

TENTH OF DECEMBER

by

George Saunders

Adapted Screenplay
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FADE IN:

EXT. ON THE ROAD DAWN - PRESENT

MUSIC CUE: "All your Joys, all your Pain" by Max Richter.

Light snow falls as the camera follows a road. A green Nissan drives and parks in a lot by a snow covered soccer field. DON EBER hesitates for a moment before getting out of the car. He takes an uneasy look around. He shuts the door and heads across a soccer field and through a wooded area with snow on the ground and trees completely bare with ice on them. He passes a fire pit made out of a tire. He gets to a clearing with an ice covered pond and he veers off the trail to catch his breath, tired. He stands at the frozen pond for a moment, looking around with a subtle, reminiscent smile on his face. He watches the snow fall on the bare trees in the surrounding forest.

EXT. LEXOW HILL MORNING - 1960

YOUNG EBER's dog, SASQUATCH, pants as they run around the pond. Young Eber laughs. They jog up the hill, Young Eber tags the boulder on top and sprints back down.

FATHER (PRE-LAP)
Better get moving! That is, if
you're still set on the boulder
idea.

KIP FLEMISH (PRE-LAP)
(tagging in)
...which still strikes us as
kind of fancy-pants.

FADE TO:

INT. EBER'S CHILDHOOD HOME DAY - 1961

EBER'S FATHER and another man, KIP FLEMISH, are getting ready to leave the family home. EBER'S MOTHER is in the kitchen dissatisfied with the situation quarreling with Eber's Father. She is waving a picture of Eber's Father and Kip Flemish's wife naked.

EBER'S MOTHER
So what, are you gay? Swingers?
You want go fuck around in
California and just leave us
here?

EBER'S FATHER
(recoiling,
dismissively)
Come on, think about the kids!
You think your son wants to go
to the Derby alone?

Young Eber stands the doorway to the hall watching his parents. His sister, VAL is walking towards the scene as well.

FATHER (O.S.)
 (trailing in)
 Ugh, it's all downhill with you.
 Everything is always just
 falling. Think of what it looks
 like to him! He wants it to be
 nice.

EXT. EBER'S CHILDHOOD HOME - DRIVEWAY DAY - 1961

Kip is loading the car. Eber's Father is kneeling in front of Eber patting his arm with a sorry smile. Kip Flemish is waiting at the car while Eber's father walks over to get in.

KIP FLEMISH (O.S.)
 Nice? That is not the word I
 would use.

INT. EBER'S CATHOLIC SCHOOL DAY - 1963

Eber's childhood teacher, Sister Eustace, puts her fingers to her mouth to shush the classroom. She is missing the ends of her index and middle fingers. She places her hand on Eber's shoulder in praise as she reads his work.

SISTER EUSTACE
 (addressing the
 class)
 Everyone should take their work
 as seriously as Donald here.
 Donald, I hope you'll go home
 and share this with your
 parents.

She pats him on the back and walks to the front of the classroom.

INT. EBER'S CHILDHOOD HOME DAY - 1963

Eber's Mother reads through his work approvingly.

MOTHER
 You know this is really good.
 You should show Allen.

EXT. LEXOW POND EARLY MORNING - PRESENT

Eber is standing at the pond, his smile gone. The look on his face has eased into sorrow masked with contempt. A cardinal zings across the sky in front of Eber. The camera follows the cardinal into the next scene.

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER DAY - 1965

We look through the trees by the riverside and see Young Eber and his stepfather, ALLEN, canoeing together. They are wearing life jackets and Allen is wearing reflective aviators.

EXT. MISSISSIPPI RIVER BEACH DAY - 1965

Young Eber and Allen arrive at a small beach and walk into an Ozark souvenir shop with TWO HIPPIE GIRLS working there. Eber brings a bag of fossil rocks to Allen and he places them on the counter. Two hippie girls are working there.

HIPPIE GIRL 1
(staring at EBER)
Ooh, you'll be a such a fox when
you grow up!

