

Lycanthropia Americana

By

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FADE IN

EXT. DIRT ROAD - MID-AFTERNOON

We open on a shot of a deserted dirt road in Anywhere, USA type of small town. The road is uneven, laden with washboard and the sides of it are overgrown with desert scrub plant life.

Stepping into the frame is ADAM. He's holding a giant freezer bag filled with fake blood. It's been folded in on itself into a tight package, ready to burst, and then taped to keep over to maintain its shape as it's being handled throughout the day.

Adam is 17 years old and physically fit, although it doesn't look like he's athletically involved. Right now, he just has the benefit of having good genes and being young enough to have a good metabolism.

He approaches a red truck, IDLING. Inside are his two friends: CHITO and MICHAEL. Chito is sitting in the passenger seat with a video camera clutched in his hand. Michael is the driver, his hands lazily draped over the wheel.

ADAM

Okay, so are we all clear on how this is going to work?

MICHAEL

Oh, yeah. I turn around, head back that way, get the truck going about 60--70 if she can handle it--and you toss that big-ass bag of fake blood onto the windshield and it'll pop.

CHITO

And I'll be filming.

Chito jangles the camera to add emphasis to his vital role in this film's production.

ADAM

Right, and we'll cut it in to match--

MICHAEL

We'll cut it in to look like I ran you over and you exploded all over the place.

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

Exactly.

CHITO

I got a question.

ADAM

What is it?

CHITO

Is it going to look good?

ADAM

Yeah! Of course! It's gonna look good.

(beat)

It's gonna look fine.

(beat)

It's gonna look okay. It'll look totally fine. We're gonna reverse the footage so instead of looking like the truck is backing AWAY from me, it's going to look like you're barreling DOWN on me and then--SPLAT!

MICHAEL

Splat!

(beat)

Alright! I'm ready! YOU ready?

CHITO

(jangling the camera again)

Ready!

ADAM

I'm ready!

Michael puts his truck into drive, cuts across the dirt road and hightails it out, away from where Adam is standing. A cloud of dust kicks up and the truck disappears down the road, getting smaller and smaller the further it gets away from us. From the very distance, looking like nothing more than a red blob, an indecipherable object on the horizon, the truck makes a two point turn and begins heading down the road, gaining speed.

INT. MICHAEL'S TRUCK - SAME

CHITO'S CAMERA POV - The shot from Chito's viewfinder looks like shitty, early 2000s-quality video. There is no stabilization, either, and it's bouncing. Chito fiddles with the zoom awkwardly so it focuses on the dashboard, then the windshield, then whip-pans over to Michael.

CHITO
Michael! How ya doin'!

MICHAEL
Camera on the road, dude!

CHITO
Huh?

MICHAEL
The road, the road! Camera on the road!

CHITO
Oh! Sorry!

EXT. DIRT ROAD

Adam twists the bag in his hands and readies himself for the throw. His face has a look of apprehension on it. We can see that he's hoping, desperately, that he doesn't mess this up.

INT. MICHAEL'S TRUCK

Michael's speedometer needles between 65 and 70 miles per hour. The entire cab of the truck is shaking and bouncing. Everything is rattling from the sheer speed and the washboard wreaking havoc on the truck's suspension.

EXT. DIRT ROAD

The truck is almost there! A glare of sunlight glints off of the windshield and Adam throws the bag.

INT. MICHAEL'S TRUCK

CHITO'S CAMERA'S POV - Adam's throw was a success! SPLAT!

However, it was a bit TOO MUCH of a success in that the bag connects with the windshield's glass, CRASHES THROUGH the

(CONTINUED)

glass, connects with the camera and then explodes everywhere. The inside of the truck, filmed through Chito's now-dirty lens, looks like something from the final scenes of "The Evil Dead."

Somehow, amazingly, Chito never once flinched. He looks, incredibly, unphased by the ordeal.

No one says a word.

The truck moves at a slower speed, slowing down until stopped on the side of the road. And that's when the full gravity of the situation really hits Michael.

MICHAEL

Oh, noooo... fuuuuck. AH,
FUCK! FUCK! Mother...
FUCKER! Son of a goddamned fucking
BI--

EXT. DIRT ROAD

Adam looks perplexed. From where he's standing, he has no idea what happened. He's not even entirely sure if the bag of fake blood even connected with the windshield or not.

He looks down the road and sees Michael's truck pulled over and here's the rest of Michael's expletive, "BITCH!", quieter from being from a distance and contained within the cab of the truck.

Adam begins to trot on over, his trot turning into a run and then turning into a full-blown sprint.

INT. MICHAEL'S TRUCK

MICHAEL

This is just great! You
know?! JUST GREAT!!

Chito's camera is now off and he's sitting in shock with fake blood pooling into his lap and windshield glass stuck in his hair and floating around in the pool of fake blood in his lap. The blood is EVERYWHERE. It's all over the seats, both front and back, it's on the roof of the car, it's on the doors. It's even on the floor mats. It's everywhere.

Adam emerges at the window and peaks his head inside.

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

Oh, my god. This is bad.

MICHAEL

You think?!

ADAM

Yeah. Yeah... yeah, I think.

MICHAEL

This is so fucked, due. I don't know what the hell we're gonna do now!

Adam thinks for a bit in total silence. He gazes down at the ground and we can see his thoughts beginning to formulate in his head until a lightbulb might as well just appear and DING! above his head.

MICHAEL

Well?!

ADAM

What we're going to do is this: We're going to drive this to your house, but we're not going to take any of the major roads. We just stick to dirt roads. It'll take longer, but we won't see any cops.

MICHAEL

We'll still have to take the highway.

ADAM

Only for a minute. Literally. If we're going sixty, it's about a mile, so it'll be like a minute we're on the paved road. We'll be fine. We'll go right after the Circle K--

MICHAEL

And take Mitchell Road to my house.

ADAM

Right. And then me and Chito will throw down on the repairs for the windshield. If we go three ways--

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Three ways? THREE ways? Why do I have to pay anything?

ADAM

Because we're all at fault here. We're all equally stupid, man. It was my idea but we're all making this together. It was a group fuck-up. We'll pay for it together and splitting it three ways won't cost much. I have some money saved up, so we should be good?

MICHAEL

What about this? What about alllll this, this, this blood that's everywhere?

ADAM

I think my dad has a carpet shampooer or something but... Jesus Christ. It doesn't look good, man. Like, I think this is just going to be a part of the truck now.

MICHAEL

Fuck. This sucks.

ADAM

I know.

Adam titls his head quizically and looks totally bemused. His gaze is focused toward Chito who's still just sitting there in the same position, looking shell shocked.

ADAM

Dude, Chito, are you okay?

CHITO

Huh?

ADAM

Dude... are you okay?

CHITO

(a little too loudly)
Ah, yeah. I just can't hear too good.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

That's true. That bag went right off on his fucking head, man.

ADAM

Man. I'm sorry, buddy. I'm really sorry.

CHITO

That's okay!

ADAM

Well, do we get out of here?

MICHAEL

Shit. I guess so.

FADE OUT/FADE IN

A musical montage begins, with the title credits rolling over the action that we're witnessing. The music takes precedence over all sound.

VARIOUS SHOTS

From inside the truck we see the wind blowing in through the bloody hole that once used to be a windshield. Adam is sitting in the backseat and the wind is blowing through Chito's hair and splashing Adam with fake blood. He winces and grimaces and tries to move, but it doesn't matter where he sits, he's going to be either getting fake blood blown in his face or he's going to be sitting in an area where the fake blood has formed a puddle.

We see the truck drive by, from a shot that would put us on the side of the road, and the truck looks incriminating as hell. It looks like they've hit and killed someone and took off.

Our trio arrives to the area where they must brave the paved road for a mile or so and they go left, TIRES SQUEALING(the one prominent sounds we DO hear during this montage).

The truck passes by the aforementioned Circle K and townfolk gassing up their vehicles watch the bloodied vehicle go by. We see someone holding a dripping squeegee take a good long look at it and mouth, "What the fuck?"

From inside the truck, we can see that our three young heroes look incredibly, incredibly embarrassed to be seen inside the damn thing.

INT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

We cut from the action that the boys are having to a stationary shot of a couch with Michael's step-dad FRANKLIN seated on it. He has a beer clutched between his lap. The light of the television is flicking across him and casting his dancing shadow on the wall behind him. The show he's watching is droning on and on. He takes a big gulp, spilling some and perks his ears up.

We can hear the sound of Michael's truck rolling up the driveway, dirt CRUNCHING and pebbled POPPING beneath the weight of the tires. Franklin stands up with a groan, still holding his beer, and makes his way to the window by the front door. He slats his chubby fingers between the blinds and opens them, only to see his son's truck with a caved in window, covered in the fake blood.

Instead of assuming the very worst, Franklin just makes a "tsk" sound and groans again.

FRANKLIN

Ah, what in the fuck is this shit?

EXT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE

Franklin emerges from the house lazily, letting the screen door open just by walking into it and then letting it slam once he's cleared the entry way.

Michael, Adam and Chito are stepping outside of the macabre-looking truck, all themselves as bloody and disgusting as the vehicle itself--Chito being in the worst shape of them all.

FRANKLIN

What the fuck happened, Mike?

MICHAEL

Talk to this asshole.

Michael motions toward Adam who begins to stammer a bit and then collect his composure. He looks confident about what he's about to say, and then uneasy again once he realized how idiotic it's all going to sound once it comes out. He opens his mouth to finally speak--

INT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE

Skipping right past the explanation, we simply see Franklin's disappointed face. Gray hairs mingle in among the stubble lined up against his gruff face. His eyes are deep set and he's tired looking, not in the mood for the bullshit that he's just heard.

FRANKLIN

You guys are all lucky no one got hurt.

CHITO

I got hurt.

Franklin gives Chito a look like, "Come on, I'm on your side."

FRANKLIN

That shit could've gotten you guys killed.

MICHAEL

I know.

ADAM

I know, too. I'm sorry.

FRANKLIN

And Adam's right. You three morons are throwing in equal amounts. You're ALL stupid.

ADAM

See?

MICHAEL

Shut up, Adam.

FRANKLIN

What the hell were you guys doing out there, anyway?

ADAM

(sighs)

We were making a movie.

FRANKLIN

That same one you've been working on? That documentary project for school?

A look washes over Adam's face and his mouth goes ajar and his eyes go wide. He stops short of audibly gasping.

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

What about tomorrow?!

MICHAEL

Oh, SHIT!

CHITO

What? I seriously can't hear that good, you guys.

FRANKLIN

What? What about--oh, shit.

ADAM

Right. Our senior project video. I don't think we can make it up there without Michael's truck.

MICHAEL

Unless... do you wanna risk it? Once we get to the mountain trail, no one's gonna be on the highway.

FRANKLIN

Yeah, but it's still not safe and it's covered in that fake blood shit. Adam, do you have a car?

ADAM

My mom has a car. I'm not sure if she'll let me borrow it.

FRANKLIN

Chito, do YOU have a car?

Chito just makes a face and shakes his head, like "Of course fucking not."

FRANKLIN

Well, I hope your mom lets you take it tomorrow, Adam, because you're not taking mine. I got shit to do tomorrow. You can figure it out from there... getting cars all fucked up working on some OTHER dumb ass movie when you could have been working on the one you're actually gonna get graded on.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Can we take your car... tonight?

FRANKLIN

Why in the fuck do you need my car tonight?

MICHAEL

There's gonna be a party!

FRANKLIN

What, so you can underage drink and drive my ride and get in all kinds of trouble? Nuh-uh.

MICHAEL

Come on, dad. I'm not going to drink. I don't even like drinking!

FRANKLIN

Oh, right, and that's why my beers sometimes magically dance away in the night.

ADAM

Nah, that's me.

CHITO

And me.

MICHAEL

See? it's these car-wrecking assholes over here.

FRANKLIN

Are there gonna be girls there?

MICHAEL

Oh, yeah. Big time.

Franklin takes a moment to consider and lets out a deep exhale through his nose and relents. He doesn't even say yes he just kind of motions his hand like a king pardoning someone who was about to be executed.

Michael and his two friends exchange a "Yesssss!" between them.

EXT. PARTY HOUSE - NIGHT

Night has fallen. We focus in on the front of a house whose front door is open and a steady thump of bassy music is coming from the inside. All of the lights are on, glowing orange in the darkness of the night. A pair of people are standing outside smoking cigarettes and others are on the side area. We're in a small residential are, like a suburban neighborhood, but there's plenty of room in between houses to give the illusion of privacy.

In the same shot, Michael's dad's car pulls into frame. It's functional, but is a real piece of shit looking thing. It has stripes of rust stretching from front to back. It's either an Oldsmobile or Buick, one of those 80s sedans where if you are asked to picture a car based only on the word "car" it's exactly the model you would think of: Square, four wheels, long.

Michael, Adam and Chito pile out of it. They are freshly showered and freshly clothed, presumably having stopped at their respective homes first.

ADAM

I still have blood in my hair, man.

CHITO

The skin on my stomach is pink. It's gonna be stained pink for forever.

The camera, still in one, unbroken shot, moves over the top of the car and tracks them on their way up to the house. As they approach, the music from inside gets louder and louder, but the music isn't obtrusive or overbearing. A pair of people standing out in front of the house wave and offer friendly hellos. Everyone seems to know everyone here.

Following the boys inside--

INT. PARTY HOUSE - SAME

--the host of the party officially greets them. Her name is CAITLYN. She's of the same sort of social standing they are: Nerdy, dorky, not at all popular, but comfortable in her own skin. Comfortable enough having friends over when he parents are out of town and not feeling like she has to prove anything to anyone in a quest for being cool. She is who she is and that's fine.

(CONTINUED)

CAITLYN

I'm so glad you could make it!

She begins by giving Michael a hug.

CAITLYN

Oh--oh! You're kind of sticky.

ADAM

That's my fault.

CAITLYN

I don't want to--

CHITO

They banged. It was beautiful.

MICHAEL

He videotaped it.

CAITLYN

Alright! Cool! Well... come on in. We have some beers in the fridge and a few bottles. Not a lot but it should last us through the evening.

MICHAEL

Great.

ADAM

That's really great, thank you for having us.

As we follow them further into the house and the party we get a fuller feel of the party's atmosphere. It's not too heavily packed, it's a comfortable vibe. There's maybe fifteen people inside tops, maybe five others scattered around outside. There are some kids sitting on the couch in the living room taking turns with a bong. A few others are challenging each other to shots of vodka, the uncouth palate of youth.

Michael nods his head approvingly and steps outside.

OUTSIDE

Michael tucks a cigarette into his mouth and strikes a light to it and takes a deep drag. He closes his eyes, reflecting on the stress of the day and exhales. That's when he hears a familiar voice.

(CONTINUED)

GILLIAN

Adam?

Adam opens his eyes and looks to the face of the voice. There stands before him GILLIAN. She's an average-looking girl, quite pretty, but not someone who focuses too much attention on trying to look unique. Like Caitlyn, she's just who she is. And who she is is someone who's too preoccupied with thinking of the rest of her life to give a shit about standing out being unique in a sea of assholes in high school.

MICHAEL

Gillian? Oh, my god. What are... what the hell are you doing here?

GILLIAN

I'm back!

MICHAEL

You're back? You're just... BACK? Since when? Oh, my god, this is fuckin' nuts. I really, really didn't expect to see you here. I mean, I haven't seen you around school.

