

Captivated: A Glimpse at the Hero's Journey

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Abstract

Have you ever watched a film in which a bold hero travels to a distant land, defeats a seemingly unstoppable evil, and returns home forever changed? If so, you have probably seen a film that contains a remnant of Joseph Campbell's concept of "the hero's journey," which is the common structure he noticed among countless mythological narratives. I discovered the concept of "the hero's journey" through academic study on the hero and the antihero as I researched desirable qualities for the protagonist of my original screenplay: *Captivated*. Through further research, I was inspired by the noble characteristics of the hero, and I became fascinated with the narrative structure of "the hero's journey." Therefore, I implemented the sacrificial journey of the hero clashing against a resilient evil force through my original feature-length screenplay. At the core, this thesis focuses on the selfless nature of the hero and the high calling the hero answers, in hopes to truly inspire those who read.

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I: Introduction

Screenwriting is the pulsating heart of the film industry. Since 1895, film has grown to be a major visual medium that elicits deep emotion within viewers worldwide. It has the ability to captivate an audience in an innovatively intimate way, unheard of in past centuries. However, the emotional drive of a film does not solely rest in the hands of the director, cinematographer, or lead actor. The emotional gravity of the film bubbles from the storytelling, which is largely crafted by screenwriters. Though the director or cinematographer may use production techniques that heavily aid and drive storytelling, the narrative of a film is first molded by the screenwriters. Simply put, without a screenplay, there is no film.

Screenwriting is an essential component of filmmaking, and this art form is truly fascinating. Thus, this honors creative thesis is centered around an original feature-length screenplay: *Captivated*. The heart of this narrative focuses on a traditional, good hero opposing a seemingly unstoppable evil force. *Captivated* was heavily inspired by the scholar Joseph Campbell's storytelling structure of "the hero's journey." This original screenplay, however, is a more modern-day telling of this journey. The story's genre is a blend of suspense, mystery, and thriller, and it ultimately pays homage to certain films that have kindled personal passion for the art of film and screenwriting. In addition to crafting this 107-page screenplay, a portion of it will be filmed for the MTSU video and film production Capstone project.

Synopsis

Captivated focuses on Liam Stephens, a recently fired police officer. Liam is faced with a horrible situation as his wife, Kelsey, is abducted right before his eyes. He pursues the kidnapper in his truck; however, he wrecks while following the kidnapper's van on a backwoods road. Liam loses consciousness and wakes up in the woods with hardly any recollection of the pursuit or his former life. He leaves the woods and enters the mysterious village of Sanctum where he is welcomed as a part of the community. There is an evil presence cast over this village that emanates from the One, the central leader of the village. Mystery shrouds the One and his intentions. Liam struggles to grasp reality as he encounters strange things within his daily life in the village. He longs to remember his life and his purpose. Liam must awaken to reality to save the love of his life and unveil the twisted mystery of the evil flowing through the veins of the village.

Origins

This project took root during the Honors Research Seminar in the fall of 2022, with Dr. Martha Hixon. Her lectures on academic research provided ample time to grapple with the thesis and ponder how to narrow its focus more precisely. Originally, this thesis involved studying the effects of media on culture; however, this simple topic was too broad. Therefore, the project shifted to creating an original screenplay in hopes of eliciting an impact on culture through screenwriting. The bulk of the fall semester provided time to research a vital component of the original film, the protagonist. The protagonist, the main character of a story, is a key element that crafts the overall atmosphere and trajectory of the narrative. The traditionally common protagonist is a moral hero; however, the recent cultural phenomenon of the antihero seemed to be an

intriguing alternative. This prompted the important question: “What type of protagonist did I want to display in this screenplay?”

First, one must ask: “What exactly is a hero?” Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary defines a hero as “a mythological or legendary figure often of divine descent endowed with great strength or ability” or “the principal character in a literary or dramatic work.” These two definitions highlight that heroes often contain physical prowess and are often the story’s protagonists. However, scholarly research has provided more nuanced qualities of the hero. Scott Pearce, a scholar who dives into the hero’s dissolution in Westerns, notes that “the Western hero is a mythic, a new version of Christ who redeems, protects, and punishes” (70). Pearce analyzes the Western genre throughout the twentieth century, and he notices the Western hero was, in a sense, a key resemblance of Jesus Christ. This imagery of the Western hero gives a sense of the sacrificial and mythic nature that is ingrained within the fiber of the hero in general. Pearce further notes that Joseph Campbell, a revered scholar on the subject of the hero, defines the hero as someone who has set moral objectives and is “saving people, or saving a person, or supporting an idea. The hero sacrifices himself for something greater—that’s the morality of it” (70). Thus, Campbell claims the hero possesses a clear set of moral standards and a selfless character that ensures the safety of people or an ideal. These selfless and sacrificial qualities appear to be critical components of the hero.

Conversely, the growing cultural phenomenon of the antihero is a fascinating and distinctly separate type of protagonist. Merriam-Webster’s dictionary defines the antihero as “a protagonist or notable figure who is conspicuously lacking in heroic qualities.” This definition gives a clear indication that the antihero is the protagonist yet not the hero.

Thus, the antihero is entrenched in a definitional marsh between the hero and the villain. Sophie H. Janicke and Arthur A. Raney, scholars of the psychology of popular media, note that the antihero's "actions range on a continuum from good to bad, in contrast with clearly moral heroes and clearly immoral villains" (534). The antihero is morally complex and impure, unlike the traditional selfless hero. However, this definition is still quite broad, creating a large range in which antiheroes can exist. In another work, Raney, along with Daniel M. Shafer, admits that giving a precise definition of an antihero is a daunting task (1030). The work of these scholars ultimately indicates that the definition of the antihero is elastic to a degree, though scholars agree that antiheroes are always somewhat morally ambiguous. The increasing popularity of this morally vague protagonist led to personal research in the psychology behind antihero narrative enjoyment and the potential effects of these narratives.

Ultimately, the enjoyment of antiheroes is closely connected to their role as the story's protagonist. The ability to mold a story around the protagonist is an art form that can elicit powerful emotions within an audience, thus spurring specific psychological effects. Arthur A. Raney and Sophie H. Janicke, scholars in the field of communications, note that both "identification" and "moral disengagement" are key psychological factors that motivate the enjoyment of antihero narratives (535). Janicke and Raney posit that "identification" occurs when the audience begins to view the story through the eyes of the protagonist. Additionally, Janicke and Raney define "moral disengagement" as a "set of cognitive strategies that we all use to excuse our own immoral actions or those of our friends and loved ones" (535). Both "identification" and "moral disengagement" are key psychological processes that allow the viewer to sympathize with antiheroes, despite their

immoral character traits. These common immoral traits of antiheroes, often referred to as the “dark triad traits” (narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy) shed light on the negative effects of the antihero narrative. In the study from Dara Greenwood et al., these psychology scholars discovered that viewers with darker antisocial traits gravitate towards these antiheroes and that antihero narratives can inspire darker antisocial traits within audiences (165). Examining the psychology behind antihero enjoyment helped solidify the desired protagonist for this thesis.

This study into the darker side of antihero narratives prompted me to focus my original screenplay on the traditional hero. The self-sacrifice and virtue of the hero cultivate profound inspiration, and I sought to ground *Captivated* in the hope of the hero’s triumph over darkness. In prior research on the traditional hero, Joseph Campbell’s narrative structure of “the hero’s journey” caught my attention. Joseph Campbell, a late American mythological researcher, discovered a common structure found within most myths and stories, “the hero’s journey.” Campbell noticed that a myriad of stories worldwide follow the common thread of this storytelling structure he often referred to as the “monomyth” (Hamby 1). Susan Mackey-Kallis, a scholar in the field of communication, notes the main structure of Campbell’s monomyth is “separation, initiation, and return” (13). Classic and immensely successful films such as *Star Wars*, *E.T.*, and *The Lion King* all draw from the monomyth structure (Mackey-Kallis 6). Campbell’s discovery of this pattern is quite fascinating, and this intriguing tool of “the hero’s journey” is heavily incorporated into the screenwriting of *Captivated*.

Thesis Statement

By examining Joseph Campbell's scholarly writings and film scripts of personal inspiration, this thesis aims to apply Campbell's narrative structure of "the hero's journey" to screenwriting in a modern context. It seems the story of a good hero is becoming less popular in modern American visual media, especially with the rise of the antihero narrative. Through academic study on both the hero and the antihero, I gained interest in Joseph Campbell's work on the "monomyth." Therefore, I seek to apply the story structure of "the hero's journey" to my own screenwriting endeavor with an original screenplay, *Captivated*. This feature length film script is centered on a traditional hero and his journey. The protagonist, Liam, is a hero who faces an evil force that resides in the mysterious village of Sanctum. The heart of this narrative focuses on a traditional, good hero and his journey as he opposes an evil antagonist.

II: What Is the Hero's Journey?

Joseph Campbell lived from 1904 to 1987, and his deep and nuanced writings on the hero and myth have left an ongoing influence. After years of study in the U.S. and abroad, he became a literature professor at Sarah Lawrence College. Encyclopaedia Britannica notes that Campbell's fame sprung from his work as an accomplished American author and editor "whose works on comparative mythology examined the universal functions of myth in various human cultures and mythic figures in a wide range of literatures" (Segal). His work on the hero and myth was prominently displayed through his book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. In the Introduction to the 2004 edition of the book, Clarissa Pinkola Estés, Ph.D, emphasizes that Campbell is not a mere onlooker of mythos but is a "genuinely inspired person who himself was once a novice, that is, a

beginner who opened not just the mind, but also the longing heart, all in order to be a vessel for spiritual realities—ones greater than the conclusions of the ego alone” (xxvi). Thus, Campbell displays an authentic passion for the long record of mythos and stories that have fueled the structure of “the hero’s journey.”

The framework of “the hero’s journey” is a more complex rendition of the formula presented in the rites of passage: separation, initiation, return. Campbell named this formula the “nuclear unit of the monomyth” (28). In this quest, the hero leaves the confines of comfort and safety to journey onward into a mystical land or region filled with fantastical, often dark, forces. The hero stands in opposition to the dark forces, and a definitive victory is often won. Following this victory, the hero generally returns to his/her familiar home. By examining a large quantity of ancient myths and stories, Campbell furthered the concrete idea of “the hero’s journey” through his publishing of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* in 1949. In the wake of this publishing, Campbell’s writings on “the hero’s journey” steadily gained tremendous influence within American culture, specifically in the Hollywood conference rooms. *Star Wars*, one of the most successful and popular science fiction franchises today, was heavily influenced by Joseph Campbell’s academic findings on the monomyth. Susan Mackey-Kallis, a communications scholar, noted that “the popularity of such seemingly diverse films as *E.T.*, *The Lion King*, *Field of Dreams*, and the *Star Wars* trilogy rests in their ability to reinterpret the quest for home in a fashion that speaks to our collective unconscious while also reinvigorating our private and collective searches for meaning and growth” (6). Hence, a diverse roster of successful film classics drew inspiration from the mythic structure of “the hero’s journey.”

Departure

Separation or departure is the first key stage of “the hero’s journey” in which the hero simply leaves home. Joseph Campbell notes that a vital part of this first stage of “the hero’s journey” is the hero’s “call to adventure.” He further adds that this call “signifies that destiny has summoned the hero and transferred his spiritual center of gravity from within the pale of his society to a zone unknown” (53). In the screenwriting profession, the call to adventure is known as the inciting incident. This generally occurs within the first ten to fifteen minutes of a film. The call to adventure or inciting incident propels the protagonist into the central conflict of the narrative. This call is a major story-telling point; however, the way the call is accepted varies. The hero can heed the call by his own will, or he can be thrown into the call. Campbell states that mere blunder is a common way in which the hero is hurled into adventure as it “reveals an unsuspected world” and leads the protagonist into a “relationship with forces that are not rightly understood” (46). This type of call to action is clearly represented in one of the most classic literary examples of “the hero’s journey,” *The Odyssey*, as Odysseus is plunged into action by the violent winds of Poseidon. Though many a hero’s journey may begin with a blunder, Campbell argues this is not mere chance but “ripples on the surface of life, produced by unsuspected springs” (46). Campbell clearly points to a mystical guidance of the hero as he concurs the “blunder may amount to the opening of a destiny” (46).

Furthermore, the stage of departure directly deals with the protagonist leaving the comforts and confines of home to journey to a mysterious and different region. Within the many myths and narratives that emulate this, the place to which the protagonist travels varies greatly. Campbell notes “this fateful region of both treasure and danger

may be variously represented: as a distant land, a forest, a kingdom underground, beneath the waves, or above the sky, a secret island, lofty mountain top, or profound dream state” (53). However, he emphasizes this distant place always contains “strangely fluid and polymorphous beings, unimaginable torments, superhuman deeds, and impossible delight” (53). The hero travels from reality to a somewhat fantastical environment. It seems as if this distant land is a complex mixture of inexplicable awe and sheer horror. Further, the hero often encounters some sort of supernatural aid as he crosses the threshold of the new land. Campbell remarks that the first encounter within the departure is often with a protective figure “who provides the adventurer with amulets against the dragon forces he is about to pass” (63). After the hero traverses past the threshold, he awaits a series of afflictions set to occur through the next stage of the journey.

Initiation

Initiation, the second stage of “the hero’s journey,” takes place once the hero is within the zone of a new and mysterious land. Now the hero must withstand a multitude of trials. Campbell states the “original departure into the land of trials represented only the beginning of the long and really perilous path of initiatory conquests and moments of illumination. Dragons have now to be slain and surprising barriers passed—again, again, and again” (100). Campbell mentions that this key phase of “the hero’s journey” is indeed a “favorite phase of the myth-adventure” (89). This phase has provided deep works of literature and film that feature the gargantuan trials that arise before the path of the hero. Further, these trials test and strengthen the hero. Clarissa Pinkola Estés, Ph.D, adds that “such struggles cause the person to be infused with more vision, and to be strengthened by the spiritual life principle—which, more than anything else, encourages

one to take courage to live with effrontery and mettle.” Hence, initiation is not only the central stage of the story, but it also propels the hero into the searing fires of adversity, forging within the hero something new.

Further, the stage of initiation often produces profound growth and character development within the hero. Campbell emphasizes that the key part of initiation is in fact the death of the hero’s ego (100). Can the hero put his ego to death? Can the hero rise above the desires of self? These vital questions, which define the hero, are often answered within initiation. As the hero rises above himself, he has the ability to transcend to something greater. Campbell describes this transcendence as “acquiescence,” a key part of the mythological motif of “the hero’s journey.” He argues that “the hero is the one who knows *when* to surrender and what to surrender *to*. The main theme is to yield your position to the dynamic. And the dynamic of life is now this form eats that form. Yield” (12). The hero’s yielding can often be to a certain ideal, moral conviction, or higher power. Hence, the last stage of initiation often displays a type of higher power or supernatural helper. Campbell asserts that the hero is “covertly aided by the advice, amulets, and secret agents of the supernatural helper whom he met before his entrance into this region. Or it may be that he here discovers for the first time that there is a benign power everywhere supporting him in his superhuman passage” (89). This powerful aid of the higher power provides comfort and essential aid that carries the hero into the peak of the conflict, fully fueled to face the darkness infesting the region.

Return

Return is the final stage of “the hero’s journey” in which the narrative concludes. Joseph Campbell asserts that this last stage occurs once the “hero-quest has been accomplished, through penetration to the source, or through the grace of some male or female, human or animal, personification...” (179). The hero has grown beyond the ego through initiation and has taken on a sacrificial nature. The hero has boldly faced the surmounting darkness and has destroyed or cast out the evil. The victory is won. However, the hero is not yet through. Campbell states that the standard monomythic tale “requires that the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing the runes of wisdom, the Golden Fleece, or his sleeping princess, back into the kingdom of humanity...” (179). Now, the hero must return, carrying home the boons, newfound knowledge, or freed prisoners. Campbell notes the hero must journey home “where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds (179). Finally, the hero, who has gained something of great value through his perilous adventure, returns home to share this with others for the betterment of society.

The Villain

Additionally, Joseph Campbell describes key aspects of the antagonist or villain in his work *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. He notes that the villain or “tyrant-monster” is “known to the mythologies, folk traditions, legends, and even nightmares, of the world.” Further, he specifies the characteristics of this antagonist are generally the same. The tyrant-monster is the “hoarder of the general benefit. He is the monster avid for the greedy rights of ‘my and mine’” (14). The tyrant-monster possesses a swelled ego

and selfish greed that motivates his/her evil endeavors. Though the tyrant-monster's efforts seem to prosper, they are a curse to the world and himself. Campbell asserts that this curse may affect "no more than his household, his own tortured psyche, or the lives that he blights with the touch of his friendship and assistance; or it may amount to the extent of his civilization" (14). The tyrant-monster may assume the actions he takes are of somewhat humane intentions; however, those under the reign of the tyrant-monster are often left poisoned. Further, the tyrant-monster is prominent within the land. He utilizes the advantage of authority and power. Campbell notes the tyrant-monster possesses great pride, and he asserts that this pride precipitates the antagonist's eventual downfall (311-312). Ultimately, wherever the tyrant-monster rules, Campbell observes there is "a cry for the redeeming hero, the carrier of the shining blade, whose blow, whose touch, whose existence, will liberate the land" (14). The malicious rule of the tyrant-monster beckons the arrival of the hero just as the dark of night calls for the sun to rise.

The Hero

The hero is the ultimate victor of most hero's journey narratives; however, the hero does not hold the same authoritative advantages of the tyrant-monster. The hero rises from obscurity and often holds the secret to the doom of the tyrant-monster. Campbell argues the "hero-deed is a continuous shattering of the crystallizations of the moment." He adds that "mythology focuses on the growing-point," and the hero is guided by transformation and fluidity while the villain is chained to stubborn ponderosity (311-312). Hence, the hero grows to a higher calling as he is transformed, often through the stage of initiation:

The hero, therefore, is the man or woman who has been able to battle past his personal and local historical limitations to the generally valid, normally human forms. Such a one's visions, ideas, inspirations come pristine from the primary springs of human life and thought. Hence they are eloquent, not of the present, disintegrating society and psyche, but of the unquenched source through which society is reborn. (Campbell 18)

The hero's life has been altered, and then he heeds the call to return and share the knowledge of life renewed. The hero and the villain differ by their own attachments to the ego. The villain tightly grips the desires of self, while the hero lets go of selfish desires for the sake of others. Campbell speaks of Arthur Schopenhauer's essay, "Foundations of Morality," which addresses the selfless act of the hero. In the paper, Schopenhauer asks, "how is it that a human being can so participate in the danger of another, that forgetting his own self-protection, he moves spontaneously to the other's rescue? How come, when the first law of nature is self-preservation, that is dispelled" (41). The high acts of the hero are of deep personal conviction. The selfless nature of the hero may often seem to defy what is logical, and this seems to be the reason why those who observe the hero are truly inspired.

