

Ode (first 30 pages)

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Comedy/drama with magic realism.

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FADE IN:

EXT. YORKTOWN, ARIZONA - WELMAN COLLEGE - NIGHT

SUPER: Early May - 1999

A rustic college campus with an Ivy League ambience on the outskirts of a sleepy town.

The sort of town where everyone kind of knows everyone else. Kind of.

Coyote howls in the rustic, high desert landscape.

EXT. WELMAN COLLEGE - CENTRAL QUAD - NIGHT

A statue of THE BIG COWBOY stands in the quad. Magnificent. Dignified. Sort of.

Empty shot glasses lay scattered in the grass near an office trash can. Suddenly, another shot glass bounces off the trash can rim from above.

EXT. WELMAN COLLEGE - BUILDING ROOF OVERLOOKING QUAD - NIGHT

A bottle of Yukon Jack whiskey sits on the roof's ledge, along with a line of unused shot glasses.

A HAND reaches for the bottle, pours another shot.

The glass is raised in the air by BRANDON LARMIKE, 50, a disheveled, but likeable, campus literature professor.

BRANDON
(to The Big Cowboy statue
below)
For you, sir ---

He downs the shot, then pretends the glass is a grenade. Pulls the pin, launches it into space.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
--- and the horse you rode in on!!

SFX: When it glances off the trash can below, surrounding night air ripples mysteriously away and appears to explode distantly. Reminiscent of World War Two Army cannon fire.

Brandon peers curiously into the foreboding darkness.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
Huh.

INT. ALLEN'S APARTMENT - OVERLOOKING THE QUAD - NIGHT

Full of GOTHIC FURNISHINGS, including memorabilia featuring warlocks, vampires, ghosts, and zombies.

A particularly cool movie poster is titled Shape Shifter Warriors.

By a window...

ALLEN, 35, a bearded dwarf (little person).

Watching Brandon intently.

Allen is regally and gruffly gay, wears over-sized rings on his fingers, and has black eyeliner. In his hands is a book titled The Illuminated Path.

Nearby diary has scrawlings from the Crimean Gothic language.

EXT. WELMAN COLLEGE BUILDING ROOFTOP - NIGHT

A part-time, uniformed security guard, PAUL, African-American, approaches Brandon.

His uniform is TOO BIG and has way too many items on the belt, ie. two pepper sprays, two sets of handcuffs, two batons, etc.

Brandon still gazes into the darkness, muttering.

BRANDON

That's never happened before.

PAUL

You've been spending an awful lot of time up here lately, prof'.

BRANDON

(turns, brightens)

Ah hah, my trusty teaching assistant! Do you know why Greek mythology is so significant to historians?

PAUL

I thought it was only significant to poets and philosophers, sir. You've said that in class.

BRANDON

(drunkenly)

I never said anything of the sort!

Lights a good cigar, puffs grandly.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

In fact, poets and philosophers are
our greatest historians. Mythology
is significant because it
represents the infinite. And,
infinity is a poet's best friend!
(gazes below)
The Greeks had a lot of statues.

Reaches for the Yukon Jack bottle, pours two shots, offers
one to Paul, who declines.

PAUL

I need my job, prof'.

Brandon downs both shots, launches glasses over the edge.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Someone could get hurt if you keep
tossin' those things.

BRANDON

Built on a foundation of truths!
But, more importantly, myths are
human. So, very, very human.
(delightedly)
The glasses are plastic, Paul.
Plastic!

EXT. WELMAN COLLEGE - DEAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The Dean of Welman College, Professor Emeritus COLIN
SOMERSBY, 85, stands on the porch in his housecoat.

Observing the unfolding drama across the way.

Not too pleased.

EXT. WELMAN COLLEGE - BUILDING ROOF - NIGHT

Brandon lifts another shot glass, teeters near the edge.

BRANDON

Yukon Jack doesn't mind plastic.

PAUL

Maybe we should get goin'.

BRANDON

Sire, are you offering a security
escort home? Because if you are---

Steps back.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
I accept! If, and only if, you
present Moonlight Road.

PAUL
I'll do the first verse.

BRANDON
First verse it is!

As Paul takes off his guard hat, preparing to quote the poem, his demeanor changes to that of formal nobility.

SFX: Faintly... of a piano simply playing Chopsticks.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
You truly are a brilliant scholar,
you know.

PAUL
Thanks.
(takes a moment)
'Walk with me, O, moonlight road
we've many more miles to travel
.. it seems as though the gravel
and stones beneath my feet are
hungry, ravenous for the light that
shines from this brilliant orb
which rules the night.'

SFX: Piano music grows a bit louder, more sophisticated, as a full moon seems to beckon Paul's words.

EXT. BRANDON'S NEAR CAMPUS RESIDENCE - NIGHT

An unkempt lot with a trailer home haphazardly set in the middle. Uncut grass.