GILLIAN

I graduated early. Actually, I didn't graduate. I took the proficiency exam and I'm taking community college classes down the hill.

MICHAEL

Well, goddamn, don't I look like a lazy sack of shit? That's great. How long have you been back?

GILLIAN

Literally, about a week. My folks moved back up here and this is the first I've seen of anybody.

MICHAEL

Man, this is so great. Shit. I wish I had something interesting to say!

GILLIAN

That's fine. I don't, either. I moved back. I'm taking my general ed classes. That's... that's it.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Uh... me and Adam and Chito are going up on the mountain tomorrow.

GILLIAN

Oh, my god. Why? Why would you do that?

MICHAEL

For our senior project. We're making a documentary about the people that live up there.

GILLIAN

Aren't they dangerous?

MICHAEL

No! I don't know. I've heard they've done some crazy shit, but they were cool with us when we asked their permission.

GILLIAN

You've already been up there?!

MICHAEL

Yeah. Why is that... so weird? We asked permission and they said yes.

GILLIAN

Is it true they made some kid dig his own grave?

MICHAEL

Okay! Hold up there, sister--
(laughing)

That's a rumor! And even in the rumor, I heard that kid was trying to steal shit from them. So, to put a scare in him, they made him dig his grave and made like they were going to shoot him, but they let him go.

GILLIAN

Ah, I'm not up to speed on my town folklore.

They share a moment of silence which is just a little more than slightly awkward and they smile at each other.

INSIDE

Chito and Adam are stationed at a bar area and Chito is pouring shots for them both. They've only been there a few minutes, but Chito is already getting sloppy, hitting the booze hard and fast.

CHITO
Shots, shots...
(hands Adam a shot)
Shot.

ADAM
Bottoms up.

The both tilt their heads back and let the liquor fall down their throats. Chito takes it a lot better than Adam does, who scrambles for something else other than alcohol to chase the flavor with. He lets out a toxic, "Ahhhh!!!" and seems to almost literally breathe fire and waves air onto his tongue.

ADAM
Goddamn! Oooof! What is that?

CHITO
Uh, it's, uh...

Chito picks up the bottle and examines it.

CHITO
It's mescal.

ADAM
It's not for me.

Adam steps backward and bumps into a bottle on the counter but as it's falling it, by sheer luck, hits his shoe and he keeps it from shattering on the floor.

Caitlyn sees this and claps.

CAITLYN
Did anyone else witness that beeracle?

ADAM
A beer... a beeracle?

CAITLYN
It's a miracle involving beer. If you'd moved your foot to the left the bottle would have shattered on
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CAITLYN (cont'd)

the linoleum. To the right, and beer would have spilled all over that poor girl's purse. Nicely done.

ADAM

Thank you, Caitlyn.

OUTSIDE

TIME GOES BY

A puff of smoke goes into the air with an audible EXHALE sound and the smoke dissipates. We hear voices, but do not see their faces yet.

GILLIAN

So, what's the most afraid you've ever been?

The camera titls down and we see Michael and Gillian sitting against the wall of the house sharing a joint. The joint is mostly burned down to a roach, the bottom of it browned with smoke tar and spit. Michael holds it delicately and takes a hit from it, breathing air between it and his lips, to keep from getting burned.

He passes the joint to Gillian who does the same. He contemplates the question she asked him for a bit before coming up with the perfect answer.

MICHAEL

When we were little kids--my sister and me, when she was still alive--we lived close enough to school to be able to walk there. On our way to school was this apple orchard. I don't know the name of the guy who owned it, but his kid was Carlos, that little kid with the bushy fro who went to school with us for like a year.

GILLIAN

I don't remember him.

MICHAEL

He was pretty cool. His dad was kind of a hard-ass, but... whatever.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL (cont'd)

So, on our way to school my sister and one of her friends, our neighbor, this guy named Sean, dared me to hop the fence to grab some apples. I did without much hesitation. I just sort of hopped the fence without thinking twice and they both looked amazed, like wow, I can't believe he did it! Whoah!

Gillian laughs and snorts on her laughter and then looks a little embarrassed that she actually snorted.

MICHAEL

I'm using my shirt folded up into a basket and I'm loading it up with these tiny, probably totally unripe, apples and as I'm doing that I hear that guy Sean yell out, "Oh my god! Run, Michael! Run! He's got a gun!" And I froze. I just dropped everything and let all the apples go loose and my sister and Sean are yelling, "Run! Run! Run! He has a shotgun! Go! Go! Go!"

(beat)

I fuckin' BOOKED IT. I didn't know I could run that fast, man. In my life, I think that will be my top speed; I've never run that fast before and I'll never be able to run that fast again. The whole time I was running I kept imagining the dude who ran the farm getting closer and closer to me with his shotgun about ready to put a bead on me and pull the trigger.

(beat)

When I got back over the fence my sister and her friend were laughing hysterically. I was just like, "What? What the fuck is so funny?" When I looked around and didn't see anyone else, it made sense, those fuckin' dicks.

Gillian is LAUGHING her ass off at this story. Michael kind of squints his eyes at her and shakes his head, but he has a smile on his face, so we know he's not completely pissed.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

What's so funny?! I thought I was gonna die, Gillian!

GILLIAN

(laughing)

I know, I know... it's just... I can see it so vividly. Ah, fuck. God, those jerks. Goddamnit, that's funny.

The two of them start LAUGHING together, wiping tears from the corners of their eyes after a good, hearty chuckle. The laughter slowly, slowly dies down and they're left in a moment of completely awkward silence, neither of them saying a word.

The side door to the house, right beside Michael and Gillian, OPENS suddenly. From the now-open entryway, Adam peeks his head outside.

ADAM

Hey, Michael?

MICHAEL

Yeah?

ADAM

You ready to bounce?

MICHAEL

Yeah, I guess so. Why?

ADAM

Eh, 'cause we gotta be up all early. And plus Chito is completely annihilated. He kept taking shot after shot and he puked on himself a little bit. Caitlyn's hosing him off.

[QUICK CUT AWAY - On the other side of the house, out front, Chito is fully clothed with a good amount of vomit on his sleeve. Caitlyn is spraying him with a high-pressured jet of water from her garden hose, targeting it on the beige-yellow spot of puke up on his sleeve.]

MICHAEL

Jesus Christ, Chito.

(beat)

Alright, let's roll. I'm ready to go.

(beat)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL (cont'd)

It was nice seeing you again,
Gillian. See you... around? Soon?

GILLIAN

Sure, I'd like that. Here, hold
up, let me give you my number.

Gillian reaches into her purse and comes back out with a pen and scrap of paper, to which she jots down a series of numbers and tears it off, folding it twice, then thrice, then hands it to Michael.

Adam is in the background with a knowing look. He looks proud of his friend.

DISSOLVE

INT. ADAM'S MOM'S CAR - EARLY MORNING

The next morning.

Our three heroes are headed out in Adam's mom's little Honda-type car, a Japanese car from the 1980s, on the way to film their senior project. The sunlight coming in through the windows looks beautiful an amber hue to the lighting illuminating them fully. It looks gorgeous, but it's clear that Chito, maybe still a little drunk and recovering, from the night before isn't into it.

CHITO

(groaning, displeased)

Is there any way to turn off the
sun?

Chito is in the backseat, not buckled in. He's sitting with his back to the door and his legs across the entire seat, using it as a type of couch, to soothe his aches and pains. He looks like shit.

Adam is driving and Michael is in the front passenger seat.

ADAM

I told you to take it easy,
buddy. You were drinking that shit
like it was candy.

CHITO

I'm... not gonna drink again. Not
for awhile. Or smoke. No more
cigarettes. I feel so, so... SO
shitty.

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

You gonna be okay to film today,
buddy? You look and sound
terrible.

After a few moments, Chito leans his chin against his shoulder and appears to nod off for a bit. Adam doesn't even look particularly bothered by the fact that Chito passed out. That's just what Chito does. He passes out.

ADAM

So. Michael.

MICHAEL

(a bit nervous)
Ah... yes, uh, Adam?

ADAM

So. You... and Gillian.

MICHAEL

Oh, yeah. That was great, man. It was really good to see her, man. It really, really was. It's been a long time.

ADAM

Do you like her?

MICHAEL

Huh. I suppose I do. She's pretty, she gets high, she's not uptight and she has her shit together. Yeah, it's a no-brainer. I dig her, man.

ADAM

Huh.

MICHAEL

What? You don't like her?

ADAM

No! I do! I think she's great. It's just, usually when you ask someone if you like them go, "Oh, I don't know! I'm not sure!" It was, uh, it was nice to hear you be so blunt. And honest. Go get her, man. When we're done with this shit, give her a call.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

I will. I, uh, I just gotta think of something interesting to say over the phone. It's such a nightmare.

ADAM

You don't have to say a whole lot. Just ask her out. Bam. Just ask her out... and she'll say yes... and then you save your interesting conversation for when you actually see her in person. Don't waste that shit on a stupid phone call. Use it for when it counts.

MICHAEL

That's not a bad idea. You're not as dumb as you look, Adam.

ADAM

Thanks, babe.

CHITO

(O.S.)

Will you two love birds shut up? My head is pounding and I can feel your voices in my head and the two voices and the pounding vein are like three things going on at once and the vibrations are making me want to puke.

ADAM

Sorry, Chito. We'll cut back on the lovey dovey.

CHITO

(O.S.)

Thank you.

MICHAEL

Sorry, Chito.

CHITO

(O.S.)

S'okay.

MICHAEL

Do you still love us?

(CONTINUED)

CHITO
(O.S.)
Yes.

ADAM
Even me?

CHITO
(O.S.)
Yes.

ADAM
You're not just saying that?

CHITO
(O.S.)
No.

MICHAEL
Be honest.

By now Michael and Adam are both smirking and smiling at their own little joke of keeping a hungover, shitty-feeling Chito awake with innane questions. Chito finally starts to get pissed.

CHITO
YES!! Jesus goddamned CHRIST! Let
me just lay here.

MICHAEL
Sorry.

ADAM
Sorry.

CHITO
Fuckin'... okay. Fine. Just,
sh-h-h. Okay?

Chito nods off again. This time, it looks, for good. Adam and Michael sit in silence for a bit before anyone ever finally says anything.

The landscape around them looks fantastic. They're higher up in elevation now and big, tall pine trees zip by the windows. Sunlight is glinting in between the peaks, strobing peacefully as they venture their way up to the mountain.

MICHAEL
Did your mom give you shit about
borrowing the car?

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

A little. Not a lot. I... I didn't bother telling her about why we couldn't take your truck. Why bother? She doesn't take shit like that very well. If I admit to her that I fucked up, I immediately regret it.

MICHAEL

So, what'd you tell her about why I can't take my truck?

ADAM

Eh, I just said it broke down. Not an unrealistic scenario and it's technically true.

MICHAEL

How's this gonna work?

ADAM

Well, your truck would have taken us all the way up, so we're gonna have to park about two miles away from that point, stop right before the road gets REALLY shitty, and we'll walk the rest of the way up.

MICHAEL

You think old Sleeping Beauty will be okay with that?

ADAM

It's just two miles.

MICHAEL

Two miles UP HILL.

ADAM

He'll be fine. Chito's built like a tank. He complains a lot but he's got the strong back of a mule. He could do that hike, hungover, with one of us dangling from each arm. I mean, he'd be bitching the whole time, but he could do it.

MICHAEL

Oh!

(CONTINUED)

With his remembering gasp and "Oh!" Michael reaches into a backpack that he has in between his legs and zips it open with a quick ZZZIIIP! and digs around until he finds what he's looking for.

MICHAEL

My step-dad gave this to me.

From the backpack, Michael's hand re-emerges with a small caliber revolver. He CLICKS open the cylinder, showing that it's loaded, and CLACKS it shut.

MICHAEL

(continued)

In case on the way up or the way down we see a cougar or a bear.

ADAM

You think that little guy could kill a cougar or a bear?

MICHAEL

No, but it'd give him something to think about. Plus, the sound itself would probably scare him off. IF we end up seeing anything, that is.

ADAM

Here's hoping our days of adventure are over for a little bit.

OUTSIDE

Adam's car zips by down the highway and the camera pans along with them. The car begins heading up a hill and we tilt up to show the full picture of what they're entering: It's a rather large mountain with dirt roads going up the whole way. The majority of the mountain is covered in a loose sort of desert scrub forest with some clearings up top, which would be plenty to establish a sort of commune.

TIME LAPSE - The boys take some time getting to the spot and we, the viewer, see the majority of the progression from looking out the windshield. We see them crawling up pieces of road that look particularly treacherous, with Adam having to steer very precisely to keep from scraping the oil pan and leaving them stranded.

Once they arrive, we know it. After a certain point, the road looks like it can only be traveled by something with a substantial amount of lift and the kind suspension you see in monster trucks.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - LATE MORNING

Adam stops the car on the side of the road, parking within the weeds and other such shrubbery. The three of them pile out of the car, one by one, wordlessly, and reach into the trunk of the vehicle and grab their things.

Adam grabs the camera and camera bag. His camera is oversized, something like an early pro-corder camcorder, similar to the Canon XL1. It looks like he likes it more due to aesthetics than actual practicality.

Chito is on sound duty. He has a pair of headphones and a boom mic.

Michael is carrying the rest of the equipment, including clap-sticks and a few portable lights that are battery powered. Everything of his fits into a nice backpack and he slings it over his shoulders.

They're off.

TIME GOES BY - We see them walking against the sun on a hill, three shadows trekking by. They look like the silhouettes of soldiers on their way to battle. The sky around them is painted in all different shades of red and purple.

CHITO

Wait. Wait, guys! Hold on.

MICHAEL

What is it?

CHITO

I got a cramp, man. I got a cramp
in my ass.

ADAM

We're almost there, buddy.

DISSOLVE

EXT. MOUNTAIN MAN COMPOUND - LATE MORNING

From the bottom of a hill, Chito, Michael and Adam hike upward and as they clear the top of the hill, the compound is laid out before them. It looks like something of a shantytown, with trailers pulled up close to each other. There are fenced in areas with crops growing and somewhere behind the compound is an even larger growth of crops, but this one is netted off with camouflage material.

As the three boys get closer to the compound, they begin to unpack their things. Adam steps forward and scans the area for someone. The mountain folk who live at the compound give back a stare to Adam, looking very unwelcoming and unfriendly.

From the middle of the crowd, a man makes eyes with Adam and begins walk toward him intently and with purpose. This is DWAYNE. Adam smiles when he sees the recognition, but his smile begins to fade when he sees how quickly Dwayne is walking toward him.

Dwayne is sort of like the unofficial leader of the compound. He's not a mayor, per se, but he would be an official spokesman to the outside world, should he be appointed as such. He's in his early 50s and looks almost like a hippie, but it's clear from his surrounding and demeanor that if he were to vote, he would probably vote Republican, despite his "intentional community" surroundings. He's just so conservative that his lifestyle choice has become liberal almost.

ADAM

Dwayne, it's good to see you aga--

DWAYNE

What the hell are you doing here?

Chito and Michael, standing a few yards back, begin to look nervous. They stop unpacking their things and start listening to Dwayne and Adam.

ADAM

I'm here shooting the documentary. We spoke about this...

DWAYNE

I mean what the hell are you doing here TODAY?