III: Methodology

The academic component of my project is grounded in my search for a protagonist as well as my study of Joseph Campbell's concept of "the hero's journey." During the fall of 2022, I used my time in the honors research seminar to discover the type of protagonist I desired for my original script. Because of its modern relevance, I researched the antihero. The antihero is a recent phenomenon that is continuing to

increase in popularity within storytelling in visual media. I studied the definition of the antihero while studying the traditional hero's definition, and I sought to articulate the specific differences between the two types of protagonists through my research. Regarding the antihero, I also conducted research on the psychology behind the enjoyment of antihero narratives as well as the negative effects of these narratives. Through this research, I was convinced I should utilize the traditional hero in my creative writing endeavor. While researching the traditional hero, I discovered the work of Joseph Campbell and his famous storytelling structure of "the hero's journey." This discovery prompted me to focus the rest of my thesis research on the traditional hero and Campbell's narrative structure while writing my original screenplay. In addition to studying the works of Joseph Campbell, I studied the screenplays of influential films that have inspired my writing process and career in video and film production.

This project originated with the drive and inspiration to create an original screenplay that tells an impactful story. During the fall of 2022, academic research on the hero and the antihero guided me toward finding a proper protagonist before writing my original script. In this academic research, I have utilized the James E. Walker Library and scholarly search engines such as EBSCOhost, Gale OneFile, Google Scholar, and JSTOR. These resources have been very useful as I have chiseled away at the academic component of the project. As I chose to focus on the traditional hero, I shifted my studies to the works of Joseph Campbell and his narrative structure of "the hero's journey." I read *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, the epitome of Campbell's work on the monomyth. Additionally, I read *The Hero's Journey: The World of Joseph Campbell: Joseph Campbell on His Life and Work*, authored by Joseph Campbell and Phil

Cousineau. The novel is a compilation of interviews between Joseph Campbell and figures inspired by his work. Finally, I read the novel, *Save the Cat! The Last Book on Screenwriting You'll Ever Need*, authored by Blake Snyder. This insightful read provided fundamental and concise pointers on facilitating character development, writing dialogue, and making revisions.

Further, in developing the narrative of *Captivated*, I gained inspirations from multiple films and works of literature; however, I paid homage to a few specific works as I wrote the screenplay. Concerning literature, I was greatly inspired by “the Lottery,” written by Shirley Jackson, and *the Bible*, a collection of ancient historical documents referred to as the word of God. “The Lottery” provided inspiration for the atmosphere of a strange village that I hoped to foster within *Captivated*. *The Bible* inspired the villain and the guiding higher power of the narrative through the vivid dichotomy of God and Satan within the Scripture (ESV). Additionally, key films that inspired the writing process were *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, written by J.R.R. Tolkien, Fran Walsh, Philippa Boyens, and Peter Jackson, and *Get Out*, written by Jordan Peele. *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy is a masterful work of film that displays “the hero’s journey” against the face of evil in a delightful and inspiring way. The mythical duel between good and evil inspired the core narrative of *Captivated*. *Get Out* is a phenomenal and brilliantly written film. Though a modern horror film, it still adheres to “the hero’s journey” in a starkly unique way. The film enchants you with its superb writing, eerie suspense, and impeccable pacing. Ultimately, these fascinating works of literature and films offered substantial influence within my original screenplay.

Concerning the creative portion of the project, months of planning took place before I even began to type the first words of *Captivated*. I first had to develop the key concepts of the narrative and determine the tone and genre of the screenplay. I created rough outlines of the story and began to construct the narrative in a very expanded sense. Additionally, I focused on creating the logline, the single sentence that conveys the essence of the story. After this vital step, I crafted the screenplay synopsis as well as character biographies. In February of 2023, I began to type out the first scene. Screenwriting is undoubtedly an intricate art form, and it requires a very particular format that adheres to industry standards; therefore, I learned how to utilize the screenwriting software called Writerduet. I frequently met with my thesis director, professor Leland “Doc” Gregory to discuss the meat of the narrative and inquire about screenplay formatting issues. I finished an initial draft of *Captivated* in July of 2023. However, I made significant revisions before submitting the 107-page rough draft to my thesis director for criticisms. I finished the rough draft in August of 2023. Since then, I have revised the screenplay twice. The final steps of the project have consisted of pre-production work for the filmed portion of *Captivated*. I have scouted locations, created cast-member lists, and developed production equipment lists.

IV: The Hero’s Journey of *Captivated*

Departure

The stage of departure begins as Liam, the protagonist, is fired from his job at the police department. This creates tension between him and his wife, Kelsey, as the story quickly builds to the inciting incident. Liam and Kelsey stop at a gas station, and they continue to argue about the situation. Liam walks inside to pay for the gas. While distracted, the inciting incident occurs. Kelsey is abducted by strangers in a van. This

horrific event catapults Liam into the central conflict of the narrative. Liam receives a call to action, and he quickly heeds it as he pursues the kidnappers' van in his truck. In the chase, Liam wrecks his truck and loses consciousness. He wakes up in a strange village called Sanctum. The One, the antagonist, casts an evil presence over the village that veils the villagers' memory of the past, causing complacency. Therefore, Liam does not remember the call to action which he so recently answered without hesitation. This gives the narrative a unique call to action as it delays Liam's efforts to rescue Kelsey. He is shrouded in the mystery of Sanctum, grasping for his true purpose within the village.

Furthermore, the departure is magnified in Liam's passage from his home to the mystical village of Sanctum. His home is a very realistic representation of the world; however, Sanctum is an entirely different environment which exceeds realistic boundaries. Sanctum seems to be perfect. The grass is a vibrant green, and there is never a cloudy day. The villagers all appear to love their home, and they adore and heap constant praise upon the One. The town has a tranquil nature, yet horrific truths lie beneath this artificial utopian veil. Additionally, "the hero's journey" often contains some form of supernatural guidance as the protagonist passes into the new land, yet Liam instead meets Petunia, the One's maid. She welcomes him to Sanctum and grants him a place to live. The hero's definitive supernatural aid occurs later in the narrative, through the stage of initiation.

Initiation

During the stage of initiation, Liam faces a multitude of trials that facilitate character growth. In the first two acts of the screenplay, Liam's veiled memory is the

greatest of his trials. The evil force that suppresses his memory blinds him from his duty. Liam is unable to recognize the true nature of his situation; however, his drive and determination deter him from utter complacency. Liam receives guidance through his interactions with Fedora, the only villager not entirely enchanted by the One. Fedora speaks of reality, claiming that Sanctum is not their true life. He speaks of the One's deception while pointing to a higher power, the Creator. The Creator reveals the truth to Fedora and Liam through an ancient text and cave imagery. Liam first resists this truth; however, he comes to acknowledge it as the Creator gives him glimpses of reality. The guidance of the higher power is a crucial element of this stage of Liam's journey that leads Liam to remember his heroic call to action.

In the third act, Liam encounters the most severe trials of the narrative. First, he faces the rejection of Kelsey. Though Liam's eyes have been opened, the evil control of the One persistently fogs Kelsey's mind. He pleads with her, and she fights to remember the truth. The Creator opens her eyes, and Liam gains a vital heroic ally as Kelsey joins his endeavor to extinguish the One's evil plan. Soon after, Liam and Kelsey are attacked by entranced villagers. This prompts them to flee to the edge of the village. At this point in the narrative, Liam and Kelsey put their ego to death in order to face the final trial. They rise to the higher calling of the hero as they part ways, striving to expose the darkness that plagues Sanctum through their separate efforts. Kelsey leaves the village to warn the outside world of this evil, and Liam returns to Sanctum to confront the One in the final conflict of the narrative. The story's tension slowly builds to this vital confrontation, which Fedora unexpectedly joins. Liam and Fedora fight against the One, and the action climaxes as Fedora risks his life to destroy the One. The power of the One

is shattered. The conflict fades to a calm resolution, and Liam sits in the dust of the final battle, forever changed.

Return

The return, the last stage of the narrative, begins in the wake of the final conflict. After Fedora has killed the One, Kelsey arrives at a nearby gas station. She shares her newfound knowledge of Sanctum with the outside world, and first responders quickly arrive to the scene. All the villagers who were taken captive walk free. Liam then receives an invitation to resume his work at the police department, since Liam's boss is now freed from the far-reaching mystical influence of the One. Liam and Kelsey then return to the comforts of their home, departing from the peculiar town of Sanctum back to the real world. Here, Liam amends the rash actions he displayed toward Kelsey at the opening of the narrative, and his love and gratitude for Kelsey are fortified through the tragedy of losing her. He mentions that potential issues may arise with alternate dark forces like Sanctum. Liam and Kelsey agree to further investigate this threat. The narrative concludes with warm optimism as they mention the chance of adoption.

Narrative Outline

Act 1

- 1) Police Department Office
 - a) Chief Stanley fires Liam
 - b) He packs up his belongings
 - c) He drives home
- 2) Liam and Kelsey's House
 - a) Liam and Kelsey argue
 - b) Kelsey consoles Liam
 - c) They go out for dinner
- 3) Gas Station 1
 - a) Liam brings up adoption
 - b) Liam pays inside the gas station
 - c) Kelsey is kidnapped
- 4) Backwoods Road
 - a) Liam pursues the kidnappers
 - b) He wrecks the truck
 - c) He loses consciousness
- 5) Woods
 - a) Liam wakes up in the woods
 - b) He walks into a village and meets Petunia
 - c) She welcomes him to Sanctum
- 6) Liam's Village House

- a) Petunia takes Liam to his new home
 - b) She invites him to teaching time
 - c) She leaves
- 7) Veritas Park
- a) Liam walks to teaching time
 - b) Liam sees Kelsey in the distance
 - c) Liam meets Denny
 - d) The One introduces himself to Liam
- 8) The Diner
- a) Denny and Liam eat dinner
 - b) Denny promotes Sanctum
 - c) Liam questions Denny's logic
- 9) Liam's Village House
- a) Liam gets ready for bed
- 10) Fedora's House
- a) Fedora warns Liam of the danger of Sanctum
 - b) Fedora attacks him
 - c) Kelsey and Villagers surround them
 - d) Fedora runs inside his house
 - e) Liam speaks to Kelsey

Act 2

- 11) The Barn
- a) The villagers meet for the lottery

- b) Fedora freaks out
 - c) He leaves
 - d) The One notices and chastises Fedora
- 12) The Pond
- a) Denny and Liam fish
 - b) Liam has questions
 - c) Denny warns against Liam's curiosity
- 13) Veritas Park
- a) Liam walks
 - b) He hears the Creator
 - c) He walks to the woods
- 14) The Cave
- a) Liam finds Fedora
 - b) Fedora reveals the Text
 - c) Liam finds out about the Creator
- 15) Fedora's House
- a) Fedora tries to remember the past
 - b) The One appears
 - c) He burns the Text
 - d) The One reveals he killed Fedora's son
 - e) Kelsey sees the One at Fedora's house
- 16) Fedora's House
- a) Liam sees Fedora's ransacked house

- b) He finds Fedora's bloody hat
- c) Liam panics and runs

17) The Shed

- a) Liam looks for Fedora
- b) He finds his old truck
- c) He remembers his wreck

18) The Fence

- a) He runs
- b) He remembers Kelsey

Act 3

19) Kelsey's Village House

- a) Liam tries to convince Kelsey of reality
- b) She refuses to listen
- c) Liam tells Kelsey of their emotional past
- d) She remembers

20) Liam's Village House

- a) Liam gets ready for bed
- b) Someone watches his house

21) Kelsey's Village House

- a) Petunia knocks on Kelsey's door
- b) The One needs to meet with her

22) The One's House

- a) The One and Kelsey have tea

- b) He explains his purpose
 - c) Kelsey recognizes the One's weakness
- 23) Veritas Park
- a) Liam sees Denny
 - b) He tells him the truth
 - c) Denny refuses to listen and leaves
- 24) Liam's Village House
- a) Kelsey meets Liam
 - b) She tells him about her meeting with the One
 - c) They plan to defeat the One
 - d) Entranced villagers attack
 - e) Liam and Kelsey escape
- 25) The Shed
- a) Liam and Kelsey run to the shed
 - b) The tranced villagers pursue them
 - c) They get in the truck and drive
- 26) The Fence
- a) Kelsey decides to alert the outside world
 - b) Liam decides to stay
 - c) They part
- 27) The One's House
- a) The One has Denny held captive
 - b) Liam confronts the One

- c) The One reveals his story
 - d) The One overpowers Liam
 - e) Fedora kills the One
- 28) Gas Station 2
- a) Kelsey warns gas station worker of Sanctum
 - b) They call 9-1-1
- 29) Sanctum
- a) First responders arrive at Sanctum
 - b) Liam and Kelsey reunite
 - c) Chief Stanley talks to Liam
- 30) Liam's Truck
- a) Liam and Kelsey drive home
- 31) Liam and Kelsey's House
- a) They resolve conflict
 - b) Liam mentions a concern about the One
 - c) They agree to investigate

The End

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Captivated

written by

Matthew Ferguson

INT. OFFICE - DAY

The second hand of a clock slowly trudges along the expanse of a small, white, square clock. The clock hangs on the wall of a cramped office with bright, stinging fluorescent lights. A framed portrait of a CHIEF STANLEY in a police uniform hangs on the pasty, grey wall.

Two men, LIAM and Chief Stanley, sit across a desk from each other. A laptop sits perched on the desk alongside neatly organized papers and folders.

Liam, a man in his early thirties, sits in a small chair in front of the desk. His dark brown hair is neatly combed to the right. He wears an ironed button-up and slacks.

CHIEF STANLEY, a man in his late sixties, sits behind the desk. Shiny, gray hairs sprout out of the side of his head. Baldness exists between the thin patches of hair. He wears a pristine, blue police chief uniform.

CHIEF STANLEY

I'm sorry, Liam. I'm letting you go.

Silence invades the room. Liam sits still. His fingers grip the arm of the chair as he bites at his lip.

LIAM

Excuse me sir, what? What do you mean?

CHIEF STANLEY

I mean, pack up your stuff.

LIAM

But, sir, what did I do?...

Chief Stanley reaches across the desk and closes the laptop.

CHIEF STANLEY

You tampered with classified files. It's unacceptable.

LIAM

(mutters)

Tampered with files? What are you talking about?

CHIEF STANLEY

The 609 cases, Liam. You can't just rummage through whatever you want. You should have stayed in your lane.

LIAM

Wait, sir, do you mean the recent missing person cases?

Liam scrunches his face and sits up straighter in the chair.

CHIEF STANLEY

See. You know exactly what you did.

LIAM

I looked through the files with good intention. Trying to help with the case. There was no indication they were classified, as you say.

CHIEF STANLEY

I think we're done here. You breached protocol. A detective like you should've known better... But you didn't. I'm not apologizing for that.

Liam's head hangs low. He blinks a few times and clenches his fist as his cheeks fill with a warm red hue.

LIAM

Excuse me sir, but how is this a fireable offense? You know my character. I saw something that needed to be worked on, and I investigated... People are going missing and no one seems to care!

Chief Stanley shifts papers around on the desk.

CHIEF STANLEY

Get out of my office.

Liam bolts out of his chair and glowers at Chief Stanley. His voice quivers.

LIAM

I didn't even do anything wrong.

CHIEF STANLEY

You weren't supposed to touch those files. Get... out.

Liam's face straightens. He leaves the room.

EXT. LIAM'S HOUSE - DAY

A mid-sized, white pickup truck rolls into the driveway of a small, one-story house. The truck comes to a halt and the engine shuts down.

Liam sits in the driver's seat for a few seconds, stares, and rests his head on the wheel. Liam opens the door and slams it shut.

His face is pale. He walks to the passenger side and opens the door. He grabs a cardboard box from the passenger seat.

A picture frame of Liam in uniform, a police badge, a couple toy muscle cars, and multiple papers and files lie in the box.

He holds the box under his arm and shuts the passenger side door. He walks across the yard to the front door. He reaches into his pocket and briefly fumbles for his keys.

He drops his keys on the porch and awkwardly crouches to pick them up. He opens the front door to the house.

INT. LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Liam walks in and shuts the front door. The living room is tiny, yet not crowded. The couches, chairs, and cabinets are clean and uncluttered. The dark hardwood floor glimmers from the incandescent lights above.

The living room is connected to the kitchen and dining room. KELSEY, a women in her early thirties, stands behind the wooden island and spreads shredded cheese on tortillas. Kelsey is a tall, slender woman. She has dirty blond hair.

KELSEY

Hey, baby.

Kelsey turns around and washes her hands in the sink. Liam ambles over to the dining room and plops the large box onto the dinner table. Kelsey dries her hands with the towel and turns around.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

Not in a talkative mood?...

Silence. Kelsey walks over to the box. She picks up Liam's badge.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

Liam, what happened?

Liam stares at the box in silence.

LIAM
They fired me.

KELSEY
What? What do you mean they fired you?

Liam mildly rolls his eyes.

LIAM
Well, babe, that means that I no longer have a job at the establishment I have been working at for fifteen years. They let me go. Terminated me. I'm gone. Fired.

Kelsey turns sharply and furrows her brow.

KELSEY
Please help me understand, Liam.

Liam props a hand on the dining room chair and bows his head slightly.

LIAM
I'm sorry, Kels... I'm sorry. Shouldn't take it out on you.

Kelsey walks to Liam and lifts his chin up with her hand.

KELSEY
I forgive you. Just breathe. Tell me what happened.

Liam wraps an arm around Kelsey's waist and lets out a long exhale.

LIAM
Stanley fired me. Out of the blue. It was so sudden. It..it.

Kelsey presses her head into Liam's chest.

LIAM (CONT'D)
It wasn't right. He fired me for doing my job.

She turns her head to look up at Liam as she rests in his arms.

KELSEY

What do you mean? What did he fire you for?

LIAM

You know the missing person cases that have been popping up here and there?

Kelsey nods her head.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I know I'm not in missing persons, but I started looking into them... Stanley gave me a ton of heat for it.

KELSEY

Are you serious?

LIAM

Unfortunately.

Liam lightly kisses Kelsey on the head and walks to the couch.

LIAM (CONT'D)

And, to my knowledge, he hadn't assigned anyone to those cases. They were just sitting there, untouched.

