

IN VISIBLE BODIES:

A PHENOMENOLOGY OF SEXUALITY

AND THE CREATION OF REPRESSIVE SYSTEMS IN FILM

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Sex has always imbued itself into the multitude of filmic histories that exist today. Whether this sex is portrayed on screen for the viewer to directly experience, or as underlying thematic elements that dictate the flow of a separate plot, it is always being perceived in some shape or form. Thinking in phenomenological terms, there has always been not only a relation between sex and the films it influences, but also conscious and unconscious modes of experiencing sex for the viewer. These experiences influence how the viewer perceives sex, or the film itself, and orientates the viewer toward a strict image of what sex is and what it means to love, make love, and be loved. For example, there has always unarguably been a considerable stranglehold on film by a heterosexual culture, one that aligns “straightness” to a sense of normalcy and order. It is this alignment that orientates an audience toward this way of thinking, in turn shifting their perception of on-screen sex not only in the film they are watching, but in any films they have watched or are going to watch. It normalizes the straight line of heterosexual sex, and labels everything else as deviations from that line.

It is the goal of my thesis feature screenplay to question this path-making, and consider the way sex is experienced and perceived in a variety of ways. I began with the idea of a cult. When brainstorming for inspiration, my initial instinct was to examine the works of Yorgos Lanthimos, particularly *The Lobster* and *Dogtooth*. Lanthimos’ work can be defined by an aloof, detached signature, and he often deals with themes of love and sex in strange, parallel worlds that look much like ours, but operate very differently. In *The Lobster*, Lanthimos examines a sort of “dating culture” that forces single people into “The Hotel,” where they must find a mate in forty-five days or face being turned into an

animal. The element of this film that emphasizes its strangeness is its darkly comedic tone. It's cool and detached, which literally "detaches" both the characters and the audience from their emotions. It places love and sex in a very authoritarian setting, placing restrictions on how and when it is performed. It is these restrictions that dehumanize the acts of love and making love, deconstructing the mechanics of these interactions into its most essential forms. It examines sex, as does *Dogtooth*, as primitive and reproductive, thus categorizing it as heterosexual. Whether or not this was an intentional move by Lanthimos, it demonstrates the castration of homosexual sex not only in media, but in real life as well.

Lanthimos' film *Dogtooth* strays somewhat further away from the idea of commonplace relationships, delving into something arguably more inhuman and deviant in the form of prostitution. In the film, the paternal figure presumably pays a woman named Christina to be blindfolded and brought to their secretive, remote home to have sex with his son, who, along with his two sisters, are not allowed to leave the grounds of the home. Here they are taught the wrong words for everyday items, that domesticated cats are the most dangerous animal on earth, and that sex is merely an act of giving and taking.

When sex is portrayed in the film, it is unsimulated, meaning the actors are not simply "acting," rather they are legitimately performing sexual acts. This forces the audience to consider their perception of sex on screen and the relationship they have with the film. Even beyond shifting how the audience perceives the sex, it supplants an entirely new relationship between the film and the viewer. It becomes shocking and

unnerving, particularly in combination with the tone of the film. It becomes pornographic. The question this generates lies beyond film, in the deep pockets of our own psychology. Why does real sex change the way we experience something fictional? It produces feelings of guilt in the viewer. It makes them uncomfortable. It's violating and penetrative, and it's also necessary. Performing real sex is not the necessary component here, rather it is the shift in the audience's experience that is essential.

Stripping sex down to its most rudimentary elements seems strange, because there are many more factors involved that convolute the experience, such as love and emotion. Without these things, it becomes something *inhuman*. This is precisely the question that I aim to consider with my thesis screenplay. This primitive, dry, functional form of sex is something that is not human, *because* it lacks emotion, love, and most importantly within the context of my thesis, variety. There is no one way to define sex. The experience is different for everyone, always, and we don't see this on screen. In *The Lobster* and *Dogtooth*, we see heterosexual relationships being explored. *Dogtooth* bats an eye at homoeroticism, but it takes place within the structure of incest rather than homosexuality. I want to place characters who have these very "other" feelings within the ideological framework of repression, and forced sex. How do you explore these "other" feelings when you are placed under a system that suppresses even heterosexual ones?

In the introduction of Sara Ahmed's *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, she discusses the formation of deviations from a "normal" line, specifically, in this instance, one that promotes a heterosexual culture. Ahmed writes, "For a life to count as a good life, then it must return the debt of its life by taking on the

direction promised as a social good, which means imagining one's futurity in terms of reaching certain points along a life course" (Ahmed 21). This "social good" can be perceived as a heterosexual good, a good for mankind and its survival, a good for such normalcy and order. "Certain points" along this course of life could be interpreted as marriage and childbirth, among other things. She counters this ideology by stating "a queer life might be one that fails to make such gestures of return" (Ahmed 21). These deviations stand for a different good, possibly a more individualistic good, as one is able to become more comfortable with themselves and their own orientations. However, this can also be seen as a social good, as representation and openness regarding themes of orientation can foster an environment that promotes such deviations as acceptable and normal. These deviations make us question our path-making.

When we experience these feelings of "other," how do we decide to proceed, and what are the consequences of each decision we could possibly make? Ahmed describes this feeling by stating that we must "decide which path to take: this way or that way. And you go one way by following its path. But then perhaps you are not so sure. The longer you proceed on this path the harder it is to go back even in the face of this uncertainty" (Ahmed 18). She then explains that hope is the elemental factor that invests us in the lines we take. We hope to get somewhere by taking the paths we have chosen, and persist through doubt and hardship. "Turning back risks the wasting of time, a time that has already been expended or given up. If we give up on the line that we have given our time to, then we give up more than a line; we give up a certain life we have lived, which can feel like giving up on ourselves" (Ahmed 18). It is this feeling that persists

throughout my screenplay. There are paths to be taken and paths to be decided against, and each path we decide to take is an investment. One that allows us to be orientated toward different objects and different opportunities and experiences. But when we are forced down a path we did not choose, and so far along that we cannot look back, what do we do?

I wanted to use the philosophy of phenomenology to frame the themes in my screenplay because there are several relationships in many directions that take place during experiences of sex and orientation in film. First, there is the relationship between the viewer and the characters. Second, the relationship between the viewer and the film itself. Lastly, the relationship between any and all of the characters (arguably as well as the performers as separate entities) participating on screen.

The first relationship there is to explore is that which lies between the viewer and the characters (not the actors). The concept of experience, whether conscious or unconscious, direct or indirect, becomes important under these circumstances. The viewer is physically orientated toward the screen, and therefore toward the characters, within the context of watching a film. When I discuss orientation, I do not mean simply the direction toward which one faces. Rather, orientation refers to what is within reach when a certain path is taken. The opportunity cost of a path not taken is what *would* have been available to us had we taken that path. The things within our reach can be interpreted as extensions of our own bodies into space, a space through which we live and understand our experiences. In the context of the aforementioned films along with my own, these extensions rely on the concept of repetition in tendency, and what our bodies *tend* toward.

The characters in each of these films inhabit their tendencies by repeating what they have learned, and how they have been conditioned to understand the world, particularly in a film such as *Dogtooth*, in which the indoctrination of their children traps their individuality in a cycle of learned tendency. Taking inspiration from films such as this, as well as cult ideology, my screenplay insists on absolute truths that are used to coerce young minds into serving simply as a function of the larger whole, serving “the community” over themselves. Working in the same way, our tendencies as viewers are molded by the experiences we have already had as viewers. The history of film has shown us the “straight” line, the line that places characters in heteronormative relationships and white bodies. When characters become able to deviate from this line, we as viewers do as well, allowing us to take different paths, and extend our bodies into different spaces, each one offering new experiences and modes of thought.

If the relationship between the viewer and the characters is seen as micro, the macro image would include the viewers and the films as a whole. Over the course of filmic history, straight male directors have dominated the industry. This inherently imbues their works with (whether or not intentionally) subconscious belief systems held by a male-dominated society at any given time. It is in this way that films closely examine preceding films as blueprints for an appropriate culture, or one that strives to identify a cultural standard of normalcy. In Jeff Bennett’s examination of Wheeler Winston Dixon’s book *Straight: Construction of Heterosexuality in Cinema*, he notes that this constricting behavior “has profound implications for those who do not, or cannot, subscribe to an elusive cultural mandate that glorifies visions of a ‘heterotopia’” (Bennett

71). We see this trend through numerous directors from Howard Hawks to Stanley Kubrick, and countless others in between. This modality is particular cause for the necessity of “other” films, or ones that do not fall under the standard of socially-accepted normative behavior. It is more important now than ever to allow viewers new experiences and new understandings of what it means to live a normal, acceptable life, because after all, there are infinite ways to interpret what that means. Therefore, the the orientation of the viewer is inflicted by the orientation of films. Until such films shift their paradigm ideologies, the viewer will continue to be subjected to damaging, destructive ideas of what a “good” life manifests into.

This concept is expressly intriguing when investigating films such as Federico Fellini’s *La Dolce Vita* (1960). While traveling throughout Rome, reporter Marcello experiences a different kind of “straight” life. He has multiple encounters with a number of women, each with their own stories and contexts, creating points on the physical path of his journey. The film consists of nights and dawns, ascents and descents, ecstasy and desperation, all of which are representative of Marcello’s desire to accomplish something good while being stuck in a cycle of confusion and loss of his own self. It’s interesting to note the parallel between Marcello’s desire to do good, and his spiraling, self-indulgent behavior he exhibits throughout the film. While *La Dolce Vita* explores heterosexual tendencies (and it isn’t quite clear if Marcello even has sex with any of these women), it explores a more divergent model of heterosexuality, one of freedom and unrestrained love. Marcello’s endeavors can be read as hedonistic, but ultimately his passions obscure

this self-indulgence as an expression of free will, and a release of human heterosexuality in all of its forms.

The relationship between characters within a single film can also be explored in works such as *Dallas Buyers Club* (It is important in this situation to distinguish between the character and the performer, as each have distinctly separate experiences and backgrounds which inform us of unique relationships). This film emphasizes the aspect of phenomenology in which one's physical surroundings can be considered an extension of their own physical presence in the world. In this case, the world which Ron Woodruff experiences is one that is wholly unfamiliar to him. Beginning as a very homophobic man, and thrust down a path he did not choose, Ron Woodruff is forced to extend himself into a space that he is at first uncomfortable with, initiating a transformation that was made possible by his own disorientation.

Feelings of disorientation are just as important (if not, arguably, more important) than experiencing and understanding toward what you are directed. In a close reading of an untitled 2005 John Ashbery poem, Lauren Berlant concludes that the theme of the poem is "being open to an encounter that is potentially transformative" (Berlant 104).

When a character such as Ron Woodruff, or an audience member who has never seen the likes of queer film is respectively introduced to, say, the world of HIV/AIDS and Barbara Hammer, the two are set down a path of disorientation. This loss of direction can be metamorphic, reframing one's perceptual experiences into something completely new and unprecedented. Berlant continues by stating that "being lost or suspended in a

process of knowing nothing...will open up a space of potential liveness” (Berlant 105), a space where new ideas can flourish.

There is, without a doubt, a fear that can accompany such a space and such a feeling. In his book *Phenomenology of Perception*, Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes this feeling as essential, stating that “the vital experience of giddiness and nausea...is the awareness of our own contingency and the horror with which it fills us” (Merleau-Ponty 296). Disorientation is not only the sense of uncertainty, but rather the *lack* of any specific orientation at all. When one tries to reach out and steady themselves, they may find nothing at all, grasping onto the “indeterminacy of air” (Ahmed 157). Sara Ahmed uses this philosophy to dissect what it means to be disoriented, to be in a state of unfamiliarity with oneself. She writes about the relationship between the body and the ground upon which it stands, writing that feelings of disorientation can be “unsettling... [shattering] one’s sense of confidence in the ground or one’s belief that the ground on which we reside can support the actions that make a life feel livable” (Ahmed 157). This ungrounding of the body not only instills feelings of bewilderment, but can also foster mistrust in the very idea of what a “livable” life means. A direct correlation lies between this sense of incertitude and what one could call a “queer” life.

In this sense, I use the term “queer” as representative of both a divergent path (not above or below, but other) and a life that is lived outside the realm of a heteronormative culture, as I, too, identify as queer. Both “disorientation” and “queer” find commonality in the connotation of “other,” as not being defined by the aforementioned “straight” line. In the readings of Ahmed and Merleau-Ponty, these two feelings can be defined as

essential to a transformative experience, and in the context of film, this applies to both the characters and the audience, thus circling us back to the root of the phenomenological questions: how can characters, as well as the audience, engage with such a philosophy in a way that shifts their perceptions toward something more dangerous, more open, and free? How do we reorientate the paradigm of sex on screen in the direction of something more comprehensive and inclusive?

These are integral elements of my screenplay, and ideas upon which I have continually self-reflected throughout the process. In order for my audience to broaden their scope of sexual perception, so must my characters. Given that I have placed them within the confines of a sexually repressive biome, opportunities abound to disorientate and reorientate. The cult in which they are forced to live serves as somewhat of an otherworldly body, one that introduces a new source of gravity. It captures their past experiences and reinterprets them into a new mode of thinking, pulling them further toward the cult and away from their old life: the outside world, an old source of gravity.

In order to fabricate a successful cult-like experience, I first had to explore similar cults that have existed throughout the past, as well as understand the process of indoctrination and its psychological effects on the brain. These steps became integral in deciding how I wanted my cult to work, and how I wanted it to affect my characters. Initially, I knew I wanted some religious aspects at work, so I began to explore foundational Christian cults and organizations, such as Xenos and the Unification Church. Organizations such as these follow strict guidelines, directly translating the Bible as the authoritative word of God, allowing no room for interpretation. Many would

interpret this as some form of indoctrination, and some might even go as far as to call it brainwashing. In an article published to Real Clear Science, however, Rebecca Moore opposes the use of the term brainwashing and all of its connotations, opting for terms such as conversion and conditioning that more aptly delineate the process of such an experience.

The article defines conversion as one's "striking change in attitude, emotion or viewpoint" (Moore). She continues by adding that most converts "begin by being passive recipients of a transcendent, life-changing event. They don't plan for it; it just happens. But they cannot go back to the way things were before their experience" (Moore), which translated into something particularly significant for my script: the main character experienced a traumatic event before being inducted into this cult, and throughout the story, he is forced to labor through the healing process while abiding by the strict conventions of this new environment. This would add a fascinating element to the story while also adding dimension to the protagonist.

