

FADE IN:

INT. CLASSROOM - MORNING

We see thumbs. Moving rapidly, nervously, clandestinely over the keyboard of an iPhone.

PROFESSOR (O.S.)

...Albert Camus, the existentialist philosopher, believed that boredom was essential to personal development.

DAVE PRYCE, 19, nervously chews on his lip in concentration as he hits "send" and sets his phone on the desk. He then turns his attention to his laptop. On the screen is the Facebook profile page of EMILY PIERSON, 19, a pretty young coed who, as it happens, sits on the other side of the room, taking notes --- all this as seen through various means of technology, iphone, security camera, etc.

PROFESSOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

If that's true, then some of you may believe that I'm contributing to your personal development right now.

There is a SMATTERING OF LAUGHTER from the class as Dave steals a glimpse at Emily who remains unaware of Dave's gaze.

PROFESSOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

But what he meant was when you're bored, you're forced to look deep within yourself and confront who you really are.

Dave looks back at the screen. At the top of her Facebook page he reads the disclaimer:

ON EMILY'S FACEBOOK HOMEPAGE - CLOSE UP

"Emily only shares some of her profile information with everyone. If you know Emily, add her as a friend."

BACK TO CLASSROOM

Frowning, Dave considers the invitation then nervously flips to RUN AMUCK, a popular single shooter computer game, intently sending his avatar, "Ironman," down the bleak urban landscape, blasting away with his weapons while the Professor drones on.

PROFESSOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
But in today's digital society with our apps and our instantaneous entertainment at the click of a mouse, have we become so connected that it's impossible to even become bored?

Dave as "Ironman" is racking up an impressive body count.

PROFESSOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
And if it's impossible to be bored, is it even possible to have true self-awareness?

Dave sinks deeper into the world of the game, unaware of the Professor now standing next to him.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)
What do you think about that, Dave?

Dave "comes to" and looks up at the professor, a deer caught in the headlights. He looks around the room. All eyes bore into him - including Emily, who sympathetically smiles.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)
Let's try and stay with it.
Whaddya say?

The Professor gently SNAPS the laptop closed.

EXT. FRONT OF TREMBLAY HALL - LATE MORNING

Emily stands with a cluster of friends, talking. Students trickle out of the building at the change of classes. Dave exits, texting as his earbuds blast music from his iPod. Emily looks up in time to see Dave breeze past.

EMILY
Hey, Dave. Dave---

Dave continues on, unaware. Disappointed, Emily can only watch him go.

EXT. THE QUAD - MORNING

Head down and texting, Dave comes to an intersection of sidewalks and is met by a steady stream students - all, like Dave, heads down and texting.

They converge in a swirling, dodging ballet, effortlessly avoiding collisions as if guided by radar.

Dave comes out of the confluence as he sends one last text, then gazes at his iPhone at a photo of Emily, a shot he just sneaked while in class.

Suddenly, two hands slam down on Dave's shoulders. Halted, Dave stares up into the face of his best friend, NICK, 20.

DAVE
Dude, c'mon - !

Nick grabs Dave's iPhone, finds Emily's picture on its face.

NICK
Whoa, hey - alright. Emily Pierson!

Embarrassed, Dave tries to grab the phone back.

NICK (CONT'D)
Way to go, stud!

DAVE
You mind?

Dave falls in beside Nick as they walk across campus.

NICK
Thought you were playing ball last night.
(faking a jumper)
I was, like, unconscious or something.

DAVE
Phone.

NICK
This? Sure. Oh, no. Only way I can ever get your attention these days.

ANOTHER GUY walks past and hi-fives Nick without stopping.

NICK (CONT'D)
So, hey, listen - tonight, OK?
We're working this blood drive? - -
(MORE)

NICK (CONT'D)
Community service thing for that
class - -
(a quick shrug)
S'OK. Anyhow, why don't you come
over to the Union, hang with us,
help out, pick up chicks.

