

The Secret Ministry of Grass

By

Richard Turner

turnerr@otc.edu
417.693.2769

FADE IN

INT. NEWGEN MARKETING - DAY

In a hallway outside NewGen Marketing, the elevator opens and Cy McHenry -- late 20s, fit and trim in crisp khakis and a white dress shirt, carrying a snappy leather satchel -- gets out and strides into the office.

Ten casually dressed employees -- a diverse group in their early 20s -- crowd around a table. Seeing him, they stand back stiffly, revealing a tiny fishbowl where a goldfish swims placidly.

Cy approaches and bends to inspect the fish, annoyed.

CY
A goldfish? Y'all brought a
goldfish into my office?

Several of the workers snicker.

CY (CONT'D)
This is funny?

ELAINE
"Y'all." Your accent sneaks out
when you're pissed. It's cute.

CY
Focus! Who thought it was a good
idea to bring a *pet* to work?

Silence.

CY (CONT'D)
I've done right by you. I built a
workplace that helps you belong to
something. That feels like home.
This is the thanks I get?

He picks up the fish bowl.

CY (CONT'D)
As you know, there's a way that
things should be.

The horrified workers watch as he crosses to the bathroom, enters, and closes the door. The lock CLICKS, and they rush to the door with pleas of "No!" and "Mr. McHenry, don't!"

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Cy speaks sadly and quietly to the fish in the bowl.

CY

I'm just doing my job. Surely you
can appreciate that.

He closes his eyes and pours the water NOISILY into the toilet, not seeing the fish bounce off the rim to the floor. He SLAMS the lid closed. Opening his eyes he reaches for the handle to flush and spots the fish flopping on the floor.

CY (CONT'D)

(whispering)

No! No, no, no!

He drops to his knees and grabs for the flopping fish, but it slips through his fingers. He frantically grabs an empty paper cup from the trashcan and scoops the fish into it then raises the lid and scoops some water from the toilet into it.

The fish swims calmly. From without in the

OFFICE

The workers continue to BEG and OBJECT. The sound of FLUSHING stops them. The door opens and Cy gives them a shrug and holds up the empty bowl.

CY (CONT'D)

You reap what you sow. Say it with
me. There's a way that *things*
should **BE**.

LATER

Elaine, 20, glum and fragile, is the last worker leaving. Cy looks up from his desk where the empty fishbowl sits.

CY (CONT'D)

I know that was harsh, Elaine, but--

ELAINE

Some of us are really going through
some stuff. Maybe, if you had a
little more sympathy?

CY

Like my Daddy says, if it's
sympathy you're looking for, you
can find it in the dictionary
between shit and syphilis.

ELAINE
Such a neurotypical.

CY
(taken aback)
I don't know what that means.

She huffs out. He watches her go, confused by her anger.

EXT. CAR - DAY

Cy weaves his small, late model car through 5:00 traffic on a gray November day. As he slows to a red light, his car BACKFIRES. He gets a text ALERT from American Dream Realty.

AMERICAN DREAM REALTY (TEXT)
Here's a new listing you'll love!!!
Click for pics!!!

He taps. Sees a picture of a white, Colonial house with a large porch and columns. He types excitedly, then tosses his phone on the passenger seat. Looking up he notices a sign for All Creatures Pet Store.

He looks down between his legs at the half full fishbowl, where the fish swims placidly.

CY
I bet even you think I'm an
asshole, don't you?

He looks again at the pet store. Heaves a SIGH.

INT. CY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Cy walks into his modern, impeccably neat apartment, cradling a large fishbowl containing the fish, pink gravel, and fake plants. He kicks the door closed. Enters the

KITCHEN

And puts the bowl on a counter.

CY
Babe? I'm home.

JACKIE
(OS)
In here.

He makes his way into the

LIVING ROOM

And sees JACKIE VACHON, 25, sitting on the couch in sweat pants and a T-shirt, long hair pulled into a sloppy bun. She CRUNCHES chips from a bag while working intently on a laptop. She exudes a buoyant, straight-forward enthusiasm.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
How was your day?

CY
Sucked. But I've got a surprise!

He kisses her. She claps her hands excitedly.

JACKIE
Because you love surprises. Oh wait, that's me.

CY
Close your eyes.

He scampers into the kitchen and comes back with the fishbowl, placing it on the table in front of her. He gently covers her eyes as she quivers with excitement.

CY (CONT'D)
When you're here all day at work --

JACKIE
Just because I don't dress up and go to a soul-sucking office . . .

CY
You know how you've wanted something to keep you company?

She grabs his hands and tries to wrestle them off her eyes.

JACKIE
A puppy!!!

She gets his hands away and stares at the fishbowl, confused.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
A fish.

CY
You hate it.

JACKIE
Pretty sure I said a cocker spaniel. But I love it!

Cy kisses her sweetly. Walks back into the

KITCHEN

CY

You know me and dog hair. And all your time on the road, *working*?

He opens the fridge, which is covered in selfies of them loving life. He grabs two bottles of beer. Opens them.

JACKIE (O.S.)

You mean out living my life, instead of contributing to economic class warfare forty hours a week?

CY

You believe in your job, I'll believe in mine.

JACKIE (O.S.)

A job is something you *do*, not something you believe in, like a north star. Where's your vision?

CY

We don't need more whacked-out mystics with vision to give us a spiritual paradigm shift.

He returns to the

LIVING ROOM

JACKIE

How 'bout a spiritual enema?

CY

You'll be singing a different tune when we're rich.

He hands her a beer and PLOPS down next to her.

CY (CONT'D)

(playfully imitating her)
I know, I know. "Eat the rich."

JACKIE

He *can* be taught!

They kiss. CLINK their bottles together. Drink. She SNAPS her laptop closed. Snuggles in to him.

CY

Quitting time already?

JACKIE

I'm the boss. Unless you want to be the boss.

He misses her suggestive look as his phone RINGS.

CY

Hello? Yes I did. Ah, wow. That's a lot higher than I expected. Thanks.

Angry, he tosses down his phone. He guzzles half his beer.

JACKIE

Bad news?

CY

Just a house I saw for sale. It's perfect. But it was. . . a *lot*.

JACKIE

You want to buy a *house*?

CY

I got a great job, then a great apartment, then the greatest girlfriend in the world moved in with me. Sort of.

He doesn't notice her blanch at this. He gets up. Paces. Gulps his beer.

CY (CONT'D)

Yeah. A house. Circle drive. Big porch. Executive suite by forty. It's in the master plan. *There's* your north star.

JACKIE

Your north star is a big porch?

CY

(becoming agitated)

But have you seen what housing prices are doing? I mean, this might be my last chance. I belong in a place like that. I thought I made it out but I'm just spinning my wheels. I don't even know if this promotion will be enough.

JACKIE

I thought the interview wasn't until Monday.

CY

It's in the bag. You know, you could use a master plan.

JACKIE

OK, let's see. In six months I want to have a cool van so I can go places and see shit. In a year I want to have a cool van so I can go places and see shit. Oh, wait! I've already got that! BOOM!

He plops back down next to her.

CY

Picture this. You're in a rocking chair on a long, covered porch. It's raining like hell. Lightning. Thunder. But you're totally safe, just watching the storm. Perfect. We belong in a place like that.

JACKIE

But if I'm under a covered porch, how can I see the North Star?

In the uncomfortable silence, they stare at the fish.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Sarah. I'm going to call her Sarah. That was my mom's name.

CY

One of those punks snuck it in the office. They think I flushed it.

JACKIE

You kidnapped a kid's stress fish? You need to take it back.

CY

I was sending a message. If I take it back they'll think I'm a poser.

JACKIE

If you weaponize a fake goldfish death, you are a poser.

They watch Sarah swim placidly.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

I got another of those envelopes today that says *Important Tax Document* on the front. Could you, you know, do that thing you do?

CY
 (peevied)
 You mean scan it into the folder I
 put on your desktop labelled
 Current Taxes, so in April I can --

She throws her arms around him and kisses his cheek.

JACKIE
 (hamming it up)
 Watching you do my taxes is a *huge*
 turn-on, you know.

After a beat, he LAUGHS and the brief tension is gone. They watch the fish.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
 Just take her back and apologize.
 They'll respect that. Most people --

CY
 Most people aren't worth my time.

JACKIE
 Why do you even say that? We know
 you don't mean it, right, Sarah?

He downs the rest of his beer. Gazes at the fish.

CY
 She was trapped in that dirty,
 little bowl, and now look at her.
 We're a family.

INT. CY'S APARTMENT - DAY

The next morning, Jackie sits at the kitchen island in sweat pants and a t-shirt, working on her laptop, scarfing a donut. Cy hustles in, tucking in his dress shirt.

CY
 How is she?

Jackie shakes her head. He rushes to see Sarah floating dead. He plunges a hand in the fishbowl and scoops it out. Holds its limp body in his palm. Prods it. Nothing. He lays a paper towel on the counter and gently sets the fish on it.

Fighting back tears, he gets a blender from the back of the counter and sets it next to the paper towel.

CY (CONT'D)
 I *knew* that pet store numb nuts
 sold me the wrong food.

He angrily peels a banana and PLOPS it into the blender.
 SPLASHES in milk. Throws in various powders and frozen kale.

JACKIE
 (consoling)
 I love that you got it for me, but
 Babe, it's OK. It's just a fish.

CY
 (emotions rising)
 Nothing's ever *just* anything. No
 matter how much you try to sort
 things out, everything always gets
 all knotted together. It's like you
 can't ever untie all the knots or
 tell what any of it means.

He's embarrassed to see her amazement at this.

JACKIE
 (genuine)
 That's so deep.

CY
 Please don't mock me.

JACKIE
 No! I swear! I've just never heard
 you talk like a whacked-out myst --

He starts the blender, its ROAR cutting off her last word. He
 moves to a cupboard to get a tumbler without looking at her.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
 (yelling over the blender)
 So I'll need to go to Rockford next
 week to install this website.

He returns to the blender without acknowledging he's heard.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
 (yelling)
 Did you hear me?

Nothing. She reaches over and turns off the blender, just as
 Cy turns back and yells, way too loud in the new silence.

CY
 (yelling)
 I heard.

(MORE)

CY (CONT'D)
 (then quiet, glum)
 Rockford. Another road trip.

He GLOPS the thick, green drink into a Chicago Bulls tumbler.

JACKIE
 Those are so gross.

CY
 Protein. Antioxidants. Eyes on the
 prize.

JACKIE
 Absolutely. Get you an extra six
 months in the nursing home.

After a beat, he bursts out in a laugh. He goes over to her
 and kisses her, then wraps the fish in the paper towel and
 throws it in the trash.

CY
 Just a fish.

He grabs the tumbler and his work satchel. Kisses her.

CY (CONT'D)
 Love you.

JACKIE
 Cool. Have a great day.

INT. NEWGEN MARKETING - DAY

The workers huddle together, eyeing TINA MELENDEZ, 50s, in
 business casual, seated near Cy's office. Noticing Tina, he
 waves to her. Passing the workers, he whispers to them.

CY
 Do you work here? Then get to work.

They scatter.

CY (CONT'D)
 Tina! Hi! Great to see you!

As he approaches her, his phone rings. He looks at it. It's
 from "Dumbass." He dismisses it.

TINA
 Do you need to take that?

CY
 Nah, just my little brother.

TINA
 Could we chat?

The workers watch from across the room, smiles on their faces. Cy follows Tina to his office. She stops at the door and studies a sign there: "I'm not mean. You're a sissy."

INT. CY'S OFFICE - DAY

Cy sits at his desk, Tina opposite him. A poster on a wall shows a workplace and the slogan "Your Team, Love It Or Leave It." He sees Tina studying his penholder full of green pens.

CY
 Studies show employees are most compliant to directives written in green ink.

TINA
 Uh-huh. So tell me about the fish.

CY
 (forcing a laugh)
 It's . . .it's fine. I was just making a point. See, as Team Lead --

TINA
 I'm not questioning your authority. But the morale? The turnover?

CY
 Surely y'all in management agree that pets don't belong here.

TINA
 "Y'all"?

CY
 (sheepish)
 Sometimes my Arkansas sneaks out.

TINA
 Arkansas? I wouldn't have guessed.

Reluctantly, he opens a desk drawer and pulls out a framed photo of a man and a young boy in orange vests, in the woods. The man holds a deer rifle. He shows her the photo.

TINA (CONT'D)
 Let me guess: dear ol' Dad, who taught you everything you know.

CY
 You say it like it's a bad thing.

TINA

If the overalls fit . . .

CY

Hey, I'm proud of where I'm from.

He stands the frame up on his desk. His phone rings. It's "Dumbass" again. He dismisses it.

TINA

When I was at Princeton I met this cute little gal from Arkansas and she . . .wait. Maybe it was Alabama. Anyway, good for you. For getting out. Highlight that story in the interview. It'll play.

CY

What story?

TINA

Climbing the cultural ladder.
Overcoming the whole race thing.
The committee will eat that up.

CY

(put off)

That's not my story. Look, these kids need to learn to keep their eyes on the prize. And I --

TINA

Just bring your team's project in on time and under budget. That's the only prize we have our eyes on.

She stands up and then he does.

TINA (CONT'D)

Between us, it's down to you and James in Accounting. You'll be a great fit. But I need you to --

CY

James!?! He couldn't find his ass with both hands! Sorry. Just something we say. Not *us*. Them.

He points at the photo on his desk.

TINA

As I was saying, I think you'd be a great fit, but James doesn't call his team members sissies. OK, you'll be up first at eight. Then James. We'll decide right then.

His phone rings. He looks down and sees it's from "Daddy," the name over an avatar of Zeus throwing a thunderbolt.

CY
Sorry. I need to take this.

She moves to the doorway. Points to the "I'm not mean" sign.

TINA
Sure. Then take that down.

She leaves. He opens his desk drawer and tosses the photo back in, face down. SLAMS the drawer closed.

CY
Fuck Princeton.

He sits primly. Clears his throat. Answers the phone.

CY (CONT'D)
Hey, Dad! What's up?

He blanches and PLOPS into his chair.

CY (CONT'D)
Oh, my God.

INT. CY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Cy and Jackie sit on the couch.

JACKIE
Oh my God! What happened?

CY
(matter-of-fact)
I don't know. He didn't say.

JACKIE
I'm so sorry.

CY
No need to be. Her timing really sucks. With the funeral Saturday, I won't be able to leave until Sunday. What if my car breaks down again and I miss the interview? I'm not going. Can't get us a big porch on a little salary.

JACKIE
Seriously? This is your mother!

CY
 She quit being my mother a long
 time ago.

JACKIE
 Babe, it's important. I'll drive.

He fights to restrain any emotion from showing through.

CY
 OK, but only because I'll get to
 watch her go into the ground.

EXT. INTERSTATE HIGHWAY - DAY

In the flats of Illinois, Jackie, in a t-shirt and jeans, drives her vintage VW Microbus. The back seats have been replaced by a fold-down bunk, work table, and sink. Cy, in his work khakis and a Chicago Bulls t-shirt, sits in the passenger seat, playing on his phone.

CY
 (genuine)
 Thanks for doing this.

JACKIE
 (downplaying it)
 Road trip, you know? Hey, does
 everyone in Arkansas
 (trying a southern accent)
talk real slow?

CY
 Please don't. That's TV. We're not
 all slack-jawed bigots.

JACKIE
 I didn't mean it like that.

CY
 I'm just sick of being the poster
 child for an entire region's weird
 history wherever I go.

JACKIE
 Noted.

CY
 And *really* fucking tired of feeling
 like an outcast any time I go back.
 It's complicated.

Silence.

CY (CONT'D)

Dad'll want me to stay a week. See all his cronies. Work on the house.

JACKIE

Tell him I've got a hard deadline and have to get back.

CY

You don't have those. Kind of your thing.

JACKIE

He doesn't know that. Oh, my God! Did your mom like green? She did, didn't she? It was her favorite color. I'm seeing her in a gorgeous green dress.

CY

What are you talking about? What green dress?

JACKIE

I'm getting, like, a real connection. She was so centered!

CY

Wow. Astral plane besties. Talk about vision. I guess yours is third-eye seeing?

JACKIE

My spirituality's important to me.