The additional term that Moore discusses is conditioning, a word with which many are familiar without quite understanding why or to what capacity. Conditioning can take place every day, regarding things as benign as being rewarded for good grades, or punished for sneaking out of the house. In the sphere of my screenplay, however, conditioning is interpreted as a far worse punishment, and one that encourages a damaging, repressive, assimilative culture. I began brainstorming ways in which to accomplish this, and thought it best to do so in as direct a manner as possible. The subjects would be given the opportunity to receive sexual gratification, and, upon

acceptance, would then be physically punished until the desire is suffocated altogether. The goal of such a method is to coerce the subject into (or out of) a certain way of thinking or behaving. However, these treatments tend to produce negative side effects that are detrimental to the very well-being of the subject, or are simply unsuccessful, both of which we see manifested in films such as Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*.

In Kubrick's reimagining of Burgess' literary dystopic near-future Britain, we see Alex DeLarge voluntarily undergoing treatment for his violent tendencies in order to circumvent jail time. The treatment consists of a medicinal substance that induces severe nausea used in conjunction with films documenting sexually violent acts. DeLarge's history of violence and sexual assault is now being *conditioned* out of him as his brain is being taught to correlate violence with his own physical illness. This simplistic procedure produces complicated results for DeLarge, as we first see him become physically ill during a strange performance meant to display the functionality of the procedure and its results to a group of scientists. This would suggest a successful outcome, as would his repulsion when reintroduced to the man whose daughter he had raped at the beginning of the film. However, the closing image of the film leaves us questioning the entire process as he sits in his hospital bed, dazed and drooling, fabricating images of nude women violently wrestling in the snow.

The psychology of such events became a touchstone of my screenplay as I began to shape the world in which it takes place. The procedure as a whole can be understood as "deprogramming," which, in the typical sense of the term, signifies a return to normalcy, an osmotic reversal of indoctrination. The thought process is outlined by a few basic

steps: “My (son, daughter, family member) has embraced a “strange” religion...Only inherently “strange” people would be voluntarily attracted to such a religion...My (son, daughter, family member) is obviously not an inherently “strange” person...Hence, he or she must have been hoodwinked or brainwashed into participating” (Bromley 44). In the world of my screenplay, however, this normalcy is a sexually repressed state, in which sex is forbidden outside the sphere of reproduction and the continuation of the human race. The modes of thought that are being “deprogrammed” from these characters are, in our world, expected, normal, and even encouraged. These thoughts are, at their very root, human. This returns us briefly to the dehumanization of sexuality in films such as *Dogtooth* and *The Lobster*. While these films both encourage and discourage sex in different forms, both create different standards of what that looks like, and what is perceived as “normal,” which, as aforementioned, is the rudimentary, heteronormative, generative expression of sex. Ironically, this brings into question more so other forms of sexuality rather than the traditional forms that are shown. It brings into question the humanity amidst the inhumanity. It forces the audience, as well as the characters, to reconsider the traditional modes of thought we have been conditioned to believe.

It was after I had established the preliminary aspects of the cult that I was able to continue on to the story. I began with the broader framework consisting of three acts. In order to structure my story, I categorized each act as a separate step in the indoctrinating process. First, the cult must instill trust for the community, and distrust of the outside world. Second, the characters must experience fear of punishment by the cult, imparting unto themselves a dependence. Third and lastly, I wanted to give my characters the

opportunity to find solace in one another. Whether or not the cult emerged victorious in the end was none of my concern. Rather, the most important aspect for me was that whether or not they escaped, the protagonist found some semblance of comfort and happiness in *someone*.

For these three acts, I heavily researched the process of coercion, and how every day people become entwined in fanatically delusional cult systems. As a cult survivor and expert on cults and totalitarianism, Alexandra Stein served as my principal source. Her book *Terror, Love & Brainwashing: Attachment in Cults and Totalitarian Systems* provided me with a laundry list of psychoanalytic research and personal experiences related to the authoritative and persuasive nature of cults and their charismatic leaders. Beginning with the first act, I analyzed John Bowlby's revolutionary attachment theory. The four branches of the theory describe the separate but malleable relationships between, typically, a small child (the subject) and their guardian (the source of attachment). A relationship such as this does not necessarily fall into one category of attachment or another, as they can shift over time or blend into one another. For me, it wasn't so much about selecting one form of attachment, but rather identifying which elements of each branch conformed to my story and the journey of my protagonist. The two branches that correlated the most were "dismissing" and "disorganized." Dismissing attachment describes a relationship in which "the parent or attachment figure concisely neglects or rejects the child, and the child deactivates their attachment behaviors" (Stein 32). This results in the child no longer seeking comfort when experiencing fear,

suppressing all instinctual attachments, allowing them to respond to stress through internalization, anger and depression.

On the other hand, disorganized attachment is defined by the source of fear and the source of comfort both being derived from the same person, causing the child to experience an “unresolvable paradox of seeking to simultaneously flee from and approach the caregiver” (Stein 33). This form of attachment is built upon two antagonistic supports: isolation from other sanctuaries or the outside world in contention with instilling fear in the subject, causing them to concurrently run toward and away from what they have been conditioned to understand as the only benevolent safe haven. In this case, this safe haven is the cult and its leader.

I began thinking about this in phenomenological terms, and how these relationships affect how the characters respond to certain stimuli. My protagonist’s past experiences (a traumatic sexual assault by none other than his own father) dictate how he reacts to sexual encounters, repression tactics, and the teachings of the cult. It is because of his past that he is forced down this path, one on which he cannot turn around, and must face all that is now within his reach, including exploring his own sexuality with other characters. These experiences have profound psychological effects on him, resulting in a duality similar to Alex DeLarge’s in *A Clockwork Orange*: his deprogramming being both successful, and unsuccessful simultaneously. It is because of this that we as the audience are unsure of the outcome, but like the protagonist, find solace in the space between, a space where good and evil, success and failure, straight and queer blend together into

some shade of grey. This is the path down which my protagonist will be thrust, and that will permanently shift his perception of what it means to love and be loved.

Before such consolation however, a valley must be overcome in which the cult disseminates fear upon its subjects. This works in conjunction with Bowlby's attachment theory, and takes it a step further. After establishing a distrust in the outside world, the cult "must broadcast elements of fear, stress or threat to trigger the traumatic disorganized bond of the follower to the group, and set in place the resulting dissociation that this maladaptive response causes" (Stein 132). The "maladaptive response" could be considered the reaction to a relationship founded upon disorganized attachment, one that creates a paradoxical fight-or-flight response with no certain solution. One of the possible effects of such a response is the severance of the connection between thought and emotion. The goal of such a method is, ultimately, to "inhibit a person's ability to reflect upon their actual situation and sense perceptions, and to impede the use of their higher-level cognitive functions to make decisions about how to act on those perceptions" (Stein 140). This manifests the stranglehold in which the perpetrator has the victim's ability to think and feel freely and properly, assimilating them into the larger group. "In giving up that ability to think about one's feelings, the follower then hands over the power to interpret their reality to whoever places themselves as the holder of the correct interpretation, namely: the leader" (Stein 140). The robbery of one's independent cognition then becomes a key component to a successful coercion. Once this transposition has taken place, the follower is now fully at the mercy of the leader, inducing a fearful desperation and the loss of oneself. This loss — this desperation —

was something that I found as a critical structural element in the character arc of my protagonist. Once all hope is lost, the transition between the second and the third act can occur.

The third act centered around the protagonist's potential recovery from his traumatic experiences, or somehow regaining some semblance of independence in order to anticipate a solution to his situation. I did not want my protagonist to find a solution, but rather, a sense of comfort in the inevitable. While it remains fairly clear that the protagonist and his friend (paired together for reproduction) will not escape this cult cycle, we as the audience can wipe the sweat off of our brows knowing that they will at least have each other. This is precisely the revelation to which the two characters come as they see each other for the first time all over again in the closing scene. And finally, as if audience and narrative combined, a sense of reciprocal unity is born amidst the chaotic, disorganized world of the cult. The protagonist is able to then regain some independence and authority over his own path-making, in respect to, but not in vain of, his past traumatic experiences. This effectively places new objects within his reach, which, in his case, is a chance at true love within a society that suppresses the very possibility of such an experience, something he may not have had *without* the troubles of his past.

Upon the completion of my first draft, there were several components that needed readdressing, the most important being to solidify the structure of the cult itself. I had to reexamine the themes of my script (sexual repression, phenomenology, and the psychology of sex on screen), and adapt the cult to fit my needs more fluidly. It was at first unclear how one became initiated in this cult. Parents would take their sexually

deviant children to this place that claimed they would “fix” them, but what does that mean? I began to formulate an outward image, something that this cult could use as a front in order to justify their process. The idea of a summer camp sprang to mind. I restructured the entire introductory scene where my protagonist is introduced, and included a simple gesture by the mother: she hands over a flyer that they received in the mail, advertising a religious summer camp for teens. The protagonist’s mother extends the flyer and explains: “we’ve received them for quite some time now, but haven’t ever really needed it until now,” suggesting that something specific has sent them here by their own agency. This strategy is popular with a number of cult systems such as the infamous Jesus Morning Star cult, which utilized propaganda in order to indoctrinate young women. Alexandra Stein gives us an example of a common recruitment song performed by members of the cult in major cities such as London, New York, and Vancouver:

“This is my Father’s world, and to my listening ears

All nature sings and round me rings the music of the spheres.

This is my Father’s world; I rest in me the thought

Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas; His hand the wonders wrought.”

This song appears to be a beautiful dedication to a religious figure. However, upon indoctrination, it is revealed that the “Father” figure referenced in the song is none other than the leader, Jyeong Myeong-Seok. In order to purge yourself of your sins and cleanse your spirit, you must have sex with him. Jyeong is now serving a ten-year prison sentence for the rapes of four women, while hundreds of other female members have accused him of various forms of sexual assault.

I did not want this type of propaganda to be a central focus of the film, but I did want to incorporate it in subtle ways that both established a clear nature of the cult, and created a sense of tension or urgency. Because of this, immediately following the warm introductory scene is a cold display of what exactly goes on behind closed doors: a punishment reminiscent of that in *A Clockwork Orange*, the persuasion of sex followed by a physical shock upon acceptance to participate. This is repeated until the victim either refuses to obey or collapses from sheer torment, the former being the intended outcome. The leader of the cult (the person conducting these punishments) emphasizes the importance of refusal. He consistently and urgently presses them into participating in the sexual act of fornication, hoping that they will not obey. If they do not obey, then the sexual deviance has been programmed out of them successfully. This signifies that they are of sound mind and body to serve the community as a whole rather than as individuals, establishing the totalitarian system I aimed to achieve.

In addition, I also made several other key adjustments such as adding a scene in which the protagonist speaks to his mother over the phone. Earlier, he attempts to call someone, but they do not answer. The addition of this scene not only clarifies the purpose of the call, but offers a chance for the relationship between him and his mother to grow beyond the initial scene, given that that is the only other experience the audience receives with her. On the brief phone call, there is not much to say. The mother eventually apologizes for what his father did to him, which we can assume was violent and sexual in nature as we see previously in the swimming pool when he hallucinates his father

drowning him. The protagonist does not accept the apology, but dismisses it altogether, ending the conversation.

With these elements established, I was able to focus on other integral plots such as the protagonist's friend and her ex-lover, who we see being "baptized" toward the beginning of the screenplay. The audience, as well as Alyssa, the protagonist's friend, becomes aware that she has been admitted into the community as a permanent member, a nurse, after becoming successfully impregnated. The question then becomes: if she is a nurse in this community, where do all of the other adults go? Surely not everyone becomes a nurse, and we don't see her husband at all after the pseudo-baptism ceremony. I needed to establish "Evergreen," a separate sect where families go to live their lives and serve the community. However, Alyssa's lover did not go, and initially, I did not fully address the reasons for which she decided to stay: for Alyssa. I wanted her to stay to keep watch over Alyssa, which both protects and harms her. Her lover hides her decision under a cloak, stating that she feels as if she needs to give back, to serve the community in a larger way. She claims that she is delighted by the opportunity, and loves living in the community. By the end, Alyssa is able to realize her true intentions, which provides some resolution to an otherwise unintentionally ambiguous plot line.

Making these additions and adjustments was a difficult matter, simply because I had to perpetually evaluate the goals of each character and plot and how they contributed to the overarching themes of my narrative. I think, in a way, this relates to a sort of egocentrist philosophy that can be tied both to the writing process and the narrative. It assumes a "natural attitude," (coined by Husserl), one in which everything is seen in

relation to *me*, rather than existing as individual, separate objects. Ahmed uses the example of pen and paper, viewing the paper not as an object that can be written upon, but as an object that is *waiting* for me to write upon it. It centers the person in the world, and establishes every object and experience as an extension of that center. This directly correlates to how queer identities are perceived in a heteronormative society: a straight person might view themselves as the encapsulation of what humanity is built to be, deeming other identities as non-essential to the human experience — as simply placeholders for things (heterosexual things) to be built upon. Ahmed elaborates on this idea by examining the concept of a “paperless philosophy,” one in which the paper, in this instance, is not essential for said philosophy to exist. This fantasy, Ahmed writes, “can be understood as crucial to...the disappearance of political economy,...as well as its dependence on forms of labor, both domestic and otherwise. In other words, the labor of writing might disappear along with the paper” (Ahmed 34). If the paper is put aside, the philosophy can no longer exist, along with the time, labor, and significance of everything that built it.

I reframed the skeletal structure of this concept in terms of sexuality and gender identity in order to fully understand its significance to my narrative. This “political economy” — this philosophy — can be understood as the spectrum of humanity, the egocentrist a heterosexual person, and the pieces of paper as queer identities and their stories. The egocentrist assumes the natural attitude and views all else as subservient to him. He writes his philosophies upon us, forcing us “others” to assimilate to a societal norm, one which he has fabricated by his own hand. If we become set aside, not only

does the philosophy cease to exist, but we do as well. Our bodies vanish along with our histories. All of the suffering, pain, glory, and love that we represent fades into the ether. This self-defeating methodology reduces us to ashes. So what, I ask, can we do instead?

