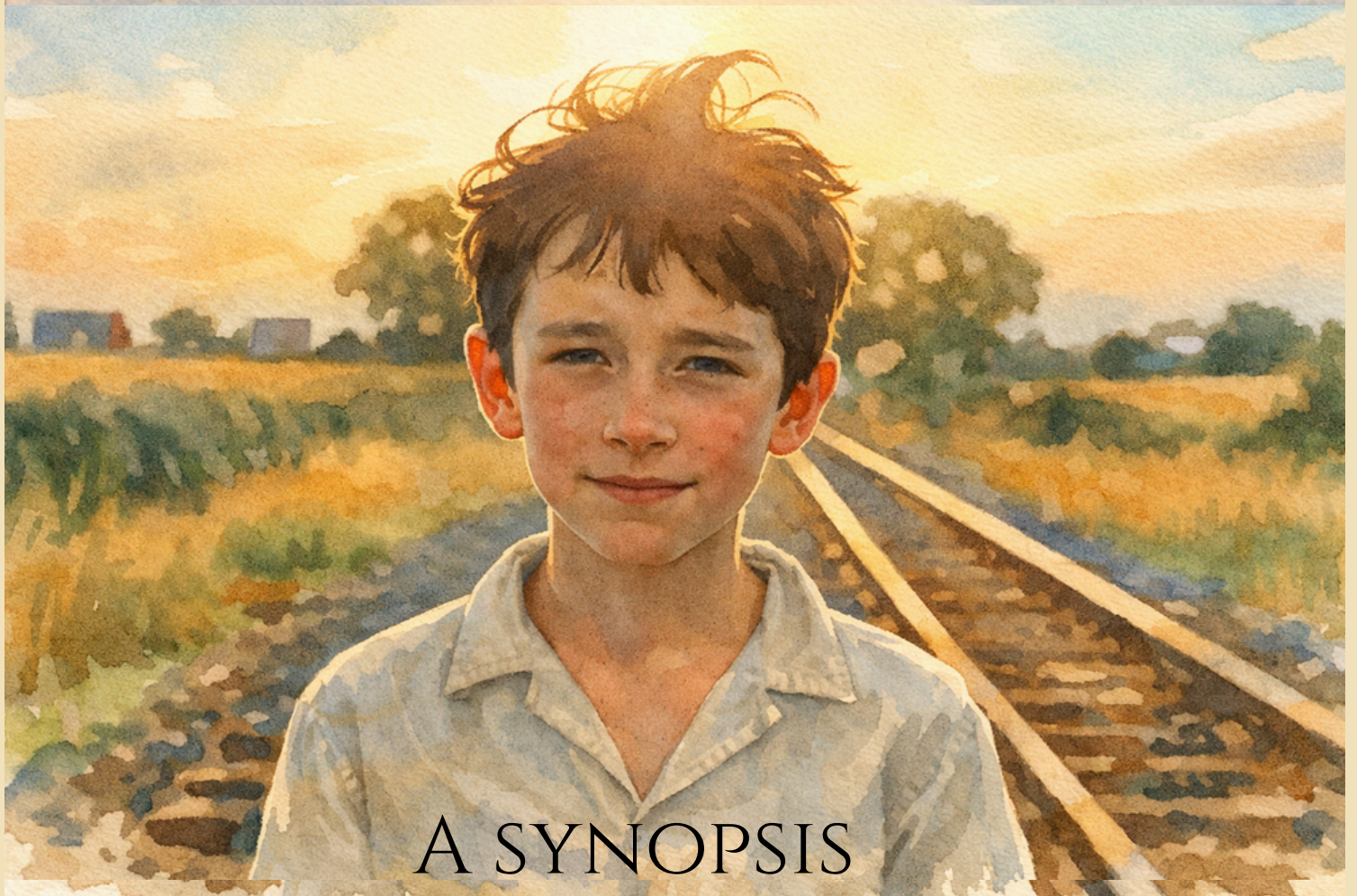


BOY BEATLE

A film



A SYNOPSIS

BOY BEATLE

A FEATURE FILM

WRITTEN BY RICHARD WILLIS

BASED ON THE SOLO PLAY BOY BEATLE

Robin, on the edge of collapse, confronts the memories of his childhood – of a boy who survived love, abandonment, and music — and discovers that healing lies not in forgetting the past, but finally hearing it.

PROLOGUE

On a bright summer day in 1965, young Robin struggles to keep pace with his older brother Rich along a winding coastal road, distracted by the beauty of the sea and wildflowers. At the summit, Rich urges a nervous Robin to mount his bike and pushes him down the hill, turning fear into fleeting exhilaration. Moments later, joy collapses into terror when Robin crashes — tangled in barbed wire at the edge of a quarry.

