the club.

Howie unlocks the driver side door.

DAN

How, how did you get through it?

HOWIE

That's the question. How do you get out of this mess?

Howie sits on the trunk facing Dan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HOWIE (CONT'D)

I'll tell you the secret. I was going to let you figure it out on your own, but I'll make it easy on you.

(Winks)

Here's what you do. You jump off. You just jump right into the abyss. There's nothing else you can do, right? So, you do it.

DAN

How can I... No. It would be... the end.

HOWIE

That's what most people think.

DAN

It would be impossible. Everything would fall apart. I would go insane.

HOWIE

You can only go insane if you DON'T let everything fall apart.

DAN

I don't know...

HOWIE

It's okay. You gotta be ready. Your head's gotta be in the right place. It could take a year, two, three. But you'll know when it's time. At some point, you'll let go and allow yourself to jump. And guess what? You live. You're okay. You start to heal. There's nothing down there. It's all been built up in your head. Everything you've ever learned about the abyss is a lie. There's like a million little things keeping you from jumping. You just have to let go of those things and be. Just be where you are.

DAN

I don't know. I guess I don't understand.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HOWIE

I know. You got time. Take your time. It's yours. I know you're an edger, man, because if you hadn't been, all this talk would've freaked you out. You would've thought I was being some kind of unsympathetic asshole. But you're beyond all that. You're there, man. And you're never going back. All that petty shit you used to worry about and stress over doesn't matter. Nothing matters and that's the truth and that's good, that's the way it should be.

DAN

I'll have to...

HOWIE

I know. Think about it. Yeah, think about it, don't think about it, whatever. Don't worry. It'll all work out.

(remembers)

Oh yeah.

He opens the back door and takes out a box.

HOWIE (CONT'D)

So, here it is. I got it at Costco.

Howie hands it to Dan.

DAN

A big box of cookies?

HOWIE

Yeah. But not just any cookies, man. These are magic cookies, edge cookies. For two weeks after we got back from the hospital, Patrick and I just sat in front of the TV and ate these cookies. They're awesome.

DAN

Chocolate chip. Kind of fattening.

HOWIE

We each gained 50 pounds. We could barely walk. It was gross. But, so what. Nothing matters, right?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DAN

Right.

HOWIE

I'll be in touch.

(He hugs Dan)

Think happy thoughts. Because everything IS okay. You can trust me on that.

DAN

Thanks.

Howie gets in the car. Dan looks at the box.

INT DAN'S DEN/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dan is watching Robin sleeping on the couch, curled up with his stuffed animal. He sits next to him and stares blankly at the TV.

DAN

What am I going to do?

INT DAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Dan startles awake, sweating, panicky. It's three in the morning. The full moon washes the room with its dull gray light.

He gets out of bed and paces, looks at things - pictures, bottles of female stuff, a piece of clothing. The tears come again.

INT DAN'S LIVING/DINING ROOM

He wanders around in the dark.

EXT DAN'S BACKYARD

He walks out to the middle of the backyard, picks up a basketball. Dribbles. He looks around, nothing. The moon is bright.

He shoots the ball into a basketball hoop attached to the eaves. To his surprise, it goes in. He retrieves the ball and tries again. Then, again. After a few more shots, he is hooked.

INT DAN'S DEN/KITCHEN

He is sitting on the couch. He's drained, but can't sleep. Through the sliding doors, we see the first hint of dawn.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He slouches down in the couch and his arm brushes against the box of cookies. He picks it up and stares at it. Then, he opens the box and takes one out. He looks it over, then takes a bite. It is good.

FADE TO BLACK,
THEN IN ON:

INT FUNERAL HOME CHAPEL - DAY

It's a small chapel filled to capacity.

PASTOR

When a tragedy such as this strikes, we wonder how there can be a God. If there is a God, why does he allow such cruelty? Taking the lives of a young mother and her daughter, two good people, loving people, with a loving family and many loving friends. Why? It's not enough to say, God works in mysterious ways. We want more.

WE MOVE around the room and look at the faces - the curious, the hopeful, the sad, the bored.

PASTOR (CONT'D)

We need reasons. It doesn't seem fair or right. For the answer, all we have to do is look in the scriptures. And we see. If we can for a moment, look past our grief and our deep sense of loss, we see that it is all part of God's plan. Our short stay on earth is only a very tiny part of the plan. God may appear to work in mysterious ways when we are feeling such terrible pain and sorrow, but we have to keep telling ourselves that it all makes perfect sense when viewed from the high perspective of God Almighty.

INT FUNERAL HOME CHAPEL - LATER

Dan, Robin, and Trudy stand in a reception line as well-wishers file out of the chapel. Most state pleasantries like "I'm so sorry" and "How are you feeling." Then Howie passes Dan...

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HOWIE

What are you doing this weekend? Do you want to see a movie? Patrick's coming back. The four of us could go see a comedy or something.

DAN

Uh, sure.

HOWIE

I'll call you.

INT DAN'S DEN/KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

ANGLE ON TV as a news magazine show runs a story about a tragic war, with gruesome footage to match.

REPORTER (V.O.)

...Whole families unearthed in mass graves with bodies buried four and five deep. Rosana Bostenky remembers.

ROSANA

(On-camera being interviewed)

I was only seven. The soldiers came to our house and forced my mother and father and my brothers and sisters out into the street.

ANGLE ON DAN as he pulls some Tupperware-encased food out of the microwave. He sets the food down and sits on the couch beside Robin. Both are transfixed.

RESUME ROSANA

ROSANA (CONT'D)

I was able to escape through a small window and hide in the woods behind the house. I heard the shooting...

(overcome for a moment)

...And I knew what had happened. But I didn't think it was possible that human beings could be so evil.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Rosana was only one of a handful of people who survived what many call the bloodiest act of genocide outside the holocaust. An entire village massacred in less than an hour. Nearly 4,000 killed.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

REPORTER (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But in many ways, the real victims were the few who lived. They have to live with the question that can never be answered: why was I spared?

An obnoxious dog food commercial cuts through the moment like a chainsaw.

ANGLE ON THE TWO. Dan's eyes are clouded with tears. Robin can't stop staring at the TV.

EXT SUNNY PARK (MOVIE) - DAY

The scene is from a movie playing in a theater.

A thirty-something woman is running gleefully to catch a Frisbee. As she does, she is suddenly gripped by a strong pain, and falls to the ground clutching her stomach. Her family runs to her.

INT DOCTOR'S OFFICE (MOVIE)

The woman is holding her husband's hand, as they face the doctor at his desk.

DOCTOR

Mrs. Bennett, I'm really glad you came to us when you did. I won't beat around the bush. You have a very rare infection that effects the lining of your liver. It's called hepatosemia. We don't know much about it, unfortunately. We do know that medication can help, but... there is no cure. The liver will continue to enlarge, until it... well, it can enlarge no further.

MRS. BENNETT

(Denial)

I don't understand. I was perfectly well yesterday. I felt fine. Will I die? Is that it? I'm going to die?

DOCTOR

Mrs. Bennett, it is one of those rare diseases that could probably be cured quite easily if there was a pharmaceutical company that saw a profit to be made.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

But it is so rare, research would be cost-prohibitive. I wish I could do more. I really do.

The Bennetts turn to each other with a "we're going to fight this one" looks.

INT MOVIE THEATER

As Dan and Howie watch the movie. They turn to each other and shake their heads.

INT PIZZA PLACE - NIGHT

Patrick and Robin are playing an arcade game. Patrick is enthusiastically racking up a big score, Robin has little energy. Patrick kills his character and gets a "game over." He swears and pounds the buttons.

PATRICK

Hey Dad, I need more quarters.

Howie approaches him counting coins in his hand.

HOWIE

What do you say?

PATRICK

Please...

(Nothing)

Can I have more quarters?

HOWIE

Here.

He dumps a handful on the console.

PATRICK

Thanks.

HOWIE

You're welcome.

WE FOLLOW Howie back to a table, where Dan is busy eating a slice of pizza.

HOWIE (CONT'D)

By the way, sorry about that stupid movie. I didn't know it was going to be one of those dead parent flicks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

That's okay. I can't shelter myself from the real world.

HOWIE

Ha. You call that movie the real world? It was pure Hollywood bullshit.

DAN

True. So true. Like that scene where she was on her deathbed and the family was all gathered around, and everybody was crying...

HOWIE

I saw you. You were getting into it.

DAN

Yeah, well, you know what I mean. Real people don't die like that. They die all alone in some nursing home or in some horrible car accident or, you know, when they're sitting on the toilet.

HOWIE

Yeah and they don't say things like, "Jonny, be a good boy to your papa when I'm gone." Their last words are like "Goddamn asshole, you pulled my catheter out too fast."

DAN

Or...
(He thinks)
Never mind.