Liam slumps down on the couch. He rests his elbows on his knees and runs his fingers through his hair.

KELSEY

You're not getting away from me, sir.

She walks over to the couch.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

Scooch over.

Kelsey sits against Liam.

LIAM

I just don't understand it, Kels.

She caresses Liam's back.

LIAM (CONT'D)

This is so out of character for Stanley.

(MORE)

LIAM (CONT'D)

I've known him for years... worked for him our whole marriage.

KELSEY

I'm sorry, Liam.

LIAM

He accused me of tampering with classified files... and then that was it.

Tears swell in Liam's eyes. He wipes at his eyes, yet tears still manage to escape through his fingers. Kelsey rests her right hand on Liam's cheek and looks him in the eyes.

KELSEY

Liam. It's gonna be fine.

LIAM

You don't know that.

KELSEY

Yes. I do. You will find something. We will make it work. And I can start picking up extended day care at the school.

Liam looks away from Kelsey and crouches again.

LIAM

I need to take a moment, Kels.

He stands up and walks to the center of the living room.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I'm gonna get in the truck and drive for a bit.

KELSEY

Baby, don't just push me away right now.

LIAM

I'm not. I just...I don't know.

Kelsey stands up and walks to Liam.

KELSEY

We are in this together.

She lightly rests her hand on Liam's shoulder. Liam embraces Kelsey tightly.

She combs her petite fingers through his thin locks. They hold each other for a few moments, in silence.

LIAM

We are.

KELSEY

I'm coming with you, Liam. Let's go for a ride...and maybe even pick up some Sal's?

They sway together and saunter into a slow dance.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

I think we need a better pick-me-up than those quesadillas anyways.

Kelsey motions her head towards the kitchen counter and chuckles slightly. She lets out a sigh.

LIAM

If you say so, Kels. Sal's Pizza does sound good right now.

The slight beginnings of a grin crack across Liam's tear-soiled face.

KELSEY

I'll call an order in.

EXT. LIAM'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

MONTAGE

-The truck pulls out of the dusty, gravel driveway.

-They drive down a curvy road with tall, green trees littered on either side.

-The rearview mirror shows Liam's face. His mouth is straight, and his face is colorless.

-They drive past a large corn field. The sky is painted with red. The sun hangs low in the sky.

-The driver-side mirror slightly shakes. The road appears to be endless in the mirror.

-The truck drives on the highway. There is large expanse of countryside and occasional houses on either side of the highway.

MONTAGE ENDS

INT. LIAM'S TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER

Liam grips the wheel. His brow is furrowed. The interior of the truck is a velvet red. Kelsey rests her head against the window.

LIAM

I better go ahead and fill up while we're out.

KELSEY

Okay. Pizza's gonna be ready soon though.

LIAM

Yeah. Got a quarter tank left. Pizza can wait. There's an Exxon up the road.

Liam points at the fuel signal on the dashboard.

KELSEY

Okay, that's fine. We can deal with it being a bit cold.

LIAM

It's not gonna be cold. This will take like two seconds.

KELSEY

Okay.

LIAM

I just don't get how you're so calm right now!

Liam motions his right hand abruptly.

KELSEY

Liam. We're gonna be fine.

LIAM

Stop saying that.

Liam pinches the bridge of his nose.

KELSEY

Oh. What? Are you gonna crap on me for being optimistic? I thought you were fine ten minutes ago?

Liam puts both hands back on the wheel. He turns the blinker on.

LIAM

You're just so unconcerned... You dismissed what just happened and now we're fine and dandy getting pizza to go.

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

Liam pulls the truck into the parking lot of a gas station with a grimy, white paneled exterior. A small, dinged up Chevy is the only other car in the lot. A bright blue Exxon sign lights up the lot. The sun hangs onto the horizon, slowly pushing itself under it.

INT. LIAM'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Liam shifts the gear stick into park. He stares into the distance.

KELSEY

I think you are being a bit unreasonable.

LIAM

Yeah, maybe. I mean... it's a great idea, really. Let's go spend extra money to eat out tonight and forget that we can't even afford to adopt now... We were so ready, Kels... and you know we can't have kids of our own!

KELSEY

Liam!

Liam turns the key. The engine's rumble fades. Kelsey quickly straightens up.

LIAM

Hey. I'm sorry... I know we've made peace with that... It's... My job was our primary income, Kels. I've got no idea what I'm gonna do.

Tears form in Liam's eyes.

KELSEY

Have faith, Liam. We'll get through this, together... I trust you... I love you.

Silence creeps in the air. Liam chuckles.

LIAM

You know... sometimes I don't see why you do.

Liam wipes the tears from his eyes.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I trust you... I love you... I just... I'm scared. I'm so scared.

KELSEY

Liam. We didn't get married just for the good times. We got married for this. For these times... This sucks... yes. But I'm here with you.

Silence hangs in the air of the truck. Liam looks directly at Kelsey.

LIAM

Kels... you're too good for me. You sure you married the right guy?

KELSEY

Yeah... I am. He's just struggling right now.

Kelsey rests her hand on Liam's thigh.

LIAM

Yeah. I'd say... I'm sorry. I really shouldn't have went off on you, Kels.

KELSEY

I forgive you... again. But that's all I got for the day.

Liam chuckles.

LIAM

I don't deserve it... I just needed some time alone, and you just wouldn't let me be.

A sly smile curls on Liam's lips. Liam and Kelsey both chuckle.

KELSEY

We needed to work through this.

LIAM

I know. We will.

EXT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

Liam opens the door of the truck. A soft, yellow Volkswagen bus drives into the parking lot. The bus halts on the other side of the lot in a parking spot facing the highway.

The sky is lit with the last few dying rays of the smoldering sun. Bright, white rays of artificial light stem from skinny, wooden power poles.

LIAM

I'm gonna pay the pump real quick.

KELSEY

Okay, baby.

INT. GAS STATION - CONTINUOUS

Liam walks in. The varied assortment of junk foods and refrigerated drinks are neatly stacked on shelves.

A cigarette bud and an empty wrapper of Twinkies lie on the waxed, tile floor. Liam walks to the counter. No one is behind it.

LIAM

Hello?

Some shuffling noises come from the room behind the counter. Liam leans slightly over the counter. A cup of steaming coffee sits on the front counter.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I need to pay the pump. The card readers never work.

GAS STATION EMPLOYEE (O.S.)

Comin'! Just a moment.

The GAS STATION EMPLOYEE ambles out of the backroom. He is a scrawny, middle aged man, with dark hair on either side of his head. He wears a stained blue t-shirt and sweatpants.

GAS STATION EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)

I'll getche taken care of. Was on the crapper back'ere. Coffee's got me all torn up.

LIAM

Okay, thank you.

The Gas Station Employee sits down on the red, cushioned stool behind the counter.

GAS STATION EMPLOYEE

How much?

LIAM

Probably just 40.

GAS STATION EMPLOYEE

Okedokee.

Liam snatches his wallet out of his front pocket and ruffles through it. He grabs two in-proportionately folded twenty dollar bills and hands them to the Gas Station Employee.

GAS STATION EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)

Thankyee.

The Gas Station Employee opens the cash register and crams the bills into the drawer. He smashes some buttons and looks up at Liam with a grin.

GAS STATION EMPLOYEE (CONT'D)

Pump four is all ready.

LIAM

Thank you!

Liam nods at the Gas Station Employee. A loud screech emanates from the parking lot. Liam dashes out of the gas station door.

EXT. GAS STATION PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

The soft yellow Volkswagen bus idles next to Liam's truck. The side door of the bus is open. Kelsey screams. A MAN pulls Kelsey into the back of the bus.

The Man is middle-aged. He has red hair and wears a light blue plaid shirt and khaki pants.

KELSEY

LIAM!

LIAM

KELSEY!

The Man shuts the door. Liam lunges towards them. The bus rips out of the parking lot and onto the highway. One wheel jolts over the curb at the edge of the gas station parking lot.

Liam throws himself into the driver seat of his truck. He turns the key. The engine roars. Liam pursues the bus.

EXT. BACKWOODS ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Liam's pursues the van in his truck. The two race from a road with large cornfields on either side to a more wooded area.

INT. LIAM'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Liam's hands are fixed firmly to the wheel of his truck. His knuckles are white. The Volkswagen bus drives smoothly about thirty feet in front of Liam's truck.

The road is long. Tall, dark pine trees line either side of the road. A deep expanse of woods stretch from both sides of the thin, pavement road. It is dark. The last remaining rays of the sun have deteriorated.

LIAM
I'm sorry, Kels...

Liam mutters to himself. Tears stream down his bright, red face. He stomps his foot on the gas pedal. The speedometer rises quickly. Liam's truck inches closer to the bus.

LIAM (CONT'D)
I'M HERE KELSEY!

The dial reaches 110. The truck shakes slightly. Liam eases his foot a little off of the gas pedal. The bus turns abruptly into the woods.

The bus's tires screech against the pavement, leaving a plume of smoke in the road. Liam's eye's widen, and he slams on his brakes, sharply turning the wheel.

The truck tail spins a few times in the middle of the road. Tires screech. Smoke spins into the air from underneath the truck's tires. Everything goes white.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Liam lies on his back in the middle of a massive wooded area. The woods are filled with an army of tall trees and tangled masses of weeds. Liam's watch glimmers in the sunlight as it ticks on his wrist. The time shows 12:10 pm.

Liam's eyes open quickly. He scans the sky. The sun flickers in between the vast sea of leaves above him. Liam sits up.

He stands up, circles around, and scans the area. He scrunches his face and squints his eyes. Liam looks small compared to the vast woods.

LIAM
Where am I?

Liam notices a line of trimmed weeds that form a narrow path through the overgrown woods. Liam follows this path.

EXT. THE ONE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Liam comes to the end of the path and walks out of the forest. A straight, cement road rests parallel to the edge of the woods.

A large, green field is filled with brightly colored houses. The houses have large spaces between them. The closest house is white. It has a nice porch and a flower bed with well-kept, vibrant flowers.

Liam walks onto the road and scans the area. PETUNIA, an older woman with gray hair, waters the flowers in a hunched over position.

Closer to Liam, a MAN IN OVERALLS rakes the grass by the road. He is in his early twenties and wears long, denim overalls with a straw hat. No leaves are near him. Liam approaches him.

LIAM
Excuse me, sir.

The Man In Overalls rakes the grass. He does not react to Liam.

LIAM (CONT'D)
Hi? Were you around this area last night?... Did you happen to hear a crash?

The Man In Overalls stands still. He pauses and looks up at Liam. He tips his hat and continues to rake the grass.

LIAM (CONT'D)
Okay.

Liam shakes his head and walks toward Petunia.

LIAM (CONT'D)
Excuse me, ma'am.

Petunia stops watering the flowers and stands upright. A wide smile curls on her face.

PETUNIA

Well hello there, sugar plum.
What's your name?

LIAM

My name's Liam.

PETUNIA

Nice to meet you, Liam. I'm
Petunia.

Petunia's smile holds an unnaturally wide position.

LIAM

Nice to meet you. Um... so Petunia,
were you in this area last night?

PETUNIA

Why yes. I inhabit this area of
town.

LIAM

Did you happen to hear some loud
noise? The sound of a wreck, maybe.

Petunia places the watering can on the grass.

PETUNIA

Oh, gee. No. I don't remember any
ruckus last night. It's quite
tranquil here.

LIAM

Oh, okay. I think I was in a wreck
last night. I was driving my truck
and suddenly woke up in the woods.
My truck was nowhere to be found.

Liam points towards the woods across the road.

PETUNIA

Golly jeepers, that's awful...
Well, where are you from?

LIAM

I'm from...um. I don't know... I
don't know.

Liam's face contorts and he pinches the top of his nose. He
exhales deeply. His eyes widen.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I don't know. I can't remember
anything else.

(MORE)

LIAM (CONT'D)

I just remember the wreck, but... I can't understand how my truck is just gone.

Liam paces. He combs his fingers through his hair.

PETUNIA

It seems your accident really gave you a good wallopin' on the noggin, huh?

LIAM

Well, see... I feel fine. My head doesn't hurt. I wasn't banged up at all in the crash.

PETUNIA

Hm. Odd... Just relax. It'll all be fine. You're here now, and you are more than welcome to stay here for a while. Just calm down.

Liam nervously laughs and steps back a foot or two. He paces.

LIAM

Like this house?

Liam motions his head at the white house next to them.

PETUNIA

Oh, no dear. This is THE ONE'S house. You can stay at the old Owen residence.

LIAM

Wait. This isn't your house? Okay, where even are we?

Petunia steps a foot closer to Liam.

PETUNIA

How rude of me! I didn't even introduce you to the village. My deepest apologies, my dear boy.

LIAM

You're fine.

PETUNIA

Welcome to "Sanctum," where broken lives come to be mended.

Petunia extends her wrinkly hand onto Liam's shoulder. She smiles and locks eyes with him.

PETUNIA (CONT'D)
Okedokee artichokee. Let's head on
to the old Owen residence.

Petunia walks off. Liam follows.

EXT. WALKWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Liam follows Petunia down a pavement path. Small, skinny trees are lined on either side of the path. The warm radiance of the sun enlivens the vivid colors of the flowers and greenery. The sky is a cloudless blue.

LIAM
So, Petunia, what exactly is this
"Sanctum?"

PETUNIA
Well, silly, I already told you.
It's where broken lives come to be
mended.

Liam sighs.

LIAM
I see. I don't even remember what I
need mended, if anything...

Liam's face contorts. He breathes heavily.

PETUNIA
All need mending, dear.

LIAM
Okay. I get the whole broken lives
mended stuff. I hear you. But what
is this place?

PETUNIA
Well, some would say a tight-knit
community. I see it more as family.
We are a village full of people
that live in harmony and submission
to the One.

LIAM
The One?

Petunia squeals and her smile grows even unnaturally wider.

PETUNIA
Yes! I cannot wait for you to meet
him.

EXT. SANCTUM HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Petunia and Liam arrive at a mid-sized, grey house. It has two-stories and a porch. The house sits on a small hill that overlooks a pond.

The house rests at the end of the walkway. The walkway is lined with a multitude of houses on either side.

PETUNIA

Here we are!

LIAM

Wow, this is very nice.

Liam scans the environment.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I really like being so close to a pond. I think I used to fish?

Petunia opens the front door and motions her hand toward Liam.

PETUNIA

After you, sugar plum.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Liam and Petunia walk in. There is a nice stone fireplace and a set of two red couches. The lights emit a warm, cozy glow of orange.

PETUNIA

Welcome to "Sanctum." I hope you enjoy your stay. You are welcome to make yourself at home and take your time to rest up and recover from that nasty accident of yours.

Liam spins in circles. He scans the room and runs his fingers through his hair.

LIAM

Why, thank you. This is just so generous.

PETUNIA

Don't thank us, sugar plum. Thank the One. Speaking of, you should mosey over to his teaching time at five.

LIAM
Teaching time? Uh...where is it?

Petunia walks over to a coffee table and opens the drawer. She pulls out a small bunch of paper and unfolds it on the table.

PETUNIA
We have complimentary village maps in the coffee table drawers. This will help you become more familiar with the community.

Liam walks over to Petunia and peers over her shoulders.

PETUNIA (CONT'D)
His usual teaching times are at Veritas Park, here at five.

Petunia points at a specific area on the map. She then nods to Liam.

PETUNIA (CONT'D)
Goodbye!

Petunia smiles with abnormal wideness and walks out the door. Liam exhales.

MONTAGE

-Liam walks through the Kitchen.

-He opens the fridge to find multiple jugs of fruit juice and stacks of individually wrapped sandwiches.

-He scans the bedroom and sits on the bed.

END MONTAGE

EXT. VERITAS PARK - LATER

Liam walks under a large metal archway and into a vast area of greenery. Metal letters stretch across the top of the archway. The letters spell "Veritas Park."

Liam walks along a path with many trees on one side and a large pond on the other. The sunlight dances across the pond's glistening water.

A large group of VILLAGERS sit on two rows of long, wooden benches. They face a single podium that stands a few feet in front of the pond. The MEN wear colorful button-ups and khaki slacks, and the WOMEN wear bright dresses.

Liam walks toward the left side of the wooden benches. He plants himself on an empty spot on the back left row. Liam turns his wrist. His watch hand strikes five o'clock.

THE ONE

Okay! Let's get this started, shall we?

Liam glances up from his watch. THE ONE, a middle-aged man, stands behind the podium. The One has a white button-up shirt and white slacks. He has long, grey hair and a thin grey beard. His face is smooth, containing very few wrinkles. He smiles gently. The murmur of the Villagers dies down.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

I just want to start by saying, I love you all so dearly.

The Villagers smile and sigh.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

This tight-knit community, this family, it can't just be manufactured, or forced into being. This beautiful thing we have is due to each and every one of you. Give yourself a round of applause!

The air fills with the thunder of the Villagers' applause. Liam looks around, and weakly claps his hands.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

I want to thank you for keeping this place pristine. You all work hard to take care of that which you have been given. I see your work and your dedication, and I thank you.

Villagers applaud.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

I came down to prepare this place for a loyal people. A family. For you. I willingly came down to grant each of you your best life... to rid your world, now, of all brokenness... This place is where broken lives are mended.

A few Villagers bow their heads toward the One.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

You all know I dwelled in a higher realm. Some would say Paradise. But, I had a zeal to do good. I chose to come down and create "Sanctum," for you.

Villagers applaud.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

This way is truth. This place is good.

FEDORA, a scrawny man in his forties wearing a silver fedora, stands up. He stands in the back row of the right side of benches. The One stops talking and looks at him.

FEDORA

What makes you so sure?

THE ONE

Hm... hello, Fedora. What is it now?

FEDORA

It's just... Can you confirm these so-called truths you feed to us? Day by day.

THE ONE

Fedora... I'll explain to you in more detail after teaching time.

Fedora squints his eyes and raises his brow. He slowly takes his seat.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

Well. We are going to end teaching time a bit early tonight. I thank you all for your patience and I apologize for the brevity of the service... Also, I want to remind you all of the lottery tomorrow.

The Villagers clap. Some stand up and give joyous squeals.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

I trust you all will be in attendance. It really is a joyous time of fulfilling gathering. The event will be held in the barn, between the Mill and Ryland's house. I'm very excited to see who is chosen. Again...

(MORE)

THE ONE (CONT'D)

I thank you all for your steadfast fervor... Be dismissed.

The Villagers claps loudly and then stand up. They intermingle with one another. Fedora walks over to meet the One. They stand to the side of the group and converse.