Rusted, drooping children's swing set off to the side, near a battered 1964 Pontiac Laurentian car.

Paul approaches, carting Brandon over his shoulder.

INT. BRANDON'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Messy.

Filled with bookshelves full of literary tomes and stacks of documents. But it has a touch of class, some great antique furniture, a few contemporary works of art.

A pair of ladies panties dangles on an EMPTY wine bottle.

Paul dumps Brandon on a worn, overstuffed leather sofa, props a pillow under his head.

An unfinished oil painting leans against a wall: a self-portrait of Brandon beside a DARK-HAIRED, TEENAGE GIRL.

BRANDON

I need less responsibility. These students, classes, creative words. Wearing me out.

As Paul heads for the door.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

I'm worn out. Defeated. Nothing left to offer.

PAUL

What're you so stressed about, prof'?

BRANDON

All of it. Existence. Mankind's burden. The beginning of Time.
(drifting off)
I've never had a vacation, y'know. Never. My life is not interesting anymore. I need to do something interesting.
(then)
Before I die.

Paul leaves quietly.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

(barely audible)
Something interesting. Before I die. Something interesting. Something interesting.

SFX: Piano music hits a wrong note, pauses, plays the right note and continues.

INT. YORKTOWN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL - MUSIC ROOM - NEXT DAY

The ONLY SOUND is still the music.

The dark-haired girl from the unfinished oil painting is at a piano, playing the Chopsticks music.

She is KATEY LARMIKE, 15, and is Brandon's daughter.

Like her piano playing, Katey has a certain mystery.

Other students stop at the open room door, say something, then move on when Katey doesn't notice.

EXT. DOWNTOWN YORKTOWN - DAY

As if time had stopped in the 1950s.

Quaint businesses and shops.

Local Court House in the middle of a five-sided central square.

On a corner is MARNY'S UNIQUE FLOWERS & PLANTS SHOP and its front window has a sign:

Award-winning Hybrids - PARIS
Fleurs de Grand Prix runner-up
1977, 1984 & 1993.

On the roof are golden child cherub figurines.

On another corner is a neon-lit PSYCHIC GYPSY shop.

In front of the Court House are statues honoring World War Two soldiers, and also those from the Vietnam War.

INT. MARNY'S FLOWER SHOP - DAY

Tastefully stocked with exotic flowers, unique plants, local flora and fauna, cactus, and regular types of flowers.

The top of a solitary white Chrysanthemum is starting to bloom, and is being examined by MARNY.

Marny is Brandon's mother and Katey's grandmother. A classy woman, 77, wonderful, warm smile. Well-earned crow's feet adorn the corners of her learned eyes.

MARNY

I don't know. I just don't know.

ALLEN prepares a floral centerpiece on a work table.

He is a fiercely loyal employee.

MARNY (CONT'D)

Paris. It's such a long way to go at my age.

ALLEN

You could definitely win this year, Marny. That Chrysanthemum is exceptional.

MARNY
 (fondly, to her flower)
 Angel's Kiss Chrysanthemum. Shall
 we go to Paris one last time?

SFX: In a corner. A flickering image OF AN OLD BUILDING AT THE END OF A GRAVEL ROAD appears. Then is gone. Unseen.

INT. YORKTOWN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL - MUSIC ROOM - DAY

KATEY'S HANDS work up the piano keyboard until she hits a key that's not working. Continues to plunk it.

The class bell rings and a cool fellow student, JASON, 17, strolls by the room's open door, notices her plunking.

INT. WELMAN COLLEGE - OUTSIDE BRANDON'S OFFICE - DAY

Hung-over from the previous night, Brandon nearly falls over the trash can he was trying to toss shot glasses into. An attached note to the can reads: Happy morning, prof - Paul

Unlocking the office door, Brandon enters the cluttered room and sits behind a vintage, wooden desk.

Shakes several pills from an Aspirin bottle, washes them down with leftover Gatorade.

JILL, a frumpy student, comes in holding a term paper marked with a red D-.

BRANDON
 Jill. Please, sit down.

She does.

Slides over her term paper to him, which he ignores.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 What is an adjective?

JILL
 A descriptive word preceding a noun.

BRANDON
 And what adjective would you use to best describe your term paper?

JILL
 Subliminal.

Glancing at the paper, he reads the first part aloud.

BRANDON

'Answer Yes or No to the following statement, and then justify it. Right or Might is in the interest of the stronger party.'

(slides the paper back over)

Read your answer, please.

JILL

(clears her throat, reads)

'Yes. Blah, blah, blah, blah.'

BRANDON

Keep going.

JILL

'Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah--'

BRANDON

Go to the second page. Last sentence.

JILL

'Blah, blah, blah, blah---

(glares at him)

--- blah'.

(he grimaces)

You're always emphasizing creative simplicity!