CY

Ah. So *that's* what the "spiritual but not religious" box in those online surveys means. So, what do you believe if you don't, you know, *believe*?

JACKIE

When I go out on our balcony at sunrise, and watch that orange-red glow creep up over those vacant lots and old warehouses behind the highway, it all makes sense. I just know, you know?

CY

(genuine)
What do you know?

JACKIE

I guess it's more like *feel*. What do you feel, watching a sunrise?

CY

"Why am I up so early?"

JACKIE

You're killing me.

CY

Same sun, different day. You see one sunrise, you've seen them all.

JACKIE

But the holy light aura around Mother Gaia always makes me *so* horny.

For a beat he thinks she's serious, then she cracks a smile and they both GUFFAW.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Jackie sits in the van, the passenger side empty, parked at a convenience store nestled in the rural Missouri hills. She surveys an adjacent business selling concrete lawn statuary.

Cy gets in, carrying a bag of chips and a soda. He RIPS open the bag and CRUNCHES into a handful, washing them down with gulps of a soda. She points at the statuary lot.

JACKIE

My mom loved shit like that. I should get something. For my step-dad. He's really struggled since she died. Do we have time?

He gets out, chips in hand, beckoning her with a nod. She gets out and they head for the statuary lot.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry your mom turned her back on you. She never reached out?

He shakes his head without looking at her.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Surely you were worth her time.

CY

I'm just being realistic when I say that.

(MORE)

CY (CONT'D)

Most people aren't going to go out of their way to do for me, so why should I. . .never mind.

JACKIE

Were you ever close?

CY

I just want to throw some dirt on the box, shake a few hands, and get back on track.

JACKIE

Cyrus McHenry! That's horrible.

CY

It's complicated.

They reach the lot and stroll among the concrete statues. He stops in front a gargoyle.

CY (CONT'D)

OK, so what even IS that?

JACKIE

A gargoyle. You know, like at the top of cathedrals. They always make me think of the flying monkeys.

CY

Flying monkeys?

JACKIE

Wizard of Oz? No place like home?

He shakes his head and shrugs.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Wow. It's only a cultural icon.

CY

(in an exaggerated drawl)
We never had no 'lectricity down on the farm, ma'am.

She LAUGHS. Leads them on.

CY (CONT'D)

Cathedrals, huh? What's that about? On top of being a world class web designer, you're also an architect?

JACKIE

Just Catholic. They come with the territory.

CY
Catholic? You never told me.

JACKIE
Well, I'm what Mom called a "lapsed Catholic." Does it matter?

CY
No. I've just never met one before.

JACKIE
Promise you have. They're just still in the closet.

She stops them in front of a statue of St. Francis, one of his hands resting on a deer's head.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
St. Francis! Perfect!

She genuflects.

CY
Who's he?

JACKIE
A rich daddy's boy who gave up everything to go preach to animals.

He CRUNCHES the last chip. Puts the bag on St. Francis' head.

CY
A Pope hat! Pope Francis!

She LAUGHS as he shoulders the statue. They continue. He stops at a Madonna and Child. She doesn't see it because she's fixed on a three-foot tall morel mushroom statue.

JACKIE
What the hell is that?

He looks to see what she's asking about.

CY
A morel. It's a mushroom. They grow wild down here. Fried up in butter? Mmm-mm, heaven on earth.

JACKIE
Looks like a giant, gnarly dick.

He GUFFAWS. With his free arm he hugs her close.

EXT. JACKIE'S VW MICROBUS - DAY

Jackie drives, Cy asleep. She gently whacks him.

CY

What!?!

He looks to see that she's pointing ahead. He follows the direction and sees a "Welcome to Arkansas" road sign.

CY (CONT'D)

Hot damn!

Cy unbuckles. Pulls off his Chicago Bulls shirt. Grabs a drawstring bag from the floor and pulls out and puts on a red shirt with "Arkansas Razorbacks" on the front.

He reaches in again and pulls out a garish, red plastic "hog hat" famously worn by Razorback fans. Jackie goggles at him.

In a Razorback sports fan ritual known as "Calling the Hogs," Cy extends both arms in front of himself, palms down, then slowly raises them upward, wiggling his fingers and saying

CY (CONT'D)

(getting gradually louder)

Wooooo. . .

He draws back his right arm, with a closed fist, and punches it forward three times, shouting in time with his punches

CY (CONT'D)

Pig! Sooiee! *Razorbacks!!!*

JACKIE

OK, what the fucking hell?

CY

Callin' the Hogs, baby. Imagine seventy thousand people doing it, in perfect unison.

JACKIE

Sounds like a Hitler rally.

CY

The whole country hates us, but we got the Hogs, so fuck 'em. We learn it to the youngins.

JACKIE

Learn it to the youngins?

CY

(as though instructing)

Listen up, kids.

(MORE)

CY (CONT'D)

You hate OU, LSU, and *especially* those sonsabitches in Austin. Got it? Repeat after me. Tuck Fexas. Tuck Fexas.

(now singing the U of A fight song)

Hit that line. Hit that line. Keep on going!/Move the ball right down the field!/Give a cheer. Rah! Rah!/Never fear. Rah! Rah!/Arkansas will never yield!

JACKIE

(singing)

Cheer, cheer for Old Notre Dame./ Wake up the echoes cheering her name./Send a volley cheer on high./ Shake down thunder from the sky!

Each sings the rest of their verse simultaneously.

CY

On your toes, Razorbacks, to the finish,/Carry on with all your might!/For it's A-R-K-A-N-S-A-S for Arkansas!/Fight, fight, fight!

JACKIE (CONT'D)

What though the odds be great or small,/Old Notre Dame will win over all,/While her loyal sons and daughters march on to victory!

EXT. TWO-LANE HIGHWAY - DAY

Jackie drives while Cy gobbles fries from a "Brenda's Bigger Burger" sack. The plastic Hog hat rests on St. Francis' head. His phone is on his lap, an outgoing call ringing. Jackie sees that it's going to "Dumbass." JERRY answers.

JERRY (V.O.)

Where are you?

CY

Just stopped at Brenda's. Shit's still amazing. How's Dad?

JERRY (V.O.)

Strangely calm.

CY

You know him. He's a rock.

JERRY (V.O.)

Something's off. He moved the funeral up to Friday.

CY

Friday? That makes no sense.

JERRY (V.O.)
Talk to him. He won't tell me shit.
I'm not the perfect son.

CY
No shame in being the asshole son.

Jackie looks at him, horrified.

JERRY (V.O.)
You're the asshole.

CY
Good talking to you. Go Hogs.

Cy hangs up. Takes a bite.

JACKIE
Why were you so mean to him?

CY
That? It's just how we talk.

Her look says she's not buying that as justification.

CY (CONT'D)
He was always jealous of me, so he
took my stuff. And, he lost a bet
but never paid up. He deserves it.

JACKIE
Cyrus McHenry! He's your brother!

CY
It's complicated.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - DAY

Jackie drives on a winding, two-lane highway through steep,
forested Ozarks hills, blazing with late fall colors.

JACKIE
So fucking beautiful!

CY
Is it? I guess.

She drives past a "Welcome to Hamilton, Arkansas. Population
44,021" sign. He points to a dilapidated, vacant gas station.

CY (CONT'D)
Pull in.

Confused, Jackie pulls in.

CY (CONT'D)
Switch me seats. It's pretty
confusing from here on.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Cy drives slowly into the town square, gawking at the businesses and the people strolling about. Jackie spots the McHenry Feed and Farm store.

JACKIE
Wait. McHenry Feed and Farm?

CY
Dad used to invest in places.

He stops at a Stop sign. Spots a well-dressed couple in their 60s -- MR. and MRS. BLACKTHORNE -- entering the crosswalk in front of him. Leaning out the window, he doesn't notice Jackie pointing in amazement at McHenry Savings and Loan.

CY (CONT'D)
Mr. and Mrs. Blackthorne. Hi!

They brighten. Wave. Saunter over to him.

MR. BLACKTHORNE
Good to see you, Ezekiel. So sorry
for your loss.

Jackie mouths "Ezekiel?" at Cy. He ignores it.

MRS. BLACKTHORNE
Of course, it's also a blessing.

MR. BLACKTHORNE
Now, Doris.

Mr. BLACKTHORNE waves to the driver in the car now behind Cy. They wave back congenially, not in any hurry.

CY
(to Jackie)
Mrs. Blackthorne was my Sunday
school teacher.

MR. BLACKTHORNE
I expect your father's waiting on
you. We better let you get on.

MRS. BLACKTHORNE
(proudly)
I took him a blackberry cobbler.

Mr. Blackthorne gives the van a suspicious look up and down.

CY
It's my girlfriend's.

Jackie waves. Neither Blackthorne returns the gesture.

MRS. BLACKTHORNE
Remember Angela Hudgens? That
foreign man she married died, you
know. She's back home. Nice girl.

Jackie gives Cy a look. Mouths "Angela?"

MR. BLACKTHORNE
Come along, Doris.

MRS. BLACKTHORNE
You remind him about the cobbler.

CY
Yes, ma'am.

They move back to the crosswalk.

JACKIE
Why did she call it a blessing?

CY
No clue.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

Cy drives from the town, into the setting sun, and the land
turns rural, the road rolling through hills dotted with
cattle. Jackie points to a distant hill.

JACKIE
Black cows dotted on a green
hillside. Isn't that gorgeous?

CY
(unimpressed)
It's cows and grass.

JACKIE
You're killing me, *Ezekiel*.

CY
OK, Ezekiel is my first name.
Ezekiel Cyrus. But just to Dad. And
the old folks in town. To my
friends I was Zeke.

JACKIE

(incredulous)

Zeke? After two years I just now find out your name? What's that make me? And you want us to get a porch together?

CY

Mom called me Zeke. Then I went to college up north.

JACKIE

"Up north"? You went to Mizzou.

CY

Like I said. Turns out Yankees think Zeke's a redneck name. "Well hey there, Zeke. Where's your straw hat and plug of tobacco, Zeke?"

JACKIE

"Yankees"?

CY

Pissed me off.

JACKIE

"Yankees"?

CY

It was even worse in Chicago. Nobody took Zeke seriously, so hello Cyrus. Worked out, though. "Cy" is trendy. Who knew?

JACKIE

That's a lot, Zeke.

He turns onto a gravel road -- McHenry Way -- then through an open gate where the road becomes a dirt path winding through an overgrown 40-acre pasture surrounded by a ragged barbed wire fence. Grass grows high among rows of rusted-out vehicles and farm equipment.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

What's all this stuff?

CY

Dad would buy cars, tractors, stuff from all over, then hold auctions every Saturday. He made a killing.

He points ahead at a large, white Colonial house, complete with pillars and a covered porch, on the highest point for miles. Dark woods loom behind, in front of the setting sun.

CY (CONT'D)

There it is. The Big House.

JACKIE

There was literally one turn since we *had* to switch seats. Who was it you didn't want seeing a girl driving you around?

He stops in front of the house. Looming above them on the porch is AMOS MCHENRY, 60s, leaning heavily on a cane, his ample paunch straining a faded dress shirt tucked into faded jeans held up by suspenders.

They get out and WUMP closed their doors. Jackie surveys the broken screens hanging askew on dirty windows and the cracks in the faded paint.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

It's like a wormhole in spacetime.

She points, amazed, to a lawn jockey near the steps, its face sloppily painted white, some of the black still showing.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Really?

CY

He beat me good when I painted it. Said I was whitewashing history.

JACKIE

Not what that word --

CY

I know. Just don't say anything.

JACKIE

He beat you?

CY

He's not like that. He protected us. From her. It's. . .

JACKIE

Let me guess. Complicated? I am so not in Kansas anymore.

INT. MCHENRY HOUSE - NIGHT - DINING ROOM

The table is cluttered with casseroles. Amos sits at the head of the table, two empty place settings to his right. To his left, separated by an empty chair, sits JERRY MCHENRY, 24, long hair hanging over a sullen face, staring at a tablet.

Cy and Jackie scurry around the casseroles, filling Amos' plate, then Jerry's and their own.

AMOS
Ezekiel, sit down.

He glances at Jackie, who nods, and he sits to Amos' right. Jackie finishes dishing up then sits to Cy's right. She picks up her fork at the same moment Cy folds his hands in prayer and Jerry conspicuously PLOPS his hands on the table.

AMOS (CONT'D)
Dear Lord. . .

Jackie hastily puts her fork down.

AMOS (CONT'D)
Thank you for bringing the prodigal son home in this difficult time. May the Seven Mountains call him to do your bidding. Amen.

CY AND JACKIE
Amen.

Reflexively, Jackie crosses herself. Amos glances sharply at Jackie, then gives Cy a hard look.

JERRY
(to Amos, sarcastic)
In your own house? Ouch!

CY
Jackie was raised Catholic, but she doesn't, you know, do it anymore. Right, Babe?

JACKIE
Thank you for welcoming me into your home, Mr. McHenry. I'm sorry for your loss. My mom passed away recently so I know what your sons are going through.

AMOS
If it's sympathy you're after --

CY
 (interrupting loudly)
 So, Dad, any rain lately?

No response. Amos takes a bite. The others begin to eat.

JACKIE
 That was a lovely prayer. Which
 seven mountains did you mean?

JERRY
 His kind have a foaming crush on
 what they call The Seven Mountains
 Mandate. Supposedly a divine right
 to kick ass and take names.

AMOS
 You who practice deceit, your
 tongue plots destruction. Do not
 use it to speak of holy things.

JACKIE
 (confused)
 I'm sorry? His tongue plots --

JERRY
 Our father is in that good company
 who love their metaphors, will
 defend them to the death, but have
 no idea what they point at.

Amos POUNDS a fist on the table. Dishes and silverware CLANK,
 followed by an awkward silence.

AMOS
 Boy, you better fear his wrath.

JERRY
 But also worship him, right? Oddly
 co-dependent, don't you think?

CY
 Jerry, please.
 (brightly changing the
 subject)
 So, Dad, Jackie's got this great
 job where businesses hire her to
 build their websites. She can work
 from wherever. Isn't that cool?

AMOS
 That pasture out front was hallowed
 ground once. Everything of value in
 the county came through Amos T.

(MORE)

AMOS (CONT'D)
McHenry. Now look at it. Your
precious internet did that.

JERRY
Ah, well played. Point for Dad.

CY
(trying a different topic)
I almost forgot! I'm getting a
promotion. Huge pay raise. Jackie
and I are quite the power couple.

JERRY
Nice counter-punch.

AMOS
Odd name for a girl. Jackie. That
short for Jacqueline?

JACKIE
Nope. Just Jackie.

AMOS
Name like that could turn a girl
lesbian.

JERRY
And we see his true colors.

CY
He's kidding. He's not like that.

JACKIE
My mother left my father right
before I was born. She knew it
would be hard for me, and she
wanted to give me a tough name.
She's from Brooklyn, so. . . Jackie.

AMOS?
Brooklyn?

JACKIE
Later she moved us to Chicago.
That's where I met . . . Ezekiel.

AMOS
Divorce is a sin.

JACKIE
Excuse me?

CY
Not now, Dad. Please?
(to Jackie)
He doesn't mean it like --

JACKIE
He hit a pregnant woman.

JERRY
Apologies aren't really in his
wheelhouse, but you know, Dad, if
ever there were a time --

AMOS
Your mother is an adulteress.

JERRY
Guess not.

JACKIE
My mother's dead.

AMOS
The wages of sin.

As Jackie starts to reply, Cy gives her leg a gentle squeeze,
then gives a subtle head shake, begging her not to retort.
She's not having it.

JACKIE
You know, Amos -- can I call you
Amos? -- Cyrus is such a romantic,
and I just bet I have you to thank
for that. For our first date --
well, second if you count the night
he took me home from the bar as a
date -- he took me to see Florence
and the Machine, and he hid the
tickets under my pillow! Isn't that
the sweetest thing?

JERRY
Bro! Florence? Outstanding!

AMOS
Angela Hudgens is back in town,
Ezekiel. She's from a good family.

JACKIE
Again? Girl's got a fan club.

AMOS
The McHenry name -- *my* name -- has
been on this ground more than a
hundred years. I need you to carry
me forward. You. You hear me, boy?

JACKIE
I never got the whole male heir
thing.

