

A Step Toward Recovery(Draft 6.3)

an original screenplay by

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INT. CHURCH COMMUNITY ROOM - DAY

Large room with items of its previous uses along side walls.

4 people on folding chairs in a half circle.

AARON, 30s, looks like a gang member. CONNER, 40s, from a family with money, with the the pock marks and face scars of an addict. SOPHIE, 20s, a nervous, petite woman in flimsy, dull clothes is dazed and leaning to one side, DANA, 30s, with a sharp style that matches her no nonsense personality.

DANA

(to Sophie)

Hi. You okay?

(beat)

Sophie, right?

SOPHIE

...Yeah.

WES, 40s, the filmmaker, in very expensive casual clothes, checks and adjusts small cameras on tripods around the room.

WES

Hi everyone, have you all met each other?

(off their nods)

Great. Let's get started.

SOPHIE

Is there ah... A makeup person or...

WES

You look great. You all look wonderful and real. That's what I need to tell this story. You with me?

AARON

Yeah. Niggas like me don't too often get to speak truth into a megaphone.

WES

One thing I want you to take note of is that we're in a church. I won't censor you, but be respectful. Also, I want to be honest with you about something. I'm not an addict. My father was a raging alcoholic. He got sober and died a year later. That's my connection to this issue. Who will start?

DANA

Do you have questions for us?

WES

Yes, but, I'm hoping you can forget about the cameras and just talk to each other. Share truth, with no embellishments.

(beat)

Let's start with your primary drug of choice?

AARON

Oxy.

SOPHIE

That's mine, too.

DANA

Alcohol.

CONNER

All of the above. And gambling and sex. Primarily.

Beat.

WES

Okay. Just relax everybody.

(beat)

How old were you when you had your first serious drink?

DANA

Sixteen.

WES

Is that the youngest?

AARON

Hell no. I was fourteen.

SOPHIE

I was fourteen. Or thirteen. I'm not sure, actually.

CONNER

Close enough, baby doll. I had just turned twelve. The maid gave me a taste and more.

DANA

It doesn't just happen to girls.

AARON

We're different, though. By twelve,
we're already looking for a piece.

CONNER

She was in her fifties or something.
I wasn't lookin' for that.

Beat.

AARON

Is everybody on parole?

DANA AND SOPHIE

Parole?! No!

AARON

Alright. I'm on parole. I did three
years on a D.U.I. Getting loaded and
cruising the streets. Nothin' like
it.

DANA

Hey, hey, we're on tape.

AARON

I did my time.

DANA

Will your p.o. see this?

WES

I get a body for my film, she sees
what I shoot.

AARON

Whatever.

DANA

She can't make your life hell?

AARON

After what I been through, it's not
in me to care.

(beat)

I'll tell it all. No filters.

WES

That's great, man.

DANA

Stick with emotional honesty, not
specifics.

A reverend in a blue suit, sensible shoes, and a collar, walks through with a hand truck of boxes.

WES

Reverend Kelly, will you join us?
We're talking openly and honestly
about addiction.

AARON

Reverend Kelly's looking good in
that suit. Get loose, girl.

Beat.

REVEREND KELLY

Wes, I don't want to get in your
way. I'll be done in a flash.

The boxes fall off the truck. The men go help.

WES

This is a sign. Come on, Rev. I'd
love to add your perspective to this.

LATER

Reverend Kelly is seated with the group. Aaron stands.

AARON

I'm not here to bullsh-- I know
what it is to be addicted. It can't
be controlled.

WES

Aaron, you're giving me stuff I can't
use.

AARON

I'm not here to lie to people.

WES

Alright, just sit down.

Aaron turns his chair around and straddles it.

DANA

All I'm saying is, addiction's not a
life sentence.

CONNER

That's true.

Aaron stands.

AARON

Ya'll trying to pull somethin'.

WES

Aaron, this aggressive--

AARON

I didn't spend seven years inside
because of a damn choice.

DANA

Was it seven or three?

CONNER

People can get sober.

DANA

I'm sober. And I can still drink,
sometimes.

Aaron grabs the top of a camera and rattles it.

WES

That's a three thousand dollar camera.

CONNER

I bought the camera. I'll buy
another. Express yourself, man.
(beat)
I'm a producer on this.

AARON

If you're not an addict anymore, you
weren't an addict in the first place.

REVEREND KELLY

Aaron, listen. I don't mind that
you're such a big guy. I really
don't. But, when you're the only
one standing, you're out of the shot.

He sits down.

DANA

Addiction is the hardest thing I've
ever survived and I'm glad I went
through it--

AARON

All real addicts see is the crud on
the bottom of everybody's sneakers.
There's nothing to be glad about.

DANA

Now, I know how hard I'll fight.
When my body and soul are at stake
and all I see is crud, I'll scrap
like a junk yard dog.

WES

Does that work for everyone?
Fighting.

DANA

It can.

SOPHIE

My brain is different.

CONNER

I was sober for a while, once. I
thought I was done with all that.
Then, I went to church and all I
could think about was crumbling up
the communion wafers to sniff.
Addiction's a disease.

AARON

(to Wes)

You shouldn't have us all in the
same group.

WES

The conflict is good.

DANA

Real addicts can get addicted to
anything. Pick something else.

CONNER

When your grabbed by a substance you
don't think through options. It's
like a man lost in the desert
searching for water. All he can say
is wa- wa- wa- water!

DANA

That's not true for me.

AARON

Have you been to jail? Ever drove
drunk. Ever sold yourself?

