

"Songs From the Heart"

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BLACK.

A cymbal crash. Then another. Then a heavy bass guitar riff, joined in by a full band, playing fast and furious.

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

A four-piece rock band in full swing. A drummer, bassist and guitarist play, fronted by a man in his mid-30s.

He is at least ten years older than the other members in his band, and he moves around the stage like a rock star, veins bulging on his neck as he sings, selling every note.

He has shoulder-length hair, and wears a knit cap, ripped jeans, and a flannel shirt, like Kurt Cobain or Eddie Vedder circa 1991. Problem is, it's 2006. This is CAL.

We widen to reveal he and his band are playing a small, dingy club. Pulling back further, we see that the club is nearly empty, and the few people who are there pay no attention to the stage.

The band builds to a crescendo and end the song with a flourish. Cal holds for applause, breathing hard.

Silence. A murmured conversation, the clink of glass from the bar, the beeping of a video game.

CAL

Thank you. Thank you.

FADE TO:

INT. CLUB BAR - LATER

Hours later. The only people left are the bartender, a bar maid doing a crossword, and Cal, who sits at the bar, drunk.

Above, the TV plays music videos, and as Cal looks up at the screen, he sees a video of him with his old band, Sinshine. He watches his younger self, a time capsule from 15 years ago.

He stares at the screen for a full beat. Then we:

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. DOWNTOWN SAN FRANCISCO - DAY

The skyscrapers of downtown San Francisco under a crisp blue sky.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

The next day. An office in a high-rise building. People in professional dress mill about, busy at work. Through the windows is a stunning view of the San Francisco Bay and the Bay Bridge, but no one here stops to notice it. This is the real world.

Off in a windowless room, under humming fluorescent lights, Cal sits working at a computer, surrounded by other temps who are much younger than he is.

He is slightly more pulled together than the night before, still with the flannel shirt and boots, but now wearing a thin tie.

He listens to music on his headphones at maximum volume, bobbing his head vigorously to the music. The other temps occasionally steal glances at him, annoyed.

A YOUNG MAN in a crisp shirt and tie enters.

YOUNG MAN

Okay, everyone. Why don't you all take lunch, and we'll see you back in an hour.

The other temps gather up their stuff and head toward the door. Cal stays behind, still listening to his music. As they exit, we hear:

TEMP ONE

(referring to CAL)

What's the deal with that guy?

TEMP TWO

Shoot me if I'm ever a 35 year-old temp.

They exit. As the room is empty, Cal shuts off his music and pulls a flyer out of his backpack. He goes to the copy room.

INT. COPY ROOM - SAME

Cal looks around furtively and makes copies of a flier.

CUT TO:

INT. LUNCH ROOM - SAME

A large corporate lunch room. People line up and slide trays down a metal railing, picking out food. The tables are full of people, including the temps from earlier, all of whom sit together, talking. Cal approaches them with a stack of fliers and begins handing them out.

CAL

Hey, you guys like music? Come  
check out my show.

He hands each of them a flyer. They look at them blankly. He turns to see the young man from earlier. Cal hands him a flyer.

CAL

My band's playing tomorrow night.  
You wanna come?

YOUNG MAN

Listen, you really shouldn't be  
making flyers on company time. Or  
with company supplies.

CAL

Sorry.

YOUNG MAN

Try to wear something a little  
more appropriate tomorrow, okay?

CAL

Like what? I'm wearing a tie.

YOUNG MAN

You know, I think we have  
everybody we need for tomorrow.

CROSSFADE TO:

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - EVENING

Cal rides his bike home, up Market to Mission Street.

He pulls up in front of his apartment in a once hip and dangerous neighborhood. Cal's building is the last remaining "dump" on a block that has been gentrified with retail coffee shops and specialty soap boutiques. Time is passing Cal by.

INT. CAL'S FLAT - SAME

Cal enters with his bike on his shoulder. He sets it down and picks up the mail, sorting through the past-due notices.

The apartment is dark and stuffy, with a printed sheet hanging over the main window keeping the light out.

It's furnished with kitschy, mismatched thrift-store furniture, and there are neon beer signs hanging from the walls. Pizza boxes and music magazines are stacked up in a corner.

In the living room, which has been converted into a make-shift bedroom, sits TIM, the guitarist in the band from the opening.

He and his GIRLFRIEND sit on the couch, hanging out. They are young, effortlessly hip, nonchalant.

Tim noodles around on his guitar, as the TV plays noiselessly in the background. Cal stands and watches the TV for a moment.

CAL

Hey.

No response.

CAL

Booked us another gig for tomorrow night.

TIM

At a club where people actually go, I hope. Hey, that guy came around again asking about rent.

CAL

Did you pay him?

TIM

Dude, it's your place.

Cal goes to the kitchen, grabs three beers, and retreats to his room.

INT. CAL'S ROOM - SAME

The walls of the room are plastered with posters of various bands, most of which were indie rock acts in the late 80s and early 90s: Mudhoney, Screaming Trees, the Vaselines, Daniel Johnston, and of course, Nirvana.

He has an impressive music collection, almost all of which is in vinyl in wooden crates. As he drinks his first beer, he flops down on his futon and pulls out an album, "Ultramega OK," by Soundgarden, which he puts on the turntable.

As the music plays, he lies back and closes his eyes. The music blends into:

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. CLUB - NIGHT

Cal and his band are playing another gig at the same club as before. Cal again gives it his all, singing like a man possessed. This time, there are a few people gathered around the club, watching. The band finishes a song to a smattering of applause. Cal drinks from a beer on his amp. Then, a VOICE calls out from the crowd:

VOICE (V.O.)

Play "Stop Me!"

CAL

I'm not gonna play that crap.  
Here's something better. Check it out.

He counts the band off, and they launch into another song. As they play, a TEENAGER comes close to the stage, closer to the band than anyone else. The boy smiles wide.

At first, Cal is excited, thinking he's got a new fan. On closer inspection, the teenager looks homeless, and is probably drugged out. He reaches on stage and starts to push Cal's guitar pedals. Cal's guitar makes a screeching noise.

Cal stomps down on his pedal, stepping on the kid's hand. The teenager hollers in pain and runs away, holding his hand. The few people watching begin to file out. Cal watches them leave, and continues to play.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. CLUB BAR - LATER

The show is over, and the bar is almost empty. Cal sits alone, drunk. It's nearly 2 AM.

BARTENDER

Last call.

CAL

I'll have one more.

The BARTENDER sets a beer in front of Cal. He looks at it, then downs it in a gulp. He pushes back from the bar and stumbles out.

EXT. CLUB ENTRANCE - SAME

Cal unlocks his bike. Two clean cut young men walk by, BOY ONE and BOY TWO, laughing, also drunk. They notice CAL.

BOY ONE

Hey, Eddie Vedder called, he wants his wardrobe back.

CAL hears the crack, but says nothing. They keep walking, but Boy Two turns around.

BOY TWO

Wait. Isn't that the dude who used to be in Sinshine?

BOY ONE

No way. Sinshine was just at the Civic Auditorium and I didn't see this loser there.

They approach Cal.

BOY ONE

Excuse me, sir. My friend here seems to think you're some kind of rock star.

Cal stands up and faces the kid.

CAL

You should get lost now.

BOY ONE

Really? Got some groupies coming  
by for a ride on your... bike?

BOY TWO

(to boy one)

Come on, man, let's just go.

CAL

(to boy one)

You know what, bro? You know  
nothing. Nothing about me. About  
my life. But don't worry. You're  
gonna see.

BOY ONE

Yeah? What am I gonna see, "bro?"

CAL

You're just a kid. You got  
everything figured out. But it's  
gonna be different later on. Trust  
me.

BOY ONE

Actually, no, it won't. See,  
'cause when I get to be your age,  
I don't plan on being some  
pathetic has-been.

CRACK! Cal swings and connects with the kid's jaw. The boy crumples to the ground, and Cal falls on him, hitting him over and over. As the other boy tries to pull Cal off, a police car drives by.

The car's flashers turn on and TWO COPS jump out as we:

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. POLICE STATION - LATER

At the bottom of the steps of the police station, a man stands curbside in front of a car. He is mid-30s, with a bald head and glasses, every bit the hipster. This is Cal's friend, Zach.



Cal comes down the stairs.

CAL  
Hey.

ZACH  
Hey.

CAL  
Thanks for bailing me out.

ZACH  
What happened?

CAL  
This punk kid got in my face after  
the show, so I start wailing on  
him, and...

ZACH  
(cutting him off)  
I don't want to know. Just get in.

They get into Zach's car, a shiny black BMW Z3  
convertible. Zach puts it in gear and pulls out.

ZACH  
What did they charge you with?

CAL  
Assault. And public drunkenness.

ZACH  
Brawling after a gig. Classy.  
Sounds like an episode of "Cops."

CAL  
It's what I do.

ZACH  
No, it's not. How long have we  
know each other? I've never had to  
bail you out in the middle of the  
night.

A beat.

CAL  
Where were you tonight?

ZACH  
At the Broken System show.

CAL

Any good?

ZACH

Totally sucked. You can read my review tomorrow.

A beat.

CAL

How come you don't you come to my gigs anymore?

ZACH

I bail you out in the middle of the night, and this is what you want to ask me?

CAL

It's my band that's the problem. They just stand there, no energy. I gotta get a new band.

They drive.

CAL

You wanna go grab a drink?

ZACH

Cal, how many reasons do you need that that's a bad idea?

CAL

Come on. We haven't hung out in forever.

ZACH

(ticking them off)

One, we hung out Tuesday night. Two, I still have to go home and write. Three, I have a wife waiting up for me. And -- hello -- four, I just bailed you out for public drunkenness. I'm taking you home.

CAL

It was mostly for assault.

ZACH

Oh, well, that's *much* better.

INT. CAL'S FLAT - SAME

CAL comes in and goes into the bathroom. He runs water over his knuckles, which are cracked, wincing in pain. He then runs water over his face and looks at himself in the mirror. A 35 year-old failure.

INT. WAITING ROOM - DAY

An official, fluorescent-lit room in a courthouse. Cal, unshaven and tired, sits in a row of plastic chairs in a room filled with other people, waiting for his name to be called. He chews his thumbnail.

COORDINATOR (V.O.)

Calvin Harris.

Cal stands and approaches a window. Behind it sits a woman, a community service COORDINATOR. Cal hands her a slip of yellow paper.

COORDINATOR

(reading)

You've been sentenced to sixty-five hours of community service.

CAL

That's right.

COORDINATOR

What's your occupation?

CAL

I'm on unemployment.

COORDINATOR

Sounds like you've got plenty of time. What do you want to do?

CAL

I get a choice?

COUNSELOR

Right now we've got roadside sanitation, prisoner literacy program, and hospital service.

CAL

What's the first one?

COUNSELOR  
Orange vest. Garbage bags.

CAL  
Ah. What were the other two?

COUNSELOR  
(writing)  
I'm just going to assume you want  
the hospital service.

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

The next day. CAL shambles into the nursing wing in a large city hospital, holding a slip of paper. He approaches a NURSE behind a desk and hands her the paper. She looks at the paper, then at the mess that is Cal.

She shrugs, then points him toward the janitor's closet.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

-Cal unenthusiastically mops the floors. A pretty nurse walks by and he smiles. She doesn't smile back.

-Cal empties a bedpan of a patient who is asleep in bed. She hasn't eaten her lunch, and Cal grabs her pudding cup and puts it in his pocket.

-Cal dumps trash down a chute. As he does, he notices some prescription bottles. He pulls them out individually and reads the labels. He sees a nurse looking over his shoulder with her eyebrow raised, and Cal sheepishly dumps the whole bag down the chute.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - LATER

Cal walks into a hospital cafeteria filled with doctors and nurses, eating. He pulls out a brown bag, and takes a bite of a peanut butter sandwich as he walks to a soda machine.

He inserts a dollar into the machine and pushes a button. Waits. Nothing comes out. Cal hits the button again.

