

A Return to Roots

Written by
Walter Lauer

Copyright (c) 2020

FADE IN:

EXT. UPSTATE NEW YORK - DAY

Late September. Nestled within the fire-colored trees lies the quiet town of Wilburn. A full hour and a half drive from Syracuse, few people come there from the city. The town likes its privacy.

INT. LOU'S FAMOUS ITALIAN - LUNCHTIME

A shitty little Italian restaurant decorated with a map of Italy and an Italian flag. The lunch rush is in full swing.

CUSTOMER 1

Excuse me, waiter? Could I possibly get this with a little more sauce?

ENRIQUE the handsome young waiter, picks up the plate, goes to a back door to--

INT. LOU'S FAMOUS ITALIAN - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

--where the food is being prepared by CHEF PETEY who sings along to the music from a make shift speaker, a phone stuck in a food cup

ENRIQUE

(Calling out over the music)

Can I get a little more sauce on this?

Petey pulls a soup ladle out of a pot of tomato sauce and pours it over the pasta. It's now basically soup.

Enrique exits, and as he does LOU (50's, very Italian, thinks he's Joe Pesci) enters and walks through the kitchen. He passes Petey, and we move with him until we arrive at a three compartment sink. It's unmanned, and has a stack of dirty dishes waiting to be cleaned.

LOU

(To himself)

Where the fuck is this kid.

Chef Petey pokes his head around the corner of the kitchen, checking for Lou. Seeing his chance, he takes a swig of cooking wine.

EXT. BEHIND RESTAURANT

A beaten up, late 90's SUV pulls into the parking lot behind Lou's, tapping on the breaks frequently and jerkily. It pulls into the only open spot next to an 80's convertible.

Out of it steps ADAM, 25, lanky, bags under his eyes, a dented can of cheap beer in his hand.

He takes the final swig of a can of beer, and tosses the empty can into the truck. He rubs his eyes and heads inside.

INT. LOU'S FAMOUS ITALIAN - KITCHEN

Adam enters. Lou is there waiting for him, arms crossed.

LOU

Hey kid. This is the fourth time in two weeks you've shown up late. That hurts the business. That doesn't work for me, capiche?

ADAM

Yeah, sure. Can I clock in now?

Adam approaches the timeclock slightly wobbly.

LOU

Are you fuckin' drunk right now?

ADAM

Working on it.

LOU

You're fired, get the fuck outta my store.

ADAM

Wait what the fuck?

LOU

It's bad enough you've been coming late, just get the fuck out.

ADAM

Fine.

Adam turns around and moves through the kitchen towards the serving area.

LOU

Where the fuck are you going?!

INT. LOU'S FAMOUS ITALIAN - CONTINUOUS

Adam exits the kitchen onto the serving floor. A few customers glance up from their food. Lou is close behind.

LOU
Adam! Get back here!

Adam approaches a couple at one of the tables, grabs a spoon from a table he passes, and uses it like a microphone.

ADAM
Hello, I'm here from the local news doing my first feature, just wanted to know, honestly, is the shit this place serves any good?

He holds the spoon out like a field reporter. The diners look concerned. Lou gives Enrique a "Help me already!" look.

ADAM (cont'd)
I mean honestly, I've scraped the leftovers of fuckin' hundreds of these dishes into the trash. It's like some Chef Boyardee shit, only it costs triple. Why don't you just drive like an hour to Syracuse? I could name three better Italian joints there off the top of my head.

Enrique approaches Adam, puts his hand on Adam's shoulder.

ENRIQUE
Come on Adam, let's go to the back.

ADAM
(Shrugging him off)
Don't fuckin' touch me man.

LOU
(To the diners)
I am so sorry for this distraction from your meals folks.

ADAM
Nah fuck you Lou, you gangster wannabe fuck.

LOU
Adam if you do not leave I'm going to call the police.

ADAM

Good, call em. I'll tell them all
about you and Enrique's dirty little
secret.

Lou's eyes blaze with fury. Adam turns attention back to the
customers.

ADAM (cont'd)

Oh ma'am, don't you know? Lou, who
hates immigrants, met his little
boytoy on his vacation to Tijuana,
and snuck him into the country to
live together.

(to Lou)

You only agree with illegal
immigration if you get to fuck em,
huh Lou?

LOU

(Sputtering)

I told you to shut the fuck up and
get out! Now!

ADAM

Don't worry Lou, I'm gone.

Adam drops the spoon and walks out. It clatters in the
silent dining area.

EXT. BEHIND RESTAURANT

Adam shuffles to his truck and gets in. He backs out of the
parking spot to the sound of LOUD CRUNCHING METAL. He
smiles. The convertible has been scraped to shit.

ADAM

Lou's not gonna like that.

He speeds out of the parking lot and down the road.

EXT. LONE ROAD - LATER

The SUV sits parked on the side of the road, hazards on.

INT. ADAM'S TRUCK

Adam punches his steering wheel.

ADAM

Good going you stupid fuck!

He takes a few deep breaths to calm down.

Adam pulls a crumpled pack of cigarettes from his front jacket pocket, pulls one out, lights it. From a different pocket he pulls out a phone with a cracked screen. It reads: 1 New Message From Devin. His eyes perk up.

INT. PROUD BARON PUB - NIGHT

The bar is dimly lit. Adam enters, and scans the establishment. It's a quiet weekday night. Country music plays from the jukebox in the corner. Only a handful of regulars in trucker hats are here.

Adam spots DEVIN (22, bright eyed and bushy tailed) sitting at the far end of the bar. He's chatting it up with the FEMALE BARTENDER (Slender, can hold her own in a fight). She leans in to keep their conversation private.

Adam walks over. The bartender notices him, and stands up a little straighter. Devin's eyes light up when he sees Adam.

ADAM

Hope I'm not interrupting something here.

Devin gets up and hugs Adam.

DEVIN

Adam! It's good to see you buddy!

Adam takes a seat at the bar next to Devin.

BARTENDER

(Customer service
voice)

Can I get you something hon?

ADAM

Whiskey ginger ale, please. And I need it strong.

BARTENDER

Coming right up.

She leaves to make his drink. Devin gestures to his own.

DEVIN

This is only my first, you don't need to catch up.

ADAM

I'm celebrating! Unemployment.

DEVIN

Ouch. What to talk about it?

ADAM

Not really, I'd rather catch up .

DEVIN

Aw I missed you too buddy.

The bartender returns and places the drink down in front of Adam WHO SMILES AT HER. He notices she's wearing a chain around her neck, with a key hanging from it.

ADAM

Thank you.

(Once she leaves)

She's into you. Saw it from all the way across the bar.

DEVIN

What? Dude, Nancy was my babysitter when I was like, 8.

ADAM

Doesn't mean she's not into you now that you're not 8.

DEVIN

We watched the Little Mermaid together. She sees me as a kid

ADAM

And I am always gonna see you as the kid who almost got his pecker bit off by a turtle on a camping trip.

DEVIN

Oh my God! You remember that?

ADAM

How could I forget? That was one of the best summers of my life.

DEVIN

Oh absolutely, same here. How old were we? Like 12?

ADAM
Something like that.

Adam drinks his drink in a gulp.

ADAM (cont'd)
You know, I was starting to think I
wouldn't hear from you again.

DEVIN
Why would you think that? You don't
think I think about you?

ADAM
Well... It's been a while. I thought
you'd make new friends.

DEVIN
Don't get me wrong, I have. But you?
You're unforgettable. Trust me.

Devin slides his hand on the counter closer to Adams,
practically touching. A pregnant pause between them.

The bartender returns. Adam pulls his hand away.

BARTENDER
Another whiskey ginger ale?

ADAM
Yes please.

Devin gulps his drink.

DEVIN
I could use another too.

EXT. ADAM'S PARENT'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

A typical suburban home set back from the road. The
landscaping has fallen behind a bit.

INT. ADAM'S PARENT'S HOUSE

The ghosts of his parent's memory looms over the house.

There has been no change to his parent's decorations. A
layer of dust covers shelves and framed family photos of
happier times. There's a stack of unpaid bills on the
kitchen counter.

There's a knock at the door.

INT. ADAM'S BEDROOM

Adam's room is still that of a teenager. Walls lined with dusty fantasy posters and the corners filled in with stacks of yellow paged old books. There's an empty six pack on the floor.

Adam is face down his bed, still wearing the clothes from the previous night, lightly snoring.

The knock is heard again, and Adam awakes to the sound.

ADAM
(Groggy)
Coming!

He stands up on wobbly knees. He's hungover, bad.

INT. FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Adam opens the door as LISA attempts to knock for a third time. She's in her 50's, overworked, and has been up all night.

ADAM
Hey Miss Phillips.

LISA
(Mile a minute)
Is Devin here? I tried calling him but his phone is going right to voicemail and so then I thought...

ADAM
I haven't seen him since last night when I got dropped off.

LISA
He dropped you off?

ADAM
No, he got us an Uber.

LISA
We have Uber in Wilburn?

ADAM
Apparently. I had him text me when he got home.

Adam shows her the text. She reads it a few times.

ADAM (cont'd)
He never came home?

LISA
No.

ADAM
Weird. I'll be sure to call you
though if I hear from him. Still the
same phone number?

LISA
Yes. I would appreciate that. Thank
you.

INT. ADAM'S TRUCK - DRIVING - LATER

Adam drives his truck on a tree-lined road. He picks up his phone from a cupholder and makes a call, hits speakerphone. It rings once. Twice.

Someone answers.

ADAM
Devin, man, you should call your mom,
she's worried about you. Did you not
go home last night?

Lisa's wails fill the truck and echo all around Adam. He SLAMS on the breaks.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME PARKING LOT - DAY

Close on: a battered old flask.

Adam, in a rumpled suit, sits in his car, looking at the building with dread. He takes a few deep breaths and a sip from a flask.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - DAY

The funeral home is semi-crowded, mostly filled with classmates of Devin's, all plain clothed. Adam doesn't recognize any of them. Talking to them is a BEARDED MAN, early 50's, lean, long graying hair tied up behind his head. They listen to him fervently.

Lisa in the funeral home's entrance. She stares an endless stare, numb to the world, shell shocked.

ADAM

Ms. Bennett I am so sorry.

She sniffs, lightly furrows her brow, but then looks over at Adam. At the sight of him the tears start bubbling up once more. She hugs him. Sniffles into his shoulder.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - MOMENTS LATER

Adam sits off to the side of the home, away from the other funeral goers.

BONNIE (O.C.)

Adam?

Adam looks up. Standing there are BONNIE and CALEB, 6, Devin's twin siblings. They're dressed in their Easter best.

BONNIE

Can we sit with you?

CALEB

Yeah, can we?

ADAM

Don't you think you should sit with your mom?

BONNIE

She's all sad right now.

CALEB

You're more fun.

ADAM

Maybe, but your mom needs you two to be strong for her.

CALEB

How strong?

ADAM

Strong as a cave troll.

Caleb is wowed by how strong that must be.

ADAM (cont'd)

Think you can do that?

CALEB

I think so.

BONNIE

Can you sit with us then?

ADAM

Uh, yeah, sure thing.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - LATER

Adam sits next to Bonnie, Caleb and Lisa in the front row. All of the rows behind them are filled with kids from Devin's school, all wearing similarly plain clothes.

From the back the bearded man walks towards the front. As he passes Adam a folded piece of paper falls from the man's pocket. Adam grabs it.

ADAM

(Softly)

Excuse me?

The bearded man turns, sees the paper, and takes it.

BEARDED MAN

(Smiling)

Thank you.

The man gets behind the podium and clears his throat.

BEARDED MAN (cont'd)

Hello everyone. Lisa, who raised such a wonderful young man, has allowed me to say a few words today. As many of you know, my name is Malcolm Turner.

Malcolm looks out into the audience as he speaks, past Lisa and the kids.

MALCOLM

I had the privilege of spending time with Devin in his time at Adirondack U, both as his professor and through the many hours in botany club. Today I am speaking for all of us who loved him so dearly.

