

THE MARSHMALLOW EFFECT

by

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ABSTRACT

The Marshmallow Effect is a fictional work that explores the consequences of isolation and trauma on an individual's identity. The story revolves around the protagonist Arthur, a man who inadvertently creates a reality-bending psychological safe haven to protect himself from his past only to have it warp and transform into an insidious space which forces him to confront said past. This project, written as a screenplay, follows Arthur as he experiences and is affected by horrifically warped versions of his memories, unbound by the rules of reality and fantastical in their proportions, until he becomes an active participant and takes back control of his space and identity. Through discussions of horror, ghosts, folklore, film, and psychological critique, my introduction breaks down the application of setting in the story as a transformative, trauma-informed space that is inexorably intertwined with Arthur's identity and body, the relationship between the characters and repetition of action to initially reinforce, then defamiliarize, identity, and the difficulties in confronting or coming to terms with trauma in order to move past negativity and into a realm of greater stability in terms of the self and identity.

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"He who fights with monsters might take care lest he thereby become a monster. And if you gaze for long into an abyss, the abyss gazes also into you." - Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

Before the Covid-19 Pandemic, what now seems a lifetime ago, I would have reveled in the opportunity to work from home. Are you telling me that I don't have to drive to work, can sit around in comfy clothes all day, *and* I can drink as much coffee as I want? Sign me up for the dream. Of course, with many things, the actual is at odds with the ideal — in the initial stages of the pandemic before vaccinations, my household took quarantining seriously to keep our elderly and immunocompromised family members safe. As time progressed, I slowly and unintentionally became more detached and separated from general society through the combination of working from home and quarantining; I became disconnected from my family and friends, coming to feel completely isolated to the point of feeling that the “normal” world was completely out of my reach. In fact, the world as I knew it felt like it had been completely upended. Like the Covid-19 virus itself, working from home for me was, and still is, insidious.

In writing *The Marshmallow Effect (TME)*, I was inspired primarily by personal experience, inspiration from my favourite films, and guided by theoretical association. The story revolves around the protagonist Arthur, an isolated individual who is trapped by his past in a self-created, internal, simulative reality composed of traumatic memories and past-experiences. This manufactured reality becomes a recursive, self-reinforcing reflection of his identity; a nostalgic prison which inadvertently isolates him further, warps his perception of place, body, and self. Ultimately, this new reality develops into a never-ending loop of horrific self-destruction, trauma, and death with seemingly little hope to escape.

Through discussions of horror, ghosts and folklore, film, and psychological critique, I will examine Arthur's identity, exploring how the primary setting, a suburban home, is a trauma-informed liminal space which transforms from a retreat to an insidious transportation-hub for Arthur's self-destructive, incidental crossings back into his traumatic past. Furthermore, I will explore how Arthur's psyche and the setting are inexorably intertwined, upending the traditional purpose of setting and directly connecting it with Arthur's private sphere which transforms setting into a vehicle for the fantastic. Finally, both of these discussions culminate in how, by coming face-to-face with monstrous versions of his memories and himself, there is a defamiliarization to the memories allowing Arthur to begin the healing process, take responsibility for the past, come to terms with it, and ultimately escape from the traumatic reality that he has constructed for himself.

Identity, Setting, and Body

Through *Arthur*, I explore the core thematic element in this project - identity. For our protagonist, identity is not something to be questioned at the outset of the narrative; he believes he is worthless, without purpose, and permanently alone. However, to discuss identity, I must contextualize the presence and purpose of the various settings throughout *TME*, as Arthur and the setting are inexorably intertwined and cannot be explored independently. Anthony Viddler, architectural critic and theorist, describes "space" as "in lived experience" where space's "contours, boundaries, and geographies are called up to stand in for all the contested realms of identity" (84); following that notion, identity and physical space (i.e. setting) are inseparable. In *TME* the setting is not a separate or "external" vehicle by which Arthur experiences the action of

the narrative; the setting is an (un)intentional creation which Arthur is the architect of, a direct reflection of his identity resulting from his self-perception (i.e. self-confidence, self-esteem), his past experiences, and direct/indirect needs (i.e. well-being). Samira Kawash discusses how “ [as] an increasing corpus of feminist, Foucauldian, and phenomenological ‘body theory’ makes clear, we can no longer so simply locate body as a stable and bounded entity that would lend itself to spatial (architectural) distinctions between inside and outside” (189). Indeed, the narrative action takes place continuously within the private sphere of Arthur’s consciousness where there is no distinction between internal or external — we are living inside his head; as such, place, space, and/or setting is an extension of Arthur’s identity and must be discussed together while examining the overarching theme of identity.

Regarding setting, “as any norm is defined by its excluded ‘other’, the norm’s integrity depends on clearly drawn demarcating lines that divide self from ‘other’” (Kolkenbrock 151). As such, this psychological unity between character and place contrasts traditional narrative setting inasmuch as a character (i.e. the self, Arthur) typically experiences narrative action in an external, “concretized” reality (i.e. “other”) where the majority of elements are outside their control. For example, in Katsuhiro Otomo’s *Akira* (1988), the majority of the action takes place in the fictional Neo-Tokyo, a speculative cyberpunk version of future Tokyo with extreme megastructures and advanced technology. While it goes without saying that this setting is fictional, the majority of characters within *Akira* experience their “lives” through a set, already built world through which the narrative takes place; regardless of medium, the majority of fictional narratives arguably deploy setting in this manner. Furthermore, in Darren Aronofsky’s *mother!* (2017), a film laden with Judeo-Christian metaphor and symbolism, the setting is an idyllic country home that is fantastical in nature, as it actively transforms to reflect the character

of Him's (Javier Bardem) identity and desires; it warps and changes alongside his progression as a character, with impossible hordes of people appearing from nowhere and the physical structure of the house changing ad hoc. However, the protagonist, Mother (Jennfier Lawrence), is a de-facto passenger in the setting, as although she is depicted as the caretaker of the house (i.e. Mother Earth), she is unable to influence the fantastical reformations of the home around her. By contrast, Arthur is directly responsible for the creation and manipulation of the setting, even if he is not fully aware that he is, as it is an extension of his psyche; while the overall settings in *Akira*, *mother!*, and *TME* are vehicles for the narrative action, the setting in *TME* is a faux-reality which is an expression of Arthur's identity that, consequently, continually reinforces said identity. Similarly, this paradigm extends to the characters - when Arthur interacts with the characters, he is interacting with a version or extension of himself (e.g. the Boss), or that character is expressed through his trauma (e.g. Hannah, Nathan, Boy).

So, who is Arthur? At the outset of the narrative, that seems difficult to describe. The audience (for clarity I will hereon refer to the general viewership of this project/paper as an "audience") is introduced to Arthur not as a fully fledged character, but rather as a nameless body careening through empty space clearly in dire condition, with an "emaciated body" and "gaunt" with "staring, empty eyes" (Harasimiuk 1). This empty space is the "Void", the deepest or base layer of trauma through which all the other settings are formed; it is the truest reflection of Arthur's identity — nothing. The Void is a metaphorical space which represents the most profound negative psychological consequences of Arthur's trauma and consequent forays into his traumatic memories; it is a "vacant" (1), generally formless, and "[infinitely] black" (33) place. While an empty space of this size may be connected to indications of safety or anonymity, as in, the Void is so "significant in size, beyond human comprehension" (1) that Arthur retreats to it on

purpose in order to become undiscoverable/escape, this notion is dispelled by the active presence of death and violence — Arthur repeatedly returns there after experiencing his traumatic memories. He “bursts through” and “[plummets] into [the] infinite black void” (33) after running into his high-school bully in university until he “smashes against the ground in a violent explosion of gore, shattered bones, and bloody mist” (33). Later, Arthur is pulled into the void after betraying Nathan as “[the] hands pull Arthur in, sucking him down through the couch and into a dark void” (86) until he again “smashes against the ground in a violent explosion of gore, shattered bones, and bloody mist” (87).

These repeated violent returns to the Void dehumanize Arthur, reinforcing his identity and representing a continual reassertion of Arthur’s self-perception regarding his inability to control violence/negativity both as an external and internal force. This sudden physical destruction is a transformative action which demonstrates the disintegration of self as a result of that perception; over and over again does Arthur reconstruct himself only to descend into memory and end up in pieces. Aviva Briefel describes a

subgenre of the horror film, which I term “spectral incognizance,” that seems dedicated to reassuring viewers of their safety...In contrast to the threat of grotesque violence deployed by *Saw*, the genre of spectral incognizance reassuringly represents death as an event that can be overlooked...Narratives of spectral incognizance are predicated on the idea that dying is not only a corporeal failure, but also a cognitive act: those who overlook their deaths are not really dead. (96-97)

TME plays with this subgenre of horror, inasmuch as it flips the characteristics of spectral incognizance to call direct attention to death as an event which *cannot* be overlooked. Arthur is not really dead, and therefore not a “ghost” in the traditional sense, but these deaths are a cognitive element which consistently reinforces the distinct lack of safety inside the private sphere of Arthur’s psyche, repeating gruesomely and detrimentally so; when the “idea of human ghosts relies on the ideas of human spirits” where “studying ghost stories can be a means towards understanding ethical systems, ontologies, and ideas of personhood” (Thompson 44-45), “narratives of spectral incognizance encourage us to return to the beginnings of sentences, plots, and human lives.” (Briefel 100). Essentially, Arthur is a ghost of a human inhabiting a spectral, liminal setting outside of the boundaries of normal human existence.

This traumatic, inhuman identity is further reflected in Arthur’s physical health outside of the Void, demonstrating the progressive degradation of his self-worth and mental health after reliving his trauma. When the audience is introduced to Arthur proper as he rolls out of bed, he is described as a “a normal, healthy-looking man” (2); however, as the narrative progresses and his traumatic experiences are repeated, his body ultimately diminishes into a zombie-like state — a “severely gaunt, hollow face”, “dull and faded” eyes, and an “emaciated, sickly frame” (87). His self-worth or self-esteem is absent and if there is “no objective criterion against which to compare self-reported self-esteem” then “self-esteem consists of how a person thinks about and evaluates the self” (Baumesiter et al. 5). In the Void and, by extension, his memories, Arthur evaluates the self in terms of violence, isolation, and disembodiment and against no other conditions other than himself.

Home Is Where the Heart Is

Of the various “memory-settings” that Arthur inhabits or travels through (e.g. high-school, university, the theatre), the primary location of the narrative is Arthur’s Home (now Home, 2). In contrast to the Void, the Home is a space which is designed to reflect Arthur’s attempt at removing himself from his traumatic experiences by creating a familiar, blank, safe space. For Arthur, this creation manifests in a typical “suburban home”; what exactly that entails or is codified as can fluctuate considerably depending on where one lives. In this case, Arthur conjures a space which is typical of a North American single family home built sometime between the late 1970’s and 1990’s and renovated into a contemporary style; it is a single-floor house with a basement, several multi-purpose rooms (e.g. Arthur’s bedroom), a living room, bathroom, dining room, and kitchen, with grey-hued paint and blocky trim. This space is one where the majority of audiences could recognize and place themselves in because of its relative frequency or comparable visual representation in Western living and media, as “the sense of space is at least partially created by the physical space” (Mustonen 138). Arthur’s home is not large enough to communicate a constructed vastness (e.g. a multi-story mansion associated with wealth, uncommon for most audiences), nor is it crowded with other characters or items that may lead one to believe it has the capability to house multiple people. It is straightforward, humble, and common without any obvious symbols that would connect Arthur, nor anyone, emotionally to the space.

For Arthur, this setting is a way to flee his trauma by creating a purposefully sanitized space which is familiar yet devoid of any triggering elements which may cause him to relive or confront his past — a “perfect” safe space that “articulates and renders explicit a particular logic

of separation and enclosure, in terms of fortification, as a necessary counterpart to ever present dangers” (Kawash 188). This barren, sterile environment is created by Arthur initially as a place of refuge and safety, a way to “[stay] under the radar” in order to cope with his previous abuse (Wehle 199). Without any monikers of “life”, as in, things that one would typically populate a house reflecting the occupant’s habits, hobbies, and history (e.g. photos, art, clothing, food), the Home is a place devoid of an active consciousness; while residing in it, Arthur can remain calm, collected, and placid. Essentially, complacently detached from a truer reality as there is nothing to remind him of his past. As such, Arthur engages in a habitual, never-ending “life loop” (4-6) of mundane domestic habits to replace the infinitely violent loop of the Void, reinforcing the Home as a blank safe-space to assure nothing overtly “negative” (i.e. the dissolution of self) happens. He simply goes through his daily motions for an undetermined amount of time as indicated by “MONTAGE - ARTHUR'S LIFE LOOP” where it is noted that “Arthur's actions are nearly identical to the first time we see him, with only minor variations. The sequence's speed of cuts becomes quicker with each moment” (4), highlighting the severity of his trauma insomuch as the “disposition, frequency, intensity, and degree of emotional isolation after the event are critical to the degree of traumatization” (Wehle 200).

However, despite the sanitized environment, there is clear discomfort within these initial sequences, montage, and subsequent returns to the Home insomuch as he “grips the chair tightly” and “stares at himself in the mirror” in amongst repeated shots of “[the] darkened hallway, extending to nothing” (5). Flett and Hewitt discuss how, in athletes, “perfectionists will be particularly at risk...to the extent that they are experiencing failure as determined by objective measures or they have *developed the perception that they are failing*; moreover, a repeated series of failures in ego-involving life domains will have a strong, negative impact” (15, my emphasis)

in conjunction with Pynchon and Little's argument that "the contextual constraints that facilitate or compromise our pursuit of meaningful action represent a common denominator in our pursuit of well-being" (425) draw attention to the repeated action and uncanny characteristics of the Home as an imperfect construct, as they are extensions of Arthur's compromised consciousness. For example, in the living room, there is a specifically placed chair, typewriter, and clock; Arthur continually returns to this area, interacting with the typewriter and clock passively but intensely, clearly in conflict with these items as he wants to interact with them but cannot, emphasised by the omnipresent static drone of the "TICK. TICK TICK. TICK." (3, onward). This inaction or "perception of failure" as well as the "constraints" which compromises the pursuit of meaningful action between Arthur and these items highlight the inherent psychological instability with the "Home" throughout *TME* and elevates these items into a realm of significance for the character. This instability lays the groundwork to eventually motivate and lure the audience into Arthur's memories, but to also motivate moving from "inaction" to "action".

Indeed, despite his best efforts, the house is not a place where Arthur can escape his memory and trauma. While it is not clear how long Arthur has remained in his escapist life-loop, ultimately the setting inverts from a place of safety and calm (inaction) to a vehicle by which the traumatic memories are experienced (action). A small accident incites the change — Arthur drops a glass in the sink, shattering it (6); a literal and proverbial door opens because of this error, where the first instance of the "whisper" creeps in, distracting Arthur and causing him to cut his thumb on the shards of glass in the sink (6). The "whisper" further accentuates the uncanny and hints at the fantastical nature of the home, demonstrating how fragile the space, and thereby Arthur, is. This fragility is emphasized by Wehle's thoughts:

I share current neuroscientific understanding, such as what Damasio (1994) has called the “body loop,” where in nontraumatic states, the link between thought, emotion, and the body is ongoing, whereas in traumatic states the body’s part in the loop is cut off due to diminished neural connections in the brain. Emotions are either consciously or not consciously experienced in the form of defence, or they have never been cognitively represented and the flooding of them when triggered in the present is terrifying, especially when orientation to time is affected due to dissociation. (Wehle 205)

Simply by making one simple error, Arthur inadvertently invites his trauma back, metaphorically shattering the pretence of safety, and incites the action of the narrative proper.

Ultimately, Arthur has created this space as a broken, isolated individual who is inexorably intertwined and trapped within a traumatic nostalgic memory-loop; the liminality of it, as in, the position of the house as a sort of memory transportation hub, is a condition of the suburban element, insomuch as a suburban neighbourhood is “a marginal, peripheral area, [joining] thresholds, gates, crossroads, bridges, rivers, and other marginal, in-between spaces as suitable settings for preternatural events” (Doroszewska 3). Thus, Arthur must continually experience his traumatic past. When considering how “[liminality], with this betwixt-and-between status, is a productive concept for dealing with ghosts...from the past but encountered with the present” (Thompson 46), the Home comes to serve a transformed purpose as to now force Arthur to confront those memories and experiences continually. While this transformation of the home is an unexpected and unwanted development for Arthur, this comes as no surprise to the audience, as this space is formed from the Void when

The floor melts away, leaving the twisted body floating in the aether. A twin-sized bed materializes underneath it, taking the place of the floor and cradling the body. Blankets appear and drape around, covering the body completely. Around the bed, the trappings of a bedroom slowly appear - a nightstand, lamp, grey walls, a floor, closet, and curtained window. Natural light rises from outside the window, spilling evenly into the room. It's overcast. (1)

Indeed, if the Home is formed from the Void, and the Void is a representation of Arthur's trauma, then the Home is formed with Arthur's trauma and, therefore, was always an imperfect and flawed space in which to try and escape. As Viddler contends,

space is assumed to hide, in its darkest recesses and forgotten margins, all the objects of fear and phobia that have returned with such insistency to haunt the imaginations of those who have tried to stake out spaces to protect their health and happiness. Indeed, space as threat, as harbinger for the unseen, operates as medical and psychical metaphor for all the possible erosions of bourgeois bodily and social well being. (84)

Justin Eichenlaub builds on Viddler's work, developing the "infrastructural uncanny" as "an aesthetic, psychological, and quasi-material effect similar to what Anthony Viddler calls 'the architectural uncanny,' a category he uses to examine the interweaving of unsettling affects with particular spaces...the subtle tension between the essential subjectivity of uncanny experience and the possibility for uncanniness to inhere in certain physical spaces" (3). As such, the Home is a place where the fantastical can happen and, in conjunction with the "commonality" of place

represented by a contemporary suburban home, infuses the setting with a sense of horror and, before the memories appear, “architectural” uncanniness — the emptiness no longer implies safety, but instability. Now the benign absence of the human artifacts and symbols that would make it a “lived-in home” become deliberate and conspicuous. For example, Arthur’s bedroom is sparse with just a nightstand and bed, there are no appliances or kitchen-ware that is actively seen or used (save for a glass), and there are no photos or art on the wall; additionally the surfaces are “conspicuously clean and spotless” or “immaculately clean” (Harasimiuk 2, 3). While one may be able to initially dismiss specific organization or lack of decoration as the behaviour of a strange individual, the lack of front-door, a “large, empty space lies between the two windows” (3), and the “impenetrably dark” (3) hallway with no discernable end in conjunction with the opening scene of the Void and the creation of the Home dispels this potential assertion of the space being “usual”. This notion is further reinforced as the narrative progresses (Arthur stepping into memories through the doorways and being transported away, characters materializing out of thin air, etc.) and firmly places the Home into the realm of the uncanny or “unusual”.

Rinse and Repeat - The Monstrous Effects of Memory and Repetition

Considering that the Home is a setting derived from Arthur’s trauma, what, then, is the relationship between Arthur, his memories, and the experiences he has in them? As described, the memories are just that - memories; they are events which have happened to Arthur throughout his life that he is reliving through the narrative action. As such, they are glimpses into Arthur’s history as he experienced it before the escapist reality in which the audience is seeing

him now; additionally, they must be memories significant to Arthur considering that, throughout *TME*, we only journey with him to a limited number of memories. Four in total - one during secondary school, one during university, and two in the theatre. We can also consider these memories as representations of different stages of Arthur's life; adolescence, young adulthood, and adulthood.

It also goes without saying that these selected memories, or stages, are important due to their clear connection to and reason for Arthur's trauma; as Thompson argues, "ghost stories remind us of past moral transgressions, and convey a sense of ethical duty and awareness. Such narratives imply an ethics *that transcends death*" (45, my emphasis). By the end of each of these stages, Arthur experiences a form of physical or mental trauma. In secondary school, the teachers are purposefully ignorant of Arthur being physically and mentally abused by his classmates, which Arthur is powerless against (10-19); in university, his high-school bully singles him out with ill-intent among a massive crowd of students and the professor verbally abuses Arthur (30-32); and, in adulthood, Arthur chooses to betray his friends and colleagues while simultaneously being physically and sexually abused by his colleague (74-86).

Returning to Eichenlaub, he describes the infrastructural uncanny as being "not associated with a single Gothic building for a subject or two to occupy, but manifests itself through a network of buildings, neighbourhoods, and zones that cannot be occupied in a single moment by a single person or group of people" (3). This organised or semi-structured approach to uncanniness applies to the network of horror created by Arthur's memories. When discussing the horror film *It Follows* (2015), Lowenstein observes how the monster is "frightening" because it "has no respect for the borders that have given meaning to the spaces inhabited by the film's characters" (361); the memories are similarly monstrous, as their ability to suddenly appear and

transgress the boundaries of the Home puts them immediately into a realm of uncanniness, even violating the rules of space since “the walls of a house and the placement of a door demand that a given person enters and exits from a specific point” (Mustonen 138). As such, the memories/experiences are dubious — while they are indeed infused with truth as they were experienced by Arthur, they are also infused (and thereby inseparable) with the truth that the current Arthur remembers/perceives them as now; the trauma has had such an effect, that, in terms of self-esteem, “either high or low self-esteem, even if initially false, may generate a self-fulfilling prophecy and bring about changes in the objective reality of the self and its world” (Baumeister et al. 2). As such, in the objective reality for Arthur as he experiences it in *TME*, the memories have transformed into fantastical, horrific truths that have now superseded reality as it once was and are now the reality that Arthur remembers and experiences. The gym transforms into a place of “infinite darkness” (18) where the characters become monstrous, such as the “[endless rows] of kids packed one behind the other” who “don’t move, standing with arms by their sides”, wearing “[hideous], exaggerated grins” that “[contort] their features” (18); the bully turns in an enormous giant, able to lift Arthur up into the air with “enormous hands” as he chokes Arthur (18). This now monstrous child wears a grin which subsequently shows up in the lecture hall where the “exaggerated, devilish grin spreads across the Boy's face — the same as in the gym before” (31). In the final memory, Hannah transforms into something demonic as she “finally relinquishes her cruel grip on Arthur, laughing as she rises. Her face is covered with blood, eyes a vicious glowing red. Fangs, home amongst her blood-soaked, demonic smile, glint in the light” (85).

When discussing Noel Carroll’s *Horror: On Paradoxes of the Heart*, Katerina Bantinaki describes how Carroll “identifies the typical objects of horror as monsters, that is, beings that lie

‘outside our standing conceptual schemes.’ Being violations of our usual categories of thought, he argues, such beings are disturbing, distressing, and disgusting.” (384) *TME* builds on this observation, as the monsters seen throughout the narrative are not wholly outside our conceptual schemes as they are transformed versions of the characters, antagonistic or otherwise. As such, they become heightened versions of typical monsters as they are connected emotionally to Arthur, transgressing against the truth as it once was. These traumatic experiences have clearly mutated from the reality that they once were into new versions suffused with a visceral sense of negativity. Hermann argues that “[memories]—like ghosts—do not only remind us of others from the past. They also socially construct our genealogies, our identities, and our individual and social histories” (333); as such, this monstrous transformation highlights how significant these experiences have become and how they inform Arthur’s identity as worthless or, more specifically, prey.