If we cease to recognize the egocentrist as just that, then his philosophy can no longer be written upon us. He no longer holds the pen, and we have our own agency. We can write our own stories, ones through which we can represent and celebrate ourselves. We can write upon our own skin the histories of our beings, and the glories of what it means to be “other,” so beautifully different.

Throughout this process, I continuously had to adjust my understandings of my own community, and what it meant to identify as something that doesn’t fit into the political structure of “straightness.” I did not want to make it a story about a gay man, or a lesbian woman, or any simplistic rendition of human sexuality. I wanted it to be as fluid as it could potentially be within such rigid constraints. This was important to me not only because of the necessity for queer people to see themselves represented in media, but for non-queer people to see us represented, particularly in such a totalitarian system, one which emulates historical circumstances. It is essential for viewers to expose themselves to new ideas, even if those ideas are troubling or unpleasant. For this screenplay, it became integral that I address the psychological effects of sexual repression in a heteronormative culture for this very reason.

It wasn’t initially my goal to achieve this. I began with the idea of a cult in order to explore the role of sexual repression in adolescent development, delving into the psychology of such actions. However, in the back of my mind, I knew I wanted to make

something that spoke to my values, my experiences, and my passions. I wanted it to be personal. I wanted it to matter, and I wanted it to matter to *me* (a hint of egocentrism, I guess). Finding my voice, taking inspiration from masterful films, and exploring how humans build and destroy relationships culminated into this screenplay. It is something that I hope works to reframe the perspectives of the viewers (readers, for now) and characters alike.

There is no doubt that I will continue to revise and edit this piece as I am passionate about its subject matter and its explorations into bodily relations, the psychology of sex, and the role of queer identities in heteronormative spaces.

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In Visible Bodies (working title)
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1 INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

A dark room, four slabs of cold concrete surround. Thinly framed bunk beds line three of the walls. Outlines of bodies are visible underneath each blanket.

It's still and silent, nothing moves or makes noise, save for one small bottom bunk in the middle.

A squeak. Another squeak. They begin slowly, spread out but rhythmic. After a few verses, a boy from the other side of the room on a top bunk abruptly lifts his head.

He pauses. The squeaks accelerate. They become violent even.

The boy gazing upon the origin of the squeaks sits up fully.

A beat.

BOY #1

He's pleasuring himself!

A few rustles from around the room notice the boy's outstretched arm pointing toward the squeaking.

The masturbating boy is too far gone. The squeaks heighten to a climax, which wakes up the entire room.

Boys hop up from their beds, climbing down from the top bunks and rushing to surround the boy, attempting to castrate the boy with screams of shame.

The automatic lights switch on.

A woman walks in amidst the chaos, dressed like a nurse. She scurries over to the bed, pushing through the crowd of rowdy pubescent boys.

She grabs the masturbating boy by the arm and drags him out of the room.

WOMAN

Back to bed, all of you!

She waves her free arm around with her demand. The door shuts behind her.

The crowd of boys is now lifeless with the entertainment taken away.

They all slowly return to their beds, and silence resumes.

After a beat, the automatic lights switch back off.

CUT TO BLACK.

2 INT. COUNSELOR'S OFFICE - DAY

A bright crimson room, high ceilings and warm drapery frame the space. The COUNSELOR, a slender, aging man, sits behind an ornate mahogany desk, hands clasped.

Across from him are a BOY, 19, stoic, and a WOMAN, 40s, stiff but brash.

MR. HEIDER
(stately, but warm)
My name is Frank Heider.

He nudges his pen slightly out of the way, not enough to do anything.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)
What can I do for you today...

He hesitates, waiting for a name.

MARY
Mary. Mary Allen, and this is my son,
Henry.

She doesn't look or gesture toward Henry.

Mr. Heider turns his head toward him, they stare at each other, Mr. Heider smiling, Henry deadpan.

MR. HEIDER
It's nice to meet you both.

Mary smiles with a hesitant chuckle. A beat. She breaks the silence.

MARY
We actually received your flyer. Well
we've received them for quite some
time now, but haven't ever really
needed it until now.

She reaches into her purse and removes a piece of paper. She places it on the table in front of her.

It's a glossy, colorful flyer advertising "The Green: A School and Community for Boys & Girls." Images of smiling

children outside and in classroom settings are plastered around the text.

Mr. Heider sees it and smiles.

MR. HEIDER

Indeed.

A beat. Mr. Heider looks at them; they don't know what to say.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Well, we can get your paperwork started.

He pulls out a sheet of paper from a drawer that holds nothing but a large stack of them. He clicks and pen open.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

First name?

He doesn't look up.

Mary waits for Henry to answer. He doesn't. She looks at him.

HENRY

Henry.

MR. HEIDER

Last name.

HENRY

Allen.

Mr. Heider looks up at him with a smile.

MR. HEIDER

A wonderful name.

He writes his last name down furiously.

MR. HEIDER

Age?

HENRY

Nineteen.

Mr. Heider writes it down.

MR. HEIDER

Now what seems to be the nature of his

admittance today, Mrs. Allen?

MARY

Well-

MR. HEIDER

My apologies. I assume it is Mrs.
Allen, correct?

Mary hesitates.

MARY

Yes.

MR. HEIDER

(concerned)

Where is your husband, Mrs. Allen?

Mary appears nervous.

MARY

He couldn't make it. He had a
dentist's appointment.

She hides her nerves with a smile. Mr. Heider looks at her
with intrigue.

MR. HEIDER

A dentist's appointment.

He thinks on in for several beats.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Well, oral hygiene is imperative to a
healthy body and gut.

He smiles briefly, returning to the paper.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

My apologies, what seems to be the
nature of his admittance today, Mrs.
Allen?

He repeats this exactly how he spoke before, as if reading
from a script.

MARY

He's been staying up very late.

She thinks, noticing Mr. Heider's expecting glare. Henry says
nothing.

MARY (CONT.)
He's been searching things online.
Things that should not be searched.

Mr. Heider looks over to Henry, who stares out the window. He notices a blackbird sitting on the window sill, cleaning its feathers.

MR. HEIDER
Is this true, Henry?

Henry watches the bird.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)
Henry? Is this true?

Henry finally looks over at Mr. Heider. He hesitates.

Mary shifts in her seat.

HENRY
Yes.

Mr. Heider looks at them both, returning to his paper. He checks off a few boxes.

Mary reaches into her bag and pulls out lipstick. She twists it and reveals a bright red pigment. She begins applying it over her lips without a mirror.

Mr. Heider looks up at her.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)
Mary.

She pauses.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)
There is no makeup allowed here. It
will disturb the boys and girls.

She stops even though she has only applied it to her top lip, and places it back in her bag.

MR. HEIDER
Thank you, Mrs. Allen.

He offers a robotic smile before grabbing his papers and straightening them.

Mary and Henry sit still in their chairs.

Mary looks over at Henry with a tenderness she tries to conceal. Henry stares out the window.

A beat. The bird flies away.

Suddenly, a very loud POUNDING on the door. It goes on for quite some time.

Mr. Heider looks up from his paperwork. The door opens, and a woman, a NURSE, peeks her head in.

NURSE

Mr. Heider, it's time.

Mr. Heider glances at the clock on the wall. He becomes flustered and laughs.

MR. HEIDER

Look at me, I've lost track of time!

He gets up from his chair.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Would you two wait here? I will be back in just a moment.

Mary hesitates, looking at the nurse and back to Mr. Heider. She shakes her head yes.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Wonderful.

He offers a large, warm smile.

3 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Mr. Heider walks with the nurse. She is dressed conservatively, as if from the fifties. They walk briskly.

NURSE

It was only just after everyone was put to sleep. The ruckus was deafening. I may have to administer a hearing test on myself this evening.

MR. HEIDER

And you are sure there was no other guest involved?

NURSE

I am. Well, I am not positive, but I

am fairly sure. I couldn't think with
all the noise. It was simply deafening
I-

Mr. Heider holds his hand up to her as they approach a window. They turn toward it, looking into an observation room of some sort.

The boy sits in a chair in the middle of the room. It's sterile and cold.

MR. HEIDER
I'll see what I can do, but I may have
to get ((the leader)).

NURSE
Gracious.

They both look through the glass. Mr. Heider walks away.

4 INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The boy sits on a chair in the middle of the room. Wrist straps hang loose from the arms. A thin black wire runs from the chair to the wall he faces. The wall bears a large blacked out window.

A door OPENS and SHUTS. Mr. Heider walks toward the boy from behind. The boy does not look up.

Mr. Heider walks around to face the boy. He stands and looks down at him.

MR. HEIDER
What's your name?

The boy stares downward at his lap. Mr. Heider kneels down in front of him, raising his chin to look at him.

MR. HEIDER
What is your name, son?

The boy looks at him.

JEREMY
Jeremy.

Mr. Heider lets go of his chin. The boy looks back down.

He grabs the boy's chin again and lifts it more sternly.

MR. HEIDER

We're just going to run a few tests,
Jeremy. Is that okay with you?

Jeremy nods. Mr. Heider straps his right hand to the chair,
leaving the left free to move.

A beat. Mr. Heider stands and walks toward the wall with the
large window.

A door OPENS and SHUTS. Shuffling. A tall, thin woman walks
out into the room. She stands directly in front of Jeremy.

She wears dress slacks and a suit jacket. After a beat, she
slips the jacket off and tosses it to the side, revealing a
thin white blouse which she unbuttons.

She finished removing the blouse and lets it fall, revealing
her upper body.

A beat. We hear Mr. Heider through an intercom.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.)

Jeremy, can you hear me? Raise your
hand if yes.

Jeremy raises his right hand.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)

Good, you can put your hand down now.

A beat. The woman stands still, arms at her side.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)

Now, Jeremy. Listen to me very
closely. I want you to reach
and touch Sasha. Anywhere you'd like.
Just one touch.

Jeremy looks up at Sasha, who stares directly at him, blankly
with a hint of smile.

He looks down at her breasts, reaching out slowly. His
fingers touch her skin. A beat.

He goes further, placing his entire hand on her chest. He
inhales deeply as if with ecstasy.

Sasha slaps his hand off of her. Jeremy yelps in pain. His
arm turns a slight red as veins protrude through his
forehead.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)
Great job, Jeremy. How did that feel?

Jeremy looks at Sasha as if asking for permission. She stares forward unflinchingly.

JEREMY
Good.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)
Which part?

JEREMY
The touching.

A beat.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)
We're going to try this one more time,
okay, Jeremy?

Jeremy becomes louder and impatient.

JEREMY
Can I use the bathroom first?

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)
Afterward.

Sasha gives a slight scoff. Jeremy looks up at her.

JEREMY
(mockingly)
What's so fucking funny, Sasha?

Sasha straightens her expression.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)
Once more, Jeremy, anywhere you'd
like.

Jeremy waits a beat, suddenly launching his arm forward. He aggressively touches her breast. it almost looks painful.

Sasha winces.

Jeremy receives a much stronger shock, sending him into a frenzy. He cries in pain, leaving him sobbing and limp.

Sasha quickly grabs her clothes, running off, attempting to cover herself.

A DOOR OPENS. Mr. Heider swiftly walks into the room toward Jeremy, still crying and limping forward.

Mr. Heider unstraps Jeremy's wrist from the chair as he falls into his arms. They fall to the floor, Mr. Heider holding him.

JEREMY

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I
didn't mean to, I can't help myself, I
need help, please.

He pleads into Mr. Heider's chest. Mr. Heider stares forward blankly as he holds his head.

MR. HEIDER

We've been here before, Jeremy.

JEREMY

Please, don't do this, please, I can't
go-

MR. HEIDER

I'm sorry, Jeremy. You've left me with
no choice.

The two of them sit in the middle of the room, rocking back and forth. Jeremy's cries soften.

5 INT. DORMITORY - DAY

A nurse briskly walks through the doors of a dormitory wing. Henry follows behind her, carrying a backpack on his front side, small wheeled suitcase rolling behind him.

The room is the one from the opening. The boys slowly and quietly make their beds. Henry spots a top bunk that is already made: the only one.

Looking down he sees the boy making his bed beneath it, who gives him a cordial smile, yet something feels off about it.

The nurse holds her arm out toward the finished bed.

NURSE #2

This will be yours. You can put your
things at the foot of the bed next to
Tyler's or you can keep them in
holding. Which would you like?

She spins quickly and sternly looks at Henry, waiting for an

answer.

NURSE #2

Well I haven't got all day. Which would you like or I'll decide for you, and I can tell you that if you let me decide for you-

HENRY

-I'll put them by Tyler's things. Thank you.

NURSE #2

So be it. I will need your phone and any electronic devices as we keep those in holding. This applies to everyone.

She holds her hand out expecting a speedy handover.

Henry glances at Tyler, who slips a phone out from under his bedsheet. He slides it back under.

Henry looks at the nurse.

HENRY

My parents don't allow phones.

NURSE #2

You don't have one? Everyone has one.

HENRY

I don't. I never have.

The nurse finally places her hand back at her side.

NURSE #2

Alright then. May I remind you that if you are caught with a phone or other electronic device, you-

HENRY

-I know.

The nurse straightens her collar.

NURSE #2

Curfew is at 9 o'clock. You will receive two hours of outdoor free time each day, except for Monday. There are scheduled classes and activities that

are mandatory for each guest. There shall be no perversion, gossip or loitering. Breaking any of these rules will result in swift punishment, and you will no longer be of use to us. Any questions?

She pauses. Henry and Tyler say nothing.

NURSE #2 (CONT.)
Oh, and you will be allowed one ten-minute phone call per week.

She glares at Tyler, and back to Henry.

NURSE #2 (CONT.)
There is a commencement at two o'clock. Attendance is required for everyone, particularly first-timers. I'll leave you to your things.

She hurriedly walks out the door, leaving it to slam behind her.

HENRY
Commencement for what?

He tosses his bags at the foot of the bed.

TYLER
Someone passed "the hour." They basically put you into a room and tell you to have sex. It's amazing if you ask me.

Henry climbs up into his bed and lies down, staring at the ceiling.

HENRY
Have you done it?

TYLER
No, you're wisdom teeth have to come in first. They only give you until twenty before they get rid of you.

Henry leans over his bunk abruptly.

HENRY
What do you mean?

Tyler motions a knife sliding across his throat.

Henry stares unable to speak.

TYLER
I'm kidding!

Tyler laughs and laughs. He suddenly stops.