Adam glances down at Bonnie's drawing. She's drawing Malcolm, but fatter, crossed eyed, and with horns. Adam smiles.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

Look around. You can see the wide reaching impact that Devin had on those around him. He had this ability to bring people in, to be closer to one another, to form such a community. It was his greatest gift.

The college kids murmur in agreement.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

With all of the time that he and I spent together, I have probably the best idea of what Devin wanted to be, and how he wanted to change the world around him.

More murmurs.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

He was becoming such a wonderful young man, but now has ascended to a higher place. A better place, surely. The best that we can do down here is aspire to be like Devin. To be the change in the world that we wish to see. To spread his love, and to sow it into the world.

Even more murmurs of agreement. Lisa wipes at tears in her eyes.

INT. FUNERAL HOME - LATER

The attendees are clearing out. Malcolm standing near the entrance to the home talking to a few funeral goers. Adam passes him. Malcolm notices him.

EXT. FUNERAL HOME PARKING LOT

Malcolm exits the home, following Adam.

MALCOLM

(Calling out)

Hey, excuse me, wait!

Adam stops.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

You're Adam, right?

ADAM

Um, yes, why?

MALCOLM

I'm sorry, I just wanted a chance to formally meet you. I love your work.

ADAM

My what?

MALCOLM

Oh! Right, sorry, my brain is moving faster than my mouth right now. I'm a fan of the book that you and Devin were writing. You know, Arcane Triumph?

ADAM

That's the book he and I wrote when we were like fifteen. He told you about that?

MALCOLM

Told me about that? Son, I was helping him work on it!

ADAM

Really?

MALCOLM

Yes, really. It's been coming along incredibly well, and to be frank, I think you've got something publishable on your hands.

ADAM

Are you serious?

MALCOLM

Very serious. I have copy of his most recent draft in my office at A.U. You should visit, I'll get you a copy. After all, it's half yours. What I'm trying to say here is that, potentially, you could finish what you two started.

ADAM

I'd have to think about it. Adirondack U, right?

MALCOLM

Right. I do hope you come by.

(MORE)

MALCOLM (cont'd)

(Considers)

I may be wrong, but Devin had mentioned something about you being a journalist now, correct?

ADAM

I was in school for it, but it didn't work out. I'm saving up to go back one day and get things back on track for myself.

MALCOLM

It's just- I hope you don't mind me saying this, but how he spoke about you, do you really want to be a journalist?

ADAM

What do you mean?

MALCOLM

I just don't get the sense that you're all that interested in the world as it is, but how it could be.

ADAM

The news has an audience. There's no money in fantasy.

MALCOLM

I think you'd be surprised. But, take as much time as you need to think about it. I know how much you loved Devin, and how difficult it was that you couldn't tell him that.

The words are caught in Adam's throat.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

It was so nice to finally meet the man behind the words.

(Chuckles)

I'll let you go without an autograph this time.

ADAM

Sure, next time. Nice to meet you too Malcolm.

Adam walks to his truck, and Malcolm watches him before going back inside.

INT. LISA'S HOUSE - EVENING

The guests have left. The house is loosely scattered with used paper plates. It's quiet now.

Adam sits in the blue glow of a muted TV. On it is playing the Rankin and Bass Hobbit on VHS. Bonnie and Caleb sleep on the couch next to him. Adam's mind seems elsewhere.

INT. ADAM'S BEDROOM - LATER

The computer flicks on. Adam opens a new browser tab, and searches for "Adirondack University Psychology Department", opens the first result.

On the page there is a photo of Malcolm, and below it reads "Malcolm Taylor, Head of Psychology"

Malcolm's school email address is listed under "Contact us". Adam turns the computer off.

INT. ADAM'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Adam lies asleep in bed when his alarm goes off. He snoozes it.

He gets out of bed, groans. He's hungover. He goes over to the desk to check for any leftover beer.

The six pack is empty.

ADAM

Fuck me.

His phone starts ringing. Lisa is calling.

ADAM (cont'd)

(On Phone)

Hello?

LISA (O.S.)

(On Phone)

Hello? Adam? Are you busy right now?

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Dozens of school children file out of the front doors of the school. Adam sits in his truck across from the entrance, watching.

Bonnie and Caleb come out of the entrance holding hands. They see Adam and their eyes light up.

BONNIE AND CALEB

Adam!

ADAM

Get in you little rugrats!

They run to his truck.

INT. ADAM'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Bonnie and Caleb climb into the back.

ADAM

(Snooty waiter voice)

Good afternoon young sir and madam.

Bonnie and Caleb giggle.

ADAM (cont'd)

(Snooty waiter voice)

Your mother has requested I bring you home from your daily learnings to clean the house and do your homework promptly, before a dinner of fine vegetables and an early bed time.

BONNIE AND CALEB

Noooo!!!

ADAM

(normal voice,
grinning)

But I have a better idea.

BONNIE AND CALEB

Yay!!

INT. ROADSIDE DINER - AFTERNOON

They sit in a plush leather booth. In the center of the table sits a small mountain sized ice cream sundae. Each of them digs away at the ice cream with a spoon.

The DINER WAITRESS (60's frizzy hair, kind eyes) approaches the booth, coffeepot in hand.

WAITRESS

How is everything over here?

BONNIE

Yummy!

Caleb gives a thumbs up, spoon still in mouth.

WAITRESS

They are adorable.

ADAM

Thank you.

WAITRESS

They take more after their mother.

ADAM

Oh, they're not mine. I'm just the babysitter.

CALEB

I'm not a baby!

BONNIE

Me neither!

ADAM

To me you are!

Caleb sticks his tongue out at Adam. Adam sticks his out right back. The waitress laughs, then leaves to attend to a nearby table.

INT. LISA'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

The front door opens and Bonnie, Caleb, and Adam enter the house.

ADAM

Mrs. Bennett? We're home.

BONNIE

Mommy's probably sleeping.

ADAM

Seems a bit early to be sleeping, don't you think?

BONNIE

She sleeps a lot now.

ADAM

A lot?

CALEB
A lot a lot.

ADAM
That much, huh?

CALEB
Yeah.

BONNIE
It's okay though. More beauty sleep
will mean she's more beautiful.

ADAM
Hard to argue with that.

Lisa comes around the corner, wearing the same pajamas she's been wearing for three days in a row. She obviously just woke up.

LISA
Adam, I'm sorry, I was going through
some of Devin's belongings and I lost
track of time and I-

ADAM
It's okay. I don't mind. If you want,
I can pick them up more often. I've
got the free time.

LISA
Are you sure? I don't know.

ADAM
I want to help however I can.

LISA
If you're sure you're up to the task.
(beat)
The kids can be a handful I mean.

ADAM
Don't worry about that, I love those
little rugrats.

INT. PROUD BARON PUB - LATE NIGHT

Adam sits alone at the bar, half a glass of beer in front of him. The same bartender from the other night approaches.

BARTENDER
Hey, last call, any final requests?

ADAM
That's okay, this is plenty.

BARTENDER
Okay hun.

The bartender starts walking away.

ADAM
Hey, what's your name?

BARTENDER
Nancy, nice to meet ya.

ADAM
Would you maybe want to meet up some
time Nancy? Do something fun?

NANCY
I thought you and Devin had something
going on?

Adam gulps the rest of his drink in one go.

ADAM
On second thought, one more for the
road.

INT. ADAM'S TRUCK - DRIVING - DAY

Adam drives along a long road lined by trees on both sides.

EXT. ADIRONDACK UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - DAY

All at once the trees separate, revealing a meadow. At the center stand sleek, modern looking buildings. The meadow has a ring of trees around it.

There are students all about the campus, enjoying the sunny weather or bustling from class to class.

INT. UNIVERSITY BUILDING - DAY

Adam walks through the halls of the school building. His clothes are shabbier than those of the students.

He goes down some stairs to the bottom floor of the building. At the bottom of the stairs is a hallway lined with offices.

He walks for a long time, passing office after office. Some open with professors inside them working, others closed off.

At the end of the hall he reaches a door with Malcolm's name on it. It's closed, but the light is on inside.

He knocks.

MALCOLM(O.S.)
 (From within)
 Come in!

INT. MALCOLM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Malcolm's office is tiny, and every inch of it is being used in some capacity. The walls are lined from floor to ceiling with books of various ages, sizes and conditions. In the middle is a small desk made of fake wood, and the desk itself is littered with papers, pens, pencils, books, and a laptop. An old coffee maker sits in the corner. The single fluorescent light hums gently.

Malcolm sits at his desk, and across from him sits ANA (20, Latina, short messy hair)

MALCOLM
 Come in, come in.

ADAM
 Oh shit, I didn't know you were with someone, I'll come back.

MALCOLM
 No, no, it's okay, Ana and I were just wrapping things up for the day, your timing couldn't have been better.

Ana closes a notebook and stuffs it into her backpack.

ANA
 Thanks again for all the help Malcolm.

MALCOLM
 I'm glad I could help.

Ana turns, quickly eyes Adam up and down, and leaves, closing the door behind her.

MALCOLM (cont'd)
 Have a seat Adam.

He takes one.

ADAM
Almost couldn't find your office.

MALCOLM
Yes, they like to keep me down here
in the dungeons.

ADAM
Even though you're the head of the
department?

Malcolm dramatically throws his hands up.

MALCOLM
Alas. But I see you've done your
research.
(Realizing)
Where is my head at? The book!

Malcolm starts going through drawers and cabinets,
searching, talking as he searches.

ADAM
Do you always talk like that?

MALCOLM
Like what?

ADAM
Like a dungeon master with all that
"Down in the dungeons" and "alas"
stuff.

MALCOLM
(Grins)
Maybe.
(Resumes search)
Do you play Dungeons and Dragons?

ADAM
I did, ages ago. As a kid.

MALCOLM
With Devin?

ADAM
Yeah.

MALCOLM
He mentioned that.

ADAM
That I played D&D?

MALCOLM
(Chuckling)
Among other things. The two of you
went on all sorts of adventures.

ADAM
Devin talked a lot about me?

Malcolm finds the book.

MALCOLM
A ha! Found it!

He pulls a thick binder out, the cover reads "Arcane
Triumph." He hands it to Adam.

MALCOLM (cont'd)
There you are.

ADAM
Thanks. I'll start reading this
tonight. Did you mean it when you
said this could be published?

MALCOLM
With all my heart. I know a few
people in publishing, and spoken
about this to them They're
interested, but it still needs a bit
of work before it's ready for that.
Think you could do that?

ADAM
I'd have to read it again, see where
it's at, you know? But, first, can I
ask you something that's been on my
mind?

MALCOLM
Of course.

ADAM
What do you do?

MALCOLM
I teach psychology, but I'm not sure
I understand your question.

ADAM

Growing up, Devin hated school, and hated teachers. I remember he used to go on these dramatic rants about teachers, the kinds you'd imagine yelled through megaphones at riots.

Adam pauses for a beat, smiles faintly as he remembers. He focuses.

ADAM (cont'd)

But then there's you. Devin liked you. How did you manage that? What makes you so different?

MALCOLM

Well, it sounds almost a cliché at this point, but simply put I would listen to him. Do you want some coffee?

ADAM

I'm okay.

Malcolm gets up, and starts prepping the coffee maker, filling it with a water bottle from inside his desk.

MALCOLM

(Making coffee)

I think there's a surprising number of teachers, not just at this school but all across academia, who view teaching in a narcissistic kind of way. Even if they don't admit it to themselves, these teachers view themselves as artists, and the students clay to be molded. It's amazing what happens when you try listening to the clay.

ADAM

Doesn't sound like you like other teachers.

MALCOLM

Just a difference in opinion on certain matters I think.

He pours the coffee into a mug takes a sip. It's full of grounds, and he spits it back into the cup.

MALCOLM (cont'd)
I forgot the filter! I'm so busy
talking to you I'm not paying
attention to what I'm doing!

ADAM
Happens to the best of us.

Malcolm sits back down, drinks from the water bottle
instead.

ADAM (cont'd)
Thank you for this. Once I have a
chance to read the whole thing can I
come back to talk about it with you?

MALCOLM
Please.