HOWIE

What?

DAN

It happened so fast. One minute we were talking and being a family and the next minute... I can't sleep. I keep going over things again and again. I'm totally obsessed. It drowns out everything else. Then I think, how am I going to raise Robin and deal with all the shit he's going through. It's too much. It's just too much.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

HOWIE

Right. One thing at a time. Take it slow. When do you go back to work?

DAN

Tomorrow.

HOWIE

That was fast. How long has it been? A couple of weeks?

DAN

Two weeks, three hours and 43 minutes.

HOWIE

Let's see, four years, Umm, five, no six months. Something like that. I've lost track. You lose track eventually.

He studies Dan.

HOWIE (CONT'D)

Anyway, I don't mean to be all flip about it. It really does suck. But you do get better, and you really do get on with your life. One thing though about the edge, it changes you. You'll never go back to the way you were before. You can't. It's a one-way trip. And that's good, I think.

DAN

I can't see how it can be good. I would give anything to go back. Wouldn't you?

HOWIE

I don't know. It's kind of hard to explain. It's like, what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. Think of it that way. Eventually, you come to terms with the fact that you can't go back, so you don't even think about it. You're left with either thinking your life is ruined and you'll never recover, or this is an opportunity to learn from the experience and get on with your life. And it's really your choice which way you go.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

HOWIE (CONT'D)

So, I guess you can choose to carry all that guilt and history around forever, if you want.

DAN

It's not what I want. It's what is.

HOWIE

You're wrong about what is. You can't do anything about yesterday, but you can do something about tomorrow, because the one thing you do have control over is what you want. You're standing on the edge now. You'll make the leap... when you want to.

INT DAN'S DEN/KITCHEN - MORNING

As Dan pours milk into two bowls of kiddy cereal.

DAN

(Calling O.S.)

Robin, breakfast is ready.

(No response)

Robin?

He sets the bowls on the table. Waits.

DAN (CONT'D)

(Calling)

Robin?!

Still no response. He panics, runs to the hall.

INT DAN'S HALLWAY

As Dan rushes to Robin's room, continuing to call.

INT ROBIN'S ROOM

He's not there. The room is a mess, hasn't been cleaned in weeks.

INT DAN'S HALLWAY

As Dan turns away and opens the bathroom door.

ROBIN (O.S.)

Dad!

DAN

Sorry.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Closes the door.

DAN (CONT'D)
I made cereal.

ROBIN (O.S.)
Okay.

DAN
How long is it going to take you in there, because we're kind of in a hurry?

ROBIN
I don't know.

DAN
Okay. Well, take your time. Are you dressed?

ROBIN
Yeah.

DAN
Did you brush your teeth and hair and stuff?

ROBIN
Yeah.

FLUSH.

DAN
Is there anything else? Wash your hands.

The water starts in the bathroom.

ROBIN
Dad, I know what to do.

DAN
Okay, well, umm...

ROBIN
Lunch.

DAN
What about it?

ROBIN
I need lunch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN
Okay, I'm on it.

He runs back to...

INT DAN'S DEN/KITCHEN

Dan opens the fridge and looks through the Tupperware. He grabs some bread and peanut butter and some containers. Then he sets them on the counter and begins to assemble something.

Robin enters and shakes his head on his way to the table.

DAN
Okay, eat your cereal.
(He stops)
Do you have a lunchbox or something?

ROBIN
No. Mom uses sacks.

Dan looks for sacks.

DAN
Do you think you could buy lunch today?

ROBIN
I hate school lunches.

DAN
Just one day?

ROBIN
(Disappointed)
Fine.

Dan opens his wallet. It's empty. He looks at the new mess.

INT SCHOOL DAYCARE

As Dan rushes in with Robin. All eyes follow them as Dan heads toward the only adult he can see in the room.

DAN
Hi, I'm Dan Byers and this is Robin.

ADULT
I'm a parent. You want the teacher.

She points to the teacher kneeling on the floor, helping a child tie his shoes.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN
Hi. I'm Dan Byers.

DAYCARE TEACHER
Hi. Nice to meet you. I'm Shawna.

DAN
What do I...

DAYCARE TEACHER
(Smiling)
Sign in over there.

DAN
Thanks.

He starts signing in. She approaches.

DAYCARE TEACHER
And Mr. Byers, we'll need a check
for this month and you have to fill
out some paperwork from the
district.

She hands him a thick envelope.

DAN
Is it okay if I turn this in
tomorrow?

DAYCARE TEACHER
That's fine. Don't worry about it.
How are you doing?

DAN
Okay. In a hurry.

The daycare teacher smiles. Dan smiles back and then turns.
He waves to Robin while rushing out.

WE STAY with Robin. Two friends approach him tenuously.

KID 1
Did your mom and sister die?

ROBIN
Yeah.

They just stare at each other.

INT SHOW LOW CHEVY SERVICE CENTER OFFICE - DAY

As Dan rushes in and passes the receptionist, SUE.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SUE

Thank God you're here. I was afraid you weren't going to show up.

DAN

What a morning.

He checks over a computer screen showing the service situation, and grabs his iPad.

SUE

Everything's taken care of, just get the customers outside.

DAN

Sorry.

He pulls on a work jacket and heads for the door.

SUE

How you doing?

DAN

Fine.

EXT SERVICE CENTER - DAY

Cars are jammed in the service entry, customers are waiting impatiently.

DAN

(Smiling)

Okay, who's first?

CUSTOMER 1

Listen, I'm already late. Can you get me first?

CUSTOMER 2

Hey, I was here before you and I'm late too, pal.

DAN

Who was first?

OLD LADY

I was. I've been here for more than an hour.

Dan approaches her. The others shake their heads.

DAN

(To Customers 1 and 2)

I'll be right with you. I promise.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN (CONT'D)
 (To Old Lady)
 What can I do for you?

OLD LADY
 (Slowly, mumbling badly)
 I'm hearing this funny noise, like
 a thumping, thumping on that side.

DAN
 (waits)
 Can you tell me a little more?

The others are glaring.

OLD LADY
 Well.
 (Thinking very slowly)
 It happens when I'm driving.

Dan is not going to get any breaks today.

INT CLASSROOM - DAY

As Robin's second-grade teacher MRS. DOWNEY leads a discussion.

MRS. DOWNEY
 Has anyone ever seen an African
 cat?

Hands go up.

MRS. DOWNEY (CONT'D)
 John?

JOHN
 On the animal channel.

MRS. DOWNEY
 Very good. What kind?

JOHN
 Lions, cheetahs, and jaguars
 mostly.

MRS. DOWNEY
 Anybody else?

She notices Robin not participating.

MRS. DOWNEY (CONT'D)
 Robin?

He looks at her and waits.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS. DOWNEY (CONT'D)
Have you even seen an African cat?

ROBIN
No.

MRS. DOWNEY
Have you ever been to a zoo?

ROBIN
Yeah, I think.

MRS. DOWNEY
What about there?

ROBIN
I don't remember.

The other students can barely contain themselves.

MRS. DOWNEY
Billy?

BILLY
I saw ocelots.

Robin stares out the window.

MRS. DOWNEY
Ooh. What's an ocelot like?

INT SERVICE MANAGER OFFICE - AFTERNOON

As Dan meets with his manager BOB across a metal desk piled with paperwork.

BOB
Dan, I want you to know the company's behind you 100%, okay? You take as long as you need to deal with things. Don't worry about this place. I had Todd run the show for the last two weeks and he did just fine.

Dan tenses when he hears Todd's name.

DAN
Todd. That's good.

BOB
If need be, he can continue until you're up to speed again.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN

(Smiling)

No, no. I'm okay. There was just a little glitch in the schedule this morning, that's all. Won't happen again.

BOB

Don't worry about it. You've always done a good job for us and we can afford to give you a little elbow room when necessary.

DAN

Thanks. So, if there's nothing else, I'd better...

He points to the door.

BOB

Nope, that's it. But the offer is still open if you need to take a break. How are you handling all this, anyway? Doing okay? Need a loan or anything?

DAN

No, no. We're fine. Really good. Thanks.

Dan leaves. Bob is not so certain.

INT DAN'S LIVING/DINING ROOM - NIGHT

As Dan opens the front door revealing a neighborhood couple, smiling, holding more Tupperware and a baking dish.

WOMAN 1

Hi Dan. It's our turn for dinner.

DAN

Wow. That's great.

WOMAN 1

I hope you like turkey.

DAN

Are you kidding? Thanks so much.

She smiles big.

INT DAN'S DEN/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Robin is watching TV. Dan is busily dishing out food, while cradling the phone against his neck.

DAN

We're doing as well as can be expected. I think we both tend to be distracted... a lot.

INTERCUT:

INT TRUDY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

As Trudy sits in a soft leather chair, holding a wine glass. Her house is very dark, quiet, and neat.

