

FADE IN:

EXT. DARK ALLEY - NIGHT

In a filthy part of town, a hooker can be heard hitting on a John.

HOOKER (O. S.)
Hey sailor, boy. Looking for some
action?

HAWKER (O. S.)
Girls, girls, girls! Hey, check
'em out, check 'em out, check 'em
out!

The sounds fade as we recede from the entrance.

A bottle clatters and a startled cat yowls.

A distant fog horn bellows.

And two pairs of legs emerge from wisps of mist.

GORDON, a scruffy addict in T-shirt, jeans, and hippie wrist
bands, glances at the entrance, tempted.

HAWKER (O. S.)
Yo, ten bucks, ten bucks, ten bucks!
Girls, girls, girls!

GORDON
I don't know, Samir.

His friend, SAMIR, a suave, sharp dressed Arabic man says
nothing aloud.

SAMIR (V. O.)
I've known Gordon, I don't know how
long now. Can't even remember when
we met. Or where. He had dreams
then. The virility of youth.

Gordon stuffs hands in his pockets, struggling with inner
demons.

SAMIR (V. O.)
I'm sure he never thought he'd fall
this far but then, who ever does?

Gordon scuffs the ground with a toe.

SAMIR

Gord, if you're not sure.

Samir raises an arm, as if to summon a cab. His sleeve slides just enough to reveal a gold link bracelet.

GORDON

No. No, we're this far. May as well check out the grub.

Samir lowers his arm. OFF CAMERA, an argument breaks out.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Vim, please.

The men turn.

Beneath a coned alcove light a man in an expensive suit, VIM, looks like he's just slept off a bender. He shoves a WOMAN away, raising an open hand to cast a slap.

She cries out, raising braceleted arms, partially obscuring a sign bearing the words "...ANONYMOUS MEET..."

WOMAN

Vim please!

Gordon glances at Samir, wondering if they should intervene. Samir shakes his head.

VIM (O.S.)

I'm out of here.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Vim! Vim, please! Vim, don't go!

The voices fade, a bit oddly, and Gordon glances at Samir.

SAMIR

Choice has to be theirs.

SAMIR (V.O.)

It just doesn't work any other way.

Gordon sighs and flicks his head at the door.

INT. STAIR WELL - NIGHT

The rhythmic echo of gym chairs slam on a floor.

SAMIR (V.O.)

That'd be Millar. He's got... Issues.

Samir and Gordon enter.

They climb trash strewn worn wooden steps.

SAMIR

See, part of the thing about our addiction is that we have what's called suggestible personalities and, well let me tell you there's always plenty ready to take advantage. Millar had the rotten luck of getting stuck with a nasty bunch. A family that kept him bottled up in the dark all the time. Only let him out to pass him around and fulfill some particularly nasty desires.

At the top of the stairs they head down a dingy corridor.

INT. LECTURE ROOM - NIGHT

The last chair hits the floor.

MILLAR, a wild haired, pierced, scrawny little punk rocker with tattooed chains and shackles glides back from his work.

NOTE: Never show below Millar's waist.

The chairs have been set out in military precision.

Millar heaves to get an empty trolley moving, struggling like he can't get a grip.

SAMIR (V.O.)

For now, he just wishes he could be left alone but, it's not like we can up and grant our own wishes.

Waiting with Samir at the entrance, Gordon gives the place an unimpressed once over.

The Anonymous members mingle. From all walks of life the only thing they seem to have in common, those with short sleeves at least, is all are wearing some type of cuff, band, or jewelry on both wrists.

GORDON

Boy. Got 'em all here, don't you?

Samir glances at Gordon.

SAMIR (V. O.)
 All newbies talk like that.
 Shrinks say it's their
 rationalizing and at this point
 advise us sponsors to just shut the
 hell up.

Sami r nods to follow and leaves. Gordon complies.

At the registration desk, Sami r fills out name tags and
 Gordon looks around.

SAMIR (V. O.)
 They're here, don't need any tired
 old cliches about how our
 affliction doesn't care if you got
 a fortune stashed in a cave
 someplace or haven't got a pot to
 piss in--

GORDON
 Whoa, who, is that?