INT. ADAM'S TRUCK - DRIVING - NIGHT

Adam drives through darkness, face partially illuminated by
the lights from his dashboard, lit up with every street
light he passes. After a moment, a small smile comes onto
his face. The binder sits on the passenger seat.

INT. ADAM'S BEDROOM - LATER

Adam lays in bed, a six pack on his bedside table. He cracks
open the first bottle, and opens the binder.

INT. ADAM'S BEDROOM - DAWN

Adam snores lightly, the binder open on his lap, the six
pack empty.

INT. ADAM'S PARENT'S HOUSE - 2:00 PM

The binder is open on the kitchen table. An old dusty coffee
machine is brewing coffee.

Adam comes in, mail in hand. He drops the envelopes onto the
pile on the counter, pours himself a cup of coffee, and sits
down to read.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Bonnie and Caleb run around a playground. Adam sits on a bench to the side, reading from the binder and looking up every now and then to keep an eye on the kids.

Bonnie grabs his wrist and gives it a tug.

BONNIE
Play with us!

Caleb grabs his other wrist.

CALEB
Yeah Adam!

They tug him to his feet.

ADAM
Okay okay! Better run, I'm gonna
getcha!

The kids squeal and run off, and Adam chases them, leaving the binder on the bench.

EXT. LISA'S HOUSE - DUSK

Lisa stands on her front porch, and Bonnie and Caleb go into the house behind her. Adam waves to her from the drivers seat of the truck. She gives a strained smile and gives a slight wave back.

INT. MALCOLM'S OFFICE - NEXT WEEK - AFTERNOON

Malcolm sits at his desk, reading from a thickly filled binder. Post it notes jut out from the sides.

Adam knocks at the ajar office door. Malcolm looks up from behind reading glasses.

ADAM
Knock knock

MALCOLM
Adam! So good to see you again! I've
been waiting to talk to you about
this! Finished reading?

ADAM
Yeah, I finished it last night
actually.

MALCOLM

Fantastic! Coffee? I made it right this time. It's my own personal blend.

Malcolm gestures to the pot of coffee behind him.

ADAM

Yeah, sure.

Malcolm pours Adam a cup. Adam take it appreciatively, drinks from it.

ADAM (cont'd)

Sorry it took so long, the book is a bit longer than I remember it being.

MALCOLM

Oh, yes yes yes, Devin had been hard at work at expanding the world of the story, and I still have my notes from some of his sessions. Come in, sit down, sit down.

Adam sits.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

A lot of what Devin had been working on was expanding the world of the story, broadening it, showing the wider consequences of these actions, all that fun stuff.

ADAM

What was the last thing he was working on?

MALCOLM

The ending. He came into my office and declared the ending didn't work, that it was untruthful. This was before even saying hello mind you.

ADAM

I take it he didn't like the happy ending then.

MALCOLM

Not really, no. He said that 100% happy endings are lies. He never elaborated beyond that, unfortunately.

ADAM

I mean, I think I can sort of see what he means. It ends with Alec defeating the dark lord Vome, marrying the princess and ruling as a just king. It's the kind of ending a highschooler would write.

MALCOLM

How should the story end then?

ADAM

I'm... well not so sure. I just know this ending doesn't work for the characters.

MALCOLM

What do you mean?

ADAM

I mean Devin changed some of the characters. The actions they take don't always fit with them anymore.

MALCOLM

How did he change them?

ADAM

For one, I don't remember there being so many gay characters.

MALCOLM

You thought it was too gay?

ADAM

(Defensive)

No, no, not that at all. I just mean we never really talked about any of the characters being gay. Now there's a bunch of them.

MALCOLM

(Shrugs)

Devin said it was unrealistic for there to be none in the world at all.

ADAM

And that's fine! It's just a change I didn't expect, that's all. Just something else for me to consider.

MALCOLM

Well, speaking of gay characters, does Alec the warrior know that that his ranger companion has feelings for him?

ADAM

Wait, what? He doesn't-
(Struggling)
Alec isn't gay though. He even gets with the elf lady in that one part. He and Oliver were just friends.

MALCOLM

Okay, but Oliver definitely is gay. Super obvious if you know what to look for, but he's definitely trying to hide it from Alec. Why is that?

ADAM

I- I don't know. I didn't even pick up on that stuff

MALCOLM

Really? I first picked it up after the battle with the giant tortoise. They just had to huddle for warmth, huh?

ADAM

The waters were like, icy cold, and plus Devin mostly wrote that part.

MALCOLM

Sure, sure, whatever you say.

Malcolm stretches in his chair.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

God I need a better chair down here. It's awful once you're in it longer than three hours. I need to stretch my legs. Will you walk with me?

EXT. ADIRONDACK UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - LATE AFTERNOON/EARLY EVENING

Malcolm and Adam walk together outside. The campus is quiet.

ADAM

Do you have like a class tonight? Or you heading out soon?

MALCOLM
Trying to get rid of me so quickly?

ADAM
No not that, it's-

MALCOLM
I'm kidding. I'm done with classes
for the day. Besides, it's starting
to get late, and you have a long
drive back. You're young, you
probably have plans.

ADAM
(Sarcastic)
Yeah, totally.

MALCOLM
What does *that* mean?

ADAM
Just that my plans are the usual. Go
home, get drunk, go to bed.

MALCOLM
That's your usual?

ADAM
Yeah, sometimes.

MALCOLM
Do you always drink alone?

ADAM
Mostly, but usually there's just no
one to drink with, that's all.

MALCOLM
You know, I used to drink. Alone,
like you. Not anymore though, haven't
had a drop in, what, 14 years now?
Has it really been that long already?

ADAM
Wow, congrats.

MALCOLM
One day at a time, that's what they
say, right?

ADAM
So I've heard.

MALCOLM

I never went through any sort of program though. One day I just woke up and found I couldn't stand the taste of it.

ADAM

Do you miss it ever?

MALCOLM

Not for a minute.

They reach the parking lot.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

Adam, as always it has been a pleasure.

ADAM

Yeah, definitely.

MALCOLM

If you need anything, anything at all, please don't hesitate to reach out to me, okay?

ADAM

I'll keep that in mind.

MALCOLM

Promise?

ADAM

Sure, I promise. Good-bye Malcolm.

They part ways into the night.

INT. ADAM'S PARENT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Adam sits in front of the TV, ignoring the news report on it. It's some report about a corrupt politician. Unimportant. He's lost in thought.

INT. ADAM'S PARENT'S HOUSE - KITCHEN

Adam pulls a beer from the refrigerator. Cracks it open, takes a gulp, holds it in his mouth. Somethings off.

He spits it into the sink, and washes his mouth out with water.

He looks confused at the bottle. Checks the expiration date. It should still be good.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - DAY

Adam sits in his truck waiting for Bonnie and Caleb.

The kids squeal and run to his truck when they see him.

INT. ADAM'S TRUCK - DRIVING - SUNNY AFTERNOON

Adam's truck roars down an empty road. Rock music blasts at full volume, windows are open and wind whips through Bonnie and Caleb's hair. The scream kids with delight.

BONNIE
Faster!

ADAM
Faster?!

BONNIE
Yes!

CALEB
No!! This is good enough!

ADAM
Okay, buddy, don't worry!

Adam gives Caleb a thumbs up in the rear view mirror.

INT. LISA'S HOUSE - LATER

The front entrance is dimly lit. Lisa lets Adam and the children into the house. The kids run past her. Lisa is looking slightly better, but there's a light in her eyes missing.

LISA
(Calling after the kids)
I'll be up in a minute to help you finish packing.
(To Adam)
I wanted to let you know you aren't going to have to pick them up for the next few weeks. We're going to be out of town.

ADAM
You guys taking a vacation?

LISA
Yeah, kinda. No. I need to go look after my mother in Chicago. We're leaving tomorrow morning.

ADAM
Was she at the..?

LISA
No, she couldn't come to the funeral. She's homebound.

ADAM
Oh.

LISA
Yeah. It's a good thing though. An excuse to get out of the house, you know? To see a different part of the world. Change of scenery will be good for us.

ADAM
That's a good way of looking at it. How long are you going to be gone?

LISA
I don't really know. Maybe a month?

Bonnie runs back into the room. Lisa puts on a happier face.

BONNIE
We'll be back in time for the winter play, right?

Caleb runs in too.

CALEB
Yeah! We have important parts! With words!

LISA
Of course honey.

BONNIE
Adam, you'll come, right?

ADAM
Wouldn't miss it.

CALEB
Promise?

ADAM
(Saluting)
Scout's honor.

The kids smile, and run out of the room. Lisa's face drops back down.

LISA
I'm pulling them out of school while we're gone. Home schooling.

ADAM
Oh, okay. Wow.

LISA
Yeah.

Beat.

ADAM
Well, I should get going.

LISA
Adam, wait. There's something I need to know. Were you drunk at the funeral?

ADAM
What?

LISA
I need you to tell me. Were you drunk at my son's funeral?

ADAM
No, I wasn't, where is this coming from?

Lisa give him a cold look.

LISA
What about when you're with my kids then? Do you drink when you're *driving them around*? Or are you going to lie about that too?

ADAM
What are you talking about?

LISA

I've second guessed myself for weeks but I know what I smelled. It was on your breath at the funeral, and now you lie about it to my face.

ADAM

I, I didn't-

LISA

Do you want to know the last thing I ever talked to Devin about? He was excited to meet up with you. He had some big question for you, and by morning he died of an overdose.

ADAM

Wait, are you saying I had something to do with it?

LISA

I don't know. I don't know if I'll ever fully know what happened that night. But, I need to know that my children are safe. I've already lost Devin, I will not lose them too.

Pained silence.

ADAM

I... I understand.

Adam leaves. Lisa stands alone in the dim hallway.

EXT. LIQUOR STORE PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Adam exits the store. The store's fluorescent sign turns off behind him.

EXT. LOU'S FAMOUS ITALIAN PARKING LOT - MIDNIGHT

The restaurant is dark and empty. Adam paces next to his parked truck. In his hand a bottle of whiskey.

He pulls the lid off the bottle and takes a swig.

It's the worst thing he's ever tasted. He spits the liquid out, betrayed.

ADAM

Fuck!!

He throws the bottle and the night swallows it.

INT. ADAM'S TRUCK - NIGHT

On speakerphone, Adam calls Devin's cell phone.

DEVIN'S VOICEMAIL
Hey, it's me Devin.

Adam smiles at his voice.

DEVIN'S VOICEMAIL (cont'd)
I promise I'm not avoiding your
calls.

Adam spies the binder in the rear view mirror.

DEVIN'S VOICEMAIL (cont'd)
Leave a message and I'll be with you
as soon as possible.

INT. DINER - DAWN

Adam sits in a corner booth next to a window, binder open, scribbling notes in the margins.

The diner waitress comes over and refills his cup of coffee, and he gives her a quick appreciative smile.

DINER WAITRESS
No kids?

ADAM
No, just me today.

DINER WAITRESS
(Noticing)
I didn't know you were a writer!
Anything I might have read? I read
two books a week from the library.

ADAM
This would be the first, hopefully.

DINER WAITRESS
Well then I'd love your autograph
once it's out. When you're a big time
author I can tell all my friends I
knew you before you were famous.

ADAM
Sure, okay, yeah.

DINER WAITRESS
I'll let you get back to it.

She gives him a warm smile and he gets back to work.

EXT. ADAM'S PARENT'S HOUSE - LATE MORNING

Head down, Adam shuffles up to the front door and tries to open it. It's locked.

He looks up and sees the notice tacked to the front door. In large angry letters it reads: **FORECLOSURE**

Adam jiggles the doorknob more to no avail. He kicks the door once. Twice. Over and over.

ADAM
Fuck! Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!

EXT. LISA'S HOUSE - FRONT ENTRANCE - LATER

Adam knocks on Lisa's door. There's no answer.

INT. ADAM'S TRUCK - IN FRONT OF LISA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Adam breaks down and sobs in the driver's seat.

He glances over at the binder sitting on the front seat next to him.

He pulls out his phone, wipes a tear, then types up an email to Malcolm.

"Can we meet?"

INT. MALCOLM'S OFFICE - DAY

Adam enters Malcolm's office, carrying the binder with him.