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

Today was the day we agreed on.

DWAYNE

No. NEXT week.

ADAM

Nooo... THIS week. The 21st.

DWAYNE

It's the 14th.

ADAM

Are you fucking KIDDING me?

CHITO

(yelling to Adam)

What the fuck, Adam?

ADAM

(to Chito)

Nothing. It's nothing. I'm just figuring something out.

(to Dwayne)

Fuck, man. Shit.

Adam turns around to face his companions from a distance. Their faces are red and their hairy is stringy with sweat and sticking to their glistening foreheads. They're breathing a little hard, winded from the hike they had to endure to get to where they are.

Adam turns back around to meet an equally unhappy Dwayne.

ADAM

Look, I went through a lot to get here. We fucked up my friend's truck yesterday so I had to borrow my mom's car and she's all pissed off at me right now, and the car got us far--it really did--but we had to park about 20 miles away and hoof it the rest of the way up. I know it's not the day we agreed on, I'm a week off, and I don't know how I did that--I blame weed; no I blame SCHOOL for my hectic schedule--but can we still do the documentary? It won't take us more than a couple of hours to shoot some footage, interview you and get some other footage.

(CONTINUED)

DWAYNE

I'm sorry--

ADAM

Please. Please, man. Look at how pissed off my friends are over there. When we get back down that hill, before we get to the car, they're going to murder me. Michael... he has a gun. A little snub-nosed .38. He doesn't like to walk and I just made him walk a SHITLOAD to get here.

Dwayne breathes in through his mouth and lets out a long, HISSING exhale through his nose, with squinted eyes, to show just how very annoyed he is presently. He tilts his head and lazily flutters his eyes.

DWAYNE

Fine--

ADAM

(pumping a fist)

YES!

DWAYNE

(Continued)

But I want you out of here in three hours. When three hours are up, I want you the fuck out of here. No kidding around, no playing grab-ass. Gone. You got me?

ADAM

I got you.

Adam turns around and gives his friends a dual thumbs up to signal to them that all negotiations have gone through correctly. He's met with less than enthusiastic responses, more just like rolled eyes and a slight alleviation that today's shoot won't end with murder.

A short amount of time goes by, maybe fifteen minutes, and we cut to a shot looking out from Michael's lens as he films around the compound, picking up shots here and there. For a brief period, he films a group of children playing in the dirt, laughing and giggling with a thick layer of filth caked up over their faces. From there he focuses on a few people looking directly into the camera, looking displeased.

(CONTINUED)

Adam and Dwayne are chatting nonchalantly and Adam signals Michael to come over an record their official interview for the project that they're working on. The duration of their conversation is captured through Michael's handheld camera, cinema vérité style.

ADAM

How long have you been living here for?

Dwayne spits between his teeth and wipes the back of his hand over his mouth.

DWAYNE

I've been living here my whole life, but this compound's been around since the 1960s.

ADAM

Who started it? Who was the first person to make the decision to move up her and move off the grid?

DWAYNE

Ehhh... it's not really like that. It's not like a situation with one person leading a whole bunch of other people. We don't have a set of laws. It's not some Manson Family bullshit--

ADAM

(to the camera)

We can bleep that out, no problem.

(back to Dwayne)

Sorry. If you want to swear, we can censor it no problem, so don't hold back on anything you want to say.

DWAYNE

Uh. Okay. Anyway, it's not like a Manson Family thing. Some like-minded folks decided that work all day, 9 to 5... paying rent... it wasn't for them. They moved up here, more or less under the radar of the government folks that technically own the land and live off that land.

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

Do you ever have to venture into town?

DWAYNE

Sure. We gotta get supplies here and there: Lumber, food something, feed for the animals. Maybe once a month we head down. We got a truck. Ain't registered so we gotta be careful, but we make do.

ADAM

How do you, uh... how do you make money?

Dwayne just looks at Adam with this look that somehow says, "Don't ask me that on film. I won't answer it."

DWAYNE

We make do.

ADAM

What do you guys do for fun up here?

DWAYNE

Same as you in town, except we don't have vidjya games. We play dominoes at night. Dance when the moon is right. Smoke cigarettes. Drink homemade hooch. It ain't bad. We're not completely isolated. There's a town right below us and we know how to read, most of us.

ADAM

Oh, yeah? What kind of books do you read?

DWAYNE

Well, shit, if you wanna check out our library, it's right over here.

Dwayne motions to an isolated trailer with a pair of children, two young boys, standing out front, playing in the filth. One of the kids is brandishing a stick at the other. Adam gives the camera a slight shrug and they head in.

INT. COMPOUND LIBRARY

Inside the trailer, the makeshift library, is surprisingly nice. It's not something you'd see in some metropolitan, downtown area, but it's nicer than one would think. It's clean inside and the walls are lined with books. Paperback books, hardcover books, magazines, board games, some small paintings contained within small frames. It's not bad at all.

The continued conversation and interview is still viewed through Michael's recording.

ADAM

I like it. it's nice in here.

DWAYNE

Yeah, that thrift store in town, it's always got cheap books. Some of 'em sell for as little as a quarter and a few times we went down, they let us buy whole boxes of books, our pick, for a couple bucks. So we hauled up the truck for some entertainment. No matter where you are, things are bound to get boring here and there so we gotta do what we can to stave off the doldrums.

CLICK.

The camera shuts off and Michael shoulders the camera. Chito puts his boom mic to the side. It's break time.

EXT. MOUNTAIN MAN COMPOUND

Gathered around a wooden table that definitely looks homemade, the three boys, along with Dwayne along with his wife and two of his children (both children being girls), eat lunch. The boys have brought their own, sandwiches, while Dwayne and his wife JULIA, eat a hearty-looking soup with a heal of home baked bread to dip into the broth. It looks delicious.

MICHAEL

(to Dwayne)

Can I ask you a question? Off the record?

(CONTINUED)

DWAYNE

Of course.

MICHAEL

I heard a rumor about you guys--

ADAM

Michael, no.

DWAYNE

Nah, nah, nah. Let him ask. He's a big boy. Sounds like he's got something on his mind. What is it?

MICHAEL

Thank you. I heard a rumor that these kids from town, older than us--this was maybe ten years ago--

DWAYNE

Tried to steal weed from us?

MICHAEL

So it's true?

DWAYNE

I don't know, maybe. What'd you hear?

MICHAEL

I heard they tried to steal weed from you guys and you--maybe not you specifically, but you as a group--got the drop on them with some rifles and marched them out to an area where you made them dig their own graves. One of them, a guy named Gordy, pissed himself and then you let them go.

DWAYNE

Yeah, that happened.

MICHAEL

Really? I always thought the story sounded so embellished. So... urban legend like. So story-like that it couldn't possibly be true.

DWAYNE

Maybe it is. Maybe we like having the story and don't wanna refute it because it's good to have people

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DWAYNE (cont'd)
scared. You don't want to invite
idiots who'd try to take your
livelihood away from you.

ADAM
So that's how you make your money?

CHITO
Duh. I knew THAT.

ADAM
(to Chito, jokingly)
Don't "duh" me, ya prick.

DWAYNE
Yeah, we drive into town once a
month and drop off a package of
some weed we grow. Make okay
money. We'll never be rich, but we
always have books in stock and
materials for rebuilding shit when
weather gets bad.

CHITO
Do you guys partake?

DWAYNE
You mean, do we smoke the shit we
grow? Yeah, of course we do.
(laughing)
What the fuck else are we gonna do
up here? Don't get me wrong, I
love it, but yeah I'm gonna get
nice and fucking high.

CHITO
Do you want to... sell some? In
advance? To me?

DWAYNE
I usually only sell in bulk once a
month, but fuck it. I'll
sell. \$40 for an eighth. Sound
good?

Chito looks at his comrades for financial support. He bats his eyelashes cutely, hoping that will loosen their purse strings. Michael makes an ugh-type sound and fishes twenty out of his wallet and slaps it onto the table. Chito slaps another twenty on top of that and they are in business.

(CONTINUED)

The sun begins to make its descent westward and the compound is bathed in a fiery glow. Michael is framing a shot of the sun between a pair of trees, trying to get it juuuust right when Dwayne emerges. He looks visibly uncomfortable with them still being there and makes it known to them.

DWAYNE

Alright, fellas. Time's up. It's time for you to go home.

ADAM

Ah, we just need to get some pickup shots for the surrounding, for editing.

DWAYNE

What did I say earlier? I said three hours, it's been three hours. Goodbye, boys. It's time to go.

ADAM

Alright, alright. Fair enough. Let's grab out things and go, guys.

Michael and Chito grunt in the affirmative and they pack up their things to get going. They all exchange pleasantries and they are back down the hill again.

With the three of them heading back down the hill to the car, dirt SCUFFING beneath their feet, Dwayne walks back to his own trailer. His wife Julia is standing out front with her arms folded. She has a very nervous look on her face.

DWAYNE

Don't worry. They're leaving. There's still plenty of sunlight and it's only two miles... downhill.

JULIA

Oh, god. I hope you're right.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - AFTERNOON

The SCUFFING of Michael, Chito and Adam's feet continues as they drag on down the road. They look tired and ready for a nap. The sun is setting further west, over halfway through its trajectory to pass the horizon and end its light for the day.

(CONTINUED)

Chito, straggling a few feet behind his two friends, stops suddenly and looks up at the sky.

CHITO

I'm sorry, guys. I need to take a break. I'm tired as fuck and I feel like total shit. I need to... I need to sit the fuck down, man.

ADAM

You okay?

CHITO

I'm okay, I just feel like shit. After hiking up the hill I haven't had a chance to just chill the fuck out since lunch. Just give me five. A five minute breather. I'll be fine.

ADAM

Alright. We can do that. Take a quick break. It really is beautiful out here today, though.

MICHAEL

Shiiiiit yeah, it is. It looks like a picture from a cheesy postcard or something.

The three of them all sit within the shade of a tree, the ground beneath them more comfortable than simply sitting on the dirt because there's a bed of pine needles for them to form under their asses into makeshift pillows.

Chito grins slightly and reaches into his pocket to fish out the baggy of weed he threw down halves on.

Without having to say much, the others already agree.

CHITO

Let's light this shit up, shall we?

Michael disassembles one of his cigarettes, pinching the tobacco out of it, and refills the empty paper tube with crumbled-up weed, twists it off at the end, removes the filter, and twists that end off, too. He sparks it up first, passes it to Chito and then passes it to Adam. They keep hitting it and hitting it until there's nothing left, not even a roach that's worth keeping for later.

SOME TIME GOES BY

(CONTINUED)

HIGH SHOT, LOOKING DOWN - Our three heroes are sprawled out on their backs looking up at the sky. From their perspective, the sun is playing peekaboo with the limbs of pinetrees as the breeze gently blows through them.

The wind WHISPERS, but does not howl, and everything is calm. It's peaceful. The only other sound we can hear, apart from the wind, is a WOODPECKER looking for insects to have for dinner in a tree's innards.

The clouds above them are puffy, picturesque, a wonderful sight for stoned eyes.

CHITO

That cloud, that one right there. It looks like a zombie wearing an oven mitt.

MICHAEL

I can see that. It's like, they got bit right before their pie was ready and they're just doomed to walk around, always expecting the timer to go ding.

(beat)

Man. That's kind of a bummer. That would suck. That's almost worse than being a ghost. You're not fully aware you're dead, you're just always hungry. And that's why you eat brains... because you're a zombie, and because you never got to eat that shit you spent all day on.

The three of them laugh, braying, stupidly. Adam sits up and brushes some of the leaves off of his shoulders. He looks REALLY high. His eyes are puffy and red and the lids are closing in on themselves.

ADAM

Hey, it's getting kind of dark. We should be heading to the car, guys. That's when snakes and shit come out.

MICHAEL

You okay to drive?

ADAM

Uhhh... I'll be fine by the time we get there. We have a bit of a hike.

(CONTINUED)

Despite the utter seriousness Adam had while advising his friends that they should be heading out, their journey down is mostly spent dicking around. They pose for pictures in front of a tree, play leap frog off the trail amidst the forest and throw rocks to see who can throw the furthest.

TWILIGHT

The boys are now walking in twilight, the magic hour as some call it, with the sun just beginning to set and nightfall is swallowing the remnants of the sunshine.

CHITO

This is probably a bad time to tell you I have to take a shit.

ADAM

Can you hold until we get to the car?

CHITO

I can't hold it for the entire drive, man.

ADAM

No, I mean just until we get to the car. I have baby wipes in the glovebox.

CHITO

Why do you have baby wipes in the glove box?

ADAM

For this. For emergencies. Do you not have to use them right now?

CHITO

Well, yeah.

ADAM

So, there. I think ahead.

MICHAEL

Well, technically your MOM thought ahead. It's her car.

ADAM

Ah, but they're MY wipes.

MICHAEL

You have a box of wipes and you brought them with you in a car that's not yours?

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

Dude... I have bubble guts like constantly. I don't like being stranded places and having to use my socks or something.

Their silhouetted figures march on by, with Chito in the rear, clenching his own, walking stiff-leggedly and trying like mad not to accidentally shit his pants on the way to the car.

SCUFFING and kicking up dust behind them, they continue their walk to the car. It's even darker now than it was before. Everything has a blueish hue to it. The sun is no longer visible, but the westward sky has pink and purple swirls of clouds. Some stars are even visible, the brightest ones probably planets like Venus.

On the opposite end of the horizon, a full moon, visible even before night officially falls, beams out from above.

A strangled CALL sounds out. It sounds like the hoarse shout of a madman, but with a choked quality to it, like if someone were to clasp to hands to either side of their throat with a decent amount of pressure and tried to yell out using only their lungs.

The boys stop in the tracks immediately. No one says a word.

From a distance away, rocks KICK and CLACK, being knocked together on the ground, like someone slid their feet over them while walking in short steps.

ADAM

Michael?

MICHAEL

(scared)

Yeah.

ADAM

You have that gun, right?

Michael, without missing a beat, drops to his knees while unslinging his backpack to meet him and unzips it. He unzips it and rifles through it frantically.

MICHAEL

(whispering)

I left it in the car.

(CONTINUED)

Adam swallows and blinks. He reacts as calmly and coolly as possible, knowing that panic would be the end of them if he were to reveal just how scared he really was.

ADAM

That's okay. We don't need it. It's probably a coyote--

CHITO

I've never heard no fucking coyo--

ADAM

It's probably a coyote. So, we just keep walking, it's only a couple hundred yards off. Two or three football fields. We can do that in our sleep. Let's keep going, we'll be there soon.

Their pace quickens and the SCUFFING of their feet on the dirt is more hurried, more frantic. Their body language and total verbal silence tells us everything we need to know about how scared they are.

They stop once more when they hear something that sounds an awful lot like a GROWL. It's a deep, guttural rumble that comes from the gut.

None of them acknowledge what they all know everyone else just heard and keep walking. The car is finally visible! It's not far off, maybe a hundred feet or so. They begin to power walk, almost like wiggle-walking toward it, a walk as fast as any of them can muster, but when they hear the unmistakable sound of a TWIG SNAPPING, they ditch all pretense and RUN for it!

ADAM

Go! Go! Go!

The doors unlocked (because who's going to steal a car in the middle of nowhere?), they all three get in. Adam starts up the engine and executes a three-point turn to get it pointed in the opposite direction and headed DOWNHILL.