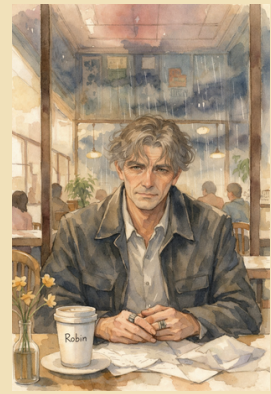
As Rich arrives in panic, Robin's scream collapses into laughter. When Rich asks why, Robin blurts out the only consolation he can find:

"It wasn't our bike!"



The Café

In 2019, Robin, in his late forties, sits alone in a bohemian café in the Old Town area of Hastings, East Sussex, in the UK, during a storm. He turns a paper coffee cup slowly in his hands, staring at his name written in thick marker. Around him, life continues — chatter, rain, clinking cups — but Robin is elsewhere. Poetry slips from his mouth unconsciously, and the café begins to blur as memory presses in.



Crisis

A year earlier: Robin records a voice message late at night, half-joking, half-frightened, in which he contemplates different ways of ending his life. He admits himself to a mental health facility, trying to stay “normal,” aware that his thoughts are spiralling faster than he can control. His humour masks fear; his intelligence can't protect him.



Love and Loss

Back in the café, present day, a fragment of a childhood poem drifts into Robin's mind. Memory pulls him backwards. Night. A cottage. From outside, Robin watches through a lit window as his wife laughs with another man.

They move closer.

They embrace.

Robin lunges forward, pounding on the glass.



Therapy Begins

In a therapy room at The Ward in June 2018, Robin sits opposite Faith, unable — or unwilling — to speak. Instead, he recites fragments of a childhood poem, his voice drawing him into a vivid inner landscape where deserts glow, bazaars hum, and distant calls to prayer echo. As Faith gently grounds him in the present and raises concerns about his recent self-harm, Robin drifts between reality and reverie. When pressed with the simple question — *why are you here?* — Robin finally answers: he wants to sing again. Music, once his deepest dream, now feels unreachable... like ashes that can vanish in the wind.



A Wind on the River

Robin's childhood memory, with Faith's therapy and past clinical encounters, reveals Robin's inner life. A warm, faded recollection of Robin and his brother playing by a woodland stream—underscored by a poem about being unseen—dissolves into the stark reality of Faith's office, where Robin resists the idea that he needs help, describing his confinement, medication, and loss of autonomy, and revealing that his mother pressured him to admit himself into the facility.

Jumping forward to the now rain-soaked café, Robin recalls an earlier session - before Faith and the Haven - in 2017 with Dr Aziz, whose guided but eccentric visualisation exposes Robin's unresolved grief, anger, and loneliness around his failed marriages.

"You've had a rich life with fit and beautiful women, Robin. Other men really respect that."

"You can't say that!"

"What can I say? I'm shallow."

Shadows and Spotlight

Robin navigates a strained meeting in the kitchen with his teenage daughter, Hannah. In therapy with Faith, he struggles to access his earliest memories, describing his parents as incompatible, prompting a montage of his mother, Anne, at 18 years old, in 1950s England: a young actress navigating ambition, desire, and early love with a charismatic director - Robin's father - through rehearsals, secretive affairs, early marriage, family disapproval, and pregnancy. We are shown Anne's resilience, isolation, and the pressures of her family and society, culminating in the arrival of her children.



An Unnoticed Absence

Robin resists discussing his parents with Faith, before admitting that his father did not believe he was his son– a rejection, he says, that cannot be healed.

When Faith asks about his brother instead, Robin recalls early childhood in the countryside, where he and Rich spent their days playing together in fields and woods, bound by imagination and closeness. The routine changes when Rich goes to school for the first time, leaving four-year-old Robin confused and alone. Wanting to find him, Robin walks several miles to the school by himself and is later brought home by a teacher. Robin realises that his parents never noticed he was gone



Lost in the Theatre

Young Anne announces the family's return to the theatre with excitement, and the boys are swept into that world — ferry crossings, a summer repertory theatre, backstage shadows, rehearsals, and opening night. Anne comes alive on stage, while the Director grows controlling and volatile, focused entirely on the production. Rich begins to identify with the theatre and dreams of performing there; Robin does not. He is drawn instead to music, a difference his father dismisses. In therapy, Robin recognises that his mother taught them to love art, but his father offered no praise and treated them as expendable. Rich belonged in the theatre; Robin never did. Robin recites a poem for his mother. He tries hard to combat his stammer, stumbles, recovers, and finishes with pride.