When acknowledging the selected nature of the memories and experiences, we must ask— are we looking at the real Arthur? Could we consider him an unreliable narrator, or something of the ilk? Obodaru argues that “[our] thinking...transcends reality in that it can construct an alternative timeline that parallels the actual one...people are able to imagine an alternative life path they could have travelled and to develop self-representations of who they would have become by travelling it” (34). Indeed, then, the argument exists that we are only seeing a selected, fabricated, or “alternate” reality stemming from Arthur that rejects the vast majority of his experiences and, therefore, Arthur could be interpreted as an unreliable narrator. This argument is only partially correct; yes, these experiences are limited, distilled from a lifetime outside the narrative that the audience is not privy to. Thus, you could say that Arthur is not telling us the whole story; however, what we are seeing in *TME* is not an “alternative” - it *is*

the consequences of that distillation of Arthur's experiences/traumas and consistently reliving them. By Obodaru's same arguments that "counterfactual thinking research suggests that our self-knowledge extends not only along the actual timeline of what was, is, and will be but also along a parallel timeline of what *could have been*" (36, their emphasis), Arthur has repeated these memories to the point that all four of those elements have blended into a monstrous new-reality. Arthur is trapped so succinctly by these experiences and the way that they have psychologically transformed that they utterly supersede any of the other less-memorable experiences. Thus, what the audience experiences through the narrative and Arthur's point-of-view is the truest form of reality as he has come to understand it, fantastical or otherwise — "[if] the majority of elements constituting the alternative reality or the elements of the person considers most important are positive, the alternate self is a better one. Conversely, if the majority of the elements constituting the alternative reality or the elements the person considers most important are negative, the alternative self is a worse one" (Obodaru 38).

As such, the ultimate versions of the manifested alternate self arise after the final traumatic memory. Arthur, now at his most vulnerable physically and mentally (as above - "severely gaunt, hollow face", "dull and faded" eyes, and an "emaciated, sickly frame" (87)), encounters the Hollow-Arthurs (now, Hollows) and the Boss. Like traditional, slow-moving zombies, the Hollows "[shuffle] slowly" and are "emaciated" (87), easily pushed or knocked over, such as when Arthur "accidentally bumps a Hollow, who falls over into the wall and slides down limply" (88). For Herrmann, "undead problematize the boundaries of time, mingling the past, present, and future" (333); indeed, the Hollows are monstrous doppelgangers of Arthur as he has now become — trapped by liminal memory, unfeeling victims with no self-esteem or self-worth who are subject to the whims of greater forces which seem outside their control. By

contrast, the Boss is an exaggerated version of Arthur, a “tall, heavyset man [...] an older, overweight, taller Arthur. A burgundy suit stretches over his rotund form which carelessly shoves past the hallway Hollows” (89). The Boss’ near-comical appearance and capitalistic verbiage communicates that he is the trauma-incarnate, the version of Arthur who values concretizing (literally) fear and trauma, tempting Arthur to continue to not face his trauma/problems despite it not being in his best interest, embodying how “current selves value their own well-being over the well-being of their future selves and make choices that do not always maximize their long-run best interests” (Zarick and Stonebraker 212).

The Hollows are the most broken versions of Arthur and the Boss is the most selfish version of Arthur, all of which inhabit the aptly named Core, an organized representation of the results of the repeated trauma. The characters travel from the “safety” of the home, retreating from it down the dark main hallway with infinite hallways stemming from it, much like a body’s spinal cord and nervous system. The Core is a harsh prison, communicating discomfort and the grotesque while also megalithic in proportions, “a giant, brutalist concrete cylinder” with “clunky, rusted metal stairs and catwalks” that is so “impossibly high and deep, it extends farther than the eye can see” (91). As with the Void, the psychological source from which the Core is derived, there is a sense of futility in its insurmountable proportions and passive behaviour of its monstrous inhabitants, matched by the Boss’ actions when he “carelessly pushes past a Hollow, knocking it over the railing...The Hollow continues to stare blankly as it spins like a ragdoll in the air before disappearing into the silent void” (92). This Hollow is parallel to the un-named version of Arthur we are introduced to at the beginning, who, similarly described, plummets unfeeling until meeting his violent end (1). If Arthur continues to be dictated by his trauma, this,

the Core and the endless cycle of trauma, will be what be what Arthur will be permanently resigned to — an inescapable prison of his own making.

Breaking the Cycle: Moving Past Memory and Into “Reality”

Despite the overwhelmingly negative impacts of Arthur’s traumatic past and the effect it has on him mentally, physically, and emotionally, he nonetheless is able to actively work at his trauma and move away from the repetitive cycle that he has created. Returning to Briefel, here is where the “cognitive act” of observing death is now defamiliarized for Arthur, changing his relationship to what he has experienced throughout the narrative. He does so after coming to his rock bottom while touring the Core and witnessing the horrific conditions he has willed into existence for himself; the defining moment is when he witnesses the Hollow break from the line and attempt to commit suicide by hurling itself into the Void. Instead of passively wandering throughout the Core, accepting the will of the Boss, and allowing that character to assert his ill-will over the environment, Arthur actively steps in and stops the Hollow from damning itself (97). This change in behaviour signals a change from a static bystander in his own story to an active participant resulting from witnessing the consequences of his own behaviour and thought-processes; Sung-Ae Lee builds on Briefel’s discussion on the spectral incognizant, discussing how, in Korean literary tradition, stories where the “ghost has been displaced from life and stranded in liminal space, since she can neither leave until her grudge is resolved nor change” and how they are “deprived of subjectivity, she seems to have little prospect of acquiring agency” (128) — Arthur is finding agency as a result of this objective incident which reframes his relationship with himself. This choice and change is further solidified when he

brings the Hollow back Home and cares for it in his own bed (98). This active choice to care, to be engaged with the self, causes the Hollow to “turn to dust” with a “faint smile” (98), symbolizing that Arthur has begun the process of self-forgiveness and, by taking care of the rest of the Hollows in the Home, proactively addressing the rest of his trauma.

However, the scope of his trauma is significant, as signified by the mass amounts of Hollows which occupy the Core and the Home where “dozens of Hollows still occupy nearly every space” (97) and the house being utterly filthy (88). At this point, April joins the story proper as, up until this point, she is more or less a character that Arthur either sees or interacts with in passing. Each time she has stepped through Arthur’s memories, it has always been positive — a warm smile in the hallway while he stands isolated from the masses (13), understanding and giving when he forgets his wallet (29), and true emotional connection when she arrives at the party when Arthur decides to speak to her (73-75). Initially, April is the idealized personification of healing, love, and acceptance, and, also up until this point, Arthur has not been prepared to fully accept either of those character traits or emotions, thus his lack of interaction with her.

Now, instead of denying that healing, love, and acceptance, instead of fleeing from the “KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK” at the door or the mere presence of said door as he has done previously, as in, being unwilling to take actively take the step to deal with and move away from his trauma (3, 5, 6, 20, 35, 55, 57), he opens that door and welcomes April into the home easily — “Please, come in” (100). Furthermore, as the embodiment of acceptance, she does not passively wait for Arthur to bring her the bag she came for — instead, she actively acknowledges the state of the home and, in witnessing Arthur’s trauma personified, takes part in rectifying the situation to help Arthur heal his trauma. She accepts him for what he is and is willing to help to

make things better. This illustrates how Arthur has begun to change for the better — he is willing to trust another person and let them explore the reaches of his trauma. That trust in each-other deepens as they work together, building a relationship to the point where she is able to wander the home freely and there is a sense of true accomplishment and happiness between the two of them (102-103). Furthermore, when “[having] to cope with reality, people are also motivated to perceive themselves accurately and admit awareness of their undesirable characteristics” (Baumeister et al. 3), Arthur and April returns to the basement and, instead of once again choosing to flee from his past, as Ferrari et al. argue that “[procrastinators] may be individuals whose self-confidence is low and whose patterns of attribution serve to (or are designed mainly to) protect their public image” (Ferrari et al. 201), Arthur outright acknowledges what happened and takes responsibility for the incident, “It was my fault. I had every opportunity to turn away and do the right things, but I did it anyway. Stupid and selfish” (105), exemplifying Arthur’s progress and the trust that has developed between the two characters.

April asks to stay - Arthur accepts, choosing to continue to heal. Even in the face of the still present fear and terror from that trauma when the “TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.” arises again and the darkened hallway beckons (106-107), he acknowledges that he must continue and return to the Core, to the Void. However, it is because of that relationship of trust between April and Arthur that he is able to do so, and, in the process of trusting April, the basement door “shimmers before turning into dust and disappearing” (107), illustrating how that memory, that trauma, has healed. This extends to Arthur’s journey through the Core; he actively chooses to face his hardship and take responsibility for his actions. Instead of falling into the Void, he enters it willingly when he “descends down countless stairs, passing through countless levels” (108); now, rather than infinite darkness, Arthur reaches the bottom, illustrating how his trauma and

negativity has now become defined and, although still monumental in size and scope, manageable. Here is where Arthur makes amends with Nathan and with the trauma of upending his moral and ethical boundaries by taking responsibility for those choices and acknowledging in action that their relationship will not be the same, stating that “I’m not asking for your forgiveness, because I don’t deserve it. And because I don’t want to forget how I made you feel. But I wanted to let you know that I’m sorry” (110); following that action, Nathan and the room disappear. Finally, in an act of self-forgiveness, instead of arguing with or matching the violent disposition of the now deflated boss (112), Arthur simply embraces him, demonstrating that Arthur acknowledges his own selfishness in these memories and the wrong he has been doing to himself; with that action, the Boss “melts away into dust”, the “lights go out” (112), and, when Arthur returns to the Home, the hallway ends “with a closet”, signalling that Arthur has acknowledged his trauma, taken responsibility, and is putting those memories to rest.

With that tied up, is all well with Arthur? After all, at this point in the narrative Arthur and April create a beautiful life together full of intimacy, laughter, partnership, and happiness (115-116) where the house becomes more than just Arthur’s - it is now “Arthur and April’s house” (116). Indeed, there is one final hurdle to deal with that, once dealt with, signifies that Arthur has finally moved past his trauma and is able to move forward with reality. That comes in the form of writing the script, an act of creation of something wholly original and new beyond the scope of the faux-reality construct that Arthur and April still exist in. Although it has been “completely transformed, and for the better” (116), we are still in the private sphere of Arthur’s psyche and still in a place that has been formed by the traumatic nature of the Void. By finally connecting with his creativity and creating something new, Arthur is signalling that he is ready to move away from who he was and into a new reality to who he is now; however, that must be

done with April, with the character that personifies love and acceptance, as the new Arthur is inseparable from those characters traits. However, it is clear that that Arthur is still flawed, as even though April is an “idealized” personification of positive character traits and emotion, she is still tempted by the choice of staying in what is now a transformed, comfortable faux-reality that they have made for themselves, insomuch as the revelation of leaving is described as “difficult” (120), she is “forlorn” after discussing the prospect of leaving (120), and must hold back tears stating “I don’t know if I can leave...I don’t want to lose you” (121). Indeed, they are both tempted by the choice but they both acknowledge that, together, they will create an actual future away from this false sense of safety — instead of wanting “to resolve all uncertainty before making important, possibly life-altering decisions” where “the pressure to make the best possible choice causes many of us to delay making any choice at all” (Zarick and Stonebraker 212), they choose to act and undertake the new, unknown risk of moving forward. Thus, this final act of stepping out together into the warm wilderness, “beautiful and inviting” (123), signifies that Arthur is truly ready to return to reality, wiser by carrying his memories, lessons, and flaws, and moving away from the person he once was. And, with that action, time, frozen throughout *TME*, begins to move again (123), fulfilling the paradigm how although “ghost stories can remind us of past moral transgressions and convey a sense of ethical duty and awareness...they are also often hopeful, in the sense that wrongs committed in the past can, at time, be atones for and forgiven, if the proper steps are taken” (Thompson 45).

Final Thoughts

When writing *The Marshmallow Effect*, I wanted to explore memory and trauma through a character so isolated and psychologically affected by his past that the consequences become

fantastical and monstrous. I wanted to communicate how the depths of trauma can follow one-self through years of life and affect the person through their various stages of life, and, if left unchecked and undealt with, can become something that severely impacts their ability to escape from it. However, above all, I wanted to have such an affected character be able to struggle through those traumas despite the severity of them, and, in the process, learn the value of taking responsibility, learning to live with themselves, and finding companionship and love (self or otherwise). I believe that Arthur embodies that journey, going from someone so utterly broken by his isolation and trauma that he inhabits a private sphere of imagination that self-reinforces his trauma by forcing him to relive it over and over, then, when things seem at their worst, he is still able to realize that he has made errors and has the power to save himself, moreso when he takes responsibility and fosters a truthful relationship with someone. The narrative technique of telling Arthur's story through the lens of a fantastical reality, combined with criticism, psychological critique, studies of film, and the inspiration from masters of their craft concretize this story in a realm that is not just pure imagination, but one that is informed by reality — a flight of fancy informed by real-life. Because, at the end of the day, trauma exists. People live with the consequences of their experiences everyday, no matter how major or minor they may be, and only by taking the reins and seeking help can we move past those issues.

Indeed, he who fights with monsters may become a monster, but, with the help of others, you may not be gazing into an abyss, but into a pool of acceptance made from the people that love you the most.

INT./EXT. VOID

A black void. It's significant in size, beyond human comprehension, and vacant.

Far in the distance, a man appears. He seems small, falling slowly through the blackness.

We get closer. With new perspective, we see that he is falling rapidly. He faces "up", arms and legs trailing behind, pulled by the momentum of his emaciated body. He wears only a t-shirt and boxers which thrash against his skin. Hair, also trailing, obscures most of his face. Here and there we get a glimpse of a gaunt face with staring, empty eyes.

Far below, a slatted wooden floor appears, still surrounded by darkness. The man rapidly approaches the floor.

The man SMASHES against the unyielding floor in a violent explosion of gore, shattered bones, and bloody mist. His face, mostly intact, still stares up at nothing. Tears leak out from the sides of his eyes, draining down and mingling with blood. Slowly, his eyes close.

The floor melts away, leaving the twisted body floating in the aether. A twin-sized bed materializes underneath it, taking the place of the floor and cradling the body. Blankets appear and drape around, covering the body completely. Around the bed, the trappings of a bedroom slowly appear - a floor, grey walls, nightstand, lamp, closet, and curtained window.

Natural light leaks in from outside the window, spilling evenly into the room. It's overcast.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

A twin-sized bed is pushed up against one corner. Rumpled blankets cover something vaguely human underneath, but they don't move. Beside it is an empty night-stand. A closed closet occupies the wall opposite the bed.

The TICK. TICK. TICK. of a clock lightly echoes in the room.

We stay in this room for a while, waiting.

The blankets move - the thing that's under them has begun to stir slightly. A small shift. A roll. A hand emerges from the top and moves the blanket down, revealing a man's head. This is ARTHUR, mid-30's.

He sits up and blinks heavily. Pushing the blanket away and swinging his legs over the side, Arthur sits on the edge of the bed hunched over, rubbing his face in his hands. He's wearing a rumpled t-shirt and loose boxers, with wild bed-head. Overall, a normal, healthy-looking man.

Note: Unless otherwise specified, Arthur will always be wearing the same t-shirt and boxers.

He SIGHS and stares ahead blankly. TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

After a moment, Arthur comes back to this reality and pushes himself up off the bed with a GROAN.

INT. BATHROOM

A typical full-sized bathroom; sink with counter, white porcelain toilet, and standing shower with a tub.

Arthur sits on the toilet. He stares forward and YAWNS.

Arthur washes his hands. He stares down at the water as he rubs his hands together.

Arthur brushes his teeth. He stares at his reflection while doing so. He bends over and spits into the sink.

INT. HALLWAY

Arthur exits the bathroom, still in his t-shirt and boxers. He scratches his butt-cheek as he wanders down the hallway.

INT. KITCHEN

Arthur enters into a typical North American kitchen. It's long room flanked with cupboards above and below. There's a sink, fridge, and an electric stove but **nothing on the counter**. At the opposite end we see a small dining room with more windows and a small table with chairs. Everything is conspicuously clean and spotless.

Arthur opens up a cupboard. He reaches in and grabs a single, clear, medium-sized glass.

Arthur fills the glass from the sink. He lets the water run and drinks until the glass is half-empty. He lowers the glass the wipes off his mouth with the back of his hand. After a moment he turns off the water. He walks away.

INT. FOYER

Glass in hand, Arthur walks past the kitchen table and into the foyer. It's a small, square room with two exits; one to kitchen and to the living room, where Arthur is headed. There's a light in the centre the roof, turned off. On the ground tucked into a corner is a mat occupied by a single pair of sneakers. A generic contemporary coat hangs above it from a single hook on the wall.

Opposite of Arthur, where a door would be, is a blank wall flanked by two thin, vertical, frosted windows. They conceal what's behind them, but leak in drab morning light.

Arthur slowly comes to a stop right in front of the empty space, between the two room exits. Turning his head, he looks at the empty space, puzzled. *Isn't something supposed to be there?*

A moment passes. Abruptly it breaks and Arthur continues into the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The living room is sizeable but nearly empty; a large bay window with frosted curtains fills the room with light but obscures the outdoors. Arthur heads for a lone chair in the centre of the room facing away from him. It looks blocky and uncomfortable. Beside it is a small side-table. Everything is immaculately clean.

He sets the glass on the side-table, lowering himself into the chair with a SIGH and a slight smile, closing his eyes. Although appearing content, Arthur sits strangely high and with a straight back.

Behind Arthur's left-shoulder is the foyer, to his left is the bay-window, and to his right is the hallway which has the entrance to the kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom.

Further down the hallway is IMPRENETABLY DARK - we cannot see where it leads.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur opens his eyes and looks up. Across from him hanging on the wall is an ANALOGUE CLOCK. It seems to be broken; the seconds hand goes back and forth on the same moment, reaching 12 and kicking back. The other hands are stuck where they are - 1:43.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur peels his eyes away and lowers his gaze. Directly below the clock is a small desk pushed against the wall. A TYPEWRITER sits on it. It's old and bulky; the cast metal body and parts are painted black with gold accents that have faded or chipped with time and use. It's loaded with untouched, gleaming white paper.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur stares at the typewriter.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur grips the chair's arm rests, tense. The typewriter does nothing.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

As quickly as it came, the moment passes. Arthur relaxes, sitting contentedly while continuing to stare.

INT. LIVING ROOM

TIME PASSES IN FAST MOTION. Arthur remains sitting in the chair for most of it, looking at the typewriter. He occasionally leaves to go to the bathroom, but returns immediately. He does not eat or drink, with the half-full glass remaining untouched for the duration of the sequence. The ruddy light remains constant.

RETURNING TO NORMAL SPEED, Arthur rises from the chair, takes a last look at the typewriter, and leaves.

INT. BEDROOM

Arthur walks into the bedroom and gets into bed, pulling the covers over top of himself.

MONTAGE - ARTHUR'S LIFE LOOP

Note: For this sequence, Arthur's actions are nearly identical to the first time we see him, with only minor variations. The sequence's speed of cuts becomes quicker with each moment.

--Arthur gets up. He's wearing the same clothes and has bed-head.

--Arthur brushes his teeth.

--Arthur gets a glass of water. Half-empty.

--Arthur steps through the foyer, not stopping.

--Arthur places the glass on the table.

--Arthur stares at the typewriter.

--The clock TICKS away, stuck.

--Arthur goes to sleep.

--The darkened hallway, extending to nothing.

--Arthur gets up.

--Arthur drinks a glass of water.

--Arthur walks through the foyer.

--The clock TICKS away, stuck.

--The darkened hallway, extending to nothing.

--Arthur grips the chair tightly.

--Arthur gets into bed. He immediately gets up.

--The typewriter.

--The darkened hallway, extending to nothing.

--Arthur fills a glass of water.

--The typewriter.

--The darkened hallway, extending to nothing.

--Arthur stares at himself in the mirror.

--The clock TICKS away, stuck.

--The typewriter.

--The darkened hallway, extending to nothing.

--Arthur steps through the foyer, through one entrance and into the other. Again. Again. Again - he hesitates once.

--The clock TICKS away, stuck.

--The typewriter.

--The darkened hallway, extending to nothing.

END OF MONTAGE.

INT. KITCHEN

A glass drops into the kitchen sink, SHATTERING.

Arthur stares forward with his empty hand raised nearly to his mouth. Confused, he stands there motionless. After a moment, he twists around with his hand still raised. The water's still on.

Looking down, he finally notices the mess in the sink. He hesitates, not sure what to do. After a moment, Arthur begins to pick out the glass shards from the sink. The water still runs over the pieces.

From somewhere down the hallway, a WHISPER - a DOOR CREAKS OPEN.

Hands in the sink, Arthur turns, drawn to the mysterious sound.

He grabs a sharp piece, slicing his thumb. BLOOD pours out immediately over the glass and sink - Arthur quickly retracts his hand, INHALING SHARPLY.

The water quickly washes away the blood, down the drain and out of sight.

ARTHUR

Shit!

He puts his thumb in his mouth to temporarily stop the bleeding. He looks around and, on the counter where there was nothing before, is paper towel on a holder. He goes over and grabs a piece, pressing it against his cut.

Arthur walks out of the room. A few drops of blood lie scattered on the floor. The water's still running.

INT. FOYER

Arthur walks through the foyer, not stopping.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Arthur rounds the chair and plops into it, focused on the pain. He removes the now blood-soaked paper towel, inspecting the cut.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

FATHER
(cheerily)
Good morning Sonny-Boy!

SHOED FOOTSTEPS suddenly erupt from down the hallway; a man emerges from the darkness - this is Arthur's FATHER, early 30's. His is similar in height, age, and appearance to Arthur. His hair is done up and he's fully dressed in business casual, with his collared shirt tucked into his neatly-pressed khakis.

He quickly passes by and into the kitchen before we can get a good look at his face.

ARTHUR
(through the pain)
Morning Dad.

Arthur looks over to his Father, just catching the back end of his dad as he turns into the kitchen. We hear the Father opening cupboard doors and the fridge, presumably getting his breakfast.

FATHER
How'd you sleep?

Arthur turns and looks back at his cut; it seems to have stopped bleeding.

ARTHUR
Not bad. Probably could have been better.

Arthur looks up to the typewriter.

FATHER
(laughing)
Ah, well that's the thing with sleep - it always could be better, and you always want more.

Arthur continues to stare at the typewriter, less absently than before. As if he was seeing it in a different light.

FATHER (CONT'D)
How's the project coming along?

ARTHUR
Good.

FATHER
Slowly but surely, eh?

ARTHUR

Yeah.

FATHER

Perfect - that's the ticket. You'll
be done in no-time!

Arthur doesn't respond. His Father continues to move around the kitchen.

Suddenly, the Father comes out and turns down the hallway.

FATHER (CONT'D)

(disappearing into
darkness)

C'mon son, you better get ready to
rock. You'll make us both late!

ARTHUR

Late?

Arthur turns towards the hallway, just catching his Father disappear into the darkness. The Father's footsteps FADE AWAY.

The room is silent, save for the TICK. TICK. TICK. of the clock.

After a moment, Arthur pushes himself up from the chair.

INT. HALLWAY

Arthur walks towards the hallway and into it. He passes his bedroom, past the bathroom, nearing the darkness. Down the hall, we can see many more identical, closed doors lining the walls into darkness.

MUFFLED NOISE comes from behind a nearby door. Arthur moves closer. As he does, the noise becomes a bit more clear - a MOVING CROWD.

Arthur opens the door.

INT. HIGH-SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Arthur steps through the door and into an empty school hallway. It's broad, made for accommodating hundreds of students passing through, tromping on the shining linoleum floor as they move to classes or the lockers lining the cinderblock walls. The many dozens of fluorescent tubes in their rectangular panels recessed into the hanging ceiling wash the hallway in an even, uninterrupted, artificial light.