The hippie girls put their tawny heads together and giggle at his prospective foxiness. Young Eber smiles and shyly hides behind Allen.

ALLEN
You know he sure will!

HIPPIE GIRL 2
Y'all have a nice day now, and
please be sure to call me when
you get a bit older!

INT. EBER'S CHILDHOOD HOME DAY - 1963

Allen reads Eber's school work as he asks questions.

ALLEN
(playfully)
Wow! This is great! Is that
the manatees? Talking to each
other? How do they do that?
What do they eat again?

INT. EBER'S SAME CHILDHOOD HOME DAY - 1965

Val and Eber slightly older decorate hat bands with magic markers. One says "WIN WITH EBER!" and another says "GROOVY!". Allen is taking straw boater hats out of a store bag.

VAL
Why not shoot for being the next
J.F.K.?

INT. EBER'S CHILDHOOD HOME LATER THAT DAY

Allen helps Eber tape record a speech.

EXT. EBER'S SCHOOL DAY - 1965

Eber is passing out the tapes.

ALLEN (V.O.)
Your message is good, and you
are incredibly well spoken. You
can do this thing.

INT. EBER'S SCHOOL AUDITORIUM DAY - 1965

Eber and his classmates sit waiting for an announcement.

PRINCIPAL
...and for class president of
the student body, Donald Eber!

Eber throws his arms up triumphantly.

EXT. EBER'S BACKYARD DAY - 1965

The students from Eber's class are celebrating his victory with a party. Allen arrives with pizza and the kids clamber to get a piece.

EXT. LOCAL SWIMMING POOL DAY - 1968

Allen coaches Eber with a stopwatch as he races.

ALLEN
Come on, come on! The clock is
ticking!

INT. EBER'S CHILDHOOD HOME DAY - 1968

Allen, Eber, and Val work on découpage making pictures of plants and animals.

INT. EBER'S CHILDHOOD HOME DAY - 1970

Allen combs Eber's hair for lice. Eber hugs Allen with tears in his eyes as Allen pats his back.

EXT. EBER'S CHILDHOOD NEIGHBORHOOD DAY - 1970

Allen puts his hand on Eber's back as they walk down the road.

YOUNG EBER (V.O.)
(crying)
I'm sorry.

ALLEN (V.O.)
No problem at all Donny boy.

INT. EBER'S CHILDHOOD HOME DAY - 1975

An aged Allen reads a letter with a horrified expression. He

puts his hands on his face, holding back tears.

INT. EBER'S CHILDHOOD HOME LATER

Allen, looking more sickly, gets angry about a broken plate. He shouts at Eber and his mother.

INT. EBER'S CHILDHOOD HOME DAY - 1977

Allen's health has significantly deteriorated. He is angry at the water delivery man for spilling water on the floor.

INT. EBER'S CHILDHOOD HOME LATER STILL

Allen has sickened and is bedridden. Eber's mother puts a glass of water on his nightstand.

MOTHER
Anything else, Allen?

Allen turns his head away

INT. EBER'S CHILDHOOD HOME LATER STILL

Allen shouts at Eber and Eber's mother as he hobbles out of the kitchen.

ALLEN
(New England
accent)
Cunt!

Eber and his mother look at each other in confusion.

ALLEN
(New England
accent)
Cunts!

Eber and his mother start laughing.

EXT. LEXOW POND EARLY MORNING - PRESENT

Eber looks towards the sun starting to rise. He walks along the frozen pond.

END MUSIC CUE

INT. ROBIN'S HOUSE CONTINUOUS

In a warm house not far away, ROBIN, a pale, young boy of about 5 or 6 with unfortunate prince valiant bangs and cub-like mannerisms, hulks to the mudroom closet and requisitions his dad's site coat. He then requisitions white spray-painted boots and a pellet gun that has white paint wiped off the wood grain. A child's drawing of a beaver with an "X" through it sits among his belongings.

NASA (V.O.)
Robin, this is Houston. Do you
copy?