(MORE)

JACKIE (CONT'D)

If you guys had a sister who had a kid, Daddy's DNA gets passed on just the same. Am I right, Amos? It's like, what's in a name?

AMOS

(to Jackie)

When Ezekiel was a boy, he had some troubles. Seeing things. Talking to trees. I said he'd grow out of it, but his mother sent him away to get his mind right. Nice girl like you, I figured it was best you know now.

JERRY

And the patriarch goes all in!

JACKIE

Babe, third-eye seeing?!? You too?!? I *knew* it!! That's so cool!! Amos, I'd say your son and I are a match made in heaven, wouldn't you?

JERRY

And that's the game! Sorry, Mr. Mayor. Nice try.

(to Cy)

Dude, she's a keeper.

INT. MCHENRY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Amos sits in an overstuffed chair in the ornate living room, sipping on a whiskey. Cy and Jackie sit on a couch as Jerry sits across the room playing on his tablet.

AMOS

OK, boys, you'll meet Vermis in the morning to pick out a headstone.

CY

Will you just please tell me what happened? She wasn't even sick.

JERRY

You know that from six hundred miles away *how*?

CY

Back off or I'll kick your ass.

AMOS

Heart attack. That's all I know.
The half-breed found her on her
kitchen floor, cold as a carp, and
came pounding on my door.

Jackie mouths "half-breed"? to Cy, stunned.

AMOS (CONT'D)

I'll meet Dickie at ten to get camp
planned out. Jeremiah, bring the
beer and whiskey in your truck.

CY

You're still having deer camp?
Still going to hunt?

AMOS

Of course we're having deer camp.
Of course we're going to hunt.

CY

Oh, my God. That's why the
funeral's on Friday morning. So you
can set up camp Friday afternoon
like always, and hunt opening day.
(to Jerry)
Seriously? Right after we bury her?

JERRY

Can you say "catharsis"?

AMOS

Never seen you turn down a bowl of
venison chili. That deer won't get
in the pot on his own. Tradition is
law. It's our lifeblood.

JACKIE

Just so I'm clear, getting drunk
and killing deer are traditions,
and therefore, what? Sacred truths?

AMOS

That's the first intelligent thing
I've heard tonight.

JERRY

Good ol' sacred truths. Well,
despite T. S. Eliot's hopes, there
is no "still point in a turning
world." Just a bunch of hollow men.

CY

Of course there's a "still point,"
right, sweetheart? Our north star?

He puts a hand gently on one of Jackie's. She pulls her hand from under his to take a bite of food.

JACKIE

So do you do that? Kill deer?

CY

I used to.

AMOS

You'll come this year.

CY

Dad, no. I hate deer camp. Stories about the big buck. Stories about who drank the most. I just try to think up something to say that's not stupid.

JERRY

Tell Chicago stories. They'll play.

AMOS

You would deny me this? After losing my wife of thirty years?

CY

Thirty four.

JERRY

Thirty four.

AMOS

If ever there was a time. It would mean the world to me, son.

CY

(genuinely moved)
I didn't know, Dad. OK, I'll come to camp.

Jackie PLOPS down next to him.

JACKIE

Sounds fun!

CY

Babe, the thing is. . .

AMOS

The thing is, young lady, there's a way that *things* should be.

JACKIE

Ah. So that's what it means.

CY

No! That's not what it means. I mean, that's not what *I* mean. It's complicated.

JACKIE

Easy there, Ezekiel. If it's OK with you, Amos, I'll just stay here and get some work done. What's the Wi-Fi password?

Cy and Jerry snicker. Amos tosses down the last of his whiskey, grabs his cane and limps toward the door. Turns.

AMOS

You know what a private woman your mother was. It'll just be us in the cemetery.

Amos limps toward the door as Jackie crosses herself.

JERRY

Now's your chance. Find out why he's being so weird.

Reluctantly, Cy gets up and starts after Amos.

INT. MCHENRY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Drinking their beers, Jackie and Jerry stand in front of a large, framed photo of the front of the house. In the middle of the circle drive is a massive oak tree, now gone.

Amos and KATHERINE MCHENRY stand in front of the tree, seven-year-old Cy and three-year-old Jerry standing between them.

JACKIE

That tree is enormous! What happened to it?

JERRY

I guess it died? I'm not sure.

JACKIE

You know, he hasn't cried or anything since finding out about your mom. What's up with that?

JERRY

The heir apparent? Seriously? Have you met our father?

JACKIE

So what's your excuse?

JERRY

When you see the world clearly for what it is, your vision isn't clouded by silly sentimentality.

JACKIE

Uh-huh. Do I call bullshit now, or wait until I know you better?

JERRY

What do you see in him anyway, cool lady like you?

JACKIE

He's kind. He's great with spread sheets. Yesterday he gave me a goldfish that he stole from some kid at work, but it died. And of course the whole third-eye seeing.

JERRY

Sorry to break it to you, but he can barely see what's right in front of his face.

JACKIE

Has he had, you know, lots of girlfriends? Relationships, I mean. Where he was, like, in love?

JERRY

Uh-oh. You hearing alarm bells instead of wedding bells?

JACKIE

No! I mean, neither one. It's just that, well, have you ever said "I love you" to a girl, but she didn't, you know, say it back?

JERRY

That's a hard no. Why don't you return his serves?

JACKIE

I guess I can't tell if he really feels it, or if they're just words he thinks he should say. Does that make me a real shit?

JERRY

No, no, no, no. Of course not.

They move to the next photo. Amos and his boys.

JACKIE
You must love him to put up with
the way he talks to you.

JERRY
Which one?

INT. MCHENRY HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Cy stands uncomfortably in the doorway as Amos sits on the foot of his bed, his cane nearby.

CY
He's just worried there's something
wrong. Other than, you know, Mom.

AMOS
He should mind his own business.

Amos takes off his boots. DROPS them on the floor.

CY
When he gets Grandad's inheritance,
I'm sure he'll do something --

AMOS
Stupid.

CY
Why are you so hard on him? It's
like you want to see him suffer.

AMOS
He's earned it. Retribution is the
law. He's got no direction. He
spends all his money on books. I
have to let the ingrate live here
rent free. I don't know why I do
that.

CY
Because he's your son and you love
him? As I recall, you weren't happy
with what I did with my
inheritance.

AMOS
You should have bought a piece of
ground here. Put down roots.

Cy picks up his boots and takes them to the closet.

CY
There's no work for me here.

AMOS

Smart boy like you? With what that man left you, you could have bought the Little House from me. Started a family. I'll sell it to you right now for half what it's worth. I had Dickie draw up the contract.

CY

Today? Like right after she died? I'm honored? But Jackie and I --

AMOS

That girl lives in her car.

CY

I love her. She loves me. I think.

Amos unbuttons his shirt. Takes it off. Hands it to Cy.

AMOS

A good woman loves a man who plants his feet. Plants his seed.

Cy takes the shirt to the closet, as Amos is lost in reverie.

AMOS (CONT'D)

(wistfully)

I loved her, you know. She had this ancient beauty, like she was made of diamonds from somewhere deep underground. But she wouldn't . . . I couldn't ever get her to . . . if she just would have stayed like that I'd have kept her forever.

Amos looks up and sees Cy's amazement at this show of emotion. It snaps him out of his reverie.

AMOS (CONT'D)

If you don't want that house, I'm going to burn it to the ground.

INT. MCHENRY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Jackie and Jerry look at a framed picture of a smiling man in front of a gushing oil well.

JERRY

Great Grandad Wyatt McHenry. El Dorado, Arkansas, 1921. The boom lasted three years. When the oil dried up, he bought this place.

(MORE)

JERRY (CONT'D)
 Became the cattle rancher he'd
 always dreamed of being.

Jerry moves them to the next picture. A different man,
 smiling in front of hundreds of cattle in a vast pasture.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 Two thousand acres. That's Grandad
 Earl. He kept it going. Made good
 money, then gave most of it away
 sponsoring Vietnamese immigrants
 coming into Fort Chaffee.

JACKIE
 And the Big House, Little House
 thing?

JERRY
 Dad's names. He hated the house
 Grandad built, and him, so when he
 died, Dad built his show place.

He moves to the next photo: Amos proudly in front of the
 their current house, under construction.

JACKIE
 What happened to the cows?

JERRY
 The story goes that one night right
 after Grandad died, Mom was helping
 a cow give birth. It started
 thrashing and when Dad tried to get
 her away from it, it kicked his
 knee. When he got out of the
 hospital, he went right out and
 shot it. Then he sold them all.

JACKIE
 That's horrible!

CY (O.S.)
 What's horrible?

Cy walks in to the room, carrying three beers.

JERRY
 The great cattle massacre.

CY
 I leave you alone for five minutes
 and you air our dirty laundry?

JERRY

Oh, that's what I'm supposed to do?
 (to Jackie)
 In the pasture, there's this mass
 grave of Union soldiers, see, and --

CY

Stop it! That's not who we are.

Cy sets their beers on the table. Guzzles half of his. Jackie joins him on the couch. Jerry sits. Picks up his tablet.

JACKIE

So if the money was in the cows,
 and he sold the cows . . . ?

JERRY

He started propping up failing
 businesses --

CY

Investing in them.

JERRY

To buy the town's servitude --

CY

To get a steady revenue stream.

JACKIE

And his name everywhere.

JERRY

(to Cy)
 You know the town's drying up,
 right? He's selling the farm, bit
 by bit.

CY

No! We can't let him do that. You
 heard. A hundred years!

JERRY

Not my problem. I just need six
 more months.

CY

(explaining to Jackie)
 Grandad left each of us a little
 money. Payable at twenty-five.

JERRY

A little? Two hundred fifty
 thousand. Each.

She looks a wide-eyed question at Cy. He doesn't respond.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 What do you *think* he did with it?

JACKIE
 No! You gave it all to Our Lady of
 the Blessed Retirement Account?

CY
 Eyes on the prize. One day you'll--

JERRY
 Wake up, both of you! There's not
 going to be any "one day" because
 there's no still point! Just a
 fucked up, turning world.

CY
 You know what your problem is? You
 bitch and moan about everything,
 but you never do anything.

JACKIE
 (to Jerry)
 So where's your money going?

JERRY
 Straight into my pocket so I can
 party like it's the end times.

CY
 That would mean getting your nose
 out of a book or off a screen.

They flip each other off in perfect unison.

EXT. MCHENRY FUNERAL HOME - DAY

With Cy in the passenger seat and St. Francis between them,
 Jackie -- wearing a Fighting Irish Football shirt -- pulls
 the van up in front of the McHenry Monuments and Funeral
 Home. Parks. Jerry sits in back, on his tablet.

CY
 You coming in?

JACKIE
 All you. I need to call the
 Rockford boys.

He gets out. Jerry props his tablet on the fold-down table.

JERRY
 Is it cool if I leave this running
 so I can level up?

JACKIE

Go for it. What shoot-em-up game
are you so obsessed with, anyway?

As Cy opens the sliding door, Jerry turns the tablet around showing a massive combine moving through a vast field of corn, the cut stalks spewing into a trailer pulled behind.

JERRY

Welcome to Fruity Acres.

JACKIE

SIMS. Nice. So you're a closet
farmer, with. . . fruity corn?

JERRY

That's just my money crop. Here's
my passion crop.

As he opens a screen showing a field of short plants, a chat bubble pops up showing an avatar of a man's smiling face, labelled "Tim" in elegant scroll. Jerry closes the chat quickly. Zooms in on the field.

JACKIE

Strawberries? I love strawberries.

JERRY

Right? Who doesn't? It's the
ultimate fruit. Very egalitarian.

JACKIE

That's deep. I mean it.

CY

Come on, Farmer Joe. We've got real-
world digging and planting to do.

EXT. GRAVESITE - DAY

Amos and the PASTOR stand near the gravesite. A gaggle of onlookers, the BLACKTHORNES among them, stand at a respectful but nosy distance. The casket is on the scaffold above the grave, ready to be lowered by thick, black straps.

Cy and Jerry approach, with Jackie a few steps behind. Seeing the grave ahead, Cy and Jerry stop, puzzled.

CY

That grave runs north-south.

JERRY

I told you! Something's off. He said she picked the plot, but she wouldn't have cared. You know her.

CY

Not like you, apparently.

JERRY

I'm sick and fucking tired of you riding my ass but never saying why.

CY

Seriously? Here? Now?

They resume walking.

CY (CONT'D)

I can't really remember what she looked like. I'm a horrible person.

JERRY

Give me your phone.

He hands Jerry his phone. Jerry takes a picture of him.

CY

What are you doing?

Jerry taps on Cy's phone as they walk. Hands it back to him. Cy looks at the picture on the screen, aghast.

JERRY

I downloaded a gender-swap app and made you a woman, thirty years older. Say hi to Mom.

He's both mesmerized and horrified by the photo. He swipes it closed and pockets the phone.

CY

I still can't believe you're hunting tomorrow.

JERRY

Let it go. It's the one week out of the year Dad and I get along.

Jackie stops short of the grave. Cy and Jerry continue and reach Amos and the pastor.

AMOS

Let's get to it. Short and sweet.

The pastor opens his Bible and prepares his remarks.

AMOS (CONT'D)

(quietly, to Cy)

I had Dickie draw up a quit-claim deed on the Little House. It's yours, boy, free and clear. I don't want your money anyway.

CY

Really, Dad? Now? She died there.

JERRY

(to Amos)

You fucking kidding me? To him?

CY

Back off, asshole. I deserve it.

AMOS

Game faces on, boys.

JERRY

(whispers to Cy)

Any time, any place, *Mama's boy*.

Cy slugs Jerry in the face. Jerry slugs him back and the fight is on. In the brawl they knock Amos to his knees, then crash into the casket, causing the strap under the foot of the casket to come unfastened.

It spins loose wildly and that end CLUNKS into the grave. At the impact, the latch on the lid CRACKS open and the strap under the head of the casket comes unfastened.

The strap spins loose wildly, and as that end falls into the grave, the unlatched lid starts to fly up. Amos, still on his knees, lunges forward into the grave and SLAMS the lid closed. The casket CLUNKS to the ground, Amos atop it.

AMOS

Goddammit boys. Today, of all days?

LATER

The service over, Cy and Jerry head away from the grave as Amos chats graveside with the pastor. Jackie falls in step.

Most of the onlookers scatter, leaving the Blackthornes waiting to intercept them. A small dark, weathered woman in her 70s, MISS ALICE, stands unseen behind them.

MRS. BLACKTHORNE

You dishonored your father.

They turn and stalk away, revealing the woman standing alone.

CY
Miss Alice!

MISS ALICE
(to Cy, ominously)
Come see me. I've got something
that belongs to you now.

EXT. JACKIE'S VW MICROBUS - DAY

Jackie drives on the highway leading to the Big House, while Cy sits in the passenger seat and Jerry sits in back. Both sport scowls on their bruised, bloody faces.

JACKIE
I've been to some crazy Irish
wakes, but that was surreal.

CY
He started it.

JERRY
He started it.

JACKIE
Children! A fistfight. At a
funeral. Who are you people?

CY
Why don't you ask him what happened
when I was in fifth grade?

JERRY
Fifth grade?

She turns up the gravel road leading to the big house.

JACKIE
What happened in fifth grade?

CY
(to Jerry)
He got me sent to a fucking
military school in Benton!

JERRY
I was seven! What could I have --

CY
I'm starting to remember all the
fun Mom and I used to have.
Riverbank picnics. Hunting for
arrowheads. Then you starting
acting up. Your teacher said you
were getting bullied.

(MORE)

CY (CONT'D)

That I must have been picking on Mommy's baby boy. So she sent me away. I'll never forgive you. Or her.

JERRY

I *was* getting bullied! By that idiot Jimmie Dinkel in my class.

CY

Dad rescued me, but after that she wanted nothing to do with me. Dad said that's why she moved to the Little House. You lost me my mama.

She drives through the pasture full of old vehicles.

JERRY

Maybe she just didn't like the sad little prick you had turned into.

Cy unbuckles himself and lurches up.

JACKIE

Sit your ass down! Your mother has just died, but all either of you care about is outdoing the other for who cares less about it. This is even stupider than that bet thing, whatever *that* was about.