TRUDY

I can't sleep. I got some pills that are supposed to help, but... I can't function.

DAN

I'm not sleeping too well either.

TRUDY

When will it end? Will we ever be able to forget? It's so hard.

DAN

Thank God for my job. It helps take my mind off things. Otherwise, I'd just keep replaying the explosion in my head.

(Calling to Robin)

Robin.

Robin turns. Dan points to the plate of food.

TRUDY

I need to get out and do something. You and Robin, especially Robin, should get counseling.

DAN

Yeah. I'd like to, but my insurance doesn't cover it.

Robin picks up the plates and carries them to the coffee table.

TRUDY

You have to do what's right. Think of Robin.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN
I do... all the time.

He watches, as Robin resumes his position on the sofa.

INT SERVICE CENTER OFFICE - DAY

As Dan updates the computer.

SUE
Dan. I got to tell you. Bob's been
down here looking through the
estimates. He's not happy.

DAN
Why?

SUE
I don't know. I've had some
customer complaints. Estimates were
off, service was bad.

DAN
How come I wasn't told?

SUE
I don't know.

She does.

DAN
Has he been talking to you? What's
going on?

SUE
He just asked where the estimates
were. That's all.

INT CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

It's empty now as Dan meets with Mrs. Downey. She speaks in a
distant, business-like manner. She thinks she is helpful,
doesn't seem to have much faith in Dan.

MRS. DOWNEY
Robin needs help. He just sits at
his desk and stares out the window.
Never participates.

DAN
How is his work?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MRS. DOWNEY

He starts, but doesn't finish.
He'll do half a test and just stop.
Here's one of his drawings.

An unfinished jaguar.

MRS. DOWNEY (CONT'D)

He just gives up. He's very bright
and I know he's capable... But I'd
say his behavior is indicative of
someone who has depression. I don't
know if I'd say severe, but very
close. A good therapist could help.
Maybe help you too. Sometimes, we
just need a little help to get us
through tough times.

DAN

You can't cut him some slack for a
little while?

MRS. DOWNEY

Of course. I just think...

DAN

I mean, we went through a really
terrible, traumatic thing. He's
just going to need time. He saw his
mother and sister...

(With extreme difficulty)

Die in front of him... in a
horrible explosion. There must be
some way to take that into account.

MRS. DOWNEY

I know how you feel. Believe me, we
both want what's best for Robin.
I'm not a doctor. I can only tell
you what I observe. At this rate,
he's not going to make it. A child
psychologist would know what to do.

DAN

Not going to make it? What do you
mean?

MRS. DOWNEY

With treatment, he'll be able to
get back to where he was at school.
Without treatment, I don't know.
School, life, everything will be
more difficult for him.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

MRS. DOWNEY (CONT'D)

There is no reason to keep him from
living up to his potential.

INT DAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

As Dan lies awake, staring at the ceiling. The clock reads:
2:30.

INT ROBIN'S ROOM - NIGHT

He too lies awake, clutching his stuffed animal.

INT DAN'S DEN/KITCHEN - NEXT MORNING

As Robin stares at a bowl of cereal with no milk in it. Dan
closes the refrigerator.

DAN

I'm sorry, Robin, I forgot to get
milk. We have some pizza from the
other night. Or... I don't know.

Neither shows any sign of life.

ROBIN

I'm not hungry anyway.

DAN

Toast? I can make eggs?

ROBIN

No.

DAN

All right, let's go.

INT DAN'S CAR - MORNING

As Dan and Robin slog through heavy traffic on a gray
morning.

DAN

Look. There's McDonalds. Let's get
something there.

He pulls in and heads for the drive-thru.

ROBIN

I'm not hungry.

DAN

You have to eat something.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBIN
No, I don't.

DAN
Pancakes, Egg McMuffin, French
toast, what?

Robin turns away. Dan stops at the order menu.

ORDER TAKER (V.O.)
(Rushing the speech)
Welcome to McDonalds. How may I
help you?

DAN
Come on. What do you want? I
thought you liked this place.

ROBIN
I'm not hungry.

DAN
(Into speaker)
Two Egg McMuffins and a milk.

Robin stares unblinking out the side window.

ORDER TAKER (V.O.)
Will there be anything else?

DAN
No.

ORDER TAKER (V.O.)
Okay, that's two Egg McMuffins and
one milk. Please drive forward to
the pickup window.

Dan drives ahead and stops behind more cars. Another car
comes up behind him.

DAN
Robin, what's going on? Am I doing
something wrong? Are you mad at me?
What?

Robin shrugs.

DAN (CONT'D)
Please, tell me something. Your
teacher says you're depressed. You
never talk. I don't know what to
do. And now you won't eat. I'm
worried about you.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN (CONT'D)

We have to stick together, man. I miss Mom and Sara as much as you. When you don't talk to me, it makes me feel like, I don't know, you don't like me or trust me. We used to be best friends. What happened?

ROBIN

I'm just not hungry. I'm tired.

DAN

But you got to eat something.

ROBIN

I don't feel hungry anymore with Mom gone.

DAN

I know how you feel. But I'm here and I love you.

ROBIN

You're not Mom.

They move slowly toward the window in silence.

ORDER TAKER

Your total comes to three-eleven.

Dan hands the guy some money. Then he receives the bag of food and change. Dan tries to hand the bag to Robin, but he turns away.

INT PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE - DAY

The child psychologist DR. WINKLER is examining Robin one on one. She speaks in a quiet professional tone, smiles disarmingly.

DR. WINKLER

Tell me what you did after your Mom and sister went to the boat.

ROBIN

I helped my Dad.

DR. WINKLER

Do what?

ROBIN

Clean up.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. WINKLER

What happened to the boat after
your Mom and sister went in it?

ROBIN

It exploded.

DR. WINKLER

How did that make you feel?

ROBIN

Scared.

DR. WINKLER

What was it about the explosion
that scared you?

ROBIN

It was loud.

DR. WINKLER

What else scared you? Anything?

ROBIN

It was like so huge and hot.

He can see it in his mind.

DR. WINKLER

What caused the explosion?

ROBIN

My Mom.

DR. WINKLER

How did she do that?

ROBIN

I don't know. Gas in the engine.

DR. WINKLER

Did she make the gas explode?

ROBIN

I guess.

DR. WINKLER

Why did she make the explosion?

ROBIN

I don't know.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DR. WINKLER

Do you think she wanted to make the explosion?

ROBIN

No.

DR. WINKLER

What did she want to do?

ROBIN

Go out in the boat.

DR. WINKLER

So, the explosion was an accident?

ROBIN

I guess.

DR. WINKLER

What happened to your Mom and sister when the boat exploded?

Long pause. No response.

DR. WINKLER (CONT'D)

Robin, where are your Mom and Sara?
Do you know?

ROBIN

No.

DR. WINKLER

Are they at home?

ROBIN

No.

DR. WINKLER

Do you see them?

ROBIN

No.

DR. WINKLER

What do you think happened to them?

ROBIN

They're dead.

DR. WINKLER

Do you know how they died?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

ROBIN

Yeah.

DR. WINKLER

How?

Long pause. No response.

DR. WINKLER (CONT'D)

Robin, tell me how your Mom and Sara died.

ROBIN

I don't know.

DR. WINKLER

Tell me how you feel about them being dead.

ROBIN

Scared.

DR. WINKLER

Why are you scared?

ROBIN

Because I don't want them to be dead.

The doctor feels she has reached an important point in her questioning.

INT PSYCHOLOGIST'S OFFICE - LATER

She speaks with Dan by himself.

DR. WINKLER

Robin is repressing his thoughts and feelings. The more we talk, the more we can bring those feelings to the surface and help him deal with the trauma. Children, and adults too, need outlets for their repressed emotions. If we don't deal with them early on, the emotions will emerge in other ways that can be more difficult to treat. By talking about our feelings, we can help make sure they are released in positive, healthy ways.

Dan just nods.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DR. WINKLER (CONT'D)

I would like to meet with Robin once a week. And I would like a child psychiatrist to evaluate him for medication. There are several excellent medications available for depression and anxiety.

DAN

How much does a psychiatrist charge?

DR. WINKLER

Oh, I would guess around 200, 250 per session. Depends.

DAN

My insurance doesn't cover it, so... and I can't really afford it.

DR. WINKLER

I see.

DAN

What would happen if he didn't see you or get the medication? Is there anything I can do?

DR. WINKLER

That depends. I can't really say.

INT DAN'S DEN/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Dan is on the phone with Trudy.

DAN

I can't afford it. We'll just have to get better on our own.

INTERCUT:

INT TRUDY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

As she paces on the phone.

TRUDY

What about life insurance, any savings?