ROBIN
(talking to
himself)
T-minus two minutes, NASA. Ready
to go?

NASA (V.O.)
Affirmative. We have your
coordinates. Be careful out
there, Robin.

During Robin's prep, ROBIN'S MOTHER, a biker chick looking woman with a munificent splay of long silver hair and a raspy voice, is in the kitchen making breakfast. There is a stuffed beaver toy on the dining room table. A bible quote above the sink says "Blessed are those who help those who cannot help themselves". The house has a warm glow of colors. There are antlers on the wall and an old-time crank phone as a decorative ornament.

ROBIN
(yelling into the
house)
I'm going to the pond to get the
nethers!

ROBIN'S MOTHER
(from the
kitchen)
To the pond?

ROBIN
Yes the nethers are there. They
might get Suzanne from homeroom!

ROBIN'S MOTHER
(confused at
first, then
laughs)
Oh yes, the nethers. Well hurry
back soon for breakfast!

Robin finishes suiting up and turns awkwardly to the door. ROBIN'S FATHER, a mid forties man with a line backer build, catches him.

ROBIN'S FATHER
(from behind)
Hey be careful out there...

Robin stops before walking out.

ROBIN'S FATHER

(from behind)

Trust your mind, Rob. If it smells like shit but has writing across it that says Happy Birthday and a candle stuck down in it, what is it?

ROBIN

Is there icing on it?

Robin's Father stands for a moment squinting his eyes as if an answer was not quite there yet. He walks away and Robin closes the door. Robin runs out with his kit and is surprised by the cold.

EXT. IN THE WOODS OUTSIDE ROBIN'S HOUSE MORNING

Robin plays hunter with his pellet gun as he rambles across a snowy soccer field and down a wooded trail, hiding behind logs and trees. Imaginary beavers (NETHERS) appear and disappear behind trees and around corners, muttering with a Mary Poppins accent.

NETHER

(muttering)

Oy there!

They chortle with laughter as Robin's shots miss. He shoots at them as they scurry away. He plays his role with focus.

NETHER

(muttering)

Blimey!

A shot hits a beaver's flank and recoils, muttering. It limps away in a hurry.

NETHER

(muttering)

Thanks guv'nor!

Robin's childish face turns concerned and intense.

NETHER

(muttering)

She's ours!

ROBIN

(whispered gasp)

Suzanne!

Robin gets behind cover and grabs a toy thermometer with a cartoon duck on it from his pocket. It shows ten degrees Fahrenheit. He peers over the cover to see Eber's green Nissan near the end of the soccer field. The bright blue snow crunches under his feet as he crosses the soccer field to the narrow, wooded path, following Eber's foot prints.

ROBIN

Look, Suzanne, I know you don't know my name. You called me Roger that time you asked me to scoot over, but still I feel something between us. Do you?

Robin crouches behind cover and points his gun.

NETHER (O.S.)

Stop talking to her, mate.

Robin runs from cover and darts through the woods.

ROBIN

I won't. Suzanne, even if you don't feel there is something to us, rest assured I will still slay this fellow and return you home. Where do you live again? Over in El Cirro? By the water tower? Those are some nice houses back there.

Robin stops in his tracks. An imaginary SUZANNE BLEDSOE is being held by imaginary beavers. She turns her head to face him. She has piercing brown eyes, wet with fear and sudden reality.

SUZANNE

Yes. We also have a pool. You should come over next summer. It's cool if you swim with your shirt on.

Robin continues running through the woods.

SUZANNE (V.O.)

(cont'd)

And also, yes to there being something to us. You are by far the most insightful boy in our class. Even when I take into consideration the boys I knew in Montreal, I am just like: no one can compare.

Robin closes in on her imaginary captors. He talks as his gun sights are pointed slightly off screen.

ROBIN

Well, that's nice to hear. Thank you for saying that. I know I'm not the thinnest.

SUZANNE (V.O.)

The thing about girls is we are more content-driven.

NETHER (V.O.)

Will you two stop already? Now
is the time for your death---
er, deaths!