They exchange a quick, puzzled look, then turn away.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

You don't even remember, do you? Unfuckingbelievable.

She reaches the Big House. Parks.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

OK, here's the plan. You go to your little deer party --

CY

Deer camp.

JERRY

Deer camp.

JACKIE

Sidebar? I get a real redneck homo-erotic vibe about that whole thing.

CY

Who you calling homo-erotic?

JERRY

Who you calling redneck?

JACKIE

Just saying. Go get drunk, tell bullshit stories, kill stuff, be all macho, but while you're there you by God better kiss and make up, because the next time I see my boyfriend and his brother -- his *brother*, for God's sake -- they better at least be civil, if not kind and loving. Is. That. Clear?

They nod, sheepishly.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Now, I'm going for a drive through this gorgeous fucking countryside until I'm over-fucking-whelmed by fucking bliss. So get the hell out.

Jerry gets out. Cy starts out. She softens. Stops him.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

Babe. No matter what happened, she was your mama, and it hurts like hell. I'm sorry.

INT. DEER CAMP - NIGHT

A dozen men, mostly Amos' age but some Cy and Jerry's age, eat, drink and schmooze inside a modern, metal barn. A fire blazes in a wood stove. Country music BLARES. Counters are piled with food. Mounted deer heads line the walls.

Amos sits at the head of a long table, holding court. Sulking in front of the fire, Cy and Jerry nurse their beers. DICKIE, a paunchy, balding man, approaches Cy, oozing reverence.

DICKIE

Good to see you, Ezekiel. Sorry about your mom. Terrible timing.
(calling out loudly)
Hey, Mr. Mayor. My money's on you for the biggest buck this year.

AMOS

You'll lose. Bet on Ezekiel.

CY

No, Dad. I don't even have a rifle.

AMOS

You'll take my thirty-thirty. Be like old times.

All the men start rhythmically clapping and chanting "E-ZEE-KEE-EL." He grins, in spite of himself. Nods in resigned agreement. A raucous CHEER goes up. Men crowd around, patting him on the back. Jerry eases over to sit next to Amos.

JERRY

You know as well as I do that ever since you dropped that old gun on the scope it shoots way low.

AMOS

And you know as well as I do he's not even going to pull the trigger.

EXT. DEER STAND - DAY

In the dim light of sunrise, Cy sits in a deer stand, huddled against the cold. He pulls out his phone, touches the screen, and is met with the photo of himself as Katherine. He swipes it away angrily and opens a text to Jackie.

CY (TEXT)

u up yet? i'm so over this!!!

No reply. He stows it in a coat pocket. A loud CLACK-CLACK startles him. He spots two bucks nearby, CRASHING their antlers together in a show of dominance. He's mesmerized.

Eventually, the smaller buck runs away. Remembering why he's there, Cy shoulders his rifle and rests the crosshairs behind the deer's front shoulder. It turns and stares right at him. His breathing comes faster and faster. He can't shoot.

He pushes the crosshairs up so they're well above the deer, closes his eyes, and pulls the trigger. The BOOM splits the silence. The deer flinches then sprints away. Cy breathes a SIGH of relief, his breath fogging in the cold air.

He ejects the shell casing and it CLINKS on the metal stand. A walkie-talkie CRACKLES to life.

AMOS (WALKIE-TALKIE)

You get him?

Cy pulls out a walkie-talkie and replies.

CY

I must have shot high.

AMOS (WALKIE-TALKIE)

How'd he do when you shot?

CY

He kind of jumped, then ran off real hard. Real low to the ground.

AMOS (WALKIE-TALKIE)
Hot damn! That's how they do when
they're hit! Go look for blood.

LATER

Rifle in hand, Cy shuffles toward the spot where the deer stood. Looking anxiously at the ground in front him, he stops suddenly, eyes wide. Blood spatters dot the leaves.

CY
No. No, no.

He stares at the blood spots, then looks in the direction the deer ran. He spots it lying motionless on the ground. Dead.

CY (CONT'D)
Jesus.

He approaches the deer. Puts his rifle on the ground. Blood wells out from a hole low in the deer's chest and pools darkly in the dirt. In anguish he covers the bullet hole with a finger, trying to stop the blood, but the pool swells.

Frantic, he digs a small hole into the ground next to the pool with his fingers so the blood runs into it. He watches as the trickle of blood slows down.

CY (CONT'D)
(stroking the deer's side)
I'm so sorry. I don't belong to any
of this.

The blood stops draining out. He scoops the loose dirt onto the pool until all of it is buried. As he pats the dirt flat, the walkie-talkie CRACKLES.

AMOS (WALKIE-TALKIE)
Find anything?

He wipes his moist eyes, smearing dirt and blood across his face, and retrieves the walkie-talkie.

CY
Yeah, dad. I got him.

As Cy wilts in anguish, Amos cheers so loud that the walkie-talkie distorts in an angry BUZZ.

INT. DEER CAMP - NIGHT

Inside the barn, Amos holds court at the head of the main table, Cy to his right. Working at the stove, Dickie pulls pans of venison steaks from the oven.

DICKIE
 (yelling)
 Meat!

Men rush the stove, leaving Amos and Cy alone at the table.

AMOS
 I get it that you don't want the
 Little House. I hate it too.

He pulls out some papers from a large envelope and hands them to Cy. He reads as the other men return to the tables to eat.

CY
 I don't understand.

AMOS
 You didn't like my other offers. I
 upped the ante. The Big House is
 yours. I can't take care of it
 anymore. Time you come live with
 your blood kin, where you belong.

Cy goes mute in disbelief. Amos stands. Everyone notices and stops eating. Puts down their utensils. Silence.

AMOS (CONT'D)
 Friends, as you all know, my wife
 just passed. I'd like a moment of
 silence to honor her.

SNICKERS run through the room as the men assume he's joking. He glares around the room and nods subtly towards Cy who's still reading. The room goes silent for a few moments.

AMOS (CONT'D)
 Thanks. Camp's special this year.
 My boy shot the only deer today!

Chants of "E-ZEE-KEE-EL" fill the room.

AMOS (CONT'D)
 But what's more, he's coming home.
 He's taking over the Big House.

CHEERS. Amos raises his beer. Everyone else follows suit.

AMOS (CONT'D)
 To Ezekiel. Welcome home.

A roar of TO EZEKIEL! fills the room. Cy slowly warms to the adoration. Accepts it. Revels in it. Stands. Chugs his beer. Pumps his fists in time with the chants, which grow louder. He lowers his hands to his sides and starts calling the Hogs.

CY
 Wooooo. . .

Everyone in the room falls precisely in rhythm with the chant of WOOOOO, PIG! SOOIEE! RAZORBACKS! followed by CHEERING. He locks eyes with Jerry, who glares at him.

LATER

The party is in full swing. Cy texts Jackie.

CY (TEXT) (CONT'D)
good day?

JACKIE (TEXT)
free Wifi at the diner so yeah. Go Hogs! you?

CY (TEXT)
*except for the stupid deer.
wild party here. OK if I stay?*

JACKIE (TEXT)
go for it

He types, but does not send:

CY (TEXT)
thanks -- ive got great news

He backspaces over everything up to "thanks." Types, but does not send:

CY (CONT'D)
*the most amazing thing just
happened. Dad gave me*

He backspaces over everything up to "thanks." Searches for the right words. Gives up. Sends "thanks".

EXT. MCHENRY WAY - DAY

In early morning mist, Cy drives Jerry's old, beat up truck through the pasture. He reaches the Big House. Sees Jackie on the front porch, wrapped in a blanket, sipping coffee. He parks. Walks up to the porch. Kisses her.

CY
A big-ass porch really suits you.

JACKIE
I guess you're ready to head back?

CY
There's one thing I have to do first. I'm under orders.

EXT. BIG HOUSE GROUNDS - DAY

Cy and Jackie stroll from the Big House, down a gently-sloping lawn towards dense woods.

JACKIE
So what did she say, exactly?

CY
(imitating Miss Alice)
Come see me. I got something that belongs to you now.

JACKIE
Creepy. So who is she?

CY
Mom's only friend. Scary lady. Her people lived here before ours so Grandad deeded their plot to her.

JACKIE
How'd that sit with your dad?

CY
Take a wild guess.

As they approach the edge of the woods, Jackie's attention is caught by a thin, distant YA-HONK, YA-HONK in the sky.

JACKIE
What's that sound?!?

Searching the sky, Cy points out an enormous, shifting "V" of migrating geese, impossibly high overhead.

CY
Migrating geese.

JACKIE
How do they know where to go?

CY
Got me. They just do. Every year.

JACKIE
That's some holy shit right there.

Having reached the edge of the woods, Cy points to a structure, now visible through the trees.

CY
The Little House.

He leads her along an old driveway through the woods, to a clearing around a house with a Frank Lloyd Wright style.

JACKIE

Wow. I could live there. I mean, in a house like that.

CY

So could you live in a house -- I don't know -- like the Big House?

JACKIE

Right! That place is so throwback.

They resume walking, now on a worn footpath. Cy stops. Points to an old stone building, with a river beyond it.

INT. MISS ALICE'S HOUSE - DAY

A fire CRACKLES in the tidy room's fireplace. Herbs grow in planters. Drying herbs and flowers hang from the ceiling. Shelves line the walls holding jars of dried herbs and canned foods. A shotgun and two fishing rods stand in one corner.

Seated at a simple wooden table, they watch Miss Alice light a gas burner and put a tea kettle on.

She takes dried herbs from a jar, puts them in a pot of simmering soup, and stirs it with a wooden spoon. From a jar she puts a dried mixture in a bamboo strainer.

CY

Dad said you found her. That must have been hard.

She puts heavy mugs on the table.

MISS ALICE

Seen plenty of dead bodies. What's hard is losing a good friend.

The teapot SCREAMS. Miss Alice takes it off the heat. Pours the steaming water through the strainer, held over Jackie's cup. A green-brown tea streams into it. She repeats it with Cy's and her own, then sits down.

JACKIE

This smells divine.

Jackie SIPS her tea. Cy just stares blankly at his.

CY

I'm not much of a tea person.

MISS ALICE

You just lost your mama. It'll be good for what ails you.

LATER

Cy and Jackie look at a framed diploma on the wall from the University of Arkansas, granting a Bachelor's in Agricultural Sciences to Alice Emerson. They move to a framed photo of a Native American man, in a crisp World War II Marine uniform, in front of a row of radios.

Miss Alice emerges from a back room carrying a bundle in faded red cloth.

MISS ALICE (CONT'D)

My father. A Navajo code talker. Helped the 5th Division take Iwo Jima. A week later, two men beat him to death with baseball bats.

JACKIE

That's horrible. Why?

MISS ALICE

They didn't like seeing a Marine Corps uniform on an Indian.

She sits and puts the bundle down next to a bowl of grapes.

JACKIE

So are you full-blooded . . .Native American?

MISS ALICE

Honey, I'm an Indian. My father was an Indian. It's one of the names the kids at school used to try to hurt me. I won't call myself something else just because people who don't know me say I should. But no. I'm not. Before the war he fell in love with a woman who happened to be Black. So you know the other name the kids called me. Now, Ezekiel, your mother left these with me to put in your hands in case something happened to her.

CY

I go by Cy now. It's trendy.

She looks hard at him over her glasses for a beat, then unfolds the red cloth, uncovering a tattered Bible and a frame containing mounted arrowheads. She holds out the Bible.

MISS ALICE
Now this --

CY
Oh, my God.

He reaches to pick up the frame.

CY (CONT'D)
Our arrowhead collection. I
remember this!

He points to an empty spot in the middle, clearly for
something larger than the rest of the arrowheads.

CY (CONT'D)
What's this spot? Why is it empty?

MISS ALICE
It's for a spear point. I guess you
never found one. Pity. According to
my father, they're powerful magic,
if you believe such stuff.

She pats the Bible.

MISS ALICE (CONT'D)
Now, she asked me to hold this
because she worried it wouldn't
make its way back to you.

She hands it to him. He thumbs through the pages. Most have
passages underlined, with numerous comments in the margins.

JACKIE
She wrote in The Bible?

He continues thumbing. Miss Alice gets up and stirs the soup.

CY
A lot of these notes say "You asked
me. . ." blah, blah, blah. Who's
she talking about?

Miss Alice peers at him over her glasses. He puts the Bible
on the table. Takes a few grapes. Flips open the front cover.
On the title page, the word "Second" is hand written, boldly
and underlined, in between "The" and "Holy."

CY (CONT'D)
The *Second* Bible? What did she
mean? What was the first one?

MISS ALICE
Couldn't tell you.

He reaches and touches the empty spot in the arrowheads.

MISS ALICE (CONT'D)
 But if she was here she'd tell you
 to keep looking for that spear
 point, because one of these days
 you might be ready to find one.

CY
 Ready?

MISS ALICE
 Another of those Indian magic
 things she believed. She liked to
 say that most people get one moment
 in their lives when the world
 splits open, and they can see
 behind the curtain to what's really
 there. But they have to be ready.
 If they're not . . .

CY
 Shows just how full of shit she
 was. And anyway, most people-

JACKIE
 Don't say it.

CY
 Well it's true. Most people aren't
 worth my time.

He shrugs at Miss Alice. Pops a grape into his mouth.

MISS ALICE
 She raised you better than that.
 She might not be here to --

CY
 She never was here. Talk about not
 being worth my time.

Miss Alice gently TAPS the spoon on the rim of the pot then
 whirls and CRACKS him on top of the head with it.

CY (CONT'D)
 OW! What the hell?! I mean heck.

Miss Alice grabs the top of his ear, hard, and holds on.

CY (CONT'D)
 OW! OW! OW!

MISS ALICE
That grape in your mouth -- DON'T
SWALLOW IT! -- what's inside it?

CY
I don't know. . .juice?!?

MISS ALICE
What's in the juice?

In his baffled pain, he looks pleadingly at Jackie.

JACKIE
Water? Sugar? Uh, fructose! C-six,
H-twelve, O-six! Carbon. Hydrogen.
Oxygen.

MISS ALICE
Somebody paid attention in school.
Minerals. Potassium. Iron. It's all
in that same mouth that said you
think you're better than most
people. How'd it all get there?

He tries to get up, but she forces him back into his chair.

MISS ALICE (CONT'D)
How'd the vine pull all of that
from the dirt and put it in the
grape slobbering out of your mouth?

He looks to Jackie for help.

JACKIE
Photosynthesis?

MISS ALICE
The sun is in that grape.

CY
What the fuck?

JACKIE
Babe! It's just like when you said
nothing's ever *just* anything! You
see like she did. I knew it!

MISS ALICE
You need to keep her, *Ezekiel*.

Miss Alice releases his ear with a shove and clamps her bony
fingers around his jaw to keep him from swallowing.

MISS ALICE (CONT'D)
Carbon? Oxygen? *The sun*? Sounds
like the whole universe is in that
grape. What, you think a Black
Indian *woman* can't know shit? You
think your *mama* didn't know shit?

He frantically shakes his head "no."

MISS ALICE (CONT'D)
Now, swallow down the universe.

She releases his jaw. He swallows. Wipes his face.

MISS ALICE (CONT'D)
Whatcha got to say about people
now? And not just most of 'em?

CY
You're insane. What possessed you
to say all that crap?

MISS ALICE
Because my good friend Katherine
isn't here to tell you herself.

Miss Alice reaches in a pocket and pulls out a key. SLAPS it
on the table in front of Cy. He just stares at it.

MISS ALICE (CONT'D)
It's a key, boy. Not a snake.

JACKIE
You said "in case something
happened to her." Did something
happen to her?

MISS ALICE
Why yes, child. She died. That's
something, don't you think?

EXT. THE LITTLE HOUSE - DAY

Dozens of birds TWITTER as they feed on the dried heads of
sunflowers, suspended from the small house's covered porch.
Startled, they scatter into the air as Cy and Jackie walk
into the small clearing around the house. Cy rubs his ear.

JACKIE
She's right. Your mom knew some
serious shit. How come you never --

CY
Because it's shit, OK?

They approach the porch, stopping to study muddy 4-wheeler tracks leading away from the steps. Cy pulls out the key.

JACKIE

You sure you want to go in?

CY

She may be insane, but she gave it to me for a reason.