DAVE
At a blood drive? Right.

NICK
Get'em while they're weak.

Dave snorts a laugh then shakes his head.

NICK (CONT'D)
Bet your girlfriend'll be there.

DAVE
She's not my girlfriend.

NICK
So why you have her on your phone?
(joking)
You a stalker or something?

DAVE
(finally grabbing back the phone)
No! Jeez...

INT. CAFE - MID DAY

The café bustles with the chaotic activity of hungry students with a short time to eat - Emily walks past a STUDY GROUP who cram for an exam, then past SORORITY SISTERS in identical pink shirts who talk excitedly.

NICK (O.S.)
So ask her out.

She passes a GROUP OF STUDENTS chattering on their cellphones - together but connected to people who aren't there.

NICK (O.S.) (CONT'D)
C'mon, least talk to her!

DAVE (O.S.)
Will you leave me alone.

Emily joins Linda, a coed who sits alone, an isle of calm in a sea of chatter. Em looks up just as Dave and Nick walk by.

NICK
What - your thumbs at a loss
for words?

Nick laughs and leaves Dave standing there exposed.

INT. THE CAFÉ - MID DAY

Dave nervously texts, an unopened Subway bag in front of him.
The others talk and eat.

MOOSE
I, like, thought I'd cleaned out
the ninjas in this one level ---

JERRY
Which one?

MOOSE
The one with that green thing - ?

As the talk continues, Dave types in a text message:

"Where r u? Ironman."

And sends it.

JERRY
(nodding)
Always gets me.

Nick crams a french fry down his pie hole.

NICK
Who're you playing with?

MOOSE
This chick named Metal.

NICK
Metal. She's hot.

The guys all nod as Greg adds, a little too enthusiastically.

GREG
Man, she's smokin'!

The guys all look at Greg for a moment. Finally...

NICK
Greg - she's a computer chick. You
know this, right?

A beat, then Greg nods ... but seems momentarily confused by the news.

MOOSE

Anyway, so I'm blasting away, I'm thinking I got 'em all --
(taking a bite)
-- when, all of a sudden, they start pouring outta everywhere like roaches!

JERRY

All you gotta do is lay down a lane of fire grenades...

MOOSE

(ignoring her)
We're toast. Then all of a sudden---
A line of fire grenades.

JERRY

A line of fire grenades.

MOOSE

Brains start exploding all around us!

NICK

Ironman.

Hearing his avatar name, Dave looks back to the guys.

MOOSE

Betcher ass. Takes him maybe 20 seconds tops, he clears the neighborhood, we all move on.

NICK

(calling out to Dave)
The guy obviously has no life.

GREG

The guy's unbelievable.

MOOSE

No - he's God. Not god-like, mind you, but God himself.

Smiling Dave is about to pipe in when Emily appears.

EMILY

Hi, guys.

JERRY
Thank, God. More estrogen.

GREG
(giggly)
Estrogen.

Jerry rolls her eyes.

EMILY
Everybody's ready for the blood
drive tonight, right?

A round of nods and uh-huhs. Dave remains speechless.

EMILY (CONT'D)
Will you be there tonight, Dave?

DAVE
Me?

NICK
(needling)
Yeah. How about it, Davie boy?

Dave takes the rub and is about to answer when his phone CHIMES with a new message. He quickly looks down and reads:

"Ironman - I'm in the game. Where r u? Metal."

The vague MURMUR of friends departing. Thumbs fly. Dave remains engrossed in texting as the gang moves off, joking. Emily glances back at Dave, but his attention is somewhere else. As she looks away, Dave finally looks up and finds himself alone. The table is empty and Emily is gone. Confused, he searches around the room, but they are nowhere to be found. He sighs and stares down at this phone.

INT. DAVE'S DORM ROOM - MID AFTERNOON

Heavy Breathing. Pixalated POV Ironman moving down a warehouse corridor, a sexy avatar, Metal, to his left.

METAL (AVATAR)
There and there. All yours.