ROBIN

(turns to face
imaginary Nether)

Well, now is certainly the time
for somebody's death!

Robin rolls out of the shot. We see him alone in the forest. He rushes forward to pursue his imagined foes. He runs through the forest with a childish gait and nearly stumbles on a recently deceased raccoon. Robin's face humbles with sadness at the sight of the beginning of decomposition. He is on the verge of tears.

SUZANNE (O.S.)

That just means you have a big
heart.

Robin sniffs away tears and walks away from the animal.

EXT. DUCK POND CONTINUOUS

MUSIC CUE: "In the Garden of Cosmic Speculation", by Max Richter

Eber continues walking the path along the pond.

MOLLY (PRE-LAP)

(laughs)

...I don't know. It just feels
so sudden to me.

INT. EBER'S FAMILY HOME MORNING - 1988

Eber pulls bananas from the freezer and cracks them on the counter. He puts the pieces in a bowl and pours chocolate over the broken chunks. Molly, Eber's wife, prepares lunch for their children, Jodi and Tommy. The children run to the kitchen ready for their first day of school. The kids chatter with excitement as they get ready.

EBER

Hey kids, big day today!

EXT. OUTSIDE JODI'S CLASS AFTERNOON - 1990

Eber waits outside Jodi's classroom window. Rain is pouring. Jodi laughs over a book with a red-haired boy (young LARS) who is less interested in her than she is in him.

EXT. DUCK POND SUMMER DAY - 1990

Eber and the kids are at the same duck pond during a nice summer day. They run around, blow bubbles, and feed the

ducks.

INT. EBER'S FAMILY HOME DAY - 1999

Jodi is older now, in late high school or college, working in the family living room. An OLDER LARS is painting a bird feeder childishly right next to her as she does homework. Molly brings them snacks. Lars starts juggling wearing a jester hat as they all laugh.

EXT. EBER'S FAMILY HOME DAY - PRESENT

Jodi and Tommy are adults now leaving Eber's house the last time he saw them together. He gives them a hug and he smiles and waves as they drive away.

YOUNG EBER (V.O.)
(background)
...but I don't wanna go.

ALLEN (V.O.)
(background,
laughing at
first)
...he won't hurt you. He's
pulled a lot of teeth before!

INT. EBER'S CHILDHOOD HOME EVENING - 1978

Allen lays in bed during his final days.

INT. EBER'S DOCTOR'S OFFICE TWO MONTHS BEFORE PRESENT

Eber sits in a similar position to Allen in a doctors office chair.

INT. EBER'S BACKYARD ONE MONTH BEFORE PRESENT

Eber is doing dishes and garden work with a noticeable difference in facial expression.

INT. EBER'S FAMILY HOME LATER THAT NIGHT

Molly rubs Eber's back as they have dinner together.

EBER
(shaky, hollow,
unconvinced)
...I'll be like him. I'll try
to be like him.

MOLLY
You are not Allen and Allen is
not you.

INT. EBER'S FAMILY HOME DAYS LATER

Family life becomes strained. Molly, Tommy, and Jodi huddle

together in the kitchen filled with pity and loathing. Molly, Tommy, and Jodi recoil at something cruel Eber says.

INT. EBER'S BATHROOM THE NEXT MORNING

Tommy lifts Eber's thin arms up so Molly and Jodi can help Eber wash himself when he is sick.

EBER (V.O.)
(trying to
explain)
...because I'm your father, and
that's what a father does...I
just want to ease the burden of
those I love...I just didn't
want it to be some painful last
image that might endure for a
lifetime.

INT. DOCTOR SPIVEY'S OFFICE SOME TIME LATER

Eber is in a doctor's office as Dr. Spivey reviews his clipboard. He is drawing a daisy on one of the post-it notes on the clipboard. Eber is taking some medical tests.

DR. SPIVEY (V.O.)
(to Eber)
...well, honestly? As these
things grow, they can tend to do
weird things. But it doesn't
necessarily have to be terrible.
Had one guy--just always craved
him a Sprite.