DENNY, a man in his late twenties, sits next to Liam in a slumped stature. Denny has short, black hair and wears a salmon button-up with khaki shorts.

DENNY

Hey...man. Name's Denny. What's yours? Don't think I've seen you here before my man.

Denny turns and stares at Liam.

LIAM

Name's Liam. I just got here today, to wherever this is.

DENNY

Man, it's real chill here.

LIAM

Yeah, it seems like it.

They both stand and Denny shakes Liam's hand.

DENNY

Glad to have you here, my man.

LIAM

Thanks. Denny? Right?

DENNY

That's it.

The crowd of Villagers around them continues to bustle with chatting. The One walks over to Denny and Liam.

THE ONE

Hello there, Liam. It is truly nice to finally meet you.

The One sticks out his large, meaty hand. Liam hesitates but locks hands with the One. Liam's head twitches a bit. His posture slumps slightly.

LIAM

How did you know my name? We haven't met yet.

THE ONE

Oh, yes. Petunia often informs me of newcomers we have. Just wanted to make the effort to greet you face to face.

LIAM

Oh. That's nice.

THE ONE

Sincerely, welcome to Sanctum.

Liam cracks a slight grin and nods his head. The One walks off into the crowd.

DENNY

He's great. Really great.

Liam eye's suddenly dart across the sea of people. His head turns sharply. He fixes his gaze on Kelsey. Liam mumbles to himself and squints his eyes.

DENNY (CONT'D)

Hey, man. I'm starving. Let's get some grub.

Liam shakes his head. He turns to Denny.

LIAM

Okay. I'm gonna try to forget you jut said grub... And I'm actually really exhausted. I don't know... it just kinda hit me.

DENNY

Oh, come on. Let's catch some dinner real quick.

LIAM

Okay... Maybe it's food I need. Just have a massive headache.

Denny and Liam walk.

DENNY

Food always solves the problem for me my man.

LIAM

We'll see. Where are we going?

DENNY

The Diner, man. Best place here.

Denny and Liam walk out of Veritas Park. The rest of the crowd of Villagers disperse. The warm, sun hangs low in the sky.

INT. DINER - LATER

Liam and Denny sit at a small booth in a very vibrant, and pristine diner. They sip clear glasses of ice water. The shiny, teal tables are lined with red cushioned booths.

WAITERS and WAITRESSES bustle around the room. They hold trays filled with plates of food. They all wear white button-ups and black pants.

CUSTOMERS fill most of the room. Every Customer has a plate of turkey, plantains, and asparagus.

JANIS, a petite woman in her forties, walks over to Liam and Denny. She has long black hair that is wrapped in a bun.

JANIS

Hiya, my name is Janis and I'll be your server for tonight. How y'all doin'?

DENNY

Pretty good, Janis.

LIAM

Alright, I suppose.

Liam takes a long swig of his water.

DENNY

How about you, Janis?

JANIS

Doin mighty fine. Mighty fine, darlin'... Okay, what y'all want to eat?

Denny scratches his head and then nods his head.

DENNY

I'll take the peach cobbler. No breading.

JANIS

Okay. You, hun?

Janis motions her hand towards Liam. He scans the diner and notices the food that all the Customers are eating.

LIAM

Um, I'll take whatever is quickest.

JANIS

Okay, I'll get you the special.

Janis stares at Liam and Denny and smiles.

JANIS (CONT'D)

Well... I'll get that right out for you both!

Janis winks at Liam and Denny and skips away.

DENNY

She's great. This place is amazing... I love the food. The people. The housing. It's perfect, man.

LIAM

That's a pretty high bar.

DENNY

Well, man. I can't really say much else about the place.

Liam straightens up in his seat.

LIAM

So, uh... Denny. How long exactly have you been in Sanctum?

Denny scratches the scarce, thin hairs that sprout from his chin.

DENNY

Uh... really, man. I couldn't tell ya.

LIAM

Are you serious? You don't remember when you first arrived?

DENNY

No. Not really. I also don't care much about it.

Liam chuckles.

DENNY (CONT'D)

Hey, man. I've been here long enough to be a real part of this community. I love it here, man...

(MORE)

DENNY (CONT'D)

we're tight here my man... Not to mention there are some really good fishin' ponds.

LIAM

Well, I'm glad I at least know I'm new here. My memory is pretty banged up... but I know that. I just can't remember hardly anything before Sanctum, besides the wreck.

Liam squints his eyes and rubs his forehead.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Do you remember anything about life before here?

Denny clicks his tongue and darts his eyes upward.

DENNY

Well... yeah. I just barely remember this one thing. Tall, shiny, metal structures... They reached up to the sky, glistening... skyscrapers my man.

LIAM

Ah, so you used to live in the city, huh?... You don't remember where?

DENNY

I'm not sure, man. I just see the images... And... I remember I always loved some good ole fishin'.

Denny pretends to cast out a hook and reel in a fish. Liam laughs dryly.

LIAM

Hm. Interesting.

DENNY

But I love it here. Don't really care about what I can't help, man. I'm here right now, and it's great.

LIAM

Yeah. The One sure thinks it's great.

Denny leans closer to Liam.

DENNY

I don't really like your tone, man.
You sound like you think the One is
a bad dude?

LIAM

Well, I just. I hardly know the
guy.

DENNY

Exactly. You don't. You don't know
him.

Liam raises his hands slightly.

LIAM

Hey, I'm sorry. Just curious.

DENNY

The One makes this place possible.
We owe so much to him. Didn't you
hear him in teaching time, man?

LIAM

Yeah, just wondering how much was
true.

Denny's face contorts.

DENNY

Bruh, did you get anything from
what he said?

LIAM

I'd like to think so.

Janis walks up with a tray containing a plate full of turkey,
plantains, and asparagus and a large bowl full of peach
cobbler without breading. Janis wears a wide smile.

JANIS

Here you guys go. Be careful! It's
pretty hot.

Janis sets the meals on the table. She smiles.

JANIS (CONT'D)

Well is there anything else I can
do for ya?

Both Denny and Liam shake their heads.

DENNY

I don't think so, hun.

JANIS

Well okee-dokee. I'll let y'all be.
And I guess I'll see y'all at the
Lottery tomorrow!

Janis walks off quickly.

DENNY

Yep! See ya Janis!

Denny and Liam's eyes fixate on the food in front of them.

DENNY (CONT'D)

Man. I'm telling you I could eat a
whole cow.

LIAM

Yeah? Yet you chose peach cobbler?
And without breadding?

DENNY

Hey man. Don't judge me. I'm a man
of exquisitital taste.

Liam chuckles.

LIAM

Yeah, seems like it.

INT. LIAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Liam stands in a small bathroom with a counter, sink, mirror,
and a toilet. The navy counter glistens. The mirror is a
perfect, crisp reflection.

Liam brushes his teeth and spits into the sink. He raises his
head and stares into the mirror, locking his eyes into his
reflection.

LIVING ROOM

Liam saunters around the living room in a slow cadence. The
white pillows on the large, red couch are perfectly aligned.
The hardwood floor glimmers without an apparent spot.

FRONT PORCH

Liam ambles onto the front porch. Dim lights illuminate the
porch from the dark abyss of night. Liam stares out into the
distance. The heavy sound of crickets chirping swells. Liam
exhales and walks back to the door.

He closes the door. Rays of light pour out of the windows of the house, which seems small compared to the darkness that engulfs it. The crickets continue to cry aloud. The lights in the windows suddenly die.

EXT. FEDORA'S HOUSE - DAY

Liam walks down a long, skinny walkway. He wears a bright blue shirt with khakis. His hair is combed in an orderly fashion. The road is lined with skinny trees on either side. The leaves are bursting with a variation of green shades.

Liam walks in front of two houses. The first house is a small, grey one-story house with a nice front porch. The grey paint chips off the panels of the exterior. Fedora sits on the front porch in a rocking chair.

The second house is just as big as the first house, and it is painted dark red. The front porch is deserted.

Liam glances at Fedora quickly and then turns his attention back to the green trees and the ocean blue sky. Fedora squints his eyes. He points his skinny, wrinkled finger at Liam. Fedora shouts.

FEDORA
WHO ARE YOU?

Liam looks at Fedora but quickly focuses his gaze back ahead of him. Fedora stands abruptly.

FEDORA (CONT'D)
Hey! You! I asked you a question!
Who are you?

Liam stops walking and turns.

LIAM
Oh, hi. Um... my name's Liam!

FEDORA
Boy, come closer! I can't hear ya
standing across the yard!

Liam walks across Fedora's yard to the edge of the porch. Fedora sits back down in his rocking chair. He rocks slowly and fixes his gaze on Liam.

LIAM
Hi. Like I said... my name's Liam.

FEDORA
It's a pleasure to meet ya, Liam.

LIAM

Likewise.

Fedora leans forward.

FEDORA

You look new. How long have ya been here?

LIAM

Funny... that's about the only thing I can remember.

Liam chuckles.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Just got here yesterday. Today's my second day in Sanctum.

Fedora hocks a loogie and spits on the porch in front of him.

FEDORA

Don't you call this place Sanctum. Nothing holy about it.

LIAM

Wow. First time I've heard something negative.

FEDORA

Not surprised, kid... Anyways, you remember anything? Before here?... You can sit on my grass if you'd like.

Liam plops himself down onto the luscious, green grass. He tilts his head up. Liam makes eye contact with Fedora who looks down on him from the porch.

LIAM

Uh, yeah. Not much really. I can't remember hardly anything specific about life before this... except the wreck I had right before being welcomed here.

FEDORA

Welcomed.

Fedora scoffs.

FEDORA (CONT'D)

Imprisoned, maybe... I swear, kid.
I remember something past this
place. Can't grasp it just yet...
but I will.

Fedora adjusts his hat and exhales.

FEDORA (CONT'D)

This place. It'll wear you down. It
looks pretty. People seem nice. But
it does something to your mind.
Can't remember a thing... Except
this hat. I know it's special. I
see glimpses here and there of
someone else wearing it. A little
boy. Runnin' around. Laughing.
Curly gold hair.

Fedora leans forward and stares directly into Liam's eyes.

FEDORA (CONT'D)

When ya get those moments. Those
glimpses. Cling to em. Cling for
dear life... That's what's gonna
get me out of here.

LIAM

Do others have these glimpses?

FEDORA

Y'know. Couldn't tell ya for sure.
Doesn't seem like many do... the
way most of them saunter around
like mindless drones.

Liam readjusts his legs to sit more comfortably on the hard
ground.

FEDORA (CONT'D)

The One spoke with me about my
glimpses... said I was ill. Crazy.
Says my mind is my enemy. He told
me to fight these glimpses. The
urges to fantasize in my own little
world.

LIAM

Do you feel sick?

FEDORA

Not at all. These glimpses...
they're real. They're true. Unlike
Sanctum. It's all a lie.

LIAM

A lie? You mean... you don't believe the One?

FEDORA

No. He's feeding us lies. This place is a mere fabrication of reality. Yet... something beyond the One... something greater... it's showing me. It's guiding me... to the truth.

LIAM

Greater?

Fedora's head suddenly twitches. His eyes widen. He stares off into the distance. His mouth rests ajar.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Hey! Whats wrong?

Fedora winces in pain. He shouts.

FEDORA

I see him! He's right here!

Fedora snaps his eyes at Liam and darts toward him. Liam bolts up and runs toward the road. Fedora grapples at Liam, pushing him down to the ground. Fedora stands over him.

Kelsey bolts out of the red house next door. She wears a burgundy summer dress.

Her hair is unraveled into perfect curls. A few VILLAGERS walk by. They gasp and turn their heads to the commotion.

Fedora leans in close to Liam. He grits his teeth. Kelsey and the Villagers walk closer to Fedora and Liam. They form a small crowd around the two. Fedora whispers lowly as he locks his blood shot eyes into Liam's.

FEDORA (CONT'D)

Think about who the real enemy is here.

Liam's eyes are opened wide. His fists clutch the grass. His face is drained of color.

Fedora suddenly relaxes his face and the redness evacuates his cheeks. He scurries away and slams his front door shut.

The Villagers murmur amongst themselves. Kelsey, offers her hand to Liam.

KELSEY

Need help up? That looked like quite a nasty tumble.

LIAM

Yeah, thanks.

Kelsey locks hands with Liam, and he stands up next to her.

VILLAGER 1

Ole Fedora. He really has something wrong in the noggin.

VILLAGER 2

I'd say, Candace. I'd say.

The Villagers mechanically saunter back to the walkway.

LIAM

So, you seem a bit familiar. What's your name?

KELSEY

Oh. My name's Kelsey... I may have seen you before... What's your name?

LIAM

Liam.

Kelsey nods her head and smiles. Her eyes are glazed over.

KELSEY

So, how long have you been here, Liam?

He chuckles.

LIAM

This is my second day. Pretty fresh here.

KELSEY

Oh, really? I am too. It's really quite pleasant here, besides ole Fedora and his antics.

Kelsey laughs.

LIAM

Yeah. I was a bit frightened there for a second.

KELSEY

Yeah... Wow. It's such a beautiful day.

Kelse smiles at Liam.

LIAM

Yeah. It's really nice here.

A beat.

Kelsey clicks her tongue.

KELSEY

Well. I've got to go sweep the back deck. See you tomorrow at the lottery?

LIAM

Oh, yeah. I'll be there.

Kelsey smiles at Liam.

FLASHBACK MONTAGE

-Kelsey smiles, she stands in Fedora's front yard.

-Kelsey frowns, she stands in the kitchen of their house. The lighting in the kitchen is dark.

-Kelsey holds a letter.

-Kelsey's face is soiled with tears.

END FLASHBACK MONTAGE

Liam sees Kelsey standing in Fedora's front yard. Liam gasps. She is smiling. She tilts her head and furrows her brow.

KELSEY

Is everything alright?

LIAM

Uh, yeah... All good.

Kelsey walks across Fedora's yard to her front porch. Liam scratches his head and watches her briefly as he walks back to the road.

EXT. BARN - THE NEXT DAY

Liam and Denny approach a large wooden barn. The old wood is cracked and rugged, yet the wooden barn looks pristine. All the wood is slathered in white paint.

They walk to the small wooden entrance door. Joyful sounds of singing and laughter exude from the interior of the barn. Denny opens the door.

LIAM

I assume this is the place.

DENNY

Yup.

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

Liam and Denny enter the white barn. Many VILLAGERS dance around the room. Some laugh while others sing a ditty in unison.

Long, thin, black wires hang from one end of the ceiling to the other. A string of incandescent lights stretch from wall to wall.

The barn is filled with wooden tables organized around the dance floor. The front of the room contains an elevated platform.

Liam follows Denny to the front of the room. The Villagers sing and shout. Fedora stands in a corner alone. He watches the crowd with his arms folded.

Kelsey dances by herself in the sea of Villagers. Her silky, dirty blond curls sway softly as she dances. Liam glances at her for a brief moment.

LIAM

Why is everyone dancing?

DENNY

My man. Because dancing is just downright groovy.

Denny jumps into the crowd and performs the Sprinkler. Liam remains outside of the crowd of dancing Villagers. The One walks onto the platform. His face is wrinkled. He gives a loud bellow.

THE ONE

Greetings everyone!

All the Villagers freeze. They turn their heads to the One.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

It's time to get started. Take your seats.

The Villagers mechanically shuffle to their seats. Liam follows Denny. He sits down next to him at a small wooden table. Fedora sits alone in the back of the room.

Petunia walks onto the stage and stand next to the One. Petunia's eyes and smile widen. The multitude of wrinkles on her face bunch together as she smiles.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

I really do find the greatest endearment as I observe you all dancing and rejoicing in my protection and care over you. I strive to create an environment and lifestyle for you that is safe and free of worry. I strive to give you true life here at Sanctum... And it fills me with a strong sense of purpose as I see you rightfully bestowing your gratitude through worship and praise... in my name.

The Villagers applaud and cheer loudly.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

I thank you for your steadfast fervor.

A beat.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

Now... today we are participating in our monthly lottery. Petunia will explain it for those of you who are new.

Liam looks at Denny and then the One. Petunia smiles wide.

PETUNIA

Aren't we excited to be here today?

The Villagers applaud.

PETUNIA (CONT'D)

The lottery, it is truly such a swell opportunity... Each month, we have this lottery for the village. For you all.

(MORE)

PETUNIA (CONT'D)

It decides which one of you gets to journey to... the Celestial Realm... the dwelling place of the One.

A few Villagers gasp in awe. Petunia bows to the One.

PETUNIA (CONT'D)

If you thought Sanctum was paradise, think again. The Celestial Realm is a place of eternal bliss... Yet the One selflessly left to build a life for us here.

Petunia straightens up. She claps. The Villagers follow.

PETUNIA (CONT'D)

And because of him, our lives are mended... in Sanctum. But imagine something greater. Something more... This is your chance...

Villagers shift around in their seats and glance at one another. Some widen their eyes and bite their lips.

A MAN IN WHITE walks out from behind the curtains at the back of the stage. He wears a white button up and white pants. He rolls out the lottery cage on a small wooden platform. He positions the cage in between the One and Petunia and then walks back behind the curtains.

Silence.

Villagers beat their hands on the tables in a synchronized fashion. Liam's eyes dart to Denny who beats his fists on the table. Liam's brow furrows, and he slowly beats his hands on the table.

The One spins the cage. The white ping pong balls roll and bounce around. Villagers beat their fists on the tables faster and widen their eyes. Their mouths rest slightly ajar.

The cage stops rolling. The Villagers immediately stop banging on the tables. They sit on the edge of their seats.

The One opens the front metal flap of the cage and reaches inside and grabs a single ping pong ball. He pulls the ball close to his eyes. Silence permeates the room.

THE ONE

The chosen one is...

Silence stings.

THE ONE (CONT'D)
My dear, Fedora.

The room is filled with gasps. All heads turn to Fedora. Fedora looks down at his feet, but he slowly tilts his head up toward the One. Fedora's eyes are wide and flared with various red veins.

THE ONE (CONT'D)
Congratulate him friends!

After a long silence, the Villagers applaud loudly. Fedora is still. He stares at the One. The applause fades into a long silence.

FEDORA
(Whispers)
Why did you choose me?

The One cups his hand to his ear.

THE ONE
Excuse me? Did you say something,
Fedora? I couldn't hear you.

A beat.

Fedora shouts.

FEDORA
WHY DID YOU CHOSE ME?

The Villagers gasp. Liam's eyes widen, and he sits up straight quickly.