This main hallway extends forwards and backwards. We do not see the end or know where they lead. Smaller hallways break off at even intervals. We do not know where they lead.

Arthur stands in the middle of the hallway still in his shirt and boxers. He turns one way and then the other, trying to make sense of where he is.

He turns back as a man steps out from a side-hallway. This is the school's PRINCIPAL. He's a tall, neatly dressed, completely bald man in his 30's. The Principal's impressively bushy moustache wrinkles as he addresses Arthur.

PRINCIPAL

God almighty Arthur, you're late.
Again. Get to class.

Arthur stares blankly at the Principal, confused.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Earth to Mr. Arthur! Where are you
supposed to be son? Certainly not
wandering my hallways while class
is in session.

ARTHUR

I'm sorry sir, I...

Arthur raises his hand to show his cut — it has disappeared.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I...I must have slept in.

PRINCIPAL

A teenager sleeping in? Shocker!

The Principal motions, and Arthur starts to walk over.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Where are your books?

ARTHUR

I don't know. I must have forgotten
them.

The Principal clasps an arm around Arthur's shoulder as he comes over.

PRINCIPAL

(chuckling)

You are truly a mess today young
man. Come on, onwards to knowledge.

The two disappear down a nearby side-hall.

INT. HIGH-SCHOOL - SIDE HALLWAY

Arriving at an open door, the pair stop. The Principal pats Arthur on the back.

PRINCIPAL

Set an alarm next time, alright?

ARTHUR

Yeah. Thanks.

PRINCIPAL

Off you go.

The Principal leaves. Arthur faces the doorway. A WOMAN'S VOICE bleeds into the hallway, lecturing about monsters and their purpose. Arthur steps in.

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM

The classroom is nearly full, with tables in rows seating two students each, gaps between each table to let people through. Bags and jackets hang off of the back of some of the chairs, and most tables have binders and books open in front of the respective students.

Motivational posters line the walls alongside various pieces of student artwork and photos of famous authors. Shelves of books and closed cupboards line the one side of the room, while lines of vertical windows interrupt the cinderblock wall on the other.

The front of the room is dominated by a large blackboard with chalk writing all over it. A desk, overloaded with papers, folders, books, a coffee-mug, and a computer, sits on the side with windows. The teacher, MS. COLLINS (30's), stands at the front of the class with book in hand, reading from a passage. It's an old, disintegrating copy of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

Noticing Arthur, she stops reading momentarily.

MS. COLLINS

Ah, and if it isn't King Arthur himself finally deciding to grace us with his presence! M'lord, If you could take your seat with us mere peasants, that would be wonderful.

The entire class turns and looks at Arthur at the back of the room. The students are around 14 years old, dressed in various styles reminiscent of the late 90's or early 2000's.

Most just look briefly and turn back around, but a few linger to SNICKER and LAUGH.

A boy seated near the centre motions to Arthur. Arthur walks towards the seat. Ms. Collins begins speaking again.

A group of boys seated together at the back continue to WHISPER to each other and stare. As Arthur walks by them, one BOY sticks his foot out and trips Arthur. Arthur barely catches himself on an adjacent table, but still knocks hard into a nearby student.

STUDENT
(angry)
Watch it!

BOY
(under his breath)
Yeah, watch where your walking
faggot.

Arthur turns and glares at the Boy and his group as they snicker.

MS. COLLINS
Arthur, not only are you late but
you're also being disruptive.
Continue to your seat please.

Ms. Collins returns to reading. She points at another student near the front, who takes over from where she left off. Arthur reaches his seat and sits.

The boy who waved him over is NATHAN, 14, Arthur's best friend. He leans in. *Note: throughout the next exchange, Nathan and Arthur whisper.*

NATHAN
You alright?

ARTHUR
Yeah I'm fine.

NATHAN
Fuck those guys. But what the fuck
man, where have you been?

ARTHUR
Sleeping.

NATHAN

Yeah, okay, sleeping - you haven't been to school in, like, forever, and, more importantly, you bailed on game night!

Nathan stealthily punches Arthur in the shoulder. Arthur chokes down an expletive and grabs his shoulder, bending over the table.

ARTHUR

Ah, shit I totally forgot - I'm sorry man I didn't mean to leave you hanging. What did you guys play?

NATHAN

Halo, obviously.

Arthur puts his face against the table.

ARTHUR

Noooooooooooooo.

NATHAN

Yeah, that's right, and it was fuckin' awesome. So stop being a sleepy bitch and maybe you won't miss out next time.

Arthur chuckles. Ms. Collins looks over and notices Arthur and Nathan whispering.

MS. COLLINS

Pay attention please boys - I don't want to have to ask you again. Nathan you're reading next. Share your book with Arthur.

The group of boys behind them SNICKERS. Nathan and Arthur slide closer together and share the novel. Nathan begins to read the passage aloud, while Arthur looks down and reads along.

Nathan's reading slowly fades away. Arthur tries to pay attention to the novel, but INDECIPHERABLE WHISPERS flicker through the air, surrounding and distracting him. The lights begin to dim, isolating Arthur in the middle of a busy classroom. He stares down at the book, through it.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

INT. HIGH-SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Nathan SLAMS his locker shut, revealing a staring Arthur. Arthur comes back to reality and leans with his back against an adjacent locker. He watches other students as they go by, packing the hallway during their lunch break.

Nathan leans against a locker. They watch people for a bit.

ARTHUR

When do we get to leave this place?

NATHAN

Not soon enough.

The throng of students continues to pass by, not acknowledging Arthur or Nathan. They watch the unbroken flow of students passively, beached against the lockers.

Arthur notices a WOMAN making her way with the crowd. A literal head above the rest, she's clearly an adult in her early 30's with blue eyes and long black hair.

Arthur and the Woman make eye contact. She smiles warmly at him. He awkwardly smiles back, fighting the urge to look away. Arthur tries to say something, but can't.

She breaks eye contact as she passes by and Arthur watches her leave. Nathan doesn't seem to notice the Woman at all.

ARTHUR

I guess it's not all bad.

NATHAN

What is?

Out of the crowd, a palm STRIKES Arthur in the forehead. LAUGHTER erupts from all around as the force SLAMS the back of Arthur's head violently into the locker he's leaning on and dazing him. He raises a hand to the back of his head, rubbing the spot to ease the pain.

ARTHUR

Jesus Christ!

THE SAME GROUP OF BOYS FROM THE CLASSROOM stand together in front of Arthur and Nathan, doubled over in laughter. The BOY THAT TRIPPED ARTHUR is the instigator — he is the leader of the group.

The students in the hallway continue to pass by.

BOY
(laughing)
I thought fags were supposed to
have strong necks from all the cock
they suck?

NATHAN
What the fuck man?!

BOY
Oh, is the other queer worried his
boyfriend won't be able to lick his
tiny wiener?

The Boy pushes Nathan violently against the locker, stepping forward and pressing his body against Nathan's. The Boy looms down at him.

BOY (CONT'D)
Because I don't give a fuck what
some fucking fag thinks.

ARTHUR
(nearly recovered)
Mind your own business douchebag.

The Boy turns to Arthur with a cruel look. He steps towards Arthur, coming face to face.

The horde of students continues walk by.

BOY
Oh, I'll be minding my own business
alright. And you're gonna like it.

The Boy hits Arthur in the crotch and shoves Arthur back into the locker. Arthur bounces off of it, doubled over, holding himself in pain. The Boy grabs Arthur by the back of the neck, dry humping Arthur in the head. The grip is tight and is painful.

Arthur can't do anything. The cronies LAUGH as the Boy continues to hump Arthur for sport. The Boy abruptly releases Arthur and pushes him away. The group leaves, continuing to LAUGH as they turn and walk away.

Arthur and Nathan watch them go. Nathan helps Arthur up. The Boy looks back momentarily with a cruel grin. The group merges with the crowd, blending in smoothly. As abruptly as they arrived, they are gone.

Arthur looks at Nathan, who is holding back tears.

ARTHUR
(exhaling painfully)
Are you alright?

NATHAN
Yeah. I just...everyday you know?

ARTHUR
Yeah...yeah.

NATHAN
Are YOU alright?

ARTHUR
Yeah. Fuck those guys. Let's go get
some lunch.

NATHAN
Yeah.

They walk in the same direction as the rest of the students,
merging in and disappearing.

INT. HIGH-SCHOOL GYM - LATER

A large high-school gym. Slatted wooden floors, retractable bleachers, and large flood-lights bolted against the high ceilings. It's full of students playing basketball on the multitude of hoops that are folded out from the walls. About 60 students, dressed in a gym or gym-like clothes, play in co-ed groups.

Arthur plays with a group including Nathan. The TEACHER, 30's, dressed in athletic clothing with a whistle dangling around their neck, CHATS and LAUGHS in a back corner with a group of other similarly dressed teachers. They're paying little to no attention to the students.

Arthur and Nathan are clearly having a good time. They're not on the same team, but are enjoying battling for the ball and guarding each-other. The game is overall friendly and both teams are enjoying themselves.

Nathan gets the ball and Arthur sets up to guard him. Nathan fakes him out, goes around, and executes a stellar layup.

NATHAN
Boom!

Nathan high-fives a teammate, smiling. Arthur drops to his knees in faux anguish.

ARTHUR
(exaggerated)
Noooooooooooooooo!

Nathan pretends to raise a fake gun, cocks it with a KUH-CHOCK, and begins to shoot Arthur while making SHOOTING SOUNDS. Arthur takes the shots dramatically, his arms out and body convulsing with each fake hit.

The proverbial mag empty, Nathan lowers his imaginary weapon. Arthur falls to the ground, a la *Platoon*.

Nathan walks over to pick up his fallen comrade. LAUGHING, they clasp forearms and Nathan hauls Arthur up.

A teammate passes Nathan the ball who then passes it to Arthur. The teams ready up to play the next round.

A WHISTLE SCREECHES. Everyone stops and looks over to the Teacher. His arm is raised, making a circle in the air with a raised finger.

TEACHER
Rotate!

The Teacher goes back to conversing.

Arthur, still holding the ball, makes an awkward two-handed peace sign to Nathan in a bad impression of a rapper. Nathan laughs and walks away with his team. One of the teammates playfully tries to hit the ball out of Arthur's hands, but they miss as Arthur turns away just in time. Arthur flips a friendly double-middle finger.

We focus on Arthur as the lights dim. DISEMBODIED WHISPERS start to rise, becoming a part of the raucous noise of the gym before overwhelming it. Still holding the ball, Arthur becomes glossy eyed, staring into nothing.

Someone steps in front of Arthur, breaking him out of the trance. The LIGHTS RAISE TO NORMAL and the WHISPERS DISAPPEAR. It's the BOY, standing in front of Arthur with a satisfied grin. Arthur sees the rest of the the Boy's team, comprised entirely of his cronies, matching up with Arthur's team. One crony shoves a teammate, while another, matched with a girl, eyes her uncomfortably.

Arthur looks back to the Boy. Following the rules, Arthur passes the ball to the Boy to get it back and start the game. The Boy throws the ball back at Arthur hard — the ball SMACKS painfully against his hands as Arthur just manages to catch it.

Arthur begins to dribble. As soon as the ball hits the ground, the Boy quickly charges in. He leads with his shoulder, not attempting to go for the ball, slamming into Arthur's chest. Arthur goes down hard and drops the ball, barely holding his head up from hitting the ground.

BOY

Oops, sorry bud.

Arthur gives a quick look around the gym - the majority of the students are still playing, but a few are looking over. Some talk amongst themselves, some grin. The teachers still converse in the corner.

WHISPERS begin to rise, the lights begin to dim.

Arthur gets up, grabbing the nearby ball. The teams setup for another play, and begin jostling. Arthur looks up at the hoop, his goal.

He starts to dribble. The Boy guards. Arthur fakes one way and then makes an explosive move to the other, going around the Boy. Just as it looks like he's made it, the Boy sticks his foot out trips Arthur.

Arthur goes down hard, face-first. His body SMACKS onto the ground, head BANGING off the floor. LAUGHTER erupt from all around and the ball rolls away.

The whispers grow LOUDER. The lights continue to dim around the two teams, isolating this one section of the gym.

DAZED, Arthur struggles to get up. Blood leaks from his nose.

The Boy's cronies look down at Arthur, LAUGHING. They seem LARGER THAN BEFORE. Arthur's teammates stare at the ground or with fearful expressions. They make no attempt to help him.

The rest of the gym has stopped playing. All of the students stop and stare, some laughing, some pointing fingers, some whispering to each-other. The teachers, slowly look over at Arthur, CONTINUALLY LAUGHING.

Arthur struggles and finally arises. The Boy walks over, basketball in hand, and extends it out towards Arthur. Arthur stares up at the Boy - *Is he taller? Bigger?*

BOY (CONT'D)

C'mon queer, just make a basket.
It's not that hard.

Still dazed, Arthur takes the ball from the Boy. The whispers continue to get LOUDER. Arthur's blood drips onto the floor.

The gym lights surrounding their section are nearly off, isolating the court and barely illuminating the other inhabitants of the gym.

Arthur looks up at the hoop. It's right in front of him, dreamily illuminated by a spotlight. It's tantalizing, inviting, glowing.

Arthur steps to the free-throw line. The other students from the gym have surrounded the court. Endless rows of kids packed one behind the other, disappearing into an infinite darkness that once was the gym. They don't move, standing with arms by their sides. Hideous, exaggerated grins spread across their faces, contorting their features.

Arthur's teammates and the cronies make up the front row, leaving just Arthur and the Boy on the court alone.

The whispers are DEAFENING. The Boy, somehow much taller, stands behind Arthur and looms over him.

Arthur looks up at the hoop. He prepares himself to make a shot. He winds up, and shoots the ball – it looks good. As the ball comes down, the hoop moves backward into the darkness and raises up to an impossible height. The ball soars through the air and misses completely.

The ball hits the ground, bouncing away into darkness. The whispers SWELL and the horde of students, remaining eerily still, begin to LAUGH.

Defeated, Arthur turns. He looks up, craning his neck – the Boy now towers over Arthur, a giant. The Boy stoops down to Arthur's face.

BOY (CONT'D)

Uh oh. I thought faggots like
filling holes?

The Boy grasps Arthur by the neck with massive hands. He stands up, scooping up Arthur and raising him high into the air.

Arthur grabs at the giant hands, trying to break them away. The Boy squeezes, beginning to choke Arthur. GASPING for breath, he looks around for help. All the students and teachers have turned their backs to Arthur.

The laughter FADES AWAY, overwhelmed by the whispers. The Boy brings Arthur closer to his giant face as Arthur frantically scratches at the enormous hands. Arthur's nails tear and break as he leaves bloody gouges and scrapes. Arthur is choking to death.

The Boy's massive, exaggerated expression of happiness feeds off of Arthur's pain. Arthur struggles but to no avail. His eyes turn red, tears of blood leaking out from the corners.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur's struggles become weaker and weaker. He gasps with less energy, less frequently, his face going blue.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

BOY (CONT'D)
You're worthless Arthur. I hope you
fuckin' die.

Arthur's neck CRACKS. Still gasping, his body goes slack and dangles in the giant's grasp.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

With a final LAUGH, the Boy releases him. Arthur freefalls limply, twisting in the air and gaining momentum as he speeds down into darkness, into the Void .

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

The whispers do not stop. Out of the darkness, the gym floor emerges and rapidly approaches to meet Arthur.

Arthur smashes against the ground in a violent explosion of gore, shattered bones, and bloody mist.

QUICKLY CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Arthur's bedroom. The rumpled blankets cover Arthur, but he doesn't move. He is closer to the wall than before.

The TICK TICK TICK of the clock echoes lightly in the room. We stay for a while, waiting. Longer than before.

The blankets move. A small shift. A roll. A hand emerges from the top and moves the blanket down.

Arthur sits up and blinks heavily. He swings his legs over the side of the bed and sits on the edge. He looks more tired than before. Hunched over and placing his forearms on his thighs, he COUGHS. Nearly imperceptible bruises encircle Arthur's neck.

He stares off blankly. TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

After a moment, Arthur comes back to this reality and pushes himself off the bed with effort.

INT. BATHROOM

Arthur sits on the toilet. He stares forward. He lets out a little COUGH.

Arthur washes his hands.

Arthur brushes his teeth. He has darker bags under his eyes than before.

INT. HALLWAY

Arthur exits the bathroom. He scratches his butt-cheek as he wanders down the hallway. He COUGHS.

INT. KITCHEN

Arthur fills a clear, medium-sized glass. He drinks from it until it's half-empty. The counters are bare.

INT. FOYER

Arthur walks past the kitchen table and into the foyer, glass in hand. The light on the roof in the middle of the room is on.

Arthur slowly comes to a stop between the two room exits. He looks up at the light, puzzled. *Did I leave that light on?*

Arthur looks to where the door would be. After a moment, he moves along to the living room.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Arthur sets the glass on the side-table. He lowers himself into the chair with a SIGH and a slight smile. He sits there for a moment with his eyes-closed.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur looks up at the clock. Still the seconds hand twitches back and forth on the same moment, the other hands stuck where they are. 1:43.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur peels his eyes away and lowers his gaze. The typewriter still sits against the wall.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur stares at the typewriter. A moment passes by. Arthur suddenly stands up.

The glass still sits on the side-table, half-full.

Arthur breathes, and bites his lip. A moment passes by. He COUGHS.

MOM

Are you alright honey?

Arthur's MOM, mid 30's, wearing scrubs and white sneakers, appears near Arthur. She's fiddling with an earring, her head tilted to one side, obscuring her face. She's heading to the foyer.

ARTHUR

What?

MOM

Pardon me, you mean?

ARTHUR

Sorry. Pardon me?

She disappears through the foyer and into the kitchen. We hear her rummaging around, opening cupboards and the fridge. She makes food while talking to Arthur.

Arthur hasn't moved, still staring at the typewriter.

MOM (O.S.)

I asked if you were alright! Been hearing you cough all morning. Reminds me when you were at that horrible school - I'm so glad we pulled you out and got you into somewhere else.

ARTHUR

Yeah, I'm alright.

MOM (O.S.)

You want a tea or something?

ARTHUR

I'm fine. I have water.

MOM (O.S.)
Are you sure?

ARTHUR
I said I'm fine.

Arthur's Mom is still rummaging around.

MOM (O.S.)
Oh, touchy. Guess I shouldn't ask
how the project is going?

Arthur stares at the typewriter. TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

MOM (CONT'D)
Nervous?

Arthur looks over towards the kitchen, concerned. As if she
can feel the gaze, Arthur's Mom answers.

MOM (CONT'D)
First day of University, pretty big
deal. And very exciting! You're
going to have so much fun.

Arthur looks away, towards the typewriter.

ARTHUR
Yeah. I'm excited.

MOM (O.S.)
Well you don't sound like it!

ARTHUR
I am. I'm excited.

MOM (O.S.)
That's the spirit honey. Do you
have everything you need?

ARTHUR
I think so.

MOM (O.S.)
And you're alright with driving
yourself?

We look through the kitchen entrance out to the living room.
Arthur stands in the same spot, looking over towards us. His
mother keeps moving around and preparing. A moment passes.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK. Arthur COUGHS.

ARTHUR

Yeah.

Arthur turns back to the typewriter. His mom whips out of the kitchen, her face still obscured, and heads down the hallway into the darkness.

MOM (O.S.)

(heading down the hall)

Then put on some pants and get
rocking Mister! Damn earring.

Arthur looks back towards the hallway, troubled. He moves towards it, reaching the threshold.

ARTHUR

Hey mum?

No answer. A moment passes.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Mum?

No answer. Arthur takes a hesitant step forward, peering into the darkness. Another. Another.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Mum?

MOM (O.S.)

(from far down the hallway)

Yes honey?

Relieved, Arthur leans against a wall.

ARTHUR

I was just wondering if you and Dad
wanted to see a movie tonight
maybe?

MOM

Oh, baby, that sounds so nice! But
we're both working late. If we
don't get called in, let's go this
weekend! Now get dressed and get
out the door before you make us
both late.

Arthur nods. He hangs his head, and rubs the back of his hair. He steps through his bedroom door.

INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - DAY

Arthur walks forward and stops. Arthur stares for a moment at the unfamiliar floor. He looks up.

Arthur, now with a backpack, is in a stadium-style lecture hall. It has around 200 seats, most of which are occupied by staring students. He stands at the bottom, giving the entire room a view of his arrival. Some students grin and laugh, but most are uninterested.

Nearby is the PROFESSOR. He's in his mid-30's, dressed casually, and is of comparable age and appearance to Arthur. He looks at Arthur with a smile, waving to get Arthur's attention. Arthur, still frozen and staring up at the hall of students, finally notices and turns to look at the Professor.

PROFESSOR

(friendly)

Earth to the newcomer! Ah, nice of you to finally join us. Mr...?

ARTHUR

Arthur.

PROFESSOR

Ah, Mr. Arthur! Say hello to Mr. Arthur everyone.

The lecture hall erupts into a loose calls of "Hello Mr. Arthur" and it's many variations. Embarrassed, Arthur waves sheepishly at the rest of the students.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

(chuckling)

I'm sorry Arthur but I just had to. I know it's embarrassing, but there's always one straggler on the first day.

The Professor turns to the class.

PROFESSOR (CONT'D)

And we will all try to be here on time! But arriving late is inevitable for everyone. Let's just try to minimize it, alright?

(to Arthur)

Go ahead and find a seat where you can, we're just going through the syllabus.

The Professor begins to the lecture again, introducing the course. His voice fades into the background as Arthur crosses the front and starts to hike up the stairs to find a seat.

He looks around, finding no seats and no familiar faces. Most students are uninterested, focused more on the Professor, their laptops, notes, friends, or phones.

Nearing the top, he finally spots a seat - at the very back in the very middle. Arriving at the top row, Arthur stoops down.

ARTHUR
(whispering)
Sorry, excuse me.

Perturbed, the first student in the line of many stands up and lets Arthur through. With many hushed apologies of "Excuse me!" and "Sorry!" Arthur finally makes it to his seat. He takes his bag off as quietly as he can and sits down.

Arthur finally takes a breath, leaning into the seat, listening to the lecture.

GIRL
(whispering)
That was quite the entrance.

Arthur looks to the seat beside him. Smiling back is HANNAH, 19. She has long, strawberry red hair done up in a messy top bun and large, round glasses. She's a naturally beautiful girl who isn't wearing much makeup, if any. She wearing a set of boyish overalls over a vintage band t-shirt.

Arthur stares, frozen. *Cute.*

Note: Hannah and Arthur whisper throughout the next exchange.

GIRL (CONT'D)
(laughing)
Just like that! Frozen like a mime.

She mimics Arthur's expression, staring off into space and freezing her body. She releases the pose after a moment and grins at Arthur.

ARTHUR
(nervous)
Thanks. All the world's a stage you know?

Hannah GIGGLES. Arthur leans forward and grabs his bag to get his books. He unzips it and reaches in.

HANNAH
I'm Hannah.

Arthur takes out a binder and leans back.

ARTHUR
I'm Arthur. Nice to meet you.

They shake hands. The student seated in front of them whips around and glares at them.

STUDENT
Shhhhh!

Hannah and Arthur, still holding hands, stare at the student. Quickly they break apart and lean back into their seats, staring forward.

After a moment, Arthur lets out a stifled LAUGH. Hannah does the same — they look at each other side-eyed and can barely hold it together.

Still smiling, Arthur opens his binder and looks towards the front.

INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL - LATER

PROFESSOR
Alright everyone, that'll about do it for the day. Remember to start the readings so we can hit the ground running next week. I'll see you all at the same time, same place.