INT. ADAM'S MOM'S CAR - NIGHT

Peering out through the windshield with the headlights on, it is now officially nighttime. The once beautiful nature that greeted them is now waving them adieu with macabre shadows from the trees stretching toward the sky like giants with bloodlust on their minds.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

There! Did you see it?

ADAM

What? See what?

MICHAEL

There!

CHITO

Oh, shit! I see it!

ADAM

What is it?

MICHAEL

It's like a... a mountain lion or something. It just vanished. Holy, holy, holy fucking shit man.

(sighs)

Oh, my god. Holy shit. That was fuckin' scary.

Michael laughs, relieved. He lets out a sigh and shakes his shirt with his hand, feeling the pumping breeze over his sweaty torso.

In the backseat, Chito looks absolutely petrified. He looks like he's seen about ten ghosts. His mouth is slightly ajar and his eyes look completely dead.

Chito looks out the rear window. All he can see is the dust being kicked up from the car illuminated by the tail lights, and total blackness surrounding the dust, except for the stars dotting the sky, which are growing in number minute by minute.

After some time of total silence, Chito shifts his weight from butt cheek to butt cheek in the back seat and finally speaks his mind about what's bothering him so much.

CHITO

I'm glad we're driving now, but I don't think that was a mountain lion, guys.

ADAM

What was it?

MICHAEL

Oh, wait, wait, wait. I forgot! Chito's crazy superstitious. Right?

(CONTINUED)

CHITO

It's not superstition. Or, it is, but it's not just stories. When I was in Mexico, visiting my family for the holidays we stopped to get gas somewhere and out in front of this gas station there was this guy just leaned up against the wall of the place outside and he looked so... so scared.

ADAM

(looking at chito in the rearview mirror)
As scared as you look now?

CHITO

It was different. He looked like he lost everything he knew. Everything he thought was true wasn't true anymore. He was just crying and crying and crying and his eyes were red, like totally bloodshot, like every vessel in his eyes had popped.

Chito rubs his eyes and SIGHS and looks out the window for a second before continuing. He rubs his gut.

CHITO

I asked him what was the matter and he said I wouldn't believe him anyway. So I kept asking and I told him it didn't matter if I believed him or not, I wanted to hear it and know if he was okay. He said he was at his house--he had a little farm a few miles down the road--and he was inside drinking--

MICHAEL

Of COURSE he was drinking!

Unphased, Chito continues his story.

CHITO

And from outside he heard someone calling to him. By name. He came outside and saw someone he'd never seen before, but they still looked familiar somehow. Like someone he's seen before but forgot, if

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CHITO (cont'd)

that makes sense. The way he said it in Spanish sounded better. But he saw this dude outside standing in his cornfield, just smiling there. And even though it was dark out and the only light on was the porch light, he could see him just fine.

Neither Michael nor Adam pipe in with a smart-ass comment at around this point in the story.

CHITO

The guy said to him, "Come out here! I'm going to kill you!" So, the guy, of course, is like, "Come up here, motherfucker. I'll show you something I got inside." The man says he knows he has a shotgun and if he wants to live through the night he'll grab it. Of course, he DOES. He grabs it and runs back out in a hurry, scared as hell, and this time, the guy in the cornfield is a little bit closer than he was before. The guy in the cornfield keeps talking, saying all this shit about how he's going to kill him and he names off members of his family, by name, and how he's going to get them next. He gets scared as hell so he tells the guy in the cornfield he has about five seconds to leave or he gets some buckshot. He goes, "Go ahead!" and starts laughing so the guy I was talking to clicks back the hammer and BLAM! Fires it at him and kits him right in the chest.

Adam, scared as hell by the story at this point but trying not to show it, slows the vehicle down a little bit, seeing that he was going too fast on this kind of road at this time of night with such limited visibility.

CHITO

But, it didn't do nothing. The pellets went THROUGH him without tearing through his flesh. And the man in the cornfield started laughing, laughing like... the way the guy said it was like it made

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CHITO (cont'd)
everything else around him go cold. And the man stepped out into the light where the porch's light was shining and it was the first time he saw his whole body all at once... and he had these big, hairy goat legs.

MICHAEL
Shut the fuck up.

CHITO
I swear to god, that's what he told me. He had the legs of a goat and when he finally stepped into the light, he saw that his eyes were like one big pupil, just totally black. After he saw that, he dropped the gun and ran and ran and ran and the gas station was the first place he came to, and I was the first person he talked to. I believed him, too. You can't fake being that kind of scared and he wasn't crazy. He wasn't even drunk anymore after what he saw.

ADAM
So, you think that's what we saw?

CHITO
I don't think that's EXACTLY what we saw, but something similar. The Cahuilla tribe says that they won't camp here on these mountains overnight, they've seen too much weird shit. Like that glowing light over Thomas?

ADAM
What, you mean Goldie? That little floating orb thing everyone swears they've seen but I've never seen it?

CHITO
Exactly. Things like that. I don't know what I believe, but I like to be careful. I think the Natives out here know a thing or two and if they don't wanna spend the night, that... that fucking MEANS something, I think.

(CONTINUED)

The three of them sit in silence, completely quiet except for the HUM of the ENGINE and the sound of dirt traveling beneath the cars tires.

CHITO

Aaaand this is a real bad time, but
I gotta shit.

ADAM

NOW? After telling me that
story? You can't hold it now? You
didn't scare the turd a foot north
of your sphincter?

CHITO

Nah, dude, it's like beer
shits. Like butt piss. It'll take
me like a second. Come on.

Michael turns around and reaches across the backseat and pushes on Chito's belly. Chito slaps his hands away angrily, without an ounce of good humor.

CHITO

What the fuck man? What's funny
about that? You wanna see me shit
my pants?

MICHAEL

Sor-REE!

Adam pulls over to the side of the road, the breaks lightly SQUEAKING as he comes to a total stop. He puts the car in P and lets it idle.

ADAM

Alright, go quick. Here are the
wipes.

OUTSIDE

The red of the tail lights is illuminating the dirt road around them and the trees and shrubbery with a hellish glow. The lighting is perfect with the red of the car and the blue of the night and the full moon. CRICKETS chirp. FROGS croak. The IDLING CAR chugs along and small plumes of exhaust smoke emit from the tail pipe.

Chito exits the car and SLAMS the door behind him and disappears into the night grasping his stomach. He finds a nice place to squat and UNZIPS his pants and slides them down his thighs. We cut before we have to hear the unpleasant sound of his bowels pouring out of him like flaming hot liquid.

(CONTINUED)

INSIDE

Adam and Michael look bored, waiting for their friend to get back from his unfortunately-timed bathroom emergency.

ADAM

What kind of grade do you think we're going to get for this project?

MICHAEL

Hmmmmmm... it's an original idea and we're not really half-assing it. But, every senior project is graded by Miss Jaenke and she's kind of a bitch... I'd say a B. A solid B. No B+ or A-...

ADAM

Yeah, I'd be happy with that. And after that, shit, we're pretty much done with everything.

MICHAEL

And then we graduate.

ADAM

Fuck. Kind of heavy, huh?

MICHAEL

I'm looking forward to it. I'm just tired of being in school. I'm tired of projects due and just bullshit. I want to take it easy for a bit before I have to go back to school... I'm also really tired right NOW, so maybe that's it. I wanna go to bed.

ADAM

I know! Me, too! What the fuck is taking Chito so long?

MICHAEL

When that guy gets the shits, he... gets... the... SHITS. He's probably still only on round one of three.

ADAM

Just out there wrestlin' with the mud-monster.

They both CHORTLE and SNORT from their stupid diarrhea joke.

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

You still undecided on college, for sure.

MICHAEL

Nah, I'm definitely going, but I'm gonna take a couple semesters off. I want to just spend some time working, saving money. I'm gonna pick up more hours once school is out. This working on the weekends only shit sucks. Did you know how long it took to buy my truck? Fuckin'... forever!

ADAM

Didn't Franklin help you pay for it?

MICHAEL

Franklin? Sure. He threw down like two hundreds bucks.

(laughs)

Ah, he's a good guy. I like him better than my dad, for sure. He's just perpetually broke. I don't know how my mom puts up with it.

ADAM

Well, he's not your dad, so she probably thinks he's a fuckin' saint in comparison.

MICHAEL

You know what I was thinking? I was thi--

The back door SWINGS open with a start and both Adam and Michael GASP in fear. Chito slides into the back seat quickly and looks at both of his friends who have their faces frozen and contorted in fear.

CHITO

What?

ADAM

Who opens a door like that?!

CHITO

Sorry! I just wanna go home! Come on, let's hit the road.

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

Well, close the goddamn door first,
you animal. Raised in a barn, I
swear.

Focused on Chito, the rear door open beside him, the cab light inside of the vehicle is on. With the cab light on, glowing a yellow shade within the cab of the vehicle, all visibility to the outside world is shut off--all we can see is a shade of complete black.

Chito shrugs at the demand to close the goddamn door and reaches over and SLAMS it shut. When he does, the cab light kicks off and the outside world is now incredibly visible, in an almost unreal sort of clarity provided by the full moon and the rural surrounding. The quality of the light outside is almost magical.

And in that magical light for one moment, only one quick fleeting glance, we see the FACE OF A CREATURE! We see it only for a moment, but its eyes are yellow and its face covered in fur. It has a snout stretching out before its face and teeth too long to fit within it. Its lips snarl back and show the full enormity of its chops. The beast's head twitches and snaps back and then CRASHES through the window!

Safety glass explodes outward and all over Chito! The beast's furry arm reaches through the window and begins clawing Chito about the face. Its jaw clamps down on Chito's neck and BITES and blood begins flowing freely from his neck as it shakes its jaws back and forth.

It all happens so quickly. The whole action takes place in only a few blinks of the eye and before we begin to fully process what it is we've seen the frame cuts to complete BLACKNESS.

In that blackness, we hear screams from Chito, Michael and Adam and SNARLING ROARS from whatever thing it is that crashed through the window. We distinctly hear only a few lines of dialogue throughout the madness.

CHITO

(O.S.)

Help me! Oh god help me!

ADAM

(O.S.))

What's happening!

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL
(O.S.)
Get off of him!

The thing ROARS once more.

We hear CAR DOORS OPENING and human cries mingled with this pure, bestial horror screaming out into the night. We hear Michael SCREAMING bloody murder and then we hear GUNSHOTS blast out.

Moments of silence follow afterward.

FADE IN

INT. ADAM'S MOM'S CAR - NIGHT

We see Michael awaking. His face is covered in blood and deep scratches run down his cheeks and forehead. One of his eyes is completely swollen shut. His senses come back to him very slowly, very gradually. He, at first, seems completely unaware of where he is--or of WHO he is--but then memories begin flooding back to him. He feels his face with his fingers and brings them back to see blood.

The window is down, shattered rather, and wind is blowing through his bloody hair, similar to what we saw with the fake blood earlier in Michael's truck. But this time, it's real.

Michael begins to breathe heavily, in short, uneasy breathes, hyperventilating. He looks around. He can't sit up entirely. He's slumped very low into the front passenger seat and can't get up. His legs and torso have been torn into ribbons. And now he REALLY begins to panic.

Michael looks up and Adam is driving emotionlessly. He looks like a man possessed. He looks like a man who's seen something he won't soon forget.

MICHAEL
Adam.

Adam says nothing in response.

MICHAEL
Adam.

He again says nothing.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

ADAM!!

ADAM

What?!

MICHAEL

Where's Chito?

Adam begins SOBBING immediately. His stone cold face melts and warps itself into a wrinkled, puckered face with tears and snot bubbling through it.

ADAM

He's dead!

MICHAEL

What?

Still slumped down low into his seat and unable to sit up, Michael cranes his neck past his seat to look into the back and meets eyes with Chito's lifeless corpse. Chito's eyes are opened wide and a pool of blood lay beneath him. The blood is so thick and red that it's reflective.

Michael clasps a hand to his mouth, GASPS audible and returns facing to where he was, looking up but unable to see anything outside.

Adam continues driving, no longer sobbing, but tears are still streaming down his face like rivers. He clenches his eyes shut and squeezes the hot tears out and wipes his eyelids with his shirted shoulder.

INT. HOSPITAL WAITING ROOM - NIGHT

The hospital waiting room is cold and stark and the overhead fluorescent lights are flickering dimly, casting dancing shadows against the walls. A row of chairs are lined against the wall, a faded red color that would have probably been lush and vibrant ten years ago, but presently are just a pale reminder of that past. Adam is seated at the furthestmost chair to the left, gazing ahead in a state of shock. His face is colorless and his mouth is slightly ajar. Blood stains are spattered across his arms, chest and face.

A DOOR OPENS somewhere off screen and a CLOPPING of FOOTSTEPS leads up to where Adam is sitting. He doesn't acknowledge the person coming up to him until they're directly in front of him. We see a POLICE OFFICER standing before Adam. Adam shifts his gaze slightly, but offers him no other greeting apart from that.

(CONTINUED)

The cops sits down next to him.

POLICEMAN

Adam?

Adam says nothing in response.

POLICEMAN

Is that your name?

Adam finally turns to meet eyes with the kindly officer speaking to him.

ADAM

Yeah. That's me.

POLICEMAN

Are you doing okay?

(slight beat)

I know that's a silly question, but that's not what I meant. I want to know if you're understanding what's happening to you. I want to make sure you're responsive, because I have bad news for you.

ADAM

I'm fine. Physically, I'm fine.

POLICEMAN

Your friend in there... Xavier?

ADAM

Yeah. We call him Chito.

POLICEMAN

I'm sorry, but he's dead. He didn't make it.

ADAM

I already knew that. Why isn't the doctor telling me this?

POLICEMAN

Because I have some other questions for you and the doctor asked me if I would break the bad news to you.

ADAM

What... questions do you have for me?

(CONTINUED)

POLICEMAN

In a second, sorry. I wanted to let you know that your friend Michael is alive. He's in bad shape. Broken ribs, collapsed lung. But he's going to survive. Doctor says he'll be here awhile, but he'll make a full recovery.

ADAM

(sighs in relief)

Good. That's really good. I'm glad to hear that.

POLICEMAN

I wanted to ask you about this animal that attacked you and your friends. Did you get a good look at it?

ADAM

No.

POLICEMAN

But you did shoot at it.

ADAM

I did. It was Michael's stepdad's gun.

POLICEMAN

And you both are underage.

ADAM

Yes. We are. Are you going to arrest me?

POLICEMAN

No. I'm just letting you know I won't be including that in the police report. It wasn't legal, but I don't want to split hairs and get anyone in trouble where it's not necessary. If anyone asks, any other police, you chased it off with a big old stick or something.

ADAM

Thank you. I appreciate that.

(CONTINUED)

POLICEMAN

Do you know what kind of animal it was?

ADAM

No. I don't. That's the weird thing. It wasn't a coyote and it wasn't a mountain lion. I don't know what it was.

POLICEMAN

You're still in shock. I'll talk to you in a few days. I think you'll probably remember more after that.

(beat)

Now, if you were to guess, do you think you hit it when you shot at it?

ADAM

I thought I did, but it didn't seem to have any reaction. I think if anything made it run, it was just the sound of the shots.