THE ONE
What do you mean? You were chosen
out of luck. And for a joyous
departing! You get the privilege of
journeying to the Celestial Realm!

A beat.

FEDORA
You don't even have the authority
to grant that.

The One's face contorts.

THE ONE
Excuse me?

Fedora surges out of his chair to stand.

FEDORA

You can't take me to the Celestial Realm. You're not the one who is actually in control.

THE ONE

You're sickness is worsening. You should go home and get some rest... it has clearly corrupted your mind.

FEDORA

You lie... and you lie. You've built Sanctum on deception. You're controlling us! Using us!

The One steps down from the platform and closer to the front of the crowd.

THE ONE

I am in servitude to the people of Sanctum. I sacrificed my higher life to share my power! My glory! You're mad ramblings are disgraceful!

FEDORA

You can't tell the truth. Can you?...

Fedora chuckles. He climbs on top of a nearby table.

FEDORA (CONT'D)

Everyone! Listen to me! We are trapped here! The One has taken us from our real lives! This place... it isn't real!

The Villagers chuckle for a brief moment. Fedora paces.

FEDORA (CONT'D)

HE'S KEEPING US FROM SOMETHING! ASK YOURSELVES... HOW DID YOU GET HERE? WHAT'S OUTSIDE THIS PLACE? WHAT WERE WE TAKEN FROM?

THE ONE

You're deeply ill, Fedora.

FEDORA

PLEASE! EVERYONE! BELIEVE ME!

The Villagers stare blankly at Fedora. Some have twisted faces. Silence fills the room. Fedora gently climbs down from the table and leaves the barn.

Villagers look at one another with wide eyes. Liam's mouth gapes open. The One climbs onto the stage.

THE ONE

Well, that was not a part of the show. Free entertainment on ole Fedora.

The Villagers laugh.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

I think Fedora deeply needs some rest. He'll be fine... eventually.

A low chatter fills the room.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

Well, there will not be another drawing for the day. The lottery has spoken... Yet again, I thank you for your steadfast fervor... Be dismissed.

The One walks off the stage. Villagers shuffle out of their chairs and mingle with one another. Liam's mouth still hangs slightly ajar.

DENNY

Man, we should go fishing.

Liam's eyes cut sharply to Denny. Liam furrows his brow and slightly rolls his eyes.

EXT. POND - LATER

Liam and Denny sit on a metal bench in front of a large pond. The bench is speckled with flecks of rust. The sunlight dances across the still waters of the pond.

The green grass is fluffy and vibrant. It engulfs the legs of the yellow bench. Denny and Liam cast their fishing rod lures into the pond.

DENNY

It's so peaceful here.

There is a calm silence. Crickets chirp and birds whistle.

LIAM

Man... What just happened?

Denny raises his brow.

DENNY

Uh... Nothing. Haven't caught a fish yet.

LIAM

Denny. I don't mean right this second. I mean at the lottery. The barn. What on earth happened?

DENNY

Oh. Well, Fedora lost his mind again. That's it, man.

Denny feels a sudden tug on the line, but he does not struggle much.

DENNY (CONT'D)

Oh man. I think I've got somethin!

Denny reels in his lure.

DENNY (CONT'D)

It's not fighting much, but I've got something!

Denny reels in the fish. It slowly drags onto the bank. Liam leans over to inspect the fish.

LIAM

Oh.

The fish is half scale, half skeleton. It is about a foot long. The hook is wrapped around one of the fish's bones. The one beady and lifeless eye of the fish stares at Liam.

DENNY

Well. Wasn't expecting this.

LIAM

Don't know why? Counting yesterday, I'd say half or more of the fish we've caught have been dead.

DENNY

I'm not so sure about that, man.

Liam throws his hands up.

LIAM

I don't know what there is to not be sure about, Denny? Unless you're just seeing something I'm not.

DENNY

Man, you just look into stuff too much.

LIAM

Is it not odd that most of the fish we catch are carcasses? I mean, what's killing them?

Denny untangles the hook from the fish carcass.

DENNY

Man, you need to chilax.

LIAM

It's just strange.

Denny tosses the fish onto the grass.

DENNY

Do you just try to kill my vibe each day, man?

LIAM

No.

Denny grabs a piece of bread from the loaf on the grass. He attaches it to his hook.

DENNY

(sassy)

Mhm.

Denny throws the lure back into the pond. Silence.

LIAM

So what happened with Fedora?

DENNY

Man. What you tryna do to me?

Denny throws his hands up and stomps his feet slightly.

LIAM

Hey, I'm just asking. You've known him longer... It just weirded me out.

DENNY

Yeah, it was crazy, man. But don't say I know him. I know of him... I don't hang with that dude.

Denny looks Liam in the eye.

DENNY (CONT'D)

But, yeah. He's just had a screw or two loose lately, man. Started when he began talking about this curly headed boy in a fedora he sees runnin' around.

LIAM

Really?

Denny reels in his lure. The hook has nothing but soggy bread on it.

DENNY

Yeah. He said he sees him all the time. The dudes not all there, my man... Makes sense he's gone full-on looney.

Denny casts the lure back into pond.

LIAM

Why do you think he didn't want to go to the Celestial Realm?

DENNY

Honestly, I ain't got a clue... Man, I'd give anything to win that lottery.

LIAM

Really?

Denny lowers his fishing rod.

DENNY

Yeah, man. This place is perfect, but imagine a place better than perfection... The Celestial Realm is literally the One's old place. It's gotta be somethin.

LIAM

Yeah, maybe. Maybe it's better than here. I wouldn't exactly classify this place as perfect though.

Liam laughs dryly.

DENNY

You're wrong, my man. This place is literally heaven.

Liam gazes at the glimmering water then turns his head to Denny.

LIAM

I don't know about that, man. But... what if it's the other place?

Denny's eyes widen.

A beat.

DENNY

You think too much, man.

LIAM

I'm just saying... I know it seems like we're more alive than we've ever been, but what if we're really just dying here, like our poor little scaled friend?

Denny throws his fishing rod to the ground.

DENNY

You need to chill out. Don't ask too many questions... I don't, and I have all I need here. I'm content.

LIAM

Yeah... we aren't the same, Denny. Answers drive my contentment.

Denny stands up.

DENNY

We already got the answers we need right now, man. Fedora started making his own imaginary problems he needed to solve and look where it got him.

Liam sighs. Denny rests his hand on Liam's shoulder.

DENNY (CONT'D)

I like you, man. I hope you stay here for a bit.

Denny walks off. Liam sits on the bench, alone.

EXT. VERITAS PARK - LATER

Liam walks on a paved walkway. A glimmering pond resides on one side of the walkway and a multitude of trees on the other.

Long and black metal railing separates the walkway from the woods. The birds chirp in harmony. Liam takes a deep breath.

THE CREATOR

Liam.

Liam stops. He looks into the woods. The woods are littered with greenery. Tall weeds and leaves fill the area.

Liam squints. He slowly pulls himself over the railing. Liam walks a couple feet. He walks to the edge of a large rock. He stands at the top and looks down at the ground below.

The rock ledge is about ten feet above the ground. The rock he stands on has a large opening underneath that extends into a cave.

THE CREATOR (CONT'D)

Liam. Find the answers.

Liam closes his eyes and turns his head. Liam walks down the side of the rock to the ground. He approaches the opening of the cave. The interior rock walls are jagged. The cave is mostly darkened, yet some natural light lingers within it.

INT. CAVE - CONTINUOUS

Liam walks in. The rough, rock walls are painted with many words, symbols, and images. The central imagery is a painting of one large hand throwing a shadowed figure from the clouds.

The hand is firm. It is calloused. The words "The Creator" are labeled on the large depiction of the hand. The words "Deceptor" are labeled on the shadowed figure in the dust.

The painting consists of numerous people who surround the shadowed figure in the dust. Liam's eyes scan the artwork.

FEDORA

You've been drawn here too?

Liam jumps slightly. He turns around. Fedora sits against the opposite rock wall. He holds a small book in his hands.

The pages are yellow. The spine and cover of the book are tattered with age.

LIAM
How long have you been here?

FEDORA
Long enough.

LIAM
Wh... what is this place?

Fedora leans up. He closes the book.

FEDORA
This... this is the key.

LIAM
What do you mean? What are these images?

Liam points to the painted imagery on the rock wall.

FEDORA
This appears to have been a place of refuge for Villagers in past centuries... One's who sought the truth.

LIAM
The truth?

FEDORA
I've studied these walls. The imagery. The stories the Villagers painted... and I've been left in awe... These people focused their praise. Their adoration. Not on the One... but something greater.

Liam squints his eyes.

LIAM
To what?

FEDORA
The Creator... The one who's guided me here. To the truth. To this cave... To this.

Fedora gently opens the aged book.

FEDORA (CONT'D)

I discovered the Text here, hidden in the depths of the cave... It's very pages are lettered with the words of the Creator. It holds to the truth of the imagery. The stories. The paintings the Villagers left. It all reveals the Creator. And it exposes the One's true nature... His true name.

Liam steps back.

LIAM

His name?

FEDORA

His real name is Deceptor. And he did not step down to serve us. To share his glory and power. He was banished. Cast down to earth by the Creator.

LIAM

This isn't true. The One told us all about your illness.

FEDORA

This place. It is not what it appears. It's a mirage. A deception. I can see now. These writings. The Text. It's guided me. Given me glimpses of reality. The curly headed boy. That's real. I'm certain. And I will cling to it... I will find it again.

Fedora's eyes widen. He laughs.

LIAM

Your mind is troubled, Fedora. The One. He is good. True.

Fedora steps toward Liam.

FEDORA

You have to believe me.

LIAM

I can't.

Liam quickly exits the cave.

INT. FEDORA'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Fedora sits at a table in his living room. The lights are dim. An orange glow emits from the meager flames of the fireplace. The kitchen is a small corner of the room. The table divides the kitchen counter from the couch.

The Text sits open on the table along with some scattered papers. Some of the papers are crumpled into balls and some are torn to shreds.

Fedora's hair is disheveled. Red veins camp in the whites of his eye like a multitude of rivers. He leans on the table and glares down at the pages of the Text.

Fedora closes the Text. He sets it on the kitchen counter behind him. He begins to scribble the name "LELAND" repeatedly onto an empty piece of paper. Fedora scratches his head.

FEDORA
Leland... Leland.

Fedora bares down on the paper. The penmanship worsens.

FEDORA (CONT'D)
Leland?

The tip of the pencil breaks. Fedora slams his hand on the table and chunks the pencil at the wall.

FEDORA (CONT'D)
Who is he?

He pounds his fist into his temple twice.

FEDORA (CONT'D)
WHO IS HE?

Fedora snatches the current paper he wrote on and flips the table. He slumps to the ground and sobs. He clenches the paper in his hands. Fedora's voice quivers.

FEDORA (CONT'D)
Why can't I remember you, Leland?

FLASHBACK MONTAGE

-A curly headed little boy runs through a field. He wears a Fedora and jean overalls. He giggles.

FLASHBACK MONTAGE ENDS

FEDORA

It's you... Leland.

Fedora's sobs fade. A sudden bang emits from the front porch. He straightens up and his jaw drops slightly. He stands up and slowly walks to the front door. Fedora flicks on the light switch for the porch light.

Fedora opens the front door slowly and peers his head out. He looks both ways. The sound of crickets swells. No one is near the front porch. In the background, a light turns on in one of the windows of Kelsey's house.

Fedora shuts the door. He flicks off the front porch light switch. Fedora turns around and slowly walks to the overturned table. He looks down at it and scratches his head. The room fills with silence. Fedora looks at the crumpled piece of paper in his hand.

FEDORA (CONT'D)

That's my son.

The One stands behind Fedora in the shadows of a hallway. The One is a distant figure mostly hidden by the darkness. Fedora jumps as he notices him. Fedora shrieks.

FEDORA (CONT'D)

You!

He turns to face the One. The One walks towards him slowly.

THE ONE

It's time, Fedora.

FEDORA

WHERE AM I? WHERE'S MY SON? HOW
LONG HAVE I BEEN AWAY?

The One walks towards him. He shushes him.

THE ONE

It's okay. I'm about to take you to
him.

Fedora backs away.

FEDORA

I don't believe you! You've fed us
all lies.

THE ONE

I will not tolerate your ignorance!

FEDORA
WHERE'S MY SON?

The One steps closer.

THE ONE
The Celestial Realm...

FEDORA
No. You're trapped here. You can't
go back. You can't take us there...
So where... where is he?

The One walks to the kitchen counter. He grabs the Text with
his left hand.

THE ONE
How... where...?

The One's face tightens. Redness fills his cheeks.

THE ONE (CONT'D)
WHERE DID YOU GET THIS?

FEDORA
It doesn't matter. I know the
truth.

The One surges at Fedora and backhands him. Fedora thuds to
the ground instantly. The One throws the Text into the fire.
A few flickering flames singe the edges of the Text.

THE ONE
You are a disgrace! I should've
known your illness... your
infectious lies... had such a
perverse source.

The One crouches beside Fedora.

THE ONE (CONT'D)
You want the truth? About your boy?

Fedora pushes himself up off the ground slightly. His arms
shake. Blood drips from his forehead. The One gets close to
Fedora's face. The One's beady eyes pierce Fedora's.

THE ONE (CONT'D)
The process here. To this haven.
Often involves a struggle. Though
it really wouldn't if you people
only knew what I was giving you...

The One chuckles.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

But... complications happen. The boy was just a little more stubborn than you. Had a bit more fight... He's dead.

Fedora head butts the One. He spits blood into his face. The One stands up. He wipes the blood off of his face with his white sleeve.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

You disgust me.

The One grabs Fedora by the hair.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

Don't worry. You'll be with him shortly.

INT. KELSEY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A muffled shout rings from Fedora's house. Kelsey shifts her curtains around as she peers into Fedora's house from her window.

EXT. FEDORA'S HOUSE - DAY

Liam and Denny walk on the walkway near Fedora's house. The fluffy grass is a vibrant green. The cloudless sky is bright blue. Liam wears a blue plaid shirt with khakis, and Denny wears a salmon shirt with khaki shorts.

LIAM

Are you gonna get peach cobbler with no breading again?

DENNY

Yeah, man. It's the best thing they got here. So good.

Liam motions his hands up.

LIAM

But for breakfast?

DENNY

Don't question me, man. What did I tell you about asking too many questions?

Liam chuckles.

LIAM

Hey, we're right by Fedora's house.
I'm gonna invite him to eat with
us.

DENNY

No. Don't invite him.

LIAM

What do you mean "don't invite
him?"

Denny stops walking abruptly and turns to face Liam directly.
Liam stops walking.

DENNY

Fedora is ill. He has some kind of
sickness. He's gone full-on loony,
man.

LIAM

Denny, I don't think that's the
full picture.

DENNY

I ain't hanging with anyone like
that, man.

Liam walks toward the house.

LIAM

I'm going to invite him.

DENNY

You two can hang all you want, man.
I'll see you around.

Denny walks off. Liam walks across Fedora's yard and onto the
front porch. The rocking chair rocks slowly in the wind. The
front door is slightly ajar.

LIAM

Uh, Fedora?

Liam slowly pushes open the door.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Hello? You here Fedora?

INT. FEDORA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Liam walks into the house and gasps. The dining room table is
flipped over. Papers are scattered across the floor.

The old wooden floor panels are riddled with scratch marks. The faint scratch marks form a trail to the back door.

FEDORA

Fedora? Are you in here?

Wisps of smoke curl out of the fireplace, which is filled with charred pieces of wood. The Text lies beneath the blackened pieces of wood.

The exterior of The Text is marred. Liam walks to the fireplace. He crouches down. He opens the Text. The pages are frail.

Liam stares at the Text. He flips the pages. Many words are still visible. Liam stands up.

Liam crouches over the papers scattered across the floor. The name "Leland" is scribbled all over the papers. Liam picks up a paper.

A small spatter of blood resides on one of the papers. Small spatters of blood are on the floor. He stands up.

He focuses his eyes on the faint scratches on the hard wood floor. He follows the scratches to the back porch. Liam opens the back door.

EXT. FEDORA'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Liam walks onto the back porch. A speck of blood is on the edge of the porch panels. He walks off the porch. In the background, Kelsey opens her back door and leans out. She looks at Liam.

Liam spins around. A fedora lies in the grass. Liam walks over to it and crouches down. He picks up the fedora. It is crumpled and stained with blood.

Liam stands up abruptly.

LIAM

No... What happened?

Liam shakes slightly. He turns around. Kelsey stands outside her house on the back porch. Liam begins to press his hand against his head. He drops the fedora.

FLASHBACK MONTAGE

-Liam sees Kelsey in their kitchen.

-She smiles at him.

-She walks toward him.

FLASHBACK MONTAGE ENDS

Liam shakes his head. He runs past Fedora's backyard.

LIAM

Fedora?

EXT. SHED - CONTINUOUS

Liam runs until he comes to a shed. The shed has two thin, metal walls on the side and a ceiling. The back of the shed is sealed off with a wall, but the front of the shed is open.

In the shed, there is a table full of tools to the side. A large grey tarp covers Liam's truck. A few cardboard boxes sit in the shed.

LIAM

Fedora? Are you in there?

Liam walks toward his truck.

Liam grabs the corner of the tarp and yanks it off of his truck. The tarp crumples to the ground. Liam gasps.

FLASHBACK MONTAGE

-Liam is driving his truck down a country road. The sun sets.

-He grips the steering wheel as he drives through a backwoods road. The sun has set.

-Liam spins the wheel. The tires screech.

-Everything is white.

END FLASHBACK MONTAGE

Liam opens the door and looks inside. The keys hang from the ignition.

Silence

LIAM

Fedora was right... I have to leave this place.

Liam darts from the shed.

MONTAGE

- Liam runs through the village.
- He has glimpses of driving the truck.
- He runs past the One's house and into the woods.
- Liam sprints through the woods.

MONTAGE ENDS

EXT. THE FENCE - MOMENTS LATER

Liam runs until he reaches a short fence. It is made of wooden posts and metal wire.

Liam walks closer to the fence. The buzz of traffic hums faintly in the distance. Liam takes a step toward the fence. He suddenly stops in his tracks.

Liam's eyes widen. He gasps.

LIAM

Kels.

MONTAGE

- Kelsey cooks quesadillas.
- Liam and Kelsey argue in the house.
- They embrace each other.
- Liam drives Kelsey around in his truck.
- Kelsey is abducted.
- Liam drives after her.
- He spins the truck.
- Everything is white.

END MONTAGE

Liam falls to his knees.