Caligula

Robin spends a quiet afternoon in the Haven courtyard, seeking tranquillity. He records a message for his brother, sharing tales about one of the Haven's "guests" – James – and his vivid delusions. Robin expresses his relief at having retrieved his glasses and phone charger. Suddenly, a siren drill catches him off guard, but he dismisses it with a tired chuckle.

In the common room, Robin listens to another guest, Andrew, who shares a bizarre story about how his ex attempted to hit him with a hammer while he was mowing the lawn. He then recounts an extraordinary tale of rescuing a woman from a nuclear submarine trapped beneath the Arctic, filled with plutonium, fifty years ago. Andrew reminisces about spotting her in a supermarket, describing how she jumped with joy and smiled at him. He even mimics her excitement with an exuberant, wild "EEEEEE!" Robin flinches at the outburst but finds it amusing.

As he navigates the dimly lit corridors, Robin takes note of flickering lights and curling notices before finally entering his room, where the name "*Caligula*" is obsessively scrawled across the walls.



“After the Door Slams

Anne storms out of a rehearsal after discovering her husband’s affair. That night, an argument at home escalates into violence, heard by the children. Soon after, the director drives young Robin along a coastal road, admits his love for another woman, and leaves Robin alone in the car while he goes to her.

In the present day, Anne speaks openly about leaving her husband for an older actor. In therapy, Robin reveals that his mother vanished for over a year, with their father refusing to explain her absence. Memories of his violence resurface, and Robin realises his mother was aware of the abuse but chose to remain silent.

Anne later struggles with her emotions backstage before a performance, ultimately forcing herself onto the stage. Decades later, she watches another actress perform and finally allows herself to cry, alone in the dark.



Chords, Chaos and Overdrive



Robin shares with Faith the moment music changed everything — a babysitter who played the Beatles after his mother was gone, turning songs into tiny plays. He wrote his first song at twelve but never felt he belonged anywhere, unlike his theatre-soaked brother.

His story leaps forward: a hopeless job, losing it on his birthday, an overdose. He survives and falls into the fast world of London bike couriers with his friend Dougal. The company thrives, the money floods in... and the music slips away. Power takes over. When Robin fires his staff, he finally faces the price.

Gaslit Drama

Faith suggests regression hypnosis to Robin. Initially, he jokes, but then agrees. Under hypnosis, he returns to a 1960s London bedsit as a six-year-old. Awake, he hears his parents argue. His desperate mother pleads; his father refuses. She tries to harm herself, and Robin panics. His father intervenes, and chaos ensues. Robin suffers an asthma attack amid their argument.

In the therapy room, Robin relives the terror, struggling to breathe, until Faith grounds him and guides him back, then leads him deeper into the memory.



The Escape Route

Robin and his brother are delivered to boarding school and left there without a word, their father driving away as the doors close behind them. Fear and abandonment set in immediately. Relief comes at half-term, when the boys escape to London by train. At Victoria Station, Anne appears — glamorous, intoxicating — and sweeps them into a world of taxis, theatres, opera, cinemas, music, food, and late-night transgressions. London becomes a secret kingdom where art, pleasure, and attention replace school, cruelty and silence. These memories fuse into a theatrical dream: Robin alone on a stage, conducting the music that once carried him away.



Never Tell

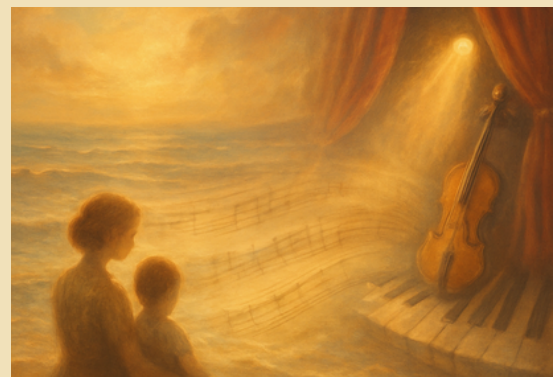
Stuck in the Haven, Robin can't reach his brother and tips into panic. When he finally sleeps, regression therapy pulls old memories to the surface. A memory floods back in fragments: mud, fists flying, boys fighting in the woods. Boarding school becomes a brutal theatre — violence, punishment, and ritualised cruelty, all enforced by silence. Teachers blur into one another: one opens doors through music and language; the others close ranks with canes, humiliation, and fear. Discovery leads to shame, shame to punishment. Always the same rule: *Never Tell*. The memories crystallise into song. On a symbolic stage, Robin sings the code he was taught — obedience, secrecy, survival — and he begins to name what once felt unspeakable.