DAN

Nothing. I got life insurance for me, but we never thought about getting it for Judy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRUDY

Well, you're making a mistake. It may not seem like much of a problem now. You may think that you and Robin can just get over it in time. But it doesn't work that way. You don't just get over it. I know. Things might seem okay for awhile, then all of a sudden you get some mental disease that lasts for years, and then you HAVE to see a therapist and you might never get better.

DAN

Well, I'll think about it.

TRUDY

Don't think too long. Dan... I don't know how to put this delicately, but I'm very concerned about Robin... and the care he's getting from you. And if...

DAN

Trudy, we're doing fine. I'm handling it.

TRUDY

Dan, I know you're doing the best you can. But I want you to think about... Robin coming to live with me, for a while - a few weeks, a month, a year, whatever. I have plenty of room here and I have the time to take care of him and get him the therapy he needs. Like most men, you're busy with your job...

DAN

I can handle it. I just can't afford 500 dollars a month. But we're okay.

TRUDY

Dan, you can do whatever you want with your life. But I'm worried about Robin.

DAN

I'm worried about him too. Thanks for the offer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

TRUDY

It's not just an offer.

DAN

What do you mean?

TRUDY

This is serious. I'm serious. He needs better care, and I don't think you're handling it correctly.

DAN

Well, I do. I have to go now.

TRUDY

Dan...

DAN

Bye.

He hangs up.

INT DAN'S CAR - NEXT MORNING

Dan and Robin are stuck in traffic on another cold morning. As usual, they drive in silence. Dan drinks his coffee and Robin stares blankly out the side window.

Dan looks around impatiently at the smoking trucks and SUVs surrounding him. Suddenly, he starts breathing rapidly, his eyes glaze over. He clutches the steering wheel. Robin turns in and watches him. Dan is gasping for air. He rolls down the window, looks around at the vehicles that seem to be closing in on him.

He signals suddenly and turns the car to the right, cutting off a large SUV. The driver HONKS angrily.

Dan pulls into a parking lot, and slams on the brakes.

EXT PARKING LOT - MORNING

As Dan gets out of the car. He loosens his collar and paces anxiously, gasping for air. He bends over and clutches his stomach. Finally the episode fades and he sits on the hood of his car. He is frightened, doesn't want to move, doesn't know where the feeling came from.

He turns to his side. Robin is standing there.

ROBIN

What happened?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN
I don't know. I couldn't catch my
breath. I'm okay now.

ROBIN
That happened to me too.

DAN
Really?

Robin reaches out and grabs Dan and hugs him tightly, then starts crying. Dan hugs him back.

ROBIN
I don't want you to die too, Dad.

DAN
I won't. We're going to get better,
pal. We're going to forget and
we're going to learn how to live.
Just you and me. Okay?

Robin nods.

INT SERVICE CENTER OFFICE - DAY

As Dan rushes in.

SUE
Hi, Bob was looking for you.

DAN
Sorry, I'm late. Got stuck in
traffic.

He grabs a tablet and heads toward the door leading to the customer area.

SUE
Bob seemed pretty anxious to see
you.

DAN
I'll grab these customers first.

Dan flies out.

EXT SERVICE CENTER - DAY

Two customers are waiting impatiently by their cars. Dan goes to the first one in line.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN
(Smiling)
Morning, how can I help you?

FEMALE CUSTOMER 1
I brought my car in last Tuesday to
get this sputtering problem fixed.
Remember?

DAN
Vaguely. Sorry.

FEMALE CUSTOMER 1
Anyway, you said it was the
carburetor. I drove it home and
everything was fine for a few days.
Then, the problem started up again.
And now it's worse.

DAN
Oh, sorry about that. Leave it here
and we can check it out.

FEMALE CUSTOMER 1
I don't want you to check anything.
I'm taking the car to Dick's
Automotive. I just came here to get
my money back.

DAN
I'm sorry. I can't give you a
refund. But I will have them
recheck the carburetor at no charge
because it is under warranty...

FEMALE CUSTOMER 1
No, I want my money back. It was
over 300 dollars.

DAN
I can't do that. Your carb...

FEMALE CUSTOMER 1
Then, I want to talk to your
manager.

Dan looks around. The other customer is getting more
impatient.

DAN
All right. I'll see if he's
available.
(To the other customer)
I'll be right back.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

Dan goes back inside.

INT SERVICE CENTER OFFICE

He heads toward Sue.

SUE
Bob was looking for you.

DAN
Okay.

Dan sets his tablet down, leans on the desk and lowers his head in thought. He is breathing rapidly.

DAN (CONT'D)
I need to go check on something.
I'll be back.

INT GARAGE

WE FOLLOW Dan as he walks back past mechanics at work. As he passes one of them...

JIM
Morning, Dan.

DAN
(Smiling and waving back)
Jim.

EXT EMPLOYEE PARKING

Dan heads across the lot and gets in his car.

INT SCHOOL FRONT OFFICE

A school OFFICE WORKER approaches Dan.

DAN
Hi, I'm Dan Byers. I need to take Robin Byers out of class for a dental appointment.

OFFICE WORKER
Who's his teacher?

DAN
Oh, umm, Mrs. Downey.

OFFICE WORKER
And you are?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN
I'm his Dad.

INT DAN'S CAR - DAY

As Dan and Robin drive in the usual silence.

EXT DESERT HIGHWAY - DAY

A long and empty two-lane road as Dan's car speeds away toward distant mountains.

INT SERVICE CENTER OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Trudy enters, takes her sunglasses off and looks around, then approaches Sue.

TRUDY
Hi, I'm Trudy Sanders, Dan Byers' sister-in-law. I'm looking for Bob Duncan.

SUE
Oh hi. I'm Sue. I called you.

TRUDY
Hi. How did you get my name, by the way?

SUE
You were listed as Dan's emergency contact. I didn't know who else to call.
(on the phone)
Bob, Ms. Sanders is here.
(To Trudy)
He'll be right out. Want some coffee?

TRUDY
Umm, sure.

Sue steps over to the machine and pours some very back coffee into a Styrofoam cup.

TRUDY (CONT'D)
So this is where Dan works. What does he do exactly?

SUE
He's a service advisor. Deals with customers and the shop.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRUDY

He doesn't actually work on cars,
does he?

Sues hands her the cup.

SUE

Oh no, no.

Trudy smells the coffee.

TRUDY

I think I will need some sweetener.

INT SERVICE MANAGER OFFICE - AFTERNOON

Bob sits while Trudy paces.

TRUDY

He's unstable, obviously. I tried
to get him to see a therapist, but
he refused. I even offered to help
him with Robin. But no, he has to
do it his way.

BOB

(Smiling)
Sounds like Dan.

TRUDY

It's Robin I'm worried about. He
shouldn't have to be the victim of
Dan's little breakdown.

BOB

Of course not.

TRUDY

Have you called the police?

BOB

No, no. There was no reason to. He
hasn't broken any laws.

TRUDY

Child abduction and mistreatment
are punishable offenses.

BOB

Well, I don't know anything about
that. As I say, he walked off the
job and left us in a bit of a bind,
but anything outside that is a
family matter.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TRUDY

Well, the longer we wait to get the police involved the more chance he'll have to harm Robin.

BOB

That's your call. Personally, I'd wait until tonight and see if he calls.

TRUDY

I don't trust him.

BOB

Well, I've known Dan for eleven, twelve years. He's our top service guy. He's not the type to fly off the handle. I think he just needed a break. Hell, maybe they went to see a movie or something.

TRUDY

That doesn't explain why he's not answering his phone.

BOB

I don't know. I wouldn't worry about it.

TRUDY

(Defensive)

Easy for you to say. You haven't been involved. You don't know all there is to know about him. I do, unfortunately.

EXT DESERT HIGHWAY - SUNSET

As Dan's car flies across mile after mile of empty, flat desert.

INT DAN'S CAR

As Robin awakens. He looks out the side window at the nothingness and starts to weep.

ROBIN

(Flat)

Where are we going?

DAN

(Trying to be cheerful)

Hey, you're awake. Have a good sleep?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He pats Robin.

ROBIN

Where are we going?

DAN

I don't... I thought it would be fun to take a little vacation. Just you and me. Then, we'll go back in a day or two. Is that all right with you?

Robin cries tears that have needed to come for weeks. Dan pulls the car off onto the shoulder and stops.

DAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Robin. I didn't mean to scare you.

Robin turns to Dan and hugs him. Then, Dan begins to weep.

EXT DESERT HIGHWAY

As the car sits alone, surrounded by the desert, colored deep purple in the setting sun.

INT POLICE STATION - DAY

Trudy talks with an officer over a counter as he takes notes.

TRUDY

Dan could drive off a cliff as far as I'm concerned, but when his actions impact the life of an innocent child, that's where I draw the line. He has no right to further traumatize a seven-year-old boy, who is already going through who knows what horrible grief and trauma.