BRANDON

That I am.

(nicely, sort of)

But, the works that get higher marks in this class are required to somehow *inspire* the reader to feel as if there is insight-- actual insight-- into the human condition. Does that make any sense? Any sense at all?

JILL

Prof'. I'm trying to say that I think the premise is boring. I'm giving people *insight* into the fact that classical philosophical discourses are an *acquired* taste.

BRANDON

Huh. Anarchy in the classroom.

(sighs, reaches for the term paper)

I suppose that's worth something.

Changes the score to a **B-** as his desk phone rings.

Jill mouths a *Thank You*.

Leaves as Brandon takes the call.

INT. WELMAN COLLEGE - DEAN SOMERSBY'S OFFICE - DAY

SECRETARY for the Dean's office is on the phone.

SECRETARY

The Dean wants to see you after
your first class, Brandon.

INT. WELMAN COLLEGE - BRANDON'S OFFICE - DAY

Brandon hangs up the phone, lifts a bottle of New Crew
cologne, splashes on AN UNSEEMLY AMOUNT.

INT. MARNY'S FLOWER SHOP - DAY

Marny gazes wistfully out a window at the roof of the Welman
College building Brandon was on.

MARNY

Why is Brandon going on that roof
so much? Was he drinking again?

ALLEN

Rumor has it he's on the verge of a
nervous breakdown.

MARNY

Is that why he's drinking so much?
A nervous breakdown?

POSTMAN, an aging stoner, delivers the mail.

Hands an envelope to Marny.

POSTMAN

This one looks important.

It's a letter from the bank stating the mortgage on Marny's
house is PAID IN FULL.

MARNY

I own my house. Outright. Out of
debt! After fifty-five years!

POSTMAN

Very groovy, Marny. Way to go.

ALLEN
 (irritated, in disbelief)
 Did you just say GROOVY? Again?
 Groovy?! Are you fricken kidding
 me?!

Postman hastily departs.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
 Can you believe that guy? Groovy.
 What is this, the fricken Sixties?

SFX: Flickering near the back door. Vintage video images of
 The Eiffel Tower, tourists taking pictures, couples in
 romantic embraces.

Unseen by Marny but Allen catches a glimpse before it
 disappears.

Marny becomes light-headed, manages to steady herself.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
 Are you okay?
 (she nods)
 Follow your path, Marny. To France.

She picks up a 1944 framed picture of herself, exuberant in a
 Bobby Sox outfit. PREGNANT. In the arms of her handsome
 husband, HUBBY, who wears a World War Two soldier's uniform.

MARNY
 It's too bad my Hubby wasn't here
 to share this. We own the house.

Rubs her eyes.

MARNY (CONT'D)
 Well, alright. I'll follow my path.
 To France! I'll have to get a
 booster shot. Yuck.

INT. BRANDON'S CLASSROOM - DAY

Brandon stands gazing out a window overlooking The Quad.

BRANDON
 Good writing, ie., poems, verse or
 philosophical statements must
 include dreams and demons.
 Without them, the written word is
 vacant, removed. In poetry,
 rhythmic structure is your friend.

Motions with his hands, as if directing an orchestra.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 One-two-one-two. One-three-two-
 four. Don't be afraid to stand out
 from your spoken word
 contemporaries.

From the back of the classroom...

PAUL
 Spoken word stands out!

BRANDON
 A note of dissent from our trusty
 teaching assistant. Acknowledged.
 Now then, who's first?

An eager student, JERRY, raises his hand.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 Jerry. Go ahead with your bad self,
 Jerry.

Jerry rushes to the front with a crumpled sheet of paper.

JERRY
 (reads)
 'In stillness, I see what you bring
 With honor, I know what you desire
 The opera diva stands poised to
 sing
 I am ready, she is ready, to put
 our souls into the raging fire.'

As the class settles in to listen, Brandon strolls out.

JERRY (CONT'D)
 'Onward, my friend, trouble is near
 What dreams and demons you have
 brought forth---'

INT. WELMAN COLLEGE - DEAN SOMERSBY'S OFFICE - DAY

Peeking his head around the corner, the secretary waves
 Brandon in.

INT. DEAN SOMERSBY'S OFFICE - DAY

SOMERSBY is at his desk, hands pursed against his lips,
 ponderous.

BRANDON
 I shouldn't have been on the roof
 last night, sire. My apologies.

SOMERSBY

That's not my concern, Brandon.
Quite frankly---

BRANDON

The shot glasses were plastic.
Harmless. In fact---

SOMERSBY

That's not the issue.

Outside a window, birds build a nest in a tree.

SOMERSBY (CONT'D)

Late Spring is a grand season.

BRANDON

I prefer Autumn. Not so much light.

SOMERSBY

Are you not happy at Welman
College, young man?