Now released, the hall becomes a cacophony of RUSTLING and people TALKING. Students pack up their things and head to the exit.

Arthur starts to put away his binder, pushing it into his already stuffed backpack. Hannah, who only has a notebook, neatly puts it into her bag.

HANNAH
Hey, what are you doing after this?

Arthur is still trying to get the binder into his bag.

ARTHUR
Um, nothing. I have a huge gap between this and my next class. Why?

HANNAH

Want to go grab a coffee or something? I have a break too.

Surprised, Arthur stops putting his book away. It takes him a second to respond.

ARTHUR

Uh, yeah, sure. That would be awesome.

HANNAH

(excited)

Great! Let's go.

Arthur finally gets his binder in his bag. Grabbing their things, the pair start to make their way out of the hall.

INT. UNIVERSITY - HALLS

Arthur and Hannah walk through the University hallways, chatting and having a good time...fast friends.

Hannah is a theatrical person, often making huge gestures with her hands and exaggerated faces for emphasis in their conversation. By comparison, Arthur is more reserved, but he's enjoying himself and holding his own in the emphatic conversation.

They come across a friend of Hannah's, CLAIRE (19). Hannah and Claire embrace bombastically, throwing their arms around each other and spinning. Arthur stands there awkwardly. Immediately after the girls pull apart, Hannah introduces Claire to Arthur. Smiling, they shake hands.

With a big gesture, Hannah motions the crew onwards.

INT. UNIVERSITY - COFFEE SHOP

Chatting away, Arthur, Hannah, and Claire finally make it into the coffee shop. It's a typical café, relatively busy with students grabbing caffeine between classes. There's tables, chairs, and some comfortable looking couches surrounding a main service area.

The trio is discussing the political complexities of *Harry Potter*.

ARTHUR

I dunno, is Hufflepuff even a real house? Like, what do they do...eat?

HANNAH
(feigning betrayal)
I don't know how you could say such
a thing, after all we've been
through?! Hufflepuff for life!

LAUGHING, Hannah and Claire bound up to the counter to order their drinks. Arthur, a step behind, digs through his pockets to find his wallet. He can't find it, so he spins his backpack around to his chest and starts combing through it.

The girls complete their order and pay, heading down the bar. Arthur is still rummaging.

VOICE (O.S.)
What can I get you?

Arthur can't seem to find his wallet.

ARTHUR
I'm sorry, I—

Hands still stuffed in his bag, Arthur looks up. Waiting to take his order is **the Woman from the High School hallway**.

Arthur doesn't know what to say. She's a stranger, yet seems familiar. *Who is this woman?*

Arthur feels drawn towards her. TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

WOMAN
(slowly)
What can I get you?

The moment is gone. Arthur comes back to reality.

ARTHUR
I'm sorry. I'm a bit of a space
cadet today.

WOMAN
That's alright. It happens to the
best of us. First day, right?

ARTHUR
Yeah. Can you tell?

WOMAN
(laughing)
Oh yeah.

Arthur, embarrassed, laughs and takes his hands out of his backpack. The Woman smiles.

WOMAN (CONT'D)
What would you like?

ARTHUR
Well, I'd love a coffee but I can't
find my wallet.

Without missing a beat, the Woman grabs a cardboard coffee-cup and lid and sets it on the counter in front of Arthur.

WOMAN
On the house.

Surprised, Arthur hesitates. She nudges the cup and lid towards Arthur. He grabs the cup and lid.

ARTHUR
Thanks, I appreciate it.

WOMAN
(smiling)
No problem. Coffee's down at the
end. Good luck with the rest of
your day Spaceman.

Arthur smiles and walks down to the end of the bar where another employee is working on drinks behind an espresso machine. Hannah and Claire stand there waiting for their orders, chatting happily.

Arthur pours his coffee from a big carafe, puts in some cream, and stirs it in. Nearby, the girls get their drinks and take a seat on some couches.

Arthur looks over at the Woman. She's serving some new customers and doesn't notice him. He continues to stir.

The girls LAUGH, snapping Arthur out the moment.

Arthur puts on a lid and joins the girls, who are well into another conversation.

Arthur steals another glance over at the Woman with an absent curiosity before being pulled back into the conversation.

INT. UNIVERSITY - HALLS - LATER

The trio stroll down the halls heading to their next classes. Arthur slows down as they reach a set of doors.

ARTHUR
See you next week!

HANNAH

Ciao!

Arthur waves goodbye, and so do the two girls. They continue on as Arthur heads through the doors.

INT. UNIVERSITY LECTURE HALL

Arthur enters the room smiling. It's another lecture hall, but slightly different from the first. It's just as large, but has tiered tables that curve around the room in a semi-circle like an Amphitheatre. Two aisles split the room to transport the students with a lecture area at the bottom equipped with whiteboards and a computer.

Entering from the top, Arthur begins to make his way down the rows. The lecture is about to begin, so the room is quite full. Students take their seats and greet their friends, while the LECTURER prepares his notes at the bottom.

Time slows. Sounds start to become MUTED and MUDDY, as if submerged in water. Arthur makes his way down, step by step, finding a seat on the aisle of a middle row. He sits, placing his bag down on the work surface.

The lights start to dim. Arthur, still smiling and digging through his bag, doesn't notice.

WHISPERS rise through the noise of the room. Time grows ever slower; beside Arthur, people move slowly. Sounds become more DIM and DISTORTED while the WHISPERS BECOME MORE CLEAR.

Arthur places a textbook and binder onto the work surface in front of him. A FAMILIAR LAUGHTER pierces through the whispers.

The hair stands on the back of Arthur's neck. He freezes, hands on his books. WHISPERS GROW LOUDER and MORE CLEAR. Lights continue to dim. Arthur looks over to the other side of the room.

Seated with his group of friends is **the Boy from high school**. He's older, the centre of attention as he leans back into his chair within a group of people surrounding him. They look to him, and he revels in it. In the group are the same CRONIES from before and other unfamiliar faces.

Arthur looks on, the horrific realization slowly washing over him. His mouth opens idly. He grips his books tightly, white-knuckled, sweat beading on his forehead.

Lights continue to dim around Arthur, WHISPERS GROWING EVER LOUDER. Arthur becomes isolated under a ghostly spotlight.

The Boy, laughing, turns and looks straight at Arthur. Lights dim around him as well, isolating the Boy under a mirrored, impossible spotlight. His smile disappears for a moment.

He recognizes Arthur. An exaggerated, devilish grin spreads across the Boy's face – the same as in the gym before.

The others around him are still LAUGHING. This moment is between Arthur and the Boy. The Boy seems to grow, filling his seat and beginning to dwarf the people around him.

The WHISPERS HAVE BECOME DEAFENING. They drown out nearly everything else. Arthur stares, frozen in this moment, unmovable.

MUFFLED SPEECH starts to push through the whispers. It's faint, but grows in intensity and clarity. It's a VOICE.

LECTURER
(clearly)
Excuse me, hello?

The WHISPERS STOP abruptly and the lights go back to normal. Standing beside Arthur is the LECTURER. He looms over Arthur, snapping his fingers, expecting something. Arthur looks around – the entire hall is staring.

LECTURER (CONT'D)
I asked you a question.

Arthur looks up at the Lecturer. The Lecturer is an imposing older man, dressed in a full suit and tie; the picture of a traditional academic. He stares at Arthur expectantly down his nose.

ARTHUR
I'm sorry?

LECTURER
(impatient)
I asked you a question boy. Were you even paying attention?

ARTHUR
I...

LECTURER
You were not, clearly.

The Lecturer looks up and addresses the rest of the hall.

LECTURER (CONT'D)
If you are in this class, you are here to learn.
(MORE)

LECTURER (CONT'D)
I expect full attention and
dedication. People who do not
follow those guidelines are not
welcome here. Perhaps someone who
is actually paying attention can
answer my question?

WHISPERS RISE AGAIN, GROWING LOUDER. Arthur looks around — he
sees Students whispering and staring. The Boy, ever larger,
stares on. The Lecturer disregards Arthur and moves onto
another student.

Pale, Arthur abruptly gets up and starts to make his way out
of the room while the Lecturer is speaking. Arthur does not
take his things.

Arthur pushes past the Lecturer, bumping into him.

LECTURER (CONT'D)
(indignant)
Excuse me, where are you going?

Arthur, looking shell-shocked, keeps moving. The WHISPERS
follow him, mingled with some students' LAUGHTER and SHOUTS
FROM THE LECTURER. Arthur reaches the door and pushes
through.

INT. CORRIDOR OF DOORS

Arthur explodes into a hallway. It's not the same one he
entered the hall from; though styled like the University,
it's a tube-like hallway extending ahead of Arthur, lined
with never-ending doors like the one he just came through.
Far away at the end is a set of double doors.

Arthur marches quickly, trying to escape the pursuing
WHISPERS. The end of the hallway stretches as he travels.
Arthur passes by door after door, making progress to the end
as it slowly pulls away, stretching and stretching. He
COUGHS.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur reaches the end doors. He pushes through, revealing
the exact same stretch of hallway.

Things repeat. He moves forward, passing many doors before
finally reaching the end and bursting through. The end of the
hallways stretches quicker and further. The WHISPERS surround
Arthur, inescapable.

Arthur breaks out into a jog to keep up. He goes through the doors again and again, becoming more and more frantic, gaining speed.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Now running, he bursts through the end again. The hallway continues, but now it's styled like Arthur's high-school.

Disembodied, ghoulish hands begin to emerge from behind Arthur's back, slithering all over his body. A large pair, covered in blood and gouges, appears and begins to encircle Arthur's neck.

Arthur desperately tries to escape the WHISPERS and hands, pushing onwards as fast as he can. The cycle repeats. Repeats. Arthur is practically running over himself.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

INT./EXT. VOID

Sprinting, Arthur bursts through another set of doors and careens into open air.

Arthur is in freefall, plummeting into an infinite black Void. The whispers fade away, left behind at the floating door which rapidly disappears above Arthur.

The hands, buffeted by the air, struggle to keep their grip on Arthur's body. One by one, they rip off and disappear.

The hands around Arthur's throat are the last to go, clinging for influence until they too finally get ripped off.

Arthur plummets fast. Free, he takes a deep breath in. He lets it out. Tears whip out of his eyes and into the darkness. Below, the gym floor appears.

Arthur closes his eyes and curls in on himself. The floor rapidly approaches.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur smashes against the ground in a violent explosion of gore, shattered bones, and bloody mist.

QUICKLY CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Arthur's bedroom. It's darker than before. Arthur is curled up under the blankets and pressed against the corner. The TICK TICK TICK of the clock echoes lightly in the room. We stay here for a while. Longer than before.

Arthur starts COUGHING, several times before lifting the blanket off over him to get a breath of fresh air. He COUGHS again.

Arthur slowly twists and sits on the edge of the bed. Arthur is a bit thinner than before. He sits there for a second before lifting himself off, trudging out of the room.

INT. BATHROOM

Arthur stands in the dim bathroom, staring at himself in the mirror. He has heavy bags under his eyes, and is more gaunt and pale than before. He presses at the bags, observing himself.

He lets out a breath and leaves the room.

INT. KITCHEN

The kitchen is darker than before. Arthur fills a glass in the sink. It's filling quickly, but he doesn't notice. Arthur can barely keep his eyes open.

He starts to nod off. The glass fills and overflows, washing over his hands. Arthur's head dips deeper. The glass slips into the sink and CLATTERS AROUND, but doesn't break.

Arthur startles awake at the noise. He begins to COUGH HARD, convulsions wracking his body as he clumsily tries to grab the glass out of the sink. It continually CLATTERS as it slips through his grasp, slick with water. A cough sprays blood out over the sink before he covers his mouth, coughing into the crook of his arm.

Arthur braces himself on the counter with one arm, fit subsiding. The sink, adjacent counter, and floor are wet with water and somewhat spotted with blood. Arthur lowers his arm – his face, forearm and crook are speckled with blood.

Arthur is trembling. He looks at his blood-covered forearm. He wipes it away with his other hand, only smearing it more and onto his hands. He anxiously wipes his hands and arms off on his clothes, staining them with blood and water.

Arthur shakily grabs the glass from the sink and fills it. He drinks deeply, blood from his mouth and face washing into the cup and mingling with the water as he slugs it back. He drinks the whole glass before taking a breath and refilling it halfway.

INT. FOYER

Arthur moves through the entranceway, glass in hand. He stops in the middle of the room. Unlike the other rooms, the foyer has never been brighter. He COUGHS lightly, turning towards where the door would be.

There is a ROUND DOOR HANDLE on the wall. Arthur looks at it. He steps forward and stands on what would be the threshold. He reaches out to grasp the handle. Just before he does, he stops. A moment passes.

Arthur is trying to grab the handle, but something holds him back. His hand shakes, hovering over the handle. Flecks of blood dot his skin.

He takes a breath. He's determined. He grasps the handle.

A KNOCK. Arthur stops and looks up at the blank wall.

A moment passes. Arthur stands frozen, grasping the handle.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. Arthur takes a step backward, releasing the handle. KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK. He presses himself against the opposite wall.

A person, silhouetted by the bright light, peeks through one of the side casement windows to look inside. It's clearly a woman, but her features and expression cannot be seen.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Arthur slides around the wall and into the living room.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

He backs up through the room, facing the foyer.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

He COUGHS.

TICK KNOCK TICK KNOCK TICK KNOCK

Arthur continues to backup as a golden light rises up from behind, illuminating his back. Still coughing, he trips and falls backwards.

INT. OPULENT THEATRE

Arthur lands on his back onto thick, red carpet. He somehow manages to hold onto the glass, but the water spills entirely all over him, drenching his head and upper body. He spits away the water and sits up, wiping it away from his face. He blinks finds himself staring at a set of intricately designed double doors. Confused, he looks over his shoulder.

Arthur is in a large, opulent theatre. He's sitting in a carpeted aisle at the top of the theatre, as if he had just entered for a show. Rows and rows of seats extend down towards a large, empty stage. Imposing red-curtains are drawn across it, covering the majority of the stage. Above Arthur is the first balcony ceiling, stretching out towards the stage and ending after several rows. The theatre is empty.

Arthur stands, glass in hand, and begins to walk towards the stage.

He reaches the end of the balcony. The theatre opens up spectacularly; a domed roof with a sparking chandelier illuminates the theatre, glittering light dancing off the complex architecture and ornate molding, painted mosaics dancing with life. A grand, decorated proscenium arch borders the stage, flanked by stacks rows of private boxes lining the walls.

Arthur looks up at it all in awe, twisting around to try and drink in the whole space.

Arthur continues down the aisle backwards. He shifts his attention to the massive balconies, stretching up in two tiers. Thousands of empty red seats stand at attention, waiting.

Arthur feels the weight of the space, enthralled by it.

Reaching a row about midway between the stage and first balcony, he stops. He looks down at the row of empty seats. Arthur steps in and makes his way down.

Smiling, he stretches out a hand and lets his fingertips brush the velvet upholstery. He holds his glass in the other.

Reaching the perfect centre, he lowers himself into the seat. He SIGHS with a smile.

He holds the glass in the middle of his chest with two hands, perfectly contented.

The lights begin to dim. By reflex, Arthur clutches the glass closer to his chest. The lights continue to dim until they go all the way out. Alone in his seat and in near-darkness, Arthur breathes shakily. He starts to rise, ready to flee.

The footlights of the stage fade up, illuminating the curtains in a warm glow. Arthur pauses.

The curtains begin to draw back. A figure stands centre-stage, shrouded in semi-darkness. Curious, Arthur sits back in his seat.

Lights fade up in sequence around the figure, illuminating a complex set made to look like the outdoors. A spotlight raises on the figure in the middle. She wears a flowing green dress, sparkling in the multitude of lights. She hangs her head, strawberry blonde hair cascading in waves over her shoulders, obscuring her face. She clasps her hands together lowly in front of her.

The TAP TAP TAP of a conductor's baton against a music stand signals a change. Anticipation hangs in the air. With a breath, orchestral music begins to float through the theatre. After a few measures, the figure on stage looks up.

The figure is HANNAH, now in her early 30's. Arthur looks on, stunned.

With a breath, Hannah begins to sing. Her voice is strong and confident, filling the theatre with a melody that reverberates through every crevice. She conveys the emotion of the song perfectly, moving through the words and phrases with deft skill and finesse. She's not singing with the orchestra, but the orchestra is playing along with her.

Hannah barely moves throughout her performance, intentional motions augmenting the emotion of her voice. Arthur looks on, entranced. His eyes twinkle with the reflection of stage lights.

The performance comes to a CRESCENDO, Hannah holding a finely tuned final note. The music fades, Hannah returns to her original position, and the performance ends. Arthur sets his glass on an arm rest, bursting into APPLAUSE.

After a moment, Hannah releases her pose and relaxes with a smile. Arthur continues to APPLAUD. She squints, trying to see past the stage lights. She covers her brow with a hand to shield her eyes.

The spotlights goes out and the house lights come up, illuminating Arthur, who stops applauding. He waves with a smile. Hannah recognizes who it is.

HANNAH
(amazed)
Oh my god, Arthur?!

Hannah SQUEALS. She hikes up her dress to reveal bare feet and runs downstage to a set of stairs connecting the house and stage. People come out of the wings and begin to mill about the stage, handling props and sets.

Arthur shuffles down the row of seats to the aisle, meeting Hannah at the end. She throws her arms around Arthur, practically hopping into his arms. Arthur is a bit shocked, but laughs and hugs her back.

Hannah breaks the hugs and holds Arthur by the shoulders.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
(grinning)
Ah! I can't believe it! It's been
so long! Where have you been?

ARTHUR
(grinning)
Oh, you know, around.

She gives him another quick, hard hug.

HANNAH
It's been years! I mean, once we
were done Uni...poof! And then you
were gone.
(pausing)
I've missed you.

Arthur doesn't know what to say.

ARTHUR
I've missed you too.

Hannah grins and throws her arms around him again, more brief this time.

HANNAH
Eee!
(releasing Arthur)
What are you doing here anyway? And
why are you all wet?

ARTHUR
Honestly, I couldn't tell you. I
just kind of ended up here. This
place is amazing.

Arthur looks up and gestures to the theatre. He looks back at Hannah as gestures towards her.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Jesus, you're amazing! I didn't
know you could perform, let alone
like that.

Still grinning, Hannah flourishes a deep curtsy.

HANNAH
(in a British accent)
Ah, Master Arthur, I deeply
appreciate the compliment. I live
for my art, and I will die for it.

Arthur flourishes an equally showy bow, reminiscent of an English Gentleman.

ARTHUR
(in a British accent)
But Madame Hannah, how could I not
shower one so talented after such a
moving performance? It is my
privilege to be in the presence of
such a master of their craft.

Arthur rises. They both laugh together as if not a moment had passed since they last spoke.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
So what's it like, being up there?

HANNAH
There's nothing like it. When
you're up there, nothing else
matters. Do you...want to see back
stage?

Arthur's eyes light up.

ARTHUR
Yeah, of course!

If Hannah's grin could get wider, it would. She grabs Arthur by the hand and starts to haul him away toward a side door near the stage.

HANNAH

Come on!

If Arthur's grin could get wider, it would. They move towards the door together.

The empty glass sits on the arm-rest.

INT. BACKSTAGE

The pair burst through the doors into a wide, dimly lit, but bustling hallway. Hannah practically drags Arthur in excitement, and he's is having a hard time keeping up – the amount of activity and motion happening around him is captivating.

The backstage is a fantasy world teeming with life. Musicians in tuxedos pass by with their instruments, holding them protectively on the way to the pit. Multicoloured costumes on racks sit everywhere, with crew and cast rustling through and comparing, some arguing about necessary changes. Performers in dazzling leotards stretch idly. A boisterous, bearded Italian man goes through some vocal exercises. Crew members, dressed head to toe in black clothing, go over lists others calling for cast members and shouting times and direction. Pairs of cast and crew put on microphones; some put on makeup and help others do the same.

Arthur and Hannah pass a dressing room full of half dressed men and women applying stylized animal makeup and costumes at traditional, lightbulb-lined mirrors. Others lounge about the dressing room bare-faced, some in full make-up roar and bay at each-other, rehearsing and laughing.

A group of people with dusty faces, knit-caps, and brooms rush by. One man, similar in age and appearance to Arthur, tips a cap with a smile at Arthur, who looks back with a grin.

Arthur is forced to turn his attention forward by the enthusiastic pull of Hannah. At every turn through their journey, she has been greeting and is being greeted by hosts of people. She's clearly well known and loved by all the cast and crew. Arthur looks on with a smile, drinking in the sights and sounds of such a magical place.

The DIRECTOR, a frazzled man in his 50's with thick, round-glasses, graying hair, and a scarf comes flying out of a room. He's followed by the STAGE MANAGER, a crew-member in her late-20's wearing all black clothing and holding a clipboard; she's also wearing a headset with microphone attached to a pack on her hip.

The Director spots Hannah and makes a beeline for her, closely followed by the Stage Manager.

DIRECTOR

(quick)

Hannah, that was fantastic. Lovely performance. I have some final notes before we open.

Hannah, suddenly serious, stops to give the Director her attention. By way of being baggage, so does Arthur. He watches a line of multi-coloured English knights rush by, each followed by a man clacking two coconut shells together.

Arthur looks through a nearby door. He lets go of Hannah's hand — she doesn't notice. As if pulled by the chest, Arthur steps through the doorway. The Stage Manager watches him as he goes.

INT. STAGE & WING

The chaotic sounds of the backstage area fade away. Ahead of Arthur is the empty main stage. He walks through the wings, passing props and pieces of the sets. Crew members mill about, all too busy to notice or care about Arthur's presence. Arthur steps onto the stage.

He squints against the sudden, direct brightness of the stage lights, shielding his eyes for a brief moment before lowering his arm. The black-floored stage is empty and massive, dwarfing Arthur as he crosses. He twists around, drinking in the huge stage.

Arthur reaches centre stage. He looks out at the empty seats, where the audience will soon be. He can picture the thousands of people packing the auditorium.

He chuckles, closing his eyes and basking in the warm glow of the lights, breathing in the inviting anticipation of an empty theatre for the first time. Arthur is as comfortable as we've ever seen him.

HANNAH (O.S.)

Pretty cool eh?

Arthur opens his eyes. Hannah stands in the wings with a satisfied smile, looking on at Arthur. Arthur returns her smile then looks back out to the audience.

ARTHUR

Yeah. It's something special alright.

The Director, still frazzled and conversing with the Stage Manager, marches up beside Hannah. The Stage Manager is explaining a problem.

STAGE MANAGER

...unless we find a replacement, we won't be able hit the timings properly. We'll be dead in the water.

DIRECTOR

Yes, yes, alright, give me a minute. Hannah, we—

The Director notices Arthur standing on-stage. He and the Stage Manager are immediately unhappy about it.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

Who is that, why is he on my stage?

Hannah still looks out at the stage, smiling.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

You there! Get off that stage.

HANNAH

Arthur.

DIRECTOR

(annoyed)

Arthur! Arthur!

Arthur looks over to the wing again. The Director waves him over with irate purpose. Arthur, suddenly feeling out of place, hustles over to the group.

DIRECTOR (CONT'D)

(quick)

You. Arthur. Who are you? What are you doing here? You're not supposed to be on my stage.

ARTHUR

I—

DIRECTOR

No one is supposed to be on that stage. Not until the show starts. What do you have to say for yourself?

ARTHUR

We—

DIRECTOR
(cutting Arthur off)
Doesn't matter. We have a problem.
I need a body for tonight's
performance. Damn actors — "sick".
Probably hungover. Right now? Fuck
'em. No offence Hannah. Have you
ever been on stage before?