TYLER (CONT.)
I don't know. They send you to
Evergreen if your teeth come in. It's
another sect for the adults.
Apparently it's wonderful.

A beat. Tyler lies down on his half-made bed as if he
finished his job.

HENRY
And if you fail?

TYLER
I don't really no what happens. You
just kind of disappear. No one ever
sees you again.

A beat. They both lie there, flat, staring upwards.

6 EXT. STAGE - DAY

Crowded rows of curved stadium seating face a small stage.
Behind the stage is an immense mirror wall, reflecting the
faux stadium back onto itself.

On the stage we see a large bathtub, propped up onto a small
flight of stairs.

Mr. Heider stands at the base of the tub in front of a
microphone. He motions his hands down.

MR. HEIDER
Settle! Everyone settle down.

The chatter stops on both sides of the seating, the boys and
girls.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)
Thank you, my children.

He adjusts the microphone.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

We have a special celebration today
for all of you.

He gestures over to the side of the stage, where a man and woman stand side by side. The man wears a smile, the woman is deadpan.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Our children, Anna and Michael, are no
longer.

He puts on a gleaming smile and claps. The audience follows suit.

Michael puts his arm around Sara, who appears completely devoid of emotion. She claps.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Now, after successfully completing
"the hour," both Michael and Sara will
be purified in this water, signifying
the renewal of their strengthened
commitment to this organization and
the community it has built and
fostered for so many wonderful years.

He looks over at Michael and Sara.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Will you join me?

Michael leads Sara up the stairs, holding her hand as if showing her the way.

They approach the bathtub and flank Mr. Heider, Michael still holding Sara's hand behind his back.

Sara releases her hand quickly and pretends to wipe off her shirt.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

These two have demonstrated an
unwavering love for themselves, our
family, and for each other. They are
eternally grateful for the lives and
opportunities they have been given
here. And repayment for undying love
is my blessing, something that I hope
you carry with you for the rest of your
time with us, your family.

He places each of his hands on their shoulders, letting out an unnerving laugh.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Michael will you please step forward?

Michael takes a step into the bathwater, followed by his other foot. He holds Mr. Heider's hand.

He spins, placing the back of his head on the palm of Mr. Heider's hand.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Michael, my sweet young man. Are you ready?

MICHAEL

(gleefully)

Yes, father.

Mr. Heider suddenly lowers him into the water. The world slows.

Michael smiles blissfully under the water. Bubbles slowly dribble from his nose. Not a care in the world.

He emerges from the water wearing a big grin. He laughs, they hug, the audience claps and cheers.

Mr. Heider kisses his forehead, grasping hushed between his hands.

MR. HEIDER

Welcome, my boy, welcome.

MICHAEL

Thank you.

Michael steps out of the tub and returns to his position.

Mr. Heider turns to Sara, who stares downward at the rippling bathwater Michael left behind.

MR. HEIDER

Sara? Are you ready?

She nods, somewhat reluctantly.

Mr. Heider motions her toward the tub. She steps in and replicates Michael's stance. It takes her a bit longer, she appears frail.

She shuts her eyes and settles into Mr. Heider's hand.

A beat. He lowers her body into the water. Her face goes under. The world slows.

INTERCUT:

7 INT. THE HOUR ROOM - NIGHT

Sara lies with her back on the bed, Michael goes down on her, aiming his eyes at hers.

A groan of ecstasy. The sloshing of water. A frightening gasp.

CUT TO:

8 EXT. STAGE - DAY

Sara gasps underwater. Her eyes widen.

She forces herself out of the water, grasping at the sides of the tub. Mr. Heider attempts to lift her up, but she falls into the tub with a blood-curdling series screams and sobs.

She holds herself, flailing and fighting back against two nurses who remove her from the tub.

The crowd holds their cheers, instead watching the events unfold, unsure of what to say or do.

NURSE #2

Where should we take her?

MR. HEIDER

Take her to the East Wing, put her in a holding cell. She can shower and gather herself there.

NURSE

You heard him, let's go.

They carry Sara away and out of sight; her screams can still be heard for some time.

MR. HEIDER

My apologies for the...clearly emotional response Sara had to this experience.

A beat.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)
Let's welcome Michael and Sara into
our family! To Evergreen they go.

He smiles endearingly.

The crowd slowly begins to applaud again.

Among the crowd sit Henry and Tyler. Tyler claps, Henry sits silent.

HENRY
What the fuck was that?

TYLER
I've seen a few of these before. This
isn't the first time it's happened.

A beat.

TYLER (CONT.)
It must be a good thing.

Henry squints at the stage in the blinding sun, unsure how to feel about anything.

MR. HEIDER (V.O.)
Secret vice, masturbation, and self-
pollution are other names applied to
this same awful sin against nature and
against God.

9 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A dark classroom houses a circle of chairs, each sat upon by a boy. Henry and Tyler sit opposite each other in this circle, headed by Mr. Heider.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)
We shall not explain here the exact
nature of the sin, as very few boys
are so ignorant or so innocent as to
be unacquainted with it. Are we?

He receives no response.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)
Boys, are you guilty of this terrible
sin? I would like you to stop,
consider, think of the awful results,
repent, confess to God, reform.

Another step in that direction and you may be lost, soul and body. You cannot dally with the tempter. Escape is only now or never.

A beat.

Tyler stares down at his twiddling thumbs.

TYLER

I am.

Everyone glances at Tyler, who looks up at all of them.

MR. HEIDER

What is your vice, Tyler. You can tell us.

TYLER

I had sex with someone I wasn't supposed to.

MR. HEIDER

Mhm, and who was this person.

He hesitates and breaks eye contact.

TYLER

A boy.

MR. HEIDER

And this is a vice because?

TYLER

I was tempted, and giving into temptation weakens me.

Mr. Heider nods.

MR. HEIDER

Whatever debases, contaminates, or in any way injures the boys of a community, saps and undermines the very foundation of the community's strength and greatness. This vice was your injury. We all feel the pain as a result. For each of us to be strong, we need to think collectively and positively about this community.

Henry watches Tyler as he continues to fumble with his

fingers.

Mr. Heider sits back in his chair.

MR. HEIDER
Anyone else?

A beat.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)
Henry. How about you?

Henry looks up at Mr. Heider, then around the room. His eyes are met with many others.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)
This is your first time, why don't you share your experience?

HENRY
Um.

Henry's nerves start to show.

HENRY (CONT.)
My parents found porn. On my computer.

Mr. Heider leans forward.

MR. HEIDER
And what were you finding pleasure in?

HENRY
I don't know.

As if to clarify, Henry continues.

HENRY (CONT.)
Girls. And maybe boys. I don't know about boys. I hadn't gotten there yet. I don't know what I'm saying, nevermind-

MR. HEIDER
-anything said in this room must be said with conviction. Being honest with ourselves and others about our abuses is the only way to cure yourself of them. You must cut it out of you.

A beat.

10 INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

Sara sits along the wall of a dreary, yet sterile room...a mix between a jail cell and a doctor's office.

Her long wet hair slouches around her shoulders. She holds a white towel around herself.

Staring at the wall, she gives us nothing, completely devoid of emotion.

The door opens, and a man, DR. WALKER, 30s, walks in, taking a seat diagonal to her. He wears thick-rimmed glasses and combs his hair back perfectly.

She doesn't look at him.

DR. WALKER

It's nice to meet you, Sara.

Nothing.

DR. WALKER (CONT.)

My name is Dr. Walker. You can call me James.

He gets nothing out of her.

DR. WALKER (CONT.)

You can tell me anything you'd like.
What music do you like?

Nothing, again.

DR. WALKER (CONT.)

Do you have any favorite movies?

He realizes this is going nowhere. He cuts to the chase.

DR. WALKER (CONT.)

Sara. In order to move through this process, you must tell me how you feel. What happened?

A beat. Sara inhales deeply, her first real movement.

SARA

How will you help me?

DR. WALKER

They hire me to come intervene in these types of situations. I have plenty of experience-

SARA

-Yes, but *how* will you help me? There's nothing to be done.

Dr. Walker removes his glasses.

DR. WALKER

My job is to help you work through whatever you're feeling. For the good of this community-

SARA

The community. The community, the community...

Sara increases her volume until she can't anymore.

SARA (CONT.)

...the community, the COMMUNITY, THE COMMUNITY!

She becomes quiet again. She doesn't avert her gaze from the wall.

SARA (CONT.)

There is no community. Only many people in one place.

Dr. Walker looks at her with intrigue.

She looks down and tears up.

SARA (CONT.)

Now I'm here forever. Now I have to make one myself.

DR. WALKER

And you will, and it will be beautiful. You will have children and they will love you as you will them.

SARA

They'll only know the kind of love they're forced to feel. It's not real.

She sits still, staring at the wall. There is nothing in her

eyes. After a moment, she furrows her brow, in thought.

SARA (CONT.)
I want to stay.

DR. WALKER
(confused)
I'm sorry?

SARA
I want to stay. Here. I don't want to
go to Evergreen. I want to be a nurse.

A slight chuckle escapes her mouth. It retreats quickly.

DR. WALKER
Sara, I assure you Evergreen will be
best-

SARA
No.

She looks up at him.

SARA (CONT.)
I want to be a nurse. Here.

Several moments of silence pass by. Dr. Walker isn't sure of
what to say.

Sara looks back down at her hands. She violently picks at the
skin around her fingernails. They're red and dry.

She stops.

SARA (CONT.)
Dirty Dancing.

Dr. Walker looks up at her.

SARA (CONT.)
That was my favorite movie. It was all
about love. I don't like it anymore.

Dr. Walker watches her with intrigue. Silence.

CUT TO:

11 INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Everyone lies in their beds, the lights are off.

Henry lies on his top bunk, while Tyler lies on the bottom. They both are still.

After a beat, Tyler slips off his sheets and quietly stands to look at Henry. He climbs up.

TYLER
(whispering)
Hey, move over.

Henry begrudgingly opens his eyes and looks at him.

HENRY
What?

TYLER
Move over, I need to tell you something.

HENRY
What is it?

TYLER
No. Move over.

Henry reluctantly shifts over. Tyler climbs into bed next to him, the two squeezing tightly in the confinement of the guard rails.

They both sit in silence for a second, not looking at one another.

Tyler suddenly rolls on his side, propping his head up on his arm.

TYLER (CONT.)
Why'd your parents put you in here?

HENRY
I thought you had something to tell me.

TYLER
No. I just said that so you'd move.

Henry lies still and keeps his eyes on the ceiling.

TYLER (CONT.)
Are you going to answer me?

Henry Looks at him.

HENRY
I don't want to.

Henry directs his gaze back to the ceiling. Tyler sits for a moment, intently looking at him.

Tyler holds strict eye contact that never falters.

TYLER
My mom found a rabbit with its head
ripped off in our backyard.

A beat.

TYLER (CONT.)
I killed it.

Henry says nothing, but his face tells us he hears every word.

TYLER (CONT.)
I quite enjoyed it actually. Not all
the blood and guts and things. I
actually got an erection.

HENRY
That's disgusting.

TYLER
I can't help it. I wanted to kill
something bigger but it was too late.

A few moments of silence. Henry is at a loss for words.

TYLER (CONT.)
I'm kidding.

He's not convincing.

TYLER (CONT.)
So why are you here?

Henry stays silent for a moment. He's hiding something.

HENRY
My mom found my search history.

He speaks as if to say "duh," and get Tyler to stop pestering him.

TYLER
That's all?

Henry nods his head quickly, avoiding eye contact with Tyler.

HENRY
Yeah, that's it.

Henry appears nervous.

TYLER
There's nothing wrong with that.

HENRY
Apparently there is.

A beat. Tyler thinks. Henry lies there, anxious, but still.

Suddenly Tyler puts his hand on Henry's arm, grasping it gently.

Henry shakes him off.

TYLER
Hey!

BOY #1
Shh!

Tyler turns his attention to the boy who shushed them. He wants to say something, but doesn't. He spins back to Henry.

TYLER
Why did you do that?

HENRY
Why did you do that?

Tyler takes a moment before climbing down from the top bunk. He slips back under his own sheets.

Henry lies completely frozen.

CUT TO:

12 EXT. ROPE COURSE - DAY

Henry, another boy, and two girls stand atop a crowded platform high up in a tree. They each wear red helmets and typical climbing gear: a waist strap with carabiners, clipped to a rope that attaches to the zip line.

They stand nervously next to each other, the girls more nonchalant about the situation. Henry stares down at the ground. Two squirrels wrestle in the dirt and skirt around a tree.

COUNSELOR

Henry! Alyssa!

Henry jolts his attention to the counselor, who stands on the next platform.

COUNSELOR

It's your turn!

Before Henry lies two wooden slats about three feet apart. They are connected to each other, and form a triangle with the zip line.

COUNSELOR

Both of you go at the same time. Keep it balanced! Work together!

Henry looks at the obstacle before him.

ALYSSA

Are you okay?

ALYSSA, 19, blonde and fragile, but rugged in attitude, has stepped up next to Henry, who finally notices her.

HENRY

Yeah.

ALYSSA

Well let's go then.

A beat. They both wait for the other to step first.

Alyssa takes her first step onto the wooden platform, grasping onto her rope. Henry hesitates causing Alyssa to slip, gasp, and step back onto the platform.

ALYSSA (CONT.)

What is your name?

HENRY

(nervously)

Henry.

ALYSSA

Well Henry we haven't got all day, do

we?

HENRY

Sorry.

COUNSELOR

Come on, we haven't got all day!

A beat. Alyssa points to Henry's rope.

ALYSSA

Grab that. Hold onto it for balance.

Henry grabs the rope.

ALYSSA (CONT.)

Okay. Three, two, one, step.

They both take a step onto the plank. It wobbles, they wobble, but they remain steady.

Henry takes a deep breath in.

ALYSSA (CONT.)

Okay. Again.

HENRY

Hold on, I need-

ALYSSA

Three, two, one.

They both step fully onto the plank, white-knuckling the rope trying to keep the whole structure steady.

ALYSSA (CONT.)

(quickly)

Okay, do you know row row row your boat?

Henry struggles to hold his place.

HENRY

Uh, yeah.

ALYSSA

We're gonna sing it and step to the beat of it, okay?

HENRY

Okay.

ALYSSA
Ready? Row, row-

They both step twice with the beat of the words. The contraption shakes as they try to stay balanced.