LIAM

I was about to leave you...

Tears soil Liam's cheeks. He wipes the tears from his eyes.

EXT. KELSEY'S HOUSE - LATER

Liam runs to the front yard. Liam takes a deep breath. His hair is disheveled, and faint dark circles camp beneath his eyes.

The grass is noticeably less green. The sky is a drab blue, littered with clouds. Liam walks onto the front porch and knocks on the front door.

The door is a faded red. Kelsey opens the door. She smiles warmly at Liam. Her brown eyes pierce his.

KELSEY

Liam? What a pleasant surprise!
What brings you here this time of day?

LIAM

Kelsey, we need to talk.

KELSEY

Oh, dear? Come on in, hun... Come on in.

INT. KELSEY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Liam follows Kelsey into the small house. They enter a cozy living room. The walls are a dull, yellow. The colors of the couch, the light fixtures, the tables, and the pillows are all quite bland.

The room is colorful but faded. There is a brick fireplace by the front of the living room.

KELSEY

Have a seat on the couch. I'll make some tea. Would you like some?

LIAM

Oh, no. Thank you, though. I just needed to talk.

KELSEY

Seems like a rather odd occasion.

Liam sits down on the red couch.

LIAM

I'd have to agree with you there, Kels.

KELSEY

Kels?

LIAM

Oh... um. That's my nickname for you.

Kelsey walks toward Liam and sits on the couch.

KELSEY

What... what do you mean by that? We barely know each other.

LIAM

Kels?... You don't remember anything past here?

KELSEY

Past here? I... I met you just a few days ago. You're confusing me...

Liam readjusts in his seat. He leans forward.

LIAM

Kelsey... I'm your husband.

Kelsey gasps.

KELSEY

Silly, we just met a few days ago?

LIAM

Baby, this place isn't what you think it is. We're captives here... We have another life apart from this... We were stolen from it.

KELSEY

What? No! This place is perfect. I've been here just a few days, but it's grown on me... like I've always been here.

Kelsey's eyes dart around nervously. Liam's brows furrow.

LIAM

Kelsey. I'm telling you the truth. This village is some kind of mystical lie. The One is deceiving us.

KELSEY

No. Why would you say this? I love Sanctum. It's so nice. Peaceful.

LIAM

That's on the surface, Kels. Look deeper... I have good reason to believe the One just murdered Fedora.

Kelsey gasps. She sits back into the couch.

KELSEY

What? No... I saw the One with Fedora last night. They were talking. But the One wouldn't murder him.

Liam leans forward. He stares at Kelsey.

LIAM

Baby. I found Fedora's hat in the fields. It was drenched in blood. Fedora's house was ransacked. Scratch marks all over the floor. Kitchen table flipped.

KELSEY

No... the One was just coming to bring him to the Celestial Realm.

LIAM

Even if... how do we know that place is truly good?

Kelsey stands up.

KELSEY

I... I just do.

Liam grabs her hand tenderly. He moves close to her.

LIAM

You're name is Kelsey Stephens. You're married to, me, Liam Stephens. We've been married for 14 years. We live on 193 Sycamore Drive, Alabama.

Kelsey looks at him. Her face is blank.

LIAM (CONT'D)

We live in a tiny one bedroom house.

(MORE)

LIAM (CONT'D)

The kitchen, dining room, and living room are practically the same room. We make it work... We always have.

Liam chuckles.

LIAM (CONT'D)

We've loved each other through all the hardships... We tried to have kids... we couldn't. We were devastated. We grew through it. We learned to love one another better. To be selfless. To put each other's needs before our own... well, most of the time.

Liam snickers lightly.

KELSEY

I don't remember any of this.

LIAM

We were just looking at adopting right before I got fired...

Kelsey loses a bit of the blankness in her face.

LIAM (CONT'D)

We had a fight right after I got fired. I was selfish and scared. But that's no excuse... We drove to get pizza... We stopped at the gas station and... you were taken.

KELSEY

No. I wanted to come to Sanctum. You're lying!

LIAM

Kelsey. Believe me. I couldn't remember much at first. But now... I do. I remember following the van that took you. And that was it. I woke up in Sanctum. Couldn't remember a thing... not even the love of my life.

Tears trickle from Liam's eyes.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I would see glimpses of us. I didn't understand them. But I began to see more and more.

(MORE)

LIAM (CONT'D)

Then I saw you... Kelsey. I remembered why I was here... it's for you.

Liam wipes the tears from his eyes.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I remember you now. And I remember how much of a jerk I was right before they took you... please wake up... wake up and forgive me again.

KELSEY

You're lying. I don't know you, Liam. Not past this place.

LIAM

Kels, at the gas station, after I got done royally screwing up and being the worst husband, you said something to me... You forgave me... and you told me "We didn't get married just for the good times." You told me "we got married for this." You said "this sucks.. yes.. but I'm here with you." If that doesn't describe marriage, I don't know what does.

KELSEY

I...

LIAM

Kelsey. I had forgotten about you. I was blinded... You are the most loving, selfless, good natured, and gracious woman I know. You're not perfect, but... you sure are close. You're the woman I made the covenant to be there for, to protect and be with till death. There's no one I'd rather do that with...

KELSEY

Liam stop. I...

LIAM

And I almost lost you... There's a deepening pit in my stomach because I know you still may be lost, and that I may not ever truly find you again... But something...

(MORE)

LIAM (CONT'D)
something tells me otherwise. That
I haven't lost you completely,
Kels.

Liam wraps his arms around Kelsey's waist. Her shoulders tense up; however, they quickly unwind. Liam cries into her shirt.

LIAM (CONT'D)
I love you, Kels. I need you to
come back to me... Please.

Kelsey gasps. A tear trickles from one of her eyes.

KELSEY
Liam?... I see it.

Liam's eyes widen. He slowly stands up. He locks eyes with her.

LIAM
You remember?

Liam wipes some of the tears from his eyes. Tears stream down Kelsey's face.

KELSEY
I do.

Liam tenderly holds her face. She grabs his waist.

LIAM
You came back to me...

KELSEY
I saw the glimpses. What you
described. I saw... and then... I
saw you.

Liam holds her close to him. Liam's eyes sparkle with the shiny glaze of tears.

LIAM
I love you, Kels. And we're gonna
get out of this.

KELSEY
I love you, Liam.

Liam and Kelsey kiss intimately yet briefly.

KELSEY (CONT'D)
I will say... I've got a couple of
questions.

Kelsey chuckles. Liam joins her chuckle.

LIAM

I've got so much to tell you. But most importantly... Fedora was right. The One is deceiving us. And now he's gotten to Fedora.

KELSEY

This is a lot to take in. It's so strange. I remember the things that happened these past few days, but it... it's all a daze. As if it were a dream of sorts... and I remember the pull on my mind. A terrible constraint... The One.

LIAM

Yes. It was awful. But something... something greater has loosened the One's grip on us.

Kelsey scratches her head.

KELSEY

What do you mean?

LIAM

The One isn't what he claims to be. His true name is Deceptor, and his true intentions are veiled... Fedora led me to the truth. To an ancient writing, known as the Text.

KELSEY

That's a mouthful.

LIAM

That's Latin for ya.

Liam grins and chuckles.

LIAM (CONT'D)

But... this text. It was authored by the one who created us, the world, and even Deceptor... The Creator... Fedora felt this being's guidance in the glimpses of reality he would see. In the truths of the text... and now he's gone. His house is ransacked. What's left of the Text smolders in his fireplace.

KELSEY

I remember... that night. The One... I mean... Deceptor... I saw him in Fedora's house. I saw them talking... but the last thing I remember... was screams. I can see it now.

LIAM

Fedora's gone... We have to figure out what this place really is. Find the truth. But we've gotta be quiet about it.

KELSEY

Oh, right. We have to seem like we are still playing this... this game.

LIAM

Yes. So, we'll have to stay separate for now. To avoid suspicion. To survive... Then we're gonna figure out what Sanctum truly is.

INT. LIAM'S BATHROOM - NIGHT

Liam stands in front of a small mirror. He brushes his teeth. He spits into the sink. He wipes his mouth with the fluffy, grey sink towel. He smiles into the mirror.

EXT. LIAM'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Light emits from the windows of the house. The house is dwarfed by the night sky. The shadow of a FIGURE briefly moves in front of the house. The lights go out. The buzzing of cicadas fill the night air.

INT. KELSEY'S HOUSE - DAY

Kelsey sits alone on her dull, red couch. She writes her name, Kelsey Stephens, on a sheet of paper on the coffee table. She writes her name repeatedly.

She smiles. There is a knock at her front door. She looks up from the paper and squints her eyes. She crams the piece of paper into her pocket.

She walks to the door and slowly opens it. Petunia stands at the door. She smiles from ear to ear. Her hair is slightly messy. Her clothes are bland and colorless.

PETUNIA

Well, good morning sugar plum!

KELSEY

Uh...

Kelsey pauses with her mouth slightly ajar. She closes her mouth and rolls her shoulders up.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

Why, hello there, miss Petunia!
What a surprise to see you here!

PETUNIA

Yes. I just wanted to come check in on ya! I know you're still new here in Sanctum, and the One wants to see how you're doin' here!

KELSEY

Oh! How sweet! It's really been a nice stay so far. Just down right unbelievable how swell this place is!

Petunia chuckles and points to the surrounding scenery.

PETUNIA

Sanctum is quite beautiful. Vibrant and full of life through the breathtaking scenery and pleasant population.

KELSEY

Yes. It's lovely.

PETUNIA

Yes... yes. Now let's get going now.

Petunia motions her hand for Kelsey to follow her.

KELSEY

Oh. Where are we going?

PETUNIA

Silly, to the One's domain... I told ya the One wanted to check on you!

Petunia smiles wide and giggles artificially.

KELSEY

Oh... What an absolute honor!

PETUNIA

Indeed!

INT. THE ONE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Kelsey and the One sit in a dining room. They each sit on one side of a dark brown, polished dining table. The walls are beige and barren of decorations.

An oak side table behind the One's seat holds a tea kettle and cups of blue and white floral-patterned china. The One glares at Kelsey. His face is very wrinkled. He smiles.

THE ONE

So, my dear. I just wanted to check in on you and see how your time has been at Sanctum.

KELSEY

Oh, well... Sanctum has been absolutely wonderful! It's as if I've been here my whole life.

The One nods his head.

THE ONE

I'm glad to hear you find Sanctum so accommodating.

KELSEY

I adore it here. The peacefulness. The teaching times. The gatherings. It's just all so swell!

THE ONE

I'm glad, dear... Is there anything I can do to improve your stay?

Kelsey presses her hand against her forehead and squints. She rubs her head gently.

KELSEY

Sorry. Feeling a tad under the weather... Uh, yes. Actually. The only real disturbances I've had were from Fedora and his bizarre episodes.

THE ONE

Yes. I forget you two live quite close.

Kelsey chuckles.

KELSEY

Yeah. Maybe a bit too close.

THE ONE

I'm terribly sorry about that. I've talked to Fedora over the past month about his illness. Trying to help him... it's a shame.

KELSEY

It really is fine. He isn't much of a bother. Just the only gripe I have.

The One stands up. He walks to the side table that holds the tea kettle and china cups.

THE ONE

Tea? It'll help you feel a bit better.

Kelsey rubs her forehead. She looks up at the One and smiles wide.

KELSEY

Please! That sounds delightful!

THE ONE

Plain? Or sugar?

KELSEY

Plain is fine.

The One pours one cup of tea.

THE ONE

How has Fedora been lately? Any better?

KELSEY

Well... last time I saw him he was having a shouting fit in his house.

THE ONE

Hm.

The One pours another cup of tea.

KELSEY

That was a couple of nights ago though. He's been pretty quiet lately.

The One adds sugar to one of the cups.

THE ONE

That's because he's no longer here.

The One chuckles.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

He wouldn't just be quiet on his own. Too stubborn for that...

He places a cup of tea on either side of the table.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

Careful. It's hot.

KELSEY

Thank you so much!

The One sits down.

THE ONE

I had to pay a visit to him the other night. I was able to reason with him concerning his illness.

KELSEY

Oh, that's great!

THE ONE

Indeed. Had to help him. He was spiraling out of control... into madness.

The One stirs his tea. The sugar grains whirl around in the murky black liquid.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

Sanctum is my home. You are my people. And I must help you at all costs. It truly hurt me to see Fedora suffer under such delusions.

KELSEY

I can imagine.

Kelsey lightly sips her tea.

THE ONE

I took him to the only place he could be cured. Where he could rest and have peace... the Celestial Realm.

Kelsey gasps and straightens up.

KELSEY

The Celestial Realm? Your former home? What an honor!

THE ONE

Yes. An honor not many get.

The One takes a sip from his cup. He adds a teaspoon of sugar.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

I do miss it. My form was meant for the Celestial Realm. It strengthened me in a way no other realm could.

KELSEY

Really? Then why are you here?

The One leans into the table.

THE ONE

I could've remained in the Celestial Realm, feeding off unparalleled power and unmeasured glory; yet, I wanted to share my power. Share my glory. With you. With Fedora. With all of the village. With a people. A family of my own.

KELSEY

You did that for us? You're so selfless. So kind. So humble.

THE ONE

Yes. I did it for Sanctum. Though I am weaker here, the adoration of my people, this village... it nourishes me.

The One lightly sips his cup of tea. Kelsey bows her head slightly.

KELSEY

Thank you for your mercy. Its
unthinkable that you would want to
share your power with us.

THE ONE

Thank you, for your steadfast
fervor. I'm grateful to the people
of Sanctum. You all have a part to
play.

Kelsey takes another sip of her tea.

KELSEY

I'm so thankful I found myself
here. Thank you.

THE ONE

Yes. I'm very glad you're here,
Kelsey... Well I'll let you get
going. I'm overjoyed that your stay
is so pleasant.

They both stand up. The One lightly kisses Kelsey on her
hand.

KELSEY

Yes. Thank you so much. I'm honored
to be here.

Kelsey rubs her head. She walks out of the room.

INT. KELSEY'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Kelsey slowly open her front door and staggers into the
house. She uses her whole body to shut the front door.

Kelsey leans her back against the closed door and slumps to
the floor. She gently sobs into her hands and presses her
fingers against her forehead.

Blood drips from Kelsey's nose. She smears the trickle of
blood with her sleeve.

EXT. VERITAS PARK - LATER

Liam walks by the pond on the cement walking trail. The water
is still. It is littered with pine straw and weeds. The sky
is swamped with grey clouds.

Liam approaches the benches and podium. Denny sits alone on one of the benches. His hair is disheveled and his salmon shirt is wrinkled.

LIAM

Hey, Denny! There you are!

Denny stands up and slowly walks towards Liam.

DENNY

Hey, Liam.

LIAM

Hey, I know you're mad, but I left yesterday for a good reason.

Denny scratches his head.

DENNY

What was that reason again, man? To hang out with the town looney instead of me?

Denny darts his eyes up and squints.

DENNY (CONT'D)

Yep. That was it.

LIAM

Denny. I went to check on him. And... something terrible has happened.

DENNY

Good.

Liam throws his hands.

LIAM

Denny! He was murdered!

Denny takes a couple steps back.

DENNY

Well... I seem to remember wanting nothing to do with him, man... Seems like I was right... He was a lunatic that hurt others with his delusions.

LIAM

Denny, I know you think he was a lunatic, but he was on to something about Sanctum... and someone wanted him silenced.

DENNY

Stop justifying him, man!

Liam walks closer to Denny and grabs his shoulders.

LIAM

Okay, man. I'm done dancing around this. I don't just have a good feeling Fedora was right about this place. I know he was right. I know the truth now...

Denny's eyes widen.

DENNY

You're delusional.

LIAM

Denny. This place is not our home. We were all ripped from our lives! Abducted. We are all captives here. The One is deceiving us with some kind of mystical control.

DENNY

Shut up, Liam! You sound just like the lunatic!

Denny shoves Liam's hands off him.

LIAM

Denny! He veils our minds. Binds us here. Keeps us complacent. I... I can't explain it fully. I just know that I can finally see... my past... my real life...the real reason I'm here. Denny, I found my...

DENNY

SHUT UP!

Denny jerks away from Liam.

LIAM

This is not our home! You have to listen to me.

DENNY
Stop talking to me! I don't want
anything to do with you!

LIAM
Denny. Open your eyes. Please.

Tears well in Denny's eyes.

DENNY
It was nice to have a friend for a
while, man.

A beat.

DENNY (CONT'D)
I really did hope you lasted here.
I really did.

Denny storms away.

LIAM
Denny.

INT. LIAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Liam sits on the couch. The couch pillows are scattered
across the cushions and hardwood floor. The cabinet doors are
ajar. The drawers of the coffee table are opened.

Liam's brown locks are frizzy, unwinding in disorderly twists
across his forehead. He combs his fingers through his hair as
he studies a map of Sanctum.

The front door swings open. Kelsey trods in and gently closes
the door. Liam turns around.

LIAM
Hey, baby.

Kelsey rests against the door.

LIAM (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

Liam walks over to Kelsey and holds her.

KELSEY
I met with Deceptor today.

LIAM

Goodness! Does he know? Did he find out you were awake?

KELSEY

No. I don't think he suspects anything. I played along pretty well... and it felt awful.

Kelsey chuckles slightly. Liam hugs her tightly.

LIAM

When was this? And what did he want?

KELSEY

It was a couple hours ago... He just wanted to check in on me. Ask about my stay at Sanctum.

Liam walks with her to the couch.

LIAM

Are you feeling alright? You look exhausted.

KELSEY

Not my best day. I... I don't know. Ever since I left Deceptor's house, I've felt drained... even before I left... I had this stinging headache.

LIAM

You went to his house?... Here. Take a seat.

They both sit on the couch.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I got close to him for just a minute or so at the first teaching time, and I felt this weakness. My head started to ache. I felt fatigued for a moment.

KELSEY

Well our conversation wasn't exactly a short one. He's quite long-winded. Loves talking about himself.

LIAM

Clearly.

They both chuckle.

KELSEY

The headache's gone. I'm just a bit tired now.

LIAM

I'm glad you feel better, Kels.

Liam gently tucks a stray hair behind Kelsey's ear. He caresses her face.

KELSEY

I don't know how... but I feel like being there, so close to him... was siphoning the life out of me... like he was feeding off of my very being.

Liam's eyes widen.

LIAM

You really think so?

KELSEY

It definitely seems possible.

Liam gets up and walks to the fireplace. He props his arm on the mantle.

LIAM

What all did you talk about?