ARTHUR
W-

Doesn't matter. We need someone to
move some props and sets onstage
tonight, otherwise we're screwed.
Fuckin' actors. Fickle. You're not
an actor, are you?

Pause. Arthur looks at the Director, ready to be cut off
again. The Director stares at him expectantly.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
No.

DIRECTOR
Great. Can you do it?

Arthur, amazed, looks over at Hannah. Hannah nods with a
smile.

ARTHUR
(resolute)
Absolutely. What do I need to do?

DIRECTOR
Fantastic.
(turning to the Stage
Manager)
Take him to wardrobe quickly and
get them to send him to the
ensemble. They can instruct him
what to do. Quick quick!

STAGE MANAGER
(calmly)
Come with me.

The Stage Manager turns on a dime and briskly moves towards
backstage. Arthur stands there, surprised by the immediacy.

HANNAH
(laughing)
Go!

Arthur dashes to catchup, leaving Hannah and the Director behind. The Director begins to give her notes, but Hannah smiles and watches Arthur go.

INT. BACKSTAGE

Arthur bursts through the door into backstage, looking for the Stage Manager. He spots her by a costume rack and makes his way over. She's conversing with another crew member; this is HEATHER the costume designer, a flamboyantly dressed woman in her mid-40's with pencils, pins, and other tools of her trade smattered around her person.

STAGE MANAGER

Ah, here he is. Heather, this is James' replacement. Get him sorted and sent over to his ensemble as quickly as possible.

Heather gives the Stage Manager a quick wink and a nod, accompanied by a affirmative mouth CLICK.

HEATHER

Aye aye captain.

The Stage Manager whisks away down the hall.

STAGE MANAGER

(shouting)

Ten minutes to places!

The Stage Manager's shouts can be heard down the hall, becoming part of the overall noise. Heather turns to Arthur and puts her hands on her hips, observing his figure.

HEATHER

Alright young man, come on over here and let's see what you got.

Arthur comes closer; Heather whips a measuring tape out and starts to circle around Arthur taking measurements.

HEATHER (CONT'D)

What's your name?

ARTHUR

Arthur.

HEATHER

Nice to meet you Arthur. I'm Heather. Move this way please.

She manhandles Arthur expertly in every which way, pushing up arms, spreading legs, manipulating his body...Arthur tries his best to keep up with the flurry of movement.

While she measures, Heather mutters idly to herself. "Yes." "Not quite." "Alright, good, good." and so forth. Suddenly she flings the tape measure around her neck and goes to a nearby rack.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
Alright Arty, drop em!

Arthur looks around. The hallway is still bustling with people.

ARTHUR
What, right here?

Heather, rummaging through the rack, stops briefly to address Arthur.

HEATHER
Yeap, no time to lose.

She goes back looking for costume pieces.

ARTHUR
Everything?

HEATHER
(muffled slightly)
Everything. Down to the skivvies!

She continues to rummage. Arthur takes a breath and peels off his shirt. He feels awkward, holding his shirt and looks around, expecting some kind of reaction or response from the people in the hallway.

No one reacts. They continue to go about their business, prepping and laughing. Arthur relaxes a bit.

Heather grabs a set of clothes from the rack with a flourish.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
Aha! Try these on.

She hands Arthur a hanger with a collared shirt, slacks, belt, and a pair of shoes. Arthur takes it all and starts to put on the costume. She looks on, observing the fit.

Clothed, Arthur rises. He looks like a man straight out of the 50's. Heather nods.

HEATHER (CONT'D)
Yeap, perfect. As per usual.

She walks up to Arthur and makes a quick adjustment to his shirt. Satisfied, she steps back with a smile.

ARTHUR
How do I look?

HEATHER
Great! Follow me.

Suddenly Heather strides quickly down the hallway. Arthur jumps to keep up with her unexpected departure, catching up. They walk quickly with Arthur just behind her heels.

STAGE MANAGER (O.S.)
Five minutes to places!

INT. DRESSING ROOM

Heather and Arthur arrive at the door to a dressing room. The co-ed room is filled with performers all dressed in the same 50's, era-appropriate styles as Arthur. As with the rest of the cast, the people in this room are doing makeup, warming up, chatting, and having a good time.

Heather stands at the door, and Arthur looks over her shoulder.

HEATHER
Nathan, are you in here?

A man in the back, chatting and laughing, looks up and towards the door. This is **Arthur's childhood friend NATHAN**, now in his early-30's. Heather waves him over, and Nathan bounds up and quickly crosses to the door with a smile.

NATHAN
What can I do you for?

HEATHER
News from the top! James is a no-show.

NATHAN
What? Fucking hell. Classic though.

Nathan turns to the group of people he was chatting with before.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Guys, James is out!

The group reacts with collective dismay and GROANS. One performer slaps their forehead. Nathan turns back.

HEATHER

This is Arthur. The new James.

Heather steps aside, revealing Arthur fully. Both Arthur and Nathan stop dead and stare at each-other. After a moment, both men SHOUT and run LAUGHING into a huge hug. Heather looks on, surprised.

Arthur and Nathan break their embrace, grasping each-other by the shoulders.

NATHAN

Arthur? What the fuck?

ARTHUR

What the fuck Arthur?! What the fuck NATHAN?!

The pair laugh, and Nathan turns to the room.

NATHAN

Everyone, we have a new James!

The group reacts with a collective CHEER. Laughing, Nathan turns back.

HEATHER

Well, I see that you two know each-other. Instruct him promptly. I'm off!

(to Arthur)

Break a leg, kid.

Heather promptly heads back down the hallway. Nathan puts his arm around Arthur's shoulders and drags him into the room and towards the group.

NATHAN

Everyone, meet Arthur, our evening's saviour and, coincidentally, my childhood best friend.

Everyone greets Arthur with an assortment of greetings, handshakes, and waves. "Hi new James!", "Pleasure!", "Sup Arty?" and so on. Arthur responds to each in kind, trying to not be overwhelmed by the situation.

Nathan takes his original seat. Arthur takes a seat with the group, eager.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Okay Arthur, first of all, I am so fuckin' glad to see you. Second of all, what the fuck are you doing here?

ARTHUR

It's good to see you too. And I honestly don't know. One minute I was getting a tour of backstage, the next I'm being berated by an old man.

NATHAN

(laughing)

That's showbiz for you! Well, do you know what you need to do?

Throughout the next exchange, the group of performers react comedically in unison to Arthur's answers.

ARTHUR

No.

NATHAN

Okay. Have you ever acted before?

ARTHUR

No.

NATHAN

Have you ever been on stage before?

ARTHUR

Yes! Once.

NATHAN

Great! When?

ARTHUR

Five minutes ago.

The group erupts with LAUGHTER. Nathan leans backwards and clutching his stomach.

NATHAN

Oh my god, this is fantastic. I actually can't believe this is happening. No worries, just follow my lead and everything will be fine.

ARTHUR
No problem! I can do that. When do
we start?

The Stage Manager walks past the dressing room.

STAGE MANAGER
(shouting)
PLACES!

The room erupts into a flurry of motion. Last minute makeup gets dashed on and completed, bits of costumes are put on, and people chat all while pushing out towards the door.

Arthur looks back towards Nathan, who then looks at Arthur.

NATHAN
(grinning)
Right now.

INT. STAGE

In the wings, Arthur peeks through a small crack in the curtain. The theatre is packed. There doesn't seem to be a seat which isn't taken, and if it isn't, it's quickly filled. The room HUMS in anticipation.

Arthur ducks back behind the curtain. Dim blue light illuminates the backstage, just enough to allow the cast and crew to see. Glow-tape is stuck to the ground and on corners gleams everywhere, laying out tracks for the sets and where people can move. Nathan and the other performers are waiting, CHATTING QUIETLY and casually. Arthur walks over to Nathan, nervous.

ARTHUR
(whispering)
Alright, what do I need to do
again?

Nathan is casual about the situation, his demeanor exuding a calm and confident air.

NATHAN
(whispering)
Just follow me amigo, no worries.
We're bonified crew during Act 1,
pretty much just moving sets.

Arthur nods, trying to methodically walk through the plan to suppress his nerves.

ARTHUR
Alright, no problem...how many acts
are there?

NATHAN
Three.

ARTHUR
Three. Okay. So what do we do in
the other acts?

Nathan grins.

NATHAN
Well, that's where things get
interesting.

Out in the theatre, the lights dim and go out – the show is
about to begin.

Nathan claps Arthur on the back and directs him over to where
the group is, now standing ready in a line. Nathan takes the
spot in front, placing Arthur behind him.

ORCHESTRAL MUSIC begins its OVERTURE; it starts SLOW AND CALM
but BUILDS IN TEMPO AND ENERGY.

Nathan looks out at the stage, then turns to Arthur. Arthur
looks past him, trying to calm his excited nerves. The music
CONTINUES TO BUILD; it's HIGH-ENERGY and EXCITING.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
(stage whisper)
Remember, just follow my lead.

Arthur nods, serious. The curtains begin to open.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
(stage whisper)
Perfect. You ready?

Arthur nods and takes a big breath. The music BEGINS TO SWELL
as the curtains fully open.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Great!
(turning to the stage)
Here. We. Go!

On "Go", the music BURSTS TO LIFE and Nathan dashes forward.
Arthur lurches behind, followed by the rest of the group.

Nathan and the Group HOOT and HOLLER, acting excited and
raucous. Arthur stumbles along with them, barely keeping up.

He looks out towards the audience – the group impossible to discern because of the overwhelming brightness of the stage lights. Arthur gets distracted for a moment, and stumbles.

Nathan scoops Arthur up in a smooth, fluid motion and into a ballroom dance pose. He spins them around before Arthur can think, forcing Arthur to just go with it.

Nathan spins them into a spot, not missing a beat with the group and the music. He throws his arm around Arthur, firmly placing Arthur where he needs to be.

The entire time Nathan and the group stay in the scene, energetic and lively. Arthur falls in-step, swept away by the energy. They all huddle together around a HUGE PINBALL MACHINE SET, pushing it with effort into place.

Arthur revels in the moment, eyes glittering with the stage lights.

MONTAGE OF ARTHUR PERFORMING:

With each moment, Arthur, Nathan, and the group wear the same costumes, but the sets, lighting, and energy change to signify the progress of the show.

--Nathan, Arthur, and the group energetically rush on stage.

--Arthur is sandwiched between Nathan and an ensemble member, snapping their fingers in unison. Arthur is just barely behind.

--Nathan, Arthur, and the group move onto stage somberly, WAILING AND MOANING.

--Arthur holds Nathan, who is acting as if he has fainted. The group crowds around, all looking somber and trying to revive Nathan.

--Hannah looks on from the wings, admiring Arthur with smile.

--Nathan, Arthur, and the group move onto stage in canon.

--Everyone stands side by side on stage, cheerily moving up and down on opposite intervals with the music.

--Nathan, Arthur, and the group move onto stage. Again. Again.

END OF MONTAGE.

The music starts to come to a close, winding up to a FINAL CRESCENDO. Arthur stands on stage with Nathan and the group in a final tableau, fists raised in the air for victory

The music CRESCENDOS and ends with a final MUSICAL BUTTON. The lights go out. The audience bursts into APPLAUSE, filling the massive theatre with CLAPPING and CHEERS.

The stage-lights come up again, confusing Arthur. Nathan pushes him with the group as everyone steps forward. Nathan and another ensemble member grab Arthur's hands as they stop near the end of the stage.

The house lights in the theatre raise up, illuminating the audience. For the first time, Arthur is able to look out and see the patrons. The audience is on their feet in a standing ovation.

Arthur is stunned. Involuntarily his arms are raised by Nathan and the other ensemble member. In unison, the company dips down in a grand bow.

Arthur raises up face plastered with a huge smile. His arms raise and they bow again. Rising, the company steps back to the sides and creates a gap in the middle.

The main actors walk from off-stage down the created aisle to the front of the stage, taking individual bows. Arthur and the ensemble applaud along.

With a ROAR OF CHEERS and WHISTLES, Hannah begins to walk down the aisle to take her bow. She wears the GREEN DRESS and looks magnificent as she walks.

Arthur watches her go. They make eye contacts as she walks by. A moment passes between them - she winks at Arthur.

Hannah strides away and takes a magnificent set of bows to the adoring audience. Finishing, she steps backwards and the curtains close, MUFFLING THE APPLAUSE.

Finally done the show, everyone starts to mill about and congratulate each-other while generally moving off-stage.

The ensemble takes no break - they enthusiastically surround Arthur, congratulating him and jostling him around.

CAST MEMBER #1

What the fuck, great job Arthur!

CAST MEMBER #2

A natural, New-James!

CAST MEMBER #3

Arty, nice fuckin' work!

The group laughs together. Arthur is sheepish as they walk, but his vibrant expression can't hide his joy.

ARTHUR
(vibrating)
Thanks everyone! I mean...holy
shit! Wow. Just wow.

Nathan laughs and pats Arthur on the back.

NATHAN
Well, I think this calls for a
celebration! First round's on me!

The group CHEERS and mimics their on-stage roles collectively. Arthur laughs and plays along.

The group passes through the stage wings towards backstage, past a small podium where the Stage Manager is talking to someone on her headset.

STAGE MANAGER
Yes. Yes. Got it.
(snapping her fingers at
Arthur)
You — hold on a sec.

Arthur stops, the group continuing on. The Stage Manager talks with the person on the other line. The conversation ends and she takes off her headset. She reaches into the podium and pulls out a stack of papers, stapled in one corner.

She turns to Arthur and hands it out to him — its **the script to the show**.

Arthur reaches out and takes it reverently, the holiest of objects.

STAGE MANAGER (CONT'D)
You did well tonight. The Director saw that you were keeping up and fit in with the ensemble — he wants you stay on if you're available. You have a bit of catchup work to do obviously, but that shouldn't be a problem considering you've already done the show once completely cold. Nathan will bring you up to speed.

Arthur stares at the script, stunned. He looks to the Stage Manager.

ARTHUR
Absolutely. I don't know what to
say.

STAGE MANAGER
Thank you, probably.

ARTHUR
(smiling)
Hah...thank you!

Arthur turns and trails away, staring at the script in his hands with a mixture of awe and disbelief.

STAGE MANAGER (O.S.)
Arthur?

Arthur turns, momentarily taken out of his stupor. The usual gruff and humourless demeanor of the Stage Manager has softened.

STAGE MANAGER (CONT'D)
(genuine)
Thank you for stepping in. You did great. Really.

Arthur smiles.

ARTHUR
No problem.

The Stage Manager smiles back. A VOICE ON THE HEADSET alerts her. Back to business, she quickly puts the headset back on and turns back to the podium. Arthur, still smiling, turns and heads backstage.

We watch from the wings. Arthur shows the group the script. They all react bombastically, excited for Arthur and incredulous at the day. Nathan wraps his arm around Arthur and gives him a congratulatory squeeze before raising his arm "Forward!", parading the group out of view.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Arthur's room. The room is as before; the bed in the corner, nightstand, and the window. The window curtains are now SLIGHTLY DRAWN BACK. We can see outside to a BLUE SKY. A HALF-FULL GLASS OF WATER is on the night stand. CLOTHES are scattered around the room.

Arthur is sprawled belly-down on the bed SNORING. He's in his shirt and boxers, face towards us, blankets rumped everywhere. He's half-on the bed, with a foot and arm dangling.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur lets out a LOUD SNORE, waking himself up. He blinks heavily, rousing slowly.

He rolls over onto his back, GROANING. He struggles to sit up, doing so with effort.

Arthur GAGS, barely holding back the inevitable sick. He quickly bursts out of bed and rushes out the room.

INT. BATHROOM

Arthur is on his knees finishing PUKING into the toilet. He GROANS into the toilet bowl before resuming PUKING.

INT. BATHROOM

Arthur stands at the sink, rinsing his mouth out with water. He bends over and SPITS. He rises and looks at his reflection. He's haggard, but not as gaunt as before.

Arthur paws at the bags under his eyes. He LAUGHS, bracing himself against the sink. Content, he pushes off and leaves.

INT. KITCHEN

Arthur fills another glass of water. He HUMS A TUNE FROM THE SHOW as the glass finishes filling before drinking the whole cup in one go.

Nearing the end of the glass, he looks over at the table. On the table is the SCRIPT. Arthur CHOKES, lowering the glass and letting out a COUGH. He quickly moves over to the table, setting the glass down on the way.

Arthur grasps the script in two hands. He pauses, grinning. *It wasn't just a dream!* After a moment, he quickly flips to the first page and begins reading.

INT. FOYER

Still reading, Arthur walks through the foyer and into the living room.

There is now a door. He doesn't notice.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Arthur walks, flipping a page. He sits down in his chair without looking up, completely engrossed.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

IN THE SAME SHOT WHERE WE WATCHED ARTHUR'S FATHER COME DOWN THE HALLWAY, we look down the hallway. It seems brighter. We stay there for a bit.

Arthur reads on.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

IN THE SAME SHOT THAT REVEALED ARTHUR'S MOTHER, we look at the living room. It seems brighter. We sit there for a bit.

Arthur reads on.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur, pulled away by the noise, looks over the script at the clock.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur's eyes flick to the typewriter. After a moment, he moves back behind the script and continues reading.

INT. BATHROOM

Arthur sits on the toilet reading the script. He laughs and turns the page.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Arthur sits in the bay-window of the living room reading the script.

INT. BATHROOM

Arthur is showering; we can see him moving behind the curtain. The script is open on a stool near one end. Arthur's hand appears and finds a nearby towel, drying off. Arthur pinches the smallest flap of paper and flips to the next page. His hand withdraws back behind the curtain.

INT. KITCHEN

Arthur, dressed in shorts and a t-shirt with a towel draped around his neck, leans against the counter near the sink. He's eating a sandwich with one hand, reading the script on the counter. Nearby is a glass of water.

He LAUGHS, turning a page.

INT. HALLWAY

Arthur comes out of his bedroom, closing the door behind him. He's still reading the script, but is nearing the end.

We follow Arthur as he reads, walking absently from his room through to the kitchen. As we pass the threshold from the hallway to the kitchen proper, we notice a doorway not previously seen or used. It's slightly ajar; we notice that it leads down to a basement shrouded in a **familiar darkness**.

We linger on the darkness for a moment before moving with Arthur again. He's walking through the kitchen, still reading.

NATHAN (O.S.)

Yo! You ready to rock?

ARTHUR

Yeah, I'll be out in a sec!

Arthur tosses his towel on the kitchen table as he passes. We walk with him through the entranceway.

NATHAN (O.S.)

No worries. I'll start warming up.

INT. FOYER

Still reading, Arthur walks through the entranceway and into the living room.

We stay in the foyer. Arthur backs up slowly into the room.

The door is slightly ajar. Daylight leaks through, spilling into the room. BIRDSONG, RUSTLING LEAVES, and WIND can be heard.

A moment. Arthur grips the script tightly.

He walks up to the door. He looks at it and, for a moment, he's going to open it.

He pushes it shut. He locks it and takes a step back.

A moment. Arthur begins to read the script, and gets sucked back in. He moves on.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Arthur rounds the corner. Down the hallway is an open doorway leading to a large, lit room with mirrors - a DANCE STUDIO. The doorway is deep down the hall; the light emanating from the room is bright, but not enough to completely eliminate a present darkness that lingers in the hallway. We see Nathan as he walks through the threshold and into the studio. He begins doing some stretches and warmups.

Face still buried in the script, Arthur walks deep into the hall, through to the end and into the studio.

INT. DANCE STUDIO

The studio is a large, rectangular room with a high ceiling that's occupied by some hanging lights and a few lazy ceiling fans. The sprung floor is comprised of bright wooden planks. One side of the room is a continuous, uninterrupted wall of tall mirrors. In one corner is an upright piano, a large speaker, and PA system. The other corner has the opposite speaker.

Arthur comes through the lone door, still reading. Rather than Arthur's hallway, we see ANOTHER PART OF THE STUDIO BEHIND HIM.

Arthur flips the stack of pages over, closing the script.

ARTHUR

Done!

NATHAN

(stretching)

Nice! Good timing. How you feeling this morning?

Arthur strides over near Nathan. Arthur puts the script down and follows Nathan in his stretches.

ARTHUR

Peachy. Prayed to the porcelain gods for a bit.

NATHAN

Don't we all from time to time?

ARTHUR

True. Worth it though. Thanks for taking me out last night. And for hauling me around the stage too.

The pair LAUGH. Nathan touches his toes, letting out a SATISFIED SIGH as he does. Arthur follows, but isn't quite able to touch his toes.

The pair continue to cycle through stretches as they converse, with Arthur trying to follow Nathan.

NATHAN

Not a problem! It was a fuckin' blast. Speaking of which, have you danced before? Like, formally so?

ARTHUR

No, but I played lots of sports when we were kids. Up until high-school too, but stopped. Obviously.

NATHAN

I get that. Still, you move pretty well for a decrepit old man.

ARTHUR

Happy to hear it. And fuck you.

NATHAN

You doing anything now?

ARTHUR

What do you mean?

NATHAN

Like sports or...I dunno, whatever really. I mean, I haven't seen you in literally ages.

ARTHUR

(laughing)
To say the least!

The pair stop stretching and sit on the floor. Arthur takes a moment.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I don't do much really. Just kind of...lounging around. Chill. Think.

NATHAN

Do you work or anything?

ARTHUR
No. Well, not in the normal sense.
I write. Or try to.

NATHAN
Damn! So you work from home?

ARTHUR
Yeah. I guess so.

NATHAN
Really? Man's out here living the
dream. Colour me jealous. Got any
projects on the go?

ARTHUR
A script.

NATHAN
Nice. How's it coming?

ARTHUR
You know. Going.

NATHAN
(laughing)
One of those eh? I feel you. The
artistic process can be a bitch.

ARTHUR
Yeah. What's your life like these
days?

NATHAN
My life is fuckin' nuts right now.
Finishing up my degree, working,
teaching a bit at the studio here
and there. Trying my best to stay
sane.

ARTHUR
Jesus. Busy.

NATHAN
Busy but happy! Although I don't
really have a lot of time for going
out, which is a major bummer.

ARTHUR
You seeing anyone?

NATHAN
Nope. Ain't got the time. I got me
eye on someone though.

ARTHUR
(bad Scottish accent)
Oh! A wee crush eh?

The pair LAUGH.

NATHAN
Aye laddie. Someone special in your
life?

ARTHUR
Naw.
(pause)
Not really. Find it hard to meet
people these days.

NATHAN
Kind of in your own world eh? I
feel that. Well, either way, I'm
glad you stumbled across our humble
little troupe. I think you'll like
being around. I'm stoked that your
going to be around. Even though
it's definitely not chill.

ARTHUR
(half smiling)
Yeah...I think I'll like it too.

Nathan starts to get up. Arthur stares forward. The lights
dim.

Nathan claps his hands together. The lights come to normal
brightness.

NATHAN
Alright! Let's do a quick warmup
before we get into the choreo.

Nathan walks over to the PA system; his gym bag and a jacket
lie discarded on the ground. He rummages through the bag and
finds his phone. He plugs it into the PA.

Nathan puts on a SONG. It's **ENERGETIC** with a **CLEAR RHYTHM**; he
waves Arthur over. Arthur joins him.

*Note: The song CONTINUES TO PLAY throughout the following
sequence, evolving and becoming more dynamic in tandem with
the action.*

Nathan grooves along to the beat, dancing his way over to
Arthur. He sets up beside him.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
We're gonna start with some basics,
and ramp up from there. Start with
your right foot, and follow me.