INT. THE LITTLE HOUSE - DAY

Light pours into the open living area from the many windows. Cy moves about the room. As Jackie studies a rectangular area on the wooden floor that is darker than the wood -- bleached by the sun -- everywhere else.

JACKIE

Babe?

Cy joins her to inspect the dark rectangle, and scrapes in the floor leading from it to the front door. His face clouds.

CY

Something's off about that.

JACKIE

Suppose that's why she gave you the key?

CY

Come on. They'll still be at camp.

EXT. MCHENRY HOUSE - DAY

Cy and Jackie approach the back door.

JACKIE

You think we have time to search every room before they get back?

Cy stops. Studies 4-wheeler tracks leading to an old shed and a 4-wheeler parked next to it.

CY

I don't think we'll have to.

INT. OLD SHED - DAY

Cy opens the shed's creaky doors. He turns on his phone's flashlight and they step in.

The beam illuminates tools and various farm equipment. In a back corner, a camouflage tarp partially covers a rectangular wooden chest.

He pulls off the tarp. Opens the chest. It's empty except for one small, cardboard box. Cy picks it up and they read the label: "McHenry Funeral Home. Katherine McHenry."

CY
(aghast)
What the fuck?

Cy opens the lid. They stare down at cremation ashes.

EXT. VERMIS HOME - DAY

CY
(aggressive)
What the fuck?

Cy holds the open box. He stands on the front porch, facing Vermis, who stands in the open doorway in threadbare khakis and a ratty Razorbacks t-shirt. Vermis pulls the door shut behind him. Steps onto the porch. Gently closes the box.

A sheriff's car eases up behind the van.

VERMIS
You called Butrick?

CY
Of course I did! If she's in *this* box, who's in the one we buried?

EXT. GRAVESITE - DAY

Cy, Jackie, Vermis and Butrick watch workers hoisting the casket from the grave. Onlookers gawk from a distance.

VERMIS
I was prepping the remains when your dad came in, insisting that she actually wanted to be cremated. But that you and your brother wouldn't like that. So I should go ahead with a burial.

BUTRICK
Knowing the casket didn't have the right body in it?

VERMIS
I know. I know. I shouldn't have.

BUTRICK
So which was it? Did he pay you or threaten you?

CY
(angrily)
You believe that story?

VERMIS
A little of both.

BUTRICK
You could be in deep shit, Vermis.

VERMIS
Me? Why aren't you going after him?

BUTRICK
You didn't buy me a squad car. So then what happened?

VERMIS
He said it would mean a lot to him if we interred some things that were dear to her. I started the cremation, locked the front door, and left the back door open for him. I swear I don't know what we buried. Am I going to jail?

BUTRICK
Depends on what's inside.

The workers get the casket on the ground and move away.

BUTRICK (CONT'D)
Unlock it.

VERMIS
I hear there was an incident during internment, and the latch broke.

Butrick raises the lid.

Cy shoulders past Butrick. Stares at the contents: a smaller arrowhead collection, family photos, three books -- the *Song of Myself*, *The Perennial Philosophy*, and *Black Elk Speaks* -- stacks of a child's drawings and paintings, all with "To Mom" and "Love, Zeke" on them.

Around it all are bricks for weight.

CY
I remember that. And *that*.
(picking up the books)
(MORE)

CY (CONT'D)

I remember her reading to me.
Where'd all this come from?

He looks at Jackie with the agony of memories that don't fit.

JACKIE

This must be what was in that
chest. She kept it all.

CY

That doesn't make any sense. She
gave up on me. Dad said.

JACKIE

I don't think she did, Babe.

Continuing to look, he finds a stack of unframed paintings by an accomplished painter. He sifts through them, confused to find that they're all of precisely the same rural scene: a woman and a young boy, squatting on a riverbank, peering into the water.

He grows more confused as he sees that they depict different times of day and night, and different seasons, all with a hint of non-representational, surreal motion to them.

CY

What the fuck?

EXT. MCHENRY HOUSE - FRONT PORCH

The casket is on the porch, Cy and Jackie spreading its contents on the porch floor. The box of ashes is on a nearby table. He shows her a picture of two smiling boys in front of the huge oak tree Jackie saw in a photo in the living room.

He reaches in the casket and pulls out *Black Elk Speaks*. He flips through it, its familiarity coming back to him. He sets the book on the railing, reaches back in, pulls out a small box, and opens it.

CY

Whoa!

He lifts up a small Catholic crucifix (with Jesus on the cross, in bloody agony) on a chain necklace.

CY (CONT'D)

I remember her wearing this.

He hands it to Jackie.

JACKIE
My mom had one just like it. Was she Catholic?

CY
Not that I know of. Put it on.

JACKIE
You sure?

He nods. She does. He gazes at her, fighting back tears.

CY
None of this tracks.

JACKIE
Sure it does. She loved you.

CY
How could she?

JACKIE
She was your mother!

A truck, Amos driving and Jerry riding, RUMBLES up the drive. Amos parks. He and Jerry get out as Cy picks up the ashes.

AMOS
We got our deer, boy. Mine was --

He spies the casket and trails off.

AMOS (CONT'D)
What the hell's going on?

CY
You tell me, Dad. Why were a bunch of Mom's things buried instead of Mom? Why is she in *this* box instead of that one?

Jerry elbows past Amos and bounds up to the porch. Cy hands the box of ashes to Jerry as Amos limps up the steps. Jerry opens the box, then goes to the casket and looks in. He hands the open box back to Cy and confronts Amos on the top step.

JERRY
Have you lost your goddamned mind?

Amos tries to move past Jerry, who shifts to block him. Cy hands the open box to Jackie and moves to intercede.

CY
Vermis said it's what she wanted. Why would she --

Amos teeters. As he is about to fall, Cy slides past Jerry and grabs his jacket. Helps him to the porch. Amos limps past Cy and Jerry and surveys the scene. Spots Katherine's crucifix around her neck. Reaches for it.

AMOS

Ah *hell* no. You filthy --

CY

STOP!

Amos freezes, shocked. Cy goes to stand next to Jackie.

CY (CONT'D)

I don't know what's going on, but one thing I do know is that you will *not* talk to her the way you talk to us. That's *not* the way that things should be. You got that?

Jackie hands the box to Cy. Jerry moves to stand next to Cy, all three now facing Amos. Jerry gently takes the box from Cy. Touches the ashes. Closes the lid.

CY (CONT'D)

You taught us anything other than an east-facing grave is a sin because Jesus will come with the morning sun. You said cremation is a sin because there's no body to go to heaven. How'd she convince you --

AMOS

I paid for a cremation. I got one. I paid to get a box put in the ground. I got that.

JERRY

This is our mother we're talking about. You owe us an explanation.

AMOS

I don't owe you shit.

CY

He's right, Dad. You owe us.

The angry silence of the standoff is rattled by the noisy CAW-CAW-CAW of a crow flying by.

AMOS

Alright. If that's how you boys want it. I took that woman in as a favor to her daddy.

JACKIE

A favor?!?

AMOS
McHenry Feed and Farm? Used to be
his.

JERRY
You traded for her?

JACKIE
Like some kind of dowery?

CY
Let him talk.

AMOS
She wouldn't mind him, so we worked
a deal. She did OK for a few years,
but after Jeremiah was born she
took to just moping around.

JACKIE
Hello? Post-partum depression?

AMOS
That's the same damn thing the half-
breed said when she came sniffing
around. Bringing those demonic
books. That's why she lost her
mind, you know. I ordered her to
stop reading. Stop wearing idols.
But she defied me.

He points at the crucifix around Jackie's neck.

AMOS (CONT'D)
Jesus is the risen conqueror, not
some blubbering milksop. Then She'd
walk right here and say "Good
morning, your holiness" to that God-
forsaken tree. I ordered her to
stop that, too. She refused. Then
you started in on it. I wouldn't
stand for that. I sent you away.
Had the damn thing cut down

CY
You? You sent me? You lied to me!

AMOS
I saved you.

JERRY
You told us she went insane.

CY
That she didn't know us anymore.

AMOS

I still would've given her a Christian burial, but when I found she kept all this against my orders, my duty was clear. I never found that damn Bible, though. I'd have burned it up with her.

Cy's eyes flick to Jackie's van. Amos follows his glance.

AMOS (CONT'D)

So, you have your answers.
Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.

JACKIE

This was to punish her? For what?

AMOS

There is only one truth. One law.
Breaking that law demands
retribution. I will be avenged.

Amos reaches for the box of ashes in Jerry's hands. Cy intercepts and grabs them.

CY

It doesn't seem like you deserved
her in life, but you damn sure
don't deserve her now.

He goes to the casket and falls to his knees in front of it.

CY (CONT'D)

I should've known. I should have --

He fights back tears. Jackie goes to kneel next to him.

JACKIE

It's OK. She knows.

Cy stands and approaches Amos.

CY

Hear me well, old man. I will never
forgive you for this.

AMOS

This is how you do me, after I just
gave you this house and all this
hallowed ground, free and clear?

Jackie and Jerry stare at Cy in shock.

AMOS (CONT'D)

You owe ME.

Amos limps inside and SLAMS the door.

EXT. JACKIE'S VW MICROBUS - DAY

Jackie, seething, drives through downtown, Cy -- the ashes and the Bible on his lap -- in the passenger seat with St. Francis on the floor between them. Jerry sits in back with the contents of the casket heaped on the floor at his feet.

JERRY

You gonna haul your sad memories
around wherever you go now? Paging
Dr. Freud.

CY

I can't trust him anymore. I need
time to think.

JACKIE

Was this in your master plan, too?
When were you going to tell me? You
were so on fire to get back for
that stupid interview. Back to our
life. What now? Where do I fit in?

CY

I didn't say I'd take it.

JACKIE

I guess secret land deals are the
way that things should be?

CY

I could find a job here, and with
your job, you know, we could --

JACKIE

Are you fucking kidding me?

JERRY

You just shit in your nest, dude.

Silence. Jackie gets a text ALERT and looks at her phone.

JACKIE

Great. The Rockford boys need
changes. I have to go back to that
diner. At least one place in this
God-forsaken town has free Wi-Fi.

INT. PIG IN A BLANKET DINER - DAY

Cy, Jackie and Jerry sit at the back diner table, empty plates in front of them. Jackie sits next to Cy, angled away from him, working frostily on her laptop. Jerry sits across from them working on his tablet. Cy thumbs through the Bible.

The bell over the door TINKLES. Dickie and his wife DINA enter. Dickie spots Cy. Approaches. Pulls folded papers from his coat pocket.

DICKIE

There he is! Long live the king! I was going to stop by your house with the deed, but this works. See what I did there? *Your* house?

He hands Cy the papers.

CY

Any way I can get out of it?

DICKIE

Get out of it? It's yours, you lucky son of a gun, free and clear.

CY

Can I sell it?

DICKIE

Amos put in a restrictive covenant. It can only be sold in the family.

CY

Nobody in our family has that kind of money. You know that.

DICKIE

Lucky you!

Dickie slaps him on the back and returns to his table.

JACKIE

Well, you got your big-ass porch for your stupid rocking chairs.

Cy looks away and his gaze falls on TIM PRESTON, 27, dining with MIRANDA, 50, both dressed casually.

CY

(to Jerry)

Isn't that Tim . . .somebody? From high school?

JERRY
 (without looking up)
 Preston. Tim Preston.

Cy catches Tim's eye and waves. Tim waves back, timidly.

CY
 Weren't you two friends?

Jackie looks up to see who they're talking about.

JACKIE
 (to Jerry)
 Hey, is that the guy who popped up
 on your screen yesterday?

Jerry ignores her. Studies his screen.

CY
 What's he doing now?

JERRY
 Teaches science at the high school.

CY
 Science? So Mr. Fishback retired? I
 liked him. I bet you made an A in
 his class, didn't you?

JERRY
 A 4.0 means you made an A in
 everything. Dumbass.

JACKIE
 Why are you ignoring him?

JERRY
 (ignoring the question)
 YES! I just turned biomass into
 both fertilizer *and* fuel. My annual
 energy costs dropped 14 percent.

CY
 I need to ask him something. I'll
 be right back.

JERRY
 Please don't.

Cy gets up. Jerry grabs an arm to stop him.

JERRY (CONT'D)
I said please don't.

Wrenching free, Cy goes to their table, taking the Bible

CY

Hey, Tim. Good to see you.

TIM

Good to see you. Mama, this is Zeke. We're sorry for your loss.

MIRANDA

Nice to meet you, Zeke.

CY

It's Cyrus, actually. Cy. Never mind. Tim, can I ask you something?

TIM

Of course.

Cy sits down in an open chair.

CY

My mom left me . . . this.

He lays the Bible on the table and opens it.

CY (CONT'D)

She wrote all over it. Stuff she wanted me to read. To know. There's something here I just don't get. Maybe if I'd paid more attention in Mr. Fishback's class?

Cy indicates a notation, in elegant cursive, at the top of the last page in Matthew.

KATHERINE (WRITTEN NOTATION)

*Father, Son, Holy Ghost. Proton,
Neutron, Electron. Coincidence?*
HAH!!!

CY

What did she mean by that?

TIM

Wow. I'm not sure. Um. . .remember the poster in Mr. Fishback's classroom? Einstein in a sombrero?

CY

Uh, no.

TIM

Sure you do. He used it in the unit on quantum physics? Never mind. It had an Einstein quote on it. Most of one, anyway.

(MORE)

TIM (CONT'D)

He said "A human being is a small part of the larger whole that we call The Universe. It is mistakenly experienced as something separate from the rest, which is a kind of optical delusion of consciousness."

CY

Delusion of consciousness?

TIM

Heavy, right? But the poster left out the next part: "Freeing oneself from this delusion is the one issue of true religion." I don't know if that's even close to what your mom meant, but it's all I got. Sorry.

CY

Did you know her, Mrs. Preston?

MIRANDA

We talked at the grocery once.

CY

Really!?! What was she like? Because I don't really. . . What did you talk about?

MIRANDA

As I recall, it was the price of chicken thighs.

CY

Oh. OK. Well, thanks anyway. It was nice meeting you, Mrs. Preston.

Cy gets up. Tim leans forward so as not to be overheard.

TIM

Einstein said the source of all science is the mysterious. He knew science and religion aren't enemies. We've all just been brainwashed into picking a side. Maybe your mom knew that, too.

EXT. MCHENRY HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

In the gloom of twilight, the van eases to a stop in front of the house. Jerry gets out and heads inside. Cy gets out of the passenger door as Jackie exits the driver's side.

CY

I don't think you get how hard this is for me. I don't know what to do.

JACKIE

Losing your mom sucks. And whatever happened when you were nine, that sucked. But all those years you felt sorry for yourself, did you ever think about how much it hurt *her*? Pain is pain. Yours isn't special. It shouldn't make you quit on the people who. . . never mind.

She turns and heads for the house.

CY

Jackie, please.

She doesn't break stride. After a beat he goes to the back of the van and rummages in the mementos to find the stack of unframed paintings. He rifles through them, confused again at their identical subject matter.

He turns one over and finds on the back, in Katherine's elegant script, the title: "The Painting of Everything." He rifles through the stack to find that every one has the same title: "The Paining of Everything."

CY (CONT'D)

What?!? What does that even mean?

He selects one at random and turns it over. In the woods behind the river, all the brown tree trunks gradually turn blue as they approach the sky, blending with it completely. He SLAPS it closed in the Bible.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Cy picks his way down the sloping path, through the dark woods towards Miss Alice's house. Seeing the vague outline of the Little House, he pulls out his phone, touches it, and is met with the photo of himself as Katherine.

He stares at it sorrowfully, then opens his flashlight and shines it toward the Little House. Instantly he recoils.

CY

Jesus!

In the phone's light, a large buck stands twenty feet away, staring at him. They lock eyes in the circle of light.

It forcefully exhales a stream of steamy breath out its nose in the loud alarm BLOW sound that deer make. Cy flinches.

The buck BLOWS again, then bolts, hooves churning up dirt and leaves. Recoiling, Cy drops his phone and the Bible. The phone lands with the light down, engulfing him in darkness and the sounds of the buck CRASHING away.

He drops to his knees and feels frantically in the leaves. He finds it and jabs the tiny beam into the vast darkness.