The policeman relaxes more in his seat to put himself in a similar stance to Adam to relate to him on that level and let him know that he does legitimately care about him. This is the first time we get a good look at the cop. He's an older gentleman, probably in his forties, and his hair is graying at the temples.

POLICEMAN

You'll be fine. Have you ever lost a friend before?

ADAM

When I was a kid, but I was only in kindergarten and I don't remember her too well. But my dad died when I was ten.

POLICEMAN

You know how it is, then. It's gonna hurt real, real bad. It gets better, though. It never stops hurting--

ADAM

No.

(CONTINUED)

POLICEMAN

(Continued)

--but it gets better. There gets to be a point where you feel guilty about how much it doesn't hurt anymore and then you know... you're getting stronger about it.

Adam begins to cry. The policeman puts his arm around Adam and lets him cry deep, RASPING SOBS into his shoulder. Adam's entire body convulses with the cries that are escaping him and causing his entire diaphragm to convulse

The off-screen entrance door OPENS again and a small flooding of light grows across the wall behind Adam and the policeman.

Adam looks to see who it is: It's Franlin and Michael's mother ROBIN. Robin is under Franklin's arm, barely able to walk on her own, she's so inconsolably sad by what's happened. Franklin, on the other hand, looks happy to know that Michael is alive at least.

Adam looks at Michael's mother and his lip begins to treble again and he stands up to embrace her as she cries.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. CATHOLIC CHURCH - EARLY MORNING

Early morning sunlight shines through the painted windows adorned with saints on the inside of a Catholic church. Candles are lit and the entire church is filled with crying family members and friends of Chito, attending his funeral.

A PRIEST, before the mourners, finishes his thoughts on the dearly departed.

PRIEST

Xavier Topete will be missed immensely by those who knew him. Those who knew him have only had kind things to say about him. He was an accomplished athlete and a great student.

(CONTINUED)

Seated up front, Adam sits with his mother, BETH. She looks uncomfortable to be at the funeral, sitting awkwardly. She's not a cold woman, but has never had grace with social situations.

ADAM

(whispering to his mother)
Why do funerals always have some guy who didn't know the person talking about him like this? Chito played football for one season and hated it; and he's an even worse student than me.

Adam's mother gently shushes him.

BETH

Be nice.

ADAM

I am nice.

On the other side of the church, Adam eyes Chito's MOM and DAD. Chito's mother is crying into a handkerchief, eyes reddened and puffy from having wept for days, probably, on end.

Adam sighs. He feels a little bad for bad-mouthing the funeral setting when it obviously means a lot to Chito's very religious family.

PRIEST

And I have a friend of Xavier's in attendance who would like to say a few words. Adam?

Adam clears his throat nervously and marches up to the pulpit, light footsteps THUDDING on thick, carpeted floor. He looks out upon the funeral mourners, some of them CRYING, others looking intimidating to a nervous speaker.

ADAM

Hi. Some of you might know me. My name is Adam. Chito--ah, Xavier--and I have been friends since we were five, so going on 12 years... which is, that's a long time to be friends with someone when you're this young.

The crowd laughs, which shocks Adam because he wasn't trying to make a joke, he was just being nervous and awkward.

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

We made movies together and, to me,
that's how I best speak or say
things that are difficult to say
with... um... ha, with WORDS.

This time HE laughs at his own awkwardness, but no one else does, which in turn makes him feel very uncomfortable.

ADAM

So... I decided to make a video to
say everything I couldn't. This is
for him.

Pre-arranged, a church employee pushes a television out on wheels and turns on the TV and presses play on a DVD player. It glows blue for a moment before kicking on and showing the video.

Set to Man Man's song "Gold Teeth" we see Adam's tribute to his friend and it's a sweet tribute. The song plays and we see Adam and Chito and Michael all together, having fun on various adventures they all had together over the years. Sometimes they're acting goofy, sometimes they're simply talking to each other, and other times they're laughing uproarious laughter that only best friends can share together.

The crowd seems to clearly love it, but Adam can't watch it. He steps outside as the video plays on, but the song follow him outside.

OUTSIDE

Adam walks along the church grounds, the camera hovering behind him like it's almost detached from reality itself. As he makes his way across the grounds, standing before a rolling, grassy field with hills rolling out before him, he opens his arms like the wings on a bird and walks/soars while the camera goes up and up and up into the sky, until Adam is just a little dot on the ground, surrounded by lush greenery and a graveyard several hundred feet away from where he's standing.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - EARLY AFTERNOON

A HEART MONITOR BEEPS rhythmically and a bag of saline sways gently from an air conditioned breeze blowing against it. Below the array of equipment, Michael sleeps. He awakes with a start, GASPING slightly, as if from a bad dream. He attempts to rub his eyeballs but winces it pain

(CONTINUED)

when he uses the arm that has an IV stick into it. He soothes the area with his good arm and lets out a sigh.

Michael looks up and sees that Gillian is sitting at a stool beside his bed. He looks genuinely surprised and pleased that she's there, although a little embarrassed that she saw him in such a vulnerable position.

The side of his head shaves and stitches running along his scalp, a general paleness and a skinnier state, Michael looks like he's recovering, but looks like he's in bad shape. He's lucky to have survived the attack, but it definitely took a toll on him.

GILLIAN

Good morning, Starshine.

MICHAEL

Is it morning?

GILLIAN

Nah, it's like 2 p.m.

MICHAEL

Huh. I never know anymore. I sleep on and off. I've been having weird dreams.

GILLIAN

I'm not surprised. You've been through a lot.

MICHAEL

Is this... is this the first time you've visited me or have you been here to see me before?

GILLIAN

I was here when you first got in, like the next day.

MICHAEL

Did you talk to me?

GILLIAN

Yeah.

MICHAEL

I thought so. I think I heard you.

He sighs and adjusts his position in the reclining hospital bed. He looks a little woozy, like even moving that small of an amount took a lot of physical exertion he wasn't quite ready for.

(CONTINUED)

GILLIAN

I think I saw something about comatose people being responsive to people talking to them. Like, even from that deep inside the coma they're still somewhat aware of their surroundings.

MICHAEL

It was crazy. I can't believe this happened. None of it. It's been strange. I haven't even... I haven't had a chance to process anything that's happened so far. I keep feeling like any second now I'm going to see Chito to come and visit me. But, I know he's not ever going to do that.

(beat)

It's his funeral today. That's what Adam told me.

GILLIAN

That's what I heard, too.

MICHAEL

Why didn't you go?

GILLIAN

I don't know. I don't think I could have stood to see his mom cry. I've never liked funerals. I'd rather be somewhere where the focus isn't on death, it's on recovery.

MICHAEL

I've always hated funerals too. But I hate hospitals even worse. The last time I was in a hospital--I mean REALLY in a hospital, there for a few days--the focus wasn't on recovery. It was on waiting for death, which I don't know, is worse than a funeral where you're talking about someone who's died. It's so much worse to just be there waiting for it to happen.

GILLIAN

Your sister?

(CONTINUED)

Michael doesn't say anything for a bit. He just thinks about the memory and allows a tear to run out of his eye and down his cheek without trying to choke it back. He simply allows the emotion to happen. He breathes in and sees that he can talk without sobbing and answers Gillian.

MICHAEL

Yeah.

She's unsure of whether or not she should ask him about it, or if he even wants to talk about it, so she just waits for him to say something.

MICHAEL

It took me a long time to stop blaming myself entirely for what happened, but I still do blame myself for it in a weird way. I COULD have saved her, but I didn't. I don't feel guilty, but it's something that I'm going to think about for the rest of my life. There's no way that I can't. It's just one of those things.

GILLIAN

It seems like pointless torture to think about what you could have done or didn't do.

MICHAEL

Oh, it is. That's exactly what it is... but you can't help it. Sometimes it hits me and I start to panic, but you get to a point where you can tell yourself that it's not your fault.

Michael reaches for an unopened bottle of water beside his bed and cracks it open and drinks from it greedily for moments and lets out a satisfied, "ah," whispered to himself.

MICHAEL

I came home from wrestling practice--

As Michael speaks, his voice becomes a narration over a series of scenes and images depicting exactly what it is he's talking about. We see him enter his own darkened house and drop his backpack off on top of his couch as he sleepily and lazily walks down the hallway.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

(Narr.)

--and this was before Franklin moved in with my mom. They were only dating at the time, so she was off at work. My sister wasn't home, so I assumed she was out with friends or something.

Michael walks down the hall and pushes open the bathroom door. The windows are fogged up with steam and a confused look pulls down at his face. Genuine concern shines through his eyes.

MICHAEL

(Narr.)

Um... and that's when I saw my sister. She was in the tub and she drew a hot bath and slit her wrists.

Michael runs to his sister and pulls her out of the pink water and onto the floor. He puts his fingers to her neck where he can check her vitals.

MICHAEL

(Narr.)

And she still has a pulse. I checked for that. I knew how to do that. She was still breathing, too. I wrapped her up in a blanket and tore up some towels and tied them to the wounds and jumped into her car with her.

Michael is swearing and crying and screaming silently. The only sound we can hear is Michael's narration from the present time. With great struggle, he positions his sister into the backseat, where her wet hair and bloody wounds seep into the upholstery.

He presses on the gas all the way down and a sputter of dirt kicks up behind the car, spraying gravel and rocks into the air.

MICHAEL

(Narr.)

And everything was going fine. I was going to get her to the fire department in town, but--

(sighs)

--I don't even know what happened. I don't know if *I* ran

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL (cont'd)
a stop sign or if someone else did,
but I smashed right into someone
else.

The car Michael is driving gets struck by another vehicle and, in extreme slow motion the car begins to roll. Gravity no longer makes sense. Glass is flying up and flying down at the same time. The shards are sparkling and dancing in an almost beautiful, balletic harmony, but all around those beads of safety glass is absolute chaos.

In a side profile, Michael's face hits water and he's floating somewhere, wading through blackened water and unable to find anything. Off in the distance, he sees his sister and tries to swim toward her but no matter how hard he swims, he never gets closer to her.

MICHAEL
(Narr.)
I blacked out when I got into the
accident. Whoever I hit or whoever
hit me took off and they were never
found.

We return to the hospital room. Gillian is on the edge of her seat, looking at Michael with such sympathy and looking like she's on the verge of spilling over into weeping for him.

MICHAEL
I had a slight concussion when I
came to, but she... ah, she hung on
for a few more days. I don't know
if she was fighting or if it just
happened that way. I don't know if
she WANTED to live or if her bodily
defenses were that strong that they
wanted to keep her alive even
though her mind wanted her
dead. All I know is that if she
had gotten to the hospital hours
sooner, if I hadn't gotten into
that car accident, she would have
still been alive. If I'd called
911 instead of taking my sister's
car... she'd still be alive. If I
had done almost literally
everything differently, she'd be
alive.
(beat, sighs)
And that's why I hate hospital
rooms.

(CONTINUED)

Gillian snuffles back a tear, but smiles at Michael's attempt at levity.

Behind them, the door opens and Adam steps through. He sneaks in and freezes mid-step when he sees just how serious everyone in the room is.

ADAM
Holy shit, did I come at a bad time?

GILLIAN
No, no. We're fine. I was just leaving.

Gillian stands up and swoops up her purse.

ADAM
Hey, hey. You don't have to leave on account of me.

GILLIAN
No. I'm not. I've been here awhile. I'll let you be with your friend.

MICHAEL
Thanks, Gillian.

She mouths thank you back at him and slips out the door and allows it to close silently.

Adam sits in the seat Gillian was previously in and scoots it up to his friend's bed.

ADAM
Man, this seat his warm. She runs hot.

MICHAEL
Is that a "she's so hot" joke?

ADAM
Nah. Too clever for me right now. I don't have the mental fortitude to say anything that has more than one meaning. I just mean her ass is literally hot. The chair is warm.

MICHAEL
Maybe she farted in it. She's been here awhile.

ADAM

Eh, I'll allow that I had a fart joke in there somewhere.

The two of them laugh slightly at the joke and Michael lets out a long SIGH. He still hurts very much from the incident and from the surgeries he's undergone.

MICHAEL

How did it go?

ADAM

The funeral? It went... it went about as well as a funeral can go. It was a beautiful reception and everything. Really, really fucking sad, of course.

MICHAEL

Of course.

ADAM

How've you been holding up since I last saw you?

MICHAEL

Okay. I've been having fucked up dreams. I told Gillian that when she got here, but... eh. I didn't want to go into depth.

ADAM

Why not?

MICHAEL

Because I like her, man, and I didn't want to scare her off.

(laughs)

It hasn't been like every night or anything, but I've been having really, really vivid dreams about what happened to us. But not just that. Other stuff. I've been having dreams where I've been talking to Chito and he's been in misery, just in total hell after he died and he tells me he hopes I never die. When I tell him I will someday he just walks away.

ADAM

I've had a few dreams about him, too.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Not just that. I've been having really fucked up, VIOLENT dreams.

ADAM

Like what?

MICHAEL

Like I've been hurting people. I had a dream I hurt Gillian.

ADAM

Probably a wise choice to have not told her that.

MICHAEL

I had a dream that I tried to kill you, but you killed me first and I woke up feeling sick.

Michael looks embarrassed that he just said that, that maybe he told him a little too much. Adam knows his friend and doesn't want him to be embarrassed, so he moves the conversation along to another subject.

ADAM

Have you talked to the cops at all? They said they'd follow up with you about what happened.

MICHAEL

Yeah. I talked to some guy. He said he talked to you. He just asked me basic shit, about what we were doing up there, what kind of animal attacked us.

ADAM

And what'd you say?

MICHAEL

I told him I don't know. I STILL don't fucking know. A bear? A mountain lion?

ADAM

(facetiously)
El chupacabra?

MICHAEL

(laughing)
Or bigfoot! I knew that blurry son of a bitch existed!

(CONTINUED)

(beat)

But seriously. I have no idea. They, uh, did a cast of my wounds, the bite marks and everything and they're hoping to match it up to something.

ADAM

Hopefully.

MICHAEL

(nodding)

Hopefully.

EXT. POLICE STATION - AFTERNOON

The same police officer we saw before is exiting a police station in a hurried, brisk walk. He's still wearing his uniform, but by the look of its condition, it looks like he's at the end of his shift. His blouse is partially untucked and he looks like he's about to call it a day. He makes his way to a squad car and opens the door and tosses a manilla envelope onto the passenger seat. A glossy photo emerges partially from the top of the folder: A photo of Michael's arm covered in wounds--scratches and bites. It's painful to look at, how deep the wounds are.

INT. POLICE CAR - SAME

The police officer settles into his seat and before he turns the ignition over, his PHONE RINGS. He puts the phone to his ear.

POLICEMAN

Hello?

On the other line is a lab technician, all business. The lab technician is neither rude, nor friendly. He's simply relaying his findings in the most straightforward manner possible.

LAB TECHNICIAN

Hello. Hi. Is this a good time?

The police officer looks around a bit, slightly disappointed that the call should come now, since he was looking forward to going home, but he figures now is as good a time as any.

POLICEMAN

Sure, no. Now's good. What's up?

(CONTINUED)

LAB TECHNICIAN

So, we got the results back.

POLICEMAN

That was quick. And?

LAB TECHNICIAN

Completely inconclusive. Judging by the bitemarks and the radius of the wounds, it's closest to a wolf, maybe a coyote--a big coyote. The clawmarks, though? They don't look like anything I'm immediately familiar with that would be in conjunction with those kind of teeth. If anything, they look they were caused by long, human fingernails. Like the bites and the scratches came from two different animals.