ALYSSA & HENRY
-row your boat gently down the stream.
Merrily, merrily-

Henry hears the squirrels below him and looks. His foot slips, nearly sending them dangling from the zip line.

ALYSSA
Henry!

HENRY
(hurriedly)
I'm sorry.

ALYSSA
Yeah, I bet. Keep going.

They continue walking.

ALYSSA & HENRY
Row, row, row your boat gently down
the stream. Merrily, merrily, merrily,
merrily, life is but a dream.

They reach the middle where another rope is attached to the line. They clip their second carabiner on the second half, and detach the first one.

Henry watches Alyssa now that he's found his rhythm. Alyssa continues to sing, Henry barely uttering them.

Alyssa's blonde hair swings with each step. She watches the plank in front of her intently. She's beautiful and powerful. Intimidating and endearing.

Henry looks back at the plank, noticing his next step is his last. They step onto the platform.

The counselor reaches out to usher them onto the next obstacle.

COUNSELOR
Wonderful work. Do you feel the
pleasure and satisfaction of working
together? You made a common goal and

achieved it! Go on you two, onto the next.

He pushes Henry around to the other side of the platform, Alyssa follows.

They stand behind another boy and girl, waiting their turn.

Henry leans against the tree, breathing. He looks at Alyssa, who is already peering at him.

She lets out a brief smile before becoming serious.

ALYSSA

What?

Henry shrugs and looks away.

HENRY

I don't know.

He plays with his feet. Alyssa looks back at him with intrigue.

CUT TO:

13 INT. BATHROOM - DAY

A cold, dark, dingy bathroom. A small window at the top, opposite the door, lets some light in.

Alyssa is being held up against the wall, gasping for air almost expressionless.

Henry holds her, thrusting her up against the wall. They grunt and breathe. They're both still fully dressed. Alyssa grips Henry's shoulder a little too hard.

HENRY

Ow.

ALYSSA

Keep going.

She winces.

HENRY

(stiffly)

Are you okay?

ALYSSA
Keep going.

They continue.

After a few moments, Alyssa pulls Henry's head toward her, and gasps. Henry trembles.

ALYSSA (CONT.)
Okay, get out, get out!

Henry panics, thinking he hurt her. He pulls out. She sets her feet on the grounds standing up.

HENRY
Are you okay? Do you need-

ALYSSA
Yes, I'm fine.

She adjusts her underwear and throws her dress back down.

ALYSSA
Did you finish?

HENRY
(stuttering)
Well, no I- I though I hurt you for a second, I-

Alyssa stares directly at him, somewhat shocked. A beat.

ALYSSA
Was that your first time?

Henry hesitates.

HENRY
No, no of course not.

Alyssa sighs with relief.

ALYSSA
Okay, you scared me.

HENRY
You scared me.

They look at each other for a second. Alyssa gestures toward him.

ALYSSA

Pull your pants back up.

Henry does so, zipping them back up and buttoning them.

Alyssa climbs up on the toilet, reaching for the window. While Henry is busy putting himself together, Alyssa removes the window. She sets it on the ground. The noise gets Henry's attention.

HENRY

How'd you know you could do that?

ALYSSA

This isn't my first time.

She says it as if everyone should know. Henry stares at her, unsure of what to do.

ALYSSA

Are you gonna help me get out of here
or what?

HENRY

Why you?

ALYSSA

This is the boy's bathroom.

Henry glances at the window.

14 EXT. BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

The back of the building is blank, save for one small window. Alyssa's feet come through. She slides out of the window and falls onto the dusty ground.

She walks away quickly. Henry places the window back into place from the inside.

TITLE CARD: TWO WEEKS LATER

15 EXT. STAGE - NIGHT

A large audience of boys and girls sit facing the stage, and the large mirror behind it.

There is very little chatter.

Henry sits nearly in the middle, next to Tyler.

TYLER
It's hot out here.

Henry says nothing as he looks around.

TYLER
How hot do you think it is out here?

HENRY
(annoyed)
I don't know.

Tyler airs out his shirt.

TYLER
God, it's so hot out here.

Henry notices Alyssa on the far side of the audience. She sits next to a group of girls who quietly chat with each other. She's alone.

TYLER
I don't know if I can sit out here for much long-

HENRY
Tyler, shut up about it. You don't have a choice.

Tyler immediately stops talking about it.

Henry continues to look around. Eventually he notices Dr. Heider walking up onto the stage. He does not look pleased.

TYLER
Here we go.

Henry notices Sara on the side of the stage as Dr. Heider walks past her.

She wears a nurse's outfit like all the others; a smile is plastered onto her face.

Mr. Heider steps up to the podium.

MR. HEIDER
Good evening. You are all gathered here today to witness a true tragedy. What happens when one abandons the health of mankind, and instead, gives in to selfish desire. It's what all of

you are here to overcome. There is malevolence in each of you, and it is our duty to rid you of that burden, and enable you to contribute to our community in a positive manner rather than soil yourselves, our name, and myself. Only we can do that for you.

Henry looks at Alyssa, who isn't paying attention. He returns to Mr. Heider as he continues speaking.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

What you are about to see is the result of a direct violation of our codes of conduct. It is fortunate this girl is getting the treatment she needs, and she will be thankful after it has been done. Without further ado.

He steps away from the podium and walks off the stage. He entered a doorway behind the mirror.

Within moments, the mirror transforms into a one-way window. The audience is faced with the observation room from earlier.

Four white walls, and a girl sitting in a chair in the middle of the room.

HENRY

What the fuck is this?

TYLER

Just watch.

Henry looks at Alyssa, who is staring intently at the girl in the observation room.

16 INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A door OPENS and SHUTS. A MAN, built, late 20s, walks into the room. He stands directly in front of boy, staring directly into the audience.

He wears a white t-shirt and blue jeans with a brown belt. After a beat, He slips his shirt off and tosses it to the side, revealing his strong physique.

He continues, uncoiling his belt. He unzips his pants and pulls them down around his ankles. He wears only underwear.

A beat. We hear Mr. Heider through an intercom.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.)
Can you hear me? Raise your hand if
yes.

The girl raises her right hand.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)
Good, you can put your hand down.

A beat. The man stands still, arms at his side, staring
intently forward.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)
Now, listen to me very closely. I want
you to do something simple for me.
Reach out and touch him. Anywhere
you'd like. Just one touch.

The girl looks up at the man, who stares directly at her,
blankly with a hint of smile.

She looks up at his torso, reaching out slowly. She takes his
body in. Her fingers touch his skin. A beat.

She wraps her hand around his backside. She continues up and
across his chest. She takes in a deep breath and lets out a
smile of pleasure.

The man slaps her hand off of him. She yelps in pain. The
audience can see her strain.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)
How did that feel?

The girl looks at the man. He stares forward unflinchingly.

GIRL
It felt good.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)
Which part felt good?

GIRL
His chest.

A beat.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)
Remember it.

The girl remains silent.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)
Once more, anywhere you'd like. Go
ahead.

The girl waits a beat. She does nothing.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)
Can you hear me?

GIRL
Yes.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)
Touch him.

She hesitates before slowly reaching out. She uses both
hands, touching both breasts.

This time, she receives a much stronger shock, sending her
falling forward, limping her whole body.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)
Just one more time for me please. Just
once more, and we will be done.

A beat.

GIRL
I don't want to.

MR. HEIDER (O.S.) (CONT.)
You must.

The girl looks up at the man, as if asking for permission.

GIRL
Can I?

The man doesn't move, and remains silent.

The girl launches her arm forward into the man's crotch with
anger.

She receives an even stronger shock, sending her into cries
of pain. She lurches forward and her arms turn red. She
wails.

The man quickly grabs his clothes, running off.

A door opens. Mr. Heider swiftly walks into the room toward
the girl, still crying and limping forward.

Mr. Heider unstraps her wrists from the chair as she falls into his arms. They fall to the floor, Mr. Heider holding her.

GIRL

I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I
didn't want to, you told me to, I'm
sorry, I'm sorry...

She pleads into Mr. Heider's chest. Mr. Heider stares forward blankly as he holds her head.

MR. HEIDER

We've been here before, haven't we?

GIRL

Please, don't do this, please, I can't
go-

MR. HEIDER

You did not resist.

GIRL

You told me to.

MR. HEIDER

And if you had known what is right you
would have disobeyed me.

The two of them sit in the middle of the room, rocking back and forth. Her cries soften.

Mr. Heider places her back in the chair and straps her back in.

Two nurses enter the room and walk up to the chair, flanking Mr Heider. One of them is Sara, who holds a tray of medical instruments.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

This will be very quick.

The other nurse removes some kind of medical knife from the tray. She unbuttons her pants and pulls them to the floor.

GIRL

Please, no, please!...

She cries for help, but no one listens.

MR. HEIDER
All of your devilish devices will be
gone. Put your faith in us.

The nurse sanitizes the knife. Sara watches with a blank expression.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)
When part of a body has rotted, it
must be cut out and discarded. It is
painful; once it was healthy and
functioning perfectly. But its disease
might infect and destroy the rest of
the body. Removing it is the only
remedy.

The nurse places the knife by the girl's lap. He faces away from the audience.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)
Three, two, one...

The girl's cries become exasperated.

The nurse works at something. She digs. The girl screams and weeps.

The nurses rush away as Mr. Heider leans in to console the girl. He holds her arms.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)
(gleefully)
At last you are free, my child.

Mr. Heider tears up with happiness, offering the castrated girl nothing but a plaster smile.

17 EXT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Henry stares dumbfounded at what he just witnessed. He looks over at Alyssa, who has gone back to twiddling her thumbs.

A slight chatter emerges, and is immediately shushed by a counselor at the podium.

Alyssa becomes annoyed amongst the chatter and slips off the side of the bleacher, walking away into the dark unnoticed.

CUT TO:

18 INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Henry lies in his bed, arms by his side like a stiff corpse. He stares at the ceiling, unable to move. He breathes deeply, his eyes lay open wide like moons.

The room is silent. The silence builds.

A VIBRATION jolts him out of his state of shock. He slides his arm under the covers and retrieves his phone.

He opens it and turns down the brightness.

TYLER (TEXT)

Are you okay?

He thinks for a second.

HENRY (TEXT)

I'm fine.

He turns off his phone and slides it back under the sheets. he returns to his dead stare toward the sky.

A beat. The silence begins to grow again. He places his hand on his mouth as his eyes begin to swell. He sobs quietly, yet heavily.

The room sits dark and silent as he cries.

CUT TO:

19 INT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY

A large indoor lap pool sits inside an plain industrial building. The walls are mostly glass, allowing plenty of natural light inside.

Boys and girls stand along the side of the pool. Alyssa and Henry stand together in front of a lane. They stand in modest bathing suits and red swim caps, with goggles propped on their foreheads.

They stand awkwardly.

HENRY

Don't you think we should talk?

ALYSSA

About what?

A beat. Neither of them look at each other.

HENRY

I don't know. That was stupid , I guess.

The counselor blows a whistle, and paces along the side of the pool.

COUNSELOR

Alright. You will relay in pairs. Each lane has three bricks at the end, on the bottom. The first is very light. The second, slightly heavier, and the third will require two people to lift it out of the water. You must bring them back to where you're standing now and stack them, heaviest on the bottom, lightest on the top. You must decide how you do this amongst you and your partner. Both must participate in as equal a capacity as possible.

Henry looks at his toes and wiggles them on the edge of the pool.

COUNSELOR

On the whistle, you have five minutes to discuss and complete the task.

A few beats. The counselor stares them down as they wait for the whistle.

Suddenly, he blows the whistle. Alyssa straps on her goggles.

HENRY

What I think-

Alyssa dives into the water.

HENRY

Fuck.

He straps on his goggles and dives into the water after her.

They push toward the other end of the pool, large splashes of water drowning the pool.

Alyssa reaches the end, placing her feet on the wall and launching herself downward. She grabs the largest brick. She can't quite get it.

She keeps pulling and straining. It begins to lift off the pool floor. She struggles. Henry eventually comes and helps her lift the brick off the pool floor.

Together, they carry the brick across the pool and place it on the side.

HENRY

Let me get the bigger one.

ALYSSA

I've got it.

She dives back in before him.

He swims after her. She grabs the bigger brick as she did the first one. This time, she's successful.

She swims back as Henry passes over her. He dives and grabs the smallest brick.

Alyssa places hers on the stack and immediately pushes herself out of the pool.

Henry reaches the end and does the same.

ALYSSA

I think I'm gonna be sick.

He hunches over toward the pool.

HENRY

Don't-

He reaches for her as she launches stomach bile into the pool water. Screams emerge from the swimmers still in the pool. Everyone scatters.

ALYSSA

Oh my god.

Alyssa runs away holding her stomach.

Everyone exits the pool and looks at Henry, including the counselor.

CUT TO:

20 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The boys sit around the classroom, this time in rows. Mr.

Heider is joined by a counselor at the front of the room, who stands and passes out sheets of paper.

MR. HEIDER

I want you to think about why you are here. What selfish act you have committed, and how to behave outside of yourself. For the good of others.

Henry gets a sheet of paper flung across his desk. He looks up at the counselor, who takes no notice of him as he continues down the aisle.

He looks down at the sheet. It reads:

COUNSELING SEXUAL ABUSE

A list of questions with several answers each rather the page.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

First, we must examine the parts of ourselves, and recognize certain parts above others.

A concentric series of circles lie atop the page, reading from outer to inner: body, emotions, soul, will, mind, spirit.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Richard, what do you think is the least important part of the self?

RICHARD

The body, father.

MR. HEIDER

Precisely. It is upon this notion that the body serves as merely a vehicle for the greater good. It is our most individual, our most selfish. As we move inward, we become who we truly are. As one. Our emotions lead us into our own souls. Our souls lead us to the spirit of God. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our

bodies.

The boys are silent, some in rapture, others daydreaming.

Mr. Heider paces.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Henry?

Henry looks up at him, confused as to why he's being called out.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Can you answer number four for us please?

HENRY

Um...

Henry looks down at number four. He reads it in his head.

MR. HEIDER

Aloud please.

He gives Henry an expectant look.

HENRY

Why did God let it happen? Result of defrauding by "a," immodest dress, "b," indecent exposure, "c," being out from protection of our parents, "d," being with evil friends.

21 EXT. ROPE COURSE - DAY

Henry leans against the tree, breathing. He looks at Alyssa, who is already peering at him.