OFFICER

But as you say, you haven't actually witnessed any abuse-

TRUDY

Not getting the child the proper care he needs is abuse. Yes. And who knows what he's up to now.

OFFICER

Okay, Ms. Sanders, I have all your information.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OFFICER (CONT'D)

About all I can do at this point is file the report and keep an eye out for them.

TRUDY

Keep an eye out!? The child is in imminent danger. The man is unstable and driving around who knows where-

OFFICER

Ms. Sanders, there's only so much we can do.

TRUDY

Can't you track his cell phone or something?

OFFICER

We tried calling and it appears he has it turned off.

TRUDY

Then, try something else! While we're standing here arguing, he could be-

OFFICER

Ms. Sanders. You're going to have to calm down. I'm warning you.

TRUDY

Warning me!?

OFFICER

All I know is what you have told me. He hasn't broken any laws and he has no history of-

TRUDY

I told you the history.

OFFICER

No criminal record. I have all your information and I'll pass it on to an investigator.

TRUDY

Who?

OFFICER

The investigator will be in touch with you, if he requires more information.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

She is furious and begins lashing out.

TRUDY

This is so typical.

She sits in a chair beside the counter. The officer is about to suggest she leave, but thinks twice about it.

EXT MOTEL POOL - DAY

A plus-size mother floats in the pool as her two hyperactive children splash and SCREAM around her. WE PULL BACK to reveal Robin, sitting in the water on the pool steps, watching them. WE PULL BACK farther, revealing Dan sitting in a pool chair watching.

A gruff, stout man approaches the mother from the parking lot.

MOTEL FATHER

(Tensely)

Come on, let's hit the road.

MOTEL MOTHER

The kids want a few more minutes in the pool.

The guy looks at his watch.

MOTEL FATHER

We have to do 300 miles today and I don't want to drive at night. Unless you want to drive.

MOTEL MOTHER

We've been going non-stop since San Diego. We need a break.

The father notices Dan and Robin watching, and lowers his voice some.

MOTEL FATHER

(Smiling sarcastically)

You've had your break. Now we need to go.

MOTEL MOTHER

A few more minutes.

MOTEL FATHER

Do you want to drive?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MOTEL MOTHER

There's no need to rush. This is supposed to be a damn vacation.

MOTEL FATHER

Do you want to drive? If you feel like driving all night, then be my guest. Otherwise, let's go.

MOTEL MOTHER

Go sit in the car. We'll be there when we're damn good and ready.

He storms off.

MOTEL MOTHER (CONT'D)

(Calling after him)

Relax, Herb! Or you can drive us right back to San Diego!

He SLAMS the metal gate. As he does, the gate pinches his finger and he SWEARS LOUDLY.

MOTEL MOTHER (CONT'D)

Keep it up, Herb!

Robin turns to Dan. When their eyes meet, they smile and try to keep from laughing.

INT MOTEL TRUCK STOP CAFÉ - DAY

Dan and Robin are seated at a booth facing the parking lot.

DAN

Remember when we stayed in here on our trip to Carlsbad Caverns?

ROBIN

No.

DAN

I guess you wouldn't. You were only three at the time.

ROBIN

Is that where we're going?

DAN

No, no.

ROBIN

Where ARE we going?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

DAN
Where do you want to go?

ROBIN
Nowhere.

DAN
Well, that's where we're going.

ROBIN
What?

DAN
I mean, I wasn't going any place in particular. I just didn't want to be where I was. Are you okay with that?

ROBIN
I guess.

DAN
Good.

ROBIN
Dad?

DAN
Yeah?

ROBIN
Are we ever going back?

DAN
I think we will.

ROBIN
Well, I'd like more clothes and my bear. And my iPad and Switch.

DAN
You're right. I didn't plan this very well.

The waitress brings their food.

ROBIN
That's okay.

DAN
What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROBIN

I mean, you know. It's okay that you didn't plan it.

DAN

(Smiling)

You're kind of getting into it, aren't you?

ROBIN

I don't know.

Robin takes a big bite of his hamburger.

DAN

I don't know. This whole trip is *I don't know*. Our lives are *I don't know*.

Dan notices Robin is wolfing his food.

DAN (CONT'D)

I'm glad to see you're eating.

Robin shrugs.

INT DAN'S CAR - DAY

Dan and Robin are singing "99 Bottles of Beer." They are on 58 and their enthusiasm is waning. There is nothing ahead, except empty highway.

EXT MONUMENT VALLEY OVERLOOK - AFTERNOON

They are sitting on boulders on the edge of a tall plateau, looking at the long, multi-colored valley below.

Robin stands and walks to the base of a large cluster of boulders. He starts climbing, slowly, steadily to the top. He stands on the highest boulder, teetering precariously over a steep cliff of jagged rocks.

Dan stands and watches him. With the patience and wisdom of a Buddhist monk, Robin bravely balances on the boulder against a stiff wind, knowing that any small miscalculation will send him to his death. Dan allows him for some reason. He trusts the boy.

Dan sits back down and watches his son survey the land. Robin looks down and around him. Then, he jumps. Dan leaps up, suddenly gripped by panic.

DAN

Robin!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

His voice echoes forever among the rocks. He runs toward the rock cluster, then sees movement.

Robin is running around the base of the cluster toward Dan.

ROBIN
(Shouting)
Dad, a rattle snake! Come and look.
Come on.

DAN
Stay away from it.

ROBIN
I will. Come on.

Robin turns and runs back.

DAN
All right. Don't touch it!

Dan runs after Robin.

EXT MONUMENT VALLEY BY SNAKE

He meets up with Robin on the other side of the cluster. He looks down, then suddenly stops and grabs Robin. It's right there, inches away.

ANGLE ON SNAKE, coiled to strike.

RESUME DAN AND ROBIN

DAN
Back up very slowly.

Robin follows Dan's lead. When they are a safe distance away, they stop and watch the snake.

DAN (CONT'D)
It's a diamondback rattler. See the diamond shapes on its back?

ROBIN
Yeah. Cool.

The snake continues rattling.

INT DAN'S CAR - AFTERNOON

As they drive away from the setting sun.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBIN

(Excited)

I jumped off those rocks on that flat rock and I looked down and he was like two inches from my foot. He didn't even see me. I just stood there and looked at him for like five minutes without moving. I was so close to him. I thought he was dead, but he was sleeping or hibernating or something. I could've touched him or petted him. Wasn't he cool? I saw this YouTube where this science guy picks up snakes with his bare hands and opens their mouths and like makes them squirt their poison into these glass things.

DAN

Why does he do that?

ROBIN

So they can make medicine, so if you get bit, you can take the medicine. You know?

DAN

Antivenin.

ROBIN

Yeah. Do you think that diamondback was poisonous?

DAN

Hell yeah.

ROBIN

Really? Why didn't he bite us?

DAN

We didn't provoke it and we were lucky. You were very lucky, actually. It could have.

ROBIN

Really? What happens when they bite you?

DAN

You can die.

Robin is suddenly quiet.

EXT NATIONAL PARK TRAIL - AFTERNOON

As Dan and Robin lean against a railing on an interpretive trail, not paying any attention to the vista points and signs. Tourists pass them occasionally, doing what tourists are supposed to do with cameras and binoculars.

DAN

Do you think about Mom and Sara?

ROBIN

Yeah. All the time.

DAN

Me too. What do you think about?

ROBIN

I think like it would be so good if they were with us now.

DAN

Does it make you sad?

ROBIN

Not anymore.

DAN

Do you feel like you've changed?

ROBIN

Yeah.

DAN

How?

ROBIN

I don't like the same things.

DAN

Like what?

ROBIN

I used to like games.

DAN

Why don't you like them now?

ROBIN

They're stupid.

DAN

Hmm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBIN

All my friends are the same. They
can't see how stupid they are.

A tourist comes up to Dan with a camera.

TOURIST

(Smiling)

I'm sorry to bother you, but would
you mind taking our picture?

DAN

Sure.

The tourist lines up with a group and they all smile.

DAN (CONT'D)

(To Robin)

Maybe you'll like games again.

He clicks a picture.

ROBIN

I don't think so. Once you see how
stupid they are, you can't just
stop thinking that.

DAN

Do you still like your friends?

ROBIN

Not really. I still like Jared a
little.

TOURIST

Thanks a lot.

DAN

(Handing him the camera)

Sure.

(To Robin)

It's like we're in a different
world now, kind of.

They watch the tourists with their cameras and silly hats,
getting all worked up about the big rocks.

ROBIN

No, it's still the same world.

INT MOTEL ROOM #2 - NIGHT

Not what you'd call a classy motel, but it has a sliding door
out to a grassy area.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dan and Robin are in their underwear, sitting up in their queen bed, watching a rented movie, eating pizza and ice cream.