Nathan takes a starting pose, holding his right foot forward.
He looks ready yet loose, poised for elegant action. Arthur
follows suit, matching in the mirror.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Perfect - here we go.
(with the beat)
And...five, six, seven, eight!

Nathan moves, dipping into a step and shifting his opposite
foot into a point. He begins a step-point, step-point pattern
towards the opposite end of the room.

Arthur watches, studying the movement.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Okay, ready? And...five, six,
seven, eight!

Arthur manages to get away on beat. Clumsily he tries to
match the movement, kind of getting it for a few moments
while staring at his feet.

He quickly loses the pattern, fumbling the movement and
stopping only a few feet off his starting point.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
No problem, start again.

Nathan crosses the room and stands just in front of Arthur.
He resets to the opening position. Arthur follows.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Okay and here we go...five, six,
seven, eight!

They move together. Arthur gets off on the beat and manages
to make it further this time, somewhat gracefully.

After a few steps, Arthur loses it. He lets out a FRUSTRATED
SIGH.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Hey, that's alright. I mean, I know
I make things look easy, but I've
been doing this for a long time.
C'mon, let's reset.

Arthur paces over to the end of the room.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Don't think about the steps too
hard, focus on the rhythm. Feel the
music and let yourself be taken by
it. You'll get it. Ready?

Arthur takes a breath and nods. They setup.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
And...five, six, seven, eight!

They take off together, moving in tandem. Arthur concentrates, looking up at the mirror. Compared to the Nathan's grace, Arthur is clunky and stiff.

But Arthur is getting it; he's keeping up with Nathan.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Hey, there we go! Fuck yes!

Arthur and Nathan continue to move. They make it most of the way across the room before Arthur stumbles and almost falls. Arthur manages to catch himself before he does.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
(laughing)
Not fuckin bad.

Nathan pulls Arthur out of his awkward position.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Again?

Arthur grins, determined.

ARTHUR
Again.

The pair setup. Without saying anything, they move on the same beat together.

Time begins to slow. The music stills plays at regular time, swelling in the background.

Arthur moves smoother, shedding a bit of the awkwardness. Step, shift, point. Step, shift, point. He's getting it.

In the mirror, Arthur wears slacks and a collared shirt — his costume from the show. The tangible Arthur still wears shorts and a t-shirt. Nathan's reflection is unchanged. Arthur and his reflection move in tandem, matching the dance moves.

Arthur's moves become smoother as his confidence grows. The pair make it to the end.

NATHAN
Something harder?

ARTHUR
Let's do it.

Nathan sets up in a different position. Arthur matches. On the beat Nathan launches forward in a more complex move, followed by Arthur after a brief observation.

We follow Arthur as he glides across the room. In the mirror, Arthur is dressed in robes, executing the moves on a stage. He smiles as he glides, focused and present in the moment.

The pair reach the end, Arthur just behind Nathan. Nathan nods, impressed.

NATHAN
Alright alright - try this.

Nathan readies and launches forward, executing a flawless step-leap combination while keeping his face smiling, performing even during the warmup.

Arthur readies himself and launches forward, executing the beginning of the move. He steps and leaps, rising into the air. He rises and rises, floating weightless into the air.

In the mirror, Arthur is now wearing shabby black pants, collared shirt, vest, and knit-cap. His face is dirtied with fake soot as he rises into the air on a black stage. He flips through the air, making surprised and whimsical faces.

Arthur lands onto the studio floor. He follows up with a few more leaps, making it to the end. Nathan is standing behind the piano; he waves Arthur over.

Arthur stands beside Nathan as he PLAYS A FEW NOTES. Nathan SINGS along to them, and motions for Arthur to do the same. Arthur leans out and braces against the piano, concentrating and TRYING TO SING to them as well.

In the mirror, Arthur and Nathan, still in the same positions, are now wearing costumes and surrounded by other singing ensemble members; they lean over a set-piece. In the studio, the entire ensemble surrounds in the piano singing together. They all move to the beat and sing in tandem. A phrase ends, and they all execute a set of choreography, spinning away from the set. The ensemble disappears out of frame.

Arthur continues the spin in the studio. Hannah and Nathan appear, dancing into a group with Arthur. Arthur and Nathan are in different clothing than before.

Arthur finishes the spin, and puts his hands on his knees, winded from the complex chain of movements. Nathan and Hannah are tired too, but much less winded than Arthur.

Nathan passes by and slaps Arthur on the butt. Hannah crouches in front of Arthur and makes a crying-face, scrubbing her hands on her cheeks. Arthur LAUGHS as Hannah smiles and gets up. After a moment, Arthur rises and the other two get into position on either side of him. The trio resets, and we see Nathan mouth "Five, Six, Seven, Eight!" All three start a set of more complex hip-hop style moves.

We focus on Arthur. He looks at Hannah's reflection, admiring the way she moves and how she can look so elegant, so confident. He pulls his eyes away, focusing back on the choreography. Hannah looks over at him and smiles.

Arthur stamps his foot; we're now on stage with him, dressed in a full suit and overcoat. He stands at the head of a group of costumed ensemble members who are on either side of him looking up. He sings loudly and with confidence, embodying a strong masculine character, motioning with his hands towards the ensemble members and the audience.

Arthur reaches to the side, hand outstretched. Back in the studio, Hannah reaches out and grasps Arthur's. Arthur pulls her in, spinning Hannah into his body, continuing a fast-paced ballroom dance. They sing to music, practicing together. In the background, the Director and a choreographer moving along, gesticulating and shouting notes. Arthur spins her out and they stand opposite each-other, singing. They step towards each-other.

They step towards each-other on stage, fully costumed and singing in tandem. They come together slowly, standing face-to-face. Arthur raises his upstage hand, palm up towards Hannah. She does the same, pressing her hand into his. Their hands intertwine. Arthur reaches and pulls her into his body, moving in for a dramatic kiss. Hannah does the same, both with their eyes closed and leaning in.

Just before they kiss, they stop. After a moment they both open their eyes and smile, launching back into a song. Hands still intertwined, they turn out towards the audience hitting a huge note.

Back in the studio, Arthur stands in the same position; arms outstretched and singing out towards a massive panel of people behind a table. They judge him silently during an important audition. Arthur, looks over to his empty hand. We focus on it, emphasizing the emptiness. He closes it in a resigned grip, his face pained. He tears up, bringing his arms close to his chest as he sings the final notes of the song.

The music that has taken us through these events finally comes to a close. The sounds of reality finally fade back in.

INT. STAGE

Arthur, now costumed, stands on in the final position for a beat, letting the moment linger. Behind him is a massive cast of people. Arthur lets the moment go — the audience ERUPTS WITH APPLAUSE and rises in a STANDING OVATION. He bows humbly, seemingly experienced with this moment, before turning to the cast. He motions to them, respectfully clapping as he does.

Nearby is Hannah. She is also costumed and applauding. Arthur stops in his turn and looks at her with a smile. He reaches out, beckoning for her to join him. She does so with a smile, taking his hand.

Hand-in-hand, the pair turn to the audience. The rest of the cast take each-other's hands behind them. Arthur raises his and Hannah's grasped hands high before dipping and bowing at, leading the tide of final bows. They hold the bow for a moment before rising one more. The bow again.

As the curtain begins to close, Arthur looks over to Hannah. She stares out to the audience smiling, captured by the moment. Arthur is captured by her.

The curtain closes.

Hannah turns to Arthur, a grin plastered across her face. Arthur looks at her; he's happy but his smile doesn't reach his eyes. She leaps into him with a hard, ecstatic embrace. Just as when he first stumbled into the theatre, Arthur wasn't expecting it. After a moment he reciprocates the embrace, leaning into it.

Hannah breaks the embrace and holds him by the shoulders. She smiles at him, but doesn't say anything. Arthur takes her hands from his shoulder and holds them in front of him.

ARTHUR

Thank you for introducing me to
this. I can't tell you what it
means to me. I've been meaning to
ask...would you like to go to
dinner with me?

A group finely-dressed women storm up to Hannah with a large bouquet of roses, SCREAMING IN HAPPINESS and cutting Arthur off — Hannah, surprised, does not hear the last of Arthur's question and turns to the women.

HANNAH

Oh my god!

Hannah's hands break away from Arthur's. The group of women descends into hugs and EXCITED SQUEALS and CONGRATULATIONS.

He nearly gets tackled from the side by an energetic body. It's Nathan, who wraps his arm around Arthur's shoulder and shakes him.

NATHAN

Congratulations man! That was brilliant!

ARTHUR

Thanks dude.

Nathan smiles and claps Arthur on the shoulder. He turns and moves towards Hannah and the girls. Nathan interrupts them, putting a hand on Hannah's shoulder.

He spins her around and puts an arm around her waist. He pulls her in and they KISS. The girls are delighted; they faux swoon and laugh. Nathan and Hannah breakaway from the kiss, smiling at each other.

Arthur looks on, stunned. Surrounded by happy people, he suddenly is on an island of his own.

A group of ensemble members come up and congratulate Arthur, just like his first show. He puts on a happy face as they shake him and turn him towards backstage.

Arthur looks back over his shoulder. Hannah and Nathan, arm in arm, chat with the girls.

INT. DRESSING ROOM - LATER

In street clothes, Arthur sits alone in a group dressing room in front of a line of lighted mirrors. His is the only one illuminated. Makeup and small props crowd the counter in front of him. Wigs, props, and costumes hang on a few racks and are scattered around.

A half-full glass of water sits on the desk. The door is open to the backstage hallway, and there are a few VOICES. Otherwise, it's QUIET.

A small group of cast and crew in casual clothing walks by the room. They SHOUT and JEST at each-other as they pass but do not stop at the room. We hear their voices FADE AWAY as they travel down the hall before going through a DOOR. We hear it CLOSE. It's SILENT.

Arthur sits in silence for while. He gets up, grabs his coat, and leaves the room.

INT. BACKSTAGE

Arthur walks down the hallway and passes the entrance to the stage. He stops and looks into it. After a moment he steps through.

INT. STAGE

Arthur walks through the semi-darkened wing and onto the stage. The working lights are on, illuminating the stage and theatre evenly. Arthur walks out and stands centre stage. He looks out to the empty audience and the theatre at large, appreciating the grandness of the space.

A JANITOR, similar to Arthur in height and appearance, goes about his business cleaning the theatre.

Arthur closes his eyes, imagining the feeling of the crowd.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

STAGE MANAGER (O.S.)

Did you talk to her yet?

Arthur opens his eyes and looks over to the wing. The Stage Manager stands there in street clothes. Arthur SIGHS and looks away.

ARTHUR

No.

STAGE MANAGER

It'll come buddy, don't worry.

ARTHUR

Will it? Seems pointless now.

STAGE MANAGER

Pointless? Better to express your feelings than not.

ARTHUR

I know, I just...

Arthur looks out at the audience as the Stage Manager comes up beside him. They stand side by side for a bit.

STAGE MANAGER

Honesty is the best policy.

ARTHUR
Maybe, but now that they're
together? It doesn't seem right.
(pause)
I can't believe I didn't know. Did
you?

STAGE MANAGER
No. I had my suspicions, but I'm
just as surprised as you are.

Arthur looks over at her.

ARTHUR
Honestly?

The Stage Manager looks back at Arthur.

STAGE MANAGER
Honestly.

They turn and look out towards the audience again. Beat.

ARTHUR
I suppose you're right.

STAGE MANAGER
As per usual. Come on, we have a
cast party to attend and the drinks
are calling our names. It'll take
your mind off of things, at least
temporarily.

The Stage Manager pats Arthur on the back and starts to head
off-stage.

Arthur stands there for another moment longer, looking out to
the audience.

Arthur starts to head off-stage. He's a bit behind the Stage
Manager, who's mostly through the wings and almost to the
door. As Arthur continues forward, a BASSY SONG BEAT rises.
Multicoloured lights start to emanate from the door, halating
around the Stage Manager. Arthur's view of the doorway is
obscured.

She reaches the door and starts to descend down a set of
stairs. As she goes down the lights become brighter, spilling
into the wings and the music gets LOUDER.

Arthur reaches the threshold. Lights dance off his face and
clothing and he looks down on a wooden, unfinished set of
stairs leading to a basement.

People with drinks mill by the bottom of the stairs, and Arthur just catches the Stage Manager as she reaches the bottom and rounds off out of sight, SHOUTING GREETINGS.

The TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK. of the clock fades in, matching the beat of the music.

Looking at Arthur from the bottom of the stairs, we see a wall behind him, a hallway, and some kitchen cabinets. **We are in Arthur's house.**

The house is dark.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK. Arthur descends into the basement.

INT. BASEMENT - EVENING

Reaching the bottom of the stairs, Arthur surveys the party proper.

It's a **rager** — the unfinished basement is filled to brim with people. Most are cast and crew from various productions Arthur has appeared in. BASSY MUSIC thumps through the party. Nearly everyone is drinking, some with red-cups, others with bottles and cans.

In one corner, a makeshift dancefloor holds a throbbing mass of people going along to the beat. An exciting beer pong game is happening in another area. Near the centre of the party is another drinking game with playing cards on a coffee table surrounded by well-worn vintage couches.

Nathan sits on the back of one of the couches, a head above most of the party. He notices Arthur over the crowd and CHEERS.

NATHAN
(waving)
Arthur! Arthur!

Arthur spots Nathan waving and pushes through the crowd.

Arthur gets to the table, surrounded by recognizable ensemble members from the first show. Seeing Arthur, they collectively SHOUT CONGRATULATIONS and APPLAUD Arthur's performance. Arthur bows sheepishly.

Arthur jostles around the table while happily greeting his colleagues, popping himself on the back of the couch beside Nathan, who has two shots of whiskey waiting in hand. He passes one to Arthur.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Cheers to you brother, great
fuckin' work tonight. Fine way to
close out the run.

ARTHUR
Cheers to you man. I wouldn't be
here if you hadn't shown me the
way.

NATHAN
To many more.

ARTHUR
Yeah. To many more.

Smiling, they clink the glasses together, and Nathan quickly
downs the shot. Arthur lingers for a moment, a look passing
over his face, before downing the shot. They both grimace
from the taste.

The BASSY BEAT of the music permeates the party. TICK. TICK.
TICK. TICK.

LAUGHING, Nathan SHOUTS and motions at a person around the
table, who passes him two bottled beers. He hands one to
Arthur, and they crack them to quickly drown the taste of the
shot.

The people around the table LAUGH at a development in the
game, and Arthur and Nathan watch.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

The drinking game is still going on. Arthur takes a swig of
his nearly finished drink. He thumbs it for a second before
nudging Nathan.

ARTHUR
Congratulations by the way.

NATHAN
For what?

ARTHUR
You and Hannah.

NATHAN
(laughing)
Oh! Thanks! Yeah, it's kind of
random. I just asked her out one
day and boom, here we are.

ARTHUR
Just like that?

NATHAN
Well, not *just* like that. I've been
crushing on her a while but I
haven't had the courage to jump on
it.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK. Arthur nods.

ARTHUR
Hmm. Why didn't you tell me?

Nonchalant, Nathan shrugs.

NATHAN
Dunno. Didn't really come up.

Arthur takes a swig of his beer, finishing it off. He gets
up.

ARTHUR
I'm gonna grab another beer. Want
one?

NATHAN
Yeah buddy, that would be great!

Arthur presses through his colleagues, leaving the table and
into the crowd. The game continues on.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur presses through the crowd. No-one turns to look or
acknowledges him.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

HEELED FOOTSTEPS matching the TICK. Someone is coming down
the stairs. Arthur looks over.

The person reaches the bottom. **It's the Woman from the
Hallway and Coffee-shop.** She stands alone, surveying the
party. Arthur stares, stupefied.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur pushes through the crowd. He gets through, coming out
of the throng near the woman. She stands there coolly, not
bothered by her solitude.

ARTHUR
Hey!

She turns and looks at Arthur.

WOMAN

Hey.

ARTHUR

I'm Arthur.

Arthur extends his hand. After a brief moment, she extends hers.

APRIL

I'm April.

The shake hands.

ARTHUR

April. Nice to meet you. Do we know each other?

Still holding hands, a hint of recognition passes over April.

APRIL

I'm not sure. But it's nice to meet you too Arthur.

They break hands after a moment.

ARTHUR

Are you here with anyone?

APRIL

Yeah, I came looking for some friends, but I don't see them.

ARTHUR

Well, can I get you a drink in the meantime? I was just going to grab one as well.

APRIL

Sure. A beer if you have it.

Arthur motions and they make their way into the party. They arrive at a cooler beside a table full of various bottles of liquor and cups. Arthur opens the cooler and grabs two bottles of beer. He cracks one and hands it to April. She takes it.

APRIL (CONT'D)

Thanks. Cheers.

She raises hers as Arthur cracks the other. He raises his and they have a drink.

APRIL (CONT'D)
So whose party is this anyway?

ARTHUR
Mine, I think.

APRIL
You think?

ARTHUR
Well, this is my house, so I
suppose that makes it at least
partially mine.

APRIL
Really? That's a shame. I heard the
guy that lives here is a bit of a
weirdo.

ARTHUR
You know I've heard that too. A bit
forward with strangers. Thought I
would come by and confirm the
rumors for myself.

APRIL
That's the only sensible thing.
These people could be in danger
after all. I mean, what if he
wasn't a he, but an it?

ARTHUR
An unexpected turn! Interesting.

APRIL
Interesting or nefarious?

ARTHUR
Nefarious?! Are you implying a
monster could be here, in Suburbia?

APRIL
(motioning to the party)
What better place to hide, than
among the prey?

They laugh together and take a drink.

HANNAH (O.S.)
Arthurrrrr!

Hannah leaps onto Arthur's back, arms circling his neck.
Arthur chokes on his beer as Hannah suffocates him with her
hug. She is clearly drunk; her words are SLIGHTLY SLURRED.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
You're finally here! I'm so happy!
(noticing April)
Who's this fox? I'm Hannah! The
star of the show!

April is unimpressed. She raises her beer to Arthur.

APRIL
(to Arthur)
I'm gonna go find my posse. Thanks
for the beer.

ARTHUR
Anytime.

She turns away. Hannah hums happily on Arthur's back.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Hey, come find me later.

April looks over her shoulder at Arthur.

APRIL
(smirking)
Sure. If you're still alive.

She turns and heads through the party, disappearing into the crowd.

Hannah jumps off of Arthur's back, stumbling a bit.

HANNAH
I'm so happy you made it! I was
starting to think you weren't
coming.

She's close to Arthur, pawing at his chest playfully, giving his clothes a slight tug.

ARTHUR
Hard to miss a party at my own
house.

HANNAH
Wait. This is *your* place?! Well,
you'll have to give me a tour
later...but you need to play
catchup first.

She lifts the beer up to Arthur's mouth, pushing him to drink more. Arthur drinks the rest of the beer by force, finishing it with a grimace. Hannah giggles.

ARTHUR
(burping)
God damn!

NATHAN (O.S.)
There you are.

Nathan emerges from the crowd, moving for Hannah. He spins her around and pulls her close, and they kiss. Arthur stares on, still recovering from the chug.

Nathan aggressively smacks Hannah in the butt. She jumps and YELPS, breaking the kiss and pushing Nathan away as he LAUGHS. Arthur puts on a happy face as the couple play-fights.

Nathan abruptly stops and points at Hannah.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Shots?

Hannah nods enthusiastically. Nathan points at Arthur.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Shots?

Arthur nods with a shrug, less enthusiastic.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
Shots!

Nathan walks over a table near the cooler. There's a bottle of JAGERMEISTER. He grabs it, cracks it, and raises the bottle to Nathan!

NATHAN (CONT'D)
To love and loss! Another show in
the can!

He take a big swig. He passes it to Hannah, who takes an equally big pull.

She grimaces, and then hands the bottle to Arthur. Arthur raises the bottle in a dull "cheers" before taking a swig.

INT. BASEMENT - BEER PONG TABLE - LATER

Arthur and the Stage Manager are on one side of the beer pong table, playing on a team versus Hannah and Nathan.

The Stage Manager makes a nice shot, pumping her fist; Arthur follows up with an equally nice shot and they celebrate. Nathan and Hannah each grab a cup, intertwine their arms, and chug together.

Arthur looks on, trying to keep up a happy face. He takes a drink from a nearby beer bottle. The Stage Manager notices and gives him a nudge, winking with an understanding smile. Arthur takes a breath, smiles, and nods before turning back to the game.

ARTHUR
Balls back you fucks!

INT. BASEMENT - DRINKING GAME - LATER

Arthur, Hannah, Nathan, the Stage Manager, and a group of party-goers play a drinking game at the coffee table. A beer bottle stands in the middle of the table surrounded by a haphazard but unbroken circle of cards. A few cards are balanced on the top of the bottle.

Hannah very carefully extracts a card from the circle, not breaking the continuous circle. She looks at the card and gleefully points at Arthur.

HANNAH
Finish your drink!

The group lets out a collective "Ohhhhh!" She spins the card around showing the JOKER.

LAUGHING, Arthur starts to chug his drink, much easier than before.

Hannah awkwardly tries to put her card on top of the pile of cards balanced on the bottle. She fails, tipping them all off in the process.

The group, including Arthur, lets out an even bigger "OHHHHH!" as they laugh at Hannah's misfortune. Hannah hangs her head before defiantly swirling her drink and downing it expertly.

She finishes the drink with a flourish, looking at Arthur playfully. Another member of the group starts to grab a card. The Stage Manager looks on.

INT. BASEMENT - DANCE FLOOR - LATER

Arthur, drunk, bounces around the dance floor. He's having a good time. He dances with Hannah, who drunkenly matches Arthur's energy.

Away from the dancefloor we see Nathan doing shots with a random group of people. He's glassy eyed and wobbly, the most intoxicated person at the party. Although still happy and energetic, his movements are uncoordinated and erratic.

Arthur and Hannah sing along to the music and dance together. They touch each other casually but on purpose, caught up in the rhythm and atmosphere. The Stage Manager, also drunk and dancing near them, gets Arthur's attention. They dance while conversing.

STAGE MANAGER

Hey! You having fun?

ARTHUR

Hell yeah! You?

STAGE MANAGER

Yeah! Make sure you...drink water
yeah?

ARTHUR

Of course!

The Stage Manager looks at Hannah. Arthur turns and looks too. He smiles. Turning back to the Stage Manager, she looks at Arthur intensely. She taps her nose with her finger a few times.

Arthur nonchalantly smiles with a shrug as they continue to dance. The Stage Manager shakes her head and goes back to dancing with her partner.

Arthur notices April through the crowd. She heading towards the stairs. He slows and stops, suddenly aware of his drunkenness. He wipes his face and takes a breath.

Arthur tries to exit the dance floor and go to April. Hannah pulls at Arthur, pining for his attention. She grabs his hand, raises it over his head, and spins him around before continuing to dance. Arthur LAUGHS, distracted.

He looks up to the stairs with a smile – April's feet ascend the final steps and disappear. Arthur grows concerned, his dancing slows.

Hannah gets close. She grabs onto Arthur – her dancing becomes sexually charged. She grinds her body into Arthur, drawing his attention back to her.

She looks up at Arthur with a drunken smirk. Arthur is surprised – she spins around, pressing her rear against Arthur's crotch and rolling her body. Arthur breathes quicker as he processes her aggressive physicality. His hands come down and press lightly on the sides of her hips.

Nathan pours another round of shots happily, quickly downing his before the rest of the group can grab theirs. A GUY walking by gets jostled by another partier, causing his entire drink to spill all over Nathan.

NATHAN

What the fuck?!

