

# Ode (first 30 pages)

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Hybrid ensemble dramedy with magic realism.

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FADE IN:

EXT. YORKTOWN, ARIZONA - WELMAN COLLEGE - NIGHT

**SUPER: Early May 1994**

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.

A coyote howls in the rustic, high desert landscape.

EXT. WELMAN COLLEGE - CENTRAL QUAD - NIGHT

A statue of THE BIG COWBOY stands in the quad. Proud. Cultivated. 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 still 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 -- and the horse you  
rode in on!

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

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
Look out below!!

**SFX:** It glances off the trash can. 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 - BESIDE THE QUAD - NIGHT

The apartment is 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 Following The Illuminated Path.

A diary nearby has scrawlings from *Crimean Gothic languages*.

EXT. WELMAN COLLEGE BUILDING ROOFTOP - NIGHT

A part-time, uniformed security guard, PAUL, 30, 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 is still gazing 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, throws the glasses over the edge.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Somebody could get hurt if you keep  
tossin' those shot glasses.

BRANDON

Built on a foundation of truths!  
But, more importantly, myths are  
human. So, very, very human.

(grins delightedly)

The glasses are plastic, sire.  
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, watching  
the unfolding drama across the way.

He is 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

(under his breath)

Maybe we should get goin'.

BRANDON

(straightens)

Sir, 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  
(relieved)  
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 student.  
I'm so glad you're in my class.

PAUL  
Thank you.  
(takes a moment, then)  
'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 - MINUTES LATER

An unkempt lot with a trailer home haphazardly set in the  
middle. The grass is uncut.

A rusted, drooping children's swing set is off to the side,  
near a parked and battered 1964 Pontiac Laurentian sedan.

Paul approaches, carrying the professor over his shoulder.

INT. BRANDON'S TRAILER - CONTINUOUS

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

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

Paul enters and 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.

Paul heads for the door.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

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

PAUL

(turns)

What're you so stressed about,  
prof'?

BRANDON

Everything. You know, 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.

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

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

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.

The music, and the girl, have an enigmatic tone.

Other students stop at the open room door. One of them something to Katey, but the ONLY SOUND is still the music.

EXT. DOWNTOWN YORKTOWN - DAY

As if time had stopped in the 1950s.

Little businesses and shops. The local Court House sits 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 three statues honoring the local Harris brothers, heroic World War Two soldiers. A fourth statue commemorates fallen soldiers from the Vietnam War.

INT. MARNY'S FLOWER SHOP - DAY

It's quite tiny, but tastefully stocked with exotic flowers, unique plants, and local flora and fauna such as cactus.

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, 72, wonderful, warm smile. Well-earned crow's feet adorn the corners of her wise eyes.

MARNY

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

ALICE, an elegant woman who always wears COUTURE GOWNS AND OUTLANDISH WIGS, has been looking around.

ALICE

You don't know what, Marny?

Allen (the Gothic little person) prepares a floral centerpiece on a work table.

He is a loyal employee.

MARNY

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

ALLEN

You could win this year, Marny.

ALICE

I'm gonna go anyway, that's for sure.

MARNY

That's because you want to see Monsieur Claude. Do you even have a flower, Alice?

ALICE

Yes, Marny, I have a flower. This year it's Louvre Museum orange, Claude's favorite color. L'orange.

As she departs grandly...

ALICE (CONT'D)

Allons-nous! Allons-nous!

MARNY

Louvre Museum orange?  
(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. Unnoticed.

INT. YORKTOWN REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL - MUSIC ROOM - DAY

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

The recess bell rings and A COOL FELLOW STUDENT, JASON, 17, strolls by the 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 reads: *Happy morning, prof - Paul*

Brandon unlocks his office door, enters the cluttered room. Sits behind his sturdy, wooden desk. Shakes several pills from an Aspirin bottle, washes them down with leftover Gatorade.

JILL, A FRUMPY STUDENT, enters holding a term paper marked with a red D.



BRANDON  
 Sit down, Jill.  
 (she does)  
 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.

Brandon takes the paper, 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.'  
 (hands the paper back)  
 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---  
 (looks at him)  
 --- blah'.  
 (Brandon manages a weak  
 smile)  
 You're always emphasizing creative  
 simplicity!