She lets out a brief smile.

22 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Henry looks up at Mr. Heider, who stares back at him. The entire classroom is looking at Henry, waiting for him to answer.

MR. HEIDER

Think.

HENRY

Um...I don't know, I think that...

He becomes noticeably nervous. He begins rubbing his pencil vigorously.

HENRY (CONT.)
I might go with "c?"

His nerves settle a bit.

HENRY (CONT.)
Being out of the protection of
parents. I think.

Mr. Heider has not broken his eye contact.

MR. HEIDER
I see. What makes you think that?

HENRY
Well, I...I trusted them, and they let
me down.

Tyler looks at him with intrigue. This doesn't line up with the story he'd been told.

Mr. Heider thinks for a second before continuing his pacing.

MR. HEIDER
Meet me in my office after class.

Henry's nerves return. The yellow pencil has been worn down to the wood, yellow shavings litter the desk.

23 INT. MR. HEIDER'S OFFICE - DAY

Henry sits opposite of Mr. Heider at his desk.

They sit like statuettes, staring at each other, Mr. Heider's hands folded on the desk.

MR. HEIDER
How are you, Henry?

HENRY
(confused)
I'm good...father.

Mr. Heider chuckles.

MR. HEIDER
You don't need to call me that. I'm
just here to help you is all.

Henry lets out a smile in response.

HENRY

Okay.

MR. HEIDER

Your father. What is he like?

Mr. Heider stands and circles the desk, half-sitting on henry's side closer to him.

Henry hesitates.

HENRY

Um...I don't know, I guess you could say-

MR. HEIDER

-You don't know your father?

HENRY

He's a bit strange.

Henry hides his anxiety.

MR. HEIDER

Strange?

Henry says nothing.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Forgive me, I'm simply trying to understand your answer.

HENRY

My answer?

MR. HEIDER

About you being out of the protection of your parents.

HENRY

Oh-

Mr. Heider quickly pulls out a file from a stack on his desk. He flips through it and lands on a page.

MR. HEIDER

I was under the impression that your mother found you searching for things online. Is this correct?

HENRY
Well, yes, but-

MR. HEIDER
Then how do you blame your parents for
what you have done to yourself?

HENRY
I don't-

Mr. Heider throws down the file and leans in to Henry.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)
The healing process must begin inside
oneself. If you cannot recognize the
source of self-abuse as the self, then
there is no progress to be made. You
must forgive the offender.

Henry's anxiety struggles to be contained.

HENRY
I can't.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)
You must. You cannot blame others for
your sins.

He leans in and places his hand on Henry's shoulder.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)
I love you as I do all of my other
children, but I cannot save you if at
first you cannot save yourself.

Henry and Mr. Heider lock eyes. Henry tries to relax in the
face of Mr. Heider's gentle smile.

CUT TO:

24 INT. WOMEN'S BATHROOM - DAY

Alyssa sits in a stall, leaning back on the toilet. Her hair
is a mess.

She has her arm under her skirt, moving her hand in and out
rapidly. Her face remains calm, as if there is no feeling
down there.

She becomes annoyed and starts going faster. She rolls her
eyes with some semblance of ecstasy.

A DOOR OPENS and SQUEAKS shut. The clack of low-heeled shoes hurries into the stall next her.

She immediately stops.

The woman in the next stall falls on her knees. She vomits violently into the toilet bowl.

Alyssa reacts with shock and disgust, trying to remain silent.

The other woman heaves a few deep breaths and flushes the toilet. She stands up and walks to the sink.

Water FLOWS.

Alyssa frantically grabs some toilet paper and wipes. She flushes the toilet and leaves the stall to go wash her hands.

She approaches the sink, a few down from the woman. It's Sara in her nurse garments.

Sara aggressively washes her hands. It looks painful.

Alyssa stands and watches.

ALYSSA

Are you okay?

Sara says nothing, only washes her hands harder. There is a slight, odd smile on her face.

ALYSSA

Hello? I said are you okay?

Sara pauses.

SARA

Never better.

She continues washing her hands. Alyssa looks down at them, covered in a scaly, deep red rash.

ALYSSA

I think they're clean.

SARA

What?

ALYSSA

Your hands.

Sara pauses again.

SARA
(chuckling)
Oh. Silly me.

She turns off the water and rips too many paper towels from the dispenser. She aggressively dries them.

ALYSSA
Here.

Alyssa walks over and gently grabs the paper towels from her hand.

She takes one of her hands, examining the rash.

ALYSSA
You need to stop being so rough with
it.

She dabs her hands with little pressure, making sure not to aggravate her skin further.

Alyssa looks at her eyes, which look down at the floor.

ALYSSA
Is this okay?

Sara says nothing, and doesn't move.

ALYSSA
I miss you.

Sara becomes even more still.

ALYSSA
Like a lot.

SARA
You cannot say such things anymore.

Alyssa tries to conceal her emotions.

ALYSSA
I hate seeing you like this.

Sara looks up at her sternly.

SARA
Well, you need to get used to it.

Alyssa raises her volume, becoming too aggressive with the paper towel.

ALYSSA

Why?

Sara winces with pain and pulls away from her hand.

ALYSSA

I'm sorry.

She coaxes her hand to her. Alyssa continues to pat her hands down, turning them over and taking them in.

SARA

My life is with them now. It is with all of us. It's my purpose.

Alyssa doesn't look up at her.

SARA (CONT.)

I'm having a child.

She lets out a gleeful laugh. It seems genuine.

Alyssa pauses, thinking.

ALYSSA

That could've been you and me.

Sara becomes stern.

SARA

That would never have been possible.

Sara holds her stare.

ALYSSA

Why didn't you go Evergreen?

Sara tries to think of an answer. Anything but the truth.

SARA

Because I like living here.

ALYSSA

Bullshit.

Sara slaps her hand across Alyssa face, sending her stepping backwards. Alyssa holds her face and gasps in shock.

A mix of shock and disappointment wash over Sara's face.

Alyssa could cry at any second.

SARA
I'm sorry.

She quickly steps out of the bathroom, leaving Alyssa standing alone.

She begins to sob, leaning against the sink, holding her face in her hands.

CUT TO:

25 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Henry stands at a single telephone perched against the wall in a long, narrow hallway. A nurse stands some distance away, keeping an eye on him.

He dials a number and waits.

It rings a few times, he stands very still.

After several rings, he realizes no one is going to answer. He's in disbelief, but understands.

He slowly hangs up the phone, staring at it.

26 INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Henry lies in his bed as usual, except this time, his eyes are closed.

A beat.

TYLER
Psst. Hey.

Henry rolls over to see Tyler standing at the edge of his bed.

TYLER
Can I come up for a second?

Henry considers.

HENRY
Just for a second.

Tyler climbs up the steps and squeezes into the other half of Henry's bed.

They both lie in silence for a second.

TYLER
I'm sorry.

HENRY
For what?

Tyler rolls his head to look at him.

TYLER
I don't know.

Henry rolls his head to look at him. He notices a few deep bruises on Tyler's cheek.

He rolls onto his side.

HENRY
What happened?

TYLER
It's nothing.

HENRY
That's not nothing.

He reaches out and touches it. Tyler winces.

HENRY
Sorry.

TYLER
It's okay.

A beat.

HENRY
Who did that to you?

TYLER
It doesn't matter. I've learned to live with this kind of thing. Maybe that's why I am the way I am.

HENRY
What do you mean?

A beat.

Tyler stares at the ceiling. His eyes start to well up. His voice quivers.

TYLER

I'm fucked up, Henry. I'm really
fucking fucked up.

Tears stream down his frozen face.

Henry grabs his face and pulls it toward him. Within an instant, they kiss, holding it for a few seconds.

Tyler stops sobbing. Henry lets go.

They're both in shock.

HENRY

I'm sorry.

Tyler grabs Henry's face and plants his lips on his. They let go.

They both lie there for a beat, knowing that nothing needs to be said.

CUT TO:

27 EXT. WOODS - DAY

Henry sits on the ground up against a tree. Alyssa stands nearby, whacking things with a large stick.

HENRY

Are you sure we're supposed to be out
here?

ALYSSA

(assuredly)

No. No one even knows we're here.

HENRY

Well they know where we aren't.

Alyssa smacks a tree with her stick, breaking it into pieces.

ALYSSA

No one cares where we are or aren't.
As long as we're not fucking or making
love.

She finds another big stick and continues her barrage.

Henry stares up into the trees, watching them sway gently in the breeze.

HENRY

Do you think they have a point?

Alyssa stops in her tracks.

ALYSSA

Who?

HENRY

Mr. Heider, the counselors. I mean what if the community is more important.

ALYSSA

It's bullshit.

She throws her stick as far as she can, watching it get stuck in a tree branch.

She rolls her eyes and finds another one.

Henry watches her.

HENRY

(gently)

Why'd your parents put you here?

Alyssa slows down, facing away from him.

ALYSSA

My parents...found porno magazines.
Under my bed.

She's unconvincing.

Henry thinks.

HENRY

I don't believe you.

ALYSSA

Then what do you want to hear, Henry?

HENRY

Why you're here, why you're actually here-

ALYSSA

Fine.

A beat. Alyssa prepares herself.

ALYSSA (CONT.)

I was raped, Henry. My sister raped me, and lied about it. She told everyone that I made moves on her because I was "trying to explore my sexuality."

Henry doesn't know what to say.

ALYSSA (CONT.)

It's so fucked up because she actually convinced me that I enjoyed it after it happened. I started hating myself because I thought I did. And now I'm here, and I deserve it. I was so fucking stupid to believe anyone but myself. So this talk of "community" is a load of horse shit.

Henry remains silent against the tree. Alyssa stands, looking up at the sky. She drops her stick, letting it fall to her feet.

HENRY

You're not stupid at all.

Alyssa starts to laugh. She looks down at Henry and smiles before looking down at her feet.

She picks up her stick again.

They both say nothing, the sounds of the wind in trees, and of the birds chirping are the only things that remain.

ALYSSA

Do you want to fuck?

CUT TO:

28 EXT. PICNIC AREA - DAY

Tyler sits alone, eating lunch in an open area outside. Other boys socialize, play on gym equipment, or eat lunch.

A group of boys talk in the distance, glancing over at Tyler. We hear his name mentioned a couple times.

Eventually they start moving toward him.

BOY #3

Hey, Tyler, how is lunch?

Tyler squints up at him toward the sun. He swallows his food.

TYLER

It's okay.

The boy and his group of friends circle the table. He leans in and looks at Tyler's face.

He grabs his chin and turns his head.

BOY #3

Aw, would you look at that. Who did that to you, I'll take care of them for you.

Tyler keeps his jaw clenched, ready to snap at any moment.

BOY #3 (CONT.)

Wait, I forgot. I'm not allowed to hit girls.

He violently releases his jaw, but remains face to face with him. He breathes heavily.

BOY #3 (CONT.)

Or was it one of the animals you beheaded? Coming back to haunt you now?

He gets in closer.

BOY #3 (CONT.)

You sick motherfucker.

He holds his face in close for a beat. He slowly back off.

HENRY

Hey!

The boys' attention turns to Henry, who walks out of the woods with Alyssa.

BOY #3

What?

Henry is now the the boy's face.

HENRY
Who the fuck are you?

BOY #3
Name's Lionel.

He holds his chin up high. Henry is not impressed.

HENRY
Lionel. That's a stupid name. Did your
dumb fucking mother call you that.

The boy gets within inches of his face.

BOY #3
Don't say a damn word about my mother.

Alyssa watches from behind, unsure of what to do.

HENRY
Or what.

A beat. The boy takes one sweeping swing directly into
Henry's jaw, sending him stumbling backward.

Tyler gets up to help him. They stumble away with Alyssa, who
shouts back at him.

ALYSSA
Fucking perv!

The boy wipes his face, puffing out his chest to intimidate,
but to no avail.

CUT TO:

29 INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

Tyler, Henry and Alyssa sit in a holding cell similar to the
one to which Sara was brought.

Dr. Walker sits across from them as a nurse tends to the
bruises on Henry's face. A bandage already covers Tyler's
injury.

Dr. Walker sits and watches them for a strangely long time.
They look blankly back at him.

DR. WALKER
What happened?

ALYSSA
I thought you'd never ask.

HENRY
These boys were trying to fight Tyler.

The counselor looks at Tyler.

TYLER
It's nothing. It's fine, really.

DR. WALKER
Know that we have taken the
appropriate steps to remedy the young
man who hit you.

ALYSSA
You call him a man?

DR. WALKER
(aggressively)
Am I speaking to you young lady?

Alyssa sees Sara was past the door. She hesitates.

ALYSSA
No, sir.

The counselor adjusts his jacket and glasses.

DR. WALKER
Well, as long as you two have no
grievances, this matter is adjourned.

He gets up and walks out the door. The three of them sit in a row in the holding cell as the nurse tends to Henry's bruises.

CUT TO:

30 INT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY

The large industrial building, an empty swimming pool, save for for one person.

Henry slowly backstrokes across the pool. His movements are gentle, his eyes lazy.

He stares up at the ceiling, watching the rafters pass by above him. They remind him of the trees outside, blowing in the soft breeze. The sounds of rippling water turn into wind

and birds.

A DOOR OPENS and CLOSES in the distance. It echoes through the room.

Henry pauses and swivels to look. There's nobody in sight.

He brushes it off and continues swimming. As he approaches one end of the pool, a pair of legs stands on the edge. They remind us of his own.

Henry gets closer to the edge and opens his eyes. There is no one there.

He turns around and swims the other direction.

He is calm and collected, seemingly at peace.

Suddenly he is pushed underwater. Two hands wrap tightly around his neck. He inhales out of shock, only taking in some water.

Grappling with the hands around his neck, he sees a figure just out of the water. It's a man's face - he looks much like Henry, but older. It could be his father.

Within an instant, he rips the hands off of his neck and emerges from the water. He gasps for air and flops on the surface of the water.

He panics, and feels his neck. Two large red spots mark around his Adam's apple.

He is completely alone.

CUT TO:

31 EXT. ROPE COURSE - DAY

A similar obstacle lies before Alyssa, except this time, Tyler is by her side.

Henry stands on the next platform having a similar interaction with his brunette partner as they did before.

Alyssa takes note, and returns her attention to the task at hand.

ALYSSA
Does it seem wider to you?