Waves and Words

A seaside holiday returns to Robin in a rush of salt air, wild freedom, and the sharp edge of danger, all softened by his mother's steady, loving presence. After a severe asthma attack, she keeps him calm through the long night, her rhythm easing his fear.

Another memory follows—driving fast toward Stratford-upon-Avon as Anne leads her boys toward the theatre she treasures. Inside, words turn to music. Robin listens to the musicians playing above the stage, lighting his imagination and hinting at the future ahead. Now, he recognises that it wasn't the theatre alone that drew him in, but the music he found within it.



Silent Witness

In a sunlit school chapel, Robin, 8 years old, kneels in prayer. His friend, Campbell, interrupts, questioning his devotion. Memories flash: Robin discovering the glory of music in the choir loft; the relentless bullying of Ennos on the playground; scratches across his back mistaken for abuse. Authority figures—matron, headmaster, choir master—misinterpret, reinforcing injustice. Robin remains silent, hiding the truth, until the moment of reckoning: Ennos is expelled. The past and present collide in the chapel as discipline lands with a sharp smack.



Corridor of Green

In a stormy café, Hannah confronts Robin moments after discovering he has prostate cancer. He insists she shouldn't worry, despite his PSA of 25, and their exchange crackles with fear, buried truths, and the tension surrounding her mother. Faith later draws him into a calming vision of a light-filled corridor.

Back at the café, Anne scolds Robin for chasing unconventional healing options.

In therapy, the scene deepens as Robin imagines a hallway of closed doors—one shining green. He moves toward it slowly, repeating a verse from childhood. The green light glows brighter, and the door opens...

Whistle and Ball /Steam and Shadows

Robin drifts weightless through a misty void, memories and reality colliding. Early childhood flashes: he and Rich with their mother, Anne, clinging to safety as their father tours the country in a musical, then thrust into theatre spectacles where danger, drama, and adult interactions overwhelm their small world.

Anne delivers the boys to Maude and Bill, leaving them terrified and crying as the door slams. Schoolrooms and nuns amplify discipline and fear. In Maude and Bill's house, Robin kneels on the dim kitchen floor, playing with a ball beside a boiling kettle. The whistle shrieks, steam hissing and shaking the stove, while the ball rebounds, clattering across the linoleum.

In the present, Faith guides Robin back from this sensory flood. Breath steadies, shoulders relax, and the light shifts—he surfaces, disoriented, poised between memory and the now.



Choice Unspoken

Robin stands at a rainy café window, lost in thought. He recalls the stove accident, the hospital, and the isolation he and Rich endured after their family’s failures. In therapy with Faith, he recounts how money and ambition complicated their lives, and how Rich always looked after him. He admits his fear: “If we don’t beat the car, we will die,” and confesses he ran. Later, Robin visits Rich’s wife Christine in their sunlit, overgrown garden. They discuss Rich’s absences and Christine’s life as a writer and mother. A charged, intimate moment arises, but Robin pulls back, choosing loyalty to Rich. He stands, straightens, and walks from the garden, leaving Christine behind in the sunlight.



The First Song

Robin prepares to leave The Haven, half-packed and on the phone with Rich. He reflects on the lives of the fellow inmates he’s bonded with: James, torn up about a “top-secret mission” in the Alps, and Andrew, whose romantic obsession with a girlfriend gone rogue has him scribbling schemes to win her back. Robin observes that, despite the chaos around them, survival takes many forms—James with his missions, Andrew with his love, and himself with the small victories over his own anxieties.

He takes stock of himself. He no longer paces through the night, no longer wrestles constantly with voices or wakes under the same crushing weight of despair. In therapy, Faith acknowledges how far he has come and gently prepares him for an ending — not a cure, but a return to the world.

Readiness triggers a memory which he retells to Faith.

Robin is twelve, travelling to London with a guitar squeezed between his knees. His brother is auditioning for a major show. A stage door opens. A corridor leads them to the lights. Rich sings Edelweiss. Someone in the darkness asks for another song. Rich freezes. Robin steps forward, suggests one of his own, and begins to play.



The Readiness Is All

Robin departs the café and steps into the rain-soaked streets of Hastings Old Town. He unlocks his bicycle and rides through gleaming cobbles and shuttered shopfronts, past the Fishermen's Museum, toward the sea. As he pedals, the ordinary streets transform: phosphorescent waves shimmer, streetlamps bloom into stars, and the shingle dissolves beneath him.

Letting go of the handlebars, Robin rides across the glowing water, arms wide, disappearing into the horizon where sea, sky, and music merge.