INT. MISS ALICE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Cy sits at the table, blankly staring at Katherine's painting, which he's put next to the Bible.

MISS ALICE
So you had a little deer scare?

CY
I wasn't scared.

MISS ALICE
Uh-huh.

She lights a burner under the kettle. Opens a jar of dried herbs and spoons a mixture into the bamboo strainer.

MISS ALICE (CONT'D)
Your mama told me about the first time your father took you hunting.

CY
You don't like him much, do you?

MISS ALICE
Tell me your version.

CY
I was eight. This little buck came out of the woods and walked right up to us. Couldn't have missed it if I'd tried. End of story.

The kettle SCREAMS. Miss Alice turns the fire off. PLOPS a mug on the table. Holds the strainer over it. Pours the water through. Cy goggles at the blood red tea that runs out. She puts the kettle back on the stove and sits down.

CY (CONT'D)
OK, in this painting --

MISS ALICE
What happened to that deer?

CY

(annoyed)

We ate it. And Mama gave a bunch to the Vietnamese women who worked at the chicken plant. Now this painting --

MISS ALICE

That explains the black eye.

CY

What? No. You're crazy.

MISS ALICE

(indicating the tea)

Hibiscus. Good for what ails you.

He sips the tea.

CY

That night I snuck into the woods and cried. Hard. It felt like I would never stop.

He gets up. Paces. Pretends to study the jars on the shelves. He notices a jar labelled "Three Sisters" with a mixture of different-colored, large seeds.

CY (CONT'D)

Three Sisters? What are those?

MISS ALICE

Corn, beans and squash.

CY

All mixed up? What a mess.

He sits down, opens the jar, and pours the seeds out on the table and starts to sort them into three piles. She reaches out a hand and gently stops him.

MISS ALICE

My father said at the time of creation, Earth Woman prayed that her body would sustain her people, and corn sprang from her breasts, beans from her hands, and squash from her navel. Ever since, we've planted them together. Together their spirits sustain us.

CY

You do tell some cool stories.

He resumes sorting. She reaches out a hand and with an iron grip clamps down on his wrist.

MISS ALICE

What I learned in college is that nitrogen from the bean roots makes the corn strong enough to hold up the bean tendrils as they climb the stalks, and the wide squash leaves keep the soil moist and cool for all of them. And eaten together, they contain all nine essential amino acids that make up a complete protein. Seems like both stories say the same thing.

CY

OK! Sorry!

He scoops the seeds into the jar. Picks up the painting.

CY (CONT'D)

Can we focus? This is clearly her and me, and that's just how the river looks at the next bend. She was good. But then why paint the trees blue? I don't get it.

MISS ALICE

You've never seen or felt something most people said wasn't there?

CY

That would mean I'm insane. So what about this?

He turns the painting over. Indicates "The Painting of Everything" written in Katherine's script.

CY (CONT'D)

It's the title of every one. What's it mean? I need to know.

MISS ALICE

I'm not much for the artsy stuff. Why'd that deer come up to you?

He gets up abruptly and wanders the room again.

CY

It had a fucking death wish! How do I know?

MISS ALICE

Remember the next day? Your mama brought you here and had me tell you the prayer of thanks my people gave the buffalo after a hunt.

CY

No more stupid kids' stories!

MISS ALICE

My Daddy was a mean man of few words, so I listened when he told stories. That's what you came for, right? Stories from the wise, old Indian lady?

CY

I just want the truth.

MISS ALICE

And you think I have it? Child, I'm no more shaman than you are. Why'd you cry over that deer?

CY

Why can't you let that go?

She just stares at him over her glasses.

CY (CONT'D)

He made me kill it. I didn't want to do that. Then he made me eat it. I promised myself I'd never kill another deer, and look what I did. How in the fuck is that the way that things should be?

MISS ALICE

You tell me.

CY

That night, I went out in the woods and just sat down and bawled. I thought I'd never stop.

MISS ALICE

Why did you?

CY

All of a sudden, this feeling smashed me right between the eyes. Everything that deer ate, all the water it drank, all those things that weren't a deer, they added up to a deer. Like there wasn't really a deer at all. Just other things arranged to make one. And since I'd eaten it, they were now part of me too.

(MORE)

CY (CONT'D)

And didn't that mean I was just parts of things that weren't me? Everywhere I looked, just parts. Nothing was what I thought it was, but for just that one instant, that was OK because everything belonged right where it was. That's when I realized I'd stopped crying.

MISS ALICE

So it worked out.

CY

Are you kidding me? It was terrifying! What eight-year-old needs to wonder if he's real?

MISS ALICE

What happened to that feeling?

CY

When I realized I'd stopped crying, I could think about me again and it went away, thank God. I never gave it another thought, until now.

MISS ALICE

Your mama would say you got more thinking to do.

CY

It felt like she died when I was nine, and now I've lost her again. How much more do I have to lose before I get the whole truth?

MISS ALICE

Is that really what you want? OK. After Jerry was born, she stopped coming by. So I'd go sit with her. Took her a few books of my father's. Helped out with you boys.

CY

I remember her in bed, reading.

MISS ALICE

She tore through them, on fire with whatever foolishness she found. Said she finally saw the *big picture*. Whatever that meant, it became her whole world.

CY

That must have been when she started reading to me after school. Why put a kid through all that?

MISS ALICE

So you wouldn't turn into him, with his little picture of things.

CY

What's that supposed to mean?

MISS ALICE

One day she called me in tears, something about you being gone. She put Jerry in her car and lit out of here like a banshee.

CY

I knew it! She was going to let me rot in that damn school, so it'd be just her and precious little Jerry.

MISS ALICE

And I'm telling you, that was his doing. She told me she was going to take you *both* someplace he'd never find you. But she ended up right back here, and then she moved to the Little House. She never talked about it again. There's the truth.

CY

(rising agitation)

Whose truth? Whose story do I believe? You know what? Fuck it. I don't care anymore. I really don't. I have the deed to a giant house with a big-ass porch. Fuck Chicago. Those Yankees can kiss my ass.

MISS ALICE

Yankees?

CY

From now on I decide the way that things should be. That's my truth.

He snatches up the painting and SLAPS it in the Bible. Stands abruptly. Heads for the door.

MISS ALICE

The same sun rises on the evil and the good. Rain falls on the just and the unjust alike.

CY

No more medicine woman bullshit.
You don't belong here anyway.

MISS ALICE

I got that from a woman who
belonged on every piece of ground
she ever walked. Listen to *her*.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Cy stalks through the dark woods, Bible in hand. Reaching the Little House, he stops. Pulls out his phone. Angrily swipes past the photo of himself as Katherine. Calls Jackie.

INT. MCHENRY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jackie sits on the couch with her knees drawn up to her chest, eyes red and puffy. Jerry sits next to her, working on his farm. Jackie's phone RINGS, showing a call from "My Man." She answers frantically.

JACKIE

Babe, babe I'm so sorry I walked
away from you. You've been through
so much. We'll find a way to work --

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

CY

(into his phone)
So what if my effing north star is
a big goddamn porch? You got that?
I deserve it. My daddy said.

He pockets his phone angrily. As he does so, he notices something in his pocket. Fishes it out. The key.

INT. LITTLE HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is dark. From outside, the key GRINDS into the lock. The door opens and Cy lingers in the doorway, then steps inside. CLICKS on the lights. Scans the open living area. Goes to the kitchen area.

On the floor next to a small table are the shards of a broken coffee cup and an overturned chair. He picks up the shards and puts them on the table. Sets the chair back up.

He opens a door and CLICKS on the light. Scans a pristinely arranged bedroom, his eyes falling on the crisply made bed, with pillows in red pillowcases on a white bedspread.

He quickly shuts off the light and closes the door. Goes to another shut door. Opens it. CLICKS on the light. Opposite the door is a table with a camera and a variety of lenses under a large window. He's stunned to see numerous framed photos on the wall of Jerry, at various ages, his hair longer as he ages, all perched in the same tree.

On the table is one of Jerry with long hair, looking as he does at present, sitting on the ground while leaning against the tree, reading a book. Under another window is a table covered in painting supplies next to an easel.

Pinned to the wall behind it are photos of Cy as a child. The adjacent walls are covered with sketches, drafts and paintings of Cy, at various ages, as Katherine imagined him.

He pulls out his phone. Takes a very somber selfie. Goes to his contacts and scrolls to find "KM." He opens a thread and scrolls past a string of texts from Katherine -- things like "Merry Christmas, son!" or "Happy Birthday, Zeke!" or "Hope it's a good day!" -- but none from him to her.

He attaches the selfie and sends it.

CY

There you go, Mom. Now you know.

Across the room he spots a small writing desk and chair. Atop the desk is a neat stack of stationery. Pens. A holder full of envelopes. A liquor bottle and a single shot glass. He freezes. After a beat he forces himself to cross to it. He touches the stationery. The pens. Picks up the green bottle.

CY (CONT'D)

Really, Mom? Jäger?

He stares at the emblem on the bottle's label: a buck deer with a cross hovering between his antlers. He sets it back down. Sits. Notices, above the single deep drawer on the right side of the desk, a single envelope, face-down.

He reaches out slowly and turns it over. It's addressed to him, in Katherine's elegant script. Across the address, in green ink, is scrawled "Return to sender. Address unknown." He picks up the envelope and sits heavily.

He pours a shot of Jäger. Downs it. And another. Gathers his courage. Starts to open the letter but stops. He pulls out his phone and opens the photo of himself as Katherine.

CY (CONT'D)

Of course, you're prettier than.

He props up his phone and opens the letter. Reads.

KATHERINE (V.O.)

My dearest Zeke, I hope you're well. I wanted to pick up where we left off last week but I've got a killer headache, so I'll just tell you that I'm thinking about you. Hope we can chat soon. I love you.

Fighting back tears, he glances at the deep desk drawer. Downs another shot. Opens the drawer. Finds bundles of envelopes, each tied with a red ribbon, each envelope addressed to him in Katherine's script with "Return to sender" scrawled in green across the front.

On each bundle is a sticky note with the year on it, going back ten years.

EXT. BIG HOUSE - NIGHT

With the bottle of Jäger in one hand, and a bulging, red pillowcase slung over the other shoulder, Cy emerges from the trees into the clearing around the Big House, bathed in the light of the bright moon overhead.

He spots a small point of light flitting next to the house. Getting closer, he sees a flashlight beam, shining on Jackie's van. The light turns to shine at him, then turns back to the van, shining into the passenger window.

Amos holds the light, his cane in the other hand.

CY

Did you ever hit mom?

Amos shines the light in Cy's face. Turns it back on the van. WHACKS the window with the cane's handle, cracking the glass. Cy drops the bottle and the pillowcase. Amos raises the cane again but Cy stops his arm, wrenching the cane free.

Shining the light at Cy, then at the pillowcase on the ground, Amos sees the Bible in its opening.

AMOS

So. You're stealing my property.

Cy picks up the Bible and holds it out of Amos' reach.

CY

It's mine. Mom left it for me.

AMOS

It was mine first. Grandad gave it to me and I want it back.

Cy GIGGLES gleefully.

AMOS (CONT'D)
What's so damn funny?

CY
You know what that makes you?
An Indian giver! Shhhh. I'm not
supposed to say that.

AMOS
Are you drunk?

Amos takes a step, reaching for the Bible. Cy holds it aloft.

CY
It's not even the O. G. Bible.

He opens the cover and holds it out for Amos to see. He
shines the light on it. Reads from the title page.

AMOS
"The Second Holy Bible"? Foul
woman! Fall on your knees, Ezekiel.

CY
I'm not Ezekiel any more.

AMOS
You'd deny your Christian name?

Amos lunges for his cane but Cy pivots away and Amos BANGS
into the van.

AMOS (CONT'D)
There's a demon loose in this
world, and it's started a war. It's
a fight for our name, our land, for
the soul of the whole damn world.

CY
That war is only in your mind.
There's your demon. Did Mom come to
that school in Benton looking to
take me away? Away from you?

AMOS
She would have kidnapped you like
she kidnapped your brother. So
I had Butrick arrest her.

CY
Arrest her? For kidnapping?

AMOS

Before I sent you away I had Dickie draw up a protective order against her. As soon as she drove Jerry off this property, she was looking at felony time.

CY

You bastard.

AMOS

I didn't press charges, but there's no statute of limitations on kidnapping a minor. I can at any time. Well, I could have.

CY

The leverage you needed.

AMOS

I offered her the Little House. She took the deal. Now, I want you out of here. You and the lesbian. Take your disgusting brother and the half-breed. Y'all need to go.

CY

Have you forgotten? I'm your landlord. I'll have you arrested for trespassing.

Cy holds his cane out to him. Amos snatches it. Limpes off.

INT. MCHENRY HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Slouched on the couch, Jerry plays on his tablet. Cy enters, pillowcase over his shoulder, Jäger bottle in hand.

JERRY

Hey, it's drunk Santa! Jäger? Not your cup of tea, is it?

CY

I got it from Mom's.

JERRY

Wow. Go, Mom.

He goes back to his game. Cy plops down in a chair opposite.

CY

Where's Jackie?

JERRY

In bed.

Jerry picks up the crucifix from the couch. Tosses it to Cy.

JERRY (CONT'D)
She really liked you, you know.

CY
I'll go talk to her.

JERRY
Because drunk apologies land well.

Cy puts the chain around his neck. Low WHOOSHES come from Jerry's game. He takes a big swig from the bottle. Takes the Bible from the pillowcase. Tosses it on the coffee table.

CY
You ever hear Mom call it the second Bible?

Cy takes another swig.

JERRY
Nah. Not *my* cup of tea. Be careful with that stuff. That guy on the bottle? He'll kick your ass.

CY
What's making that weird noise?

JERRY
Flamethrower.

CY
A war game? What about your magic strawberries?

He goes to PLOP down next to Jerry. Looks at the screen. It's the same farming SIM game. Carrying a flamethrower, Jerry's avatar wears cutoff overall shorts, boots, and a straw hat. He walks through a field, igniting swaths of brown stubble.

CY (CONT'D)
You're burning up your field?

JERRY
Instead of industrial poison, I clear my fields with the elemental force of nature. It's a rush.

They watch the avatar walk and burn.

CY
Sassy avatar. Nice boots.

JERRY
Are the overalls too much?

CY
Just right.

JERRY
Jackie's a really cool lady. I hope
you haven't totally fucked it.

Cy takes the crucifix from around his neck. As Jerry watches
him suspiciously, he turns it over and over and over.

CY
It's so hard to believe.

JERRY
I was fourteen when I quit trying.

CY
I meant Mom.

JERRY
That too.

He takes another swig. Jerry takes the bottle from Cy. Takes
a swig. Caps the bottle.

CY
Want to see something disgusting?

He goes to the pillowcase and dumps out the letter bundles.
Jerry gets up and goes to kneel down next to the pile.

JERRY
Holy hell. You returned them? Why?

CY
I'm a shit son, obviously.

JERRY
I thought I had issues. Kind of
cliche, don't you think? Letters
from beyond the grave?

They both return to the couch, Jerry to his game and Cy to
turning the crucifix over and over.

JERRY (CONT'D)
OK, that field's done. Out with the
old, in with the new.

There's a loud BEEP, BEEP, from the game. Cy looks to see the
avatar backing up a tractor to a large tank on wheels.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Time for my biomass spray.

CY
Biomass?

JERRY
Pig shit. Yeah, the overalls are
too much.

Jerry changes the avatar's overalls for jeans. Gets on the tractor and drives, spraying slush on the blackened ground.

CY
(studying the crucifix)
God is all powerful, right?
Wrathful? Vengeful?

JERRY
You sound like Dad.

CY
But at his most important moment,
his avatar is broken. Suffering.

They bend very close to study the crucifix.

CY (CONT'D)
And the thing is, he's not looking
to kick somebody's ass. He's OK
just hanging out with the
suffering. That's a next level
superpower.

JERRY
Uh, nails? Not really his choice.

CY
You're missing the point! It's not
a religion thing. It's bigger.

JERRY
Bigger?

CY
Yeah. Like some kind of spiritual
north star or something.

Cy freezes, realizing what he's said.

CY (CONT'D)
So that's what she meant.

JERRY
What who meant?

After a beat to process this, Cy goes back to the crucifix.