POLICEMAN

Human fingernails?

LAB TECHNICIAN

That's what it LOOKS like, but taking an educated guess based on what I see here, I'd have to say they were attacked by a large coyote, possibly rabid--the young man was given shots just in case--and it violated its typical behavior due to mental illness caused by the disease. So, hypothesizing, here: The animal went berserk and attacked with everything it had, including with claws which is atypical for it and had enough ferocity to have killed two kids.

POLICEMAN

What about the kid, Xavier? The one who died? Did you pull any DNA from the wounds?

LAB TECHNICIAN

Nothing usable. We found human saliva in the wounds, but we're thinking that came from one of the other two boys during the eventual struggle.

(CONTINUED)

The officer covers the receiver with his hand and mouths, "shit" loud enough for us to here, but quiet enough that the lab tech on the other line doesn't hear his disappointment.

POLICEMAN

Well, thank you very much for your time. It's been helpful.

LAB TECHNICIAN

You're wel--

The officer disconnects the call before the lab tech can finish and tosses his phone on top of the gory photos of Michael's injuries. He lets out a SIGH.

POLICEMAN

Son of a bitch.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Michael's room is pitch black except for the glow of machinery in the start lightlessness. His heart rate monitor casts a light glow of blue across the room and emits an ambient HUM with an occasional BEEP, BEEP, BEEP. The room itself, bathed in its comforting colors, looks otherwise peaceful, but something is amiss.

We spend some time in the room, soaking up the atmosphere, watching pieces of equipment move up and down, before dollying in Michael. He's asleep, but his hands CLUTCH the bedsheets with a suddenness that's shocking and his heart rate monitor begins to BEEP BEEP BEEP a lot faster than before. His eyelids part slightly and only the whites of his eyes are showing. His lips part over his teeth.

DREAMWORLD

In his dream, we only see FLASHES of what he's seeing and such as dreams are, the images themselves make little sense.

We see Michael sitting in the car. He looks outside and sees Chito walking in the night toward the car. Chito stops and goes up to Michael's window.

CHITO

Don't die. Death is somehow worse than this.

(beat, looks off in the distance)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CHITO (cont'd)

At least I get to see you
sometimes. I wonder if I'll see
you when you die.

Michael tries to talk but he can't. His throat is frozen. He grasps at it in a feeble attempt to loosen is vocal chords, but nothing works.

Michael's eyes WIDEN when he sees a hairy hand rakes across Chito's neck and blood begins to spill out of the wound liberally.

Chito looks unphased by the life force draining out of him.

CHITO

This always ends the same.

A jet of blood squirts out of Chito's jugular and the jet becomes a stream, which begins to flow in sheets and then the world around them as they know it is filled with nothing else but blood.

REALITY

Michael is laying on his back, flopping like a fish, having a seizure. His heart rate monitor is BEEPING maniacally. Its beeps have no space between them anymore.

A pair of nurses run in to subdue him and keep him from swallowing or biting down on his tongue.

NURSE 1

(to Michael)

It's okay, it's okay, you're going
to be fine.

NURSE 2

Can we get someone in here? He's
having a seizure!

EXT. MOUNTAIN MAN COMPOUND - NIGHT

Night stars are twinkling ahead. A meteor FLASHES by and disintegrates in the Earth's atmosphere in a small but brilliant show of lights and fire.

The compound is quiet and still, but a slight WIND is BLOWING. The wind is slight but it's high-pitched like a woman's scream, going in between wooden planks and slightly parted windows.

(CONTINUED)

A pair of headlights are seen down the way. It's the policeman's patrol car. It has a higher lift than Adam's mom's car and can make it all the way to the compound without stopping with some maneuvering. It's an SUV with four-wheel drive.

As the lights grow closer and closer and brighter and brighter, DOGS begin to BARK. When the dogs alerting the inhabitants, they begin to stir awake.

A door SWINGS OPEN with a BANG when it hits the outside wall. Dwayne stands in a doorway with his wife behind him. They both look scared, but are trying to act as though they're calm, cool and collected.

The patrol car pulls up in front of where Dwayne is standing and the officer kills the engine, then the lights. He steps out and up to the couple.

DWAYNE

Evening, officer. Is there anything we can help you with?

POLICEMAN

Sorry to bother you so late.

DWAYNE

No problem at all.

POLICEMAN

I just wanted to talk to you about the boys who came here to visit you a couple weeks ago.

DWAYNE

Yes. The high school kids shooting a video for some sort of school project.

POLICEMAN

And were attacked by an animal.

DWAYNE

So we heard. Another office, a sheriff's deputy told us about it the night it happened. Couple of the kids got killed, it seems. Sad. Those mountain lions... they must've been near its cub without even realizing it. Just protecting its young.

(CONTINUED)

POLICEMAN

Well, not quite. One of them got killed, another got hurt. He's in the hospital.

Dwayne's eyes narrow.

DWAYNE

He's not dead.

POLICEMAN

Almost. He got hurt real bad, but he's gonna do okay after some recovery time.

DWAYNE

I see. Well I'm real glad o hear that. I'm glad he'll push through.

Inside Dwayne's cabin, his wife looks to the side where they have a break-barrel shotgun leaned up against a wall. He shakes his head at her slightly. She steps back from the weapon.

POLICEMAN

I just wanted to ask you some questions.

DWAYNE

I'd be happy to tell you anything I know.

POLICEMAN

What's bothering me is these lab reports I got back. They weren't conclusive with any sort of animal bites we're familiar with. No usable DNA on the wounds, either. I wanted to see if you might know something I don't.

DWAYNE

What would I know that the experts don't?

POLICEMAN

I don't know. I really don't. I guess that's what I'm here to find out. Just to see if you know anything they don't know. If you know what attacked those boys.

(CONTINUED)

DWAYNE

I'm sorry I can't be of more help to you.

POLICEMAN

Yeah.

The policeman looks around the compound and kicks at a pebble by his feet.

POLICEMAN

Yeah, I'm sorry too. I'm sorry to have bothered you.

Dejected, unsure of why he even came up there in the first place, he walks back toward his vehicle.

DWAYNE

Officer.

The officer looks up.

DWAYNE

There's things up here we don't understand. There's a reasons why the Indians don't go up here. Where we are, this area, we're safe. Nothing ever happened to us here. We told them kids to leave before it got dark, but they didn't. Now, I'm awful sorry about what happened, but what happened was a tragic accident. That's all. Get some rest, office. You've done all you can.

The officer nods in agreement and gets back in his car and takes off from whence he came. His taillights cast the compound, and Dwayne in his wife, in a glow of red. As the vehicle slowly makes its way carefully down the dirt road, the lights fade and eventually disappear into the darkness. The HUM of the engine disappears.

Dwayne's wife, Julia, grabs her husband by the arm and holds him tight.

JULIA

What do we do now?

DWAYNE

You know what we have to do.

She lets out a SOB and a tear runs down her cheek.

(CONTINUED)

DWAYNE

Man has a way of surviving. But if I see that kid again, I'll put a shotgun round through his chest.

He puts an arm around her and she embraces him.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

INT. GILLIAN'S CAR - NIGHT

Gillian is in the driver's seat of her falling-apart Oldsmobile with a newly-released-from-his-hospital-stay Michael sitting in the front passenger seat. His head is shaved on one side with a row of stitches visible. He's wearing ill-fitting clothes that he doesn't own, that the hospital gave him for his release.

The road ahead of them is illuminated by the headlights only by a few feet, the rest of the road and the world around it cloaked by the night's darkness.

MICHAEL

So, why did my parents send you to come get me? Not that I don't appreciate it...

GILLIAN

They didn't. They sent Adam to come get you and he called me because he thought it'd be nice for you.

MICHAEL

Well, that was thoughtful of him. But why did they send HIM?

GILLIAN

Because they're planning something special for you and they want to both be there to see you at home.

MICHAEL

Well, that was thoughtful of them. Couldn't they have sent along a change of clothes, though? These are what the hospital had and I think I'm wearing girls' clothes.

(CONTINUED)

GILLIAN

They're very flattering on you.

MICHAEL

Thank you.

GILLIAN

I actually think they gave Adam a change of clothes but he brain-farted it, so what you got is a miracle. You're just lucky you're not wearing an ass-less robe made out of paper.

As the car makes its way down a series of dirt roads, we see an illuminated house with a banner out front. This is Michael's house all set in a happy, warm homecoming for him. He looks at it and dread sets in. From the distance, he can see people inside, his mom and stepdad and Adam and a few others, through the glass sliding doors.

MICHAEL

Keep driving.

GILLIAN

What?

MICHAEL

Keep driving. I can't do it right now.

She blows past the house. No one inside looks. As far as they're concerned, it's just another car on its way home. Someone else. Some stranger.

MICHAEL

I just can't yet. Not yet.

She drives further up the road and finds a clearing and pulls over into it.

GILLIAN

Are you okay?

MICHAEL

I just have to build up to it. I don't know why, I just don't feel right.

GILLIAN

I think that's understandable.

(CONTINUED)

She kills the headlights. The rest of the world around them is temporarily shut off. It's just them, alone, in the center of the universe and nothing else matters.

MICHAEL

You don't think I'm being weird?

GILLIAN

You ARE being weird, but it's okay. You've been through a lot. You just need a moment. You're going to need to take things at your own pace.

MICHAEL

I just wish they weren't throwing me a party. Or if they had to, I wish they would have told me about it.

GILLIAN

I think the party's more for them than it is for you. They're acting selfishly, but only because they're so happy you're still alive. Chito's parents aren't so lucky.

He leans back and looks up at the roof and closes his eyes for a moment to reflect, then sits back up and gazes out the windshield, into the abyss.

MICHAEL

I guess I'm being selfish, too.

GILLIAN

Being selfish isn't BAD, it's just what it is. Everyone's going through this in their own way. You need a moment, your parents are behaving perhaps a little insensitively by having a party first thing--but the surprise aspect of it is part of it. They just want to show you they love you.

MICHAEL

I know. You're right.

GILLIAN

Hey, what are you doing next month? On the 18th?

MICHAEL

(laughing)

Uh... my calendar is clear. I have no plans.

GILLIAN

I guess that was a stupid thing to ask.

MICHAEL

Nah, no. It's fine. I'm the king of stupid questions. Remember when that guy Scott's house burned down?

GILLIAN

Yeah.

MICHAEL

Well, when he came back to school I was like, "Hey, what've you been up to?" And he was just all, "Uh... nothing. Just had my fucking house burn down, that's all."

Gillian laughs.

MICHAEL

But, what's up? What's going on next month?

GILLIAN

Some of my friends from down the hill are going to this party at a cabin and I was wondering if you'd like to go with me.

MICHAEL

Really?

GILLIAN

Yes.

MICHAEL

Of course. I would love to go. Absolutely.

GILLIAN

I'm glad.

MICHAEL

It's a... date?

She smiles at him and gives him an affirming nod.

(CONTINUED)

GILLIAN

Yes. It's a DATE.

He smiles back, but mostly to himself. He's practically beaming with joy upon this news. His lips have stretched from ear to ear.

MICHAEL

I think I'm ready to see everyone now.

GILLIAN

Okay.

INT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Wordless, melodic music with a hint of bittersweet and melancholy plays as Michael and Gillian enter Michael's house. There are no sounds to hear except for the hum of the music. The whole thing is set in slow motion.

Michael's mother hugs him tight and he grimaces but fights through the pain to hug her back. Franklin tussles his hair, making sure to tussle the side of his hair that isn't shaved with stitches standing out on the skin.

Adam raises an opaque cup to him in his honor and Michael returns the gesture by raising an invisible cup. They both laugh.

A few stragglers, aunts and uncles wish him well and shake his hand and hug him and let him know how happy they are to see him.

Michael looks and further back, into the kitchen, he sees Chito's parents and tears begin spilling from his eyes when he sees them. He goes to them and hugs them both warmly and strongly, so happy to see them and so sad for their loss.

FADE OUT

With the screen still blackened out, we hear a monstrous, inhuman WHEEZING, struggling and COUGHING. Whatever it is we hear breathes IN and OUT with inconsistency and pain. Somewhere within the bestial, awful sounds, we can hear a very human voice--Michael'S VOICE--call out.

TITLE - ONE MONTH LATER

INT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Gazing out through a window with its curtains open, we can see the moon--full and blue and glorious. A single cloud drifts by it, blotting it out for just a moment and then crossing, leaving the moon in its solitary brilliance.

The camera tilts down and walks down the hallway. We gaze into the living room. We see someone's arms draped over the back of a couch, head slumped over. It's Michael, and he looks hurt.

Thick, coarse, black hair is GROWING out of his arms at an alarming rate!

The closer the camera gets to him, the louder his BREATHING and WHEEZING is. In an almost normal voice, he speaks.

MICHAEL

Oh, god. Oh, god help me.

Something tears at him from the inside.

MICHAEL

Please, help.

EXT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE

We hear, from the outside of the house, a muffled HOWL.

The WIND BLOWS through the trees and nothing else is heard.

CHAOTIC POV SHOT - From the perspective of whatever it is that Michael was turning into on the couch in the living room, he runs as a quick speed through a dirt road. We see his hands and feet clawing at the ground for leverage to help propel him faster. He's moving so fast. A car, headlights bright in front of it, turns down the dirt road, and he hides in brush until it passes. GROWLING and MOANING, he continues on his way. The dirt and gravel beneath him looks like a blur and everything else around him looks almost surreal. The color is all wrong, like the world is being seen through eyes of another creature. It looks wrong, but better somehow, like he can see better like this. He sees a lone house on a hill, with a single porch light on, and makes his way toward it.

POV SHOT CONTINUED - Michael prowls the outside perimeter of the house, checking for a way in. His human-looking-but-hairy arm with long claws reaches out and tries the door. It's locked. He moves around back and tries the backdoor. Locked. The windows are locked to, not

(CONTINUED)

budging when he tries them for weaknesses. Up top, he sees a window on the second floor and scales the side until he makes his way to it. Success! It slides open.

Inside the house a small dog emerges and begins BARKING, ALARMING the owner of his presence.

INT. HOUSE ON THE HILL - NIGHTTIME

In a cozy-looking bedroom, a woman sleeps. She is peaceful now, unaware that something is in her house. When her DOG begins BARKING, she bolts awake, first looking annoyed. She turns over on her side and slumps back down on the bed hard and positions her pillow on top of her ear to help keep the noise down. The dog does not stop.

Her look of annoyance turns into fear and terror when she hears the dog suddenly YELP, and the barking stop immediately. She sits up in bed, the moonlight casting her shadow behind her larger than life.

WOMAN
(softly)
Sadie?

She slips out of bed, her bare feet hesitant to touch the ground and begin her journey to find out what's happening.

She pushes the bedroom door open with a SLOW, WINING CREEK. The moonlight from the open window grows out from her bedroom and into the hallway as it opens. She steps softly and quietly, trying to make as little sound as possible.

WOMAN
(whispering)
Sadie!

No answer. She continues her way down the hallway. On her way, she passes a bathroom with a lighted candle she forgot to blow out before bed. All around the bathroom and the surrounding hallway walls are discolored into a dancing, flickering orange.

A window is open and the curtains are drifting and flapping from the newly-created wind. She sets it shut and latches it.