CAL  
What the...

Still nothing. Cal begins kicking the machine.

CAL

Dammit!

A large Samoan man in scrubs approaches. This is LOUIS, late 20s.

LOUIS

Easy there, chief.

Louis walks up to the machine, shakes it twice, then hits it square in the middle with his fist, Fonzie-style. The soda dispenses and Louis hands it to Cal.

LOUIS

You gotta talk to it nice.

CAL

Thanks, doc.

LOUIS

Actually, I'm a nurse.

CAL

Oh. Sorry, I...

LOUIS

(Ribbing him)

Come on! (Then) It's cool, I'm used to it. (Sticking out a hand) Louis.

CAL

(shaking)

Cal.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - SAME

Cal and Louis sit at a table alongside other doctors and nurses. They eat.

LOUIS

Yeah, my pop kinda bugged when I said I was gonna be a nurse. But it's an awesome job. Besides, I got two brothers in the joint, so what's he gonna say?

CAL

My dad wasn't nuts about my career choice, either.

LOUIS

What do you do?

CAL

I'm a musician.

LOUIS

For real? I got a brother who's a music producer. Hip-hop.

They eat.

LOUIS

So you got somebody here in the hospital?

CAL

No. I, uh, got community service.

LOUIS

Where they got you working?

CAL

Third floor.

LOUIS

Why don't you come work on my floor? We could use help.

CAL

Where's that?

LOUIS

Children's cancer ward.

CAL

Oh. I'm not real good with illness.

LOUIS

I don't know if you noticed, but you're in a hospital. It's where the sick people are at. Come on.

INT. CANCER WARD - LATER

Louis leads Cal in children's cancer ward. Cal follows behind tentatively. The walls are painted cheerful colors and there is sunlight streaming in, a far cry from the third floor.

There are children everywhere, many with bald heads, some in wheelchairs. Kids play board games and watch TV.

LOUIS

(to Cal)

Don't be afraid. They can smell fear.

Louis stands on a chair.

LOUIS

Listen up, soldiers! This here is my new homie, Cal. He's gonna be helping out around here for a little while. Can everyone say hi to Cal?

The children chorus back.

CHILDREN

Hi, Cal!

Louis gets off the chair.

LOUIS

(to Cal)

See, that wasn't so bad.

CAL

So whattya want me to do? Mop?

LOUIS

Naw, we got people for that. Just mix it up with the kids. Play games. Read to 'em.

CAL

Really? I don't know. I'm not good with kids.

LOUIS

(smiling)

You can always go back to dumping bedpans on the third floor.

Cal walks around slowly, looking for an opening. He stops by a group of CHILDREN watching cartoons. He stands there awkwardly.

CAL

Hey.

No response.

CAL  
What are you guys watching?

CHILD ONE  
(not looking up)  
Cartoons.

CAL  
Right on.

After a moment, Cal moves on. He picks up a book off a table and tries to find a child to read to. He looks around and sees a CHILD alone in bed. As he approaches, the child bursts into tears. This is not going well.

Eventually, he comes upon two children, both nine years old. One is AMANDA, a tom-boyish girl who is bald from chemotherapy and is wearing a 49'er cap. The other is a boy with sandy-blond hair, BEN. They're playing fish.

BEN  
Got any eights?

AMANDA  
Go fish.

BEN  
You cheat. You totally have eights.

AMANDA  
Go. Fish.

Cal approaches.

CAL  
What's up?

BEN  
Nothing.

Cal sits.

CAL  
What's your name?

BEN  
Ben.

CAL  
I'm Cal. (to Amanda) What's your name, bro?



Amanda slugs Cal on the arm, hard.

CAL

Ow!

BEN

That's Amanda. She's a girl.

CAL

(rubbing his arm)

She doesn't hit like one.

BEN

She cheats like one.

Amanda giggles. We see that she's holding two eights.

CUT TO:

INT. CANCER WARD - LATER

End of the day. Cal is playing Monopoly with a table of kids, laughing and having a great time. He looks up at the clock.

CAL

Whoa. I gotta split.

The kids call out, "Bye, Cal." Cal gives his timesheet to Louis, who signs it.

LOUIS

How'd it go?

CAL

Okay.

LOUIS

See you tomorrow?

Suddenly, Cal looks up to see a woman in her early 30s. She is strikingly pretty, refined, with impeccable dress and makeup. This is Ben's mother, LINDA. Cal watches her as she approaches Ben and kisses him on his forehead.

LOUIS

Hello? Be here tomorrow?

CAL

Yeah.

INT. BAR - LATER

Cal and Zach are at a table in a hipster bar in the Mission. The walls are covered in graffiti and local band flyers and stickers. People at least ten years younger line the walls and the bar.

Cal is on his third beer; Zach drinks a soda. Cal orders up two more beers.

CAL

What are you even talking about?  
U2 is one of the worst bands of  
all time. All that fake emotion.  
Plus, they're complete sell-outs.

ZACH

Dude, U2 are a lot of things: Self-  
important, melodramatic,  
pretentious. But one thing they  
are not are sell-outs.

CAL

What? They're billionaires.

ZACH

It all comes down to intention.  
They're not sell-outs because  
that's what they wanted from the  
word go.

CAL

They wanted to sell out?

ZACH

Completely. Back in Dublin when  
they were nobodies, they knew they  
wanted to be the biggest rock  
stars in the world. And now they  
are.

CAL

They still suck.

ZACH

I don't disagree. But they're not  
sell-outs.

CAL

It doesn't matter, anyway. The  
corporations totally ruined music.  
Nobody makes decent music anymore.

ZACK

You realize how old you sound when  
you say that?

"Touch Me, I'm Sick" by Mudhoney plays on the jukebox.

CAL

Mudhoney. Now there was a band.

ZACH

Yep. I mention them in my new  
book.

CAL

What's the book about?

ZACH

Bands that time forgot.

They drink.

ZACH

Ever think about what you want to  
do?

CAL

What do you mean? Music.

ZACH

You do music.

CAL

Yeah, but you gotta do it right.  
For the right reasons.

ZACH

What does that even mean? What are  
the right reasons?

CAL

You know this. For the music  
itself. To be real about it. Not  
do it for fame. Or money.

ZACH

(sarcastic)  
Yeah, money sucks.

CAL

It does. It wrecks things.

ZACH

Can I be honest with you, man? It seems like every time you're in range of getting what you want, you screw it up. You ever think about why?

CAL

God hates me.

ZACH

Yeah, right. (Looking at watch) I gotta jet. You need a ride?

CAL

No, I got my bike.

INT. CANCER WARD - MORNING

Cal reads a book to a group of kids. We hear the sound of a guitar strumming. Everyone looks up to see a man dressed like a cowboy enter, playing a guitar. This is COWBOY JOE.

COWBOY JOE

Howdy, buckaroos! Who's ready for a song?

Louis gathers everyone together.

LOUIS

Gather 'round, soldiers, and let's give Cowboy Joe our attention.

The kids know the routine and move unenthusiastically into a circle around Cowboy Joe.

COWBOY JOE

(singing)

"Home, Home on the range/Where the deer and the antelope play/Where seldom is heard a discouraging word..."

Cal looks around and catches Ben's glance. Ben sticks his finger down his throat and makes a gag face. Cal stifles a laugh.

INT. CANCER WARD - A SHORT WHILE LATER

Cal wanders through the ward, picking up stray toys. He passes by Ben.

BEN

Can you believe they make us  
listen to that?

CAL

That might have been the worst  
music on earth.

BEN

Cowboy Joe is a complete tool.  
(Then) Can I ask you a question?

CAL

Shoot.

BEN

How come you're here?

CAL

I... I got in a fight.

BEN

Me, too.

CAL

Really?

BEN

Yeah. At school. I got a bloody  
nose.

CAL

What happened to the other guy?

BEN

(smiling)  
He got a black eye. But then my  
nose didn't stop bleeding. The  
doctors did a bunch of tests, and  
then they said it was leukemia.

CAL

That sucks.

BEN  
Tell me about it. I've been here  
for six months. It's like prison.  
Only I didn't do anything wrong.

CAL  
Sorry, bro.

BEN  
What was your fight about?

CAL  
This guy... didn't like my music.

BEN  
You're a musician?

CAL  
(referencing his  
attire)  
Duh.

BEN  
What kinda stuff?

CAL  
Nothing you'd like.

BEN  
Are you in a band?

CAL  
I was.

BEN  
Which one?

CAL  
Sinshine.

BEN  
*Sinshine?* Aren't those guys, like,  
a million years old? You're not  
old.

Cal laughs and gives Ben a high-five. Just then, Linda  
enters. Cal brightens.

BEN  
Hey, mom.

LINDA  
Hello, sweetheart.

BEN  
Mom, this is Cal.

Cal sticks out a hand, and Linda ignores it.

LINDA  
Hi. Have you sanitized your hands?

CAL  
Huh?

LINDA  
You shouldn't be in here unless  
you've sanitized your hands. Ben  
is very sick. All of these  
children are.

BEN  
Mom!

CAL  
Well, I should go. (To Linda) It's  
nice to meet you.

LINDA  
You, as well.

Cal leaves, but sneaks a look back at Linda.

INT. ROCK CLUB - NIGHT

Cal and his band finish up a set, to lukewarm applause.  
People have begun to stream in, just as they finish.

INT. ROCK CLUB - LATER

Cal's band breaks down equipment as another band sets up  
to go on next. The club is now packed. Cal approaches  
JACK, the club's booker.

CAL  
Hey, Jack. What's our percentage?

JACK  
(looking at a clip  
board)  
Let's see. Nothing.

CAL  
What do you mean? This place is  
packed.

JACK

Yeah, now it is. Everyone's here to see Exciter.

CAL

Come on, Jack. Cut me a break. I gotta pay the guys. I gotta pay rent.

JACK

Cal, how long have you been doing this? You know the game: You don't get anyone in here, you don't get paid.

EXT. ROCK CLUB - MOMENTS LATER

The band members are loading gear into a van as Cal exits the club. Tim sees him and approaches.

TIM

We didn't get any money, did we?

CAL

Not so much. But we've got a gig at the 30 Watt next week that will totally kill.

TIM

Dude, listen. We're not gonna do this anymore. The guys wanted me to tell you.

CAL

Oh.

Tim puts his guitar case in the van.

TIM

No offense. But maybe you should think about another line of work.

Tim gets into the van with the rest of the band and drives off. Then:

CAL

(Calling after the van)

Maybe you should piss off! You guys suck anyway! I'm glad you're leaving! Best thing ever!



INT. CAL'S FLAT - MUCH LATER

Cal sits on his bed, surrounded by empty beer bottles. He listens to "Chloe Dancer/Crown of Thorns" by Mother Love Bone. He gets up and sorts through some cassettes near his bed.

He pulls one out with "Sinshine Demo Tape" written in pen. He stops the music and pops in the cassette.

The music begins, in poor audio quality, but remarkable nonetheless. We hear Cal singing, in his prime. Cal listens for a full beat. Then he pulls the cassette out and yanks and tears the tape out, and throws it across the room.

INT. CANCER WARD - MORNING

Cal sits watching cartoons with Ben and a group of kids. Louis is on the phone. He hangs up.

LOUIS

Listen up, soldiers, announcement.  
Cowboy Joe can't make it, so  
there's no music today.

BEN

(sarcastic)  
Oh, gee, that sucks.

A beat.

BEN

(to Cal)  
Why don't you play?

CAL

Huh? Me? Nah, I don't do that.

BEN

(loud, to Louis)  
Hey, Louis, Cal is a musician.

LOUIS

Oh, yeah! Cal, you could play for  
us.

Cal is on the spot.

CAL

I, uh, I don't have my guitar.

Louis reaches behind the counter and pulls out a guitar.

LOUIS

Lookie here! Cowboy Joe left  
behind his gee-tar.

Everyone looks at Cal.

BEN

Come on. Do it!

Cal sits frozen. Then, out of the corner of his eye, he sees Linda. She has seen the whole exchange, and is watching Cal.