MALCOLM
Adam, I didn't expect to see you today.

ADAM

Hey Malcolm, I had a question. Does AU have any sort of like a program where you can work for room and board?

MALCOLM

I believe so, but only for registered university students.

(Concerned)

Adam, why, is everything alright?

ADAM

I lost my house today.

MALCOLM

What?

ADAM

I mean, my parents house. I lost it. The bank took it. It got foreclosed. Fuck.

MALCOLM

Do you have somewhere you can go? Family? Friends?

ADAM

(Tearing up)

No. I don't.

MALCOLM

What are you going to do?

ADAM

(Starts crying)

I really don't know. I think I'm homeless now.

Malcolm comes around his desk to Adam, and crouches down to his level, putting a hand on his shoulder.

MALCOLM

Adam, it's going to be okay. I promise. If you really need it I have somewhere you can stay.

ADAM

You do? But I thought you said the school-

MALCOLM

It's not through the school. Come with me.

EXT. CAMPUS - PATH EDGE - DAY

Malcolm walks with Adam, who has pulled himself together a little bit. They reach the end of a paved path on the edge of the woods surrounding the campus grounds.

MALCOLM

This path leads to the Botanical Gardens. Careful where you step, the pavement ends here.

They step off the pavement onto a worn dirt path.

EXT. WOODED PATH - DAY

Malcolm leads Adam through the woods. Beams of sunlight break through the leaves and birds chip up above somewhere.

EXT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - DAY

They exit the trees into a clearing. The botanical gardens stands in the center of it. It's architecture is far older than that of the university. Malcolm opens its heavy wooden door easily.

MALCOLM

We don't keep it locked.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - MAIN GARDEN - DAY

The room is large and brightly lit, with daylight shining in through a glass roof. Lines of plants in long rows span the length of the hall.

MALCOLM

Welcome to the botanical gardens. Years ago A.U. used to have the strongest botanical programs in the entire state. But over time the program's interest fell. Nowadays it's only offered as a minor. They don't even use these gardens anymore, all standard classroom affairs.

ADAM

Then what is this place for?

MALCOLM

I help run a thriving botany club that meets here nightly. We've been looking someone to keep an eye on this place overnight to guard the produce. It comes with a room if you're interested.

ADAM

I am.

MALCOLM

Great! Let me show you to your room.

Malcolm leads Adam across the main garden, passing plants of every shape and size.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS BACK ROOM

A small yellow light bulb illuminates the room. The room is small and filled with gardening supplies. The ceiling is a large, steel framed skylight.

MALCOLM

Way back in the day this room used to house the school's first botany professor. The guy loved plants enough to want to live as close to them as he could.

Malcolm moves some supplies off of a basic cot bed in the corner.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

It's a bit spartan, I'll admit, but the greenhouse keeps this room warm year round, and the bed isn't that bad either. I've used it myself.

ADAM

Malcolm, this is so generous of you. Are you sure this is okay? You hardly know me.

MALCOLM

I promise, it's okay. Berry and I have helped a few lost and desperate souls over the years.

ADAM

Berry?

MALCOLM

The botany professor here. You'll meet her, she's nice.

Adam sits on the cot.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

Berry will be by later today with some fresh clothes for you, the ones you're wearing are in desperate need of changing.

Adam looks at the clothes he's been wearing since yesterday.

ADAM

Thank you.

MALCOLM

Of course. I have to leave for now, I have a class to teach. Rest. You're safe now.

All of Adam's exhaustion seems to hit him at once.

ADAM

I, yeah, I think I could use a nap.

He lies down. Malcolm turns the light off, silhouetted by the open door.

ADAM (cont'd)

Malcolm? Thank you. Truly.

MALCOLM

It's no problem. Get some sleep son.

The door closes.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Adam wakes up to BERRY, 70's, long gray hair and a smile lined face, putting a small pile of folded clothes at the foot of his bed.

ADAM

Who are you?

BERRY

(Hushed)

Sorry to wake you deary. I'm Bernice,
but call me Berry. Malcolm told me
you'd be staying with us.

ADAM

How long was I asleep?

BERRY

A few hours, it's evening now. I
brought you some clothes.

ADAM

Thank you.

BERRY

Of course deary. Now get your rest.

She turns to leave.

ADAM

Berry? How long have you and Malcolm
known each other?

A wistful smile comes to her face.

BERRY

Most of my life. Malcolm and I were
classmates in high school. He was as
brilliant then as he is now.

(Collecting herself)

I'll be back later with a bowl of
soup.

She leaves. Adam drifts back to sleep.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Adam wakes up. The night sky is cloudy and starless.

He feels his way darkness, finds the light switch. He flips
it and squints at the light.

There are clothes neatly folded at the foot of the bed. A
plain green long sleeve shirt and plain brown pants. He
changes into them.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - NIGHT

Adam comes out of the back room. It's quiet in the garden

He walks through the rows of plants, looking at each one he passes.

He rounds a corner and sees Malcolm sitting on the ground, gardening some flowers by the light of the moon.

ADAM

Malcolm?

Malcolm looks over his shoulder.

MALCOLM

Hey, you're finally awake.

ADAM

What time is it?

MALCOLM

I don't know, close to 3:30 I think.

ADAM

Why are you here so late?

MALCOLM

Come here, I'll show you.

Adam crouches down next to Malcolm.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

Watch closely.

Clouds move and pale moonlight shines down on them. A single pale white flower blooms with small traces of bright blue bioluminescence spreading through each petal.

ADAM

Whoa.

MALCOLM

This is a flower that only blooms in special circumstances, particularly in moonlight. It's a rare specimen, and it needs special care and attention. It's my own special project.

Malcolm gives the flower tender care and a smile. Adam smiles with him.

ADAM

It's beautiful.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS BACK ROOM - DAY

Adam wakes up. At the foot of his bed are another pair of plain clothes. On top of them a note that reads simply "Coffee? -M"

Adam puts the clothes on.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - MAIN GARDEN - DAY

Adam exits into the garden. Tending the plants are a few CLUB MEMBERS, plainly clothed, barefoot. A boy with blonde curly hair and bright eyes looks up, sees Adam, and he smiles warmly.

CLUB MEMBER
Hello friend!

ADAM
Um, hi.

CLUB MEMBER
Have you come to garden with us?

ADAM
I'm sorry, I didn't expect for there to be anyone else here.

CLUB MEMBER
The doors are always open to members to garden. We come and go as we need.

ADAM
That right?

CLUB MEMBER
Tell me friend, what is your name?

ADAM
I'm Adam.

CLUB MEMBER
Welcome Adam. I'm Joshua.

Joshua hugs Adam, surprising him.

ADAM
(Awkward)
So about Malcolm.

JOSHUA

I think Malcolm has a class ending soon. You might be able to catch him if you head to the psych building.

ADAM

Thanks.

JOSHUA

Are you coming to the meeting tonight?

ADAM

Meeting?

JOSHUA

The club meeting!

ADAM

Oh, right, maybe. Thinking about it.

JOSHUA

I hope to see you there friend.

Joshua gives him another warm smile and returns gardening. Adam looks back at Joshua before he leaves.

INT. PSYCH CLASSROOM - MORNING

Malcolm is teaching freshman about Freud.

MALCOLM

Alright, class dismissed. Don't forget about the test next week, I'll know if you don't study!

The class gets up, files out. As Malcolm packs his things together, Adam pokes his head into the room and taps on the door.

ADAM

Knock knock.

MALCOLM

Adam! Good morning, I was just about to come visit you! Want to get some coffee?

ADAM

Yeah, sure.

INT. CAMPUS COFFEE SHOP - TABLE - LATER

The two sit at a table, sipping their drinks. Students study on laptops at surrounding tables. Through a large window the sky is bright and blue.

ADAM

I met a member of your club this morning. Joshua.

MALCOLM

I love Joshua! He's an absolute darling, and one of our most faithful members. He attends almost every meeting.

ADAM

He seems really nice.

MALCOLM

He is.

ADAM

He asked if I was going to the meeting tonight.

MALCOLM

You're welcome to, everyone is, but please, go at your own pace. If you still need to collect yourself-

ADAM

I don't want to just be cooped up in my room all night. I'll go. It's just gardening, right? How hard can it be?

MALCOLM

Wonderful!

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - MAIN GARDEN - NIGHT

The lights make it bright as day in the garden. There are club members scattered around the plants. All wear plain clothing, most are barefoot.

Joshua sees Adam, face lighting up, and waves. Adam smiles and waves back.

Malcolm leads Adam past Joshua to a kneeling girl gardening by herself. She looks up, and Adam recognizes Ana.

MALCOLM

Ana, could you show Adam the ropes here?

ADAM

Hi.

ANA

I'd be happy to Malcolm.

MALCOLM

You're in good hands here Adam. Ana is one of our best. She'll guide you. I'll check in with you two soon, okay?

ADAM

Okay.

He walks off. Adam gets down on his knees next to her.

ADAM (cont'd)

Hey, I just wanted to say sorry for interrupting you and Malcolm's meeting a few weeks ago.

ANA

Are you still hung up on that? It's in the past, let it go.

ADAM

Okay.

A club member walks up to them carrying a tray of small ceramic mugs.

ADAM (cont'd)

What's this?

ANA

(Taking a mug)

Once a week we all drink this special herbal tea while we garden. It has special properties and helps open our minds.

ADAM

Opens minds?

ANA

Like in a spiritual sense. When we take it together, it brings us all closer together. Look, even Malcolm is drinking it.

Adam looks over, sees Malcolm finishing his own mug. Adam takes a mug from the tray and takes a sip. It's slightly spicy. He keeps drinking it.

There is a crackle over speakers mounted in the ceiling.

Insert: An old record is lowered onto a record player.

The speakers begin playing Hindustani Indian classical music.

ADAM

Uh, who has the aux cord?

ANA

(Giggling)

Berry. When she was young she studied abroad, and learned from Dr. T. C. Singh about the effects of music on plant growth. He's the guy who figured out that music helps plants grow better. Not specifically this music though, this is just her personal taste.

ADAM

Oh, I get it.

ANA

Listen before we start I just wanted to say I'm sorry about Devin. He was very special.

ADAM

(Awkward)

Thanks.

ANA

I'm sorry. That was wrong of me to bring that up right now.

ADAM

No, I'm fine, I promise. Just a bit out of my element here. So much to take in.

ANA

It's okay. Just follow my lead. These plants are getting too big for their pots. They need to be taken out so they don't strangle themselves. We'll be putting them in the ground

ADAM

So... like a trans-plant?

Ana laughs.

ANA

You're funny.

She pushes her hands into the bare soil. Adam follows suit.

ANA (cont'd)

Feel the earth around your fingers.

Adam wiggles his fingers in the warm soil.

ANA (cont'd)

Now feel yourself. Can you feel that connection?

ADAM

I think so.

Adams arms sprout goosebumps. The music gets slightly louder. The lights get dimmer.

ADAM (cont'd)

I feel it.

ANA

Yes! Now.

Using hands as shovels, they each open a small hole in the earth. The music gets LOUDER.

They remove the plants from their pots and stick them into the soil. The music gets FASTER.

They push soil around the plant bases. NO SOUND can be heard over the music. Adam smooths the soil around his plant.

ADAM

(Inaudibly)

I can't feel where my skin ends.

His fingers slip into the dirt, they feel as one.

ADAM (cont'd)
(Inaudibly)
What was in that tea?

Ana says something that cannot be heard.

Adam looks at the plant in front of him. The outlines of the leaves pulse and breathe.

The plant GROWS. New branches continuously sprout out, growing and growing, stretching and becoming taller than Adam.

A small light begins shining in the center of the leaves of the plant

Adam gently parts the branches, the leaves softly illuminating with his touch. He peers inside and sees a lake. The lake from his past.

EXT. LAKESIDE - DAY

There is no sound. Young Adam and Young Devin, both around twelve, come out of the water wearing only their underwear. They do not see him.

They flop out onto the shore, letting the sun warm their skin.

Sitting up now, Young Devin says something to Young Adam. Cautiously, he leans over and tries to kiss Young Adam.