Dave stares into the computer screen, face intent, breath heavy. He thumbs the game controller like some finely tuned instrument. His eyes light up as he uncovers a target.

DAVE
Locked. Cover me.

The STACCATO BLAST OF GUNFIRE bounces off the walls. Dave is seated in the center of a room crammed full of a what seems like an endless array of technology. The Subway bag lays alone on a table, its contents remain untouched. Dave squeezes off a final spray of bullets and the round ends.

As the game calculates scores and opens the next level, Dave calls up an app on his iPhone, as it boots he turns his attention to his Wii, then back to his iPhone then he sits and types at a second computer screen and up pops Emily's Facebook page. He stares intently at the friend icon for a moment. Then the game BEEPS. The next round has begun.

EXT. DAVE'S DORM - NIGHT

Through a window we can see Dave still deep into the game.

INT. DAVE'S DORM ROOM - NIGHT

Pixelated image: POV as Ironman and Metal fire away.

Looking back through the screen at Dave, door behind him. A POUNDING AT THE DOOR. Dave doesn't notice. MORE POUNDING and then Nick walks into the onslaught of glowing technology.

Nick looks around the room. The big screen TV shows an Ultimate Fighting bout and a second TV screen hooked up to the Wii shows the image of a paused video game. A third screen displays a bit torrent of some movie.

NICK

Hey, nimrod!

No answer as Dave plays on. Nick walks up behind Dave and yanks the earbuds from his ears.

Dave spins, a wild-eyed look on his face. Just then, his avatar "Ironman" takes a grenade to the head and collapses.

DAVE

God, you douche!

NICK

You missed it.

Dave works furiously to try and reenter the game.

DAVE

Missed what?

NICK

The blood drive.

DAVE
No, I didn't. I ---

Nick picks up the iPhone, clicks on a "what time is it?" app and sets it down in front of Dave.

NICK
It's 9:30. You missed your chick!

DAVE
She's not... Never mind.

NICK
Yeah, I know - -
(imitating Dave as an
andenoidal nerd)
She's not my girlfriend.

DAVE
Shut-up - - -

NICK
Well, she might be if you lived in
this world. Look at this place. You
max out all your credit cards yet?

DAVE
Leave me alone!

NICK
What the hell is going on with you?

DAVE
I just lost track of time.

NICK
Bullshit. Dude, you gotta problem.

DAVE
OK, Mom.

NICK
This crap is taking over your life!

Dave turns to Nick, flaring in anger.

DAVE
What do you know? It's my life.
Leave me alone!

NICK
Dave, I play, too. It's just a
game.

Dave jumps back into the game.

DAVE

Yeah -- and I'm the best, man! I'm the Ironman.

NICK

What ever. Tell Dave I'm gonna shoot some hoops. Do what you want.

Dave turns just in time to see the door slam in his face.

INT. DAVE'S DORM ROOM - PRE-DAWN

The door seems to jump, move, vibrate. As we pull back into the room it's now four am. Except for the glow from the screens, the room is dark. Dave remains focused on his game. Frown lines crease his face. Sweat rings his neckline. His eyes seem worn. He presses pause, removes his ear plugs and sighs. He clicks to another screen and stares.

The screen shows Emily's Facebook page. A friend has posted a few shots of the blood drive. They feature Emily laughing with some guy, not Dave. Frustrated, Dave clicks the screen closed and returns to his game.

METAL(AVATAR) (O.S.)

Where'd you go?

DAVE

Had to check something out.

At first, he's unsure of the MUFFLED EXPLOSION coming from outside. He looks up but decides the sound must have come from the game. He turns his attention back to his screen.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Metal? So where did you go?

Suddenly, there's a LOUDER EXPLOSION accompanied by a bright flash outside his window. Dave reacts just as the power goes out and everything goes dark.

Silence.

DAVE (CONT'D)

What the ---

Surrounded by lifeless machines, Dave grabs the desktop screen with both hands, searches its blackened surface. It remains dark, dead.