KELSEY

Well. We had our pleasantries. He asked me about life in Sanctum. He made tea. I drank it. To avoid suspicion. I told him how wonderful it was here.

LIAM

You're bold.

KELSEY

I was terrified.

Kelsey rubs her forehead.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

I shifted the conversation to Fedora, and he mentioned that he talked with him a couple nights ago. They agreed on a way to cure his illness.

LIAM

Oh, yeah. Murder? Sounds like a great cure.

Liam smiles and nods his head as he squints his eyes.

KELSEY

I know, babe. I'm not sure if I believe him, but he didn't say that he murdered Fedora.

LIAM

Okay. So. What happened to Fedora? We know he was at his house that night.

KELSEY

Well, he told me that he took Fedora to the Celestial Realm.

Liam walks away from the fireplace.

LIAM

I think that may just be his kind euphemism for murder... Before Deceptor got to him, Fedora showed me the Text... He explained some of the truth behind this place. Truth that villagers held to centuries ago... The text mentioned the Celestial Realm. But it gave no indication that Deceptor had control over it. He was cast out. Exiled. By the Creator.

KELSEY

So... maybe Deceptor can't physically take people to the realm. But he's from there. He said his form was made for the Celestial Realm, and that he's weakened as he remains here.

Liam paces.

LIAM

Hm... he's weakened here. So he must not be staying here by choice. Though he loudly proclaims his presence here is due to his selfless ambition.

KELSEY

That's his claim. He went on this rant about sharing his power and glory with a people. With Us. Here at Sanctum.

LIAM

Of course he did.

Kelsey motions her hand up. She wags her index finger.

KELSEY

But... then he seemed to talk as if he needed the village in some sense. I remember him mentioning that he, in some way, feeds off the adoration and praise of the people.

LIAM

Okay... well that adds another layer of complexity to this.

Liam raises his eyebrows and crosses his arms. He rests his hand under his chin. He rubs the rough, black stubble.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I mean. It makes sense to some degree. He seems to feeds off the energy of our physical selves, considering our prior experiences being in close contact with him.

KELSEY

Definitely explains my lingering exhaustion... But most importantly. Once it seemed like he was no longer probing me as a suspect. When it seemed as if he trusted me. He alluded to his dependence on Sanctum... Therein, he exposed weakness.

LIAM

Exactly. So there's a chance to attack. To exploit.

Kelsey and Liam lock eyes. She runs her fingers through her hair.

KELSEY

I mean we have to. Right? Even if it's just us.

LIAM

Yes. We do... because the people are helpless. Taken captive from their lives. Their families. Reality... I looked into Denny's eyes today and I saw a hollow void. Darkness. I tried to tell him the truth, but he wouldn't listen. He's the closest thing I have to a friend here, yet he looked at me as if I were a monster, mortified. Gripped by this mystical allegiance to Sanctum, to Deceptor. I went to try and open his eyes, like I did yours. To see if he would help. I just left with tears.

KELSEY

I'm sorry, baby.

Liam wipes tears from his eyes. He walks toward Kelsey.

LIAM

And it's not just Denny. There are hundreds of people here, maybe more. Blinded by this illusion... You know how beautiful it looked? The green grass. The glistening water. The perpetual singing of the birds... But now I see nothing but gray skies and jaded colors. I just see what this place really is... We've been guided to this moment. Just as Fedora was. The Creator has opened our eyes to this... this horror. And now we have a responsibility to save the rest. They need us, and we have to try.

Liam sits down next to Kelsey.

KELSEY

I know, Liam. We have to. We have to try and fight this... this darkness... I'm with you till the end.

They hold each other. Liam wipes his face again.

LIAM

I'm so glad I found you. That we're in this together.

They break their embrace. Liam exhales. They both breathe for a moment.

KELSEY

Okay. So what's our plan?

A beat.

LIAM

So. We need to have two main strategies. Obviously. I came here to find you. And I want to get you home. So we need to have a strategy for leaving as well as taking down Deceptor if things go south.

KELSEY

Okay. But how do we leave this place?

Liam points at the map of Sanctum that rests on the coffee table before them.

LIAM

Crossing the fence. I've been to the edge of the village. It seems that the only thing binding Sanctum together is the mystical influence Deceptor exerts on the captives. Anyone could really walk away if they truly wanted.

Kelsey sits back on the couch.

KELSEY

Wow. So our backup will just be to run to the fence?

LIAM

Yeah. And my truck is still in the shed near Fedora's house. It should have enough gas to make it to the woods. Then we can get to the fence on foot.

KELSEY

Okay. Simple enough. We've got the defensive, but what about the offensive?

Liam pulls a pistol out of his pocket and sets it on the table.

LIAM

I snagged this from my truck today after I talked with Denny. It was still in the glove compartment.

KELSEY

You plan to shoot Deceptor? Will that even do anything?

LIAM

I don't know if it would affect him. I know how to find out though. Considering what you've told me, he doesn't sound like the all-powerful being he describes himself to be.

Liam secures the pistol behind his back in his waistband.

LIAM (CONT'D)

We need to somehow get in a personal setting with Deceptor. I first want to talk to him. Figure out what's really going on... However, as much as he likes to talk, I have a feeling he won't be very talkative when his power is being threatened.

KELSEY

He'll bring a fight if he knows he may lose Sanctum. I'm sure of it. But... I may can get us in a position to talk to him, personally. It seems like he may still trust me.

LIAM

That's a start... and we really must assume he has suspicions about me. I've tried to be careful, but I have definitely been more active lately than the common hollow villager.

Liam takes Kelsey's hand.

KELSEY

It sounds crazy. We are going to take down this mystical force that has been holding a whole village captive for centuries. Maybe longer.

Kelsey throws up her other hand.

LIAM
Yep. Thats it.

They both chuckle.

LIAM (CONT'D)
I know it sounds crazy. We hardly know at all what we're up against. But I know... I know that this is right. That this is good. No matter what Deceptor says. The excuses he may drum up. He has entrenched the people of this town in a darkness. It emanates from him. I see it. You see it. Now its time to let the others see.

KELSEY
Like I said. I'm with you to the end.

LIAM
I'm forever thankful I married you.

Liam smiles.

LIAM (CONT'D)
Who knew, 14 years ago, what we'd be getting into now?

KELSEY
Who knew?

They both chuckle. Liam kisses Kelsey.

LIAM
Well. I feel better now. We at least have the beginnings of a plan... We just need to work out the details.

KELSEY
We've got all night.

LIAM
Yeah. We need to figure this out tonight. Make our move as soon as possible.

The lights suddenly flicker out. Liam and Kelsey stand up abruptly. Liam walks slowly toward the front windows. There is silence. He rests his hand on the gun.

A hand punches through the window left of the front door. The glass shatters and falls to the floor. ENTRANCED VILLAGER 1, holding a torch, climbs into the living room. Entranced Villager 1 is a middle aged-man with dark brown, thin hair. He sports a green and yellow silk pajama set.

ENTRANCED VILLAGER 2 climbs through the window with a torch in hand. Entranced Villager 2 is a middle-aged woman with dark red hair. She wears a baby blue night gown. The fire of the torches dance wildly.

LIAM (CONT'D)
They've come for us.

ENTRANCED VILLAGER 3 smashes his hand through the glass of the window to the left of the front door. He is young man with red hair. He wears a grey pajama set. Blood drips from the battered hands of the villagers.

Liam slowly walks backwards toward Kelsey. He takes his hand off of the gun.

LIAM (CONT'D)
We can't kill them. This isn't really them.

The Entranced Villagers walk slowly toward Liam and Kelsey. Entranced Villager 1 leads the other two. He stares at Liam.

ENTRANCED VILLAGER 1
He knows... He knows you're awake.

The Entranced Villagers drop their torches on the floor. The fire spreads.

The orange and yellow flames dance wildly across the dark hardwood floor. Liam lunges at Entranced Villager 1 and slams him against the front door.

Kelsey quickly grabs a lamp off of an end table and clobbers Entranced Villager 3 in the face. Villager 3 falls to the ground.

Liam quickly spins and kicks Entranced Villager 2 in the groin. She stumbles out the window backwards. The fire spreads rapidly. It consumes some of the couch, burning the bright red fabric into a darkened black char.

LIAM
The defensive plan it is.

The Entranced Villagers move slightly on the ground. Liam looks at Kelsey. They both bolt to the stairs and run down them.

ENTRANCED VILLAGER 4, an older man with long, black hair stands in front of the back door. The glass of the back door lies shattered on the ground.

Entranced Villager 4's hands are soiled with blood. Fire spreads across the floor. Entranced Villager 4 points at Liam.

VILLAGER 4

You were supposed to be sleeping.

He then turns his head to Kelsey.

VILLAGER 4 (CONT'D)

(Whispers creepily)

You?

Entranced Villager 4's eyes widen. He lunges toward Kelsey and slams her against the wall. Her leg brushes against a dancing flame. Kelsey screams in pain. Tears form in her eyes.

Kelsey punches Entranced Villager 4 in the nose. He lets out a muffled cry and steps back. Liam grabs him by the shoulders and throws him to the floor.

Kelsey leans on the wall. She whimpers slightly.

LIAM

Let's get to the truck. Can you run?

KELSEY

We'll see. It's just pain.
Nothing's broken.

EXT. LIAM'S BACKYARD - CONTINUOUS

Liam and Kelsey hustle out the back door and dash toward the shed. Kelsey winces as she hobbles.

EXT. LIAM'S SIDEYARD - CONTINUOUS

They run past the front yard of Liam's house. A warm orange glow emits from the blaze of fire within the house. The Entranced Villagers stagger around on the front porch. They move toward Liam and Kelsey from afar.

Kelsey staggers behind Liam. She cries out in pain.

KELSEY

Babe, I'm gonna need you to carry me for a second.

Liam slows down.

LIAM

I've got you, Kels.

Liam crouches down. Kelsey wraps around him. He runs. The Entranced Villagers pursue them from a couple hundred feet away.

EXT. OPEN FEILD - CONTINUOUS

Liam dashes past Fedora's house.

KELSEY

We're almost there.

EXT. THE SHED - CONTINUOUS

Liam and Kelsey approach the shed. Kelsey unwraps herself from Liam. She opens the passenger-side door of the truck and climbs in.

The Entranced Villagers run passed Fedora's house toward them. Liam opens the driver-side door and lunges into the driver's seat. They close both doors.

The key already hangs in the ignition. Liam turns the key. The engine sputters and then comes alive.

The truck rips out of the shed. The tires annihilate the perfect patches of grass. The Entranced Villagers stop running and gaze at the truck.

The truck speeds across the back yards of village houses toward the distant woods. The yellow beam of headlights ignite the way.

EXT. EDGE OF WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

The truck skids to a halt at the edge of the woods. Kelsey and Liam exit and run into the woods. Kelsey hobbles behind Liam.

EXT. THE FENCE - CONTINUOUS

They come to a halt close to a small wire fence. The faint sound of a highway whispers from the area of the woods behind the fence. Kelsey hobbles toward the fence.

KELSEY

Civilization. The real world...
It's just right there.

Liam stands still.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

Liam. We need to get out of here
and tell others... before they find
us.

Liam sighs. He rubs his eyes.

LIAM

We do. But... I need to stay. I
need to deal with Deceptor... while
he's somewhat caught off guard.

KELSEY

Liam. We can just go get help.
Right now. Together. Then we come
back with the police. The
authorities. And we take him down.

LIAM

But Kelsey... you know just how
little we understand what this is.
What we're up against. This place
messes with the mind...

Liam paces. He rubs his forehead.

LIAM.

Sanctum isn't known to the outer
world. In reality. There's gotta be
a reason for that... What if we
leave this place... and we forget?
Forget it all. All the people.
Prisoners. That bend to the will of
Deceptor. If we forget them...
there's a chance they're lost
forever.

Liam and Kelsey embrace each other. Tears form in Kelsey's eyes. Kelsey wraps her eyes around Liam's neck and locks eyes with him.

KELSEY

You're right, baby. We can't take the risk.

LIAM.

We can't. This dark veil cast over the peoples eyes. It has to be killed... Now exactly how that is going to happen is a work in progress.

Liam and Kelsey chuckle.

KELSEY

Listen. Liam. He's weak right now. I could feel it... And no telling how much weaker he is now after using the villagers to try and cook us alive.

Kelsey chuckles a bit.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

Never thought I'd make a joke about almost being burnt to a crisp by mind-controlled villagers in a strange village.

Liam chuckles and smiles.

LIAM

Life's full of surprises, babe.

KELSEY

Certainly is... Go to Deceptor. Confront him. I'll head to the highway, and then the nearest gas station or restaurant. I'll contact the authorities. Expose Sanctum from its hiding... assuming I remember.

Liam rests his hand on Kelsey's cheek.

LIAM

I don't want to leave you. I don't want to risk losing you again... but this is right. Darkness has consumed the minds of this people ... Under the mind control. Though everything was brighter. Prettier. Seemingly perfect. There was a cold hollowness about it. A chilling, empty void. Deep in my being.

(MORE)

LIAM (CONT'D)

Draining me... I can't fully articulate it. But the people of Sanctum are dying. They need to see the truth.

Kelsey leans closer to Liam. They kiss.

KELSEY

If I don't see you again, babe. I've been blessed to live the life we've had together. Despite the pain we've been through. I've adored living life with you.

LIAM

Kels, don't get too sentimental on me. Not to sound like a cheesy movie we've watched before, but... I'm gonna come back to you.

Liam caresses Kelsey's cheek. A tear streams down his face.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I think it's gonna be just fine. It'll be alright. The night's almost over. The sun will be up soon... this isn't the end.

KELSEY

And even if it is. I love you.

LIAM

I love you.

Liam steps away. He examines her leg with his eyes.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Are you alright to walk far?

KELSEY

Yeah. It just stings. I'll make it.

Liam nods and then exhales. Kelsey walks toward the fence. She stops and turns to Liam.

KELSEY (CONT'D)

Find Deceptor. And kill him. If it's even possible. He killed Fedora. He's killing this town. I'll go get outside help. And we're going to bring Sanctum to the ground. Drag it into to the light.

LIAM

Yes ma'am. And... I'll see you in a little bit, Kels.

Liam smiles at Kelsey. She turns and climbs over the fence. She walks away. Tears stream down Liam's face. He walks through the woods toward Sanctum.

EXT. EDGE OF WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Liam walks out of the woods. The stains of tears dry on his cheeks. He walks onto the road that lies before the One's house.

The sun rises behind Liam. The fiery, red ball paints a swirl of warm yellow and orange hues across the morning sky. Birds sing in harmony.

Liam stops and gazes at the sky. He sighs. He casts his gaze toward the One's house. The white panels of the house are pristine, made even brighter by the rays of the rising sun.

EXT. THE ONE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Liam walks toward the front porch. He climbs up the steps. The birds fall silent. The low hum of cicadas and the soft clanging of a wind chime fill the air.

The front door is slightly ajar. Liam pushes it open fully. The door creaks.

INT. THE ONE'S LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Liam walks into the house. It is silent. The lights are out, yet dim light illuminates the room through windows. There is a white couch, a brown coffee table, and a fireplace. The beige walls are barren.

THE ONE'S DINING ROOM

Liam walks to the dining room that is comprised of a dark, hardwood table, two dining room chairs, and a small end table holding tea cups and a kettle.

THE ONE'S BEDROOM

Liam walks past the empty dining room and into a bedroom. The walls are a light pink. A bed rests in the center of the room with a neat, white comforter.

The two pillows are evenly positioned at the top of the bed. Liam runs his hand across the comforter.

Liam walks toward the closet door at the back of the room. The door is a dark, hardwood. The sun pierces through the window and reflects off the shiny gloss of the closet door.

Silence creeps about the room. Liam wipes his hands on his pants. Liam reaches behind his back with his right hand and grabs the pistol from his waistband.

Liam grabs the door knob of the closet door with his left hand and turns it. He slowly opens the door. It creaks. Liam gasps. He points his gun up.

A long stretch of rock steps wind down into darkness. The ceiling and walls are solid and jagged rock. Liam peaks his head over the steps further. He squints.

Farther down into the darkness of the steps, there is a faint, orange glow. Liam pinches the bridge of his nose.

INT. THE ONE'S LAIR - CONTINUOUS

Liam slowly walks down the stairs. He holds to the jagged rock wall with his left hand and grips his gun with his right. Liam walks until his silhouette is formed by the orange glow below.

Liam comes to a stop. At the end of the rock steps lies an open floor of jagged rock terrain. Orange light floods the space. Faint talking comes from below.

Liam crouches close to the edge of the stairs and hides his body behind the jagged stairway wall. He peeks his head out from behind the wall to glance at the open space.

Soil and jagged rock line the ceiling and walls of the open space. Sharp rocks hang down in varied areas across the ceiling. A couple torches hang from the walls. The floor is jagged and rocky, yet somewhat flat.

The One stands in front of a large, glowing gape in the rocky surface of the ground. His back faces Liam. A vibrant beam of orange flows from the hole and illuminates the cave.

Denny lays on the rocky ground, slumped against a wall. His hands are bound with rope. The One turns toward Denny. The One's face is severely wrinkled.

THE ONE

I'm thankful for you. Your fervor.
Your prior commitment to Sanctum.

DENNY

Sanctum is my life. I love it.

THE ONE

Yes... Yes. But do you truly love it as much as you claim?

The One walks toward Denny.

DENNY

What do you mean? What more do I have to prove? I told you about Liam. I've been a faithful villager since... always. I'm not lying!

THE ONE

You informed me about Liam. Yes. And I've had him dealt with. But who knows what all his sickness has touched. Who of my people it has infected. Corrupted... You should've told me sooner.

The One walks to Denny and crouches down. Denny shifts around. Sweat trickles down his brow.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

If you truly loved Sanctum. If you sincerely gave me your utmost devotion. You would have informed me of his questions. His delusions. As they occurred.

DENNY

I'm sorry. He was my friend. The only one I had. I tried... I tried to help him.

THE ONE

That's not your place. You should've let me handle it.

The One stands up, towering over Denny.

DENNY

I'm sorry. Please. What can I do to make it right? I didn't know he would be as wacko as Fedora. I swear. I didn't know! Please! Forgive me!

Denny reaches for the One's boots. He lies at his feet. Tears stream down his eyes.

THE ONE

Hush, my child. It'll be fine. You can be reconciled yet.

DENNY

What can I do?

Denny folds his hands together and shakes them.

THE ONE

I must make you an offering.

DENNY

Wh...what do you mean?

Denny's eyes widen.

THE ONE

Prove your devotion. Offer yourself to the Celestial Realm.