Young Adam pulls away.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS

Adam is PULLED out from the plant and back into the garden.

He looks around through a technicolor haze. Club members feel the earth, the music and each other. The light in the leaves of his plant is gone. With a hand, Ana guides his gaze back onto her.

The plants continue expanding and breathing, growing around the two of them. They are engulfed, just the two of them together, eyes locked on each other, breathing in sync.

He reaches out and touches the side of her face, she reacts affectionately to the feeling, skin glowing.

They pull each other in and kiss, intensely. Their lips illuminate at the touch. Their clothes literally melt off of their bodies, the clothing fibers flowing like water.

Their skin connects, glowing on contact, and fuses together. The branches wrap around their bodies and join them as one.

DEVIN (V.O.)

Adam.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS BACK ROOM - MORNING

Adam GASPS awake. He looks around, unsure where he is at first, then realizes he's in bed.

He looks down. He's naked.

Another neat little stack of clothes sit at the foot of the bed.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - MAIN GARDEN - MORNING

Adam steps out wearing the clothes. The garden is empty, and beams of sunshine rain in through the ceiling.

He rubs his eyes.

He sees his plant from last night, carefully tended to in the soil. He crouches down and feels one of its leaves.

Voices are heard.

Ana enters the garden with two other club members, a boy and a girl, both bright eyed.

ANA

Good Morning Adam!

They approach him. Ana hugs him.

ADAM

Good morning.

The other two club members hug him as well. He awkwardly hugs them back.

BOY

(Hugging)

Good morning brother.

GIRL
(Hugging)
Good morning brother.

ADAM
Uh, good morning.

ANA
Adam, I want you to meet my two very
good friends, SOPHIA and LUKAS.

ADAM
Nice to meet you.

ANA
We were just talking about last
nights meeting.

ADAM
I'm sorry, I don't actually fully
remember what happened last night.
Everything is foggy. What happened?

ANA
You don't remember? We fucked.

ADAM
(Taken aback)
We- what?

ANA
You know, sex.

ADAM
You're not making a very big deal
about it.

ANA
Why would I? Wait, was it your first
time?

ADAM
No, it's just I don't remember that
happening at all.

SOPHIA
Well what do you remember?

ADAM
I remember gardening with Ana, and
then the music got louder and the
lights got weirder.

LUKAS
That might be the tea.

ADAM
The tea?

SOPHIA
Our tea has special properties. It helps you see clearly.

ANA
I told you that.

ADAM
But-

LUKAS
You're confused, it's okay, don't worry. It happens to everyone. I remember my first time drinking it I almost peed myself! I was so confused!

ADAM
I need to talk to Malcolm.

He rushes out, leaving the trio behind.

INT. MALCOLM'S OFFICE - LATER

Adam enters without knocking.

ADAM
Malcolm we need to talk.

Malcolm is with a student who's wearing rainbow stockings and heavy leather boots.

MALCOLM
Is this an emergency? I'm with a student right now.

ADAM
It can't wait.

MALCOLM
(To student)
I'm sorry Rosie, could we meet after lunch?

ROSIE
Sure, Professor.

She gets up and leaves the office. Adam sits in the chair.

ADAM

What the hell kind of club are you running?

MALCOLM

I told you, it's a botany club. We garden together and grow together.

ADAM

And you trip together.

MALCOLM

Are you talking about the tea?

ADAM

What the fuck else would I be talking about?

MALCOLM

Alright, fair, the herbs were grow for the tea have similar effects as Psilocybin. You know, magic mushrooms.

ADAM

And you gave me that without telling me? You can't just do that! I should call the police for this.

MALCOLM

The herbs aren't illegal Adam. You'd just be wasting their time.

ADAM

I could have died!

MALCOLM

You weren't in danger for a single second. Every tea night I drink the first cup brewed. I would never subject anyone to something I wouldn't do first. The entire point of tea night is bonding! Connecting emotionally with those around you!

ADAM

That's some flowery language to justify drug fueled orgies.

MALCOLM

Sex does happen sometimes, yes. Last night included.

(Then)

Does sex make you uncomfortable?

ADAM

No, but-

MALCOLM

Were your parents catholic by any chance?

ADAM

Yeah, but I've never been religious.

MALCOLM

But you still have that Catholic guilt, right?

ADAM

That's not at all the point here. You can't drug people like that.

MALCOLM

I'm sorry Adam. I was just trying to help you.

ADAM

Why the hell did you think it would do that??

MALCOLM

Because it's what Devin would have wanted.

Stunned silence.

ADAM

How dare you. You obviously didn't know him at all.

Adam turns to leave.

MALCOLM

Adam, I assure you, I knew him better than most. There are parts of Devin he hid from you.

ADAM

Oh yeah? Like what?

MALCOLM

He was in love with you. Deeply.

Adam storms out. Malcolm doesn't chase him.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - MAIN GARDEN - DAY

Joshua is gardening when Adam comes into the garden.

JOSHUA

Adam?

Adam rushes through the garden to the...

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Adam searches among the items in the room. He grabs the binder, tosses it behind him on to the floor.

JOSHUA

Adam, what's wrong?

ADAM

Joshua, hi, I'm sorry but I have to go. I need to find my keys and get out of here.

JOSHUA

Where are you going?

ADAM

I don't know I just need to get out of here, I need to, I need-

Adam starts hyperventilating. Joshua rushes to his side.

JOSHUA

Shh. Sit down. Catch your breath, it's okay Adam.

Joshua sits him down on the bed. Adam tries to slow his breathing, and Joshua rubs his back, gently shhing him.

JOSHUA (cont'd)

It's okay, it's okay.

Adam takes a deep breath, exhales.

ADAM

Did you know Devin well?

JOSHUA

Oh yes. We were very close, he and I. When I was new here he guided me through my first meeting. He was my first.

ADAM

You mean?

JOSHUA

Yup. Like how Ana was your first.

ADAM

So Devin was gay then.

JOSHUA

Sexuality isn't that black and white Adam.

ADAM

Why didn't he tell me?

JOSHUA

Are you sure he never tried?

Beat.

JOSHUA (cont'd)

I know what you're going through. I loved him deeply, and I miss his presence every day.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - MAIN GARDEN

The garden door hangs open, and an outside breeze rustles the leaves of the plants. From the back room Adam is heard faintly crying.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS BACK ROOM - AFTERNOON

Adam lies on his side, staring blankly towards the back room. He sees the binder lying on the floor.

He goes over, picks it up, opens it.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS BACK ROOM - EVENING

The sky through the ceiling is orange. Adam reads from the binder.

There's a knock at the door and Malcolm comes in.

MALCOLM

Adam, I wanted to say I'm sorry. I should have told you about the tea myself. It wasn't fair to keep that from you, even if I thought I was helping.

Adam doesn't look up.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

Adam?

ADAM

It was in here all along, wasn't it?

Malcolm sits at the foot of the bed.

MALCOLM

What was?

ADAM

Everything that Devin felt. About himself, me, everything. The real Devin, the one I never fully knew, he's in these pages. I just couldn't see it

MALCOLM

When I met Devin, he was such a troubled soul. But, that book? It's how he found himself.

ADAM

He could be himself in it. It's more honest now.

(short beat)

But it's not there yet. It's still half a lie.

MALCOLM

What do you mean?

Adam looks up from the pages.

ADAM

I need to find out my half of the truth in these pages. I need to finish what Devin started.

MALCOLM
Is there anything I can do to help
you with this?

ADAM
You've given me a p[lace to stay. I
just need something to write with.

MALCOLM
I have just the thing upstairs.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - MAIN GARDEN

They go into a corner of the garden. Blended into the wall
is the outline of a door. Malcolm pushes the door open.

INT. STAIRWELL - CONTINUOUS

There's an old staircase tucked inside the wall. They climb.
Boards squeak with every step.

INT. MALCOLM'S STUDY

Malcolm leads Adam into a small room. A window overlooks the
garden, high above the tops of the foliage. In one corner is
Berry's turntable and records. The ceiling is painted with
constellations, each star hand labeled in Latin.

On a desk in the corner there is an old typewriter.

MALCOLM
This is where Devin used to come to
write. On this very typewriter. You
could write here too

Adam runs his fingers across the keys.

ADAM
It's perfect.

Adam presses down on a key.

Click.

It sounds right.

INT. MALCOLM'S STUDY - NIGHT

Adam types away at the keys, entranced by the words pouring onto page, the sound of clicking keys fills the air.

BERRY (O.C.)
Sorry to interrupt honey.

Adam whips around, startled.

ADAM
Jesus!

BERRY
Oh dear are you okay?!

ADAM
Yeah, you just startled me.

BERRY
I wanted to see if you were hungry.
There's a feast tonight downstairs if
you are.

Adam looks out the window, sees the dark sky.

ADAM
It's night already?

BERRY
We didn't want to disturb your
writing.

ADAM
Maybe a little later, I just want to
finish this part first.

BERRY
Of course.

She turns to leave.

ADAM
Berry, can I ask you something?

BERRY
Yes sweetie?

ADAM
You've known Malcolm the longest. Has
he ever kept things from you?

BERRY

Only when he had to, for my sake. He cares so deeply for all of us.

Adam turns back to the typewriter. He puts his fingertips on the keys...

...Nothing.

He falls back in his chair. His stomach growls.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - MAIN GARDEN - NIGHT

There's a long table in the center of the garden overflowing with vegetables, greens, and fruits. Club members sit along the sides, and Malcolm sits at the head of the table.

Berry leads Adam over to the table, and he sits in an open seat next to Joshua.

JOSHUA

Hey, how are you feeling?

ADAM

A bit better now.

Malcolm stands up. All eyes are on him fervently.

MALCOLM

Welcome Adam, to our harvest feast.

(To everyone)

Tonight, we celebrate nature and the gifts she bequeaths us. We do this to remember our part in the greater system of things. It's a cycle of life and energy that stretches back long before you or I. An exchange that goes back to the beginning of time. For you see, all energy, all life, exists within this higher system.

Malcolm picks up a carrot.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

All life is borrowed. The energy, the life force, grew this carrot. But the carrot does not own the energy. When I eat the carrot

(MORE)

MALCOLM (cont'd)

(Takes a bite)

the life is given to me, but I don't own it. One day I will die, and my energy will go back into the earth.

He carelessly tosses the carrot back onto the table.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

But, we are blessed with knowing our place in this. Our higher consciousness over our fellow beasts of the Earth is a privilege we mustn't squander. We know that when we sow life back into the earth-

He stretches his arms out over the banquet.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

She rewards us.

He sits back down.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

Please, eat.

The club members dig in all at once, but Adam hesitates.

ADAM

(Whispering)

Joshua, are these like the tea?

Joshua shakes his head "no" while chewing.

Malcolm watches Adam take his first bite before eating himself.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS BACK ROOM - LATER

Adam lies on his bed, looking up at the stars through his skylight.

The door cracks open, Malcolm peeks inside.

MALCOLM

I didn't want to wake you.

ADAM

You didn't.

MALCOLM

I heard from Joshua that you were thinking about leaving today.

ADAM

I was, yeah.

MALCOLM

If you ever want to, you can always leave. You aren't trapped here.

ADAM

Malcolm, are the drugs you guys take really just for emotional bonding?

MALCOLM

The tea we drink opens our minds to the true nature of the world, and of the order of the natural world. When we drink it, it allow us to see without our defenses and inhibitions. Experiencing that together is what brings us closer.

Adam absorbs the answer.

ADAM

That... kind of makes sense.

MALCOLM

When you drank the tea, what did you see?

ADAM

I saw Devin. He and I as boys. A memory I had forgotten. And I heard his voice.

MALCOLM

What did he say?

ADAM

My name. It was like, like he was with me.

MALCOLM

He is with you. Always. When we die, our lives are added to to greater system. He is all around you, here most of all.

ADAM

I want to stay here. I want to work on the book, and be near Devin.

Malcolm smiles in the moonlight.

MALCOLM
You're welcomed here Adam.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS BACK ROOM - DAY

Adam is spread out in his bed, reading from the binder.