BRANDON

I'm happy. Just not so young. Not
so-- not so--

SOMERSBY

Shall we focus on the happy part?

Brandon stares out the window at the ROOFTOP he was on the
previous evening.

SOMERSBY (CONT'D)

Is there something out there that
interests you?

EXT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Marny drives onto the parking lot in her vintage Volkswagon
van that is covered with flower decals.

MARNY'S POV

Dark and blurry.

Getting out of the van, she has to lean over to catch her
breath.

INT. DEAN SOMERSBY'S OFFICE - DAY

Somersby pushes a thin legal document forward.

SOMERSBY

This is a new, four-year contract, Brandon. But, I don't want you to sign it just yet.

BRANDON

Not sure I want to.

SOMERSBY

The money's good. But, the faculty board and I have a concern. A serious concern. Nothing to do with your teaching ability. Your creative writing class is one of Welman College's most popular.

(glances out the window at the rooftop)

There was another talented professor who spent time on a roof. He liked guns. Had a very nice revolver. The bullet entered and exited the sides of his head in a very nice straight line.

Puts his finger to his temple, pulls the trigger.

SOMERSBY (CONT'D)

Kapow!

(dryly)

A *Psychology* professor.

(then)

What do you want out of life?

What's important to you?

BRANDON

Well--- I'd like a really interesting vacation. With hula girls in grass skirts. And those beverages with umbrellas and pineapple wedges!

Not exactly what Somersby wanted to hear.

INT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

A DOCTOR'S HAND pushes the plunger on a hypodermic needle in Marny's arm.

Hand belongs to DOCTOR JOE, a quirky doctor with an uneven hairpiece.

Concerned about Marny's eye-rubbing.

DOCTOR JOE

What's with the eye stuff?

MARNY

Oh, probably just allergies.

Doctor Joe picks up an ophthalmoscope, flashes it ON.

DOCTOR JOE

Let's have a look.

Doctor Joe's NURSE chews bubble gum, blows an impressively expanding bubble.

MARNY

Doctor Joe. I have been working *for decades* to grow a flower that might win the Paris Fleur De Grand Prix. I've finished second *three times*. But, this year, the flower we have, which is doing its darndest to bloom on schedule, might be the best of all!

(sweetly, but with labored breathing)

My plane leaves in three days.

DOCTOR JOE

I need to run more tests. We'll know more in the mornin'.

Nurse's bubble expands even LARGER.

INT. BRANDON'S OFFICE - DAY

Snoozing at his desk.

Brandon fumbles to answer his ringing phone.

BRANDON

Yes, yes.

MARNY (OVER THE PHONE)

It's me. Just your mom.

BRANDON

Hey. What's up?

INT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY

In a HOSPITAL GOWN, Marny talks on a pay phone.

MARNY

Nothing really. I--- I'm in the hospital.

BRANDON (OVER THE PHONE)
In the hospital?

MARNY
(keeps rubbing her eyes)
I'm sure it's nothing.

Shivers abnormally.

MARNY (CONT'D)
Listen, I want you to pick Katey up
from school.

INT. BRANDON'S OFFICE - DAY

BRANDON
I guess I could do that.

MARNY (OVER THE PHONE)
Of course you can.

EXT. YORKTOWN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Standing on a sidewalk by the street, Katey waits.

INT. BRANDON'S PONTIAC - DAY

Puffing on A CIGAR, Brandon sees Katey, steers the car over.

As he reaches across and opens the passenger door, clouds of
cigar smoke billow out.

Annoyed, Kate steps back from the smoke.

BRANDON
Hey! Grandma couldn't make it.
C'mon, get in!

She hesitates.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
You still playin' Chopsticks?

Stepping forward, Katey slams the car door SHUT, walks
angrily away.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
Here we go.

Tosses the cigar, drives up beside her.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
I got rid of the cigar!

From her backpack...

Katey takes out a SKETCH PAD and black marker pen, writes:
SMOKE LINGERS! PLUS COLOGNE!

Holds it up so Brandon can read it.

Flips the page over, writes: **WHERE'S GRANDMA?**

BRANDON (CONT'D)
(quietly)
In the hospital.

Katey runs away, down the street.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
Stuff. Always stuff!

As he puts the car in gear, it backfires and stalls.

Tries to restart it.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
C'mon, c'mon.

Thick smoke leaks from the hood.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
C'mon, you piece of junk!

Gets out of the car as his daughter rapidly disappears.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
Katey, wait! Dammit.

Kicks the curb, hurting his foot, then limps over and opens the car hood... is instantly engulfed by black, oily engine smoke.

EXT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Katey strides determinedly through the emergency entrance.

INT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - RECEPTION DESK - DAY

Approaching a nurse, she takes out the sketch pad and marker pen, writes: **MY GRANDMA IS MARNY LARMIKE.**

RECEPTION DESK NURSE
And you are?