DENNY

The Celestial Realm? I'd get the chance to go there?

THE ONE

Yes. Despite your shortcomings, I am gracious to bestow this honor upon you.

The One walks toward the pit.

DENNY

I... I've dreamed of making it to the Celestial Realm. It's. Wow... this is amazing!

THE ONE

Now. As I said. You are an offering. A pleasing sacrifice. You will be reconciled. Forgiven. Once you have plunged into the Pit. It is the gateway to the Celestial Realm.

The One stands in front of Pit. The Orange light dances on one side of his face while the other is cast in shadows.

DENNY

That glowing, deep, orange hole, right over there? Get into that?

Denny straightens up. He breathes heavily. The One walks back toward Denny.

THE ONE

The Pit. Yes. It will transport you to the Celestial Realm. The Realm above all. Denny. You'll have peace... Unending splendor.

DENNY

Umm... I'm gonna have to think on this. Heights aren't my thing. I... I.

THE ONE

Maybe I haven't been clear, my child... There is no alternative.

The One bashes Denny on the head with his large fist. Denny slumps to the ground. His mouth hangs open. His eyelids are shut. The One grabs Denny by the feet and drags his body.

Liam steps out from the shadows and into illumined light of the cave. Liam points his pistol at the One.

LIAM

Get away from him.

The One turns sharply. He lets go of Denny's legs, and they slump to the ground. The One's eyes widen.

THE ONE

YOU? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

LIAM

Let's just say I'm here to talk.

The One runs his fingers through his hair. He clicks his tongue.

THE ONE

No offense to you. But you were supposed to be burned to a crisp by now.

LIAM

None taken. As you can see that didn't come to fruition.

THE ONE

Clearly.

The One paces. He sighs.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

You really have proven to be quite the nuisance.

The One takes a step closer to Denny. Liam steps closer and readjusts his finger on the trigger. Liam stands about 10 feet away from the One.

LIAM

Don't go near him! That's my friend.

THE ONE

Oh?

A smile peels across the One's face. He chuckles.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

You may want to choose your friends more wisely. He is the one that gave you up.

LIAM

Yeah. I heard. I've been listening.

THE ONE

Just a thought.

LIAM

I think I'm fine. He held out for me longer than most would under your influence.

Liam shakes the gun.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Did you not hear me? I said get away from my friend!

THE ONE

Okay. Okay. I'll indulge you a bit. Just calm down... but do you really think that silly little thing can hurt me?

The One raises an eyebrow.

LIAM

I'm not sure... but I'm finding more and more reasons to put it to the test.

THE ONE

Ah. Yes. Because I'm evil. Right?

LIAM

I'd say that's one word to describe you.

The One chuckles.

THE ONE

I know you try to do what's right... but you're reasoning is flawed, Liam. You're blinded by your lack of understanding.

LIAM

Oh really? Just like Fedora was blinded, huh?... I'm sure you had no trouble murdering him with the excuse of this messed-up sacrifice.

Liam motions his gun to the Pit.

THE ONE

He deserved the death I gave him. For infecting Sanctum with his madness. Clearly, you are the fruit of his lies... he would have made a pleasing offering... But, he was too stubborn. Too aggressive to bring to the Pit. His illness required a more immediate remedy.

LIAM

You're a psychopath.

THE ONE

Oh, foolish child. A psychopath kills without reason. Without a clear objective in mind. No goal... But I must protect Sanctum. The people. I must sustain this place of refuge. And that requires power... I need the praise. The people. The offerings.

Liam scratches his head.

LIAM

Well I'm a bit confused here. You say you must protect the people of Sanctum, yet... you just murder and sacrifice any of the people you see fit?

THE ONE

It's a small price to pay for the well-being of the whole.

LIAM

You're despicable.

The One throws his hands up.

THE ONE

To perpetually sustain this... this perfection. This community. I must feed my power. My body is not meant for this place. It was made for the Celestial Realm. The true one. My being weakens as it remains here, yet, through the people, I receive a profound surge of power.

LIAM

I know you were made for the Celestial Realm. You speak of it often. But you never tell the whole picture... you're true intention. Am I right, Deceptor?

The One's mouth closes shut. His body halts its subtle movements.

THE ONE

What did you call me?

LIAM

You're true name... I know of the truth. The Text. The Creator. You're exile.

Silence.

THE ONE

So Fedora has fully corrupted you... You are the rancid fruition of his delusions!

LIAM

Should have guessed. More deception.

THE ONE

You're right. I never did reveal the full story of my origin... Not out of ill intent... but for the protection of the people of Sanctum.

Liam's eyes roll. He sighs.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

I am indeed from the Celestial Realm. Yes. The Realm above all others. Paradise. Eternal glory.

(MORE)

THE ONE (CONT'D)

However, I did not step down of my own volition. I was cast down to earth by force.

LIAM

By the Creator.

THE ONE

Yes. The one I sought to protect the people of Sanctum from...

Liam steps a foot closer to the One.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

My mission remains the same, though it has an alternate conception.

The One paces slowly. Liam tracks the One's movement with the pistol barrel.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

The Creator sits on the throne of the Celestial Realm. He receives the glory. The power. The praise. Yet... he is undeserving. The world He has built is fallen, yet he gets all the praise. So, I sought to overthrow him. To take my rightful place and discard him to the dust below. Yet, centuries ago, he cast me down to earth with unbridled force. I spiraled from the Celestial Realm, flaming from the sheer heat of combustion. The very space we stand, and the deep void of the Pit are the craters left from my fall. I pummeled through layer after layer of rock till I was nearly singed by the magma of the earth's core. But I stopped myself from falling into the core. I clung to the earth. Fueled by rage. Hatred. I climbed. Furiously. I climbed for days... until I was here.

Liam's eyes are wide. His mouth is slightly ajar. The One sighs.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

I lie in this cave. Thinking. Pondering my use. My purpose.

(MORE)

THE ONE (CONT'D)

The Creator squandered the meaning
 I so desperately wanted to attain,
 and I sat in the dust of the earth.
 Alone. I had no use. Until I made
 one for myself... And there it was.
 I began to envy something for
 myself. A people... to call mine. A
 community. A place. So I began to
 work. To create something of my
 own. I formed Sanctum. From the
 ground up. Changing over the years,
 yes, but the heart... that's what
 still beats the same. It's a refuge
 for people. A haven from the real
 world.

Liam's face contorts.

LIAM

A refuge? Sanctum is a falsehood. A
 deceptive hollow shell of reality.
 Everyone here is a captive, ripped
 from their families. From their
 true lives.

THE ONE

Your ignorance colors your speech,
 boy. Sanctum is perfection. The
 people live in harmony. Peace. Yes.
 A few may suffer, but the whole
 prosper. Sanctum gives a world
 without sickness, crime, pain. No
 suffering at the cost of the
 brokenness that stains the real
 world. Here, you won't have to
 worry about struggling to get by.
 You won't have to worry about
 losing your job... You won't have
 to think about the harsh reality
 that you can't have kids of your
 own... Vile plagues exist in
 reality.

A glaze of tears formulate over Liam's eyes.

LIAM

You're trying to pry into my life.
 Sway my emotions. But it won't
 work. You've sold the whole village
 lie after lie. I won't take your
 lies for one more moment. You've
 dragged these people into a
 fabricated world...

(MORE)

LIAM (CONT'D)

while people in reality are mourning their disappearances! I've seen, up close, the darkness you've shrouded over the people of Sanctum. The deception. And for what? So you can feed on the people's praise? Suck out the life they have left... They need the truth.

Liam walks a few steps closer to the One. He stands about six feet away from him.

THE ONE

The truth isn't worth having. The Creator messed up. He created a flawed world. Yet He sits enthroned in glory. He said He will make things right one day... But here we are, still. In Sanctum, you can be free from the flaws of the Creator's world.

LIAM

Listen. The imperfection. The flaws. The hardships in the real world. That's what living is. That's what drives us to be who we really are. The choices we make in the midst of the mess of life. When we choose to keep going, even when all seems lost. That's what defines us.

THE ONE

Good speech.

The One claps slowly.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

But you're wrong.

Liam grits his teeth.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

Tell me something, Liam. Do you believe the Creator is good?

A beat.

LIAM

Yes.

A slight smile peals across Liam's face.

THE ONE

Well, He isn't. He may have created the world. Matter. The stars. Us. But he made a mistake when He made me... I am his ultimate mistake. All I have ever truly longed for is His power. His reverence. His glory. For myself! Why would He create me? My existence. My will. It only ever spat in His face.

The One paces. He gasps quietly.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

Unless... I was made to fix His mistakes. To do what He cannot. What He won't... I was in the right. Trying to take His place. His throne. The purpose I felt then... it still rings true.

The One looks down into the Pit. He turns around. He raises his head slowly to align his eyes with Liam's.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

I still can take His place... I must.

LIAM

But He is good. True. He deserves the glory He has... You're experiment here at Sanctum is enough to see that you're fueled by rage. A selfish deceitfulness. Draining the life of your people.

THE ONE

Silence!... I still can take His place. I've been content to stay in this small area. Filtering more and more souls through Sanctum. But why stay here? I could cover the earth. Take it all for myself. Out of His grasp.

Liam grips his gun tighter. His knuckles turn white.

LIAM

No... No.

THE ONE

I want to thank you, Liam, for your insight. You've challenged me. I've been too content. Complacent.

LIAM

You've said it yourself. You're too weak. Growing weaker by the moment. You can't take this on.

The One stands still. His eyes widen. He points at Liam.

THE ONE

Well. I can start by providing a solution to my current weakness.

Red veins burst within the white of the One's eyes. He growls loudly and charges toward Liam. Liam shoots the One in the chest. He halts for a brief moment.

The One continues to charge at Liam, and he shoots the One twice more in the chest. The One stumbles. He falls onto his hands and knees. Liam lowers the gun.

The One suddenly charges at Liam. They both interlock arms. The One looks into his eyes.

LIAM

The light will prevail. In the end.

THE ONE

You spout this so confidently to the face of darkness.

The One twist Liam's hand. Liam lets out a muffled scream and drops the pistol to the dust. The One kicks the gun to the right side of the cave. The One throws him toward the Pit. Liam stumbles to the rocky ground, a foot away from the Pit.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

Still think I'm weak, boy?

Liam attempts to stand; however, the One pins him down. He rests his knees on either side of Liam's hips. He places his arms on either side of Liam's head.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

You may believe that the light will triumph in the end. That the Creator is good. And true. But... to tell you the truth for once... it's all foolishness. It's comfort for a child scared of the dark. Victory is for the brutal and darkened hearts... those willing to take what is theirs.

The One presses his left hand on Liam's neck.

LIAM

Think I would trust you?

Liam clears his throat. He coughs slightly.

LIAM (CONT'D)

The selfless. The ones who see the light and cling to it. They will overcome.

The One tightens his hand around Liam's neck and pushes him closer to the Pit. The One holds Liam's head just over the edge of the Pit. The orange glow illuminates them.

THE ONE

Your hopeless fodder doesn't exactly stifle my craving to make an offering out of you. You know that, Liam?

The One punches Liam in the face. His head snaps back into the open depth of the Pit. The One punches Liam again. Blood trickles from Liam's nose and lips.

LIAM

Wasn't trying... I just know...

Liam coughs. He spits out blood into the Pit.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I just know you won't make it. You will pay for what you've done.

Fedora walks down the rocky stairs and into the cave. His head is tilted down. His eyes, darkened by bruises, are fixed on the One. Fedora's black hair is disorganized.

His clothes are torn. Scars and scrapes litter his arms and face. Liam lets out a sigh. A faint grin cracks across his bloodied face.

THE ONE

Given your current predicament, I believe it is you who will not make it.

FEDORA

Are you sure about that?

The One stands up abruptly. He turns around. His face contorts.

THE ONE

You just won't die!

Fedora charges at the One. The One takes a couple steps toward Fedora and away from the Pit. Liam crawls slowly toward the cave wall.

FEDORA

You're the reason Leland's dead!

Fedora punches the One in the face. The One's face and body only move slightly.

THE ONE

He was just a bit too stubborn.
Just like you.

Fedora hurls his left fist at the One. The One catches his fist with his right hand and punches Fedora in the face with his left hand.

Fedora's body drops to the ground. Liam crawls to his pistol. He grabs it. Fedora slowly squirms on the ground. He groans quietly.

Liam cocks the pistol. The One turns toward Liam.

THE ONE (CONT'D)

You with that gun again, boy?

Liam shoots two rounds into the One's chest. The One staggers.

LIAM

You will never be Him. You will
never get His praise. The power.

Liam shoots two more rounds into the One's chest. Blood runs from his lips.

THE ONE

I may never be Him... but we will
take His creation.

The One walks toward Liam. His eyes are red with veins. Fedora charges at the One and wraps his arms around him. Fedora tackles him into the Pit.

LIAM

NO!

Liam stands up quickly. Fedora and the One both fall into the Pit. Liam staggers to the edge of the Pit. The One and Fedora have faded out of view into the abyss of glowing orange.

Liam sits down at the edge of the Pit.

Silence.

Liam tilts his head down and closes his eyes. He lets out a long sigh. Denny coughs and moves slightly. Liam walks toward Denny. Denny inhales deeply.

Denny's hands are bound with rope. He sits up with his back against the rocky wall. Denny smiles wide.

DENNY

My, man! Liam! It's you!

Liam grabs Denny's hands and pulls him up on his feet.

DENNY (CONT'D)

Is... is it over? Is he gone?

Liam smiles gently. Tears form in Denny's eyes.

LIAM

I think it's over Denny. I think He's finally gone.

One small tear trickles from Denny's eyes.

DENNY

Hey, man. I'm sorry... I didn't mean to...

LIAM

Denny, you're good. I know that wasn't you.

Denny exhales. He smiles.

DENNY

And man... that's the thing. I... I don't feel the One anymore. His hold on me... I'm free.

Liam smiles. Denny and Liam are small figures in the vast cave, silhouetted by the bright rays of the Pit.

INT. GAS STATION - MOMENTS LATER

A GAS STATION EMPLOYEE sits behind a register. The Gas Station Employee is a tall woman with auburn hair. She smacks her lips as she aggressively chews a piece of gum.

Three CUSTOMERS sift around the gas station. They walk through the snack aisles. The Gas Station Employee blows a big bubble. Kelsey slams through the front door. The Gas Station Employee's bubble bursts.

Kelsey breathes heavy. She limps toward the Gas Station Employee. Kelsey wears a tattered, red dress. She has a dark burn on her ankle.

Small leaf shreds are sprinkled throughout Kelsey's hair. She leans on the counter and stares into the Gas Station Employee's eyes.

KELSEY

I need to use the phone. A lot of people are in trouble.

EXT. SANCTUM - LATER

The houses of Sanctum look like small specks below. A various assortment of sirens fill the air. Many fire trucks, ambulances, and police cars roll into the streets, walkways, and yards of Sanctum. The village is flooded with vibrant, strobing red and blue lights.

MONTAGE

-Liam and Denny walk out of the One's house with their hands up.

-Liam speaks with a POLICEMAN.

-A MEDICAL EXAMINER shines a light in Denny's eyes while he sits at the back of an ambulance.

-A SMALL CHILD and HIS FATHER run to a WOMAN VILLAGER. She hugs them both. Tears stream down her eyes.

-VILLAGERS sit on the grass with towels around their necks. Some drink out of plastic water bottles.

-Liam sees Kelsey. They run to each other and hug tightly.

EXT. THE ONE'S FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Liam and Kelsey let go of each other. Liam holds her face and caresses her cheek with his thumb.

LIAM

We did it, Kels.

Liam smiles. Kelsey smiles. Chief Stanley walks up to Liam.

CHIEF STANLEY

Liam, I don't mean to ruin a moment, but can I talk to you over here for a minute?

LIAM

Yes, sir.

Liam follows Chief Stanley over to a police car. Chief Stanley's face is straight. His brow is furrowed.

CHIEF STANLEY

I don't know exactly what you and Kelsey uncovered here, but... a lot of people are gonna be re-united with their families today because of it.

Liam grins.

LIAM

Yes, sir. Today's a good day... this situation is unlike anything I've ever come across. Evil. Brokenness. So many people. Just taken from their lives... and... I know... you may not want to here the whole story from me, but I can try my best to explain it.

Chief Stanley rubs his eyes.

CHIEF STANLEY

I'd love to hear it from you, Liam. I trust you. And I never should have fired you... I felt this... this hold on me. Pressing me to let you go. To keep the 609 cases cold... I can't explain it. I... I was wrong. And I can brief you further on what happened back at the precinct. You have your job back... if you still want it.

Liam smiles. His face fills with color.

LIAM

I'll be there, sir.

EXT. LIAM'S TRUCK - LATER

Liam's pickup truck drives smoothly on a country road. The orange and red hues of the setting sun swirl in the sky. The windows are down.

MONTAGE

-Kelsey and Liam's strands of hair dance violently in the wind.

-Liam and Kelsey sing and move their hands to an inaudible rhythm.

-Liam's truck rolls to a halt in the gravel driveway of their small, one-story house.

INT. LIAM'S TRUCK - CONTINUOUS

Liam puts the truck in park and turns the key in the ignition. The truck engine sputters to a stop. He exhales.

LIAM

Here we are.

KELSEY

I've missed being home with you.

LIAM

Me too, baby. Me too...

Liam rubs his forehead. He sighs. He wipes sweat from his hands and onto his pants.

KELSEY

What's wrong?

LIAM

It's just... before Deceptor was killed. Before Fedora tackled him into the Pit. He said something... strange... about taking the Creator's power. His glory. But he used the word "we". He didn't just refer to Himself... but he used the plural.

Kelsey shifts in her seat.

KELSEY

Wait... so you think there are others out there? Like Deceptor? More Sanctums?

LIAM

Well. I don't know for sure. But, I mean. Even if there isn't... What if?

A beat.

KELSEY

We have to make sure. We have to look.

Liam nods his head.

LIAM

We will... We can take the evidence we collect on Sanctum. We can start with disappearance patterns. And then we look for replications.

KELSEY

You think Stanley will be fine with this?

Liam chuckles.

LIAM

I think I can convince him.

Kelsey laughs.

EXT. LIAM'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Liam and Kelsey exit the truck. They walk to their front door. The house is silhouetted by the orange and purple hues of the sunset.

LIAM

And ya know, now that I've got the job back. You think it's about time?

Liam puts his arm around Kelsey.

KELSEY

It's been time, baby.

Liam chuckles softly. They both smile and walk into the house.

THE END