INT. EBER'S BEDROOM THAT NIGHT

Eber is sitting up in his bed at night. He has some trouble getting out of bed and falls getting off. He picks himself up to sit against the bed and catch his breath in the dark. He puts his hands on his face.

EBER (V.O.)
(talking to
Molly)
...I guess that's how they get
you. (beat) I just wish I could
spare them.

EXT. LEXOW HILL PRESENT DAY

Eber stops walking as a breeze sends down a sequence of linear snow puffs from somewhere above. Eber has a somber look on his face.

EBER
(shivering)
Good Christ.

Eber takes off his hat, coat, and gloves.

INT. EBER'S LIVING ROOM THAT MORNING

Eber is reading on his couch. He sees Molly gather her things and leave the house and they wave each other goodbye.

EXT. LEXOW HILL PRESENT TIME

Eber stuffs the hat and gloves in a sleeve of the coat and leaves the coat on the bench.

EBER
Lord, don't let me fuck this up.

Eber is shivering heavily now. Like a tremor. His head is shaking on his neck. He pauses to puke a bit in the snow, wipes his face and then sighs and continues on.

PAUSE MUSIC CUE

EXT. LEXOW WOODS CONTINUOUS

Robin crunches through the snow to a snow covered truck tire with a wadded up old blanket in the center and some beer cans.

NETHER (V.O.)
You probably like to party.

SUZANNE (V.O.)
No, I don't. I like to play and
I like to hug.

NETHER (V.O.)
Hoo boy. Sounds like
Dullsville.

SUZANNE (V.O.)
Somewhere there is a man who
likes to play and hug.

EXT. DUCK WOODS CONTINUOUS

Robin emerges from the woods to a vista by the pure white frozen pond. Eber's tracks in the snow depart from the path to the shore where he stopped to look earlier. Robin stops to look at the same spot. He follows the tracks back to the path and around the pond towards Lexow Hill. Eber's coat is on the bench where he left it with no snow on top of it. It is still warm. Robin looks up the path to see Eber's bald head and bare, skinny arms plodding halfway up the hill in his pajamas. Robin is confused as if he knows something is wrong. Robin picks up the coat and begins to continue up the path towards Eber.

ROBIN
(talking to
himself)

Estimated time of overtaking the
Nether, handing him his coat?
Approximately nine minutes. Six
minutes to follow the path
around the pond, an additional
three minutes to fly up the
hillside like a delivering
wraith or mercy-angel, bearing
the simple gift of a coat.

(pauses for a
moment)

That is just an estimate, nasa.
I pretty much made that up.

NASA (V.O.)
We know, Robin. We know very
well how you work.

Robin begins talking to himself in Suzanne's voice.

ROBIN
(as Suzanne)

Robin, hurry, I feel so sorry
for that poor old guy.

ROBIN
(as himself)

Don't worry. He's a fool.

ROBIN
(as Suzanne)

I'm worried he doesn't have much
time.

ROBIN
(as himself)

There, there. Don't be afraid.
He is lucky to have me here to
bring his coat up that big steep
hill, which isn't my cup of tea.

ROBIN
(as Suzanne)

You're a hero!

ROBIN
(as himself)

I guess so.

Robin walks along the shore and looks up towards Eber.

SUZANNE (V.O.)
He's getting away!

Robin looks around for a shortcut. The path continue on the
opposite side of the shore across the ice. After hesitating

for a moment he begins to walk across it.

SUZANNE (V.O.)
Wait, it's too dangerous.

ROBIN
It is not. I have done it
numerous times...Or
once...Actually never.

EXT. LEXOW HILL CONTINUOUS

Eber struggles to make it further up the hill.

INT. ALLEN'S BEDROOM EVENING - 1978

Allen is asleep during his final days.

EBER'S MOTHER (V.O.)
(echoing)
Oh, Allen. Even now you're
still Allen to me.

EXT. LEXOW HILL PRESENT

Eber struggles to exhaustion and lays into a tree as he
collapses at its base.