Nathan drunkenly looks at his soaked, stained clothes – he becomes enraged.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

(slurring)

Watch it you fuckin' dick!

Nathan stands up and shoves the guy. The shove is not very hard, but it causes the guy to stumble back through some partygoers and into a table of various alcohol bottles. The table shakes, knocking over a few bottles onto the ground. They SHATTER.

Arthur hears the glass break. He lifts his hands off of Hannah; she doesn't notice and continues to dance. Arthur looks over to see the Guy, much less drunk and much larger than Nathan, get equally as angry. The Guy slams his drink down onto the table and begins to move with destructive intent towards the swaying, fuming Nathan.

Arthur pushes through the dance floor and crowd to the enraged duo. The Guy shoves Nathan hard into some people standing nearby; they hold Nathan up and push him back up. A ring of people is forming. Arthur steps in and between the men.

ARTHUR

Alright, alright, that's enough.
Let's take a breath.

Nathan stumbles into Arthur, looking for a fight. He points at the Guy.

NATHAN
(slurring)
No, fuck this guy! Fuckin' dick
spilled his drink on me on purpose!

Arthur pushes Nathan away easily, and Nathan stumbles away. He regains his balance but sways in place as Arthur looks at him.

ARTHUR
No he didn't dude, it was an
accident.
(to the Guy)
We're chill, my friend's obviously
fucked up.

The Guy's still aggravated, clenching his fists, but he doesn't move.

NATHAN
I'm not fucked up. *He's* gonna be
fucked up! Come at me you fuckin'
pussy!

Arthur turns sharply to Nathan.

ARTHUR
Shut the fuck up man, you're
fucking wasted and not helping.
(to the Guy)
We good?

The Guy nods and backs off. He snatches his beer off the table and moves away.

Arthur turns back to the swaying Nathan.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Jesus man, what the hell are you
thinking? It's just a fuckin'
drink. No harm done.

Nathan's making the rest of the party look sober. He wobbles and almost falls over. Arthur grabs him by the torso to steady him.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
Let's get you some water bud.

NATHAN
Naw, I'm good. A bathroom though...

Nathan is pale. He HEAVES, nearly tossing his cookies. Alarmed, Arthur quickly hauls him away from the party.

INT. BASEMENT BATHROOM

Arthur fills a red cup from a sink near a kneeling Nathan, who VOMITS PROFUSELY into a toilet.

Arthur sets the cup on the ground near Nathan and sits on the side of a bathtub. He SIGHS.

Hannah drunkenly walks by the bathroom entrance; seeing Arthur, she catches the doorframe and looks in.

HANNAH
(pouting)
Arthur, you left me!

She stumbles in, just now noticing Nathan.

HANNAH (CONT'D)
Ew, is that who I think it is?

ARTHUR
Yeah. He's just had a bit too much.

HANNAH
Ugh, classic. Is he gonna be alright?

ARTHUR
Yeah, should be.

Nathan, done vomiting for the moment, pulls his head out of the toilet and drunkenly leans back into a nearby wall. His eyes are closed, his BREATHING HOARSE.

Delighted, Hannah tugs at Arthur.

HANNAH
(whining)
Come back and dance with meeeee.

Arthur looks back at Nathan.

ARTHUR
No, I'm good. Nathan's pretty fucked up, so...

Hannah keeps tugging.

HANNAH
He literally does this every weekend. He'll be fine. Come oooooon!

ARTHUR

But—

She incessantly tugs harder and harder, slowly pulling Arthur up. He's torn, looking back and forth between Hannah and his friend in need.

Almost out the door, Arthur resists. Hannah grabs his face and turns his head to face her. She looks deep into his eyes. Their faces are close together. She strokes his jaw with a finger, tracing the outline of his lips.

HANNAH

He's fine. Stop worrying.

She smiles. Arthur can't pull away. Hannah tugs him out the door into the party.

Arthur doesn't look back. Nathan, alone in the bathroom, vomits on himself.

INT. BASEMENT - DANCE FLOOR

Arthur and Hannah unapologetically tear up the dancefloor, as if the rest of the party doesn't exist for either of them. They stop occasionally to drink more alcohol before flying into each other's arms again.

The dancing is gradually becoming more sexual. A caress of the arm, a grab of the waist, a touch of the face, a lingering hand on a butt. They come closer and closer, banding together by sexual tension and music.

The music comes to an abrupt end. The two of them are the last on the dance floor, breathing heavily and LAUGHING. They come back to a sort of reality.

The party has died down. Very few people mill about, chatting, leaning, and sitting; all drunk. Many people are passed out in every which way and every manner. We spot the ensemble members amongst them. The Stage Manager's passed out in a chair, a woman draped across her chest.

ARTHUR

Water?

Hannah nods hungrily. Arthur smiles and stumbles over to a cooler, popping it open and taking out an icy bottle of water.

Hannah makes her way to an empty couch, melting into it as sexually as a drunk can, eyeing Arthur.

Arthur walks over and plops himself down beside her. He cracks the water and takes a drink, offering it to Hannah with a smile. She takes it as Arthur leans back into the couch, grinning and catching his breath.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

That was so fun! Dancing is so fun.
Phew.

Hannah doesn't take a drink, putting the bottle down. She leans into Arthur, hungry. She runs her hand across his chest, grabbing at his shirt.

HANNAH

Arthur...

Arthur turns to her. He sees the hunger, but, before he can react, Hannah leans in and kisses him.

Arthur, feeling his own drunken lust, resists. He pushes her away.

ARTHUR

Hannah, I—

She leans in again, forcing herself onto him with her mouth and desire. Arthur tries not to kiss her back, clutching her body to push her away. She takes it as an invitation, pressing into him more. She mounts Arthur, straddling him and trapping him on the couch.

Arthur's willpower starting to melt. He feels her body.

The lights start to dim. Faint WHISPERS start to rise.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur resists. He turns his face away and tries to push her away again.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

(breathless)

Stop. Stop. Please.

The whispers RECEDE SOMEWHAT, the lights rise a bit.

Hannah is unphased. She presses in harder, clutching at Arthur, feeling him up and kissing his neck.

HANNAH

I know you want me Arthur.

Arthur almost gives in. The whispers get LOUDER, the lights dim. He tries to press her away, but he can't — he is trapped beneath her.

ARTHUR
But Nathan, he's—

Arthur breathes heavily, clutching Hannah by the waist. She breaks away from his neck and looks down on him, pressing her hands against his chest. Their faces are close. She grinds herself down into Arthur, gyrating her hips. Arthur's willpower is nearly gone.

The lights continue to dim. The whispers grow EVEN LOUDER. The pair are practically isolated by light.

HANNAH
Fuck him. I want you.

The rest of the party ceases to exist. Hannah descends onto Arthur, giving him no choice, pressing her mouth into his. She kisses him hard, intense with desire.

Arthur submits to her advance momentarily, clutching at her waist. He turns away drunkenly, weakly.

ARTHUR
Hannah, please...

She presses back in, animalistic. She paws through Arthur's hair, grabbing it and controlling the movement of his head while she ravages his mouth.

Powerless, Arthur gives in. His own desire takes him, and he kisses her back.

Arthur opens his eyes and looks out over the party. The partygoers are now all awake in the same place, staring intensely at Arthur.

Hannah grabs Arthur's face and turns his attention back to her. She grinds on Arthur while holding his head. He closes his eyes and leans back. She leans in and kisses him.

The whispers are DEAFENING. Hannah's hands creep down his head, caressing his cheeks. She holds on behind his head, as another wraps near his neck, squeezing.

Hannah moves down to kiss Arthur's neck and we glimpse a diabolic grin spread across her face. Her hand squeezes tighter.

Arthur's eyes snap open. All around him are the partiers, standing shoulder to shoulder, looming over the pair. No longer drunk, Arthur is awake, lucid, and confused.

The Stage Manager stands nearby in the front-row. She glares at Arthur, shaking her head in disappointment. Arthur gawks at her, horrified.

Hannah still grinds herself into Arthur, more forcefully than before. She starts to clutch at his head and neck harder, face buried into his neck. Arthur flinches painfully.

Arthur frantically scans the crowd – disappointed and angry faces of his friends and colleagues are everywhere. He finally lands on Nathan, front and centre. Nathan is dirty and covered in vomit. His fists are clenched, white knuckled. He shakes with rage, directed at Arthur. Tears stream down his face, mingling with the vomit on his face and clothes. Vomit leaks out of his mouth and through his clenched teeth. His tears turn to vomit.

Arthur struggles against Hannah, horrified and disturbed. He tries to push her away, but she only digs in harder. Arthur SHOUTS IN PAIN – he can't get her off him. He cannot escape.

The crowd stares on. The Crew stares on. The Cast stares on. The Stage Manager stares on. Nathan stares on.

Arthur weeps as he tries to push Hannah away. He SCREAMS as she digs in hard, drawing blood with her nails at Arthur's neck and scalp.

Disembodied hands slither from behind Arthur all over his body. They clutch at his clothing and flesh, pulling him in and pinning his entire body down to the couch. Arthur SCREAMS.

Hannah finally relinquishes her cruel grip on Arthur, laughing as she rises. Her face is covered with blood, eyes a vicious glowing red. Fangs, home amongst her blood-soaked, demonic smile, glint in the light.

HANNAH

(giggling)

Oh Arthur, I've seen the way you
look at me. I know you've wanted
this for a long time. And you're so
bad not caring about your friend.
It makes this even more delicious.

Blood streams from holes in Arthur's neck. Arthur CRIES OUT as the hands crunch into his body, ripping through his clothes and puncturing his flesh and muscle.

Blood sprays out and starts to soak into the couch, red patches growing into a massive red blob.

A giant pair of hands emerge and encircle Arthur's neck. They start crush it, cutting off his shouts of pain, blood spurting out from the wounds.

Arthur is horrified. The room stares. Hannah stares gleefully.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Hannah leans in, placing a hand on Arthur's chest. She smiles devilishly, face stained with blood.

She pushes.

INT./EXT. VOID

The hands pull Arthur in, sucking him down through the couch and into the Void. Arthur is suddenly in free-fall, air whipping his hair and clothes as he gains momentum.

Through a lighted hole in mid-air, malicious visage of Hannah leers through, flanked by the grim gazes of Nathan, the Stage Manager, and the other Cast and Crew. Arthur looks up at them as he plummets into nothing, the hole gradually disappearing above.

The hands give Arthur no quarrel. They squeeze into his body, crushing and splintering his bones, twisting his body horribly. The large hands crush Arthur's throat. The bones in his neck CRACK AND FRACTURE. The DEAFENING WHISPERS FOLLOW HIM DOWN.

Arthur does not move. He doesn't make any effort to struggle, to resist. He just falls.

Tears glitter in the fading light as they whip off Arthur's face and disappear into nothing.

Below, a wooden floor appears out of the darkness. It's rising quickly.

Arthur stares up. He CHOKES on blood, trying to breathe only by instinct. Blood leaks from the wounds, creating trails of blood in the air like marionette strings. His eyes become bloodshot and red. Tears turn bloody.

The WHISPERS DO NOT STOP.

The light in Arthur's eyes dims, almost going out. He gazes lifelessly above.

Arthur smashes against the ground in a violent explosion of gore, shattered bones, and bloody mist.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

It's dark. Behind the curtains we can see a hint of bars covering the window from the outside. Light from somewhere in the hallway presses through the partially open bedroom door, sharply shadowing the room.

The nightstand is empty. The sheets are crumpled and discarded. Arthur huddles on the floor in a corner.

Arthur HACKS and COUGHS violently. The fit subsides after a while. He stays in the corner, unmoving.

Time passes. Arthur remains still.

A wind starts to blow through the house. It whistles, pushing into Arthur's room and rustling his clothes and blankets. He shivers.

A person outside the room SHUFFLES SLOWLY, and something SCRAPES the ground methodically. It and the scraping slowly moves past the door, its shadow rolling over the lump that is Arthur.

Another set of SHUFFLES and SCRAPES. More. Even more. The shadows and noises regularly pass by Arthur's room.

Arthur can feel the shadows. He cowers from them, retreating further into the corner.

More SHUFFLES. More SCRAPES. More shadows.

Arthur slowly looks over his shoulder out to the door. The shadows slowly ripple over his severely gaunt, hollow face. Arthur's eyes are dull and faded.

After a moment, he slowly turns and crawls to the corner of the bed. He grabs the edge, knobby fingers curling around the mattress. He braces against the bed and he lifts himself slowly up, ligaments and joints POPPING. His shirt and boxers hangs loosely on his emaciated, sickly frame as he fully stands up.

Arthur looks out to the door. He COUGHS HARD, and slowly trudges over to the door. He peeks through the crack.

A line of similarly EMACIATED MEN shuffle along the hallway. The line emerges from the basement and continues down the hallway, disappearing far into the darkness. Dim light bulbs covered with a metal cage dangle from cords fastened to the ceiling at regular intervals, illuminating the corridor somewhat.

The men are identical. Emaciated, gaunt, and extremely dirty, covered in dirt and grime. Their heads hang low, faces covered by greasy, unwashed hair or the odd miner's helmet. They all wear filthy t-shirts and boxers, draped loosely on their meager frames. All of them drag large pickaxes behind them, scraping against the ground and gouging the floor.

Arthur looks on. He does not react to the sight.

One man looks up at the door as it passes by, staring at Arthur. It's another Arthur, identical to the original - **A HOLLOW-ARTHUR (Hollow)**. The entire line is comprised of these identical Hollow-Arthurs.

The Hollow doesn't react to Arthur. It's as if it hadn't seen anything. It simply turns its head back and keeps walking, trudging along in line with the other Hollows.

Arthur walks out and towards the living room. He accidentally bumps a Hollow, who falls over into the wall and slides down limply. It stares absently at nothing. The other Hollows continue to walk, stepping on the fallen one without care.

By instinct, Arthur bends over and tries to help the Hollow up. Arthur tugs, attempting to pull it to its feet. It simply does not react or move, limply lying against the wall. Arthur gives up, letting the Hollow slump back against the wall. He continues on. The line continues on.

INT. LIVING ROOM

The living room is an absolute mess. Dust, dirt, and grime cover every surface and wall. Hollows blanket the room in every which way; seated, lying down, standing, wandering aimlessly, fetal position, and so on. The kitchen, foyer, and dining room are no different, utterly grimy and crowded with Hollows.

The Hollows barely make a sound other than hoarse breathing and the occasional moan. A COUGH here, a HACK there. The feet of those who mill around SHUFFLE lightly against the dirty floor.

Arthur scans the room, landing on the typewriter. The typewriter and desk are spotless.

Arthur looks up at the clock; it's still there on the wall, completely untouched by the dust and grime. It does not move. Concern touches the otherwise blank face of Arthur.

HEAVY STOMPING erupts from down the hallway.

BOSS (O.S.)
Alright boys, time to get to work!

A tall, heavysset man emerges from the darkness – this is the BOSS, early 50's. He looks like an older, overweight, taller Arthur. A burgundy suit stretches over his rotund form which carelessly shoves past the hallway Hollows, smashing many of them into the walls. They collapse and don't move.

The hallway lights glint off his slicked-back hair as he talks out of the side of his mouth through a lit stogie.

BOSS (CONT'D)
C'mon you bums, lets get a move on!

The Boss finally notices Arthur staring. He stretches out his arms in a welcoming gesture, smiling wide.

BOSS (CONT'D)
There he is! The man, the myth, the legend!

The Boss stomps over, absently knocking over more Hollows. He grabs Arthur by the hand hard, shaking it uncomfortably with two familiar, doughy hands. He looms over Arthur.

Arthur lets himself be manhandled.

BOSS (CONT'D)
I can't tell you how happy I am
that you've finally arrived!
Preparations of your grand vision
are well on their way and
progressing nicely – all under my
watch I might add.

The Boss gives Arthur a greasy wink. With a salesman's flourish he rises and motions down the hallway, into the darkness.

BOSS (CONT'D)
Shall we?

Arthur doesn't react. With a smile, the boss trundles off towards the hallway. Arthur follows.

The Boss CRUNCHES on the fallen Hollows as he speaks, focused on his mission. Arthur steps around or over them.

BOSS (CONT'D)
Phase One, the tunneling, was completed some-time ago. This main tunnel here was of highest priority. That was really the biggest hurdle in the project, getting it off the ground, or, into it.

The Boss continues down the main hallway, seemingly endless. As they walk, the hallway transitions from dank dirt to rough, damp concrete both on the ground and the walls. Adjacent halls appear.

BOSS (CONT'D)
(laughing)
Check it out! The boys, hard at work!

The Boss points down one of the deep adjacent hallways. Construction lights stretch off into darkness. Arthur looks down to see many Hollows weakly swinging their pickaxes into the dirt walls.

The Boss puffs on the cigar, blowing smoke haphazardly, most of it into Arthur's face. Arthur doesn't react.

BOSS (CONT'D)
Getting more space is so important. Storage. Transportation. Temporary housing for the boys. Well, more permanent than expected, but there's just so many workers to put up! And progress demands some sacrifice.

The Boss LAUGHS MERRILY, enthralled by the joy of progress. Arthur continues to follow.

The main tunnel is coming to an end; there's a large, open space at the end of it.

BOSS (CONT'D)
And, of course, Phase Two is already well underway.

INT. THE CORE

Arthur and the Boss step onto a rusted metal platform and into a **massive** room.

The room is a giant, brutalist concrete cylinder. Impossibly high and deep, it extends farther than the eye can see above and below. The cylinder is ringed by layers and layers of barred cells running the perimeter of the room. Each level is connected by clunky, rusted metal stairs and catwalks. A separate concrete cylinder lies at the core, extending above and below as high and low as can be seen; it's dotted with more metal walkways the lead into it from the ringed levels. Darkened hallways extend away from the core outwards at regular intervals on every level.

Thousands of Hollow wander about aimlessly, shuffling all over the levels and walkways.

The Boss steps forward to the edge and puts his hands on the railings, taking a deep breath and drinking in the sight. Arthur steps up beside him.

BOSS
(exhaling)
Ahh. Beautiful, isn't it? So well
designed, so well envisioned.
(to Arthur)
Fine work Arthur, fine work. Come.

They travel along a catwalk on the edge of the room, circling around, illuminated by dirty, dull fluorescent tube-lights hanging loosely from the catwalk layer above.

The Boss motions to the cells as they pass by.

BOSS (CONT'D)
I took the liberty of improving on
your original design. At first each
room was going to have a
nightstand, closet, kitchen,
bathroom, a door, blah blah. But
then I realized the boys don't *need*
that! They only need their work,
each other. A true brotherhood.

The cells are nearly bare. The sliding, locking bars are open on most of the shadowed rooms, illuminated only by the threadbare ambient light from the catwalk. The only feature of the room is a concrete slab built into the corner, serving as a bed. Arthur stares into them blankly.

BOSS (CONT'D)
Simplicity. Focus. Progress. That's
the goal here. It's provides the
boys purpose, and they really get
shit done when they have purpose. A
resounding success overall – or
rather, so far!

Hollows occupy some of the cells. Laying unmoving on the bed, standing facing a corner, sitting, and so on. All of them stare blankly at nothing.

BOSS (CONT'D)
(pointing down a hallway)
We're expanding quickly and at a steady pace. We haven't reached the end yet, which is a fantastic development. I mean, think of the possibilities!? This project could be endless!

The Boss LAUGHS again. Arthur continues to follow.

The pair turn onto a catwalk leading to the core. The Boss carelessly pushes past a Hollow, knocking it over the railing. Arthur stops and watches it fall. The Hollow continues to stare blankly as it spins like a ragdoll in the air before disappearing into the silent void.

The Boss stops and looks over his shoulder.

BOSS (CONT'D)
(grinning)
C'mon Arthur! You haven't even seen the best part yet.

He continues forward. Arthur stares into the darkness. After a moment, Arthur looks back up and follows.

They arrive at the concrete core. On it is a deep-set, damp concrete hallway. The Boss enters, followed shortly by Arthur. They walk along, footsteps ECHOING down the corridor.

The hallway begins to transition from the dirty concrete to clean, shining black marble on the floors, walls, and ceiling. Light appears, emanating from ornate golden sconces. Side-tables adorned with glittering vases and gold objects pass by at frequent, regular intervals underneath the sconces.

They arrive at the centre, nearing a pair of curved golden doors. A small golden panel with two buttons is inset in the wall beside it.

The Boss presses a fat finger into one. DING. The doors slide open. It's an ELEVATOR.

The elevator's cylindrical interior is lavish; more shining black marble lines the floor and walls trimmed in gold. The tall, rounded ceiling is trimmed ornately, centred around a gorgeous crystal chandelier reminiscent of the theatre's.

The Boss steps in first, standing in the middle and taking up most of the space. Arthur steps in front of him and turns around, both of them facing the door.

The Boss looms over Arthur. He reaches over Arthur's shoulder and presses another button on the elevator's wall. The elevator shudders to life.

They rise up in silence, smoke filling the elevator as the Boss puffs away on his cigar with a grin.

INT. BOSS'S OFFICE

DING. The doors pull apart. Smoke billows out as Arthur steps into an equally extravagant office.

The room is a giant glass dome. Uninterrupted, curved glass stretches high above. The golden light from the elevator spills out across a floor of even more black marble, ending in gold trim. Outside are more layers cells, stretching above endlessly into darkness. The dull lights from the catwalk don't touch the dark office.

The Boss steps out. The doors close, cutting off the light. The elevator retracts into the floor and disappears. The office is now a 360° dome.

Directly ahead is an impressive, carved wooden desk lit by a lone lamp. It's extravagant, inlaid with many types of wood, ivory, and gold. An imposing, ornate chair is behind it with a few less ornate and smaller chairs for visitors on the other side. The Boss makes his way over and motions to one.

BOSS

Please, take a seat! Make yourself comfortable.

The Boss veers off to a wall of alcohol. It's an intense and sprawling collection of expensive alcohol bottles set within a complex wooden stand, trimmed with gold and inlaid lighting. There's a bar made of more carved wood with a black marble top, also trimmed in gold.

The Boss steps behind the bar and starts picking through bottles on the shelf. Arthur reaches a chair and sits.

BOSS (CONT'D)

Can I get you a drink? What do you like? Name it, I got it!

Arthur doesn't react.

BOSS (CONT'D)
Let me guess...a whiskey man, am I
right? Neat?

Arthur doesn't react.

BOSS (CONT'D)
(laughing)
That's what I thought! No muss, no
fuss, but something with bite! I
like your style.

The Boss pulls one of many whiskeys off the back and starts
fixing the drinks. Arthur looks up through the dome, peering
into the darkness.

The Boss plonks the drink in front of Arthur on the desk.
It's a deep amber liquid, almost red in the light. Arthur
looks at it. The Boss round the desk and drops down into the
large chair. It groans under his weight.

He takes a sip of his drink, SIGHING with satisfaction. He
leans forward and reaches onto the desk to adjust a nameplate
engraved with "THE BOSS". He opens up a large, equally as
extravagant HUMIDOR and grabs a fresh cigar. He does not
offer one to Arthur.

BOSS (CONT'D)
(biting off the end)
Well, what do you think?
Magnificent isn't it?

Arthur simply stares.

BOSS (CONT'D)
(lighting the cigar,
leaning back)
Rendering you speechless eh? I
completely understand. Sometimes I
just sit and watch, marveling in
what I...we've built. I mean, when
you're inspired am I right?

The Boss grins and puffs away, blowing the smoke in Arthur's
face.

BOSS (CONT'D)
But, I'm gonna shoot straight with
you Arty...we need more resources.
We need *help* if we're to continue
onwards to greatness. To *true*
freedom.