DANA

That's the test?

WES

There's no test.

AARON

Crazy people desperate for a group--

DANA

You want me to leave?

WES

Dana, why do you consider yourself an addict?

DANA

Look, things got really bad. I had a little trouble with Xanax, too.

Aaron scoffs.

CONNER

When you say you'll scrap like a junk yard dog, what--

DANA

At one point, I was getting over it all and I was driving from a Kwicki mart and a guy walked in front of my car. The neighborhood drug dealer. He looked in at me and I just stared at the light. To make it clear that I was not going to see him and when the light turned green I was going forward.

AARON

So?

Reverend Kelly's pager beeps.

REVEREND KELLY

Wes, I need to leave. But, can I share something with your group, first? Sometimes, we all get to thinking I got this, I'm powerful. I'm gonna show these people and run this my way. We can end up making bad choices. Taking wild risks. That's when I rely on prayer. To put it another way, you can't take the house. When you think you can, let the Lord in. Choice, disease. Choice, disease. Let the Lord in.

As she leaves, Wes takes hold of her hand for a moment.

LATER

The group continues talking.

WES

Sophie, you're very quiet.

SOPHIE

I'm learning a lot.

WES

Do you mind talking about why you want to get sober?

SOPHIE

I'm not sure I can. I just want to see my son, again. But, I embarrass him. I want him to know I'm trying and I'm helping.

CONNER

He still loves you, baby doll. Children want to understand.

(to Wes)

Right? With your dad?

WES

Love is asking too much of me. Let's stay with Sophie.

CONNER

But, you respected his struggle.

WES

He didn't handle it right. So, no.

SOPHIE

I'm sure he's as sorry as I am.

CONNER

I need a cigarette break. How about you, baby doll?

DANA

(to Wes)

Aren't we trying to cope with our urges?

WES

I need a break, too. Let's get lunch. There are sandwiches in the kitchen.

CONNER

Baby doll and I are going off campus.

LATER

Wes, Aaron, and Dana, the only ones in the room, are up talking in a corner.

WES

Yeah, I was in rarefied air and it was nice. I'll get back there.

DANA

I'm worried about Sophie. There should have been a therapist here.

WES

I want to give her a chance to talk more. She can feel like she's said her piece. For her son.

AARON

You want us sliced open, don't you.

WES

Let's get back to it.

They sit down.

AARON

If you do this again, have two groups. Real addicts don't need regular abusers judging.

Sophie and Conner enter.

CONNER

Sorry we're late.

WES

You're right on time. And I'd like to start with you, Sophie. Can you talk more about your plan to reconnect with your son?

SOPHIE

I don't have plan. It's just what I want. More than anything...

CONNER

Then that's what will happen. Trust me. I'd bet you're a great mom.

LATER

WES

Is Alcoholics Anonymous or Narcotics Anonymous part of your recovery?

(beat)

Sophie?

SOPHIE

No, I...

CONNER

You got to find ones with good people.
Come to one with me.

SOPHIE

Okay.

CONNER

Okay.

AARON

I went to a couple of meetings.

DANA

I was going to three meetings a day
for a while.

AARON

Here we go.

DANA

It helped me to stay out in front of
those thoughts. It worked.

CONNER

Dana, if you don't know what it's
like to decide you're never going to
use again. That you'd rather get
hit by a truck than use, and then
start up again, maybe you aren't an
addict. That's good. I was sober
for years, once and I accidentally
had a drink and that was it. You
think if I had a choice, I wouldn't
have sliced off skin instead of
disappointing everyone, again?

DANA

I never understand why people say
alcohol doesn't have a smell, but--

CONNER

It was mixed with fruit punch and
with all the food. I couldn't tell.

DANA

But, in active addiction, my cells
would get jittery around alcohol. I
couldn't have had a drink
accidentally. And when the first
sip turned into a long swig, why
didn't you go to rehab?

Conner throws over a chair.

CONNER

I lost my family to this disease.

AARON

(to Dana)

You were ready to run over a drug dealer so you could stay sober. Be proud, but don't--

DANA

I'm not proud. But, now I know I'm not a victim. I won't lay down.

WES

You can be proud of that.

AARON

But, don't judge--

WES

Aaron, let's move on. None of us can judge.

DANA

I'm not proud of it.

WES

What are your plans to stay sober this time? Sophie?

SOPHIE

...I don't know.

AARON

I'm gonna try prayer. The Reverend converted me.

CONNER

I don't know, either.

WES

Dana?

DANA

Later that night, after the dealer approached my car, the scene came back to me and I realized he wasn't by himself. He was with a young woman and a boy. Eight or nine.

(Beat)

I'm not proud about not seeing them.

WES

Guys, it's been a long day.

(MORE)

WES (CONT'D)

I'll be able to pull together something very special from all this and I'll keep you updated for where to watch it.

Wes checks and turns off each of the cameras.

AARON

(to Dana)

Okay, you might be an addict.

SOPHIE

Too bad we can't keep talking.

CONNER

Anybody want to get dinner? On me.

AARON

(indicating Wes)

He's gotta take me back.

CONNER

As a producer on this, I can do that.

AARON

Alright.

CONNER

(to Sophie)

Come on, baby doll.

DANA (O.S.)

You know what? Don't call her that anymore. She's not your baby doll.

CONNER (O.S.)

Then, who can I hold onto? Are you my-- Ow, ow. Bad idea. Got it.

Wes checks the main camera and turns it off.

FADE TO BLACK