EBER'S FATHER (V.O.)
(echoing)
Falling.

Eber grimaces in pain, emotionally crushed. His eyes turn
red and begin to water. He closes his eyes.

INT. MEDICAL EXHIBIT DAY - 1982

Eber and Molly look at a brain slice with a nickel-sized
brown spot.

MOLLY
That brown spot was all it took
to kill the guy.

EBER
(laughing)
Poor guy. No brain in his head.

INT./EXT. VENUE ATRIUM CONTINUOUS

Eber and Molly eat hot scones. They watch a squirrel mess
with a plastic cup. They smile together as they hold each
others hands.

EXT. LEXOW HILL PRESENT

Eber grimaces again as he rubs the scar on his head, then
puts his hands around the tree and is barely able to close

them together on the other side of the trunk. He turns around to sit up against it with his back to the trunk.

EBER

No more. Just stay put.

Eber looks around to concentrate on the beauty of the pond, the beauty of the woods, the beauty he would be returning to, the beauty that is everywhere. His eye catches Robin walking on the ice down hill at the pond carrying the coat he had left at the bench.

EXT. DUCK POND CONTINUOUS

Robin walks across the ice.

SUZANNE (V.O.)

Please be careful.

ROBIN

I'm careful. Mom would be afraid to see me now if I wasn't, and I like mom too much.

Robin has walked three-quarters of the way across. He sees a grayish patch in the ice. He stands at the edge for a moment looking at it before dropping the coat to the side and grabbing his pellet gun. He starts tapping the edge of the gray patch with the butt of the gun and it makes a solid sound. He taps more towards the gray and the sound gets thinner. He taps it again and it audibly and visibly cracks.

EXT. LEXOW HILL CONTINUOUS

The music volume quiets to a pause. Eber watches as the ice breaks and Robin falls into the water. Eber is barely able to comprehend what he is seeing.

EXT. DUCK POND CONTINUOUS

Robin panics to grab back onto the ice to pull himself out. The ice keeps breaking in front of him as he repeatedly tries to grab onto it only to fall back into the water.

EXT. LEXOW HILL CONTINUOUS

Eber's face is horror struck in disbelief. It takes him a moment to snap out of his state and he slowly stands back up again. He is very weak but works his way down the hill tree to tree, checking the pond every so often to see robin thrashing through the ice and crying in fear. He stumbles over a lot and even falls over once, bloodying his hand, as he makes it to the switchback and down the hill.

EXT. DUCK POND CONTINUOUS

Eber comes through the woods to the trail head and looks around to see Robin only about 50 yards away. Robin has pulled himself to shore with his legs still in the pond, his

crying subdued to the cold. He lays face down soaking wet on the shore freezing, panting, and groaning. Eber's face has completely changed to one of strength and confidence as he approaches Robin. It takes all of Eber's strength to pull Robin completely out of the water in four pulls. He tries to flip Robin onto his back but he is too heavy. He worriedly turns Robin's head over to get his face out of the snow and starts coaching him with his old voice.

EBER
 (gravely,
 fatherly)
 You're too cold. You have to
 get up. Gotta get moving or you
 might lose your legs. You might
 die.

Robin stares at Eber thoughtlessly and blinks. He stays where he is at but is shivering violently. Eber looks at him worriedly and then looks out to the ice and sees his coat. He immediately walks about 50 feet down shore to walk in a loop towards the coat near the tear in the ice. He is shivering himself and his legs are weak. As he gets close to the coat and the hole in the ice he gets onto his hands and knees and crawls before eventually laying flat on his belly. He slides forward a bit and stretches out his arm to grab the coat at the music's climax. He retraces his sliding, crawling and then walking back to the shore where he came from. Robin has gotten himself up to a sitting position at this point but continues to shiver like a jackhammer. Eber grabs his arm as he beckons for Robin's soaked clothing one piece at a time.

EBER
 Arm...Other arm...Come on, you
 won't last long out here.