DAVE (CONT'D)

No---No!

Dave can't believe what's happened. He shakes the screen again, stares in hopefully. Nothing. Finally, he gives up, fumbles around for his iPhone, finds it and powers up. To his relief, the phone remains alive, illuminating his confused face. He tries placing a call. No signal----

DAVE (CONT'D)

Come on.

Still staring at the iPhone, Dave goes to the window, looks out. All seems normal. He stares down at the iPhone, clicks open an app and starts for the door.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Waiting for the app to return a new screen, Dave steps out into the bright light, unaware of where he is. Then he feels the glare in his eyes and looks out.

DAVE

Huh? What the---?

Dave stands in the middle of a bleak urban street. Shell shocked buildings surround him. Foreboding. Sun bleached. Instinctively, he turns and rushes for the safety of his dorm room, but instead slams against the face of a cold brick wall. The door is gone. This, too, cannot be. He pushes back a bit and stares.

DAVE (CONT'D)

No. Hell no! This is not---

He turns to face the street, back jammed against the wall. There's no trace of a human soul. Just a vast emptiness. Not unlike the RUN AMUK game setting.

DAVE (CONT'D)

No. Absolutely, no way----

Overwhelmed, he turns immediately to his iPhone. As his thumbs fly, clicking into his "Where am I?" app, the signal fades and the app returns "no signal."

DAVE (CONT'D)

Come on!

The SOUND OF GUNFIRE startles him.

EXT. CITY SIDE STREET - DAY

Dave keeps to the walls, moving away from the trouble. He reaches a corner, chooses a direction. He continues searching out various apps, clicking on them without response. Dave hears footsteps coming down a side street. He freezes, slips back into a shadow. Then the CRACK OF GUNFIRE close by. VOICES, shouting.

DAVE

God --- Where's a cop when you need one?

INT. BUILDING, SECOND FLOOR - DAY

Something looks down on Dave from the windows, paralleling his escape path along the street.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Dave's footfalls make SHARP HOLLOW SOUNDS that echo off the empty store fronts. The GUNFIRE echoes, further off now. As he nears the end of the street, something drops down in the foreground, obliterating the view.

Dave looks back. There is nothing there. He turns his focus once again to the iPhone and moves on.

He continues along the street, keeping close to the graffiti covered brick walls.

A shadowy form steps out onto the sidewalk, blocking his path. As Dave looks up, it settles into a shooter's stance.

SHADOW

Freeze.

Dave halts, eyes widening.

SHADOW (CONT'D)

Show'em.

Dave lifts his hands slowly into the air. The Shadow moves out into the faint moonlight, gun barrel leading the way. Dave sighs in relief as the Glock centers on his face.

DAVE

Metal?

METAL, a stunningly engaging, long haired athletic beauty offers up a warm smile.

METAL

I thought you'd never get here.

Another ROUND OF GUNFIRE, this time closer, interrupts the reunion.

METAL (CONT'D)

We have company.

EXT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - MORNING

The INTERMITTENT GUNFIRE sounds closer now. Two tiny figures move cautiously across the rubble strewn parking lot.

Dave and Metal shoulder up to opposite sides of a rusty loading dock door. Barrel pointed skyward, cheek height, Metal's gun is at the ready.

DAVE

Where are we?

METAL

Shh ... Gun up.

Dave shakes his head. She gives him that "are you kidding me look," then pulls something from her hip.

METAL (CONT'D)

Here.

She tosses him the 9mm. It drops heavily into his hands.

DAVE

What do you want me to do with this?

METAL

Shoot it.

DAVE

Shoot it? This? This is a real gun.

METAL

Yeah.

DAVE

Are you kidding me? Where do you think we are, Run Amuk?

METAL

Where else could we be?

DAVE

No...

METAL

Black Box level.

Metal slides back the rusty steel door.

