

# SHIFTING

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# **Logline and Synopsis**

*you will know yourself only through another*

Davide (20) is a sensitive and troubled guy. He has problems with his intimacy: he's still searching for his own identity. Therefore, he needs to run away from his narrow town in the south of Italy. In order to change his tough life and to find his own place within the world, he escapes his culture: a culture of guilt.

Davide smokes his last cigarette and travels to Berlin without any money. Like a young immigrant he is desperate, has no place to go and has to make it on his own. He wanders through the cold suburbs of East-Berlin in search of a job, a life and himself. He ends up on the edge of real trouble, with a dangerous boy-gang as "friends" and even risking to serve time in jail. He sleeps in an under-construction roof-top with a wooden board as main door: it's their music band practice-place.

Davide starts to experience the dark side of the city. During the night he explores and discovers his sexual identity. His need to "hide" from the world and be without responsibilities pushes him to date older women.

One day by chance Davide meets Emmanuel (84) exiting a supermarket. He's a sullen Scandinavian man, who looks confused and lost. He helps the old old man to find his way home.

That's how Davide met Emmanuel's daughter, Christine (43) a sensual blonde, lonely and work-stressed woman. One morning whilst Davide at her place - after a night together - Christine mobile rings cause Emmanuel fainted again, so she makes Davide an offer: they need a person to help him in his house, even if her father doesn't accept this idea. It's his chance to have a room for free.

A common, but somehow forced living begins: Emmanuel is suspicious and very possessive of his territory. He puts many rules in his house; many little rules which Davide can't understand, above all there's a key locked room where access is forbidden. That house in Flemingstrasse will become the shared place and, as third character, the witness of these two lonely strangers' lives.

Davide has found a job as a cleaner in a swimming pool where he meets Maya (21), an Indian-origin girl who works at the front desk. She starts to appreciate Davide and soon tries to drive him into a straight life; but still he cannot react to love... Maya works also as belly dance teacher in a private dance school, where Davide goes to pick her up to walk with her in the Berlin summer nights.

The situation with Emmanuel is not easy to handle. The old man doesn't accept the presence of women in his house. To make love to Maya, Davide has to hide.

Sometimes the old man faints and - after being helped and awakened by Davide - Emmanuel accuses the boy of things he is sure he has seen: but in reality he is mixing his dreams and the real world because of his disease.

So it happens that on one side this boy whose main problem is being inwardly tormented by guilt from birth, faces on the other side a person who trusts no one. Emmanuel is looking for peace and, bothered by Davide's presence, easily starts accusing him of everything.

Davide also hides Maya from Christine, with who he's carrying on an affair. With Christine he still has good sex, but not more than that. With her he is cold, but not brave enough to quit.

Time goes by: the discouraging relationship with Emmanuel is instead slowly turning into something different and positive: things seem to go better... Roles are now clear; Davide shows respect and Emmanuel appreciates it. The old man sometimes slightly helps him without being noticed by Davide.

But... at one point Emmanuel starts a big deal accusing Davide to have been inside the locked room.

Once again trust between them is broken, and this time the atmosphere is also reflected on Davide's relationship with Maya. That's the reason why the next time Emmanuel faints Davide, totally worn out, decides to take the key from the old man's necklace and to step into the forbidden storage room.

Inside, there's the story of the old man. He was a photography lover: his work is clearly the result of a long artistic research. It is a collection of pictures of Berlin, streets, objects and often one woman: Emmanuel's wife. The pictures are collected into labeled boxes every 5 years. The last box was created 10 years ago, after the death of Emmanuel's wife.

Furthermore... on one side there's a new and more recent box: inside are the photographs Emmanuel took of Davide!

Davide goes mad, wakes Emmanuel up and the two fight, but at the same time they feel relieved as they argue for the first time. Emmanuel share with Davide his private story: Franz, his best friend a long time ago saved his life when they worked in the Hamburg docks. The old man speaks to Davide who is now Franz in his old eyes. Emmanuel – big smoker - offers one to the boy who quit smoking in the beginning: they share the time of this cigarette together.

The following day Davide will leave the house, having the feeling to be like-Franz was to Emmanuel: a friend. But there's not enough time because Emmanuel dies in the early morning, when Davide was about to share their coffee ritual as usual. Davide has to handle this situation... and leaves later.

Obsequies: Davide is again in the house that has been his own the last past months. There's a few people there, but nobody knows Davide. He walks like a ghost among them and passes the spots of what was his first real life experience. His room: remembering Christine and Maya; Emmanuel's room and the forbidden room where he steps again.