INT. MALCOLM'S STUDY - AFTERNOON

Adam types away at the typewriter, occasionally referring back to the open binder next to him.

He stops.

Trembling, he pulls his hands away from the keys. He leans in close, and rereads the last thing he wrote.

He falls back in his chair, and takes a deep breath.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - MAIN GARDEN - NIGHT

Joshua is kneeling in the soil gardening when Adam walks up to him.

ADAM
Joshua?

JOSHUA
(warmly)
Hi Adam.

ADAM
Can I garden with you tonight?

JOSHUA
Of course!

Adam kneels down next to Joshua a bit awkwardly. They smile at each other.

Beat.

Berry's music starts playing. Adam breaks the gaze, looking downwards suddenly.

ADAM
(Sheepish)
Sorry.

JOSHUA

For what?

ADAM

Being awkward.

JOSHUA

I don't mind.

SOPHIA (O.C.)

Excuse me, Adam?

Adam looks up. Sophia is holding a tray with small ceramic mugs.

SOPHIA

I didn't know if you wanted to have the tea tonight or not.

Adam takes a mug.

ADAM

I do.

Joshua takes a mug of his own and takes a sip.

Adam downs his like a shot, then smiles sheepishly

JOSHUA

If that's how you want to play it.

Joshua finishes the rest of his mug with a grin.

They start gardening, moving in and out of sync with the music, letting it guide them.

The lights dim slightly, and familiar goosebumps spout up Adam's arms.

Adam starts to slowly dig with his hands. The soil is warm around his fingers as they go in and out of it.

Adam's hand brushes up against Joshua's, the contact leaving a glow.

They pause for a moment, before moving the hands back together.

The contact is warm, glows, and their skin softly melts together.

They look at each other for a moment. Joshua smiles. Adam leans in, almost unsure.

Their lips come together, brightly GLOWS on contact.

They lean into each other, hands hesitantly exploring, leaving softly glowing trails on each others bodies.

The music gets louder, and they melt together.

FADE TO WHITE

FADE IN:

EXT. WINTER FOREST - DAY

An areal view of snow covered trees that stretch outwards for miles.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - MAIN GARDEN - DAY

January.

The garden is still. The world outside the garden windows is blinding white from snow.

INT. MALCOLM'S STUDY - DAY

Adam, now with a short beard, types away, engrossed in his work. *Click click click*

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - MAIN GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Malcolm comes in, bundled up warmly, carrying two cups of coffee. He shakes snow off of him.

MALCOLM

Adam, I'm back!

He sheds his winter coat, hangs it on a hook near the door.

INT. MALCOLM'S STUDY - CONTINUOUS

Adam doesn't notice Malcolm come in.

MALCOLM

How's it coming along?

Adam looks up.

ADAM
Hey, you're back!

MALCOLM
With coffee!

ADAM
I was craving that, how'd you know?

MALCOLM
(Sly grin)
Don't you know by now? I know
everything.

Adam takes a long, satisfied drink of his coffee.

ADAM
So good.

MALCOLM
How's the writing going?

ADAM
It's good, things are going easier
now that I know the characters
better.

MALCOLM
That good! Know the ending yet?

ADAM
Kind of. I'll think of it when I get
there.

(Another sip)
You ready for classes to start up
again tomorrow?

MALCOLM
Absolutely. Most of all I'm looking
forward to members coming back. It's
too quiet in this house during break.

ADAM
Right? I am too.

MALCOLM
Not to mean I haven't appreciated
your company.

ADAM
I didn't think that for a second.
(Sip)
I wonder if we'll get new members.

MALCOLM
I'm sure of it.

The wind outside howls.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - MAIN GARDEN - EVENING

There are club members around the garden, greeting and hugging each other. Adam is among them, embracing each person he meets.

Ana walks up to him, leading a Freshman, skinny and twitchy, with her.

ANA
Adam, I wanted to introduce you to someone. This is TOMMY. He's in my Poli-Sci class and is joining our club.

ADAM
Welcome!

Adam gives him a hug.

ADAM (cont'd)
It's gonna be overwhelming and possibly scary at first. Trust me, I know.

TOMMY
It is?

ANA
Before you Adam was our newest member, but he's really proved himself. He's come a long way.

ADAM
Once you're past the initial fears, it's great, I promise. Plus, Ana helped me through my first meeting. You're in good hands here.

Malcolm comes out of the door to the study and into the center of the room.

MALCOLM
Welcome everyone, to the first session of the Botanical club! I know this semester is going to be a great one.

The crowd reacts positively. Adam claps with them.

MALCOLM (cont'd)
Have a great time tonight everybody!

The club members spread out and begin to garden. Malcolm gestures to Adam, and Adam comes over.

MALCOLM (cont'd)
Adam, could you pass out the tea tonight?

ADAM
We're having tea on the first night?

MALCOLM
The group has been apart too long. We need to feel together again to start things off right. Berry is brewing it upstairs.

ADAM
Alright.

INT. MALCOLM'S STUDY - MOMENTS LATER

Adam enters.

Berry has a large pot of tea on a portable cook top set up next to her turntable.

ADAM
Is the tea ready Berry?

BERRY
Adam! Yes, yes, come.

She hands him a large tray with tiny ceramic mugs.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - MAIN GARDEN

The wind howls in the night outside.

Adam brings the tray over to Ana and Tommy, who are kneeling on the ground together.

ADAM
Tea?

ANA
 (Taking one)
 Yes please.

ADAM
 Tommy?

TOMMY
 I'm alright, I'm not a big tea
 drinker.

ANA
 It's a special herbal tea that we
 brew ourselves.

TOMMY
 What makes it so special?

ADAM
 It helps you relax break down
 apprehensions and barriers. When the
 club all drinks it together, we all
 become closer.
 (Points)
 See? Even Malcolm is drinking it.

Tommy sees he is.

TOMMY
 Um, okay.

Tommy hesitantly takes a mug and and takes a sip.

TOMMY (cont'd)
 Spicy.

ANA
 (slightly flirty)
 You like spicy?

TOMMY
 Spicy is good.

ADAM
 You're in good hands Tommy.

Adam brings the tray to other club members.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - MAIN GARDEN - LATER

Adam kneels and works on a plant with Lukas and Sophia. He
 reaches for his own mug to take his first sip.

TOMMY SCREAMS.

All eyes snap towards the sound.

ANA
Tommy it's okay!

Tommy is staggering backwards from the plant. He's swatting and scratching at himself furiously.

TOMMY
They're all over me! They're crawling
in my clothes!!

Tommy starts RIPPING his clothes off.

Ana tries to approach.

ANA
Tommy, they're not real! It's okay!

Adam comes to Ana's side.

ADAM
Tommy! It's going to be okay! You're
safe!

Tommy RIPS his underwear off and SCRATCHES FURIOUSLY all over his body.

TOMMY
THEY'RE CRAWLING IN MY SKIN!!

SOPHIA
Malcolm!!

Ana eases towards Tommy. He sees her and SHRIEKS.

TOMMY
STAY AWAY FROM ME!

Tommy RUNS OUT into the night!

Malcolm comes out of his study, shirt unbuttoned. Berry comes out behind him, a robe hastily wrapped around herself.

MALCOLM
What's going on here?!

SOPHIA
It's- It's a new kid. He's-

ADAM

He's gone!

Ana sprints out into the darkness after him.

ANA

Tommy!! Tommy!!

Adam sprints after her.

EXT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - NIGHT

A set of footprints trace from the door straight into the woods, ignoring the cleared path back to the campus. Adam follows the footprints.

He struggles through the snow. The wind HOWLS around him, WHIPPING his face, partially BLINDING him.

ADAM

Ana!! Tommy!!

Every step is a struggle.

The footprints disappear. Adam turns around once. Twice.

ADAM (cont'd)

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

Darkness and snow HOWL around him, drowning out his calls.

ADAM (cont'd)

Ana!!

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - MAIN GARDEN - LATER

The club is in shock. Malcolm paces nervously, wild eyed. No one else moves.

The doors are thrown open, and Adam falls into the garden, frozen to the bone and shivering uncontrollably.

JOSHUA

Adam!

Joshua runs over and helps Adam inside. Another member runs and shuts the door.

Malcolm rushes over and crouches down next to Adam.

MALCOLM
Did you find them?

ADAM
(Shivering)
No. It was too dark.

Malcolm stands back up and starts pacing again.

MALCOLM
(Muttering to himself)
I didn't have the foresight. I didn't
know. How could I not know? How?

Sophia steps towards Malcolm.

SOPHIA
Malcolm?

Malcolm stops and realizes all eyes are on him.

MALCOLM
Go! All of you! Back to your
dormitories tonight! Distance
yourself from here. Tonight's meeting
did not happen.

LUKAS
But-

MALCOLM
This is for your own protection. I am
not abandoning you, I'm sheltering
you. Now go!

Most of the club members grab their coats and leave.

Adam, Lukas, Sophia, and Joshua stay behind.

LUKAS
We're with you Malcolm.

SOPHIA
Yeah. Always.

Malcolm smiles at the gesture.

MALCOLM
I know. I won't forget that. For now,
go, I'll tell you what to do in the
morning.

They nod, and turn and leave.

ADAM

Once I'm warmed up again I can-

MALCOLM

No. You go to bed. I do not need you catching hypothermia. Get to bed. I'll go look for them.

Malcolm gets his coat and leaves the garden.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS BACK ROOM - NIGHT

Adam collapses into bed. He pulls the covers up to his chin and falls asleep immediately.

Beat

Ana shakes him awake. She hasn't slept.

ANA

Adam. Wake up. We need to go.

ADAM

What? What time is it?

ANA

Almost 5 A.M. Get your things, get whatever of Malcolm's you can carry, we need to go.

ADAM

Go where? Whats happening?

ANA

To Malcolm. Shit hit the fan. We have to go now. I'll explain later!

She runs out of the room. Adam throws his blanket off of him, pulls on a pair of boots and a coat.

INT. MALCOLM'S STUDY - MOMENTS LATER

Adam runs in. He yanks the most recent half written page from the typewriter, and gathers up the papers he has scattered around the desk.

ANA (O.C.)

(Downstairs)

Adam! Let's go!

He stuffs the pages inside the cover of the binder.

INT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - MAIN GARDEN

Ana has the teapot, half full and now cold, under her arm, and a bag slung over her shoulder.

ANA
Ready?

ADAM
Yeah, but why?

ANA
Later!

EXT. BOTANICAL GARDENS - 5AM

The two run out of the gardens. Ana THROWS the teapot into the woods. It lands in a snowdrift that buries it.

They run along the path, Ana leading.

EXT. ADIRONDACK UNIVERSITY CAMPUS - 5AM

They run through the empty campus, the sounds of their feet echoing through the air.

As they run, Ana whips her head around, constantly checking behind them and around corners.

ANA
Malcolm is meeting us behind the library. He needed to get something from his office before it's too late.

ADAM
Too late for what?

They turn around a building and STOP DEAD in their tracks.

There is a police cruiser parked in front of the Administration building, lights flashing. Talking to the officers is the Dean of the school.

Ana and Adam sprint forward without being noticed.

ADAM (cont'd)
There are cops involved now?

ANA
Keep moving!

EXT. BEHIND LIBRARY - MOMENTS LATER

They stop running, try to catch their breath.

ADAM
Where is he?

ANA
He'll be here soon.

A pair of headlights turn the corner. They freeze in the beams like deer.

The lights come closer, revealing the station wagon they belong to. Malcolm is driving, and the two breath a sigh of relief.

MALCOLM
Get in!

INT. MALCOLM'S CAR - DRIVING - 5:30AM

The road is empty. Malcolm drives wild eyed, but under the speed limit. Adam sits in the passenger seat, Ana in the back.

ADAM
Malcolm? What happened back there?

MALCOLM
I... I didn't have the foresight, and everything went wrong.

ADAM
Malcolm, no, why are there cops there?

ANA
That Tommy kid was found by campus security, half frozen to death. Campus security called the Dean and he called the cops. They're looking to press charges.

ADAM
Oh fuck. Against who, Malcolm?

ANA
Yeah.