Slowly, Cal gets up and takes the guitar, straps it on, and nervously begins tuning. He looks up.

CAL

Hey, everyone. Okay. This one is  
called "Disaster."

He takes a breath. Then he begins to play, launching into the song. He hammers away on the guitar furiously and lurches around. The kids' eyes grow wide. He starts to wail at the top of his lungs:

CAL

(singing)

"Baby, you're a disaster/A mess of  
broken plaster/You're nobody now  
to me/For ever, for eternity..."

Cal looks up at a room full of shocked, frightened faces. A couple of the kids have begun to cry. Linda looks shocked. Even Louis looks a little freaked. Cal stops playing.

CAL

Um, okay. I'll play something  
else.

The room is deadly silent. A trickle of sweat runs down his forehead. He looks around, uncertain. Then, he sees a painting on the wall of a squirrel. Inspiration!

He starts up an up-tempo chord on his guitar, and he begins to sing, making it up as he goes.

CAL  
 (singing)  
 "I knew a squirrel and his name  
 was Lance/Lance danced around in  
 his underpants/Oh yeah, oh yeah."

He looks up, and the expressions have changed.

CAL  
 That's right, I said it.  
*Underpants!*

Some of the kids laugh. He walks over to Amanda.

CAL  
 (singing)  
 I got a friend and her name's  
 Amanda/She's best friends with a  
 panda/Oh yeah, Oh yeah.

AMANDA  
 (giggling)  
 Nuh-uh! No, I'm not!

He goes over to Ben.

CAL  
 Ben, how old are you?

BEN  
 Nine.

CAL  
 Not for this song. You're ten.  
 (Singing) "I got a friend and his  
 name is Ben/How old's Ben? Ben is  
 ten!/Oh yeah, oh yeah."

The room is suddenly his. All of the kids are now hanging  
 on his every word.

KID ONE  
 Do me next! Michael!

KID TWO  
 Me, too! Alicia!

Cal goes around the room, singing to each of the kids,  
 making up funny rhymes. As he does, each of the kids  
 laughs and squeals with glee.

Some of the nurses and parents have come out to see Cal  
 play, and they tap their toes to the music.

INT. CANCER WARD - LATER

End of the day. Cal makes his rounds, a back pack over his shoulder, getting ready to go. As he walks down the hall, a man late 20s approaches him. This is SCOTT, Amanda's father.

SCOTT  
Excuse me. Cal?

Cal turns around.

SCOTT  
I'm Scott. Amanda's dad.

CAL  
(shaking his hand)  
Hey.

SCOTT  
My wife and I saw you play earlier. Really great! Amanda loved it.

CAL  
Cool, I'm glad.

SCOTT  
Listen, my wife and I run a preschool, and we've been looking for someone to come and play. Would you be interested?

CAL  
I don't really do that.

SCOTT  
You don't?

CAL  
No. I do... other music.

SCOTT  
(writing his number  
on a scrap of paper)  
Well, if you change your mind, here. We couldn't pay much. Maybe \$75.

A beat. Cal takes the card.

SCOTT  
Anyway, good to meet you.

CAL  
You, too.

Cal continues down the hall. He looks in on Ben, who lies in bed doing his homework. Linda sits next to him, helping.

BEN  
(looking up)  
Cal!

CAL  
What's shakin', little man?

LINDA  
You were quite a hit today.

CAL  
Thanks.

BEN  
Did you know Cal was in Sinshine?

LINDA  
I don't know that band. (To Cal)  
Sorry.

CAL  
No, actually, that's good. (To Ben) I gotta cut out. Catch you tomorrow.

They do a three part handshake. Linda looks at Cal. He pulls out a bottle of hand sanitizer to show her.

CAL  
No worries. All sanitary.

LINDA  
Thank you.

She smiles. Cal smiles back. A beat.

CAL  
Nice to see you again, Linda.

LINDA  
You, too.

Linda and Cal exchange a smile as Cal exits.

INT. REHEARSAL STUDIO - NIGHT

Later that night. Cal auditions new band members.

SERIES OF SHOTS:

-A DRUMMER playing. He is bald and covered in tattoos. He slams the drums like he's taking revenge on them. Cal rolls his eyes.

-A BASSIST playing. He is tall, older, with a pony tail. He slaps and pops the bass like a funk player. Cal checks his watch.

-DRUMMER TWO plays. He is extremely young, maybe 17. He is thoroughly incompetent, stopping, apologizing, and starting again. Cal smiles painfully.

-A GUITARIST plays. He looks the part, a natural hipster in his early 20s. He plays quite well, but stares at his shoes as he does, aloof, cool -- just like Tim did.

Cal starts shaking his head 'no.' The kid stops and looks at Cal.

CAL

Stop, bro.

GUITAR PLAYER

What?

CAL

You're not playing like you mean it. You gotta believe in what you're doing, you know? Where's the pride? You're just phoning it in.

GUITAR PLAYER

No, I'm not. I'm playing it like you told me.

CAL

No! You're not!

GUITAR PLAYER

Hey, you know what? Your music sucks. That's the problem.

The kid unplugs his guitar and leaves. Cal stares at the wall.

INT. CANCER WARD - LATER

Next day. Cal plays Monopoly with Amanda and Ben. Ben rolls the dice and lands on a space.

CAL  
(looking at a card)  
Marvin Gardens with four houses.  
That's \$340.

BEN  
You only have two houses.

CAL  
No, I don't. I have four.

Cal looks down to see he only has two.

CAL  
What happened to the other houses?

Ben says nothing. Amanda stifles a giggle.

CAL  
Dude, where's my other house?

A beat. Ben sticks out his tongue and we see he's got the house in his mouth.

CAL  
You cheater!

Cal picks up Ben and tickles him. Ben laughs.

CAL  
Where's the other one, you cheat?

Amanda opens her mouth and reveals a piece.

CAL  
Oh, that's it. You're both totally  
busted!

Cal picks up Amanda, too, and spins the two kids around. Suddenly, a panicked voice:

LINDA  
Oh my God! What are you doing?!

Cal stops mid-spin, facing Linda, a kid under each arm.

CAL  
(referring to BEN)  
He started it!

BEN  
Nuh-uh!

CAL  
(to BEN)  
Yeah-huh!

LINDA  
Just put them down! Now!

Cal sheepishly puts them down. Linda rushes to Ben's side.

CAL  
Sorry.

LINDA  
Ben, sweetie, are you okay?

BEN  
I'm fine, Mom.

LINDA  
(to Cal)  
Listen to me. These children are very, very ill. They have cancer. You need to respect that.

BEN  
Mom, I...

LINDA  
I don't want to hear it. You shouldn't be playing anyway. You're supposed to be studying. You have a tutor coming in half an hour.

Linda opens up a highly organized bag with snacks, towels, and water on one side, and textbooks and pens and pencils on the other side. She hands a book to Ben.

INT. CANCER WARD - LATER

Cal is packing up his bag and getting ready to leave. Linda approaches.



LINDA  
Hi.

CAL  
Hey.

LINDA  
I wanted to say I'm sorry. About earlier.

CAL  
It's okay.

LINDA  
No, it's not, I just...

A beat.

LINDA  
I'm going down for a cup of coffee. Would you like to come?

CAL  
I don't really drink coffee. But I'll introduce you to my favorite soda machine.

INT. HOSPITAL CAFETERIA - MOMENTS LATER

Linda and Cal sit at a table, Linda with a Styrofoam cup of coffee and Cal with a can of coke.

LINDA  
Ben really likes you, you know.

CAL  
I like him.

LINDA  
I mean, I think he looks up to you. He talks about you all the time. So I thought maybe I'd get to know you.

CAL  
To see if I'm a bad influence.

LINDA  
No.

CAL

It's okay. I would never encourage Ben or anyone to be like me.

LINDA

Actually, I wanted to know how long you're planning on working here. People come and go a lot here, and it's hard on him. He needs some stability.

Cal looks at Linda.

CAL

I'm not going anywhere for awhile.

LINDA

Good.

A beat.

CAL

So, does Ben's dad ever come in? I never see him.

LINDA

Ben's father is dead.

CAL

Oh. I'm sorry.

LINDA

It's okay. We manage.

CAL

Do you have any other kids?

LINDA

No, Ben's my only.

CAL

I'm an only child, too.

LINDA

So am I.

CAL

Everybody says we're supposed to be spoiled. It's such a lie.

A beat.

CAL  
You were spoiled, huh?

Linda smiles. Cal laughs.

CAL  
Did you ever want brothers or  
sister when you were little?

LINDA  
I did. I always wanted a little  
brother. To take care of.

CAL  
I always wished I had a big  
sister. Somebody to tell me about  
things. Help me learn.

A beat.

LINDA  
Well. I should get back.

CAL  
Thanks for the soda.

LINDA  
I'll see you later.

CAL  
You will.

Cal nods and they exchange smiles again. He watches as she Linda walks away.

Fade to black.

INT. SCOTT & JENNY'S PRESCHOOL - DAY

A couple of days later. Cal walks tentatively into a preschool with a guitar slung over his shoulder. The place buzzes with very young children, and adults trying to keep up with them. This is decidedly not Cal's scene.

Scott approaches and greets Cal.

SCOTT  
Hey, Cal! Glad you made it! I've  
been telling everyone about you  
all morning.

CAL  
 (nervously)  
 Really?

Scott hands him an envelope with cash in it.

SCOTT  
 Here you go. You all set?

CAL  
 (smiling)  
 Guess so.

Scott leads Cal toward the main room. Cal looks at the envelope. He hasn't been paid for a gig in a long, long time. Scott introduces him.

TEACHER (V.O.)  
 Everybody, this is our special guest. He's going to sing some songs for you. Everybody say hi to Cal, the Preschool Punker!

CAL  
 (to mouthing to himself)  
 "Preschool Punker?"

Cal enters the room slowly. The children stare at him, and he stares back at them for a full beat. Then, he begins strumming.

CAL  
 Hey, everybody! My name's Cal. (To a little boy) What's your name?

BOY  
 Dale.

CAL  
 (singing)  
 "Well, I got a friend and his name is Dale/Somebody told me that Dale eats snails/Oh yeah, oh yeah!"

The children all crack up.

BOY  
 I don't eat snails!

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. CANCER WARD - LATER

Cal and Ben play Duke Nukem on an X-Box.

BEN  
(as they play)  
"Preschool Punker?!"

CAL  
You don't like it.

BEN  
It's only about the lamest thing  
I've ever heard.

CAL  
Yeah?

BEN  
You're not even punk. You're  
grunge.

CAL  
I am not grunge.

BEN  
You are totally grunge.

CAL  
Nuh-uh.

BEN  
"Preschool Punker" sucks.

CAL  
Alright, you do better.

BEN  
I will.

Ben's video game character sneaks up on Cal's. He blasts Cal, and Cal's character dies.

BEN  
Gotcha! Ha ha! Yes!

CAL  
Alright, alright. Don't be getting  
all big for your britches.

BEN  
One more game.

Linda and Louis approach.

LINDA  
Ben, sweetheart, it's time.

BEN  
Time for what?

LOUIS  
Ben, we need to draw some marrow  
for testing.

BEN  
No!

LINDA  
Ben...

BEN  
No! I'm serious.

LINDA  
Honey, you knew this was coming.  
We scheduled it.

BEN  
(crying)  
No! No! It hurts so bad.

Ben looks at everyone.

BEN (V.O.)  
I don't want to be sick anymore! I  
hate this! It isn't fair.

Ben runs into his room and lies on his bed. LINDA enters  
and Ben turns away from her.

BEN  
Go away!

LINDA  
Sweetheart...

BEN  
No!

She leans in and Ben pushes her away, crying. Louis  
starts to advance, but Cal holds up his hand. Louis  
stops. Cal sits down next to Ben.

CAL  
Bro? Can I talk to you?

BEN

No.

CAL

I know this sucks. This sucks worse than anything. Dude, if I could do this test for you, I totally would.