DAVE

No--- Nobody ever reaches---I never---

Metal nods reassuringly, slips through.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - MORNING

Dave slides in beside Metal, who seems on ultra alert now.

DAVE

It seems so real.

METAL

That's what makes all this so cool.
(weighing the gun)
You can feel the weight in your
hand. And it's got a kick, too.

They stop and stare out into a wide foreboding space. Empty and abused. Flaking paint. Lights streaks in through tall broken windows. Rows of circular columns support heavy concrete ceilings. Maybe a little too much like RUN AMUK.

Satisfied things are safe, Metal walks out into the open, searching every shadow. Dave follows along.

METAL (CONT'D)

Two o'clock!

Her arm flies out and she FIRES THREE TIMES.

METAL (CONT'D)

Let's hit it!

Under FIRE, Metal rushes forward, pulls a second pistol. Both GUNS BLAZING, she rolls across an opening and slides into a corner.

METAL (CONT'D)

Move it! Move it! Move it!

A shadow appears, FIRING on Dave. Metal takes it out.

Dave rolls up against Metal, FIRES on another oncoming assailant. He's into it now, dosed on Metal's Kool aid.

DAVE

Damn!

METAL

Yeah. Oh, yeah.

Metal releases her clips, slaps in fresh loads.

DAVE

Feels so real.

METAL

There. There and there. Go!

They rush their remaining assailants, GUNS BLAZING, forcing them back. One falls, then another. Then a third. The last two try to escape. Dave and Metal try to cut them off, as they attempt to fall back into a hallway.

Metal rolls across the opening, rights herself and FIRES, taking one out. Dave appears, fires on the second, but the man runs down a side hall and as Dave beads on him, escapes through a doorway.

Dave smiles, completely reassured now. Joking, he blows the smoke from the end of his gun barrel. Then he walks over to Metal and they share a high five.

Metal holsters one of her weapons as they walk up to the dead man on the floor. Dave kneels down beside the "kill."

The color drains from his face as he examines it. The dead man is bloodied, torn with bullet wounds. All too real.

DAVE

What have we done?

Distressed, Dave looks up to Metal. She seems preoccupied, looking around expectantly.

DAVE (CONT'D)

This guy is dead. I mean, really.
Dead. I -- we just killed him.

METAL

Yeah.

(chastising)

It's a game, man. And this is the
ultimate level. Reserved for the
very best of the best. Look.

Dave follows her look. A holographic score card shimmers between the columns. Listed among the many participants are Metal and Ironman 777. Metal, far and away, is in the lead.

METAL (CONT'D)

Metal, forty two. Ironman, one.
Better pick up the pace. Or don't
you want to become legend?

She walks off, leaving Dave with the dead man on the floor.

INT. SIDE HALLWAY - MORNING

Splashes of red dot the floor. Metal examines them as Dave rejoins her.

METAL

Blood trail. You must have winged
him after all.
(looking into the darkness)
Cover.

The two shoulder up to a wide opening in the wall. It frames a large deep dark space. Unknown. Dangerous.

METAL (CONT'D)

This one is all yours.

DAVE

I don't know how to do this.

METAL

Sure you do. You are the Ironman.
You've done this a thousand times
before. --- Just do it!

He ponders her statement. Then they both turn and, shoulder to shoulder, enter the darkness. The unexpected MASS GUNFIRE lights up the night, its sound EXPLODING off the walls.

Dave and Metal bound back into the hall, a HAIL of GUNFIRE at their heels. Metal turns and FIRES. And they are forced to fall back yet again.

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - MORNING

As they retreat, Metal and Dave take FIRE from high and from low, surrounded. There seems to be no way out. Dave grabs Metal and they roll under a tall shelf, peek out the other side.

METAL

Ambush. Two over there. Three on
that side and one there.

DAVE

I got two up there and at least
three there.

Dave sees a side door at the end of the parallel row. He points so Metal can see.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I've got you covered! Go!

Dave lays down covering FIRE and Metal sprints for the door.