MALCOLM
(Muttering to himself)
How did I not know? That should
not... be possible...

ADAM
Malcolm, where are we going?

MALCOLM
To... I'm going to.. This way.

ANA
What's this way?

MALCOLM
Um. I don't know.

ADAM
(Realizing)
This is the road back to Wilburn.

ANA
Wilburn? What's that?

ADAM
Where I'm from.

The car glides through the blue of the early morning.

INT./EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAWN

It has started gently snowing, and the windshield wipers wisp away snowflakes steadily. Their sound is all that's heard.

ANA
Adam, you're from here, do you know
where we could stay, lay low? Off the
grid?

ADAM
Um, one place, maybe. It's like two
miles down this road.

They reach a gated side road. The gate has a sign that reads
"FORECLOSED - NO TRESPASSING" on it.

ADAM (cont'd)
This is it.

The car stops and Adam gets out of the car.

He goes over to the gate. He unwraps a broken chain and swings the gate open.

Malcolm pulls the car through, and Adam closes the gate behind them, wrapping the chain back around it.

He gets back in the car.

ADAM (cont'd)
Just down this way.

ANA
Where are we going?

ADAM
The old O'Brady farm. Bank shut them down a few years back. Kids sometimes come here in the summer to smoke weed.

EXT. THE O'BRADY FARM - DAWN

The O'Brady farm is run down. The paint on the farmhouse and barn are peeling. Old farm equipment lies in the middle of fields, rusting away in the elements.

ADAM
You should park in the barn.

EXT. BARN - MOMENTS LATER

Adam closes the barn door, car inside.

ANA
Look.

She points at the tire tracks. The falling snow has begun covering them.

MALCOLM
(Exhausted)
That's good. That helps us.

ADAM
Malcolm lets get you inside. You need rest bad.

INT. FARMHOUSE

The trio enter. The farmhouse is a bit dusty, but all of the furniture inside is still intact.

Adam leads Malcolm to a...

INT. FARMHOUSE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

... and in to the bed inside it. He tucks Malcolm in.

MALCOLM
(Dozing off)
Thank you Adam.

Malcolm falls asleep, and breathes gently.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

Ana is going through the cupboards, pulling out a few dusty cans of food. She turns when Adam enters.

ANA
There's barely any food here.

ADAM
This place has been empty for a while. I'm surprised you found that.

ANA
Well we're gonna need more. We might be here a while.

ADAM
How much trouble is Malcolm in?

ANA
I'm not fully sure. I got in contact with Lukas, him and a couple others managed to get off the campus before it was too late. Apparently lots more cops there now. Said he'd tell us more in person.

ADAM
Jeez. How are you contacting each other?

ANA
He sent me a text.

ADAM
You should probably get rid of your
phone.

ANA
Shit, right.

Ana goes into a kitchen drawer, pulled out an old wooden
mallet. Without hesitation she SMASHES it into her phone.

ADAM
Holy shit.

Ana SMASHES again and again, when the mallet head SPLINTERS
off.

ANA
That ought to do it.

ADAM
Yeah I think so.

ANA
Where's yours?

ADAM
It died back in December. I never
replaced it. No one to call.

INT. FARMHOUSE - FRONT ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Adam and Ana wait wordlessly. A pair of headlights pull onto
the property, and the two rush to the window.

ANA
That's Lukas' car.

ADAM
I'll tell them to park in the barn.

Adam grabs his coat and runs outside. Ana watches through
the window.

INT. FARMHOUSE - FRONT DOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Ana waits by the door. When it opens, Adam leads in Lukas,
Sophia, and Joshua.

ANA
You guys got out!

They greet each other with long hugs.

INT. FARMHOUSE - FRONT ROOM - LATER

The five of them sit on the old furniture in a circle.

ANA

What happened?

JOSHUA

Things got scary real quick.

SOPHIA

When that Tommy kid woke up he started naming the names he could remember. Everyone named is getting expelled.

LUKAS

When he ran out of the names he knew Dean gave him access to the campus database. Had him looking at every student ID to name the rest.

ADAM

How'd you learn that?

LUKAS

Overheard it from campus security sneaking out.

SOPHIA

Police took over for Campus security and started hunting down students in their dorms. Making arrests.

JOSHUA

They were using dogs to sniff members out.

ANA

Jesus.

LUKAS

We barely got off campus.

MALCOLM (O.C.)

And I'm so glad you could.

They all turn, Malcolm has been standing in the doorway listening. Some of the life is back in his eyes.

JOSHUA

Malcolm!

Joshua runs to Malcolm and hugs him.

MALCOLM

Hello my child.

Lukas and Sophia join Joshua in embracing Malcolm.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

Thank you, thank you. Please, sit
back down.

They do as he asks.

LUKAS

Malcolm, they're looking for you.

MALCOLM

Yes, I know I've been fired. Berry
told me before I got out.

LUKAS

The cops are looking for you too.
They're pressing a whole bunch of
charges and-

MALCOLM

I know. We have to leave the school
behind us.

LUKAS

And the club?

MALCOLM

We cannot go back to the Garden. Its
doors will soon be chained shut for
good.

Hearts sink at the news.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

Do not worry. I have seen the answers
to our problem in my dreams. This is
not our end. There will be others,
like you, who get out. I can reassure
you of that. We will welcome them
back into the fold upon their
arrival.

Malcolm turns to Adam.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

You have shown immense clarity in picking this location. We can rebuild here, become one with the land as I have always taught.

ADAM

Thank you Malcolm.

MALCOLM

(To the group)

We cannot, however, plant our crops until Spring. We still need to eat. How are we on supplies?

ANA

Barely any.

MALCOLM

We'll need a supply run. Ana and Adam, you'll go. The others will stay. There's cash in my car. Take it and go to the supermarket in Wilburn.

They nod.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

There is one more thing I saw in my dreams which we must do.

SOPHIA

What's is it?

MALCOLM

In my dreams, the universe spoke to me in it's deep ancient tongue. It told me that the time has come to spread higher enlightenment, and to share it with you all, to awaken you beyond what you already know.

JOSHUA

How?

MALCOLM

There is a substance you must take. The same substance that awakened myself all those years ago.

ADAM

What is it?

MALCOLM

It has no proper name in modern tongues. I know it only as The Elixir. You'll find it here.

Malcolm pulls an envelope out of his pocket, and hands it to Adam. An address is written on it.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

After you retrieve the supplies, go here. This is where you'll find the arcane chemist. Give them that note and they shall provide for you.

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - DRIVING - DAY

Ana drives, and Adam sits in the passenger seat.

MALCOLM (V.O.)

They shall provide us with what we need.

They travel in silence. They pass an old sign that reads "Welcome to Wilburn"

INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Adam pushes the cart through the supermarket. Ana walks in front, grabbing boxes of food and tossing them into the cart.

Adam glances around, on guard for familiar faces.

No one pays him any notice.

EXT. SUPERMARKET PARKING LOT - DAY

The lot is gray with salty slush, mirroring the gray sky above.

Adam pushes the cart through the lot, still looking around. They reach Lukas' car and a wave of relief washes over Adam.

BONNIE (O.C.)

Uncle Adam?!

Adam freezes. He slowly turns.

In the next row of the lot, Lisa stands frozen with a shopping cart. Her hair is noticeably grayer now.

Next to her, Bonnie tugs on her mother's clothes, and points in his direction. Caleb, standing in the shopping cart, sees him too.

CALEB
Uncle Adam! Uncle Adam!

Adam locks eyes with Lisa for a beat, then ducks into...

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

ANA
Who are they?

ADAM
No one, just drive.

She does. Adam watches the trio shrink in the rearview mirror.

INT./EXT. TRAILER PARK/LUKAS'S CAR - AFTERNOON.

A shitty, run down trailer park, on the edge of deep woods. The car pulls in slowly.

ANA
Here?

ADAM
That's what it says. Apparently the one all the way in the back.

She drives slowly into the park.

EXT. CHEMIST'S TRAILER - DAY

They stop in front of the furthest trailer. It looks identical to the others.

They get out and go the the door. A message on the front door, written in sharpie, reads "No solicitations, fuck off".

Adam knocks on the door.

MUFFLED VOICE (O.C.)
(From inside)
Can't you read?!

ANA
We're looking for someone.

MUFFLED VOICE (O.C.)
(From inside)
Can't help you! Fuck off!

ADAM
We're looking for the Arcane Chemist.

Beat.

The sounds of locks unclasping are heard running down the door.

The door opens as far as a chain allows. Inside is NANCY, the bartender from the Proud Baron!

NANCY
Who sent you?

ADAM
Malcolm.

He hands her the envelope. She pulls it through the opening and reads the paper inside it.

NANCY
(To herself, reading)
...Thought he was done with this stuff...

The door closes briefly, and then swings wide open.

NANCY (cont'd)
Okay. I'll get you some. But it isn't here. Follow me.

She leads them behind her trailer.

NANCY (cont'd)
Into the woods. Come on.

EXT. SNOW FILLED WOODS - AFTERNOON

Nancy leads Ana and Adam through the woods, trudging through the untouched snow.

ANA
How far?

NANCY
It's up ahead.

Nancy leads them around the corner, where they see

INT./EXT. SHIPPING CONTAINER - CONTINUOUS

an abandoned and rusty shipping container in the middle of the woods.

ADAM
Whoa, how did that get out here?

Nancy pulls the chain off of her neck, and sticks the key into a thick padlock on the door.

NANCY
(Unlocking)
It was a pain in the ass, don't worry about it. Come on.

She swings the door open wide, and turns on a battery powered lantern hanging from the ceiling.

They follow Nancy over to a table with a chemistry set on top of it. She goes into a small wooden box and pulls out an amber bottle with a dropper bulb lid. She hands it to Adam.

NANCY (cont'd)
One bottle of the elixir, just like he asked for. One drop only. You have to be careful with this stuff. Too easy to take too much.

Adam nods, and sticks the bottle into his pocket.

NANCY (cont'd)
Say, do I know you from somewhere?

ADAM
I don't think so. We have to get back to Malcolm.

They get out of the shipping container, and Nancy locks it back up tightly.

EXT. NANCY'S TRAILER - LATER

They arrive back at the trailer, and Ana and Adam head back to the car. Nancy stops at her front door.

NANCY

I know where I know you. You're that kid Devin's friend. You were with him that night that he-

Adam stops in his tracks.

NANCY (cont'd)

I'm going to tell you one more time what I told him. Only one drop. It's too easy to take too much. Don't go the same way he did.

INT. LUKAS'S CAR - DRIVING - LATER

Adam pulls the small bottle out of his pocket. He looks at the bottle for a long time in his hands.

EXT. FARMHOUSE - LATER

When the car pulls in, Sophia and Lukas come out to greet them.

LUKAS

Malcolm wants to talk to you two, we'll unload the supplies.

INT. FARMHOUSE - MALCOLM'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Malcolm is sitting in his bed, reading from Adam's binder. he looks up when Adam and Ana walk in.

MALCOLM

Did you get it?

Adam pulls the bottle out and hands it to him.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

Good, good. That's good, yes.

Malcolm holds the bottle tenderly.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

You two have done well today.

ADAM

Malcolm, the chemist, she mentioned-

MALCOLM

Devin?

ADAM

Yeah.

MALCOLM

I thought she might.

He looks down at the bottle in his hands.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

The last person I thought was ready for the Elixir was Devin. When I sent him to retrieve it for his Enlightenment, he never came back with it. He- He was a troubled soul. He took it on his own, without my knowledge, and he couldn't handle it.

Adam's legs feel weak. He drops his head down.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

Adam, look at me.

He matches Malcolm's gaze.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

You are ready. I will oversee your ascension myself. I will protect you.

Adam, unable to form words, nods.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

Leave me for now.

(Looks at the bottle)

I need to recenter myself in the universe before we can continue. I am not to be disturbed until I emerge.

Adam goes to leave.

ANA

Malcolm, before we go, can I speak with you a moment?

MALCOLM

Yes my child.

(To Adam)

Have faith, Adam. It will be alright.

Adam leaves, and closes the door slowly behind him. As he does he sees Ana lean to Malcolm's ear and whisper into it.