Something catches her eye. She bends to look and sees the smallest drop of blood. She touches her fingers to it--wet. It's fresh blood. Her heart in her throat and pumping, she stands again, but this time faint and looking like she's on the edge of collapsing from fear.

(CONTINUED)

CREEK, CREEK, CREEK, her feet one by one make their way down the carpeted stairs and down into what may as well be the depths of hell: Her first floor.

She hears something. She cocks her head to hear better and it's the sound of CHEWING. She holds her hand to her chest and proceeds.

CRASH! The sound of something falling BOOMS out!

By this point, she looks absolutely terrified, but something inside of her is compelling her to move forward. Something is drawing her to the sound.

And that's when she sees the most awful thing she'll ever see. The fridge in her kitchen has been knocked down and food spilled about, the light from the appliance pointed downward on the carnage on display on the tiled floor. But there's something else. Michael is sitting squatted about the food. He looks completely awful. He looks like the thing that attacked him leaving the mountain man compound. He has in his hands a piece of turkey from the fridge and he's tearing it apart.

And then Michael sees HER. His eyes narrow and his pupils dilate. His lips peel back and his teeth shine in the night. He's barely visible in the darkness, but what we can see of him is the stuff that nightmares are made of.

WOMAN

Please don't hurt me.

She backs up slowly, slowly. She never takes her eyes off of him. She backs up, maintaining eye contact and never moving suddenly, out of fear that any sudden movements could set the beast off and her life right then and there.

As she moves, Michael moves. He matches her pace. He matches her pace through the kitchen and up the stairs. He BREATHES that same awful SHALLOW, WHEEZING breath and flicks a tongue over his long, shiny teeth. A dribble of saliva streams from the corner of his lip and all the way down to the ground.

She moves past the bathroom again, with him in tow, and the orange light flickers through the fur coating down his back. He follows her, she looking at him and walking backward the entire time, into the bedroom. She crawls into bed like a scared child and lays back into it. Michael sits in the doorway on his haunches.

She slides the blanket over her eyes and during that moment, we are with her underneath the blanket, seeing nothing else but her face pressed up against the fabric.

(CONTINUED)

WOMAN

Our Father, which art in heaven,
Hallowed be thy Name. Thy Kingdom
come. Thy will be done in earth, as
it is in heaven. Give us this day
our daily bread. And forgive us our
trespasses, as we forgive them that
trespass against us. And lead us
not into temptation, but deliver us
from evil. For thine is the
kingdom. The power, and the
glory...

We hear the sound of something heavy move its way onto the mattress and we see her head move from the shift in weight. The bed springs are squeaking together and her already panicked breathing becomes absolute, incosollable dread. She finishes the prayer, nonetheless.

WOMAN

For ever and ever.
(beat)
Amen.

She stays under the blanket for half a moment longer and peels it from her face, to see Michael as the beast with his face right up against her.

He SNAPS FORWARD at an impossible speed and blood splashes on the wall behind her.

INT. CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

A TEACHER stands before a classroom full of disinterested students, but perhaps the most disinterested of them all is Michael. He looks tired and beat down, like every ounce of energy has been wrung from him.

Everything that the teacher says is inaudible. It's like her dialogue has been recorded underwater. Michael blinks slowly, and we can practically see his eyelids stick to his eyeballs.

A piece of paper lands on his desk. For a brief moment, Michael has the energy to look away from the one spot he's been staring at on the wall. Adam, sitting next to him, is the one to have tossed it to him. He opens it up and looks down. It's a note that reads, "Do you like me? Yes, no, maybe. Circle one."

Adam winks and nods. Michael rolls his eyes and chuckles softly.

(CONTINUED)

Adam clears his throat, and in doing so, accidentally FARTS. The class erupts in a soft GIGGLE, some laughing harder than others.

ADAM

Ah, just to let you guys know, I was clearing my throat and just happened to fart. I wasn't clearing my throat to cover up the sound of me farting.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - MOMENTS LATER

The full spectrum of young, school life is on display. Stoner kids are laying down on the grass, jocks are flexing to each other and girls, nerds are sticking together, and Michael and Adam walk and talk.

Someone runs up to Adam, LAUGHING on his way up. The sound of his laughter gets louder the closer he gets to Adam and Michael until he approaches them and stops.

LAUGHING KID

Hey, Adam, I heard you farted.

ADAM

Oh. Yeah. I heard you also farted once.

The laughing kid looks befuddled by the response and walks away. Adam and Michael shake their heads and keep on walking.

ADAM

Have you been okay, buddy?

MICHAEL

I guess so. I'm doing okay. I just feel like shit. I've felt like shit ever since I got out of the hospital.

ADAM

Did you see anyone about it?

MICHAEL

Yeah, I had a few followup appointments. They said it's normal, that I'll be back to myself in no time.

(beat)

Also that I'm probably depressed.

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

Well... duh. No, shit. That makes sense. It was depressing what happened. You have a lot of reason to feel depressed.

MICHAEL

I know. I'm just having such bad dreams, too, you know. Really fucked up dreams I wish I wouldn't have anymore.

ADAM

I'm sorry, man.

MICHAEL

That's okay, dude. You're a good friend. I like having you around to talk about shit like this. It... helps me feel better.

EXT. FISHING LAKE - HOURS LATER

A lake shimmers with specks of sunlight like flakes of gold upon its surface and a quiet breeze blows tiny waves back and forth, dancing to and fro in the afternoon sun.

At the lake's shore, Gillian and Michael lay back on a blanket, in the dry grass and stare up at the sky. A cloud drifts into their field of vision.

GILLIAN

To me, that cloud looks like almost exactly like a zombie with an oven mitt.

MICHAEL

Like he's got something in the oven?

GILLIAN

Yeah, exactly. Like, this zombie has a home life.

MICHAEL

So, he's not just moaning the streets, this one.

GILLIAN

No, he BUYS brains. Free range.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

I'm pretty sure brains are gluten free, too.

GILLIAN

Oh, definitely, they are. And organic. No GMO grains or anything.

Another cloud drifts into view of them.

GILLIAN

What does that one look to you?

Michael takes a long time before answering. He sizes up the cloud and finally has an answer that's satisfactory to him.

MICHAEL

Like if the USS Enterprise and the Millennium Falcon had a baby.

GILLIAN

(laughing)

Took you long enough to answer that one.

(beat)

Nerd!

MICHAEL

Hey, the slow worm gets the bird.

GILLIAN

What?

MICHAEL

Oh. Sorry. I like to butcher cliches. It's a thing I do.

GILLIAN

Oh, I love doing that.

MICHAEL

Because I've heard people say some really good ones on total accident.

GILLIAN

The sincerity is what makes it better. Like when someone is talking about how, alright, let's do this thing. Let's dive in, feet first!

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Yeah! Or... don't kick a gift horse in the mouth.

GILLIAN

Looking a gift horse in the mouth is rude, but KICKING a gift horse in the mouth is psychotic.

MICHAEL

Who would do that?!

GILLIAN

Why did I give a horse to this crazy person?! He straight up kicked it in the mouth!

We pull back from their laughter, seeing their shadowed shapes silhouetted against a setting sun and just enjoy the moment with them while we can.

INT. MICHAEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

It's night at Michael's house and his mom and step dad are in the living room watching TV, some semi-brainless sit-com with a canned audience laughing at every joke so that the viewer at home knows which lines are supposed to be funny.

Down the hallway, Michael is in the bathroom, looking like he's in distress. He's on the toilet, gripping his stomach and grimacing in pain. He HISSES through his teeth and sweat and tears in equal measure slide down his cheeks.

He finally stands up to flush and in the mess of the toilet looks like a mixture of shit, blood and... hair.

Michael notices what looks like hair intermingles with his dump and his eyes widen into saucers.

MICHAEL

What... the fuck?

Michael FLUSHES the toilet to erase the memory of what he saw, to get it out of his head and out of his mind.

EXT. MOONLIT FIELD - NIGHT

On any given night, the moon glows above a field, casting a seemingly unnatural glow on everything below it. The night is still, and the only movement we see is from animals--bunnies hopping from bushes, coyotes huddled together in packs.

(CONTINUED)

Off in the distance, we see someone. We see a man, walking. He's naked, totally disrobed, and stumbling like a drunk. As he gets closer, his features are more and more clarified, until he gets close enough to see fully--it's Michael! His eyes are shut and he's wandering the night with his eyes closed, walking in a dream and through the night, unaware.

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Michael's ALARM screams him awake and he bolts up, disoriented. He slaps all around his bedside table, smacking everything BUT the alarm, feeling around frantically but unable to see anything quite yet, until he's pulled further from his sleep.

The ALARM finally shuts off and he lays back in bed. He shuts his eyes, but only a moment later reopens them. Something doesn't seem right. Something is amiss.

He pulls his blankets back and looks down at his feet: Covered in dirt and mud and gunk and several of his toenails are broken, with dried blood sticking some of his toes together.

Michael snaps forward, shocked and horrified by this finding, to get a closer look.

INT. BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Michael jumps in the shower to wash away the memories of this unfortunate finding about himself, much like he did with the hair that he found in the toilet. The blood and the dirt mingle together into a dark brown color as they both circle the drain. The wounds on Michael's feet, however, are bright red and look fresh.

INT. CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

In the same classroom we were in earlier, Michael looks even MORE disinterested than before, if that were possible. He has his elbow propped on the desk and his hand supporting his chin. He gazes forward but his eyelids appear too heavy to support on their own and they droop more and more, drooping closed until they settle shut. A slight SNORE, a small one, begins to escape his lips, SNZZZZ....

In an instant, his eyes snap wide open and he lets out a loud SCREAM--not like of emerging from a nightmare, but like the scream someone would let out if they were sure that they were going to die.

The entire class looks back at him, looking confused and curious. Adam, however, looks absolutely terrified for his friend.

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Michael is laying on his side, unable to sleep. He turns over to face the ceiling and stares at it up above. Stark, white nothingness, with bumps and imperfections and countless dots.

After finally admitting to and coming to terms with his sleeplessness, he grabs his phone off of his bedside table and calls Adam. It rings and rings and goes to voicemail. He hangs up and calls again. This time Adam answers.

ADAM

Hello?

MICHAEL

Hey.

ADAM

It's late, man. What's up.

Michael begins to cry.

MICHAEL

I can't sleep.

ADAM

Are you okay, man?

MICHAEL

(sniffling)

I don't know. I don't know anymore. I can never sleep anymore and when I do, I wake up so tired. I just don't feel right.

ADAM

You're okay, buddy. You're doing fine. It's been hard for you, but... fuck it. Whenever you feel like this, just call me. I'll be here.

MICHAEL

Do you ever feel guilty about what happened?

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

Sometimes. Sometimes I feel guilty, but I try not to. Why?

MICHAEL

Because I feel guilty all the time.

ADAM

You didn't do anything, though.

MICHAEL

I know, but I've been having these dreams--

ADAM

The ones with Chito in them?

MICHAEL

Yeah! But, I've been having other dreams lately, too. You know that lady that died? The one that they never found?

ADAM

Oh, oh yeah. The, uh, the substitute teacher lady.

MICHAEL

I had a dream with her in it and she told me that it was my fault. Chito was there, too. She was just standing there and she looked so sad. And when I walked up to her, she backed up, walking away from me and told me not to come any closer. And she told me that *I* killed her.

ADAM

That's really weird. I hate those kinds of dreams. It's like, what do you want from me, subconscious? I didn't do anything, man!

Michael doesn't say anything in response. He just continues to lay there with the phone pressed up against his ear, the blue light of the phone wrapping around the side of his face.

ADAM

But, hey, tomorrow's gonna be fun for you. Par-tay time with Gillian and her friends.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Yeah, I know. I'm really looking forward to it.

ADAM

Good, you deserve something to look forward to.

MICHAEL

Hey, can I text you the address later? In case it's weird or wack or whatever, can you come pick me up?

ADAM

Uh... sure. No problemo. I mean, it's probably gonna be Aweeeesome. Someone's gonna get laid.

MICHAEL

(laughing)

Oh, well. We'll see what happens. Have a good night, buddy.

ADAM

You, too.

EXT. RURAL HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON

A poorly paved road, dusty and gray rather than black, with stripes that are crackling and peeling paint, leads us toward the horizon, disappearing into the mountains dotting the distance.

Gillian's car WHOOSHES by.

INT. GILLIAN'S CAR - SAME

Armed with plenty of snacks and music to combat the boredom of the road, Gillian and Michael make their way to the cabin for the party they've planned. The window is down and fresh air blows through the car, through their hair. Michael sticks his hand out to feel the force against his fingers.

MICHAEL

How much longer we got until we get there?

(CONTINUED)

GILLIAN
Why, you in a hurry?

MICHAEL
Nah, just wondering. I'm a
terribly impatient passenger.

GILLIAN
Eh, we'll be there in about another
90 minutes or so.

MICHAEL
Cool. I call first dibs on the
bathroom.

GILLIAN
Ewww! THAT'S why you're
asking. If you want me to pull
over on the side of the road--

MICHAEL
Nah, it's not that kind of "having
to go to the bathroom."

GILLIAN
I repeat: Ewww!
(beat)
Do you want me to find a gas
station?

MICHAEL
Nah. I can hold it. 90
minutes? That's nothing. I say we
just head out and get there and
that'll be perfect timing.

GILLIAN
Alright, I'll speed up.

MICHAEL
No, no, no. No need. 90 minutes
is perfect.

GILLIAN
You're gross.

MICHAEL
I am, aren't I? Jesus.

GILLIAN
Yeah, but you've got charm, so it's
okay.

OUTSIDE

The car WHOOSSES by the viewer's position on the side of the road once more and climbs up the mountain road toward the cabin.

EXT. CABIN - EARLY EVENING

Gillian's friend's cabin is surrounded by a mouth of forest, effectively and visually swallowing it whole. Though there is still some light still out, the darkness of night has already begun to cast itself over the land and the lamps inside the cabin are glowing within.

Gillian's car crawls up the driveway at a sluggish pace, BOTTOMING out once on its way up. She parks among a group of other cars and comes to a stop.

Gillian and Michael pile out. The trunk pops open so they can gather their stuff.

MICHAEL

I told you you were going too fast.

GILLIAN

I wasn't going too fast, I'm just loaded with a lot of extra weight my car's not used to.

MICHAEL

Is that a fat joke?

He pinches a fat roll off of his belly and shakes it at her.

GILLIAN

I was referring to the stuff in the trunk, but I guess it works if I talk about the stuff in YOUR trunk.

They both laugh and walk their way up the steps to the cabin's front door. Before they come to it or have a chance to knock, it swings wide open and her friend whose family owns the cabin--JASON--stands in the doorway.

Jason is dressed well and is clearly well off. He's clasically handsome. He looks meticulously groomed, like he has an ongoing appointment with a barber bimonthly. Michael is immediately, silently, jealous of him.

JASON

Gillian! Oh, my god, it's so good to see you!

(CONTINUED)

She drops her bag and runs up the steps to give Jason a hug. Michael stands below, swiveling on the balls of his feet awkwardly.

GILLIAN

Oh, it's good to see you, too!

She looks down and sees Michael below.

GILLIAN

Jason, this is my good friend,
Michael. Michael, this is Jason,
this is his family's cabin.

MICHAEL

Hi, good to meet you.