BEN

No, you wouldn't.

CAL

Yeah. Yeah, I would.

Ben turns to Cal. He believes him.

CAL

I'm gonna sit here with you. The whole time. And then we can play video games right after. And I'm gonna totally kick your butt in Duke Nukem. Okay?

Ben looks at Cal. He nods. Louis comes over to Ben's bedside and preps him. Linda looks on.

INT. CANCER WARD - LATER THAT EVENING

Cal approaches Louis and hands him his time card. Louis signs it.

LOUIS

Good work today, chief.

Louis hands Cal back his card.

LOUIS

Looks like that's it. Your sixty-five hours are done.

CAL

Really?

LOUIS

Yep. You're a free man.

He looks at CAL.

LOUIS

You don't have a job, do you?

CAL  
Uh... not so much.

LOUIS  
I got a brother in construction.  
Or, if you want, I could try to  
find room in the budget to keep  
you here for awhile.

CAL  
Yeah, I'd like that.

Cal turn to walk away. Louis stops him.

LOUIS  
By the way, I lined you up a gig  
for tomorrow.

CAL  
You? What?

LOUIS  
(hands Cal a slip of  
paper)  
One of the kids' parents want you  
to come play a birthday party.

CAL  
(shaking his head)  
Dude, I don't know.

LOUIS  
Suit yourself. Let 'em give their  
money to Cowboy Joe.

INT. CANCER WARD - MOMENTS LATER

Cal puts on his flannel shirt and zips up his backpack.  
Behind him, we hear Linda.

LINDA  
Cal?

Cal turns around.

LINDA  
Thank you. For what you did.

CAL  
It's no problem.



LINDA

I'm amazed how good you are with him. And a little jealous. I didn't expect that.

CAL

(in a British accent)  
"Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition."

LINDA

(in a British accent)  
"Their chief weapon is fear, fear and surprise."

CAL

Oh. My. God. A woman who knows Monty Python.

LINDA

(in a British accent)  
"Well, I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to shoot you."

CAL & LINDA

(in a British accent)  
"What a senseless waste of human life."

They laugh.

LINDA

I've only seen every episode 100 times. That's what happens when you have a father who only lets you watch PBS.

CAL

Hey, I was thinking... I really like spending time with you and Ben.

LINDA

I like it, too.

CAL

Would you ever want to... go out?

LINDA

Like a date?

CAL

Yeah.

LINDA

Oh. Cal, I don't think that's a good idea.

CAL

Yeah. That's fine.

LINDA

I... Because of Ben.

CAL

Absolutely.

A beat. They stare at each other. Then, Linda walks away. As she does, Amanda appears out of nowhere, walking with her IV.

AMANDA

(to Cal)

It's so totally obvious she likes you.

INT. REHEARSAL SPACE - NIGHT

That night. Cal comes out of his rehearsal space, holding a black book. He dials a pay phone in the hallway of his rehearsal space, the thump-thumping of bands practicing in the background.

CAL

(on phone)

Hey, Jack. It's Cal. Cal Harris. Listen, you got any slots for me? No, no band. Just me on guitar. Uh huh. Nothing, huh? Okay. Call if anything opens up.

He hangs up, inserts some coins, and dials another number.

CAL

(on phone)

Hey, bro, it's Cal. Harris. Listen, I need a gig on Thursday. What? Can I guarantee 50 people? Come on, Nate. I need this. I... Okay. Right. Later.

He hangs up, and turns around, smack into the owner of the rehearsal space, JERRY, mid-30s.

CAL

Hey, Jerry.

JERRY

Cal. How goes it?

CAL

Okay.

JERRY

Good, good. Listen, I hate to bug you again, but...

CAL

Can you give me a week?

JERRY

A week. Okay. But if you don't have it, I'm going to have to evict you from your rehearsal space. I don't want to, but I got bills, too.

CAL

I swear. One week.

INT. ZACH'S HOUSE - EVENING

The next night. A doorbell rings. A woman, CARRIE, comes down the hall, wiping her hands, and opens the door. CAL stands there, with a bottle of wine.

CARRIE

Cal! Come on in!

CAL

(handing her the wine)

Here ya go.

CARRIE

Thanks. Zach's in the kitchen.

CAL walks through the space, a beautiful Victorian flat with hardwood floors, tasteful furnishings, and art on the walls. A far cry from CAL'S squalid crash pad.

CAL

Thanks for having me over. I haven't had a home-cooked meal in forever.

CARRIE  
Thank Zach -- he's doing the  
cooking.

Zach pokes his head out from the kitchen. He's wearing an  
apron with the Beastie Boys emblazoned on it.

ZACH  
Dude, I hope you're hungry.  
Risotto!

INT. ZACH'S FLAT - LATER

Zach, CARRIE and CAL sit back, finished with the meal.  
Music plays softly from an expensive hi-fi.

ZACH  
And then after the interview, he  
needed a ride. I offered. So the  
mighty Kurt Cobain rode in our  
car.

CARRIE  
Even I'm impressed.

CAL  
Wow. I rode in that car. Hope it  
rubbed off.

CARRIE  
More wine?

CAL  
You bet.

ZACH  
A little.

CARRIE fills glasses.

CAL  
We opened for Nirvana in 1990.

ZACH  
I remember that.

CARRIE  
Did you talk to him?

CAL  
Yeah.

CARRIE

What about?

CAL

Mostly about how much my band  
sucked.

Everyone laughs.

CAL

That was back before Zach got all  
civilized and could cook and  
stuff.

CARRIE

Thankfully, I wasn't there for  
that.

CAL

You know, I had a grandpa who  
could cook, but none of the other  
men in my family could. Especially  
not me.

ZACH

Man, what are you talking about?  
You make an exquisite bowl of  
ramen.

A beat.

CAL

Can I ask you guys something?

ZACH

Shoot.

CAL

You ever think about having kids?

CARRIE and Zach look at each other and laugh.

CARRIE

No.

ZACH

God, no.

CAL

Really?

ZACH

No time. And besides, why would anyone want to bring kids into this messed up world? Terrorism, global warming...

CARRIE

Why do you ask?

CAL

No reason.

ZACH

Did you call Heather?

CAL

No. I just... This volunteer thing I'm doing, there are a lot of kids. And I didn't think I'd be any good with kids, but it turns out I am.

ZACH

Wow.

CAL

Well, the interesting part is that I played some music for them. Not my stuff. Original stuff that I just made up.

ZACH

Whoa. Original kids' music?

CARRIE

I think that's sweet.

CAL

I played a preschool the other day and got paid to do it, which is rad...but.

CARRIE

But what?

CAL

It's just so... lame. You know?

ZACH

Kids' music isn't real music.

CAL

Exactly.

CARRIE

Oh, stop it. You two are such snobs. You sit on your thrones talking about bands no one has ever heard of, but you never talk about what people actually want to hear. Cal, I think you should play whatever makes these kids happy.

CAL looks over at Zach.

ZACH

Whatever, man. Just don't use your real name.

INT. CAL'S FLAT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Cal sits strumming his guitar, and begins writing a new song. He sings as he plays, trying to find something new in the same old chords.

CAL

(singing)  
"Hollow and dark... Watch me fall  
apart..."

He stops. He looks around for inspiration. Nothing. He picks his nose. Then:

CAL

(singing)  
"Boogers, boogers..."

CROSSFADE TO:

SERIES OF SHOTS:

-SHOT of Cal playing in front of a group of children at a hospital. The kids clap along, and Cal looks much more confident. When he finishes, a woman hands him an envelope with cash.

-SHOT of Cal playing a grade school. The crowd is larger this time, and the kids and others around them are much more into the show. Cal, too, seems much more at ease, much more polished.

All of the children have some sort of percussion instrument -- hand drums, cymbals, tambourines, etc. Cal leads them in playing the instruments.

When he's finished, a man hands him an even thicker envelope full of cash.

-SHOT of Cal playing a birthday party. The party is packed to the rafters with people, and Cal commands the room, with all of the kids clapping and singing along. A woman hands him an envelope that is even thicker still with cash.

INT. CANCER WARD - DAY

Cal plays for the kids back at the cancer ward. This is his home turf, and he works it. He has given all of the children percussion instruments, and they play along as he conducts them. He finishes a song.

CAL

Yeah! You guys rock! Okay, you guys wanna hear some really cool music?

KIDS

Yeah!

CAL

I can't hear you!

KIDS

(louder)

Yeah!

CAL

Okay, check it out, here's what *really* cool music sounds like.

He starts the opening riff for "Smells Like Teen Spirit" by Nirvana. Then he launches into another song, with a call and response.

INT. CANCER WARD - LATER

Cal at the nurse's desk.

LOUIS

Killer set today, chief! You slayed 'em. (A beat) Probably not the best metaphors to use around here.

Louis hands Cal an envelope.



LOUIS

So, good news and bad news. I wasn't able to get you on staff.

CAL

That's alright.

LOUIS

But, I can keep paying you every time you play. Plus I got a ton of other places that want you.

CAL

Dude. You're like my pimp.

LOUIS

(winking)

I figured you could use a manager.

INT. CANCER WARD - EVENING

Cal zips up his backpack. On his way out, he peeks into the rooms, checking on the kids. He looks into Ben's room. Ben and Amanda are looking at football Amanda holds. Ben sees Cal.

BEN

Cal, check it out! Amanda got a signed football.

CAL

That's rad!

AMANDA

Yep. It's signed by Steve Young.

CAL

Awesome! Can I have it?

AMANDA

(laughing)

No!

Cal turns to exit. He bumps into Linda.

LINDA

Hi.

CAL

Hey. I'm going to get some dinner. You want to come?

LINDA

Oh.

CAL

Not like a date. Come on. I'll buy...

A beat.

LINDA

Okay.

CAL

Really?

LINDA

Yes.

CAL

Yes!

LINDA

Where to?

INT. BURGER KING - LATER

Cal and Linda stand in line at a Burger King, with its plastic tables and garish lighting. Linda looks slightly uncomfortable.

LINDA

I'm not sure what to order. I've never been here before.

CAL

To this Burger King?

LINDA

To any Burger King.

CAL

Well, in my experience, you can't go wrong with a Whopper.

LINDA

A Whopper. Sounds good.

INT. BURGER KING - MOMENTS LATER

The two eat burgers and fries, sitting across from each other.

CAL  
Thanks for loaning me the dollar.  
I had less than I thought.

LINDA  
No problem. (she eats) Pretty  
good.

CAL  
Right?

LINDA  
Cal, you must think I'm some big  
snob.

CAL  
No, I don't. At all.

LINDA  
I *have* been to a McDonald's. With  
Ben.

CAL  
Next time I'll take you someplace  
nicer.

LINDA  
Next time.

CAL  
Alright, I have a question for  
you.

LINDA  
Okay.

CAL  
If you could be alive during any  
time in history, when would it be?

LINDA  
Well. I'd have to say the 50s in  
North Beach. I'd hang out with the  
Beats and just write poetry all  
day.

CAL  
Really?

LINDA  
What? Can't someone who looks like  
me be into Beat poetry?

CAL

I guess you can. Man, that would be the scene. Hanging out with Ginsberg, Kerouac, Neal Cassady, all those guys.

LINDA

What about you? When would you want to be alive?

CAL

I used to think I'd go back to the East Village in the 1970s and play at CBGB. But I have to say, it's pretty nice being alive right now.

Linda smiles.

CAL

Hey -- you wanna go to the park?

LINDA

...Okay.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - MOMENTS LATER - TWILIGHT

Cal leads the way, as they walk through a meadow. It's wide open in every direction, and the buildings and sounds of traffic begin to disappear as they walk.

CAL

I used to come to this place all the time when I was a kid.

LINDA

You grew up here?

CAL

Yeah.

LINDA

So did I. What school did you go to?

CAL

George Washington. You?

LINDA

Waldorf Academy.

They walk. Cal looks over at Linda, who shivers slightly. He gives her his flannel shirt.