Robin's shirt was almost turned to ice. Once it is off, Eber takes off his own pajama shirt and puts it on Robin, followed by the coat, then the hat and gloves that were stored in the coat, then zips the coat to the top. Eber sits on an overturned boat nearby and removes his own boots and socks, then removes his pajama bottoms, stripping himself down to his underwear. He then helps Robin lift himself to his feet and walks him to the boat, then helps him swap his soaked pants and boots with Eber's. Robin stands up after he's changed with his eyes closed from the cold, still shivering.

EBER
 We're going to walk now, okay?

Robin says nothing but opens his eyes some as Eber gets up to his back to beckon him forward. He gives Robin an encouraging pop in the shoulders. Like a football thing.

EBER
 We're going to walk you home.
 Do you live near here?

Robin still says nothing but pushes him again harder. Robin looks up to gape at him, baffled. Eber pushes him again and Robin starts walking. Eber taps him again to get him to move faster.

END MUSIC CUE

MUSIC CUE: "Beginning and Ending" by Max Richter.

Robin picks up the pace as Eber keeps popping him on the back until the panic kicks in and he starts to run away faster than Eber can keep up. Eber watches as Robin runs out of sight back down the trail he came from. Eber is relieved.

EBER
Good boy, get home.

Eber comes back to himself and sighs as he realizes how cold he is, as if he had never known cold. He hobbles to the boat to sit in the snow.

EXT. LEXOW WOODS CONTINUOUS

Robin continues running past the bench and the trail head and into the woods on the old familiar path. He gets to the point where he can't run anymore and sits down on a nearby tree stump to regain his energy. He looks up at the sky to see the clouds have cleared up and the sun had risen. The sky was turning blue and there was a breeze swaying the trees. He looks at his feet and waves them about to make sure he didn't lose them. He looks at his hands to see that he was not shivering as much as he had been before. He closes his eyes and takes a big breath. He then looks back toward the trail and realizes Eber is not following him anymore. He turns to start running again back towards his house. He makes it to the soccer field. Across the field he sees his house with the lights on. He stops for another moment.

EXT. DUCK POND CONTINUOUS

Eber sits slumped against the boat. He is in his underwear freezing to death. His face reflects the chilling pain of the cold. The sound of laughter and children playing in the pond echoes in the background.

EXT. DUCK POND SUMMER DAY - 1988

Eber's children are playing the pond ages four and six. People are walking around with parasols through the park. There is a merry-go-round, a band, and a gazebo with people serving food. A much younger Molly and Eber sit at the shore watching Tommy and Jodi swim together. Tommy splashes Jodi.

MOLLY
Play nice Tommikin!

EXT. EBER'S BACKYARD DAY - 1990

Tommy and Eber play with Tommy's pet rabbits in their back yard. Tommy is feeding them carrots.

EXT. A LARGE FIELD DAY - 1990

Eber helps Tommy fly a kite.

EBER (V.O.)

You have it Tommy. (beat) Even
now I am thinking of you.
(beat) You are very much on my
mind.

INT. EBER AND MOLLY'S BEDROOM EVENING - 1994

Molly and Eber are having a disagreement and harsh words are exchanged in frustration. Molly put her hands to her face as she sits in their bed, starting to cry. Eber hugs Molly and they both lovingly embrace with care and kindness, as if they are saying sorry with their bodies and accepting each other back.

EXT. DUCK POND AUTUMN DAY - 1994

There is a barbecue back at the duck pond. The children are now teenagers. A now freckle-faced Jodi is accompanied by her boyfriend, Lars.

INT. EBER'S FAMILY HOME PRESENT DAY

Jodi and Molly are at home. Jodi is 6-8 months pregnant. Molly cares for Jodi around the house and helps her make coffee and food. Jodi is noticeably stressed. Eber is unable to relate to the stress and awkwardly tries to assist even though he is not well either. He wanders away to gather himself realizing his incapability.