She looks down at the beams.

ALYSSA (CONT.)
Like further apart?

TYLER
I don't think so. Looks the same to me
as it did the other day.

Alyssa furrows her brow at it.

COUNSELOR
Alright, on we go!

TYLER
Ready?

Alyssa thinks.

ALYSSA
Yeah.

TYLER
Three, two...

Alyssa takes her step too soon, nearly falling. She steps
back onto the platform.

TYLER
What the fuck?

ALYSSA
(frazzled)
Sorry.

Tyler looks at her, bewildered.

TYLER
Okay. Again. Three, two, one...

They both step onto their respective beams, grabbing their
ropes for balance.

TYLER (CONT.)
Do you want to sing?

ALYSSA
Sure.

TYLER
Okay.

A beat.

TYLER

And, row, row, row your boat gently
down the stream...

They each take steps with the beat, each more steady than the last.

TYLER & ALYSSA

...merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,
life is but a dream. Row, row, row
your boat, gently down the stream...

Alyssa looks up into the trees, watching the leaves blow in the wind. They're swaying a little farther, allowing peaks of sunlight to shine through.

TYLER & ALYSSA

...life is but a-

They had reached the middle. Tyler attached his new carabiner, Alyssa did not. As she walks, her first carabiner hits the middle rope, pushing up against the clip, causing it to open.

She slips, it detaches. She plummets to the ground, leaving Tyler dangling from the line.

Alyssa lets out a yelp. She hits the ground.

TYLER

Alyssa!

Everyone around them gasps.

The counselor rushes to get to the ground.

Henry stands, staring at Alyssa from above. She lies on her back, motionless. Henry is stricken with fear. He's speechless.

CUT TO:

32 INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

Alyssa lies down on the examination table with her eyes closed. They open.

The light above her is too bright to look into. She tries to move her arm to cover her eyes, but winces with pain.

TYLER

Don't move, he said the nurse would be
in any second.

Alyssa rolls her head to look at Tyler, who sits in a chair
against the wall, smiling at her.

TYLER (CONT.)

You almost killed me.

Alyssa rolls her head back, unsure of what to make of Tyler's
smile. It's almost as if he is happy about nearly being
murdered.

Alyssa squints into the light, giving up her attempts to
block it.

Suddenly a DOOR OPENS. Light clacks of low-heeled shoes
approach the examination table.

Alyssa hears a tray being set down, and bags being unzipped.

The nurse straps on latex gloves.

Alyssa slowly looks over toward the nurse. It's Sara.

She turns back toward the light, not appearing to be fully
there.

ALYSSA

(struggling to speak)

Can I get someone else please?

SARA

I'm afraid not.

Sara doesn't wear her typical plastic smile.

Tyler watches as Sara examines her arm.

TYLER

What's wrong with her?

ALYSSA

Yeah.

A beat. Alyssa stares at Sara, who doesn't pay any mind to
her.

SARA

Her forearm is broken. Gonna need a

stint and a sling. Should be healed up
in a few weeks.

ALYSSA

A few weeks?

Sara says nothing as she unpacks a stint. She wipes it down
with a cleansing wipe.

Tyler looks at Alyssa, who hasn't taken her eyes off of Sara.

Sara returns to the examination table.

SARA

Sit up.

Alyssa just stares at her.

SARA (CONT.)

Come on, up you go.

Sara grabs her and pulls her upward. Alyssa lets her head
roll limply into her. Sara sits her up and pushes her head
back to rest against the wall.

She takes gauze tape and rips it. She begins to wrap the
stint to her arm.

ALYSSA

How are you?

Sara doesn't answer. Alyssa's eyes are nearly lifeless.

ALYSSA (CONT.)

Did you hear me?

SARA

Better than you, I suppose.

Alyssa scoffs with a smile. Her smile fades. Lifeless once
more.

A beat.

Alyssa looks down at what Sara is doing. She spots something
on her skin, just showing past her short sleeve.

ALYSSA (CONT.)

What's that?

Sara looks at Alyssa and follows her eyes to her arm. She

blows it off.

SARA

Just a little bruise, that's all.

Alyssa looks over at Tyler, still sporting his cheek injuries.

She looks back at Sara.

ALYSSA

Why are you lying to me?

Sara finishes the stint.

SARA

Because it's none of your business.

ALYSSA

So you admit that it's not a bruise.

Sara doesn't respond.

Alyssa looks at Tyler. She uses her other arm to lift up her sleeve. Sara quickly pulls it back down.

Alyssa honest know what to say.

ALYSSA (CONT.)

Matthew 5:28.

Sara prepares the sling vigorously. Alyssa becomes emotional.

ALYSSA (CONT.)

They branded you??

SARA

I belong here.

Alyssa thrashes her legs.

ALYSSA

No you don't!

SARA

Alyssa!

Alyssa cries, but no tears come out.

Sara holds her arm tightly, wrapping the sling around her shoulder and the stint.

ALYSSA
I just miss you.

She closes her eyes and rests her head against the wall again. She breathes deeply.

Sara slows her pace.

SARA
You cannot miss what is right in front
of you.

Alyssa doesn't budge. Sara returns to her tray after finishing the sling.

ALYSSA
You're just a shell.

SARA
(sternly)
I have found my purpose. Mr. Heider
and everyone who lives here loves you.
It's out of the kindness of their
hearts.

Sara finishes packing everything back onto the tray.

SARA (CONT.)
I've been given the greatest gift of
all.

ALYSSA
And what the fuck is that?

Sara looks at Alyssa endearingly.

SARA
A second chance.

Sara walks toward the door. She holds it open and stops, not looking back.

SARA (CONT.)
Feel better.

She shuts the door quietly behind her. Alyssa doesn't watch her leave. Instead, she stares numbly at the wall before her, her arm resting in a fresh white sling.

Tyler looks up at her.

TYLER
I'm sorry.

Alyssa doesn't move. She looks dead.

Tyler looks at the door the Sara shut behind her.

CUT TO:

33 INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Henry and Tyler lie squeezed in bed together on the top bunk, both facing upward.

HENRY
How's Alyssa?

TYLER
Not good.

HENRY
What do you mean?

TYLER
She loves Sara.

HENRY
Who?

TYLER
The nurse. From the ceremony.

Henry says nothing, trying to piece things together.

TYLER (CONT.)
I think they were in love.

HENRY
Are you sure?

TYLER
Definitely.

Henry scoffs with disbelief. A beat.

HENRY
We had sex.

Tyler swivels his head.

TYLER

What?

HENRY

In one of the private bathrooms. I
thought I was hurting her.

A beat.

INTERCUT:

34 INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Alyssa winces, being thrust up against the wall. A mix of
pain and pleasure wash over her.

35 INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

He chuckles, but with apprehension. Reality washes over his
face.

A beat.

TYLER

You didn't hurt her.

They lay there in silence. Tyler and Henry both think in
their own worlds.

CUT TO:

36 INT. BOY'S SHOWERS - DAY

Henry stands under a shower head alone, water dripping down
his face and onto his body.

He stretches his neck and rubs his face. His hands run down
onto his neck, the red bruises still laying bare. He
continues down his torso.

He puts his head level and groggily opens his eyes. His
vision is blurry, but he can distinguish a boy's naked body
walking into the shower room.

Henry sways calmly under the shower water as the boy
approaches. The boy comes closer, and comes more into focus.

It's Tyler. He grabs Henry's face and pulls him in for a
kiss.

The world moves slowly as they kiss passionately under the

running water.

Tyler pushes Henry up against the wall and continues making out with him. A beat.

Henry opens his eyes slightly, noticing a woman's figure standing in the doorway, nude.

She leans up against the door frame with her arm extended. Henry continues kissing Tyler as he watches her.

She walks toward them slowly. She comes into focus. It's Alyssa.

Tyler notices her as she goes in to kiss Henry. They begin to kiss against the wall, Tyler kissing her neck.

They all share this moment underneath the steaming waterfall. Everything feels right, yet everything feels wrong.

Alyssa pulls away from Henry, affection in her eyes. They glisten. Henry smiles in a daze.

Alyssa turns to Tyler and kisses him. Henry watches them.

A SHARP STAB. Tyler grunts.

Henry looks down, noticing Alyssa pulling a knife from Tyler's stomach. It's drenched in blood that runs down her arm and into the shower drain.

Henry seems unaffected. Alyssa watches Tyler fall to the shower floor.

She takes in a deep breath of steam and turns to Henry.

She goes in for a kiss. Henry half-smiles at her as she wipes off her lips.

Tyler's blood spirals down into the shower drain.

CUT TO:

37 INT. MR. HEIDER'S OFFICE - DAY

MR. HEIDER
Do you hear me?

Henry sits across the desk from Mr. Heider, staring out the window.

HENRY

I'm sorry?

MR. HEIDER

You had something to tell me?

Henry jolts back to the matter at hand.

HENRY

Oh. Yes. My teeth have started to come in.

MR. HEIDER

Are you sure?

HENRY

Yes. My mouth is in quite a bit of pain.

A beat. Mr. Heider opens a drawer and pulls out a flashlight. He stands and leans over his desk.

He shines the flashlight at Henry, who leans in and opens his mouth. He pulls his lips down.

Small teeth protrude through the back of his mouth.

Mr. Heider clicks the flashlight off and sits back down.

Henry sits back down, correcting his posture.

MR. HEIDER

Very well.

He pulls out a sheet of paper from another drawer and places it on the table. The CLICK of a pen, and Mr. Heider begins filling out the form.

HENRY

Who will I be placed with?

MR. HEIDER

We will pair you when there is a pair to be made.

Henry sits silently, watches Mr. Heider write quickly. He checks off a long list of items, pauses, moves down a few, and continues.

Henry looks around to pass the time. He notices a mourning dove sitting atop the window sill. It coos.

MR. HEIDER

Thank you, Mr. Allen. Congratulations.

He reaches his hand out to shake. Henry hesitates, then realizes what he's supposed to do. He reaches out and shakes his hand, offering a numb smile.

CUT TO:

38 INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The room sits silently as usual, the chairs forming a circle. Henry sits in his usual spot. Tyler, who typically sits across from him, is absent.

EVERYONE

Save the boys from vice and crime,
give them good training, physically,
mentally, and morally, and the
prosperity of the community is
assured.

A beat.

MR. HEIDER

Good. And why do we speak of the
community rather than ourselves?

He looks around at the boys. One of them raises their hand.

BOY #2

Because you keep us safe.

MR. HEIDER

Exactly. This is your safe haven. We
are here to help you cleanse and be
reborn as part of a family. The
outside world is ridden with filth and
distrust. Here, you always have a place.
You always have your place, in our
place.

He motions his arms around to everyone, collectively.

Henry sits and listens, staring lamely around the room.

MR. HEIDER

And someone here has found a new
place.

He looks at Henry with a slight smile.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Henry?

Henry jolts out of his daze, turning his attention to Mr. Heider. He looks at him, not quite sure what is happening.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Henry's teeth have begun coming in.

The group of boys murmur to themselves. Henry continues his daze, hearing everything, but not ingesting anything.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Soon we will be one classmate short,
as he will be commencing his adulthood
very soon.

Mr. Heider smiles at him. Henry is still dazed.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Henry?

He becomes slightly concerned.

The world slows, Henry's daze strengthens. Voices echo.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Henry, how are you feeling?

HENRY

I'm okay.

He stares at Tyler's empty chair.

CUT TO:

39 EXT. PICNIC AREA - DAY

A few boys mingle around the picnic area. Some loiter on the tables, others play on the gym equipment. Others sit and talk in the grass.

A nurse walks through the open field. She walks quickly, as if in a hurry. She slows down, and suddenly stops. She has difficulty standing, her body sways trying to keep steady.

Suddenly, she collapses onto the ground, making little noise. No one around her notices.

She lies on the ground, unmoving, for quite some time.

A beat.

TITLE CARD: TWO MORE WEEKS LATER

40 EXT. WOODS - DAY

Henry and Alyssa sit with their backs on opposite sides of a tree.

Everything is still, save for the slight sway of the leaves. Sunlight flickers on the forest floor.

Alyssa's face is empty. Henry picks at his fingernails.

A beat.

HENRY

How long has it been?

ALYSSA

Two weeks. I think. I'm not sure anymore.

Alyssa doesn't budge or blink. Henry picks vigorously at his fingers. A sharp PICK.

INTERCUT:

41 INT. BOY'S SHOWERS - DAY

A swift STAB. The slow release. Alyssa smirks at Henry.

42 EXT. WOODS - DAY

Henry looks at his fingers. They're a burning red; skin flakes off around the nails.

ALYSSA

I kind of feel like I'm dying.

A beat.

ALYSSA (CONT.)

Is that normal?

Henry throws a fingernail into the dirt.

HENRY

What's normal anymore?

Alyssa scoffs.

ALYSSA
I don't think anything is normal.

HENRY
Normal doesn't always mean good.

ALYSSA
Normal would be better than this. Even if we went back to the "normal" where she left me behind. The "normal" where she couldn't even look at me. That would be better.

A beat. Henry doesn't know what to say.

Alyssa stands up. She quickly walks around the tree. She sits in front of Henry, facing him, crossing her legs.

Henry looks at her, unsure of what to do.

ALYSSA (CONT.)
This is normal. Right?

She wipes a tear from her face, and fakes a smile.

ALYSSA (CONT.)
We still have each other. And Tyler, I guess, if you count him.

HENRY
Yeah, we have each other.

ALYSSA
Good.

A beat. Alyssa and Henry both look down at their feet.

ALYSSA (CONT.)
What's wrong with your fingers?

She looks up at Henry for an answer. She doesn't get one.

She grabs his hand forcefully and looks at his fingers. She looks at him.

ALYSSA (CONT.)
Henry, what the fuck?

HENRY
It's nothing, I just pick at skin, I always have.

ALYSSA

No you haven't. Don't lie to me,
what's wrong?

HENRY

Nothing, I'm fine, it's just-

ALYSSA

-just what?

HENRY

(shouting)

It's nothing, Alyssa! Just leave me
alone, worry about your fucking self!

Henry is within inches of her face. Alyssa looks scared. She
leans back. Henry cools his temper.

A beat.

HENRY (CONT.)

I'm sorry.

Alyssa's fear intensifies. She starts backing away.

HENRY (CONT.)

Alyssa, I didn't mean to-

ALYSSA

Yes, you did.