KATEY
Katey.

RECEPTION DESK NURSE
Why do you write when you can talk?

No response from Katey.

Nurse dials number on desk phone, hands it to Katey.

KATEY (INTO THE PHONE)
Grandma?

MARNY (OVER THE PHONE)
Hi, Katey pie! Everything's
alright.

Katey tries to say something, but can't.

MARNY (OVER THE PHONE CONT'D) (CONT'D)
I'll be home tomorrow.

INT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - MARNY'S ROOM - DAY

Still holding the phone, Marny is very concerned.

KATEY (OVER THE PHONE)
Promise?

MARNY
Promise. Is your father with you?
(silence)
What happened? Tell me what
happened.

KATEY (OVER THE PHONE)
Cigar. Smoke. Cologne!

Phone call disconnects.

Marny goes to a window, looks down to the sidewalk.

Major concern lines her face.

Coming into view, Katey looks up, clutching her backpack.

Sees her beloved grandma.

Smiling bravely, Marny waves.

HER POV dark and blurry, the sidewalk seems to undulate.

Katey just stands there.

MARNY
Dear God.

Shivers, eyelids fluttering unnaturally.

EXT. YORKTOWN SIDE STREET - DAY

Brandon's face is smudged with oil and grease.

A tow truck operator, UNCLE VLADIMIR, a cowboy hat-wearing individual with an unidentifiable accent, hoists up the front end of Brandon's disabled car.

UNCLE VLADIMIR

Yah, the wife won't let me watch NFL game no more. Not like when we got married! You tell me what wrong with spendin' afternoon in front of tube on Sunday football.

Trying to flick a glob of grease from his tweed jacket, Brandon smudges it further.

UNCLE VLADIMIR (CONT'D)

(tosses him a rag)

You should let mechanic take care of dirty work, chief.

Finishes hoisting the car up.

BRANDON

I've worked on cars before, Uncle Vladimir.

UNCLE VLADIMIR

Yah, I can tell.

A STRAY DOG urinates on the car's back tire.

UNCLE VLADIMIR (CONT'D)

Hey!

Dog barks back, continues to urinate.

BRANDON

Perfect.

EXT. UNCLE VLADIMIR'S SERVICE STATION - MINUTES LATER

From under Brandon's hoisted-up car.

UNCLE VLADIMIR

Well, professor, it look like oil filter housing crack. Oil spill on exhaust. That where black smoke come from. Anyways, it take three day to order part from Tucson.

BRANDON

Think it's worth fixing?

UNCLE VLADIMIR
 Sure, still a buncha miles left on
 'er.

Tosses over a set of keys.

Nods at a vintage '55 Ford F100 pickup truck.

UNCLE VLADIMIR (CONT'D)
 You borrow. She ride rough, but,
 does job.

A SHINY, GOLD KEY seems out of place.

BRANDON
 What's this one for?

UNCLE VLADIMIR
 I got yacht moored up at Lake Santa
 Claus. The Green Monster. You can
 take 'er out fishin' if you like.
 (lowers his voice)
 Kinda look like you could use
 fishin' vacation, pardner.

BRANDON
 (gets in the truck)
 Thanks, Uncle Vladimir. I might
 take you up on that.

UNCLE VLADIMIR
 Green Monster. Like from Boston,
 you know. Like Massachusetts over
 there. She's moored with other
 yachts.

Starting the truck, Brandon grinds it into gear, drives off
 with a weak grin.

INT. MARNY'S FLOWER SHOP - EARLY EVENING

Katey helps close up shop for the day.

After checking the dirt thermomete, Allen carefully puts the
 Angel's Kiss Chrysanthemum in its special place in the walk-
 in refrigerator.

Adjusts the flower's position slightly.

The stray dog trots by the shop's front door, glances inside.

INT. BRANDON'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Finishing brushing his teeth furiously, Brandon takes a swig of mouthwash, slushes it around, spits into the toilet.

Flushes the toilet, accidentally knocks his hair brush in the bowl. Reaches in to rescue it, brushes his hair without rinsing the brush, splashes on a ton of New Crew cologne.

PHONE rings as he grabs a jacket, heads for the door.

Answering machine comes ON and he stops.

BRANDON'S OUTGOING MESSAGE

'Nobody's here to talk. I'll consider returning your call. But, don't count on it.'

Machine beeps, his mother's VOICE is heard.

MARNY'S VOICE

I wish you'd change that message. Anyway, it's just me again, Mom.

Frowning, Brandon goes to the phone, presses the SPEAKER button.

MARNY'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Katey is not going to live with you until you stop the cigars and cologne. All that drinking and running around.

(very labored breathing)

It's time for you to start being a better father.

BRANDON

What did the doctor say? What's the matter?

(then)

Are you dying?

MARNY'S VOICE

Brandon--- why would you ask a question like that? What's going on with you lately? I wanna know.