BRANDON  
 That I am.  
 (nicely, sort of)  
 (MORE)

BRANDON (CONT'D)

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 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.

His desk phone rings as he changes the score to a B. Jill mouths a *Thank You* and leaves as Brandon takes the call.

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

The 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 - CONTINUOUS

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

INT. MARNY'S FLOWER SHOP - DAY

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

MARNY

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

ALLEN

Of course.

The POSTMAN, a stoner, arrives with the mail.

Lingers on an envelope.

POSTMAN

This one looks important, Marny.

Marny opens the envelope, a letter from the local bank stating the mortgage on her house is PAID IN FULL.

MARNY

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

POSTMAN

Very groovy, Marny. Way to go.

ALLEN

(irritated, in disbelief)  
Did you just say GROOVY? Again?!!

The Postman hastily departs.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

Can you believe that guy? What is this, the 60s?

**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.

ALLEN (CONT'D)

(intently)  
Marny. Follow your path. To France.

She looks at him quizzically.

MARNY

You, my dear friend, are unusual.

Marny 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 (CONT'D)

It's too bad my Hubby wasn't here to share this.

RUBS HER EYES, much more than what would seem to be normal.

MARNY (CONT'D)

Well, alright. Then I'll follow my path. To France!

(then)

(MORE)

MARNY (CONT'D)

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, absent, 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.

(turns to the class)

Don't be afraid to stand out from  
your spoken word contemporaries.  
Spoken word does have it's place.  
Just not in classic literature.

From the back.

PAUL

Spoken word is already a classic  
form of literature!

BRANDON

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

AN EAGER STUDENT 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

(takes a breath, 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.'

Brandon walks out as the class settles in to listen.

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

Brandon peeks his head around the corner, and the secretary waves him in.

INT. DEAN SOMERSBY'S OFFICE - DAY

SOMERSBY sits behind his desk, hands pursed against his lips, ponderous.

Brandon stands before him.

BRANDON  
I shouldn't have been on the roof  
last night, sir. It won't happen  
again.

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

BRANDON  
The shot glasses were plastic.  
Mere plastic!

SOMERSBY  
That's not the issue.

Brandon glances out a window. Birds building 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  
Yes, I'm happy. Just not so young.  
Not so-- not so--

SOMERSBY

Let's focus on the happy part.

Brandon continues to stare out the window, now 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.

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. In fact, it's excellent. But, the faculty board and I have 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)

There was another talented professor who spent time on that roof over there. 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?

BRANDON  
(overly eager)  
A really, really interesting  
vacation! Hula girls in grass  
skirts. ENORMOUS, SENSUAL beverages  
with pineapple wedges!  
(then)  
Seriously, how could it be better  
than that?

INT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

A DOCTOR'S HAND pushes the plunger on a hypodermic needle.  
The hand belongs to DOCTOR JOE, with his uneven hairpiece.  
He notices Marny rubbing her eyes, uncharacteristically.

DOCTOR JOE  
What's with the eye rubbing?

MARNY  
Oh, probably just allergies.

Doctor Joe picks up an ophthalmoscope and flashes it ON.

DOCTOR JOE  
Let's have a look.

Doctor Joe's NURSE chews bubble gum, and 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 it's darndest to  
bloom on schedule, might be the  
best of all!  
(sweetly)  
My plane leaves in three days.

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

The nurse's bubble grows even LARGER.

INT. BRANDON'S OFFICE - DAY

Brandon snoozes at his desk, when his phone RINGS and he answers.

BRANDON

Yes.

MARNY (OVER THE PHONE)

Brandon, it's me. Just your mom.

BRANDON

Hey. What's up?

INT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - HALLWAY - DAY

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

MARNY

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

BRANDON (OVER THE PHONE)

In the hospital?

MARNY

I'm sure it's nothing. 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

Katey stands on a sidewalk by the street, looking around.

INT. BRANDON'S PONTIAC - DAY

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

He reaches across and opens the passenger door... clouds of SMOKE billow out.

Katey steps back to avoid the smoke.



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

Katey is very hesitant.

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

She steps forward, slams the door SHUT, walks quickly away.