She gets up, shaking.

ALYSSA (CONT.)

She meant it, and so did you.

She backs away and runs into the woods, disappearing in the
trees.

Henry sits against the tree, leaning his head back loosely
against the bark.

HENRY

Alyssa!

Everything is still. The trees sway.

CUT TO:

43 INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Henry and Tyler lie in their own beds, Henry on top, Tyler on the bottom.

Neither of them move. Henry lies on his back, eyes closed. Tyler lies on his side, staring at the wall.

Tyler appears vulnerable, something we've yet to see from him. He rolls over.

TYLER

Henry?

He gets no response.

TYLER

Henry, are you awake?

Still nothing. He gives up.

He rolls onto his back, staring up through the top bunk, through the ceiling and into the sky.

He calms himself and breathes.

Henry lies on his back, breathing deeply, sound asleep.

44 EXT. WOODS - DAY

The trees softly bend in the breeze, their leaves flickering the sunlight in every direction.

It's a beautiful summer day.

A bird flies by, chirping through the branches.

A GUN SHOT. The bird screeches, falling silently to the ground. A SOFT THUMP.

The trees keep swaying in the wind, the sunlight a rippling tide on the forest floor, the bird a speck in the vast green ocean.

CUT TO:

45 EXT. STAGE - NIGHT

The large stadium seating is full. It's somber and silent. Slight murmurs here and there.

MR. HEIDER

Needless to say, it has been a
difficult past fifteen days.

Henry sits in the middle of the crowd. He glances over at Alyssa, who sits on the edge where she always does. She stares numbly into the mirror behind the stage.

She focuses in on her face. Her eyes are sallow pockets. There's little life left in her.

Henry watches her.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

We lost a dear member of our family.
Someone we love, someone who loved.
She dedicated her body and her life to
the greater good of our community. She
not only lived a full life, but a true
one. An honest one.

Henry returns his attention back to the stage.

He notices Michael standing on the side of the stage, arms behind his back, staring down solemnly at his feet.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Michael lost the love of his life. The
woman he was to spend the rest of his
days with. And the child he was meant
to raise in the arms of our family.

Michael begins to sob. A nurse approaches and wraps her arms around him, consoling him.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Not only did we lose her, she was
taken from us.

Chatter from the crowd bubbles up again. Henry furrows his brows. He looks over at Alyssa, who is now paying attention to the stage.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

A vile, despicable soul has ripped her
from our warm hands. It is now that
this person must pay for what they
have done to our fragile institution.

He waves his hand back at the mirror wall, which transforms once more into a one-way window.

A boy sits in the chair in the middle of the room, facing the audience.

Henry squints to see who it is. It's Tyler.

Henry looks at Alyssa, who stares at Tyler, completely deadpan.

The boys who bullied him in the picnic area gasp with shock, followed by slight chuckles.

Mr. Heider walks toward the door, and into the observation room, it's white, sterile environment a stark contrast from the darkness outside.

46 INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

He walks over to Tyler, kneeling by his side. Two nurses stand at the side of the room.

Tyler sits with his hands strapped to the arms of the chair. He has been crying, but is now numb.

MR. HEIDER

(softly)

Do you know what you have done, boy?

A beat.

TYLER

Yes.

MR. HEIDER

Why don't you tell your family how you betrayed them.

Tyler says nothing.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Tell them!

The strength in Mr. Heider's voice shakes Tyler into speaking.

TYLER

I killed her. It was me.

47 EXT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Alyssa watches intently, a mix of emotions drowning her face. It feels like she's trapped underwater.

48 INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Mr. Heider gets closer, brushing the back of Tyler's head. He speaks softly again.

MR. HEIDER
And why, dear boy, would you do such a thing.

Tyler is on the verge of breaking down.

TYLER
To protect someone.

Mr. Heider looks confused.

MR. HEIDER
And who would that be?

TYLER
It's not important.

Mr. Heider glares.

Tyler hesitates.

TYLER
Alyssa.

49 EXT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

The audience gasps and looks around.

Alyssa is on the edge of tears, unable to take her eyes off of Tyler.

Henry stares blankly, but intently.

50 INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MR. HEIDER
(digging)
Alyssa?

Tyler shakes his head.

TYLER
They were in love.

The audience murmurs. Mr. Heider looks bewildered.

TYLER

It could never be. And now it never will.

Mr. Heider looks out through the window, as if searching for Alyssa. He returns to Tyler.

Mr. Heider runs his finger through Tyler's hair.

MR. HEIDER

Surrendering to vice never fails to worsen your lot. Haven't you learned this my boy?

Tears start to roll down Tyler's cheeks. He looks out at the large window, unable to see outside.

TYLER

I'm so sorry, Alyssa.

51 EXT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Alyssa watches, taking in deep breaths to soothe herself. She tries to take it all in.

52 INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

TYLER (CONT.)

I never wanted to hurt you or Henry or Sara or anyone. But you're both in a better place.

MR. HEIDER

But don't you see boy? By allowing harm upon yourself, you have given pain to everyone you sought to save.

He walks around to his other side.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Only I have the power to save.

He kneels at his other side.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

Now surely your friends don't want to see you in pain.

53 EXT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Henry and Alyssa both jolt up in their seats hearing this.

Henry looks at Alyssa. She can't bear to watch.

54 INT. OBSERVATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MR. HEIDER

But what else am I to do, Tyler?

He speaks with an endearing tone, as if to comfort him.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

You cause pain, you receive pain. This is how the world works when functioning properly. Pain is not pleasure. Both are the work of something evil.

He stands, and circles around to the back of Tyler's chair.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

It is clear to me you haven't the will to learn. Your progress is scant.

One of the nurses walks toward the center of the room with a tray.

Mr. Heider pulls something off of it, but we don't see what it is.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

When you pain yourself, it multiplies, and supercedes all else, inflicting those around you.

Mr. Heider leans his head in near Tyler's. Tyler is sobbing quietly, but uncontrollably.

MR. HEIDER (CONT.)

You are no longer a part of this family. You've left me with no choice.

TYLER

Please.

Mr. Heider cranks Tyler's head backward, swiftly slicing his throat with a large knife.

Blood spatters, dripping a deep crimson down his neck and onto his shirt.

Mr. Heider does not flinch.

55 EXT. STAGE - CONTINUOUS

The audience gasps. Henry nearly gets sick.

He looks over frantically to find Alyssa, who quickly steps off of the bleachers and into the darkness.

Henry stands up, pushing past throngs of people to get out.

He eventually makes it to the edge and jumps down onto the ground.

He looks around, panicked and dizzy, making his way to the backside of the bleachers.

HENRY

Alyssa!

He sees a vague, blonde figure moving in the distance. He runs to catch up with her, the world becoming less dizzying as he runs away from the chaos of the stage.

56 EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

He runs after her, catching up to her in the middle of the woods.

HENRY

Alyssa!

She doesn't stop running as she wipes her tears.

Henry finally catches up to her, grabbing her by the shoulder and spinning her around.

ALYSSA

What do you want?!

Henry is out of breath.

HENRY

I just wanted to make sure you're okay.

ALYSSA

No, I'm not okay. This is fucked.

She aggressively wipes her tears away with the palms of her hands.

HENRY
Alyssa, listen, it's-

ALYSSA
No, you listen!

Henry stands, dumbfounded.

ALYSSA
(frustrated)
She left me. You left me. And now
Tyler left me. How could he not see
that coming?

HENRY
I don't know.

ALYSSA
Why can't someone just be there for me
and not fucking leave?

HENRY
Tyler didn't leave us, he was taken,
he was trying to protect you.

ALYSSA
I don't need fucking protection! I've
protected myself for as long as I can
remember, I don't need you or anyone
else to do it for me.

HENRY
Okay.

Alyssa takes in a deep quivering breath. She's lost and
completely overwhelmed.

Henry doesn't know what to do.

Alyssa picks up a stick and chucks it into the darkness.

ALYSSA
Ahhhhhhhh!

She screams and lets out her emotions, breaking into a full
sob.

Henry rushes over and hugs her tightly.

ALYSSA (CONT.)
What's gonna happen to me? They know

about us now.

HENRY
I don't know.

ALYSSA
Am I never gonna see you again?

HENRY
I don't know.

They stand for a moment in the darkness, surrounded by trees, still in the night. Alyssa wipes her tears on Henry's shoulder. She lets out a laugh.

ALYSSA
Fuck you.

Henry holds the back of her head and pulls her in.

HENRY
I know.

They stand, swaying among the still trees, Henry rocking her like a baby in the night.

Everything is quiet.

CUT TO:

57 INT. DORMITORY - NIGHT

Henry lies in his bed, curled up as Tyler was, facing the wall. He's numb.

Tyler's bed lies empty, his sheets are neatly made and tucked into the mattress. It's as if no one was ever there.

Everything is still.

CUT TO:

58 INT. MR. HEIDER'S OFFICE - DAY

Mr. Heider sits in his chair, across the desk from Henry. He write on a piece of paper.

He finishes and looks up at Henry. A beat. He hands over the paper.

Henry thinks before grabbing the paper, looking at it

inquisitively.

MR. HEIDER
Just your signature.

He gives him a warm smile. Henry returns it with a hesitant one.

He looks down at the paper and signs it, handing the paper and pen back to Mr. Heider.

MR. HEIDER
Very well. Are you ready?

A beat.

CUT TO:

59 INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Henry stands in a long hallway. A lone telephone hangs from the blank wall. Henry stares at it.

Suddenly, he grabs the phone and begins dialing a number. He brings the phone to his ear as it rings.

He glances over, a nurse stands by a distance down the hall, watching him.

The phone rings and rings. Eventually someone picks up. It's silent at first. A voice comes through.

MARY (O.S.)
Hello?

HENRY
Mom?

Mary sighs with relief through the phone.

MARY (O.S.)
Henry.

A beat.

MARY (O.S.) (CONT.)
How are you?

Henry fiddles with his fingers.

HENRY
My teeth came in.

MARY (O.S.)
That's wonderful.

Her voice is genuine, filled with emotion.

Henry feigns a smile.

HENRY
How are you?

MARY (O.S.)
I'm okay. It's strange being alone,
but I'm making the best of it.

Henry says nothing.

MARY (O.S.) (CONT.)
I learned how to make sweaters.

HENRY
Yeah?

He smiles.

MARY (O.S.)
They're nice and big and soft. I'll
have to send you one.

HENRY
I'd love one.

Silence. Neither of them know what to say. Mary becomes
breathy through the phone.

MARY (O.S.)
Henry, I'm so sorry.

HENRY
You shouldn't be.

MARY (O.S.)
I am. And he would be, too, I'm sure.

A beat.

HENRY
If he was going to be sorry, he
wouldn't have done it.

Mary doesn't know what to say. Henry swallows.

He looks up at the nurse, still watching him.

HENRY (CONT.)
I've got to go.

MARY (O.S.)
Okay.

A beat.

MARY (O.S.) (CONT.)
I love you, Henry.

Henry waits a second.

HENRY
I love you too.

He holds the phone for a beat before hanging it up. He stands alone in the hallway, the nurse watching him from down the hall.

60 INT. WAITING AREA - DAY

Henry sits in a chair along the wall in a long hallway. The lighting is grim and medical.

He looks down to one end of the hallway. It seems never-ending. There is no one in sight.

It's so silent, the ventilation system becomes audible as it kicks on.

He looks down at his hands, nervously twiddling his thumbs and tapping his foot.

Suddenly a DOOR OPENS. There is no one there.

He stares at it and waits for a moment. He looks around as if to find someone to ask permission.

He looks back at the door.

A beat.

He stands up and slowly steps toward the open door. Warm light flickers out from the room as he approaches it.

61 INT. THE HOUR ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The door opens into a dimly lit bedroom. Candles are placed around the room, soft lamplight accents the mood.

Henry takes a few steps further into the room, taking a look around.

The bed posts stand tall, draped with sheer white curtains. Everything is a tone of orange, red, or yellow, fostering a warm, romantic setting.

Henry stands still for a second, taking in his new surroundings.

Suddenly, the door opposite his opens.

He stares at it, anticipating someone's entry.

A few beats. Slowly but surely, Alyssa walks through the door. She looks up at Henry, a softness in her eyes and her movements.

Henry lights up, but tries to hide it.

They stand on opposite sides of the bed, looking at each other.

HENRY

Hi.

ALYSSA

Hi.

A beat.

HENRY

You're here.

ALYSSA

Yeah.

HENRY

Did your teeth come in?

ALYSSA

Not yet.

Henry looks at her, expecting an explanation.

ALYSSA (CONT.)
This is my punishment. A new life, I
guess.

They look around awkwardly. Alyssa takes in the room. Henry
looks back at her.

ALYSSA (CONT.)
Nice room.

HENRY
Yeah.

They continue standing.

Henry sees Alyssa bout to say something.

ALYSSA
Can I say something?

HENRY
Of course.

ALYSSA
I'm sorry.

HENRY
For what?

ALYSSA
You were just trying to be there for
me. I was a dick.

HENRY
You don't need protected.

Alyssa and Henry exchange warm looks.

A beat.

ALYSSA
I'm scared.

HENRY
What about?

ALYSSA
About what's gonna happen. With me.
With us.

HENRY
It'll be okay.

Alyssa pauses.

ALYSSA
Do you wanna-?

She gestures toward the bed.

HENRY
Sure.

They both pull back the sheets on either side of the bed. They slowly climb in, sitting close together, yet still making it awkward. Henry pulls the covers over both of them.

They sit still for a minute, basking the warm light.

ALYSSA
How are you feeling?

HENRY
I don't know. I feel weird, but okay.

He turns just his head toward her.

HENRY (CONT.)
You?

Alyssa stares forward and says nothing. She becomes more flustered as she sits there.

ALYSSA
She told me she was having a baby.

Henry stares ahead. Alyssa is lost in herself, thinking about everything all at once.

ALYSSA
She stayed here for me.

She smiles briefly before returning to her deep thought. Tears well up in her eyes.

Suddenly, she wraps her arms around him, nestling her head into his chest.

She thinks.

ALYSSA

Can we wait?

Henry wraps his arm around her, placing his other hand on her arm. He holds her.

HENRY

We have all the time in the world.

Several moments pass.

They lay there in silence, the candle light dancing around the room, washing them in warm, comforting light.

CUT TO BLACK.