CY

It's like I feel what he feels.

JERRY

Just your mirror neurons talking.

CY

Huh?

JERRY

Brain cells that trick you into feeling what you see somebody else feels. Like how a baby smiles back at you. Dude, read a book. And everybody's felt like that. So it can't be a secret superpower.

CY

That's it! A secret *everybody already knows!* Why did you stop believing? At fourteen.

Cy gets up and begins circling the room, studying the family photographs, conversing over his shoulder. Jerry watches him suspiciously, then resumes playing.

JERRY

Dad said Mom was going to hell, with me right behind her. Kind of put me off the whole program.

CY

You? What'd you ever do to him?

JERRY

Being me was enough.

CY

I was so jealous of you back then.

JERRY

Jealous? Of me? Why?

CY

You were the smart one. Better at sports, hunting, fishing. You were the son he wanted.

JERRY

Are you getting real with me here?

CY

You had it all, but you pissed it away.

(MORE)

CY (CONT'D)

In high school, all the girls
practically falling on the ground
in front of you? What did you want?

JERRY

Think about it. It'll come to you.

CY

Like you hated him for no reason.

JERRY

He hated *me*. Ever since I told him.

CY

Told him what?

JERRY

Dude, isn't it obvious?

CY

Nothing's ever obvious to me.

JERRY

I'm gay. Your brother's gay. And
that's not exactly the way that
things should be.

Jerry looks furtively up to gauge Cy's reaction, but he just
continues studying the photos.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Did you even hear me?

CY

Yeah, you're gay. I know that's
supposed to be a big deal, but for
some reason, it doesn't feel like
it even matters now. Is that OK?

JERRY

It's better than OK.

CY

Ever notice there aren't pictures
of Dad's family after great-grandad
died, and none of ours after this
one with the tree? It's like each
little pod is stuck in time.

JERRY

We're all stuck in time.

CY

Mom didn't believe that.

JERRY

What are you talking about?

CY

I read some of those letters. She knew some serious shit. She thought the whole world -- all of us, Chicago, Little Rock, this room -- it's all connected in "*the painting of everything.*" That's what she called all her paintings. All different but each one showing the exact same moment.

JERRY

Stuck in time. Like I said.

Cy hops on the couch next to Jerry, manic.

CY

Not the painting of everything!, They're all at different times, see, and different seasons, but they all show the exact same moment. So they're all now!

JERRY

You're really toasted.

CY

Every time she painted that moment, it was the *only* moment. It's all there is!

JERRY

OK, it's past your bedtime. We've spread enough shit for one night.

Jerry closes the tablet and starts for the door. Goes back for the bottle just as Cy grabs it.

CY

I'm a big boy. I can handle it.

Jerry smiles. Sticks out his right hand for a handshake.

JERRY

Thank you, brother. About . . . you know. That means more --

Cy leaps up for a full-body bear hug. Initially shocked and unsure what to do, Jerry finally hugs him back. Hard.

LATER

Seated on the floor, leaning against the couch with the bottle by his side, Cy reads a letter, surrounded by others, many still bundled but many others opened, read and scattered around him. Out a window he sees movement from the driveway.

EXT. MCHENRY HOUSE - FRONT PORCH

He walks onto the porch and sees two men near Jackie's van, a truck parked behind it. One SMASHES first one headlight then the other with a bat. The other spray-paints the van's side.

He goes down the steps and toward two men his own age. They all recognize each other. DRUMMOND hides the bat behind his back as WALKER drops the spray paint behind his.

CY

Drummond? Walker? What's going on?

DRUMMOND

Jesus, Zeke. Sorry.

WALKER

Your old man called ours and said we should come out and, you know, rough up the lesbian's van.

DRUMMOND

We didn't mean nothing by it.

CY

We're old friends.

WALKER

It's fucked up, I know. He got Dad a new storefront window after the big hailstorm, so . . .

CY

Quid pro quo.

DRUMMOND

Huh?

Cy walks around them and goes to the van and looks at the L, E, and S that Walker had spray painted.

CY

Who's Les?

WALKER

Uh, it was gonna be . . .lesbo.

Suddenly Cy VOMITS. Drummond drops the bat and recoils, bumping in to Walker, and they both fall.

WALKER (CONT'D)

Dude!

CY

Huh. Didn't see that coming.

All three go for the bat. Cy gets it, and advances on them with it held aloft. They scramble up, run for the truck and ZOOM off. Holding the bat at the knob, he whirls in circles for momentum and heaves it into the darkness.

He returns to the porch. Leans on the railing. Gazes at the moon high in the sky. Notices the *Black Elk Speaks* book he'd left on the railing. He tilts the book to read the first page in the moonlight.

He rips out the first page and stuffs it in his pocket. Puts the book down.

Noticing movement below the railing in the moonlight, he kneels and sees a black and yellow garden spider working on a web -- containing an egg sack -- between two of the spindles.

He sits cross-legged, enraptured by the spider, hovering over her egg sack. He reaches timidly and lightly touches the web. The spider takes a few quick steps, then returns to the sack.

CY (CONT'D)

Huh. I guess you just know.

Suddenly a moth flies into the top of the web.

CY (CONT'D)

Whoa! Kamikaze moth.

The spider scuttles to it from her egg sack and wraps it in silk. It carries the moth back toward the egg sack, stows it on the web, and resumes hovering over the sack.

Seeing motion on the sack, he squints and sees hordes of tiny spiders emerging and streaming out along the web's strands.

CY (CONT'D)

That's it!

He pops up and heads for the door.

INT. MCHENRY HOUSE - CY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jackie sleeps, her back to the door. The room is a time capsule: posters of *The Dark Knight*, *Slumdog Millionaire*, and the 2008 Razorbacks basketball team on the walls.

CY
Jackie? Babe? Are you asleep?

JACKIE
I was.

CY
You won't believe this story. There was this spider, see --

JACKIE
The only story I want is the one where you tell me how things are going to work out between us.

He thinks. Pulls the page from his pocket. Reads aloud.

CY
I'll tell you the story of my life. Many others have lived that story to be grass upon the hills. It is the story of all life that is holy, and of us two-leggeds sharing it with the four-leggeds and the wings of the air and all green things.

She rolls over and sees him quickly pocket the page.

JACKIE
What the hell? Is that a Miss Alice script? Some AI bullshit? Who are you?

CY
I thought it was something you'd want to hear.

JACKIE
What I want to hear is what you have to say. Not Daddy. Or Miss Alice. Or even your mom. You.

He leaps onto the bed, giddy with excitement.

CY
I can do that too!

JACKIE
You smell like puke.

CY
Right. I'll go wash. Stay there!

He gets up abruptly and leaves.

JACKIE
I've been living with a crazy man.

INT. MCHENRY HOUSE - JERRY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Cy starts to run past Jerry's room then stops, throws open the door and bursts in. He CLICKS on the light, revealing a room with bookshelves stuffed with books, a farm calendar on the wall, and a desk with his tablet on it.

Cy plops on the bed next to Jerry.

JERRY
What is it? What's wrong?

CY
I know what she meant.

Jerry pulls the covers over his head. Cy whips them down. Jerry picks up his phone. Checks the time. 4:35 AM.

CY (CONT'D)
Of all the places that moth could go, why did it fly into her web?

JERRY
Whose web?

CY
The spider's, dumbass.

Jerry sniffs. Points to something wet on Cy's mouth.

JERRY
Is that. . . ?

CY
Oh yeah. Jackie's waiting for me to rinse off.

Cy pulls the page from his pocket. Dabs at the spot. Stuffs it back in his pocket.

JERRY
I warned you. Jäger'll kick your ass.

CY
See, nothing's just what it is. Everything out that window screams it. The acorn becomes a tree! The grape becomes a universe! The moth becomes a spider!

JERRY

Ah. Mom's a spider. Get out.

CY

That's the first Bible! It's been right fucking there all the time. We need to tell everybody!

JERRY

You know, it's one thing for Mom to write down stuff like that, alone in her little hermit house, but can't you see what'll happen if you say shit like that out loud?

CY

I don't have to say it. I just have to DO something with it.

CY (CONT'D)

You know, when Zeke started to see what she saw, Dad got so pissed he had her arrested.

JERRY

Arrested?!? For what?

CY

Kidnapping.

JERRY

Kidnapping?

CY

It wasn't. She just took you to come get me. At that school.

JERRY

Did she go to jail?

CY

Sort of. In the Little House.
(with rising emotion)
She tried to connect with him, you know. Zeke. For years. But he was too scared. She didn't leave him, he left her.

JERRY

Oh, God. You're not going to --

Cy SOBS, the tears finally coming.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 OK, you are. Look, you were -- Zeke
 was -- what . . . nine?

CY
 He should've known. And the
 letters? What kind of asshole would
 do that? I'm so sorry, mama.

JERRY
 Just a thought here. Maybe it's
 time to let both of you off the
 hook. We'll talk in the morning.
 But first, you really need a bath.

They hear the front door SLAM.

CY
 Jackie?

JERRY
 I told you. She's pissed.

EXT. MCHENRY HOUSE - FRONT PORCH

Running out the front door, Cy sees Jackie, backpack over her
 shoulder, get in the van. She SLAMS the door. He runs to the
 van's passenger side just as she LOCKS the door.

CY
 What's going on?

JACKIE
 What happened to my window?

CY
 He was after Mom's Bible.

JACKIE
 Unreal.

CY
 Sweetheart, I see it now.

JACKIE
 I'm not sticking around to find out
 what it looks like. Or how long
 before you turn into him.

She points to the jockey.

JACKIE (CONT'D)
 Or him.

Cy looks at the jockey.

CY

Oh, my God, you're right!

He runs to the jockey, heaves it on to a shoulder, and trots back to the van.

CY (CONT'D)

There's something I have to do. I should have done it a long time ago. It won't take long. So please, stay here. Please? I can't lose you, too. Wait for me.

He trots off and disappears into the woods.

JACKIE

Not my style.

She starts the engine. Flips the headlights on. Nothing. She gets out and looks at the shattered glass on the ground.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

What the fuck?

She goes back and turns off the engine. SLAMS the door. The cracked window shatters. She stalks into the house.

EXT. RIVERBANK - NIGHT

Cy CRUNCHES through the riverbank gravel to the water's edge. The piercing, staccato CALL of a whip-poor-will RINGS out from nearby trees. Swirls of fog hang over the GURGLING water, glowing blue-white in the light of the full moon.

He sets the jockey down, then kneels in the gravel and splashes some water on his face. Sits back on his haunches. Peers at the jockey, at the sloppily painted-over face grinning garishly at him in the moonlight.

CY

You smug, two-faced bastard. You always were an abomination.

Another whip-poor-will joins the first. A third joins in the raucous, disjointed CHORUS. He looks at the jockey, stands, picks it up, and presses it overhead. BELLOWING with the effort, he launches the jockey into the river, KER-SPLASH.

CY (CONT'D)

(shouting angrily)
OK, now what? **Tell me!**

The whip-poor-wills cease calling, the dark silence broken only by the river's gentle MURMUR.

CY (CONT'D)
That's what I thought. Standing in
the dark, just talking to myself.

He stares into the darkness. Listens to the river's MURMUR.

CY (CONT'D)
Seriously? OK. You're the boss.

He strips off his clothes. Wades into the waist deep river.

CY (CONT'D)
I don't know how, Mama. Hell, I
don't even know what or why. But I
promise, in the name of the Father,
the Son, and the Holy Electron,
I'll do right.

He lets himself fall slowly backwards into the water, then floats peacefully on his back. He spits a stream of water straight up, delighting as it splashes back onto his face.

INT. MCHENRY HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Jackie enters, a blanket wrapped around her shoulders, as Jerry pours a cup of coffee. Out the window, the sun is just starting to come up over the pasture.

JERRY
Good morning, sunshine.

JACKIE
Where is he?

JERRY
He's not in bed? As toasted as he
was, he could be anywhere.

He pours her a cup of coffee.

JACKIE
I think I found him.

Jerry looks to see Jackie pointing out the window at Cy, squatting in the pasture, in the rising sun.

EXT. MCHENRY HOUSE - PASTURE

Damp clothes clinging to him, Cy squats in the pasture between a battered International Harvester tractor and a rusted Jeep Cherokee. He tears up handfuls of grass, tossing it to drift away in the breeze.

In the background, Jerry and Jackie -- the blanket around her shoulders -- approach. Getting closer, they see that Cy is kneeling, staring at the ground, his moving rhythmically.

JACKIE
Is he crying?!?
(calling out)
Babe, it's OK! I'm here.

She starts running to him and Jerry follows. As they reach him, his attention has been drawn by the BUBBLING SONG of a red-winged blackbird, perched in a dead tree.

With each burst of SONG, it puffs out slightly, revealing the otherwise hidden red-orange under its wings, and a thin wisp of its breath fogs in the sun slanting through the crisp air.

It flies, captivating Cy as the gleams from its vibrant red feathers are fully visible. They don't see it, or notice Cy watching its flight, focused on the hole he's jabbed in the ground with the point of a sharp, triangular stone.

CY
When they're still, the colors hide
underneath the black, but then they
fly and that blood-red glow --
fading into sunshine yellow
underneath -- it's so beautiful you
can hardly stand it.

They look around, trying to find what he's seeing.

CY (CONT'D)
(to Jackie)
The orange-red glow. Just like you
said. It changes everything.

She drops to her knees and hugs him.

JACKIE
Babe, that is so . . . oh, my God,
why are you all wet?

Jackie drapes the blanket around him. He scoops up some of the dark dirt he's churned up. He stands, dirt in one hand and stone in the other, and the blanket falls. Jackie picks it up and wraps it back around his shoulders.

Taking the stone, she guides that hand to hold the blanket closed in front so it hangs like a robe. She studies the stone, a Native American spear point. He holds out the dirt.

CY

That's good dirt, right?

JERRY

Years of cow shit means loads of nitrogen and phosphorous, so, yeah. Now, how 'bout we go inside. Get you warmed up.

Jackie holds out the spear point to Jerry. He takes it.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Whoa. Where'd this come from?

Cy points to the hole. Takes the spear point from Jerry.

CY

Buried, but just barely. Like the ground wanted me to see it.

Cy squats and pours the loose dirt back in the hole, then smooths and tamps it with the flat of the spear point. He stands up, still holding the blanket so it hangs like a robe.

CY (CONT'D)

If you ask a blackbird, or an oak tree, what time it is, what day it is, they'd think it's the stupidest question you could ask.

(mimics their response)

"It's now, of course. What else is there?" Dad worshipped this ground for the past that's buried in it, and what it could do for him in the future. I just hated it as something to get away from. That means we both missed what it really is. Dirt.

JERRY

Here we go. Please don't start in on the painting. Just come inside.

JACKIE

What painting?

CY

The painting of everything.

JACKIE

The what?

JERRY

(sarcastic)

Let me. It won't make any more sense if I do it, but it'll be quicker. He thinks Mom believed in something she called the First Bible. It's like nature or something. And she tried to capture it in this "painting of everything." Only it's not *just* a painting, see? It's actually the whole world, all the time, but really always now, where everything's connected and turning into everything else. And apparently putting all that together makes you as giddy as a fucking schoolgirl. Did I cover it?

CY

You're not so dumb after all.

JERRY

And you're full of shit. Now can we please go inside? I'm freezing!

JACKIE

(to CY)

This painting, am I *in* it, or looking at it?

JERRY

Oh, no. Not you too!

CY

You see it, don't you?

JERRY

Of course not! Nobody does.

CY

That's just the delusion of your consciousness talking.

JERRY

Delusion of consciousness?

CY

Einstein. Read a book.

Jackie studies Cy's face as though seeing it for the first time. Beams with the joy of realizing their shared vision.

JACKIE

Babe! My mom and I fought and fought over this same thing. Only she called it the incarnation. She said it was one and done. I told her the way I saw it, it's never stopped.

Cy beams at her. Jerry is stunned by her words.

JACKIE (CONT'D)

The last time I said that, she kicked me out of the house. We never talked again.

Cy wraps the blanket around her.

JERRY

Wait. It never stopped? My God! Plato. Marcus Aurelius. Whoa! *Schrodinger*. Y'all know some serious shit.