DAN

I think I'm going to call work and your school tomorrow. Maybe Aunt Trudy.

ROBIN

Are we going back?

DAN

Maybe in a couple of days.

ROBIN

Good.

DAN

(Turning to Robin)

Good because you want to go back, or good because we aren't going back right away?

ROBIN

I was just agreeing with you.

DAN

So, you don't really want to go back, but you feel we should?

ROBIN

Yeah, I guess.

DAN

Look at us. A bunch of bums eating pizza in bed, sitting around in our underwear...

ROBIN

(Laughing)

Farting.

DAN

What?

(Smells it)

Oh yuk!

Dan nails him with a pillow, then grabs him and starts tickling him. Robin laughs so hard, he can't breathe.

SLOW DISSOLVE
TO:

INT MOTEL ROOM #2 - LATER

Only the bathroom light is on. Robin is deep asleep. Dan is sitting in an easy chair watching him, drinking a beer. He looks out of control with a half-beard and tousled hair.

DAN

(To himself)

How are you doing Robin? If you're like me, you're one step away from... going crazy. Giving up. Just giving up on everything. It's just too fucking much to take. You got it all one minute and the next minute, it's gone. In a millionth of a second. That's all it takes, a millionth of a second and it's all fucking gone. Just like that, everything. Everything is nothing and nothing is everything. All that shit that makes us happy, that makes life worth living, that gives value to everything. All that shit is just... a movie... it looks so real, but it doesn't even exist. It's just an illusion. It's all in our heads, and then when it's all gone, you feel so stupid, like you've been had. You were all worked up and confident that you owned the world, and just like that, you see it's all a big joke. Don't worry, Robin. Don't get stressed. There's nothing there. Not a damn thing.

SLOW DISSOLVE
TO:

INT MOTEL ROOM #2 - NEXT MORNING

Dan is still in the easy chair, deep asleep. We HEAR a light TAPPING sound. Dan awakens. His eyes open slowly, groggily. He has slept for only a couple of hours. His head is throbbing, the world refuses to focus. The TAPPING again. This time he opens his eyes wide, blinks, looks at the bed.

Suddenly, he sits up, gripped in panic. Robin is gone. Dan stands and scans the room. He finds the source of the TAPPING. A morning breeze is blowing through the open sliding glass door, causing the drapes to hit against a table.

Dan throws his pants on, runs to the door and looks out. No Robin. He runs outside.

EXT MOTEL #2 COURTYARD - MORNING

As Dan runs out of the room. He scans the area, frantically. The porch leads to a lawn with neatly trimmed trees and shrubs. He runs across the wet lawn, turning as he does, looking everywhere. He reaches a concrete walkway lined with Tiki lights and looks toward the enclosed pool.

He runs through the iron gate into the area. Then, he spots Robin sitting quietly in a lawn chair, facing away from him. When Dan closes the gate, Robin turns back and smiles.

DAN

Hi.

ROBIN

Hi.

DAN

You scared me. I didn't know where you were.

ROBIN

I was right here.

DAN

Well, obviously.

ROBIN

I came out here to let you sleep.

DAN

Oh, thanks.

(Calming himself, making conversation)

It's nice.

ROBIN

I know. I walked all around.

DAN

Oh yeah?

ROBIN

Guess what. There's a garden back there with a bird feeder and a million birds were eating seeds. I watched some robins pull worms out of the grass, until they turned the sprinklers on.

DAN

(Sitting)

Wow. That's great.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Dan's heart rate is slowing.

ROBIN

And I watched the sunrise and fed
some potato chips to a squirrel.

DAN

(Yawning)
The sunrise.

ROBIN

Why don't you sleep some more?

DAN

I... I don't know. I don't think I
can.

ROBIN

Where are we going today?

DAN

(Smiling)
Well, umm, there is an old highway
that cuts straight through the
desert and bypasses the interstate.
I thought we'd try that. Okay?

ROBIN

Okay.

DAN

(Standing)
Come on, let's get ready.

ROBIN

Are you sure you want to keep
going?

DAN

Yeah. Well, no, but I'm not ready
to go back yet.

ROBIN

I think I am.

DAN

Yeah?

ROBIN

I'm ready.

DAN

Well, maybe I'll change my mind
after some coffee. Come on.

INT MOTEL ROOM #2 - DAY

As Dan closes the slider and Robin heads into the bathroom. There is a KNOCK at the door. Dan shakes his head and opens it. Two policemen are standing at the door, YATES and GARCIA.

YATES
Daniel Byers?

DAN
Yes.

YATES
I'm officer Yates and this is
Officer Garcia. We're with the
Gallup Police. Do you have a son,
named Robin?

DAN
Yes.

YATES
Can you step outside for a moment,
please?

Dan steps outside.

EXT MOTEL #2 PARKING AREA - DAY

DAN
What's going on?

Garcia goes into the room. We see a third officer entering from the slider. They work quickly.

YATES
Is your son with you?

DAN
Yes.

YATES
Mr. Byers, we'd like you to come
down to the station and help us
figure out this situation we got
here. We have information to the
effect that you... uh, your son
might be at risk.

DAN
What?!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YATES

And we've been asked to check it out.

DAN

Where did you get that idea!?

They bring Robin out and hand him over to a female officer, who ushers him to a waiting cruiser.

YATES

The information was passed on to us from the Show Low Police. Evidently, your sister expressed some concern about your... state.

DAN

Where are you taking him?

YATES

We will be holding Robin in protective custody until-

DAN

What!

YATES

Until we straighten this out. We just have a few questions-

DAN

Well, I have a few questions too!

YATES

I'm sure you do-

DAN

Why do you have to take him?

YATES

Calm down, Mr. Byers.

DAN

How do you expect me to calm down when you barge into my room and take my child-

YATES

If you don't calm down-

DAN

You take my child for no reason-

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

YATES

Mr. Byers, if you don't calm down
I'll be forced to use these.

He holds up a set of cuffs.

YATES (CONT'D)

You don't want that, do you?

Dan is beyond panic. He stops talking, squeezes his eyes
shut, and grabs his head.

YATES (CONT'D)

Are you going to be okay?

DAN

(Maintaining)

Yeah. Let's go.

Yates grabs his arm and guides him to another waiting
cruiser.

INT GALLUP POLICE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

A small room with a long metal table and a window overlooking
the central squad room. Dan is seated across from Yates.
Garcia is present.

DAN

I don't know.

YATES

You must've had some destination in
mind.

DAN

No. I didn't.

YATES

Why did you do it?

DAN

I thought a little vacation would
help.

YATES

Help what?

DAN

Help me think and relax. Look,
don't take this the wrong way, but
have I broken a law?

Yates does take it the wrong way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YATES

Mr. Byers, we are very concerned about the welfare of your son. This is all about doing what's best for him. I'm sure you understand that.

DAN

Of course. Are you saying that I'm-

YATES

Mr. Byers, we're not saying anything yet, okay? This is all about finding out what's going on here and making sure the right thing gets done. Right now, we don't know if you're running away from something, you've got some plan, or if you just had a little lapse of common sense. But that's what we have to find out.

DAN

I'm not running away from anything.

YATES

Okay. That's a start.

INT GALLUP POLICE CHILDCARE ROOM - DAY

A small room with a metal table and some toys packed away in colorful crates. Robin sits across from a child psychologist, DR. PROCTOR. She smiles with wide eyes, like all the others. Robin fingers an action figure toy.

ROBIN

He came to the school and got me and we started driving.

PROCTOR

How does that make you feel?

ROBIN

I don't know.

PROCTOR

(Putting words in his mouth)

Were you glad to go or were you scared or...

ROBIN

I was a little scared.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

PROCTOR

Uh huh. Did your father tell you where he was going?

ROBIN

No.

PROCTOR

I can see why you'd be scared. Huh? That would be frightening not knowing where you were going.

ROBIN

That didn't scare me.

PROCTOR

Oh, what did then?

ROBIN

I don't know.

PROCTOR

Did your father scare you?

ROBIN

Kind of.

PROCTOR

Uh huh. What did he do?

ROBIN

Nothing.

PROCTOR

Did he, uh, speak angrily, did he yell at you, did he drive too fast, did he touch you in a way that made you feel uncomfortable, did he hurt you?

ROBIN

No. He didn't do anything. He was sad and just drove.

PROCTOR

Uh huh. Does he often get sad?

ROBIN

Yeah.

PROCTOR

And that scares you?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROBIN

Kind of.

PROCTOR

What does he do when he gets sad?

ROBIN

Nothing. He just... sometimes he cries.

PROCTOR

Why do you think your father went on this trip?

ROBIN

I don't know.

PROCTOR

Was it because he was sad?

