

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

Rod is asleep on a log in the middle of the woods. He is surrounded by empty beer cans and a puddle of vomit.

A nearby animal scurries by and rustles some branches and leaves.

Rod opens his eyes and sees a view of the sky partially blocked by the trees. He slips off the log, then slowly stands up, realizing where he is.

He notices the empty beer cans near him and kicks a couple of them, muttering obscenities under his breath.

It's a struggle, but he regains his strength and starts heading in what he hopes is the right direction.

EXT. HALFWAY HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

In the distance, Rod comes out of the woods and heads toward the house.

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Daryl strategically places a piece of paper in the burnt out hole of the Christmas tree. He picks up a suitcase by his side just as Rod enters the room.

DARYL

Rod? Where have you been?

ROD

I got lost in the woods.

Daryl lets out a very fake laugh.

DARYL

I have some bad news. Tweak's in the hospital.

ROD

What?!

DARYL

He overdosed on all kinds of drugs. But don't worry. Tweak's fine. I just saw him. In fact, he should be home in a couple of hours.

ROD

I thought Tweak was doing good.

DARYL

Well, it seems that our producer, Brett, thought that ratings would go up if everyone relapsed and fell off the wagon. I'm sure he's the one that planted all the drugs around the house.

ROD

I guess he put the case of beer at the front door too.

DARYL

I've seen it all, Rod. I've had enough.

Rod glances down at the suitcase he is holding.

ROD

Where are you going?

DARYL

I'm sorry. This isn't for me anymore. I've been clean and sober for almost eight years and for the first time I really, really feel like going out and getting drunk. All because of this house and this stupid show. I should have never agreed to do it.

ROD

You can't leave. Tonight's Christmas Eve.

Daryl shakes Rod's hand and smiles.

DARYL

Merry Christmas, and good luck in the new year. I left a note on the tree for the rest of the gang. Make sure they read it, alright?

ROD

So you're just leaving us here unsupervised?

DARYL

No. They're sending someone over to replace me. So long.

Daryl slowly walks out of the room, suitcase in hand.

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE - HALLWAY - LATER THAT DAY

Rod sits on the staircase while playing his guitar and humming a Christmas tune.

Patty pushes Tweak through the front door on a wheelchair. The rest of the gang follow behind them. Rod stops playing at the site of the crippled Tweak.

ROD

Tweak! They didn't tell me you were paralyzed!

TWEAK

I can walk. It's just my body's very weak and this was the only way they'd let me out for Christmas.

Rod points to a piece of paper hanging on the tree.

ROD

Daryl left us. There's the note.

EVERYONE

What?!

Tweak wheels himself over to the tree, grabs the note and reads it out loud.

INT. LOCAL BAR - DAY

Daryl sits alone at the bar. There are random customers spread throughout.

TWEAK (V.0.)

Dearest Friends: I'm sorry, but I can no longer stay in this house. The network has used each one of us to further their agenda for higher television ratings.

The bartender places a full mug of beer in front of Daryl.

TWEAK (V.0.) (CONT'D)

A halfway house is supposed to be a safe haven for all of us, including myself. It is a place to find support for our addictions, not a devious trap created by a mad scientist trying to bring us all down just for money.

Daryl stares at the foamy mug of beer in front of him.

TWEAK (V.0.) (CONT'D)

I have struggled for many years to stay sober, but yet I have never felt so wasted and useless as I do right now.

Daryl picks up the mug of beer.

TWEAK (V.0.) (CONT'D)

Please forgive me. I will miss you all. Merry Christmas. Your friend, Daryl.

He holds the mug of beer inches from his lips, staring at the suds, but still thinking it through.

INT. HALFWAY HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Tweak crumples up the note and tosses it into the other room. Wreather, the cat, chases it across the floor and starts to play with it.

TWEAK

He left us here by ourselves?

ROD

Not exactly.

We hear footsteps coming down the stairs. Everyone looks to see who it is. It is Brett.

Brett fixes his tie and flashes them all a fake smile.

BRETT

Wonderful. You're all here. Since your trusted counselor decided to quit on Christmas Eve, you're stuck with me until your replacement gets here.

Brett looks at his watch.

BRETT (CONT'D)

Your new counselor, Barry, should be here in the next hour or so. In the meantime, I'll be taking care of some paperwork, so I'd appreciate some peace and quiet around here. Believe me, I don't like hanging around you lowlifes any more than you do.