Cy hands Jerry the spear point. He studies it, and the land around. Squats and picks up a handful of dirt. Studies it.

CY

(to Jackie)

With Dad, I was either running from a past I wasn't part of, or following him toward a future I didn't want, a copy of myself looking at his copy of the world. Now it's like I'm really here. And I want to be with somebody who knows how to see and feel like that, who craves, with every breath, seeing deep down into the life of everything there is.

JACKIE

What are you saying?

CY

I'm ready to quit blaming the dirt for being what it is, and I'm ready to forgive Zeke for being who he's always been.

JACKIE

Zeke?

ZEKE (CY)

Just Zeke. And I belong everywhere.

JACKIE
Everywhere?

ZEKE
Everywhere. And I want to be all
those beautiful places. With you.

JACKIE
But your master plan?

ZEKE
This isn't complicated.

He kisses her left cheek.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
That's for yesterday.

He kisses her right cheek.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
That's for tomorrow. And this is
for right here, right now.

He kisses her on the lips.

JERRY
Finally!

JACKIE
Zeke McHenry, you whacked-out
mystic, I think I'm in love.

She jumps into his arms.

ZEKE
(taking the spear point)
Dude, you ready for a new story?

Seen from a distance, Zeke uses the spear point as a pointer, illustrating for Jerry changes to make in the pasture, the house, the woods. Jerry shakes his head, unsure of it all, causing Jackie to whack him on the shoulder.

Zeke makes his case again as Jackie nods enthusiastically.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
And the best part? We'll bring
people along for the ride. It'll be
a movement. A revolution.

JERRY

You're kidding yourself if you think you're going to convert anyone out there to your . . .

JACKIE

Third-eye seeing?

ZEKE

We don't have to show them what to see. Just what to do.

Jerry gazes around the farm. Considers. Gives a slight smile and a nod. Zeke offers him a handshake. Instead, Jerry hugs him so hard they fall over.

INT. MCHENRY HOUSE - KITCHEN

Wearing the crucifix, Jackie sits at the table, typing furiously on her laptop, while Jerry prepares breakfast. Through the window, Jerry sees Zeke stow some folded papers in his back pocket and shake hands with Dickie.

JERRY

You really think it'll work?

JACKIE

Dude, I can see it. You'll be killing it here, while Zeke and I go out and spread the gospel.

Zeke enters.

JERRY

I don't know. There's just so much to do. And the people around here --

ZEKE

Are good people. You'll see.

Zeke puts his phone down on the table and goes to help Jerry carry plates piled with food. His phone rings.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

Who in the world?

Jackie looks at the screen.

JACKIE

Tina.

ZEKE

Oops. Forgot about that. Put it on speaker.

He and Jerry carry the plates to the table.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
Tina, Hi! Beautiful day, huh? How
'bout that sunrise?

TINA (V.O.)
Where are you? We're all waiting.

ZEKE
About that. Let James have it.
He'll be great.

TINA (V.O.)
What about eyes on the prize?

ZEKE
Turns out that's not the way that
things should be.

TINA
Have you've lost your mind?

ZEKE
Great talking to you, Tina. I'll be
in touch. Bye, bye.

He hangs up.

JERRY
What happened to my big brother?

ZEKE
Good riddance. Guy never fit in
anyway.

JERRY
He didn't fit in? Oh, boo-hoo.

ZEKE
(to Jackie)
Oh, yeah. Turns out he's gay.

JACKIE
Huh. That explains a lot. With your
dad, I mean.
(to Zeke, sharply)
Tell me that's not why you fight.

ZEKE
Nah. I just found out. We fight
'cause he takes my stuff.

JERRY
And I don't pay my debts.

EXT. MCHENRY HOUSE - DRIVEWAY

Zeke, Jackie and Jerry survey the damaged van.

JERRY
I'll get some headlights from the
parts store.

JACKIE
Is there anything he can't do?

ZEKE
I guess we'll find out.

Jerry turns and gazes at the front of the house as Jackie picks up the can of spray paint Walker had dropped. Zeke moves to stand with him as behind them Jackie moves to the side of her van with the spray paint.

JERRY
I'm seeing hostas all along the
front, with rhododendrons on either
side of the stairs.

ZEKE
Whatever you say.

JACKIE
What do you think, guys?

They turn to see that Jackie has added spray paint to the "Les" on her van, making it into "Less Is More."

JERRY
(to Zeke, quietly)
I get that you might not want
relationship advice from me, but
for God's sake don't fuck this up.

The front door opens and Amos limps out on his cane.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Morning, Dad. I made you breakfast.

Zeke heads up the steps. Jerry and Jackie follow. They reach the porch. Zeke faces Amos as Jerry goes inside.

ZEKE
Big changes are coming, Dad.

AMOS
But you're still letting your old
man keep his room, right, Son?

ZEKE
Not my call.

Zeke reaches into his back pocket and pulls out a document. Unfolds it and hands it to Amos.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
I had Dickie draw up the paperwork.

Amos reads, growing increasingly agitated. Jerry returns holding a dollar bill and the Ozark Mountain Daredevils' "It'll Shine When It Shines" album in its well-worn cover. He hands the album to Zeke.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
Dad's old Daredevils' album!
Where'd you find it?
(singing)
Like my Daddy said/It's in your
heart, not your head/

<p>ZEKE (CONT'D) (singing) And you got to sing and sing and sing.</p>	<p>JERRY (singing) And you got to sing and sing and sing.</p>
---	---

AMOS
That hippie crap wasn't mine.

Zeke turns to Jerry in shock.

JERRY
It was Mom's. She left it for me
with a note to give it to you.
Pissed me off. So I kept it.

Amos shakes the papers angrily.

AMOS
You're selling? To him? He doesn't
have that kind of money, even with
what my idiot father left him.

JERRY
Oh, we worked out a price.

Jerry hands Zeke the dollar.

JACKIE
Praise God, you're even!

AMOS
That faggot --

ZEKE
Careful. That's your landlord
you're talking about.

AMOS
I gave you everything.

ZEKE

You gave me a disease.

Amos WHACKS the railing with his cane, which splinters slightly, unnoticed by any of them.

AMOS

I did right by you. Now you do right by me. That's been the law for two thousand years, handed to us in that book you're stealing.

ZEKE

To you it's just an evacuation plan, but look out there. The world dies every winter and roars back to life every spring. Twice a year, geese fly right thousands of miles and know exactly where they're going. It's been right in front of us all along, but we've been too pigheaded to see it.

AMOS

That foul woman! This is her doing.

JACKIE

Why did you hate her so much, Mr. McHenry? Why?

AMOS

I had dreams, you know, and two sons who were going to turn them into a legacy. But she poisoned *his* mind and turned *him* into an abomination. Now they take her side? After all I did? Mark my words, vengeance of The Seven Mountains is coming for you all.

ZEKE

I'll see your Seven Mountains and raise you Three Sisters.

Amos turns away and limps inside, SLAMMING the front door.

JERRY

That went well.

ZEKE

He'll come around. OK, the first thing we need to do is --

Amos throws open the door and limps out, brandishing a Colt Army Model 1860 revolver.

AMOS

My great-great-grandfather McHenry defended his family with this and I aim to honor him. Now, get off this hallowed ground. All of you.

ZEKE

It's hallowed, but not how you think. And not yours to defend.

Amos points toward the battered red tractor in the pasture Zeke was squatting next to earlier, next to the rusty Jeep.

AMOS

Right there, between the International Harvester and the Jeep Cherokee --

ZEKE

Give it up, Dad. It's a new day.

AMOS

Three Union soldiers came for our people, and there they lay.

ZEKE

It's where they belong.

AMOS

I demand atonement.

ZEKE

You just want revenge.

Zeke moves towards Amos.

AMOS

The law says an eye for an eye.

JERRY

Huh. I always heard it was a cheek for a cheek.

BANG! Smoke curls from the gun Amos has fired at the ceiling.

AMOS

I am not fucking around.

Zeke calmly approaches Amos, reaching for the gun. Amos turns and aims at the van. With a BANG, he fires, shattering the driver's window. Zeke reaches lightning quick and puts an iron grip on Amos' wrist.

ZEKE

Neither are we.

He takes the gun and hands it to Jerry. Amos slumps.

AMOS
You're no son of mine.

Amos throws a punch at Zeke, who sidesteps it. As Amos lurches forward on his cane, it shatters and he THUDS heavily to the porch floor. Zeke extends a hand to help him up. Amos spits at it. Zeke extends the other hand. Amos ignores it.

AMOS (CONT'D)
Jeremiah, son, come help me.

JERRY
Big changes, Dad.

Amos crawls to the railing. Pulls himself to standing. Looks out over the rusted vehicles, then up at the sky.

AMOS
(to the sky, enraged)
Why are you doing this to me?

ZEKE
This isn't about God!

JACKIE
This isn't about God!

JERRY
Not even in some far out, non-
sectarian, mystical way?

Shocked, Zeke and Jackie goggle at Jerry.

JERRY (CONT'D)
What? She was my mom too.

Jackie calls their attention to Amos.

JACKIE
Guys?

Amos staggers, his face twitching and his eyes slack. He falls to his knees.

ZEKE
Dad?

JERRY
Dad?

He slumps to the porch floor.

EXT. MCHENRY HOUSE - DRIVEWAY

Jerry screws in the last screw on Jackie's new headlights. Zeke and Jackie approach, carrying their backpacks, in the clothes they wore when they first arrived. Zeke also has the red pillowcase of letters over a shoulder.

ZEKE

Sorry to run off, but I've got to clear the decks with Tina. And clean out my desk.

JERRY

Understood. Go. I hope you're right about all this. We're just three kids on a piece of dirt out in BFE.

ZEKE

I like our chances. If not us, who?

Jackie gets in the van. Zeke reaches in his backpack and pulls out the Bible. Hands it to Jerry.

JERRY

She wanted you to have it.

ZEKE

(gazing over the pasture)
It's OK. I've got another one.

Zeke gets in. Puts his backpack and the pillowcase next to St. Francis. He and Jackie WHUMP closed their doors.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Jackie drives away from town. Seen from a great distance, her van becomes one of many vehicles in a vast fall landscape.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

Seen from a great distance in a vast spring landscape, a vehicle comes into view, heading the opposite direction from the previous scene. It's a large, new motor home with a custom wrap showing a diverse, multi-generational group of people picking berries among the rows in a strawberry field.

Splashed boldly over those images is "KZJFarms.org" and the slogan "More Than Just A Berry." Jackie drives, Zeke across from her, on his phone. They wear matching work shirts with the logo "KZJ Farms" embroidered above a large heart-shaped strawberry. The spear point dangles from the mirror by a thin piece of leather.

ZEKE

(into the phone)
That's great! Welcome to our farm consortium! It's more than just a berry, you know! The startup info's on our website.

(MORE)

ZEKE (CONT'D)
 Soil analysis, wholesale suppliers,
 the legals for your state,
 marketing tools, grant
 applications, FAQ's. It's all
 there. Welcome aboard. OK, bye-bye.

He hangs up.

ZEKE (CONT'D)
 That was Springfield. They're in!
 That makes thirteen cities in five
 states, and counting.

EXT. MCHENRY HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Jackie drives past a sign for "KZJ Farms -- More Than Just a Berry." The old pasture is a pristine strawberry field, plants bursting with bright red berries. Diverse, multi-generational groups pick into KZJ-branded buckets.

She pulls past a new red barn and up to the re-sided house where a sign announces it as KZJ Bed & Breakfast. Several of the B & B residents rock in rocking chairs on the porch.

Near the barn, a wood chipper sits between a neat stack of small tree limbs on the intake side and a pile of chipped-up mulch on the outflow side. A sign stuck in the ground in front of the limbs reads "Organics For Mulch."

In a KJZ Farms shirt, Jerry sits atop the refurbished red tractor from the field. With a front end loader attachment he scoops up piles of kitchen waste in front of an "Organics for Compost" sign, and works it into a compost pile.

He waves at Mr. and Mrs. Blackthorne who dump out a sack of cut strawberry tops onto the pile, then head back to their car. Seeing the motorhome, Jerry turns off the tractor and gets down.

Jackie parks. She and Zeke get out, followed by a happily-BARKING Cocker Spaniel. Zeke carries a large canvas tote bag, sporting the KZJ Farms logo. They hug.

ZEKE
 (calling to the dog)
 C'mere, Sarah.
 (to Jerry)
 Just had another group join the
 consortium. It's a movement, dude.
 We're hanging the world one.

Jerry points to rows of plants beyond the strawberries.

JERRY

The new blackberry plants I just
put in. Behind them are and
blueberry bushes. They look good.

They gaze out over the field at all the activity.

ZEKE

You ready?

JERRY

Yep. Let's let him know.

They start for the barn. Passing the spot where the old oak
grew, Zeke and Jackie nod to the sapling now in its place.

ZEKE

Good morning, your holiness.

JACKIE

Good morning, your holiness.

EXT. BARN - DAY

They walk into the barn full of equipment and to a table
where some customers weigh their picked berries and pay while
others inspect bags of "KZJ Farms Compost -- What Goes Around
Comes Around."

Tim Preston sits behind the table, in front of a "More Than
Just a Berry" banner. Next to him sits Amos, a walker next to
his chair. One hand curls in, frozen in the post-stroke pose.

A young dad, mom, and two kids approach the table, each kid
with a bucket brimming with bright red strawberries. Amos
smiles a crooked smile at the kids and helps put their berry
bucket on a scale. Zeke, Jackie and Jerry approach.

ZEKE

Hey, Dad. Hey, Tim.

Amos smiles a crooked smile, and nods.

TIM

Hey, guys.

JACKIE

Hi, Mr. McHenry. How are you
feeling today?

Amos smiles at her, nods, and speaks with difficulty.

AMOS

Happy to be here.

JACKIE

We all are.

ZEKE

We're headed down. You guys got it?

Tim nods and continues helping the family. Zeke, Jackie and Jerry turn and walk toward the barn door.

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

Zeke, carrying the tote bag, Jackie and Jerry CRUNCH through the gravel to the water's edge. He hands the bag to Jackie, then he and Jerry take off their shoes and socks and work their pants up past their knees.

Jackie holds out the bag and Zeke takes out the box of Katherine's ashes. He and Jerry slowly wade into the water.

ZEKE

(singing)

The old cat on the roof/He could
stand a little push/Cause he's got
nine good lives to live.

Jerry joins in.

ZEKE (CONT'D)

But like my mama said/You
only live till you're
dead/And you got to give and
give and give.

JERRY

But like my mama said/You
only live till you're
dead/And you got to give and
give and give.

Knee deep, they stop. Zeke holds the box out. Jerry opens it.

JERRY (CONT'D)

Ready to go home, Mama?

Each holding two corners, they pitch the ashes in a graceful arc over the water. They SPLASH gently, then coalesce on the surface in a thin, undulating blob.

ZEKE

Follow the yellow brick road.

They watch the blob float gently downstream. Suddenly a bright green dragonfly lands on the floating mass.

JACKIE

Babe! It's her! The green dress!
She's come to tell you that --

A large fish SMASHES up through the ashes, launching into the air a foot above the water, gulping the dragonfly on the way. It thrashes violently in the air then KER-THUNKS back into the water, the widening circular ripples dispersing the ashes. Stunned momentarily, Zeke and Jerry LAUGH.

JERRY
 (singing)
 There's a pebble in a pond/
 Going on and on/

ZEKE
 Making waves and tides/
 and ripples and rain.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 Making waves and tides/
 and ripples and rain.

A champagne bottle POPS. Jackie, holding the foaming bottle, picks up three glasses from the bag and pours into each one.

They wade to shore. She hands each a glass. They CLINK the glasses and hold them aloft towards the floating ashes. Zeke turns and raises his glass towards Miss Alice's house.

EXT. MISS ALICE'S HOUSE - DAY

Watching through the trees, Miss Alice raises a fifth of whiskey in their direction. Takes a big swig.

EXT. RIVERBANK - DAY

They sip champagne and watch the ashes float downstream.

THE END

The DRIVING GUITAR and SYNCOPATED HARMONICA intro of the Ozark Mountain Daredevils' "If You Wanna Get to Heaven (You Got to Raise a Little Hell)" BLARES as the credits roll.

FADE OUT