CAL

Here.

LINDA

Thanks. You know, Cal, my parents told me to never go into the park after dark.

CAL

Don't worry. I'll protect you.

They come upon a playground area, with a jungle gym and swings. Cal jumps on one of the swings and starts swinging.

CAL

Come on.

LINDA

No. I just ate.

CAL

Come on!

Linda gets on a swing. Cal starts swinging higher.

CAL

Bet I can swing higher than you.

He swings even higher. Then:

LINDA

Bet you can't.

They both start swinging higher and higher, laughing.

EXT. 9TH AND IRVING - LATER

They walk back toward the hospital. It's night, and the fog is beginning to roll in. They do a Monty Python sketch:

LINDA

(in British accent)

"Could you do the egg-bacon-spam-and-sausage without the spam, then?"

CAL

"Ugghh!"

LINDA  
(in British accent)  
"What do you mean, 'Ugghh?' I  
don't like spam!"

CAL & LINDA  
(singing)  
"Spam, spam, spam, spam. Lovely  
spam! Wonderful spam!"

They laugh.

LINDA  
I have to say, Cal, I don't  
believe I've ever met anyone like  
you.

CAL  
Oh, I'm out there. You just gotta  
look for me.

They walk past a bar.

CAL  
Hey, you wanna go get a beer? I'm  
buying.

Linda stops. She looks at him.

CAL  
What's wrong?

LINDA  
Nothing, it's just... you don't  
have enough money for dinner, but  
you have money to go drinking?

CAL  
It's cool. I got a tab.

LINDA  
I'm going to go. Goodnight, Cal.

Linda walks away. Cal follows.

CAL  
Wait! Wait! I'm sorry if I upset  
you.

LINDA  
You didn't. I have to look in on  
Ben.

She walks away. Cal watches her, then he goes into the bar.

INT. MUSIC CLUB - NIGHT

A young indie rock band plays onstage, shrieking, noisy. We pan back to see Zach and CAL standing in a crowd of young hipsters, watching.

CAL

I've been having this dream where I'm playing in front of, like, a million people. And everybody's loving it, singing along, dancing. Then when I get off stage, I look in a mirror and I'm in full clown gear, the wig, the nose and everything.

ZACH

Gee, wonder what that means.

CAL

Yeah.

ZACH

Could be worse. You could be these guys.

CAL

They suck, right?

ZACH

Completely.

CAL

God, I can't even tell anymore.

They listen. CAL looks around.

CAL

How come I can't get a crowd like this?

ZACH

Maybe you don't suck badly enough.

EXT. SCOTT AND JENNY'S PRESCHOOL - DAY

There is a large banner that says "Sunshine Day Care Benefit." It's a large crowd of both children and adults, and they fill the playground is so big that they've had to use the playground out back to accommodate everyone.

Scott introduces Cal.

SCOTT  
Are you guys ready for the main attraction?

The crowd shouts 'yes!'

SCOTT  
Okay, everybody, here he is -- Cal, the Preschool Punker!

Cal plays, looking more polished and confident than ever. He commands the crowd, and the kids clap and laugh along with the music.

INT. SCOTT & JENNY'S PRESCHOOL - MOMENTS LATER

Scott and Jenny approach Cal as he puts his guitar in its case.

SCOTT  
Thanks for coming today.

CAL  
Not a problem. You guys make some money?

JENNY  
Enough to keep us going a couple more months. Or until they triple our rent again.

CAL  
How's Amanda?

JENNY  
She's doing okay. She needs a new course of treatment the insurance won't cover, so...

SCOTT  
(cutting her off)  
Jenny. (to Cal) She's fine.



CAL  
Well. Lemme know if there's  
anything else I can do.

SCOTT  
Don't worry. If we get in trouble,  
we'll just call the Preschool  
Punker.

CAL  
I still can't forgive you for  
naming me that.

Scott smiles.

EXT. SCHOOL - LATER

Cal is leaving the school, heading for a bus station. A  
man approaches him, MARCUS.

MARCUS  
Cal?

Cal turns around.

CAL  
Marcus?

MARCUS  
Hey. I just saw your set.

CAL  
Yeah?

MARCUS  
My kid goes here. Your stuff is  
really, really good.

Cal doesn't respond.

MARCUS  
Look, I know we have some bad  
blood...

CAL  
Huh. Getting me kicked out of my  
own band. That's what you call bad  
blood?

MARCUS  
I had nothing to do with that.

CAL

Whatever. What do you want?

MARCUS

Well, under better circumstances,  
I'd like to talk to you about  
producing an album.

A beat. Cal laughs. He starts to walk away.

MARCUS

Cal, do you know how much money is  
in kids' music?

CAL

Figures it's still all about the  
money with you.

Cal walks away.

INT. HOSPITAL - LATER

Cal enters the hospital and walks down the corridor on the way to the elevators. As he passes by the billing office, he sees through the window that Scott and Jenny are sitting with a billing administrator, and the meeting is not going well.

He stops and watches for a moment. Both parents look terribly stressed, and Jenny fights back tears.

INT. CANCER WARD - MOMENTS LATER

Cal stands outside Ben's room, and sees Linda trying to feed Ben, who resists her.

LINDA

Try to eat just a little, please.

BEN

I don't feel like it.

LINDA

You have to eat something.

Cal enters.

CAL

(to Ben)  
What's up, dude?

LINDA  
We're having a little nausea.

BEN  
*I'm* the one who has the nausea.  
Not you.

LINDA  
Let's just get some food in you.  
Then we'll study.

She pushes a spoonful toward him. Ben knocks the spoon across the room.

BEN  
Stop it! I'm not a baby! I don't feel good!

LINDA  
Ben...

BEN  
Just leave me alone! Why are you always here? Go away!

Ben grabs his food tray and flings it across the room.

BEN  
Get out! Everybody just get out!

Linda and Cal exit the room. They stand for a full beat. Then, Amanda appears. She goes in the room and sits on the bed next to Ben. She pulls out a candy bar, unwraps it, and breaks the bar in half.

She hands half to Ben. Slowly, he takes it, and they both eat.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - MOMENTS LATER

Cal and Linda walk.

LINDA  
I know he resents me.

CAL  
No, he doesn't.

LINDA  
Yes, he does. And I don't blame him. I smother him.

CAL

You're just trying to do the right thing.

LINDA

He's the only thing I've ever done that I'm proud of.

CAL

I'm sure you were a great wife, too.

LINDA

All that got me was a big, stupid, empty house. (Then) I'm sorry. I don't know why I'm telling you all this.

A beat.

CAL

You know, on our "non-date," I noticed that you had fun. And I guess I was wondering if maybe we could try for an actual date.

Linda stops walking.

LINDA

Cal.

CAL

Look, I know you probably think I'm just some weird guy who dresses funny and doesn't act his age, but I've got a really good heart. And I've never met someone as pretty as you who can also quote Monty Python, so if you would just give me a chance... Are you still mad about the dollar I had to borrow? I've got it now. See?

Cal pulls out a dollar.

LINDA

(laughing)

Cal, stop.

CAL

What?

LINDA

This time, I get to pick the place.

INT. RESTAURANT - LATER

Cal and Linda enter an upscale restaurant, and Linda is greeted by the owner with a kiss on the cheek. Cal has removed his hat, and he is trying to smooth down his hair. His shirt is tucked in. He is, in short, making an effort.

INT. RESTAURANT - MOMENTS LATER

Cal and Linda sit at a table. They eat. Cal drinks a beer, and Linda drinks sparkling water.

A beat.

LINDA

This is nice.

CAL

Yeah. I'm trying not to embarrass you too much.

LINDA

You're a perfect gentleman.

CAL

That's the first time anyone ever called me a perfect anything.

Linda laughs.

CAL

The owner knows you.

LINDA

Yes. Alan and I used to come here.

CAL

Oh.

LINDA

It's okay. We can talk about it.

CAL

How long ago did...

LINDA

A year ago. Actually, a year and a two months. He was overseas on business, in a taxi. His business partner was killed, too. Then Ben got sick a few months later.

CAL

How did you deal with all that?

LINDA

You'd be amazed at what you can deal with. I probably would have had to deal with Ben by myself anyway. Alan was almost never around. I think he saw Ben maybe a week out of the month. And then... (A beat) Anyway, everything happens for a reason. Maybe this is all a test.

CAL

Looks to me like you're passing.

EXT. THE MARINA - LATER

Cal and Linda walk through the Marina, an upscale, yuppie neighborhood. They eat ice cream.

LINDA

So. Tell me what it's like being a big rock star.

CAL

I don't think I was ever a rock star. But I was in this band a long time ago...

LINDA

Sunshine?

CAL

Right, close enough. And when we started to get big, I left.

LINDA

How come?

CAL

It started to not be about the music anymore.

(MORE)

CAL(cont'd)

They just wanted the wrong things,  
and I couldn't deal with that.  
Anyway, now I do my own thing.  
It's better that way.

LINDA

Better for who?

CAL

Me, I guess. I'm only responsible  
for me.

LINDA

I honestly can't remember what  
that was like.

CAL

It's kind of overrated.

LINDA

So, you never got married? Never  
had any kids?

CAL

I... No, never got married.

LINDA

Well, you're very good with Ben.

CAL

Actually, I think he's even better  
with me.

EXT. BAY STREET - LATER

Cal walks Linda to her car, which is parked along Bay Street. In the background is the entire bay, with the Golden Gate Bridge lit up in the distance.

LINDA

Do you know what Ben wants to do  
when he gets out of the hospital?

CAL

What?

LINDA

He wants to walk across the Golden  
Gate Bridge.

CAL

By *himself*?

LINDA

No. With me. And now he says he wants you to come.

CAL

No way. I am so incredibly terrified of heights. And water.

LINDA

Oh my God, me too! I was hoping you could take him!

CAL

We're screwed. Maybe we could talk him into something else.

LINDA

Apparently you don't know my son.

They reach Linda's car.

CAL

Heading back to the hospital?

LINDA

Anything's better than the big, empty house. Need a ride?

CAL

No. I got my bike.

Linda looks at Cal. She draws closer. Then she looks down at his ripped jeans.

LINDA

Your pants are torn.

CAL

I know.

LINDA

I could fix them.

CAL

(laughs)

Unfortunately, this is what passes for fashion with me.

Linda looks at him and smiles. Suddenly, she leans in kisses Cal. She looks at him.



LINDA

You're the first person I've  
kissed since Alan died. You're the  
first person I've wanted to kiss.

Linda pulls him in and kisses him again. It looks as if for a moment she won't let him go. Then she turns, unlocks her car, and drives off. Cal watches her go. He smiles.

EXT. CAL'S FLAT - MORNING

A brilliant San Francisco morning. Cal exuberantly bounds down the stairs with his bike, a guitar on his back. He pulls out a slip of paper with an address on it. At the bottom, it says: "Go kick butt. --Louis."

Cal hops on his bike and takes off down Mission Street.

INT. BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB - LATER

Cal plays to an enthusiastic crowd of kids. He jumps around with his guitar, and does the Chuck Berry kick. The show is getting quite polished, and he is having the time of his life.

EXT. CAL'S FLAT - LATER THAT DAY

Cal pulls up with his bike, still high on the day and the night before. He absent mindedly leans it against a pole and bounds up the stairs.

INT. CAL'S FLAT - MOMENTS LATER

Cal pulls a wad of cash from his pocket and puts it in a coffee can that is already almost full with cash. He sticks it back in the cupboard with a row of identical coffee cans, each full of cash.

EXT. CAL'S FLAT - MOMENTS LATER

He comes down the stairs, to the spot where he left his bike. The bike is gone, stolen.

INT. LINDA'S CAR - LATER

LINDA drives down the Bayshore Freeway, with Cal in the passenger seat.

CAL  
I'm serious, Linda, I'm no good  
with cars.

LINDA  
Having a car is great. Absolute  
freedom. Trust me.

CAL  
I don't know. What if I still just  
want another bike?