INT. EBER'S FAMILY HOME LATER

Eber looks through Jodi's graduation pictures. One of her in her gown. Another in a nice dress obviously enjoying herself.

INT. EBER'S FAMILY HOME MORNING BEFORE PRESENT DAY

Eber is looking out the window as the two of them get in the car to run errands.

PASTOR (V.O.)

...and this very day you will be
with me (beat) In paradise.
(beat) In the kingdom of heaven.

INT. EBER'S FAMILY HOME CONTINUOUS

Eber is going through his mail. He picks up his life

insurance documentation from the mail and sees an insurance plan for \$400,000.

INT. EBER'S FAMILY HOME CONTINUOUS

Eber's bed is empty. His pills have been left on the table. Molly gets back from the errands with Jodi and calls for Eber.

MOLLY
Hey Don, I got you a
snack...Don...?

Her face becomes concerned once she knows Eber is not home.

EXT. DUCK POND PRESENT

Eber is nearly frozen, hardly able to keep his eyes open. His face is red with sadness and he is nearly in tears.

EBER
Molly, please forgive me.

END MUSIC CUE

INT. MRS. KENDALL'S SUN ROOM DAY - 1992

Jodi's old piano teacher, MRS. KENDALL's sun room is empty except for a piano to one side.

INT. MRS. KENDALL'S SUN ROOM LATER

Younger Jodi has her music book with her getting ready to do a piano lesson. She practices playing. Mrs. Kendall walks into the sun room and sees Jodi.

MUSIC CUE: "She Finds the Child" by Max Richter

MRS. KENDALL
Hello?

She looks at Jodi and says it again. Her voice sounds distant now.

ROBIN'S MOTHER (PRE-LAP)
(distantly
shouting)
Hello, hello!

EXT. DUCK POND PRESENT

Eber is sitting against the boat facing the woods. A silver-haired woman, Robin's mother, is coming around the pond with blankets and jackets in her hands. Eber looks like he might be dead. His sad, tired, frozen face leaves the viewer wondering for a moment.

ROBIN'S MOTHER

Hello!

EBER

(barely able to
speak)

...yeah! Over here!

Robin's mother starts putting several coats and sweaters on Eber, followed by a hat, socks, and sneakers as she helps him to his feet.

ROBIN'S MOTHER

I knew I'd find someone out
here! Let's get you warmed up.
I've got some hot tea back at
the house.

EXT. LEXOW WOODS CONTINUOUS

Robin's mother walks Eber hurriedly through the trees and across the soccer field. Eber sees the Nissan and starts to walk toward it. She guides his shoulders back toward the house.

ROBIN'S MOTHER

(laughs)

Oh, no you don't!

INT. ROBIN'S HOUSE CONTINUOUS

Eber is sitting in a lounge chair in front of a wood stove. Robin's mother brings him a brown blanket to replace the snow covered one he walked in with.

ROBIN'S MOTHER

Here, let me take that. Wrap up
now.

She brings him a mug full of hot tea on a plate.

ROBIN'S MOTHER

Drink this.

Robin's mother reaches down to touch Eber's scar on his forehead.

ROBIN'S MOTHER

Oh wow, ouch! You didn't do
that out there, did you?

Eber smiles and is relieved to be out of the cold. Robin's mother walks back to kitchen. Robin walks up to Eber still wearing Eber's large coat and pajamas. He holds Eber's bloody hand to apologize.

ROBIN

Sorry for running away mister.
I was scared.

EBER

(laughs)

Listen, you did amazing. You
did perfect. I'm here. Who did
that?

Robin walks away. Tears spring into Eber's eyes as he sits and drinks the tea by the wood stove. Red and blue flashing lights appear from the window. The sound of hurried footsteps emanates from the driveway. Eber turns his head as he hears people talking in the entryway. Molly walks in flustered and apologetic, a touch of anger, embarrassment, and shame is in her face, overshadowed with concern. Molly almost stumbles a bit on a swell in the floor of the house as she comes over to embrace Eber.

END MUSIC CUE

FADE OUT:

THE END