On the floor, among many others, there's a picture he didn't see before. It's just a square of Berlin: very well recognizable because of a weird monster for children. It's the very same square where Davide used to go during his first lonely weeks in Berlin. Nobody is to see in the photograph, the picture is old and was taken a long time ago. The place talks about both their souls and seems to connect them by a matter of "taste".

This relationship has been to Davide a gift, presenting him a different viewpoint of life. Deep down inside the old man concealed tenderness, solitude and feelings that were surprisingly similar to his own. Also, Emmanuel was an example of how we can face life and live it like only we are able to shape it ourselves.

Davide reaches new levels of understanding in his young existence: perhaps he will be able to open up to someone, leaving behind his fears to trust again. Davide realizes that life only finds a meaning in true and sincere relating to other human beings...

As he exits the house, a girl asks him who he is. Davide, with an inmost and private smile on his face, sincerely answers: "Franz".

# **Extract I**

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Davide looks at the old man: the man seems confused. Soon after, just as Davide glances at him again, the old man turns in his direction.

OLD MAN

Do you know where I live?

DAVIDE

What?

OLD MAN

You know! Where am I?

DAVIDE

In Berlin... Well, what do you mean?

OLD MAN

Hm? Do you know where I live?

DAVIDE

(hesitant)

No...

OLD MAN

Tell me where I live. Where do I live? Where do I live? Where? Where?

The old man seems to be in a muddle, but not insane.

DAVIDE

Wait. You don't remember where you live?

OLD MAN

You're young... You know.

DAVIDE

What? No. I don't know. I'm not familiar with Berlin.

(to himself)

How can I help you. Do you have any ID with you? ...Identity card?

OLD MAN

Fleming, do you know it?

DAVIDE

Do I know what? What's Fleming? Your surname?

OLD MAN

(hesitant)

Home. Fleming, stratos...

DAVIDE  
Flemingstrasse? Wait, I'll ask  
someone. Wait, ok?

EXT. STREETS - DAY

The old man stands watching Davide, unable to concentrate. The boy asks for information from the first passer-by, then returns to the old man again.

DAVIDE  
Come with me, come on. Do you want  
me to take your bag?

Davide is about to take the shopping bag from the old man's hand, but he holds his fist tight clenching it at him. Davide is astonished, lets go of the bag and gets going with him.

INT. HOUSE/HALL - DAY

From the inside we see a door opening in the darkness: through the incoming light, the two silhouette shapes of Davide and the old man stand out. Davide makes him sit because he still seems very confused.

DAVIDE  
(loud)  
Someone here? He is back...

Davide tries to find someone in the house and explores it from the corridor to the kitchen. He hesitates before entering any room: they're all empty. There's also a storage room, but it's locked.

INT. KITCHEN/HALL - DAY

Davide returns to the old man.

DAVIDE  
What's your name, Sir?

The old man remains silent.

DAVIDE  
Does anybody live with you? Who can  
I call?  
(to himself)  
Damn!

OLD MAN  
Franz don't worry.

DAVIDE  
Franz? Do you have a son? Who is  
Franz - your son?

OLD MAN  
(hesitating)  
Yes... It's you, Franz.

DAVIDE  
Me?  
(silently)  
What the hell you saying?

Davide, exhausted for the nonsensical discussion,  
leaves the room.

OLD MAN  
C'mon Franz, take it easy! It's  
between me and you...

Davide gropes about on the small table in the  
entrance hall. He picks up the phone book, looks at  
it for a few seconds, then decides not to open it...

## **Extract II**

NIGHT EXT. APARTMENT WINDOW/STREET

Five boys of the gang climb through an apartment window.

ITALIAN BOY

It's not a problem, nobody lives here. We always do this...

DAVIDE

I'll stay here. I'll keep a look out.

While the others are inside, Davide cautiously looks around. He looks inside, but it's dark and he can neither see nor hear anything. A sudden noise erupts from inside the apartment: it's the noise of things falling to the floor. His friends jump out of window and run away; Davide follows them. They jump on their scooters: he only just manages to clamber onto the back of his friend's scooter.

MOMENTS LATER EXT. STREETS

The Italian boy is driving fast.

DAVIDE

(angry and skared)

You asshole, you were leaving me into troubles. The house is not fucking empty! You crazy and run away lik this...

The boy stops the scooter.

ITALIAN BOY

Go away.

Davide is speakless.

ITALIAN BOY

C'mon...

The young boy forces Davide off the scooter and leaves him in the street.

NIGHT EXT. STREETS/LITTLE SQUARE WITH MONSTER

Davide is alone, walking around the city. He walks past prostitutes and again ends up in the little square with the monster for children: here he starts kicking a ball, formerly chewed by a dog.