LINDA  
Then you can get a bike, too.

CAL  
Okay.

EXT. USED CAR LOT - LATER

Cal and Linda look at used cars. They select one for a test drive, a small, late-model import.

EXT. USED CAR LOT - LATER

A SALESMAN hands Cal the keys and they shake hands. Linda stands next to Cal, smiling. The salesman walks away.

LINDA  
(to Cal)  
Now you're officially a driver.

CAL  
Wow.

LINDA  
What's your first destination?

CAL  
I don't know. Home?

LINDA  
Really? You just got a car.

CAL  
I don't really like to go  
anyplace.

LINDA  
The bike thing is suddenly making  
sense. (Then) Care for some  
company at home?

CAL  
Oh. Linda, my apartment is... not  
very nice.

LINDA  
I don't care. Besides, Ben doesn't  
want me around right now.

Cal gets into his car.

CAL  
Okay. I'll race you.

EXT. EL CAMINO REAL - LATER

Cal sits at an intersection. Linda pulls up next to him.  
Cal sees her and revs his engine.

CAL  
(winking)  
Hey.

LINDA  
Hey.

CAL  
You're cute. Wanna drag?

As the light turns green, Cal tries to gun the car, and  
he kills the engine. Linda laughs.

INT. CAL'S FLAT - LATER THAT EVENING

Cal and Linda sit on the couch, eating pizza. CAL drinks  
beer. They watch "Monty Python and the Holy Grail." The  
two, unbeknownst to each other, mouth along with the  
words.

INT. CAL'S FLAT - LATER

Cal strums his guitar as Linda sits, reclined on the couch.

LINDA

Ben told me yesterday that he wants to be a sports medicine doctor for the 49'ers when he grows up.

CAL

I don't even know what that is.

LINDA

I'm not sure I do, either. But it's nice to hear him talk about growing up. (A beat) What did you think you'd be when you got older?

CAL

I figured I'd be retired by now. Thirty-five is ancient for a musician.

LINDA

Not for a children's musician. Think of Burl Ives.

CAL

Hey, that's true.

Cal strums a quick Burl Ives song.

CAL

(singing)

"On top of old smokey/All covered with snow/I lost my true lover/for courtin' too slow." Remember that?

LINDA

I do.

CAL

What about you? What did you want to be?

LINDA

I didn't know then, and I don't know now.

(MORE)

LINDA(cont'd)

I see you with your music and I wonder how anyone can be that passionate about something.

CAL

What about Ben?

LINDA

That's different.

CAL

How?

LINDA

It just is.

CAL

Music was the only thing that ever made any sense to me. I wasn't any good at school or sports. When I found out I could do music, that was it.

A beat.

LINDA

Play something for me.

Cal looks at her. He begins to strum. Then sing. He plays "Stop Me."

He finishes, and looks up at her.

LINDA

It's beautiful. I remember that song. I had no idea you wrote it.

A beat.

LINDA

How come you don't play it anymore?

CAL

I can't.

LINDA

Why not?

CAL

I just can't.

LINDA

Cal, what are you afraid of?

CAL

(snapping)

Nothing! I... (A beat) I didn't leave Sinshine. They kicked me out. And they asked if I wanted the rights to all my music or if I wanted a check. I took the check.

LINDA

Why?

CAL

Most bands never make any money anyway.

LINDA

Even with a song on the radio?

CAL

The record companies totally screw you. At the time, I thought five-thousand dollars was a lot of money. And, I didn't think they could keep going without me. But they did.

LINDA

Why'd they kick you out?

CAL

I don't know. I didn't show up for gigs, I was drunk all the time, I blew off interviews. But mostly I was a total jerk.

A long beat.

CAL

You should also know that I've been at the hospital because I was doing community service.

LINDA

For what?

CAL

For getting into a fight. And for drinking. But it was the best thing that ever happened to me. Because I found Ben. And then I found you.

Linda stands up and walks toward the door.

CAL  
Where are you going?

LINDA  
I have to go.

CAL  
Please don't.

She turns and looks at him. She walks over to him and draws close.

LINDA  
I want you to promise me something.

CAL  
Whatever you want.

Linda puts her hand up to Cal's mouth.

LINDA  
Think before you say anything. I need you to promise me that if we do this, if you're going to be with me and Ben, that you won't drink anymore.

Cal looks at her.

LINDA  
This is important. I need to trust you. I want you to think about it. Okay?

Linda kisses him on the forehead, and then lets herself out. Cal watches her go.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Cal and Zach sit at a table. Cal is cleaned up more than usual, shaven, without his usual hat and flannel shirt.

ZACH  
You bought a car? You?

CAL  
I know.

ZACH  
Man, she must be something. I've never seen you drink club soda.  
(MORE)

ZACH(cont'd)

I've never seen you in non-ripped jeans.

CAL

I don't know what's going on. But it's good. You know? I'm real honest with her. It feels right.

They drink.

ZACH

So you're being honest. That's great.

CAL

Yeah.

ZACH

You're telling her everything?

A beat. No response from Cal.

ZACH

You know, while you're on a roll with the honesty thing...

CAL

I don't want to hear it, Zach.

ZACH

I'm just saying, if this is a good thing, you probably owe it to her to...

CAL

I just laid out that I'm a worthless drunk. Maybe I can give her some time to let that sink in first before I tell her everything...

ZACH

(cutting him off)  
Alright, chill out.

CAL

Screw you, chill out! Why are you always judging me? What are you, my shrink?

ZACH

I'm not judging you.



CAL

Right. You always have the answers. Tell me this: how come I get to watch you get everything you want, while my life goes down the sewer? Huh?

ZACH

What are you talking about? Your life isn't in the sewer; You've got this woman, got this kids' music thing...

CAL

You hate the kids' music! You think I'm a joke, Zach!

ZACH

No, I don't.

CAL

Nobody wants to hear my real music? God damn it! What am I supposed to do?

ZACH

Cal, come on...

CAL

Whatever. Call me when you get down off your freaking high horse.

Cal storms out.

INT. CANCER WARD - DAY

A month later. It's Ben's birthday, and the floor is decorated with streamers and balloons. All the kids are in attendance, including Amanda. Louis brings out a cake with candles.

Everyone sings "Happy Birthday." Ben takes a deep breath and blows out all the candles.

AMANDA

What did you wish for?

BEN

For us to get out of this place.

INT. CANCER WARD - LATER

Cal and Linda stand together, watching as Ben opens presents, a 49'ers jersey, a board game, a manga comic book. Amanda hands him a gift, and he opens it. It's a football signed by Steve Young.

BEN

Whoa! It's signed by Steve Young.  
Where did you get another one?

AMANDA

It's the same one.

BEN

Oh.

LINDA

(Looks at Amanda)  
Are you sure you want to give that  
to Ben?

Amanda nods.

BEN

Thanks. Cool!

Cal pulls out a present and hands it to Ben. Ben opens it. It's a Sony PSP!

BEN

A PSP! Awesome!

LOUIS

Hey, I want one of those.

BEN

You can play with mine if you  
promise no more tests.

Louis smiles.

LOUIS

I'll do you one better, soldier.  
Dr. Harrison? Want to do the  
honors?

DR. HARRISON, a pediatric oncologist, steps forward.

DR. HARRISON

Ben, we're happy to announce that you're in full remission. We're releasing you on Sunday.

Ben jumps up.

BEN

Yes! I'm outta here!

Everyone applauds, and Ben takes several bows.

INT. CANCER WARD - LATER

Cal performs for the kids, and the whole room is packed with kids, nurses, and parents, including Linda.

Just as Cal finishes a song, Amanda suddenly rolls off her bed and falls to the floor. She is having a seizure. Cal stops singing, and Louis and several nurses rush to her. Louis looks at her pupils.

LOUIS

It's a brain bleed. We're gonna need a room. Somebody page Harrison. Now!

Louis and the nurses subdue her and wheel her away down the hall. Ben tries to run after her, and Linda holds him back. He breaks free and runs down the hall.

LINDA

Ben!

INT. CANCER WARD - LATER THAT EVENING

Everyone sits in the ward, waiting for any news about Amanda. The room is still filled with balloons and streamers from Ben's party earlier.

Cal sits on Ben's bed. Linda holds Ben in her arms, and Ben holds the signed football Amanda gave him.

After a beat, Louis and Dr. Harrison appear. They look haggard, broken. Dr. Harrison shakes his head.

DR. HARRISON

I'm sorry.

Ben puts his head into Linda's chest and cries.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - LATER

Cal approaches Scott and Jenny, who sit, puffy-eyed from crying. He sits with them. There is nothing to say.

INT. CANCER WARD - LATER THAT NIGHT

Linda stands outside Ben's room, looking in on Ben. He lies on the bed, staring into space.

Cal comes up behind her and puts his hands on her shoulders.

LINDA

He won't talk to me. Or anyone else.

CAL

Maybe there's nothing you can do. Maybe he needs time alone.

LINDA

I'm supposed to know what he needs.

A beat.

LINDA

What do I do now?

CAL

Go home.

LINDA

God.

She looks at Cal.

LINDA

Come home with me? Please?

INT. LINDA'S HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

Linda enters her house, a huge Pacific Heights house with a stunning view overlooking Alcatraz and the Bay. Cal follows her inside. He takes in the surroundings.

CAL

It's... nice.

LINDA

It is. But it's also really big  
and awful and lonely.

Linda goes into the bedroom. Cal stands uncomfortably.

LINDA (V.O.)

Do you want anything? Something to  
eat?

CAL

I'm okay.

Cal looks around. He sees a large calendar tacked to the wall with notes about Ben's medication schedule and his progress scrawled on each day.

Next to the calendar is a box marked "Emergency Kit," with a list of items taped to the top: "potable water (5 gal); batteries (C, D, AA); canned food (soup, peas)," etc.

Cal walks into the living room. There he finds photos of Alan and Linda together, Alan and Ben together. A happy family. A chill goes through him like a ghost.

Linda emerges from the bedroom. She has changed into a sweatshirt and jeans. She sees Cal looking at the photos.

LINDA

I haven't been able to take them  
down.

CAL

You shouldn't. What did he do?

LINDA

He was a trader. But the money  
wasn't his. It was mine. My  
father's, actually.

CAL

What did your father do?

LINDA

He was an inventor. He patented a  
method to triple wheat production.

CAL

(looking around)  
I guess he made a killing.

LINDA  
He did. He also helped feed  
millions of starving people. Can I  
ask you something?

CAL  
Okay.

LINDA  
What is it about money?

CAL  
That's not... (A beat) I'm going  
to go.

LINDA  
Why?

CAL  
I don't belong here.

CAL heads to the and opens it. LINDA stops him.

LINDA  
Please.

CAL  
Do you want me to stay because you  
want me? Or do you just not want  
to be alone?

A beat. LINDA stares at him.

LINDA  
I don't know. But right now, I  
need you to be here. Stay. Please.

She puts her arms around Cal and holds him. She closes  
the door. Cal lets her.

She takes his hand and leads him into the bedroom. She  
kisses him and moves him toward the bed.

Fade to black.

INT. LINDA'S HOME - NEXT MORNING

Linda sleeps next to Cal as he lays awake. He looks over  
at her. Then he looks out the sun rising over the bay as  
he tries to make sense of everything.

EXT. CANCER WARD - LATER

LINDA and CAL push BEN in a wheelchair from the CANCER WARD. It's bittersweet. The decorations from the party have been cleared. BEN says goodbye to his friends. Then they approach LOUIS.

LOUIS

At ease, soldier. I'm gonna miss you, Ben.

BEN

You, too.

LOUIS

You be cool.

BEN

Okay.

LOUIS

Oh, one other thing.

He pulls out AMANDA'S 49'er cap.

LOUIS

Amanda's parents wanted you to have this.

He puts it on BEN'S head. They shake hands, and CAL and LINDA roll BEN away. CAL stops to talk to LOUIS.

CAL

I wanted to talk to you about coming on full time as my manager.