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
(tosses the cigar)  
Here we go.

Drives the car up beside her.

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

Katey stops, takes a large SKETCH PAD and black marker pen from her backpack, and writes: **SMOKE LINGERS! PLUS COLOGNE!**

Holds it up so Brandon can read it.

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

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

Katey turns and starts running.

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.

Smoke leaks from the hood.

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

Gets out of the car, SHOUTS at his rapidly disappearing daughter.

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
Katey, wait!

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

EXT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Katey strides quickly through the emergency entrance.

INT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - RECEPTION DESK - DAY

Katey approaches a nurse, takes out her 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?

Katey shrugs as the nurse picks up a phone, dials a number and hands the phone to Katey.

KATEY  
Grandma?

MARNY (OVER THE PHONE)  
Hi, Katey pie!

Katey wants to say more, but can't.

MARNY (OVER THE PHONE CONT'D) (CONT'D)  
Everything's alright, sweetie. I'll  
be home tomorrow. Can't have  
visitors.

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

MARNY'S POV... is like looking through a translucent sheet of thinly-frozen ice... she is still on the phone.

KATEY (OVER THE PHONE)  
Promise?

MARNY  
Promise. Is your father with you?  
(silence)  
What happened? Katey?

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

INT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - RECEPTION DESK - DAY

KATEY  
(sighs)  
Room? Where?

Listens, then hands the phone back to the nurse.

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

Marny stands at a window, looking down to the sidewalk.

Major concern lines her face.

Katey walks into view, looking up, arms folded around her backpack.

SEES her grandma and stops.

Marny smiles bravely and waves.

MARNY'S POV... the translucent sheet of thinly-frozen ice comes on again.

MARNY  
Dear God.

EXT. YORKTOWN SIDE STREET - DAY

Brandon's face is smudged with oil and grease.

He watches the tow truck operator, UNCLE VLADIMIR, a cowboy hat-wearing Russian, hoist the front end of Brandon's disabled car up.

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

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

Uncle Vladimir spits out a stream of chewing tobacco juice.

UNCLE VLADIMIR (CONT'D)  
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  
(tosses him a rag)  
Yah, I can tell.

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

UNCLE VLADIMIR (CONT'D)  
Hey!

The dog barks back, and continues to urinate.

BRANDON  
Perfect.

EXT. UNCLE VLADIMIR'S SERVICE STATION - MINUTES LATER

Uncle Vladimir peers from under Brandon's jacked-up car.

UNCLE VLADIMIR  
Well, professor, it look like oil  
filter housing crack.  
(comes over)  
All the oil spill on exhaust. That  
where black smoke come from.  
Anyways, it take three day to order  
part from Tucson.

BRANDON  
You think she's worth fixing?

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

Tosses over a set of keys, nods at a gleaming '55 Ford F100  
pickup truck.

UNCLE VLADIMIR (CONT'D)  
Use my truck. She ride rough, but,  
does job.

Brandon singles out a SHINY, GOLD KEY that seems out of  
place.

BRANDON  
What's this 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)  
You 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.

Brandon starts the truck, grinds it into gear, and moves on with a weak grin.

INT. MARNY'S FLOWER SHOP - EARLY EVENING

Katey helps close up shop for the day.

Allen carefully puts the Angel's Kiss Chrysanthemum in its own special place in the walk-in refrigerator. Checks the dirt thermometer, adjusts the flower's position slightly.

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

INT. BRANDON'S TRAILER - EARLY EVENING

Brandon finishes brushing his teeth, takes a swig of Listerine, slushes it around, spits into the toilet.

Flushes the toilet, accidentally knocks his hair brush in the bowl, forcing him to reach in and rescue it. Brushes his hair without rinsing the brush, then splashes on a ton of New Crew cologne.

The phone rings as he grabs a jacket, and heads for the door. The 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.'

The machine beeps and his mother's VOICE is heard.

MARNY'S VOICE

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

Brandon moves toward the phone.

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

Brandon presses the SPEAKER button, talks.

BRANDON

What did the doctor say? Are you  
alright?  
(then)  
Are you dying?

MARNY'S VOICE

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

BRANDON

I'm fine. Everything's good. I  
asked that question because you  
mean so much to me.  
(pause)  
You're my only friend.