SUNSET INT. SWIMMING POOL

Davide is cleaning the pool and looks at his image reflected in the water.

MOMENTS LATER INT. SWIMMING POOL

Maya gets in. Everything is closed, most the lights are off and there's nobody around. Maya jumps in the pool and throws off her swim-suit. She swims naked and calls Davide to her. He jumps in fully dressed; they get closer and closer... hesitate a moment then kiss.

CUT TO:

MORNING INT. BEDROOM

Davide is silently making love to Maya. There's a lot of sun coming through the window: she seems happy and hugs him. Yet Davide seems to be absent.

CUT TO:

DAY EXT. BEACH

The beach is crowded but there's nobody swimming. From a subjective viewpoint, we see the dark stone pass over the heads of some people standing on the shore. We see it splash into the water.

FADE TO:

DAY INT. BEDROOM/KITCHEN/CORRIDOR

Blue cells: Davide is at the microscope, but Emmanuel's hammering won't let him study: suddenly the old man cries out. Davide runs to him. Emmanuel has hurt himself: his finger is bleeding. The old man wants to be left alone because he says he can manage alone. But Davide helps him keeping Emmanuel's finger under the water tap. Emmanuel calms down and is now relaxed.

EMMANUEL

Bathroom, bathroom...

Davide quickly bandages his finger and in a rush carries him to the toilet, where he goes in with him.

DAY INT. KITCHEN

It's 7.45am: Davide pours warm coffee into two cups. He's very well dressed up. Emmanuel comes in and takes his cup just like he's used to.

EMMANUEL

(without showing interest)

The interview is today?

Pause.

EMMANUEL

Where do you think you can go  
without a tie?

Davide laughs. When Emmanuel understands that the boy hasn't got one, he goes into his room and comes back with a tie of his own; Emmanuel has to tie the tie for Davide as Davide doesn't know how to. Emmanuel is very proud inside to do something Davide hasn't learnt yet.

SUNSET EXT. PUGLIA COUNTRYSIDE

In the nature of the Mediterranean bush with many Trullo (traditional cone shaped houses) and the sea as a background, Maya dances and sings an Indian song in Bollywood style. Then she comes closer and looks into the camera pointing a piece of paper.

MAYA

How can you pay our rent? ...and  
marry me?

Maya hands Davide the paper, but when he is about to take it, it is no longer paper, but the dark smooth stone we previously saw on the beach.

DAY INT. FUTURISTIC HIGH CORRIDOR

A mechanical arm moves between two high, narrow walls: it stops and removes a drawer of books from this huge storage of archives. The arm carries books automatically to Davide, who notes down something on a computer.

NIGHT INT. KITCHEN

The clock shows 9.35pm: Emmanuel is waiting at the table prepared for two. Finally Davide comes back home, late. The boy sits. Emmanuel, very hungry, starts eating without a word. He can finally eat. He doesn't raise his eyes because he's busy concentrating on eating, not because he's angry or upset.

EMMANUEL

(to himself)

Good.

*Intention notes:*

*Shifting* deals with imaginary motion of souls from person to person.

The reason behind this film is the time I spent with my grandfather: it deals with the missing sense and the idea that some people, even unaware, can deeply mark our life.

In a longing for youth society, oldness is a value, a treasure, amazing beauty that nobody looks at. Old age can bring truth and wisdom, especially to a boy who's learning to live with nobody to rely on: it's about the need to have a friend, a master, a companion, an enemy, an example and an affection; a memory to carry... because you grew up with something that marked you.

But old age means loneliness too: our world often leaves weak people drifting alone. This is the story of two of these solitudes that meet; but it's also the crash between two outcasts belonging to such far and different worlds.

Unlike what this kind of story suggests, the tale is led in a very sober way, among many sub-plots and without any judgment; it's pushed forward not emphasizing events, but making their inner strength vibrate. Music plays a soft and hidden role. It feels like it's not the narrator, but the story to leads us, as if it was an unavoidable flow of accidental events, not driven by a purpose-built narration.

*Production notes:*

**suburbs have the same smell in all the world**

Originally set in Berlin - mixing Mediterranean, Scandinavian and Indian cultures - this universal story could be filmed in any big western city like Paris, London or New York; offering a big chance for coproduction depending on the main stars attached to the project and the chosen city.

After a big gross like French comedy *Intouchables*, and following the tradition of Old-Young cinematographic friendships, if set in New York perfect actor would be Nick Nolte.

Some Italian, Usa/German, Usa/Indian and German producers showed interest.