LOUIS

I appreciate the offer. But I got my thing here. This is where I belong.

CAL

Okay.

LOUIS

But one of my brothers is looking for a gig.

CAL laughs.

CAL

How many brothers you got?

LOUIS

Nine! All boys!

The two shake hands.

CAL

Thanks for everything, Louis.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - LATER

Linda drives, with BEN in the passenger seat and Cal in the back seat. It is a sparkling San Francisco day, and Ben looks out the window, seeing everything with fresh eyes.

The Transamerica building, a streetcar, Coit Tower, Golden Gate Park, the bay, even the sky looks new. The three drive along.

Suddenly, Ben pipes up.

BEN

Mom?

LINDA

Yes, sweetie?

BEN

Remember your promise?

LINDA

What promise?

EXT. GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE - LATER

Ben, with Cal and Linda on each side of him holding a hand, walks across the Golden Gate Bridge. Ben is radiant, alive, charging forward with all his might. And Cal and Linda hang onto him for dear life.

BEN

Look at all the boats! This rules!

Cal and Linda stare straight ahead, clearly petrified.

BEN

You guys are such wusses.

Fade out.



INT. CAL'S FLAT - AFTERNOON

Cal goes to the kitchen and pulls out two coffee cans. He pulls out the cash and stuffs it into a large envelope.

INT. SCOTT & JENNY'S PRESCHOOL - LATER

Cal enters. The place is nearly empty, save for a few kids. A WOMAN sits behind a desk near the entrance.

WOMAN

Hi, Cal. Playing today?

CAL

No. Could you just give this to Scott and Jenny?

He hands the woman the envelope and exits.

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK - DAY

Ben and Cal walk down the steps through a packed football stadium as a 49'er game is underway. They go down further and further, getting close to the field.

They find their seats on the 40 yard line, 15 rows up from the field. Ben is wearing Amanda's 49'er cap.

BEN

Whoa! These are totally choice seats! Where'd you get 'em?

CAL

My buddy Zach's paper gets them for free. He gave them to me.

BEN

He didn't want 'em?

CAL

He's kind of a geek.

The two settle in. A cell phone rings. Cal pulls it out and answers it.

CAL

Hey there. Yeah, we're just fine. He's great. No, we're not close enough to the field to get hit.

Cal hands the phone to Ben.

CAL  
She wants to talk to you.

BEN  
Hi, Mom. Yes, I'm fine. No, Mom,  
I'm not close enough to the field  
to get hit by a ball.

EXT. CANDLESTICK PARK - LATER

Ben and Cal watch the game and cheer as the 49'ers score a touchdown. Cal has loaded up Ben with souvenirs and snacks.

INT. CAL'S CAR - EVENING

Cal drives Ben home. Ben sleeps in the passenger seat. This is a whole new role for Cal. Cal looks over at Ben and smiles.

INT. CAL'S FLAT - LATER THAT NIGHT

Cal enters his flat. The place is neater, and he has rearranged the furniture. He hits the voicemail on his phone. He has one message.

ZACH (V.O.)  
Dude, it's Zach. Listen, I was out  
of line. It's none of my business  
what you do.

A beat.

ZACH (V.O.)  
Anyway, just call me, willya? We  
need to hang out. Alright, later.

Cal erases the message.

INT. CAL'S FLAT - LATER

Cal sits and strums his guitar on the couch. He fidgets. He jumps up out of his seat and heads to the kitchen and opens the fridge. There is one beer, surrounded by cans of soda. He pauses.

Then, he yanks out a six-pack of soda, which he tears into and drinks down, one after the other.

Fade out.

INT. LINDA'S HOME - EVENING

Cal and Ben burst in the front door.

BEN  
Mom! Turn on channel 7!

Cal and Ben sit down on the couch, and Ben turns on the TV. They're watching a newscast on a local news station.

Linda comes in from the other room.

LINDA  
What's going on?

BEN  
We're on TV! There were people  
from the news at the street fair  
today.

A report comes on TV.

INSERT ON TV - CONTINUOUS

A reporter stands in front of a street fair.

REPORTER  
...including, food, fun, and a lot  
of local entertainment.

The camera cuts to CAL on a bandstand performing in front of a horde of children and their parents.

REPORTER  
One of the most popular  
attractions of the day was  
children's musician Cal Harris,  
formerly of the band Sinshine, who  
now goes by the name "The  
Preschool Punker."

The report cuts to a one-on-one with CAL.

CAL  
 Yeah, it's just a beautiful day in  
 San Francisco for everyone to  
 bring their kids out, hear some  
 fun music, and sing and dance.  
 It's a great sense of community.

The report cuts to a one-on-one with BEN.

REPORTER (V.O.)  
 And what was your favorite part?

BEN  
 Oh, totally the "Preschool  
 Punker!" He rocks!

BEN makes the "horns-of-the-devil" sign.

RETURN TO SCENE:

CAL and BEN cheer!

CAL & BEN  
 Yay! Whoo-hoo!

LINDA  
 Ben, you shouldn't have made that  
 sign with your hands on TV...

INT. DINER - DAY

Cal enters a diner near the hospital. Louis, sitting in a booth, waves to Cal. Cal approaches.

Louis sits with a similarly large Samoan man. This is his brother, DANNY, mid 20s.

LOUIS  
 Good to see you, chief.

CAL  
 You, too.

LOUIS  
 Like I said on the phone, this is  
 my brother, Danny.

CAL  
 (taking in the  
 similarity)  
 He sure is.

Cal shakes.

DANNY

Don't worry, bra. I'm not the brother who just got out of the joint.

LOUIS

No, this is the producer who just got a big advance from Pioneer Records.

DANNY

Louis says your stuff is tight.

CAL

Well... It's not hip-hop.

DANNY

That don't matter, dog. Good music is good music.

EXT. LINDA'S HOME - DAY

CAL parks his car in front of Linda's home. He gets out, carrying a small puppy. He walks to the front door and opens it.

CAL

Hello?

As he walks inside, we hear:

BEN

Yes! *Awesome!*

INT. LINDA'S HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

Cal and Ben play with the puppy.

CAL

Settled on a name yet?

BEN

I'm gonna call him Montana. After Joe Montana.

CAL

Only the greatest quarterback that ever lived.

They high five. Linda enters.

LINDA  
Bedtime!

BEN  
What? No way!

LINDA  
You heard me. Go brush.

Ben exits.

CAL  
I guess I should get going, too.

He heads toward the door. Linda follows.

LINDA  
You don't have to leave.

Cal turns around and looks at her.

CAL  
I love you.

A beat. Linda pulls back slightly.

CAL  
I shouldn't have said that.

LINDA  
No, it's fine. It's just... This is good, Cal. This is all good. Ben is home, he's healthy. I should be thrilled. And I don't know why I'm not.

A beat.

LINDA  
You've come at quite a time. Just don't go away. Alright?

CAL  
I won't.

LINDA  
I trust you.

Cal smiles. He kisses Linda and exits.

Fade out.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - DAY

CAL stands in a plush recording studio. Danny sits behind a large console and about a million dollars worth of recording equipment.

Cal looks around. It's been a long, long time since he's been in a recording studio. He looks at the gold and platinum records on the wall. A bassist and a drummer are getting set up behind the glass in the next room.

DANNY  
(indicating the  
space)  
You feeling this, bra?

CAL  
Yep.

DANNY  
You ready to get bangin'?

CAL  
Yes, I am.

INT. RECORDING STUDIO - LATER

Cal, along with The band is in full swing in the studio, laying down a rough track of the "Boogers" song. Cal is clearly loving every moment of this.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Zach and CAL sits at a table at their favorite bar, silent. After a beat:

CAL  
The Black Forest show any good  
last night?

ZACH  
Sucked.

CAL  
You hate everything.

ZACH  
That's basically true.

A beat.

ZACH  
I'm sorry, man.

CAL  
Yeah. Me, too.

They shake.

ZACH  
I don't hate the kids' music  
thing, by the way.

CAL  
Really?

ZACH  
No. I mean, what if this thing is  
what you're meant to do? Turn kids  
on to good music early. Then,  
maybe they won't grow up and  
listen to Ashlee Simpson.

CAL  
We can only hope.

A beat.

CAL  
I'm not sure what I should do.

ZACH  
No offense, but I think you know  
exactly what you should do.

A beat. Cal nods.

ZACH  
Do you need airfare?

CAL  
No.

EXT. AUSTIN AIRPORT - DAY

A plane lands.

EXT. AUSTIN - LATER

Cal takes a cab from the airport.



He looks at a slip of paper and gives the DRIVER the address.

He drives through Austin, seeing old sights, old neighborhoods. Old ghosts, old memories.

EXT. AUSTIN STREET - MOMENTS LATER

The cab pulls up in front of a house in a tree-lined neighborhood, and Cal gets out.

EXT. AUSTIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Cal looks at the house. There are children's toys in the front yard. He double checks the address on the slip of paper, then he mounts the stairs.

EXT. HEATHER'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

He knocks, and waits. A BOY answers the door. Cal stares at the boy for a full beat.

BOY

Hey.

Cal stands frozen.

BOY

Hello?

CAL

(snapping out of it)

Hey. Is your mom home?

The boy turns around and yells into the house.

BOY

Mom! There's a man here.

A beat. Then, a woman about Cal's age comes to the door and stands behind the boy. She stands for a full moment and stares at CAL. This is HEATHER.

HEATHER

Kevin, why don't you go inside and play?

The boy retreats into the house. Heather comes out onto the porch and closes the door behind her. They stand for a moment.

CAL

Hi.

HEATHER

What are you doing here?

CAL

I had to see you. Is that...?

HEATHER

That's him.

They stand.

HEATHER

Is that why you came?

CAL

No. I wanted to say I'm sorry.

HEATHER

It's fine.

CAL

No, it's not. I don't know how to tell you how sorry I am. For what I did.

HEATHER

I don't mean that. I mean I married Carl about six months after you left. He takes care of us. Kevin thinks he's his dad. And I intend to keep it that way.

CAL

Okay.

A beat.

HEATHER

Is there anything else?

CAL

You have every reason to hate my guts.

Heather laughs.

CAL (CONT'D)

But I need you to believe me that I'm a different person now.

HEATHER

So am I.

CAL

I'm sure that's true. (A beat) I didn't know you married Carl.

HEATHER

Like you care. All I saw of you was your dust, Cal.

A beat.

CAL

This is a nice place.

HEATHER

It is. We have a good life.

CAL

Well. Listen, I came to give you this.

Cal pulls out an envelope.

CAL

I'm making money now. It can't make up for what I did, but it's something.

HEATHER

I can't take this.

CAL

Please.

HEATHER

We're fine. We don't need your money. There was a time, but that time is over.

A beat.

CAL

I know I'm not in the position to ask for favors, but could you please just take it? Get Kevin something he's always wanted. And I'll never come back.

Heather looks at Cal for a full beat. Then she takes the envelope.

INT. CAL'S FLAT - MORNING

The curtains are drawn and the room is dark as Cal sleeps.

His phone rings, and he lets it ring. His machine picks it up. It's Linda.

LINDA (V.O.)  
Wake up, wake up, sleepy-head.  
It's Saturday. We want to go play.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS:

-Cal, Linda, Ben, and the puppy play in a grassy field. Cal and Ben play catch with a football, while the puppy chases Linda around.

-The four walk through the central esplanade, near the band shell and the museums.

-The four of them at the playground where Linda and Cal had their first date. Linda and Ben swing.

LINDA  
(to Ben)  
Not so high, Ben! Careful!

Cal watches the two of them together, his new family, and a painful reminder of past mistakes.

INT. LINDA'S HOME - LATER THAT NIGHT

SERIES OF SHOTS:

-Cal and Ben play a video game on the TV in the living room.

-Cal, Ben, and Linda sit around a table, eating. Ben talks animatedly. Cal is a million miles away.

-The three sit on the couch and watch a movie. Linda leans her head on Cal's shoulder.