INT. STORAGE SPACE - MORNING

She thunders in, slams against the wall, safe. Dave flies in on her heels. They slide down the wall, truly cornered. Yet Metal seems nearly euphoric.

METAL

I am so amped. Like a thousand
times before.

Holding tight to an arm, shuddering, Dave tries to take control of his breathing. He grits his teeth and peers at Metal. He has a graze mark on his cheek and his arm is bleeding.

DAVE

This is nothing like before.

METAL

Sure, it is. Can't you feel it?
Like a thousand times before. And
we always win.

DAVE

Do you see this? I am bleeding.

Metal seems unmoved.

DAVE (CONT'D)

I think we could die here.

METAL

Don't be such a nube.

(pause)

We could just sit here, do nothing.
Be nothing. Wonder how long that
plan'll work?

She tosses him a fresh clip, then begins her own reload. Dave stares at her. She smiles conspiratorially.

DAVE

You're crazy.

She motions him with her head, then springs to the door frame and readies her gun.

METAL

We all have to decide what we really want, don't we? And then we have to risk it. Sometimes whether we want to or not. What do you want, Dave? What do you really want?

Dave thinks, has no answer.

DAVE

What do you want?

METAL

I want to be legendary.

An insignificant CRACKLE of gunfire. The single bullet pierces her heart.

DAVE

Metal?

He jumps up and takes her in his arms as the life fades from her eyes.

DAVE (CONT'D)

No, no! --- Metal?

Stunned, Dave pulls Metal back into the corner. He can't process that this could be happening. Vacantly, he picks up his gun, stares into space.

DAVE (CONT'D)

What do you want, Dave? What do you want?

The SQUEAL of the heavy steel door pushing back brings him around. Instinctively, he tries to draw a bead on the sound. But it's too late.

Shadows already fill the door frame. THE FLARE OF RAPID GUNFIRE EXPLODES into the room.

DAVE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Nooooooo!

SMASH CUT:

INT. ABANDONED BUILDING, BALLROOM - NIGHT

THE CRY DISAPPEARS into the blackness. Stillness follows.

RAGGED BREATH. SHUDDERING.

DAVE

Huh?

Dave cant's see a thing. But he can feel. He's freezing cold. Better yet. Still alive. Slowly our eyes adjust and we can make out his face.

DAVE (CONT'D)

What is this? ----

He tries to look around. Can't see a thing.

DAVE (CONT'D)

Where am I? Where is this?

His VOICE ECHOES somewhere far off. He listens as the echoes fade away. He wonders if this is what it's like to be dead. He breathes in and out. In and out. Then notices he can see his foot. The light comes from his touch screen. He lifts his hand and stares at the screen. He has a signal.

DAVE (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Yes... yes.....okay...okay.

He finds his "Where am I?" app, opens it, types in a query. The answer returns:

"You are here."

DAVE (CONT'D)

(retyping and sending)

Where is here?

He waits. Again the answer: "Here."

DAVE (CONT'D)

Unbeliev---

Using the screen as a flashlight, he shines it out and disappears into the darkness. He reappears. Closer now. To calm his fears, he tries texting Nick. No signal. The stress is just too much.

DAVE (CONT'D)

(a whisper)

I don't want to be here.

A deep desperate silence is his only reply.

DAVE (CONT'D)
(shouting now)
Did you hear me? I don't want to be
here! I don't want to be here!

His voice ECHOES ON AND ON. He listens as the echoes fade to nothing. Then he becomes silent. He's in contact with his world now. And aware. Finally, he's really listening, tuning in. He listens for what seems a long time. He seems to become a less and less significant presence in this world.

DAVE (CONT'D)
(whispering)
What do you want, Dave? What do you
want?

He places his hands over his face, ready to give up. Then from somewhere far off comes the faintest WHISPER OF A SOUND. Dave's hands slip from to his cheeks, a glimmer of hope kindling in his eyes as he strains to listen.