MARNY'S VOICE

Well, you should have other  
friends.

He doesn't respond.

MARNY'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Brandon?

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 is parked outside.

INT. MOOKIE'S HIDEAWAY BAR & RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Brandon dully finishes a drink.

BARTENDER  
Another one, professor?

BRANDON  
Keep 'em comin'.

Bartender pours a strong drink, slides it over.

BARTENDER  
(sarcastic)  
By the way, nice cologne.

Brandon downs the drink in two gulps.

BRANDON  
Aaahhhhhhh!

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

Katey is in her grandmother's bedroom... looking at an open  
suitcase on a cedar chest containing a plane ticket to  
Paris... and a tourist brochure for Normandy Beach in France.

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

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

Brandon is slumped over at the bar, the bartender taps his  
shoulder, puts the bar tab down.

BARTENDER  
Time, Mr. Larmike.

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

Brandon adds a tip to the tab, signs unsteadily, practically falls off his 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.

The bouncer reaches into Brandon's jacket pocket, takes the truck keys before Brandon staggers outside.

He notices the stray dog eyeing him from across the street.

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

The dog growls.

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

The dog barks. Brandon gets down on his hands and knees and barks back.

EXT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - VERY LATE 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. Marny is rubbing her eyes again, looking very worn-down.

DOCTOR JOE  
It's not good, Marny.

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

Brandon sleeps off his drunken night in the passenger seat of Uncle Vladimir's truck.

Katey comes out, climbs into the truck's loading bed, BANGS on the cab roof.

KATEY  
Go!

Brandon wakes abruptly, frantically moves over and starts the truck. Katey keeps pounding on the roof.

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

Brandon accidentally jams the truck into reverse, and when he lets out the clutch, Katey ends up ON HER BUTT.

Brandon grimaces, quickly shifts to the proper gear and the truck lurches forward.

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

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

MARNY  
You look so tired, Brandon.

**SFX:** Her words SOUND to Brandon like they are coming from a huge, 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 STARTS TO HEAR 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 sitting in an alcove down the hall.

She glares at him, then gets up and goes to Marny's room.

EXT. YORKTOWN GENERAL HOSPITAL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Brandon leans on his truck, rips off the sterile mask,  
struggles to catch his breath.

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.

Allen nervously spills dirt on the floor.

ALLEN  
Dammit!

BRANDON  
Can you manage the shop if I go to  
Paris?

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

EXT. OUTSIDE THE FLOWER SHOP - DAY

Brandon gets into Uncle Vladimir's truck and motors away.

Katey, who's been waiting around the corner for him to leave,  
comes into the shop and hugs Allen.

The truck drives halfway around the town square, and Brandon  
sees the stray dog trotting along the sidewalk.

He rolls his window down, barks at it.

STRAY DOG  
(stops)  
Hello, Brandon.

Brandon's jaw drops and the dog SMILES.

STRAY DOG (CONT'D)  
Follow me, buddy!

The dog darts down the block and stops right in front of the Psychic Gypsy Shop. Brandon catches up in his 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.'

The dog LAUGHS.

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

Coast is clear, so he parks and gets out of the truck.

INT. PSYCHIC GYPSY SHOP - DAY

**FANTASY SEQUENCE.** *When Brandon enters the shop, it's like stepping into a Jamaican beach vacation dream. A line of beautiful, 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.** Brandon is seated at a table, eyes closed, continuing to air-kiss. Stretches his hands towards 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.  
(MORE)

PSYCHIC GYPSY (CONT'D)  
(the dog slinks away)  
You, what is your name?

Brandon is looking at his hands, mesmerized.

PSYCHIC GYPSY (CONT'D)  
Never mind, I don't care.  
(then)  
Stop looking at your hands! Give me  
ten dollars!

BRANDON  
(puts ten dollars in her  
tip jar)  
My mother. Something's very wrong.  
I think she's dying.

PSYCHIC GYPSY  
(leans forward)  
Death is always whimsical.  
(examines one of his  
hands)  
Your soul is lost.

BRANDON  
My mother. She's everything.  
I want to bear her burden.  
(leans forward)  
I want to replace her death with  
mine. Would you know how to do  
something like that?