BRANDON

I'm fine. Everything's good. I asked that question because--- because you mean so much to me.

(then)

You're my only friend.

MARNY'S VOICE
 (still labored breathing)
 Well, you should have other
 friends. Brandon? Are you
 listening?

He just stares into the phone.

EXT. MOOKIE'S HIDEAWAY BAR & RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A working-class bar in the town square.

Its neon sign blinks off and on: 1/2 PRICE HAPPY HOUR ALL DAY
 LONG!!

Uncle Vladimir's truck parked outside.

INT. MOOKIE'S HIDEAWAY BAR & RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Blearily finishing a drink...

BRANDON
 Keep 'em comin'.

Bartender pours another drink, slides it over.

BARTENDER
 By the way, nice cologne.

Downing the drink in two gulps...

BRANDON
 Aaahhhhhh!

EXT. MARNY & KATEY'S HOME - NIGHT

A friendly, 1940s era, brick house with a grand front porch.
 Only a few lights are on.

INT. MARNY & KATEY'S HOME - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

In her grandmother's bedroom, an open suitcase on a cedar
 chest has a plane ticket to Paris, which Katey is having a
 look at.

Also a tourist brochure for Normandy Beach in France.

INT. MARNY & KATEY'S HOME - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Television beams an episode of The Tonight Show with Jay Leno as Katey comes downstairs and sits at a classic Steinway piano.

Starts to play Chopsticks.

INT. MOOKIE'S HIDEAWAY BAR & RESTAURANT - CLOSING TIME

At the bar, Brandon is drunk, slumped over.

Bartender taps his shoulder, puts the bar tab down.

BARTENDER
Time, Mr. Larmike.

BRANDON
(drunkenly lifts his head)
Yesh. Of coursh.

Adds a tip to the tab, signs unsteadily, practically falls off the bar stool.

At the door, the BOUNCER stops him.

BOUNCER
We'll drive you home, boss. Uncle
Vladimir lent you the truck, eh?

BRANDON
(swaying on his feet)
I'm okay ta drive-- boss.

Bouncer takes the truck keys from Brandon's hand before he staggers outside.

Across the street.

The stray dog barks at Brandon.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
Hey, I know you!

Dog growls menacingly.

Getting down on his hands and knees, Brandon growls back.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
You think you're the only one who
can growl?

Departing bar patrons aren't sure what to make of Brandon as he howls like a deranged wolf... and the dog slinks away into the shadowy night.

EXT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - NIGHT

Light shines from Marny's window.

RADIO D.J. (V.O.)
 More late night melodies from KJME
 radio in Yorktown, Arizona. Here's
 one for the ages. Old Blue Eyes.

MARNY'S SHADOW traces on the curtains as Frank Sinatra's
Summer Wind plays on a transistor radio in her room.

SINATRA (ON THE RADIO)
*"A summer wind came blowin' in
 across the sea ..
 It lingered there and touched your
 hair and walked with me .."*

INT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - MARNY'S ROOM - NEXT DAY

Doctor Joe examines a new set of X-rays.

Rubbing her eyes again, Marny looks very worn-down, shivering uncontrollably.

DOCTOR JOE
 It's not good, Marny. Not good at
 all.

EXT. MARNY & KATEY'S HOME - STREET OUT FRONT - DAY

In the passenger seat of Uncle Vladimir's truck, Brandon
 sleeps off his drunken night

Climbing into the truck's loading bed, Katey BANGS on the cab
 roof.

KATEY
 Go!

Waking abruptly, Brandon frantically moves over and starts
 the truck.

Katey keeps pounding on the roof.

KATEY (CONT'D)
 GO!! GO!!

Accidentally jamming the truck into reverse, Brandon
 forcefully lets out the clutch and Katey ends up on her butt.

Jamming on the brakes, Brandon finds another gear and somehow
 the truck lurches forward.

BRANDON
 Sorry, sorry.

INT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - MARNY'S ROOM - DAY

With a sterile mask over his face, Brandon stares at his mom through blood-shot eyes.

Marny has an oxygen mask on, an IV attached to her arm.

MARNY
 You look so tired, sweetie.

SFX: To Brandon, her words sound like they are coming from an empty cave.

BRANDON
 Tell me what the doctor said.

MARNY
 I can't go to Paris. Maybe you can go. Katey's too young. Allen has to mind the shop.

Brandon hears the SOUND OF HIS OWN BREATHING.

MARNY (CONT'D)
 Anyway, they don't know what I have, Brandon. I should probably write a will.

POV BRANDON

Continues to hear himself breathe as he exits the room.

MARNY (CONT'D)
 Where are you going?

He passes by Katey in the hall, doesn't notice that she sticks her tongue out at him.

EXT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Ripping off the sterile mask as he gets to his truck, Brandon inhales and exhales deeply several times.