INT. FARMHOUSE - FRONT ROOM - LATER

Adam sits at the window, staring out of it.

Ana comes out of Malcolm's room, and closes the door behind her.

ANA
Hey, are you okay?

ADAM
What?

ANA
What Malcolm told you back there.
It's a lot to take in, are you okay?

ADAM
Yeah, I'm fine.
(Then)
What did you tell him when I left?

ANA
It's nothing, I wanted his guidance
on a personal matter.

ADAM
Oh.

ANA
Yeah.
(Awkward beat)
Do you know where Lukas is? Malcolm
wants him to help prepare.

ADAM
He's out in the barn I think.

ANA
Thanks.

She grabs her coat and leaves the farmhouse.

Through the window Adam watches her walk to the barn and go inside it.

INT. FARMHOUSE - FRONT ROOM - EVENING

Faint, unintelligible sounds come out from Malcolm's bedroom.

The club members sit in the front room together, silently, listening to the sounds.

INT. FARMHOUSE - FRONT ROOM - MIDNIGHT

Adam is the only one awake. The other members sleep around him.

Malcolm's bedroom door opens, and he emerges, wearing only his underwear and an old purple bathrobe. The robe is untied and hangs open limply.

Adam goes over to him.

ADAM

Malcolm, are you alright?

MALCOLM

The others, they could not stay awake with me?

ADAM

They wanted to but...

(trails off)

They had a long day.

MALCOLM

Their spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. Thank you for staying awake for me. We will postpone matters until tomorrow. Get some rest. Tomorrow is a big day.

Adam nods, and Malcolm returns to his room, humming a hymn.

INT. FARMHOUSE - LATE MORNING

Adam wakes up in the front room, alone. He hears the sound of cooking from the kitchen.

INT. FARMHOUSE KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Adam shuffles in, still half asleep. Sophia is cooking a large pan of scrambled eggs.

SOPHIA

Morning!

ADAM

Morning. Where is everyone else?

SOPHIA

They're in the barn with Malcolm. The enlightenment process is a very personal one. One on one with Malcolm and the universe.

ADAM

Wait, did you?

SOPHIA

Yes, at dawn with him.

ADAM

What was it like?

She gazes off wistfully.

SOPHIA

Indescribable.

(Back to Adam)

There's so much you don't know yet Adam. You'll see. When it's your turn.

ADAM

When's that?

SOPHIA

Sundown.

(Offering)

Eggs?

EXT. BARN - LATE AFTERNOON

Adam waits outside of the barn. Low in the sky, the sun starts to bleed red light into the sky and into the snow.

The barn doors open. Ana and Lukas come out in a daze.

ADAM

How was it?

LUKAS

Incredible.

ANA

I see what Malcolm sees now. I- I get it now.

(Focusing slightly)

He's waiting for you Adam.

They walk past him and to Lukas' car.

MALCOLM (O.C.)

Come in Adam.

Lukas' car drives off.

INT. BARN - SUNDOWN

Adam walks in. Malcolm, still in his purple robe, stands waiting for him, arms outstretched. The bottle of The Elixir is on a tray on a small table at Malcolm's bare feet.

MALCOLM

Come Adam.

ADAM

Where are they going?

MALCOLM

They have a task set before them.
Come, enlightenment awaits.

Adam walks up to him.

ADAM

What do I do?

Malcolm picks up the tray.

MALCOLM

The task is simple. A drop of The
Elixir to unlock the universe.

Adam reaches out, takes out the dropper, and holds it over his tongue. The liquid in the bottle is an inky black.

MALCOLM (cont'd)

That's it my child.

A single drop falls slowly falls onto his tongue...

THE WORLD FEELS LIKE IT'S EXPLODING ALL AT ONCE.

It BURNS like ACID, and Adam's ears are filled with a high pitched SCREECHING. He clasps his hands over his ears and SOUNDLESSLY SCREAMS at the UNBEARABLE loudness. He squeezes his eyes shut, tight as he can, and falls to the ground. He feels his brain MELTING.

UNKNOWN BLACK VOID - UNKNOWN TIME

Close on Adam's pained face. Everything goes silent.

He opens his eyes and sees the unending black void around him.

ADAM
Hello?

Nothing.

ADAM (cont'd)
Hello?!

DEVIN
Hello.

Adam spins around. Devin is standing there in the same outfit from that last night.

ADAM
Devin!

Adam tries to get to him, but his steps don't move him any closer.

DEVIN
Malcolm... he killed me... he gave me too much... and now I'm here. Welcome to the void Adam.

ADAM
To the- the what?

FEMALE VOICE (O.C.)
The void.

Adam turns and sees his MOTHER. She lies in a hospital bed, hair gone from chemo, paper skin, glassy eyes.

ADAM
Mom?

ADAM'S MOTHER
The void. In the end, this is where we go.

MALE VOICE (O.C.)
You see-

Adam turns and sees his FATHER, case of beer under one arm and oil stained AC/DC shirt on.

ADAM
...Dad?

Adam's father spits chewing tobacco out. It falls into the void where he stands.

ADAM'S FATHER
Son, in the end, this is where we all go.

ADAM'S MOTHER
This is heaven.

DEVIN
You'll be with us soon.

ADAM
No...

LISA (O.C.)
Adam.

Adam spins again. Lisa is standing there, black holes in her eye sockets.

LISA
You abandoned Devin. And now you abandon them.

Bonnie and Caleb walk out from behind Lisa. Their eyes are pure white.

BONNIE AND CALEB
Uncle Adam...

LISA
You left them to die.

ADAM
No, I- I didn't.

ADAM'S MOTHER
Come into the void sweetie.

ADAM'S FATHER
It'll be all over soon.

ADAM
NO!

The defiant yell echos outwards.

Adam's mother ages rapidly, CRUMBLING into DUST.

Adam's father is CRUSHED into a pulp by an invisible force. Blood spurts out, limbs splatter out in bits.

Lisa's throat spits own, and blood pours from it like a fountain. Bonnie and Caleb are swallowed by the void.

DEVIN

Adam...

ADAM

Devin. I'm so sorry. I love you. I always have and I never told you.

Devin smiles.

DEVIN

I know. I always did.

ADAM

(Reaching out)

Devin.

DEVIN

They need you now.

The void swallows Devin hole.

INT. BARN - NIGHT

Adam wakes up. Sweat has soaked through all of his clothing. The bottle is on the ground next to him.

Malcolm is sitting in the corner, reading from Adam's binder by the light of a single lantern.

The door to the barn opens. Ana, Lukas, and Joshua come in. They're CARRYING IN BONNIE AND CALEB. The children are BOUND with duct tape, and whimper and struggle in their bondage.

MALCOLM

Bring them over there.

ANA

Brother Adam isn't awake yet?

Adam pretends to still be passed out as the club members pass him.

MALCOLM

No. He will be soon.
(gesturing)

In there.

They carry the kids into pen, and close it.

MALCOLM (cont'd)
Their mother?

ANA
Dead.

JOSHUA
Slit her throat myself.

MALCOLM
Good.

LUKAS
Why didn't we kill them while we were
at it?

MALCOLM
No, Adam must be the one to sever his
bond to his past life. Only then can
we properly give back to the Earth in
the way we need to.

He looks at the bound children.

MALCOLM (cont'd)
These children shall bring us a most
bountiful harvest.

The club members nod.

MALCOLM (cont'd)
Now go, I must be alone with him when
he wakes back up.

They nod and leave, closing the door to the barn behind
them. Malcolm turns back to his reading.

Adam quietly gets up and walks towards Malcolm.

MALCOLM (cont'd)
(Without looking)
You have made major progress here
Adam.

Adam stops in his tracks.

MALCOLM (cont'd)
This is a much stronger text than
when Devin wrote alone. I'm proud of
you and the work you've done.

Adam peers into the pen where Bonnie and Caleb lie,
struggling against their duct tape.

MALCOLM (cont'd)
There is one last thing you need to
do Adam.

They make eye contact with him through tear filled eyes.

MALCOLM (cont'd)
You must sever your ties to your past
life to start anew.

Adam winks at them.

Malcolm looks to Adam.

MALCOLM (cont'd)
Can you do what must be done?

ADAM
I can.

Adam TACKLES Malcolm, knocking him to the floor. The man
lets out a cry as he hits the ground.

MALCOLM
No!

Adam grabs the binder, and climbs on top of Malcolm.

ADAM
MURDERER!

Adam starts BEATING Malcolm with the binder, blood
SPLATTERING the front with each impact.

ADAM (cont'd)
(Between blows)
You killed Devin! He LOVED you! And
you KILLED HIM!

He tosses the binder to the ground.

Malcolm's face is bloodied. He tries to say something but
the words gurgle in his mouth.

Adam pulls the small amber bottle.

ADAM (cont'd)
Enjoy enlightenment.

Adam pulls the lid off the bottle and pours ALL of it into
Malcolm's open mouth. He starts CHOKING on it. His eyes roll
back.

Adam climbs off Malcolm and goes into the pen. He unties Bonnie and Caleb.

They cry and embrace each other.

ADAM (cont'd)

Come on.

He stands them to their feet and they follow him past Malcolm. Malcolm convulses in the dirt, seizing violently.

EXT. THE O'BRADY FARM - CONTINUOUS

The yard is empty. Malcolm's car is parked on the other side of the farm.

ADAM

We have to be quick and get to that car. When we do we're home free.

BONNIE

Home? Where's home? Mommy...

She whimpers.

ADAM

It's going to be okay. Can you two run?

CALEB

Yeah.

ADAM

Good. Bonnie?

Bonnie shakes her head no and cries.

BONNIE

The mean girl hurt my ankle.

ADAM

Okay.

Adam picks Bonnie up.

ADAM (cont'd)

Ready?

Caleb wipes his nose and nods.

ADAM (cont'd)

Now!

They take off RUNNING! Closing the distance between them and the car.

LUKAS (O.C.)

Hey!

Adam looks over his shoulder as he runs. The other members spill out of the farmhouse. Sophia and Ana run towards the barn, Lukas and Joshua towards Adam and the kids.

ADAM

Keep running!

They run as fast as their legs can manage.

Sophia reaches the door of the barn and SCREAMS!

ANA

MALCOLM! NO!

Adam reaches the car and throws open the back door.

ADAM

Get in!

Bonnie and Caleb scramble into the car. Adam slams the door shut behind them. He turns-

RIGHT INTO LUKAS' FIST. The blow knocks him off his feet. Joshua, slower, is lagging behind.

ANA

Malcolm is dying!!

Lukas turns towards the barn, total fear in his eyes.

Adam KICKS Lukas' ankle as hard as he can, and Lukas FALLS to the ground.

Adam scrambles to his feet, and before Lukas can get back up Adam KICKS him in the ribs. Lukas rolls over in pain.

Adam scrambles into...

INT. MALCOLM'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Adam slams down the lock on the door him.

Joshua appears at the window and starts POUNDING on the glass.

Caleb is crying. Bonnie holds him.

BONNIE
Go Adam! Please!

Adam searches the car frantically. He pulls down the visor and the keys fall into his lap.

He JAMS them into the ignition and turns. The engine sputters to life and Adam FLOORS it.

The tires stall for a moment, and then grip the road, shooting the car forward.

Joshua tries to keep up with the car, but falls behind.

As they drive off the property, Adam looks through the rear view mirror and sees-

EXT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Ana, sitting in the dirt and sobbing, holds Malcolm's lifeless body across her lap, recreating The Pietà.

Sophia sobs to the side, and Joshua helps Lukas walk over to their teacher. They four share their grief together, sheep who have lost their Shepherd.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAWN

Malcolm's car drives along the empty road.

INT. MALCOLM'S CAR - DRIVING

Bonnie and Caleb, huddled together in the back seat, sleep a much needed sleep.

As he drives, Adam watches the first light of the sunrise peak over the edge of the horizon, and smiles.

The car drives forward towards an uncertain future.

Adam looks in the mirror at the children asleep in the bac. They're the only certainty he needs, and he will be the certainty they need. Deep down he knows, it will be okay.

FADE OUT

END