Sami r glances over.

AN AGITATED PONY TAIL

Is given immediate berth by everybody.

Gordon stares, slack jawed.

SAMIR (V. O.)
 Yeah. Shamal has that effect on
 anybody with a pulse.

SHAMAL, an exotic beauty, sets coffee at the food table.

Sami r pushes up in the air with a finger.

Gordon's jaw clicks shut obligingly.

Sami r pastes his tag on.

SAMIR
 She, Gordo, could rip your you know
 what out by its roots.

Then presses Gordon's on. Gordon can't take his eyes off
 Shamal.

SAMIR
 And stuff it where the sun don't
 shine with the blink of an eye.

Gordon cocks a challenged eye at his buddy.

BOB, a grizzled biker with SCRIPT TATTOOS down each arm and BIKE CUFFS, takes the speaker's podium.

BOB
If we could all seat? Everybody?

Samir spins a finger and flicks at the chairs.

Smirking, Gordon whirls, letting legs lead as if under magic compulsion.

Chairs shuffle as members seat.

Near the back Gordon offers Samir in a seat as she passes. She gives him an icy glare in passing.

Samir scowls at Gordon.

GORDON
What? You didn't feel the magic?

SAMIR
(huffs)
Yeah.

He shivers.

Shamal creates a minor ruckus as she forces her way to an empty seat in the middle of the crowd.

Members flow away as if she were surrounded in an invisible bubble.

Gordon shrugs a smirk at Samir.

GORDON
(re: Shamal)
Oh come on. You'd have to be dead.

Samir rolls eyes, that finger, and jabs to sit.

Again Gordon feigns being magically forced.

SAMIR (V.O.)
Got to admit I'm tempted. To turn him loose.

Shamal's agitated ponytail seems to have a life of its own.

SAMIR (V.O.)

Been a while since I've seen an irresistible force hit an immovable object but, Sammy here don't do collateral.

BOB

Hi everybody. My name is Bob.

MEMBERS

Hi, Bob.

Gordon scowls at Samir.

SAMIR (V.O.)

Yeah, I know. But it's those little rituals that bind.

BOB

I see a few new faces here so, before presentation, any questions?

Other than somebody shuffling a chair, it's dead silent.

BOB

Alright. For those unfamiliar with our program then, I've been dealing with this affliction since my youth.

Millar's more interested in the back of the chair in front.

BOB

If I'd known how tight it would bind then maybe.

He twists a sweaty cuff.

BOB

Maybe that first time I would have refused. But after was too late and I've been forever chasing that initial high. I still remember that first, rush of escape. I was invincible, all powerful. Felt I could do anything.

The audience mumbles agreement.

Millar carves the back of a chair with an UNSEEN knife.

BOB

I remember the old days--

MEMBER

Old testament or new, Bob?

The crowd chuckles.

BOB

Hey. Credit me a couple millennium.

The crowd chuckles again.

BOB

In any case. Then?
 (a bit bitter)
 It was always, us with the problem. We, lacked control. We, had no will power.
 (shrugs)
 It's always easy, preach from outside but, only those of us, who've actually lived inside that bottle, understand your will is first to go.

Gordon glances at Samir, who just shrugs.

BOB

It's a lot rougher on family though. We all just assume they'll always be around but, you just have to stay in that bottle once too long and the next time you come out you find they're all gone. Just memories and dust. If we could just, get people to think first, it would save a whole lot of heartache.

The members mull privately as Bob gestures to Dr. an odd little man clutching a stuffed briefcase.

BOB

Our guest speaker tonight is Dr. Nicholas Panford, an addiction specialist. He holds degrees in neurology and psychotherapy, and is a leading researcher in the field.

There's polite applause as Panford takes the podium.

PANFORD

Um. Thank you. Thank you.

He looks around, clearly nervous of his audience, even a bit scared to be here.

PANFORD

Um. My. My research has determined that there is direct correlation, between a brain's neurochemical and synaptic structure and addiction. As I will explain...