INT. MARNY'S FLOWER SHOP - DAY

BRANDON'S FACE stares at the Angel's Kiss Chrysanthemum.

It's bloomed a bit more since the day before.

Spilling dirt on the floor, a nervous Allen.

ALLEN

Dammit!

BRANDON

You sure you can you manage the shop if I go to Paris?

ALLEN

Marny wouldn't let you represent her flower in Paris. Get real.

BRANDON

What if I just get the hell outta here?

EXT. OUTSIDE THE FLOWER SHOP - DAY

Uncle Vladimir's truck screeches away, Brandon driving.

Waiting around the corner for the truck to leave, Katey joins Allen in the shop.

Truck drives halfway around the town square.

Noticing the stray dog trotting along the sidewalk, Brandon slams on the brakes.

Rolls the window down, barks at the dog.

STRAY DOG

Hello, Brandon.

Brandon's jaw drops and the dog GRINS.

STRAY DOG (CONT'D)

Follow me, buddy!

Darts away, then stops in front of the Psychic Gypsy Shop as Brandon catches up in the truck.

BRANDON

(reads the shop sign)

'Crystal energy. Curses Granted.
Reverse Curses. Aura Cleansing.
Chakra Balancing. No Voodoo. Free
Zodiac key chain Tuesdays and
Wednesdays.'

Dog LAUGHS.

Brandon glances inside the open shop door, looks around to see if anybody in town is watching him.

Coast is clear.

INT. PSYCHIC GYPSY SHOP - DAY

FANTASY SEQUENCE:

When Brandon enters, it's like stepping into a Jamaican beach vacation dream. A line of exotic, bikini-clad women dance seductively, blowing air-kisses at him. He air-kisses them back as he is handed a tropical alcoholic beverage with a chunk of pineapple wedged on top.

BACK TO REALITY:

Seated at a table, eyes closed, Brandon air-kisses the shop PSYCHIC GYPSY, AN EDGY WOMAN who wears too much sparkling blue eye make-up.

Etched into the table are the words: *Crimean Gothic*.

PSYCHIC GYPSY
Look at your hands. Look at your
hands, you fool!

As Brandon's eyes blink open, the stray dog peeps its head around the corner, panting.

PSYCHIC GYPSY (CONT'D)
(glares at the dog)
Go away, I'm busy.
(the dog slinks away)
You, what is your name?

Brandon is fascinated by how his hands look.

PSYCHIC GYPSY (CONT'D)
Stop looking at your hands! Give me
ten dollars!

He puts ten dollars in her tip jar.

BRANDON
My mother. Something's very wrong.
(leans forward)
I think she's dying.

PSYCHIC GYPSY
Death is always whimsical.

Examines one of his hands.

PSYCHIC GYPSY (CONT'D)
Your soul is lost.

BRANDON
My mom. She's everything. I want to
bear her burden.

(MORE)

BRANDON (CONT'D)
I want to replace her death with
mine. Would you know how to do
something like that?

As the Psychic Gypsy sizes him up, her face EXPANDS OUTWARD
with an ENORMOUS TOOTHY SMILE.

PSYCHIC GYPSY
Of course. How much money do you
have?

Taking out a clump of cash, Brandon clumsily sorts through
it, and WE HEAR the sound of his own breathing again.

SFX: SCENE COLORS AND CONTRAST shifts.

BRANDON
About a hundred.

Picking up the truck keys, the Psychic Gypsy selects the gold
boat key, says something.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
What? I'm sorry, what?

She picks up a pitcher of water, pours it on his head.

PSYCHIC GYPSY
Go spend time on the Green Monster.
It is a good boat. Uncle Vladimir
is my dear friend.

Stands up abruptly, emphatically gives him the gold boat key.

PSYCHIC GYPSY (CONT'D)
You may depart!

Grinning enthusiastically and shivering through his dripping
hair...

BRANDON
Very interesting. Now this is
interesting!

PSYCHIC GYPSY
Depart! Leave your money!!

Dumping his clumped cash on the table, Brandon picks up a
Psychic Gypsy shop discount flyer on his way out.

INT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - MARNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

In her darkened room Marny sleeps restlessly, shivering.

SFX: SCENE COLORS AND CONTRAST shift. A wall flickers with black and white images of World War Two soldiers partying in a dance hall.

Her eyelids flutter abnormally.

EXT. LAKE SANTA CLAUS - NIGHT

Mostly small boats are moored at various points around a quaint municipal lake, which features a STATUE OF SANTA CLAUS in the middle.

Brandon stands on the shore.

Shivering without control, eyelids fluttering abnormally.

A LOCAL gets out of a paddle boat.

BRANDON

Excuse me. Where are the yachts?

LOCAL

Ain't no yachts around here.

(hacks, spits)

Lookin' for somethin' in particular?