As she sizes him up, her face EXPANDS OUTWARD with an  
ENORMOUS TOOTHY SMILE.

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

Brandon takes out a clump of cash, and WE HEAR the sound of  
his own breathing again.

**SFX:** SCENE COLORS shift.

BRANDON  
About a hundred, maybe one twenty.

The psychic gypsy picks up the truck keys, lifts up 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)  
You may depart!

Brandon holds the gold boat key, grins enthusiastically  
through his dripping hair.

BRANDON

Very interesting.

PSYCHIC GYPSY

(points to the door)  
Depart! Leave your money!!

Brandon puts his remaining cash on the table.

On the way out, he picks up a Psychic Gypsy shop **discount  
flyer.**

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

**SFX:** As Marny sleeps in her darkened room, walls flicker with  
images of World War Two soldiers partying in a dance hall.

Her eyelids start to flutter, and she shivers.

EXT. LAKE SANTA CLAUS - TWILIGHT

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, looking around.

ONE OF THE LOCALS is getting out of a paddle boat.

BRANDON

Excuse me. Where are the yachts?

LOCAL

Ain't no yachts around here.  
Lookin' for somethin' in  
particular?

BRANDON

The Green Monster.

Brandon starts shivering.

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
I haven't been here since I was a kid.

LOCAL  
I reckon not, mister.  
(nods over his shoulder)  
Green Monster's over there. Uncle Vladimir's boat, right?

A nearby fluorescent green, wooden ROW BOAT has the words GREEN MONSTER embossed on the side.

LOCAL (CONT'D)  
Yah, that Uncle Vladimir tells everybody it's a damn yacht. I guess beauty's in the eye of the beholder.

Brandon continues to shiver, and his eyelids now flutter.

BRANDON  
Huh. Interesting.

INT. PSYCHIC GYPSY KITCHEN - NIGHT

As if coming out of a trance, the Psychic Gypsy's eyelids flutter and she shivers. Picks up the cash Brandon left on the table, puts it in her purse.

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

The bowl begins to vibrate.

Outside the shop's front door, it starts to rain heavily.

EXT. LAKE SANTA CLAUS - NIGHT

It starts to rain heavily.

The lake's stark facility lights BLINK ON.

Smoking a cigar, Brandon sits slumped in the boat, in the middle of the lake, glaring at the Santa Claus statue.

Fishing pole line dangles in the water. Then a sheet of rain soaks him thoroughly, and his cigar goes out.

BRANDON  
(to his cigar)  
In the eye of the beholder.

Throws the cigar, bouncing it off the Santa Claus statue's nose.

BRANDON (CONT'D)  
Statues!

INT. PSYCHIC GYPSY KITCHEN - NIGHT

The Psychic Gypsy puts a spoon on the bowl's rim, mumbling in Crimean Gothic language, but the bowl keeps vibrating.

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

She sits down, glares at the chicken bone on the floor. It starts to jump up and down.

EXT. LAKE SANTA CLAUS - NIGHT

Suddenly, Brandon's fishing line takes a huge dip, and line spools rapidly out of the reel. He stands up and yanks back on the rod.

BRANDON  
Merry Christmas, fish! HAH!

BRANDON'S POV suddenly switches to the translucent frozen ice visual effect.

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

The fishing rod drops into the water and disappears.

The boat starts to sink as the rain increases in intensity, LIGHTNING flashing all around.

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

Marny is looking out the window, watching it rain.

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

INT. ALLEN'S CAMPUS APARTMENT - NIGHT

Allen is on his sofa, reading.

The lights dim, correct themselves, then dim again.

He frowns, goes to the window and sees the surreal lightning, mutters something in the ancient language of Crimean Gothic.

EXT. LAKE SANTA CLAUS - NIGHT

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

INT. PSYCHIC GYPSY SHOP - NIGHT

The Psychic Gypsy lies on her storefront couch, exhausted.

Chicken bone is on the floor in the kitchen, motionless.

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

INT. BRANDON'S TRAILER - DEEP INTO THE NIGHT

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

Shivers uncontrollably, eyelids fluttering rapidly.

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

Kate stands watching the rain, mesmerized.