Could it be true? Somewhere far off, could there be a sound? Intent, he waits for its return, seeks to find his direction.

Finally! The SOUND begins again. Dave listens, tries to pinpoint it. As he seeks it out, the strength of it grows. He stops and listens. The FAINTEST TAPPING somewhere far off. And now, if he really looks hard, he can also make out the vaguest hint of light. Relieved, he heads for the sound.

INT. ABANDONED OFFICE BULLPEN - NIGHT

An empty call center, perhaps. Under high ceilings, the darkened maze of empty cubicles fills a vast neglected space. A glow from a single cubicle calls out to the night.

INT. ABANDONED OFFICE BULLPEN, OLD MAN'S CUBICLE - NIGHT

THE OLD MAN sits in the darkness, surrounded by frames of light: wide screen TV's, computer monitors, iPads, etc. Dressed in worn clothes similar to Dave's, the swarthy white haired "dude" seems quite content multi-processing the infinity of his wired world. He also seems very old.

Carefully, Dave approaches, stares in at the back of the Old Man's head, backlit by the glow of screens.

DAVE
(quietly)
God.
(MORE)

DAVE (CONT'D)
Please tell me you know where we
are ---
(no response)
Did you hear me?

The Old Man ignores him.

DAVE (CONT'D)
(yelling)
Dude! Where the hell are we?

Without looking up, the Old Man adjusts his ear plugs,
answers as if it's the most natural thing in the world.

OLD MAN
Here, man. We are here. Right here.

DAVE
Where the hell is here?

OLD MAN
(snickering)
Now you're getting close.

The Old Man looks up, sees Dave, and YELPS.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
What the ----?

Both men jump back. Backlit, features unclear, the Old Man
peers into the darkness, can only make out Dave as a shadow.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Who the hell are you? And where the
hell did you come from?

Suspicious, Dave inches in, the light and shadow marking his
features. The technology and decor seem eerily familiar. Too
much like the inside of Dave's own room.

DAVE
No... I asked you first. Where are
we?

OLD MAN
I already told you. We're here.

DAVE
What do you mean here?

OLD MAN
Right here? Where we always are.

Tubes trace along the side of his leg. The Old Man adjusts them and what seems to be a urine bag, then turns back to his screens.

DAVE

Are we dead?

The Old Man turns and kicks a chair Dave's way.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Have a seat.

DAVE

I don't want to be here.

The Old Man clicks away on various keyboards. Dave notices the IV tubes taped to the Old Man's arm.

OLD MAN

Yes, you do. It's all here. The whole wide world. Every place, every person, every dream. No mothers and fathers splitting up. No girl friends telling you what you have to do. No bosses gettin' on your case. No embarrassment. No pain. Not one of them can ever tell you no, let you down, leave you, break up with you. And if they do, screw 'em. There's a thousand more friends out there who'll never say no.

The Old Man turns, face a silhouette once more.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)

Tell me what you want. We'll have it for you in a nanosecond. You can be anything. You can do anything. All from right here. Isn't it great! You'll never have to leave.

DAVE

You are out of your friggin' mind!

OLD MAN

No more than you. Look in my eyes, Dave. This is all yours anyway.

DAVE

How do you know my name?

OLD MAN

Come on, Dave, don't give me any of that.

The Old Man stands up, pulls his IV along with him into the light.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
I am you. I always have been.

Dave stares into his own aged ancient face, stunned.

OLD MAN (CONT'D)
Ironman --- 777. Look, I even got your scars.

DAVE
No --- You are not me. No way.
Never.

The Old Man smiles, reaches out for Dave. Dave turns, runs.

EXT. BALLROOM - NIGHT

Dave runs out into the middle of the blackness, searching its recesses.

DAVE
I just want my life back. My friends. My real friends.