ROBIN

Yeah.

PROCTOR

What was he going to do?

ROBIN

I don't know.

PROCTOR

Did you ask him?

ROBIN

Yeah.

PROCTOR

What did he say? Do you remember?

ROBIN

He said we were going on a trip for a couple of days.

PROCTOR

Hmm.

INT GALLUP POLICE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Dan is still seated. Yates can be seen in the squad room listening in as Garcia speaks on the phone. After a moment, they hang up. The two converse for a second longer, then Yates leads Garcia back into the conference room.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YATES

(Smiling)

Mr. Byers, sorry to keep you waiting. We have a few more questions for you. We just spoke again with the Show Low Police and they're very concerned about the child.

Garcia leans by the door as Yates paces.

YATES (CONT'D)

Your sister claims-

DAN

Sister-in-law.

YATES

She offered to help take care of your son, but that you refused her help and hung up on her.

DAN

I didn't hang up.

YATES

Well, the point is, you refused to get help.

DAN

I didn't need her help.

YATES

But you see, people don't normally walk off their jobs without telling anybody, remove their children from school, turn off their cell phones, and drive off with no destination in mind, unless they need help, unless something is wrong. Now that's a pretty off-the-wall thing to do, don't you think?

DAN

I guess.

YATES

Seems like kind of an unstable thing to do?

DAN

Whatever.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

YATES

What did you hope to accomplish taking off like that?

DAN

I don't know. I was confused. I needed to get away and think for awhile... get away from work and all the people and confusion.

YATES

That's very understandable. My God, you went through a terrible ordeal. I would've done the same thing. Okay? But the thing is, if you wanted to get away, why bring the child? I would've left him with your sister. She offered to help. And why didn't you ask for the time off? Your manager at work offered it. Why did you do all these unrational things? It doesn't make sense, unless you were going through some kind of mental... unstableness.

DAN

I don't know.

Yates looks at Garcia, shakes his head. Then he leans into Dan.

YATES

Mr. Byers, help me out here, okay? We've been going around in circles for over an hour.

(Almost shouting)

I'm that close to taking your child away from you and turning him over to protective services. Do you understand?

DAN

He's my child. How can you take him away?

Dan tries to remain in control, but he is panicking.

YATES

I can take him away if I find that you are unfit to care for him, if I feel you could cause him harm, if you are not stable enough to make good decisions on his behalf.

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (3)

YATES (CONT'D)

I can do that. I don't want to. But I can and I will, if I have to. Do you understand?

DAN

Yes.

YATES

So far, I'm not hearing a lot to persuade me in the other direction, okay?

DAN

I'm sorry.

YATES

I'm sorry too. Your sister told the Show Low Police you have attempted to commit suicide.

DAN

(Surprised)

That was many years ago.

YATES

Did you get help for that?

DAN

Look, I agree it was not the best decision, but I was planning on going back today or tomorrow and explain things. I have never harmed my son. I would never ever do that. I took him with me because... I love him. We went through a lot together and we're very close now. We understand each other and need each other. We need to be together. It would be... very uncomfortable and upsetting for both of us... to not be together. That is the only way... I feel... we will ever be happy again. I don't know what else to tell you.

YATES

So, you're going back tomorrow?

DAN

Yes.

YATES

You going to turn your cell phone back on?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (4)

DAN

Of course.

YATES

How do I know you'll do that?

DAN

You don't I suppose.

Yates gives him a look then turns to Garcia.

INT GALLUP POLICE CHILDCARE VIEWING ROOM - DAY

Proctor is on the phone with Yates. Robin can be seen through an observation window, sitting in the childcare room moving the lifeless limbs on the action figure.

PROCTOR

I am very concerned.

INTERCUT:

INT GALLUP POLICE SQUAD ROOM - DAY

On Yates as Garcia listens in on another line. As Yates paces, we get glimpses of Dan waiting in the conference room.

YATES

We all are, but I'm not sure we have enough to pull his kid.

PROCTOR

I disagree. Robin is very despondent and depressed. Being around a father who is obviously unstable can only further traumatize him.

YATES

He doesn't seem that unstable. He's maybe a little mixed up. Who wouldn't be?

PROCTOR

Nothing personal Bob, but what you might call a little mixed up, a professional psychologist would call severe anxiety disorder, clinical depression. A man in his state cannot be trusted to make wise decisions for himself, much less a seven-year-old child who suffers from depression and anxiety and who knows what else himself.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YATES

Has he harmed the child?

PROCTOR

He certainly hasn't helped.

YATES

But has he physically or mentally caused harm to the kid?

PROCTOR

It's not what he has done, it's what he is capable of doing.

YATES

You don't like him, do you?

PROCTOR

The father?

YATES

Yeah.

PROCTOR

What kind of a question is that? I don't like what he is doing and probably will do to Robin. That has nothing to do-

YATES

I think you're judging him without having-

PROCTOR

We have laws to protect children like Robin in this type of situation. It's your decision. You have my input.

YATES

Yes, thank you.

PROCTOR

If he does anything to Robin, at least I will be able to live with a clear conscience.

YATES

You assume I am going to let him take the kid.

PROCTOR

I believe you are.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

YATES

How far are you willing to go with this?

PROCTOR

What do you mean?

YATES

I mean are we going to court? Are we going to get into custody battles?

PROCTOR

I am going to do whatever is best for Robin.

YATES

Fine. I'll call you back.

They hang up.

YATES (CONT'D)

Bitch.

GARCIA

She's got a point. You have a good case for taking custody of Robin. If we do, what's the worst that can happen? We go to court and the case gets thrown out. It's off your back. If we let him take the kid and he does something stupid. Boom. It's your ass. See what I mean?

YATES

Yeah, it makes sense I guess. It's just that I'd like to shove a...

He makes a shoving motion with his fist.

GARCIA

Hey, don't be stupid. Don't let your feelings about Proctor make you do something you'll regret, dude.

INT GALLUP POLICE CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Yates is sitting across from Dan.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

YATES

(Intensely)

Can you look me right in the eye
and promise me you will not do
anything to harm your kid? It's
very, very important that you make
that promise.

Dan looks him in the eye.

EXT GALLUP POLICE STATION - DAY

At the front entrance. Yates walks out with Dan. They stop
and face Proctor standing beside Robin. After a moment,
Proctor gives Robin a little push on the back and Robin runs
to Dan. They hug.

EXT MOTEL#2 PARKING AREA - AFTERNOON

A cruiser pulls up and stops. Yates gets out and opens the
rear door. Dan and Robin get out and walk to Dan's car. Yates
calls out.

YATES

Hey, Mr. Byers.

(Dan turns)

Sorry about all this, okay? Have a
nice trip back.

Dan gives him a small wave and turns away. The cruiser drives
off. Robin gets in the passenger side. Dan opens the trunk.

He unzips a backpack and feels around inside. He finds
something and pulls it out. It's a handgun. Keeping it below
out of Robin's view, he checks it over. Then, he returns the
gun and closes the backpack. Then, closes the trunk.

EXT HIGHWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

As Dan's car passes heading toward the setting sun and a
spectacular vista of colored rock towers and mountains. The
car becomes a tiny speck in a desert spreading out forever
before them.

INT DAN'S CAR - LATE AFTERNOON

As they drive again in silence. Finally, Dan clears his
throat.

DAN

(Cheerfully)

So, we got a choice. We can stay on
the interstate or we can take a
chance on that bypass road.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBIN
Which is faster?

DAN
If we take the bypass, we could cut
off 50 miles.

ROBIN
Okay.

EXT HIGHWAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Dan's car takes an offramp in the middle of nowhere. The road is narrow and disappears into the horizon.

EXT HIGHWAY - LATER

ANGLE LOW on the highway as Dan's car approaches. There are no other vehicles and the desert is brown and sterile. Dan passes. The paved road becomes fine, dry dirt and runs off to a horizon of dark thunder clouds.

INT. DAN'S CAR

As they speed over the bumpy road, Dan fusses with his cell phone.

DAN
Holy shit. I have like a thousand
messages. Mostly from your Aunt.

He continues to read messages as he drives.

DAN (CONT'D)
So, how are you feeling?

ROBIN
Okay.

DAN
I mean... You haven't said much.

ROBIN
Neither have you.

DAN
Touché.

ROBIN
To what?

DAN
Touché. It means... you win.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ROBIN
Oh.

DAN
So, what did they do to you?

ROBIN
She asked me questions about you.

DAN
Oh?

ROBIN
Like do you scare me or hurt me.
Things like that.

DAN
Hmm.

ROBIN
I told her you scared me a little
when you were sad.

DAN
I'm sorry.

ROBIN
That's okay. She didn't ask if I
scared you.

Dan looks away from his phone and smiles.

ROBIN (CONT'D)
Do I?