JASON

Likewise. She's told me a lot
about you.

MICHAEL

(somewhat incredulous)

Oh?

JASON

Yeah, she told me about what
happened to you and your
friends. It's good to finally meet
you, my friend. Your house is my
house and Gillian's a great
girl. I know you had a string of
THE most unfortunate luck I could
ever imagine, but hopefully
tonight--because it's going to be
magical--will help change your luck
a little bit.

Immediately, Michael is taken aback and warms up to Jason. Jason really IS a good guy.

MICHAEL

Well, thank you. Thank you very
much.

JASON

Now, get your asses inside! We're
taking shots!

INT. CABIN - EVENING

About 10 people, not counting Jason, Gillian or Michael, are scattered around the living room. They all turn and greet Michael and Gillian as they enter, cups and bottles in the air, and let out an, "Ehhhh!!!"

Gillian and Michael return their gesture with a wave and a smile and a nod.

They come to the kitchen where Jason has them set down their things, then slams three shot glasses down on the counter and fills them with tequila. He has salt and lime ready. They lick salt from their hands, shoot the tequila and bite into the lime. They all three wince and shake their heads, exhaling the stink of the tequila outward.

JASON

Whooooohhh! That'll put hair on yer chest, huh?

(beat)

Come on, let me show you around!

They follow Jason into the living room where the party seems to be at right now.

JASON

Everyone, this is Gillian--whom some of you have met--and THIS is Michael--whom I suspect NONE of you have met yet. But, don't worry, he's a sweet guy.

MICHAEL

Thank you.

Everyone in the groups says, "Hiiiiiii, Michael!"

Jason leads them to upstairs and motions down the hallway.

JASON

Bathroom's down thataway. My room's at the end of the hall, so if you need anything like blankets or a board game, or need to complain, I'm in there. Pound, knock, whatever. I'll get up. And, uh, you guys are right here.

Jason pushes it open and they step inside and throw their things on the bed.

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

Wait, we get our own room?

JASON

That's right.

He winks and makes a CLICKING sound with the side of his mouth and steps out backward into the hallway and down the stairs.

MICHAEL

(nervous)

Well, that was very, very nice of him.

GILLIAN

He's cool, right?

MICHAEL

He is. I really like him.

GILLIAN

Good. I'm glad.

She smiles at him and he smiles back, somewhat sheepishly.

DOWNSTAIRS

Some time passes after they settled into their room and the party is now in full force. Music is playing and everyone is drinking or dancing, or both.

Michael walks to the kitchen to refresh his beer and stops and puts a hand on his stomach. A sharp pain causes him to move forward a bit, but he shakes it off and continues. He grabs two beers and heads back to the living room area and hands one to Gillian.

GILLIAN

I thought you didn't drink.

MICHAEL

I don't, but I thought tonight might be a good night for it.

GILLIAN

Yeah, try new things. Live a little!

MICHAEL

I know. I plan on it.

Behind them the floor-to-ceiling windows have their curtains drawn and the beautiful night sky is behind them. The moon is full and the stars are twinkling around it.

INT. ADAM'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Adam's room is a sloppy, sloppy mess. It looks like the room of some sort of eccentric genius, or possibly just a madman. He has a dirty plate on his bed and posters for old movies plastered everywhere.

Adam himself is glued to his computer, editing footage from the mountain man compound. He has his headphones in and is studying the screen intently as he makes cuts, swaps shots and lowers audio levels.

Adam realizes he hasn't blinked for like two solid minutes and blinks hard, keeps them shut, and scoots back in his chair. He presses his palms into his eyeballs and rubs them.

ADAM

Oh. Oh, wow. Ow.

(beat)

I need a break.

KITCHEN

Adam's kitchen, his mother's domain, is nearly spotless. In fact, from what we can see around the rest of the house, the only disgusting area is Adam's domain. Everything else looks fantastic.

He opens the fridge and grabs a 2-liter bottle of store brand grape soda and pours himself a glass, but also take a swig straight from the bottle before putting it back. He also grabs a couple pieces of fried chicken to eat for later.

On his way back to his room, he sees a newspaper and stops to glance at it: The headline front and center is regarding the woman that Michael had killed (unbeknownst to Adam) in her home. He feels compelled to set his drink and snack aside and actually pick up the article. He reads through it and as he does, certain words and phrases pop out at us. Phrases like, "BODY NEVER FOUND" and "UNKNOWN ANIMAL."

A curious look emerges on Michael's face, something like, "I wonder?" and, instead of going back to his room, he takes a seat in the living room and sends a text to Michael: "So, how is the party?"

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Still going strong, the partygoers move and dance and sway to Starship's "Nothing's Gonna Stop Us Now" that's playing from the stereo. No words are exchanged, but a lot is spoken between Michael and Gillian in their wordless exchange. She reaches her hands out to him and he takes them, and she leads him to the floor to dance slowly. They look into each other's eyes. As the song ends, he smiles and she does too. She excuses herself to the kitchen.

Michael looks at his phone and replies to Adam's text with, "Actually, great. I'll hit you up buddy."

Not but a minute later, Michael fishes his phone out of his pocket and sees Adam's response, "Okay. Let me know if you need a ride or anything."

Michael replies, "K."

BZZZZT! His phone vibrates again! This time, annoyed, he sees a "K" from Adam with a smiley face and doesn't bother replying.

INT. ADAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Adam is in the same position he was before on the couch, but now the chicken is gone and the soda is half empty. He gazes forward, looking at the text and rubs a hand through his hair and over the back of his head.

ADAM
(to himself)
I don't know...

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Michael, now in the kitchen, and visibly intoxicated, talks to an even more intoxicated Jason.

JASON
Nah, man, I'm just really, really glad that all you guys are here. My family never uses this goddamn place and I want to make sure everyone has a good time tonight, you know.

MICHAEL
Of course! I'm having a GREAT time tonight.

(CONTINUED)

JASON

Because...

Jason pours himself another drink and swallows it in one gulp and then returns to finish what he was saying.

JASON

...you're drunk.

MICHAEL

So?

JASON

So, great! Everyone drink up!

Everyone around the house CHEERS, lifts up their drinks, and has another gulp.

Michael turns around to see Gillian walking toward him.

GILLIAN

Do you... want to go upstairs?

MICHAEL

I...

He looks and sees Jason giving a drunken, sloppy nod of approval.

MICHAEL

Uh, yeah.

UPSTAIRS

Michael sits on the bed, while Gillian removes their bags and things from it and sets them on the ground. She sits next to him and puts her hand on his knee. He looks like he thinks he should say something, but doesn't know what, so he remains silent instead.

GILLIAN

I... really like you.

MICHAEL

I really like you, too.

GILLIAN

The other day: Why didn't you kiss me by the lake?

(CONTINUED)

MICHAEL

I don't know. I think I was waiting until tonight.

GILLIAN

Well, what are you waiting for NOW?

He just goes for it. He leans in and kisses her and they entwine and embrace and fall down toward the bed, kissing.

During their kiss, Michael doubles over from pain and clutches his stomach again, but muffles the sound of pain and conceals it as a moan of passion and tries to ignore it.

We see the back of his neck begin to spout THICK, BLACK hair, streaming from his skin and growing outward at an alarming rate. He touches a hand to his neck where the hair is growing--but his hand is mutated and ugly, with long, crooked fingers growing from it.

Still kissing, he rolls her over. Their kiss is separated just for a moment when their lips disconnect and not but a second passes before he lunges forward on her and sinks his teeth into her neck, around her throat.

Gillian is suddenly paralyzed, like a gazelle that has a lion ripping into its neck. She tries to scream but is unable to. Her throat and trachea CRUNCH under Michael's jaw.

Her hand goes limp.

INT. ADAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Sensing that something is wrong, not knowing what, but only knowing that he has to do something, Adam tries calling Michael, but it simply rings and rings. He tries Gillian and gets the same result. He paces back and forth and decides to throw on a coat and head out. On his way out, he opens the front door and shouts over his shoulder.

ADAM

Ma, I gotta do something! I'm taking your car, I'll be back.

BETH

(off screen)

What?

The door slams behind him before he has a chance to answer her.

OUTSIDE

Adam jumps into his mom's car and takes off quickly, peeling out on the dirt and causing dust to kick up into the air. We watch him from a distance and as he gets down the road, we see another car turn its engine over and follow.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Downstairs, with Michael and Gillian missing, Jason looks at the stairway, and he knows what's happening. He sort of chuckles and smiles and shakes his head as he nurses a drink.

A friend comes up to him with a drink of his own and takes a slug from it, off balance from drunkenness.

JASON'S FRIEND

Where did, ah, those two go? Gillian and Michael?

JASON

Upstairs.

JASON'S FRIEND

Ohhhhh... I see. Someone's gettin' lucky!

JASON

Oh you better believe it. This is a cabin... of love.

JASON'S FRIEND

They've been up there awhile.

JASON

That they have been.

Jason's friend hold up a finger like, "I'll be right back," and runs off somewhere. Less than a minute later he comes back with a video camera.

JASON'S FRIEND

Shall we?

JASON

Shall we what?

JASON'S FRIEND

Oh, come on! It'll be funny! We embarrass them for like a second! It's like dumping cold water on someone in a hot shower.

(CONTINUED)

Jason thinks about it for a second.

JASON

Okay!

UPSTAIRS

Jason and his friend have their ear pressed up against Gillian and Michael's door and listen. They hear grunting and groaning and what sounds to be like kissing sounds--but we know that they're anything but.

JASON'S FRIEND

It sounds like they're really going at it in there.

JASON

Okay, here's the plan: We push the door open real quick, hit the lights, say something stupid and then run out. They'll yell at us later.

JASON'S FRIEND

Good plan!

Jason slides a key into the lock and unlocks it very, very slowly, saying "Sh, sh, sh!" to himself as he does it. He winces as he turns it and the mechanism CLICKS, signifying that it's now ready to open. He slides the key out slowly and drops it into his pocket and looks back at his friend to count down, silently, "3, 2... 1!"

The two idiots push the door open and flick the switch on the wall to turn on the light, but as soon as it kicks on something RUSHES by and smacks into the dangling ceiling light.

The light sways, casting light in each direction, illuminating only pieces here and there. As the light swishes one way, all we see are Jason and his friend looking terrified in the doorway. As the light swishes another way, we see a dresser. The light is now cast over the luggage. Now, the bed. And, now.... Gillian, dead, with her throat ripped out.

The two men in the doorway GASP when they see this and begin backing out and away from the gore and the carnage. When the light settles, below Gillian they can see the beast that Michael became, gnawing at Gillian's intestines. It has her guts in its hands and is ripping at them with its teeth and swallowing in large chunks.

(CONTINUED)

The two men let out a SCREAM! The partygoers below look up.

The beasts eyes narrow and its pupils dilate.

IT LUNGES! It knocks into Jason's friend first with all its weight and brings him to the ground. It sinks its claws into his chest and rips.

JASON'S FRIEND

Oh, god! Oh, god help me! Help me,
please, god, oh Jesus god help me!

RIP! Blood sprays from his chest and over the beast and he is dead.

Jason is paralyzed with fear at first, wobbly in the knees, looking at his dead friend and this thing that came from hell.

JASON

Please--

Jason turns and runs and the thing leaps through the air and lands on him and punches its snout into his back, killing him.

INT. ADAM'S MOM'S CAR - NIGHT

Adam is hauling ass up the mountain road as quickly as he can. The window in the backseat is still broken and a chilly air is blowing in, causing him to shiver and shake as he clutches the steering wheel tightly. He grits his teeth together and mutters something we can't understand.

The world around him outside is black, and only occasional glimpses of trees can be seen when his headlights spot them.

INT. CABIN - NIGHT

Downtown, the partygoers scramble and split up to save themselves. Girls abandon their boyfriends and boyfriends abandon their girlfriends. Everyone is in it for themselves now and want to live, desperately. Some even make it outside and run for the hills, while others inside find themselves victims to their prey.

The beast that was once Michael leaps off the upstairs balcony and onto someone, claws out, and rips them down the middle, spilling gore onto the floor below.

A girl witnessing this madness, limp and accepting her death, stands before the scene and allows it to rake its claws across her throat and split her life force down her blouse. Still in shock, she calmly touches the wound, looks at her stained fingers, and falls dead onto the floor.

INT. ADAM'S MOM'S CAR - NIGHT

Adam pulls into the driveway of a cabin. He double checks the address on his phone, but realizes he has the right place when he sees people fleeing from the opened front door. Someone jumps in a car and takes off at an incredible speed, just pedal to the metal and almost crashes into Adam head-on on their way out.

Adam checks the glove compartment and the gun is still there. He pulls it out and checks the magazine: Fully loaded.

All sound is deadened or muffled and "Werewolf on the Hood of Your Heartbreak" by Man Man begins to play.

Adam puts the car in park and begins and steps out of the vehicle and toward the house. He walks up and into the mouth of the house like someone approaching the gates of hell.

INSIDE

Adam walks inside and the camera tracks his feet. He comes to another pair of feet, but as we track sideways we see that the feet and legs belonging to someone else are not attached to anyone, they're severed and soaking in a puddle of blood.

All around the cabin is mayhem and madness and carnage. There are dead bodies, pieces of them, strewn everywhere. Bits of skin and flesh are dangling from places and everything, except for the music playing, is so still and so eerily quiet.

Adam walks upstairs, the wooden steps CREAKING and GROANING beneath his weight as he makes his way up. He stops himself, collects himself, and breathes in. He continues down the hallway and pushes a door open.

There, he sees it. The familiar face of the monster that attacked his friends all those nights ago, but now different somehow. Because now this is his friend, and not just some THING.

(CONTINUED)

ADAM

Michael?

The beast does not acknowledge him.

Adam CLICKS the hammer back on the gun, and the beast's ear twitched toward the sound and POUNCES. It knocks them both clear through a wall and onto the ground. Before it has time to swipe its claws across him, he sticks the gun into its furry belly and FIRES! The bullet rips through its gut and paints a splotch on the wall behind it red, with a hole smack dab in the middle of the spray.

Michael, the beast, HOWLS out in pain and bites down on the arm holding the gun. Adam screams too and drops the gun and rolls over on his wound to help contain some of the blood that's flowing from it.

When he rolls back over, the beast is nowhere to be seen. Adam crawls toward fresh trickles of blood and follows it to another room.

Michael, his friend, is leaned against the wall, now a human again, bleeding out profusely. He's dying. Adam crawls toward him and slumps up on the wall next to him. They sit next to each other, up against a wall, both bleeding out from their wounds.

Adam looks down at Michael's gunshot wound to the stomach and sees how severe it is.

ADAM

I'm going to call 911. We can make it. We can do something about this. We can--

We hear the door that Adam crawled through CREEEEEEK open, slowly, like a lingering scream. Though we don't see him, we see his shadow. We see the shadow of Dwayne cast on the wall behind them, holding a shotgun.

ADAM

No, don't! Wait--

Adam is cut short when a BLAST from a shotgun rips through Michael's chest and he dies instantly when his ribcage blows outward. Adam holds his hand out to shield his face from seeing what is bound to happen and pellets from the buckshot tear through his fingers and face, killing him.

The screen goes black.

(CONTINUED)

The song continues. The song morphs into ambient ocean sounds. As the credits crawl, the ocean sounds turn into a scream.

THE END