No one answers. He becomes very quiet and stares into the darkness. He hears SHUFFLING. The SOUND of an IV stand on wheels. He looks toward the sound, sees the silhouette of the Old Man approaching. His iPhone CHIMES, announcing a new text message. He stares at it. It reads:

"New Message from Ironman 777"

DAVE (CONT'D)
Go away!

He throws the iPhone toward the old man. It smashes against something with a CRASH. LIGHT FLARES. It's like fifty screens EXPLODING and the light engulfs Dave entirely.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DAVE'S ROOM - MORNING

As the murky whiteness slowly recedes, a dark shadow looms over Dave. Dave shouts out and pushes out with his hands, skittering across the floor on his back until he's stopped by his bed.

NICK
Whoa! Hey, dude, it's cool, it's
cool, it's cool...

DAVE
Wha --- ?

Still in a daze, Dave continues trying to push away from Nick.

NICK
Dave, Dave, it's me, Nick!

Dave stops struggling as the fog clears. Nick looks at him with concern, keeping his distance while trying to calm him.

NICK (CONT'D)
Don't worry, man ---

Dave begins to come to and, for the first time, seems to recognize Nick. Relieved, Nick gives a lop-sided grin.

NICK (CONT'D)
You're still in Kansas.

DAVE
Huh?

NICK
Sorry I was so ticked at you last
night. I was coming over to
apologize -- Or knock some sense
into you. Looks like somebody beat
me to it.

DAVE
What?

Nick continues to look closely at Dave, checking him out.

NICK
I found you passed out on the floor
here.

DAVE
Oh.

NICK
They didn't break your thumbs, did
they?

Dave rubs his head and starts to stand. Nick helps him up.

NICK (CONT'D)
Where'd you get the scar?

DAVE
Scar?

Dave brings a hand to his cheek, feels the roughness of a scar. Slowly, he remembers the gunfire.

NICK
You okay?

Dave looks around the room as if seeing it for the first time. He walks to the window and looks out, then moves over to his computer. The screen shows the urban landscape of RUN AMUK. Dave stares at it, then shuts down the power to the surge protector, which powers all his equipment. The HUM OF ELECTRIC FAN MOTORS die.

DAVE
Yeah. I am.
(after looking around)
How about some hoops?

Nick smiles.

NICK
Yeah? You wanna play?

DAVE
(brightening)
Maybe.... Yeah.

Nick shrugs as he heads for the door. He turns back to Dave.

NICK
Only if you guard me - you suck.

Nick pops out of the room and Dave heads out, calling as he exits...

DAVE
You don't want none of this!

INT. BASKETBALL COURT AT THE STUDENT CENTER - MORNING

Dave, Jerry, and Moose are playing Nick, Greg, and ANOTHER GUY three on three. Although Nick apparently wants some of "this" after all, Dave actually doesn't suck and is holding his own against Nick in the game. The truth is, none of them are particularly gifted athletes but they're all playing hard and having a good time.

There's a scramble for a rebound, the ball bounces toward out of bounds, and Dave goes after it.

As it turns out, the ball bounces right toward a group of students. Dave goes to retrieve the ball and there, holding the ball, is Emily.

Dave stands before her, gazing, sweating, and panting. After a moment, he smiles. Emily returns the smile - and the ball.

With that, Nick and the others - who have been standing in a clump watching - make SOME JUVENILE TEASING SOUNDS, trying their best to embarrass Dave. He turns to see them, then looks back to Emily, shrugs.

DAVE

Morons.

Emily nods and laughs.

Dave nods and heads back to the guys a few steps, then stops. After a moment, he turns and swallows. Then...

DAVE (CONT'D)

I'm Dave.

EMILY

I know.

He's surprised. She smiles.

EMILY (CONT'D)

I'm Emily. My friends call me "Em."

A beat as Dave smiles.

DAVE

Well---I'd like to be your friend,
"Em."

Emily smiles and nods. Beaming, Dave turns, trots back to the game dribbling the ball...and squeezes off a sweet 20 footer which hits nothing but net!

FADE OUT.

THE END