DAN
A little.

ROBIN
I'm sorry.

DAN
I think we should stop scaring each
other.

(A beat)
You know I would never hurt you,
don't you?

ROBIN
Yeah.

Dan pats his knee.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

ROBIN (CONT'D)

Dad?

DAN

What?

ROBIN

Nobody understands.

DAN

What do you mean?

ROBIN

You know. People feel sorry for us and try to help us, but they don't understand.

DAN

They don't know how we feel, but they all think they have the answers.

ROBIN

You can't understand unless it happens to you.

DAN

Right. It has to be so bad, your whole world falls apart.

ROBIN

Yeah.

DAN

I'm glad I have you... to understand.

ROBIN

Me too.

He goes back to reading texts.

EXT HIGHWAY - LATER

As Dan's car flies past, going nowhere on a deserted dusty road. WE PAN to a partially obscured road sign: ROAD CLOSED, 45 MILES AHEAD, LOCAL TRAFFIC ONLY.

Off in the distance, the sun sinks lower in the sky behind a rapidly growing mass of clouds.

INT DAN'S CAR

As they drive, the wind picks up, the sky darkens, and clouds of dust obscure the view. Dan slows. The dust thickens. Bright shards of lightening appear ahead.

EXT HIGHWAY

ANGLE LOW as the car passes and the thick, black clouds overhead begin to spill raindrops the size of fists and the lightening pounds the earth with intense claps of THUNDER.

INT DAN'S CAR

Dan is creeping along as the raindrops hit the windshield, then turn to golf-ball-size hail. Soon, he can barely see the road. The wipers are on full, but offer little help. Then in an instant, a road barricade appears. He slams on the brakes. The sign reads - ROAD CLOSED - BRIDGE OUT.

DAN

Stay in the car.

EXT HIGHWAY BY BARRICADE - SUNSET

Dan gets out, shielding his face from the wind-driven hailstorm. He looks beyond the barricade. It appears that a bridge across a deep gorge has washed out, and there is no way to cross.

Dan steps around the barricade and stands at the edge of the drop off. Through the cloud of hail he can make out a sheer cliff covered with loose rocks, falling through an obstacle course of jagged rocks and bridge structure to a wash 50 feet below.

On the verge of a panic attack, he turns back to the car. Then, he sees Robin walking along the edge heading toward him.

DAN (CONT'D)

Robin, go back to the car.

Robin takes one last look down the cliff, then suddenly a strong blast of wind slams into them. Dan falls to the ground. Robin is pushed over the edge.

Dan runs to the point where Robin went over. He can see Robin's small body tumbling like a rag doll, the few seconds expanding to an hour. Finally, Dan can see that Robin's fall has been arrested by a cluster of boulders 30 feet down. There is no movement.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The wind whips the rain relentlessly. Dan panics. His world has caved in once again. He pulls out his cell phone. No service. Not one bar.

He runs back to the car and opens the trunk. Finds the gun in his backpack. Then, runs back to the cliff. He doesn't know what to shoot to stop the pain. The pain is all around him. It is infinitely large and forever. He closes his eyes and feels the cold opening of the gun on his temple.

He squeezes the trigger, but can't go all the way. He relaxes his grip and lowers the gun. He looks at Robin. Then, he clicks the safety on and puts the gun in his pocket.

Then, he starts to carefully lower himself over the edge. He searches for any small rock to hold him up. There is none. He lowers himself inch by inch. Then suddenly, the edge gives way and he tumbles down the cliff.

EXT BRIDGE PYLON - TWILIGHT

Dan's fall is broken, when he slams into a concrete pylon. After recovering from the impact, he sits up and checks himself over. His ribs are bruised and blood is coming from somewhere. He can barely open his eyes in the deluge. He slowly turns over and looks across the near-vertical river of mud.

ANGLE HIS POV. Twenty feet across the slope, he can make out Robin bent over a boulder that is part of a large cluster of boulders. The only way to get to Robin is to cross the slope, which offers nothing more than a few small footholds - jagged rocks no larger than the size of a tennis ball. He has no choice.

EXT ROCK SLIDE - TWILIGHT

He starts across the slide, carefully shifting his weight from one toehold to another, grabbing on to whatever he can. One miscalculation and he will slide down 100 feet to a wash, which is now flooded and running rapidly.

With all his strength, he clings to anything solid he can find, slowly feeling his way along. Finally, two feet from the cluster, the rock he had been trusting to hold his weight falls away. He holds tightly to one small jagged rock in his left hand, the only thing keeping him from sliding away.

He bends his right knee up and carefully probes the wet surface for anything that isn't moving. He finds a small rock, and then carefully transfers his weight to his right foot. It holds. He locates another handle. He finds one.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He transfers his left foot onto the foothold and probes with his right foot again. He finds another foothold, and then slowly slides his body up toward the boulder.

He grabs onto a crack on the boulder surface, and with his fingernails pulls himself up. As he struggles, the wind picks up. He closes his eyes tightly and holds on.

With one toe on his left foot placed tenuously on a small jagged rock, he grasps the crack with both hands and slowly pulls himself up with every bit of strength he has left. He locates another crack and transfers his hold to that one.

Using the sandpaper surface of the boulder, he is able move up over the top. He wriggles up on the boulder with his stomach. Then when he is resting on top, he turns over to a sitting position.

EXT CLUSTER

He rests briefly, and then crawls to Robin in the dim light.

Dan checks him. No obvious problems - some blood, a bump on his head, but he is breathing. The pocket Robin lies in is rapidly filling with water. Dan looks up and sees a safer place higher on the cluster. He lifts Robin's limp body into his arms, and carries him over several boulders to a flat area.

He lays Robin on the rock, then sits beside him. He holds Robin's head and turns to shield him from the driving rain. Then, he closes his eyes and waits.

EXT DISTANT PEAKS - NIGHT

A full moon rises over a craggy set of plateaus, creating silhouettes resembling a landscape at the beginning of time. The wind and rain have gone, and it is lifeless and darker than dark.

EXT CLUSTER - NIGHT

Dan sits beside Robin, motionless, with his back against a rock, staring at him without blinking.

DAN

(Whispering)

Wake up, Robin.

(To God)

Please don't take him from me. I'm at the bottom. He's all I have left. He isn't much. Do you have to take everything? I'm at the bottom and there's no place to go.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks up at the black sky. No answer, just silence.

DAN (CONT'D)
 (shouting)
 I can't hear you!
 (To Himself)
 Nothing.

He pulls the gun from his pocket, stares at it.

DAN (CONT'D)
 What the fuck am I supposed to do?

He watches the moon rise, perhaps looking for a clue. Then, he sets the gun in the dirt next to him. WE HEAR it slide away, skipping across a fine layer of mud. Dan leans back and closes his eyes and waits.

SLOW DISSOLVE
 TO:

EXT CLUSTER - DAWN

The same ANGLE, but Dan has shifted to another position. The sun is red and strong. We can HEAR a distant bird, water still flowing in the wash below.

Then, the stillness is broken sharply by a GUNSHOT. Dan's eyes pop open. He shakes his head and stares, blinking several times to clear his vision.

ANGLE HIS POV. Robin is standing on a tall rock 10 feet away, again balancing precariously over a steep drop off. He turns back to Dan, holds up the gun and smiles.

ANGLE THE TWO.

DAN
 Robin. What, uh...

ROBIN
 Dad, look what I found.

DAN
 Yeah, a gun, and it's loaded. You'd better give that to me right now.

ROBIN
 I'm not afraid.

DAN
 I'm glad, but you should be afraid of guns. Give it to me, please.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Robin comes to Dan and hands him the gun, then sits beside him. Dan checks him over.

DAN (CONT'D)
So, you seem all right.

ROBIN
My head really hurts.

DAN
Does anything else hurt?

ROBIN
Yeah. My ribs hurt and I got some,
ouch, blood here and here.

Dan just stares at him in amazement.

DAN
Wow. We were very lucky.

ROBIN
Why?

DAN
Why? Because... we could be dead.

Dan looks at the gun, then tosses it into the abyss.

ROBIN
I don't feel very lucky.

DAN
Well, the buzzards aren't so lucky.

ROBIN
What do you mean?

DAN
I mean we could've been buzzard
food.

Robin finds a comfortable spot leaning against Dan.

ROBIN
Right here is where we are.

DAN
That's a good way to look at it.

Robin looks around.

ROBIN
Dad?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED: (2)

DAN

What?

ROBIN

Where are we?

Dan looks at him and smiles.

WE PULL BACK AND UP SLOWLY. The two grow smaller amid the vast landscape. At ground level, a sheriff's cruiser is parked next to Dan's car, and two deputies are checking in the car and around the area. One of them looks over the edge and points to Dan and Robin.

FADE TO BLACK.