INT. LINDA'S BEDROOM - EARLY MORNING

Cal lays in bed next to Linda, awake, staring at the ceiling. The sun rises over the bay and streams light into the room.

Linda wakes up and looks over at Cal.

LINDA  
You're awake.

CAL  
Yeah.

LINDA  
What are you thinking about?

A beat.

CAL  
That this is the best thing that's ever happened to me. You and Ben. I can't even think of my life without you.

LINDA  
I'm glad.

CAL  
I need you to know that.

LINDA  
It could be like this every morning. Will you think some more about moving in?

CAL  
Yeah.

LINDA  
It's like we're a family. I didn't think I'd find myself saying that again.

She puts her head on his chest.

LINDA  
I love you, Cal.

He says nothing. She looks at him.

LINDA  
Cal? What's wrong?

CAL  
Nothing. I...

A beat.

CAL  
I don't think you should say you  
love me yet.

LINDA  
Cal?

CAL  
I have to explain something.

INT. BEN'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ben hears Cal and Linda talking in the other room, their voices raising. He slowly gets out of bed and walks down the hall, until he's in front of the closed door. He stands for a moment, listening. Then:

INT. LINDA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

LINDA  
So how old is he? Your boy?

CAL  
About nine.

LINDA  
Same as Ben.

CAL  
Yes.

LINDA  
God.

CAL  
I was stupid.

LINDA  
It all makes sense. You thought  
you could fix your past, make  
everything alright, clear up your  
conscience. With us. Using us.

CAL

No!

LINDA

You must think I'm some kind of fool.

CAL

Linda, please. If I could do it again, I would do everything so different. I love you.

A beat.

LINDA

Get out.

INT. LINDA'S HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Cal walks out through the living room, fully dressed. Ben Cal can't bear to look at Ben, who watches as Cal leaves.

EXT. SAN FRANCISCO - LATER

Cal drives through the city.

EXT. GAS STATION - LATER

Cal impulsively pulls into a gas station with a neon beer sign in the window.

INT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

CAL enters and stands in front of the glass doors, staring at six-packs of beer. After a beat, he steps aside and grabs a six pack of soda instead.

INT. CAL'S CAR - LATER

CAL sits in his car, parked at the foot of the Golden Gate Bridge. He drinks his soda, listening to the radio. A song comes on. It's "Stop Me."

Cal listens for a moment. Then he pulls a foot up from the floorboard and kicks the radio again and again until it goes silent. Then he sits back and drinks his soda.

Fade to black.

INT. RECORD RELEASE PARTY - AFTERNOON

Two months later. A party for CAL'S first album at the Palace Hotel downtown. There are posters of Cal and the album cover of his new album everywhere.

Children run around among well-to-do parents, who nosh on a large buffet. There is a stage set up in the far end of the hall, ready for Cal and his band to play.

Cal stands talking to a well-dressed couple, with Danny at his side.

Out of the corner of his eye, Cal spots Linda and Ben entering. They have the puppy on a leash with them, and he's grown considerably. Cal excuses himself from his conversation.

Ben sees Cal and runs up and jumps into Cal's arms. The puppy jumps up and licks Cal.

BEN

Cal! What's up?

CAL

What's up yourself?

CAL sets BEN down. CAL looks at LINDA.

CAL

Hi.

LINDA

Hello.

CAL

Thanks for coming.

LINDA

Ben didn't want to miss it.

CAL

Well... Thanks.

INT. RECORD RELEASE PARTY - LATER

Cal sits at a table, signing CDs for his young fans, as the parents snap photos.

Ben is next in line, and he approaches Cal with his CD.



CAL  
Hey, little man.

BEN  
Hey.

CAL  
What do you want it to say?

BEN  
That you'll come back.

INT. RECORD RELEASE PARTY - LATER

Cal and his band play the party. The kids all jump and dance around in front of the stage like a pretend mosh-pit. Cal sees Ben running around, dancing.

Suddenly, Ben slams into another kid, hard, and falls down. Ben lays flat on the floor for moment. Cal looks down to make sure Ben's okay. The, Ben jumps back up and keeps dancing. Linda doesn't see any of this happen.

CROSSFADE TO:

INT. RECORD RELEASE PARTY - LATER

Cal and his band continue to play, and the crowd dances. Out of the corner of his eye, Cal sees Linda as she escorts Ben and the dog toward the door. Cal finishes up the song.

CAL  
Thanks, everybody! Okay, little punkers. We're gonna take a quick break.

INT. RECORD RELEASE PARTY - MOMENTS LATER

Cal catches Linda and Ben at the exit. Ben looks ashen.

CAL  
You guys going?

LINDA  
Ben doesn't feel well.

BEN  
I'm okay.

Cal looks at Linda.

CAL  
Thanks for coming.

LINDA  
Goodbye, Cal.

Linda and Ben exit.

INT. BAR - LATER

Danny, Cal, and his band sit around a table, along with two RECORD COMPANY EXECUTIVES. Everyone except CAL drinks.

INT. LINDA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Linda and Ben at home. Ben gets ready for bed, and LINDA stares out the window. She is thinking about CAL.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

One of the executives is making a toast. Everyone holds up their glasses.

EXECUTIVE  
...we are absolutely thrilled with our latest addition to the Pioneer roster. Here's to the success of "Preschool Punk!"

Everyone raises their glasses, including CAL who raises a glass of water.

EXECUTIVE  
Cal, you can't toast with water.

CAL  
Why not?

EXECUTIVE  
It's bad luck. (To the bartender)  
Get this man a shot of tequila,  
the best you've got.

INT. LINDA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Linda tucks Ben into bed.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

CAL and the band drink the toast. CAL knocks back the shot.

INT. LINDA'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Ben calls the puppy.

BEN

Montana!

The dog comes scurrying in and hops up on the bed, then jumps on Ben's stomach. Ben hollers in pain. Linda comes into the room.

LINDA

What's wrong?

Ben is doubled over in pain. Linda lifts up Ben shirt to see a huge, rose colored bruise forming on his abdomen from when Ben fell down earlier. Internal bleeding.

INT. BAR - CONTINUOUS

Cal sits and listens to everyone talking animatedly. He hears nothing. Then, his cell phone rings. Cal excuses himself from the table.

CAL

Hello?

INT. EMERGENCY ROOM - LATER

Cal walks into the emergency room waiting area. He sees Linda sitting in a chair. They look at each other. A familiar scene and setting.

Linda has Ben's old bag packed, with water, clothes, books. Everything in its right place.

A beat.

CAL

It's going to be okay.

LINDA

You don't know that.

CAL

Yes, I do.

Linda gets up slowly and approaches Cal. Then she shoves him away.

CAL

What?

LINDA

Just go!

CAL

What?

LINDA

I can smell it on you.

CAL

What? Excuse me? You kicked me out. You don't get to tell me what to do.

LINDA

I don't believe this.

CAL

You think you can control everything? You can't.

LINDA

My son is in the hospital.

CAL

And I'm here.

LINDA

Yes, well, you can leave now.

CAL

No. I'm not going anywhere.

A DOCTOR enters.

DOCTOR

Are you Ben's parents?

LINDA

I'm his mother.

DOCTOR

Ben needs surgery to stop the bleeding. Immediately.

(MORE)

DOCTOR(cont'd)

And we need to run some tests. I  
need your authorization.

Cal watches Linda. She doesn't look back at Cal. She  
straightens up, all business.

LINDA

Do it.

Linda follows the doctor, leaving Cal standing alone.

INT. OPERATING ROOM - LATER

Doctors operate on Ben.

INT. HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Linda stands in a hospital corridor, staring straight  
ahead. People pass by.

INT. RECOVERY ROOM - LATER

Ben sits in the recovery room. Linda stands and watches  
through a window.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - LATER

Linda stands at Ben's side. He has been intubated, and  
hooked up to tubes and IV's. He is unconscious. She puts  
her hand on his.

INT. INTENSIVE CARE UNIT - EARLY MORNING

Linda sits in a chair, asleep, at Ben's bedside. She  
wakes up and looks at Ben. He is in the same position as  
earlier.

Linda gets up and walks through the corridors. She finds  
her way to the exit.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As she turns the corner, a bright light. The sun is  
rising through the glass of the waiting room at the front  
of the hospital. She shades her eyes.

As she comes into focus, she sees Cal sitting in the waiting room, looking back at her. He has been sitting there all night.

She walks past him.

Then, she turns around and approaches. Slowly, she sits next to him.

She lays her head on Cal's shoulder.

She cries. A sob, then another. Then she lets go. Cal holds her.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - NOON

One year later.

A huge outdoor concert on a perfect San Francisco day. A mass of adults and children spills out over the esplanade.

On the band shell, a giant banner across the stage reads "1st Annual Amanda Hopkins Memorial Children's Cancer Benefit." There are pictures of Amanda everywhere. Onstage, a four-piece rock band plays up-tempo music.

Cal enters a backstage area. He turns a corner to see Linda and Ben waiting for him, along with the dog, who is now almost fully grown. Linda and Ben have laminates around their necks.

CAL

Hey! About time you guys got here.

LINDA

We slept in after you left.

BEN

You slept in. I've been up.

Cal approaches Linda, and they kiss.

BEN

(holding up his laminate) Dude, this is the coolest thing ever. I can go everywhere with this.

Ben runs off.

LINDA  
This is a wonderful thing you've  
done.

CAL  
It wasn't all my idea.

Scott approaches.

CAL (CONT'D)  
This guy had something to do with  
it.

SCOTT  
Big crowd out there.

CAL  
Not bad, huh?

SCOTT  
You ready?

CAL  
Absolutely.

SCOTT  
About five minutes. Jenny will  
come get you.

Cal looks up as Zach enters.

CAL  
Well! Look who finally made it to  
one of my gigs. What's the  
occasion?

LINDA  
Hi, Zach.

ZACH  
Hey, Linda. Yeah, I figured I'd  
better start getting used to kids'  
music.

CAL  
Why?

ZACH  
Carrie's pregnant.

LINDA  
Congratulations!

CAL  
That's awesome! I think...?

ZACH  
(smiling)  
It is. I was freaked at first, but now I'm looking forward to it. I was hoping I could get some pointers on how to act around kids.

CAL  
Don't be afraid. They can smell fear.

Ben comes running up.

BEN  
Cal!

CAL  
What's up?

BEN  
I think the guys from Sinshine are here.

Cal turns around to see all of his FORMER BANDMATES in Sinshine standing there. Each of them has at least one child, all Ben's age and younger. All of kids hold one of Cal's CDs.

BAND MEMBER ONE  
What's up, Cal?

CAL  
Hey.

BAND MEMBER TWO  
Sorry to bug you before a show. Our kids wanted to get your autograph.

KID ONE  
It's the Preschool Punker!

The kids rush CAL with their CDs. He laughs.

BAND MEMBER ONE  
You're a major rock star to them. More than we're ever gonna be.



Cal gathers the kids around and signs their CDs, talking with them and laughing.

EXT. GOLDEN GATE PARK - MOMENTS LATER

The crowd chants "Preschool punk! Preschool punk!"

Scott and Jenny come out on stage. Scott approaches the mic, holding a piece of paper.

SCOTT  
He's coming, I promise!

JENNY  
But before we bring him out, we just want to let you know that so far today, we've raised over \$50,000!

The crowd roars in approval.

SCOTT  
Now, are you ready for your headliner?!

The crowd hollers back: "Yes!"

SCOTT  
Let's give it up for Cal, the Preschool Punker!

Cal comes out on stage, waves, and plugs in his guitar. He and his band kick into an upbeat song. In front of the stage, kids start to dance in the pretend "mosh pit."

From the side of the crowd, BEN, LINDA, and the dog emerge.

BEN  
Can I go dance, Mom? Please?

A beat.

LINDA  
Only if I get to dance with you.

Ben rolls his eyes. Then he grabs Linda's hand and leads her and the dog into the center of the dancing. Cal and his band play on as we pull back on the crowd.

END.