BRANDON

The Green Monster.

(looks around)

I haven't been here since I was a kid.

LOCAL

I reckon not, mister.

Points over at a fluorescent green, wooden ROW BOAT with the words GREEN MONSTER embossed on its side.

LOCAL (CONT'D)

Green Monster's over there. Uncle Vladimir's boat, right?

BRANDON

Right.

LOCAL

Yah, that Uncle Vladimir tells everybody it's a damn yacht.

Face evaporates as he stares at Brandon.

LOCAL (CONT'D)

I guess beauty's in the eye of the beholder.

Brandon can't stop shivering, or the fluttering eyelids.

BRANDON
Interesting.

INT. PSYCHIC GYPSY KITCHEN - NIGHT

Eyelids fluttering, the Psychic Gypsy shivers uncontrollably while picking up the cash Brandon left on the table.

Takes a leftover chicken drumstick from a plate, eats the remaining meat, tosses the bone into a soup bowl.

Bowl begins to vibrate.

Outside the shop, rain pours down.

EXT. LAKE SANTA CLAUS - NIGHT

Now raining heavily.

The lake's stark facility lights BLINK ON, vibrate in a surreal manner.

In the middle of the lake, smoking a cigar, Brandon is slumped in Uncle Vladimir's row boat.

Fishing pole line dangling limply in the water.

BRANDON
I reckon not, mister.

Glares at the Santa Claus statue.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
In the eye of the beholder.

Sheets of rain soak him, and his cigar goes out. Throws the cigar, bouncing it off the Santa Claus statue's nose.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
Statues!

INT. PSYCHIC GYPSY KITCHEN - NIGHT

Putting a spoon on the bowl's rim, the Psychic Gypsy mumbles in Crimean Gothic language, but the bowl keeps vibrating.

She gets angry, picks up the bowl and throws it against a wall where it shatters to pieces.

The chicken bone bounces onto the floor, where it jumps up and down.

Outside, lightning flashes.

EXT. LAKE SANTA CLAUS - NIGHT

Lightning flashes.

Brandon's fishing line takes a huge dip, and line spools rapidly out of the reel.

Stands up, yanks back on the rod.

BRANDON

Merry Christmas, fish! HAH!

Takes a step to brace himself and his foot goes right through the bottom of the boat.

Fishing rod drops into the water, disappears.

Boat starts to sink as rain increases in intensity.

INT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - MARNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

At the window, Marny hypnotized by the intense rain and lightning, eyelids lightly fluttering, more relaxed.

SFX: An unusually glorious surge of multi-colored lightning bursts from the clouds and strikes UPWARDS.

EXT. LAKE SANTA CLAUS - NIGHT

SERIES OF STILL SHOTS increasing in distance as the row boat completely sinks and Brandon struggles to swim to shore.

INT./EXT. PSYCHIC GYPSY SHOP - NIGHT

Psychic Gypsy crawls to her storefront couch, exhausted, eyelids fluttering.

Chicken bone on the kitchen's floor motionless.

Shop's pink neon *OPEN* sign blinks in the darkness.

INT. BRANDON'S TRAILER - NIGHT

Very pale, Brandon huddles in a chair, squinting to watch TV, blanket draped over his shoulders.

Shivering harshly, eyelids fluttering.

POV dark and blurry.

INT. YORKTON GENERAL HOSPITAL - MARNY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Marny sleeps peacefully.

EXT. MARNY & KATEY'S HOME - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Kate enraptured by misty colors drifting in the now peaceful rain, as runoff water courses through street gutters.

INT. ALLEN'S CAMPUS APARTMENT - OVERLOOKING THE QUAD - NIGHT

Allen on his sofa, reading, interior lights fluctuate.

Heavy rain CRACKS the apartment's huge window overlooking the campus quad.

Allen looks over, mutters in Crimean Gothic language.

Crack DISAPPEARS.

INT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - MARNY'S ROOM - NEXT DAY

While his nurse blows a huge bubble gum bubble, Doctor Joe takes a thermometer from Marny's mouth, has a look.

DOCTOR JOE

Fever's gone.

MARNY

I feel superb! By the way, did you see that colorful lightning strike last night? And the wonderful rain?

Nurse's bubble bursts.

DOCTOR JOE

The sky was clear last night, Marny.

MARNY

Really? I could've sworn-- now listen Doctor Joe-- I appreciate your concern, but the flower we have this year could be the best ever. The best ever!

(sits up, brightly)

My plane leaves tomorrow.

(MORE)

MARNY (CONT'D)
(sweetly)
Not rubbin' my eyes anymore.

INT. BRANDON'S TRAILER - DAY

Brandon dumps scrambled eggs from a frying pan onto a plate, but most of the eggs end up on the floor.

Awkwardly pours a cup of coffee, spilling it everywhere, doesn't notice.