Panford's drone fades as Samir mulls privately.

SAMIR (V.O.)

That last Bob said got me thinking about my own ex. Funny. I gave her everything. Every comfort imaginable, to try and make up for my disappearances maybe I guess, I don't know. But in the end she couldn't handle it. Last time she saw me she said, if we couldn't grow old together, she damn sure wasn't going to do it alone. Where ever she ended up. How ever.

(mental sigh)

I hope she was happy.

GORDON

Well ain't that an kick up the old id.

SAMIR

Mm?

He turns to Gordon, who flicks his head toward the front.

Panford gestures to a schematic of the human brain.

PANFORD

...As if stimuli were round shaped pegs, while the brain's receptors are varying mixtures of round and square holes. Most have more round receptors, thus requiring only small numbers of pegs to satisfy, but the addict has a greater percentile of square receptors, requiring a flood of intense stimuli to find the few fitting receptors, or hammer the round into the square. Addiction is entirely a result of your genetic make up.

GORDON

So it really is Mommy and Daddy's fault.

Laughter breaks out and Samir gives Gordon a drool scowl.

Gordon just smirks.

Things settle as Bob returns to the podium.

BOB

Thank you, Dr. Panford. Now for questions--

Millar is up like a shot. NOTE: Members block any view of his lower body.

MILLAR

Yeah, I got some!

He bobs oddly, shifting from side to side and clutching the chair in front like it's the only thing keeping him grounded.

MILLAR

If it's what he says about us being addicted, then how come it's always only us who gets the blame? I mean. All of us here all know here we can't stop ourselves. I mean. I never want to hurt nobody yet it's always us who gets blamed for the messes.

Gordon glances at Samir as members grumble agreement.

MILLAR

I mean, it's not like they're compelled like we are and it's not like there's no literature out there. About us and our condition and what.

GORDON

Can't argue that there.

Not really paying attention, Samir shrugs agreement.

MILLAR

How come they never show no restraint. I never seen them not open the bottle on us even when they know the affect on us.

Sami r doesn' t notice Gordon messi ng wi th something conceal ed
i n hi s palm.

SAMIR (V. O.)

Kid' s got a poi nt. When you just
crawl out nobody' s thi nki ng
straight. Some of us have been
i nsi de so l ong we got
i nsti tuti onal i zed. That' s when
thi ngs have changed so much on the
outsi de change you can' t cope. All
you want is back i n, and you don' t
care what you have to do to get
there.

As Gordon gauges di stance ahead, TIGHTEN on SAMIR' S PROFILE.

SAMIR (V. O.)

You ever come across someone l ike
that, run. Those guys don' t come
wi th rap sheets they come wi th
legends. They should never be
al lowed back i n society but, these
days, wi th everybody wanti ng
i nstant grati fi cati on--

A THUNDER CRACK snaps Sami r back to real i ty.

SFX: CHAIRS SCATTERING.

Sami r appears normal from thi s profi le. Besi de, Gordon
puzzles ahead, tappi ng hi s chi n wi th the fi ngers of a CURLED
PALM.

GORDON

You know. Now that I recall.
Ai n' t Shamal old tongue for vi ci ous
ki ller storm or something?

Turni ng to Sami r for answer, Gordon uncurl s hi s SMOKE
BLACKENED PALM to gesture ahead.

ANOTHER ANGLE

The hal f of Sami r besi de Gordon took the full l i ghteni ng
blast.

Sami r slumps, clenchi ng a mi grai ne. Gordon just frowns
ahead.

BEGIN TIGHT ON SHAMAL' S wi th angry arms folded out i n front.

Her coal red eyes are just looki ng for excuse to blink as her
pony tail writhes over her head l ike an angry cobra.

Samir groans inwardly.

SAMIR(V. O.)
You wouldn't believe the insurance
we got to cough for this dump.

Everybody's split off to the side, hands up ready to
magically protect.

Millar bobs beside a GIN/GENIE'S ANONYMOUS sign. From the
waist down, he's genie smoke

THE END.

FADE OUT.