The Boss leans forward, serious.

BOSS (CONT'D)

We need you. All of you. Up until now we've only had your guidance, your influence, your desires to lead us — but if you were here, completely and fully? Imagine what we could do!

Arthur stares. Emboldened, the Boss presses forward.

BOSS (CONT'D)

Think about it. Who greater to lead the charge than *the* legendary Arthur? The visionary behind the whole project!

The Boss gets up and circles the desk, unnaturally quick for his size.

BOSS (CONT'D)

Be among the boys. Your boys. You could energize them. Get them really going. Know their struggles, know their hearts, and lift them to greater heights on the road of progress!

He leans against the desk in front of Arthur, looming over him.

BOSS (CONT'D)

It's a beautiful thing we have here Arthur, *beautiful*. You don't want it to end do you?

Arthur stares.

BOSS (CONT'D)

See, I *know* you. I know you want this.

Arthur stares.

The Boss pushes himself off the desk, rounding back to his throne with a smile. He talks while he walks.

BOSS (CONT'D)

Hah! I *knew* you wouldn't let me down! Now we're really hurting out there, so I think you should start ASAP. We work hard here, so if you get out there and show them how it's done...the possibilities...

He settles into his chair and trails off with a knowing grin. Arthur stares.

BOSS (CONT'D)

Now you go get a good night's rest.
You're gonna need it! I'm thrilled
you're on board.

The Boss, suddenly done with Arthur, dismisses him with a wave of the hand. He turns away on his throne, puffing on the cigar.

Arthur grips the arms of the chair. His jaw clenches. A light rises in Arthur's eyes. For a moment, it seems like he's going to take action.

DING. The elevator rises out of the floor. The doors open.

Arthur's eyes dull. The moment passes. He gets up and walks to the waiting elevator. He enters and descends.

INT. CORE

Arthur trudges on a catwalk, unfeeling, retracing his steps back. His footsteps ECHO through the concrete cavern. He passes Hollows in their cells and on the catwalks. They don't react. Arthur doesn't react.

He nears the main tunnel. A continuous line of Hollows stream out and into the core, heads down. They turn away and head down on the opposite edge of the room. Arthur presses on blankly.

One Hollow in the line looks turns and looks out to the core. After a moment it stops. The Hollow behind bumps it and falls over, pickaxe CLANGING against the metal ground. A few more fall over with similar BANGS before the line adjusts wordlessly around them. The fallen Hollows begin to pick themselves up.

Arthur looks over at the noise. The Hollow that started the pile up steps out of line. Arthur stops.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

It begins shuffling towards the the centre. Arthur walks towards it. The Hollow drops its pickaxe on the way, CLANGING against the metal floor.

The Hollow stops at the railing separating it from the void. Arthur arrives at the railing; he and the Hollow are close. The Hollow grips the railing. Arthur stirs.

ARTHUR
What are you doing?

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

The Hollow shakily lifts itself up and onto the rail, balancing on top. It stands precariously above the empty space below.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

After a moment, the Hollow looks down at Arthur. Tears stream down its face.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

HOLLOW
Nothing.

It leans forward into the darkness.

Arthur quickly reaches out grasps its wrist, stopping the Hollow from falling. The Hollow weeps, struggling weakly, but Arthur is steadfast. He grips the wrist tight, unshakable.

The Hollow stops struggling. Arthur softens his grip and pulls gently.

ARTHUR
C'mon.

Arthur helps the Hollow step down carefully off the railing. It looks down at the ground, sullen. Arthur puts his arm around its shoulders. The Hollow turns away, but doesn't resist.

Arthur and the Hollow step forward and into the main tunnel. One Hollow notices the pair - it steps out of line and watches them go.

INT. END OF THE HALLWAY - LATER

Arthur ushers the Hollow out of the hallway and into his home. They pause as Arthur surveys the pitiful scene in front of them - dozens of Hollows still occupy nearly every space.

Arthur's jaw clenches. The pair turn into the bedroom.

INT. BEDROOM

Arthur helps the Hollow up and into his bed. The Hollow lays down gently and Arthur puts the blankets over it. Within moments it falls asleep.

Arthur looks at the creature. A moment passes.

Arthur moves over and opens his closet. Inside are stacks of random boxes of all sizes, stacked precariously on each other. Clothes of all colours hang inside, tightly pressed together. Above is a shelf, packed full of blankets. Arthur reaches up and grabs a stack, leaving the closet open.

Arthur leaves the room. A faint smile crosses the sleeping Hollow's lips. It turns to dust.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Arthur carefully moves through the crowded room, stepping over Hollows. He places the blankets on his empty chair.

He grabs the top one and lays it on a shivering Hollow huddled against a wall. He lays another on a sleeping Hollow. He holds one out to a Hollow who stands staring at nothing; it notices after a moment, but is confused. Arthur shakes the blanket. The Hollow hesitantly takes it.

Arthur walks away to grab another blanket. The Hollow takes the blanket and looks around the room. It turns to another hollow and drapes it around it.

One by one, each Hollow has their own blanket or shares a blanket with another.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Arthur moves to the kitchen and starts rummaging around. He grabs bowls from a cabinet and puts them on the table. He grabs spoons from a drawer and takes them to the table as well. A large pot from another cabinet goes on the stove. He opens the fridge and closes it quickly, finding nothing. He digs through others, finding some cartons of broth in one and a large bag of rice in another. He grabs them and closes the cabinet.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

Arthur waddles over to the kitchen tables carrying the now steaming full pot. He barely manages to heave it onto the table.

He bends over and takes a breath, tired from the effort. He grabs a bowl from a nearby stack and ladles out soup into it.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Arthur walks into the living room with a few bowls of soup and starts passing it out to the Hollows who can move.

He goes back for more, returning and passing fresh bowls out to more Hollows.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Most of the Hollows have soup. Arthur kneels on the floor, spoon feeding a prostrate hollow. It's a slow process; the Hollow can barely open its mouth. Another blanketed Hollow crouches beside Arthur, observing. Behind him, we see other Hollows crouched together asleep. There are a still dozens of Hollows, but the room seems slightly less crowded.

FOOTSTEPS near the entrance. KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

Arthur freezes. The entire room of Hollows turn and stares at the door. The spoon trembles above the Hollow's mouth.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK.

Arthur takes a breath and dribbles a bit of broth into the Hollow's mouth. He turns and passes the bowl and spoon to the crouching Hollow.

ARTHUR
Can you take this?

The Hollow nods, taking the bowl and spoon from Arthur. Arthur gets up as the Hollow dips the spoon into the broth and carefully feeds the other Hollow.

INT. FOYER

Arthur stands in front of the door, on the threshold. He reaches out to grasp the round handle. Just before he does, he hesitates. He breathes.

He grasps the handle and opens the door.

The night sky twinkles with stars against a forested backdrop. A small sliver of golden light lays against a horizon, silhouetting leafy trees blowing in the wind. A fresh breeze rolls through the house, rippling the hanging clothes of Arthur and the Hollows.

There's a woman, facing away. She turns into the light of the house. It's April.

ARTHUR

April?

APRIL

(embarrassed)

Arthur...Hi...I'm sorry for bothering you so late. And randomly. Did I wake you?

ARTHUR

(laughing)

No, I was already up. It's nice to see you. What's up?

APRIL

I forgot my bag. I was a little sauced when I left.

ARTHUR

No problem! Please, come in. Don't worry about your shoes.

April steps inside. She looks around and takes in the strange state of the house.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Did you leave it downstairs?

April nods hesitantly — she looks at Arthur, noticing his appearance. Arthur motions her to follow.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Arthur walks towards the basement door. April follows slowly, concerned by the state of the house and Hollows. She pauses in the living room.

Arthur reaches the door. He pauses. Reaching out and grasping the handle, he begins to turn it.

A DRY COUGH from the living room. Arthur looks around the corner and sees a Hollow huddled on the floor under a blanket COUGHING DRYLY. He walks over, takes a bowl and spoon from nearby, crouches, and gives it to the Hollow. It takes the bowl and spoon and starts eating, soothing the cough; Arthur rubs its back. It looks up at smiles at Arthur.

April takes a hair-tie off her wrist and puts her hair up. Arthur notices.

APRIL
Well, quite the refugee crisis
here. How can I help?

Arthur stares at April. She waits for an answer.

ARTHUR
Your bag?

APRIL
It can wait.

A moment.

ARTHUR
(hesitant)
You could make sure everyone who
needs a blanket has one. That would
be great.

April nods and goes over to the stack of blankets on the chair. She grabs a few and start to pass them out. Arthur smiles, and he turns back to help the Hollow continue to eat.

--April crouches near a Hollow. Arthur passes her a bowl and spoon and she starts feeding it.

--Arthur stands over a large pot in the kitchen, mixing it with effort. April walks by with some dishes, putting them in the sink.

--Arthur tucks in a Hollow crouched by a wall. From the darkness of the hallway, a group of new Hollows peer in timidly. Arthur spots them, and opens his mouth to say something. April whisks by him, motioning for the Hollows to come in. She takes the first one by the hand gently, leading it through. The others comes slowly through after. Arthur smiles and stands.

--Arthur and April sit at the table, taking a break. Arthur says something and they laugh together. April says something in retort, and they laugh again.

--April walks by a few sleeping Hollows, checking on them. Arthur walks up with two bowls of broth and offers her one. She takes it with a smile. They clink the bowls together for a satisfied "cheers" and take a sip.

--Arthur, crouching and looking healthier, finishes laying a blanket on a Hollow before sitting down wearily against a wall. His eyes are heavy; after a few resistant blinks they close and Arthur falls asleep.

April comes out from the kitchen with a bowl in one hand and blanket in the other. She hands off the bowl to a thankful Hollow, and, spotting Arthur, goes over to him. She crouches and drapes the blanket over him, letting him sleep. She smiles.

Standing up, she surveys the room. She notices a few bare Hollows without blankets. Seeing there are no spares, she turns towards Arthur's room.

On her way, she passes the basement door.

INT. BEDROOM

Inside, April looks around. She notices a few blankets still on the shelf in the open closet. She tries to reach up and grab them, but they are just out of her reach. Carefully she stands on a box and then another to be able to get to them, reaching up high.

As she gets a hold on one, the boxes collapse under her. She falls to the floor, ripping the whole stack of blankets down and scattering boxes.

She hits the ground, but not hard. She winces as she peels herself off the floor. She rises and brushes herself off before stiffly gathering the scattered blankets and putting them on the bed. She starts to cleanup the boxes, tipping them back upright and gathering spilled contents.

She comes across a picture-frame, facedown. She picks it up and turns it around. It's a photo of Arthur and Nathan as teenagers, arms around each-other and grinning. The glass over the photo has cracked, splintering the photos into pieces. April smiles and rises with it.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Arthur pats a smiling hollow on the back as it eats. Satisfied, he stands up.

ARTHUR

I'm going to hit the bathroom. Need anything?

April looks back at Arthur. She's helping a standing Hollow adjust its blanket.

APRIL

(smiling)

No thanks, I'm good!

ARTHUR
Cool cool cool.

Arthur heads towards the hallway. He rolls his shoulder and stretches wearily. He looks into the bedroom as he passes, stopping suddenly.

INT. BEDROOM

Arthur enters goes towards his bed. On the nightstand is the framed photo of Arthur and Nathan, cracked glass removed.

Arthur picks it up. He sits on the bed with it, smiling, remembering. After a moment, he places it back on the nightstand. He adjusts it until he's satisfied. Stepping back, he chuckles. Arthur leaves, grabbing a spare blanket as he goes.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

The amount of Hollows in the house has thinned out considerably. Once there were dozens, now there are only a handfuls. Arthur, looking almost healthy, looks on contently as the last remaining Hollows chat happily with each-other.

April comes up behind Arthur, putting a hand on his back to alert him. She passes him a full glass of water, smiling.

ARTHUR
Oh! Thank you very much.

APRIL
No problem.

Arthur takes a drink. April, as if by habit, takes the glass from him and takes a drink. Arthur, as if by habit, doesn't resist. They survey the remaining Hollows happily.

ARTHUR
Hey, do you still want your bag?

APRIL
(laughing)
Yeah. I totally forgot.

ARTHUR
Me too.

Arthur and April make their way to the basement door. Arthur grabs the handle and turns it, swinging the door open.

He stands there looking down the stairs, uncertain.

April comes up near him and she looks down the stairs, then to Arthur. Arthur looks at her. April smiles. After a moment, Arthur smiles back. He looks away and steps down into the basement.

INT. BASEMENT

Arthur reaches the bottom landing with April close behind. The basement is setup the same as the party; couches, coffee table, and general clutter, but without any of the party accoutrement. In fact, no traces of the party can be seen throughout the basement. It's silent.

ARTHUR

Do you remember where you left it?

APRIL

Not really.

ARTHUR

No worries. It's bound to be here somewhere.

They walk around the room and search for the bag, checking in and around things.

Arthur walks over to the couches. On the couch in the spot where Arthur was pulled through is a small, lone, black bag.

He stands there, staring at the spot. April comes close by.

They stand there in silence. Beat.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Did you hear what happened?

APRIL

Yeah.

ARTHUR

(grimacing)

Yeah. Not my finest moment.

Beat.

APRIL

I mean it happens. You were fucked up. Everyone was fucked up. It's not your fault.

Arthur doesn't answer. He stares at the couch. A moment.

ARTHUR

No. It was my fault. I had every opportunity to turn away and do the right thing, but I did it anyway. Stupid and selfish.

Arthur grabs the bag. He walks over to April and holds the bag out to her.

April looks at Arthur. After a moment, she takes her bag.

APRIL

Thank you.

ARTHUR

I should be thanking you. I appreciate your help with everything upstairs. It means a lot.

A moment.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

C'mon. Let's head back.

APRIL

Yeah. Yeah...

They head up the stairs. Behind Arthur, the couch slowly turns into dust, spiraling into the air and disappearing.

INT. FOYER

April and Arthur pass by the Hollows, headed for the foyer. April slowly comes to a stop near the front door.

ARTHUR

Hey.

She turns to Arthur, bag in hand.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

This has been really nice, you know?

APRIL

Yeah, it has! Sorry again for barging in.

ARTHUR

Seriously, not at all. It's been a while since I've had company. Well, normal company.

APRIL
I get it. Theatre people are a lot.

ARTHUR
(laughing)
You're not wrong there.

A moment. They look at each other.

APRIL
Are you going to be alright?

A moment. Arthur looks at the Hollows.

ARTHUR
I don't know. Maybe.

APRIL
Because I don't have anywhere to
be. I can stick around...if you
need a hand that is.

Arthur continues to look at the Hollows. After a moment,
Arthur turns back to April.

ARTHUR
Oh really? What do you have in
mind?

APRIL
Well...you could make me a cup of
coffee and we could go from there?

ARTHUR
I think I can handle that.

April smiles and turns towards the door, looking like she's
going to leave. She drops her bag by the door, closes it, and
turns around.

APRIL
Great.

Arthur smiles. April smiles.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur becomes uneasy. He looks over at now moving clock,
then down to the typewriter. A moment passes.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

A SONOUROUS RUMBLE echoes through the house. Arthur and April peek around the corner, down the hallway. It descends into darkness. Another RUMBLE.

APRIL (CONT'D)
What is that?

INT. LIVING ROOM

Arthur walks towards the hallway. April follows. RUMBLE. Arthur pauses. RUMBLE. He turns to April.

ARTHUR
Could you watch the place for a bit?

APRIL
Where are you going?

RUMBLE.

ARTHUR
Just gotta take care of something. I won't be long.

APRIL
Of course. Just don't get lost.

ARTHUR
I won't. I mean, it's my house, right?

Arthur smiles. They look at each-other, into each-other, caring.

Arthur nods with a smile. April nods back.

He turns towards the hallway. He walks forward and steps into the darkness, gradually disappearing as he moves further down the deep corridor.

April watches him go. She takes a breath, then turns back to the Hollows to tend to them.

As she turns, we see the basement door. It shimmers before turning into dust and disappearing.

INT. DARKENED HALLWAY - LATER

Arthur walks alone down the main hallway leading to the core. The work lights barely illuminate the walls, his footsteps ECHOING.

Where there was once countless Hollows, there are now none. Except for Arthur, the hallway is empty.

INT. THE CORE - LATER

Arthur steps out and into the concrete Core. He comes up to the railing and looks out at the immense room. As with the hallway, all seems deserted.

To Arthur's right is a rusty staircase leading down. Arthur heads over and begins to descend, the echo of his footsteps CLANKING into the darkness.

Arthur makes it to the next floor. Nearby is another set of stairs. He descends again.

Again. And again. And again. Arthur descends down countless stairs, passing through countless levels.

INT. THE CORE - LATER

Arthur descends another set of stairs. He peers over the railing – he can see the bottom, not too far now. He continues.

INT. THE CORE - LATER

Arthur descends a final staircase, feet landing on a concrete floor. It's bare all around. No Hollows, no cells...just concrete. It's dark, with the light from the catwalk above barely illuminating the ground.

Arthur pauses. He takes a breath before continuing straight for the concrete pillar at the centre.

After a while, he reaches it and starts to circle around. He's looking for something.

After a while, on the other side of the room, is a break in the concrete wall – a closed interior door like the ones from Arthur's house. Light spills out from underneath a gap at the bottom. Arthur sees it and pauses.

He steps away from the pillar and walks to the door.

Arthur approaches. He stands in front of the door and pauses. After a moment, he opens it.

INT. NATHAN'S ROOM

Arthur steps into a bedroom. It's just like his - minimal, nothing on the walls, and bed pressed against the corner. However, everything is flipped, as if he was viewing it in a mirror.

On the bed in the corner is a kid, holding his knees to his chest and head buried between his legs. He's crying.

It's NATHAN, as he was when he and Arthur were in school.

NATHAN

Go away!

Arthur stands on the threshold. After a moment, he steps through and closes the door.

Nathan pulls in his legs more, squeezing them tight.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

I said go away you fuckin' asshole!

Arthur walks over and sits on the edge of the bed. Nathan retreats further.

They sit there for a moment. Arthur CHUCKLES.

Nathan lifts his head up, peeking over his knees, glaring daggers at Arthur.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

What's so fuckin' funny?

ARTHUR

(laughing)

I was just remembering the first time you slept over. We stayed up all night playing games online. We kept killing our teammates and it was so fucking funny and we were so loud that my mum came down to tell us to "Shut the hell up and go to bed!"

Arthur CHUCKLES. Nathan SCOFFS and turns away.

Arthur looks over at his anguished childhood friend.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I'm sorry Nathan. I'm sorry for what I did.

NATHAN

No you're not. Friends don't do that.

ARTHUR

You're right. Friends don't do that. But I did, and I shouldn't have.

Nathan looks up, furious.

NATHAN

You're just like them. Mean, uncaring, and A LIAR. All you do is think about yourself! You fucking left me alone at school with those assholes. Abandoned me. Do you know what it was like without you there? WE WERE FRIENDS. Then, after all those years, I helped you. I can't believe how stupid I was.

Nathan pauses.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

You're just like *them*. I fucking hate you Arthur. I hate you.

ARTHUR

I know. I know...

Arthur struggles to find the words.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

You're right — I am a selfish asshole. I left you. Then I betrayed your trust. I'm not asking for your forgiveness, because I don't deserve it. And because I don't want to forget how I made you feel. But I wanted to let you know that I'm sorry.

Arthur looks over at Nathan. Nathan stares back with angry puffy eyes.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I love you Nathan. You're my best friend, and always will be.

Nathan and Arthur stare at each-other. Nathan buries his head back in his legs, turning away from Arthur.

After a moment, Arthur looks away from his friend. He nods. A tear rolls down his cheek. He wipes it away.

Arthur gets up and puts something on the bedside table — it's the photo of Arthur and Nathan. Arthur walks to the door.

Arthur pauses, contemplating turning back. His resolve returns and he walks away, leaving the door open.

Behind Arthur and through the open doorway, we see Nathan look up. He sees the picture frame. He crawls over and grabs it, sitting on the edge of the bed.

Nathan looks up and out the door towards Arthur. Nathan melts into dust, and the room disappears.

INT. THE CORE

Arthur walks back into the concrete Core, heading for the pillar in the middle. Inset into the middle is a pair of gleaming golden doors — the elevator.

Arthur reaches it and presses the button. DING. The doors slide open. Arthur gets in, presses a button, and the doors close.

INT. BOSS'S OFFICE - LATER

The cylindrical elevator rises up from the floor, coming to a halt. DING. The doors open and Arthur steps through into the room proper.

The office is in complete disarray. The chairs are thrown away and toppled; the thronelike chair lies on its side, mostly in pieces. Shattered glass and empty bottles lie near and all over the bar. Almost all of the liquor is gone.

Stacks and stacks of papers fill the once mighty desk. Toppled stacks and discarded papers lie everywhere, some wet with liquor and stained, all adding to the mess on the ground.

The Boss looms over the desk, his back to Arthur. He is significantly thinner; his clothes hang loosely over his body. He raises a glass of whiskey shakily to his mouth before slamming it back onto the table. He grabs papers and furiously reads them, sorting them, throwing them.

In a frenzy, the Boss turns and looks at the source of noise, at Arthur. His face, once ruddy and fat, is now pale and droopy, layers of stretched skin hanging heavily over his body and face, distorting his features.

His eyes are bloodshot and wild and his hair is disheveled. Fully turning to Arthur, his suit drapes over him like a child wearing his father's clothes. A short, chewed, unlit cigar hangs out his mouth.

BOSS
(incredulous)
Arthur?! Arthur! Just the man I
wanted to see! Dri...drink?

The Boss clumsily points at the bar and makes his way over to it. He makes an attempt at smoothing his hair. His bare, knobby feet CRUNCH on papers and broken glass, leaving behind bloody footprints. He scrambles to find something at the bar. Arthur walks over to the desk.

BOSS (CONT'D)
Please, please make yourself
comfortable! Not much for selection
these days, but I'm sure I'll find
something.

He searches, tipping over empty bottles onto the ground as he goes, shattering them. He grabs a bottle, twisting it in his hands. Finding it empty, he GROWLS and hurls it against the bar with rage. It SMASHES, pieces of glass flying everywhere. He spits out the cigar.

BOSS (CONT'D)
Fine! Fuck the drink! We have
bigger problems.

He makes his way frantically over to the desk. Arthur stands there, coolly looking through the papers.

The Boss aggressively grabs some papers and waves them at Arthur.

BOSS (CONT'D)
Production is at an absolute
standstill! The workers, gone!
Progress, GONE! The *INCOME*, GONE!

The Boss breaks down, tearing up.

BOSS (CONT'D)
(whining)
I can't believe it! After all this,
after all I've built! Damn them!
Damn them all! What am I going to
do?!

The Boss breathes heavily, scrambling through the paper to find any sort of solution. He pauses. He looks up at Arthur, glaring. He points at Arthur.

BOSS (CONT'D)

You. It was you wasn't it. You
fucking bastard, why couldn't you
just play along. I gave you
everything. EVERYTHING!

The Boss rounds the desk and grabs Arthur by the neck, trying to choke him. Arthur simply accepts it, staring at the Boss.

The Boss tries his hardest, leaning into the choke and squeezing with as much effort as he can muster. Despite this, it has no affect on Arthur.

Arthur looks at the Boss with pity.

The Boss's anger subsides and he slowly releases Arthur. Weeping, the Boss sinks to his knees.

Arthur crouches, coming face to face with the Boss. The Boss looks up, tears in his eyes.

Arthur reaches out and embraces the Boss. The Boss is stunned.

After a moment, the Boss closes his eyes and returns the embrace.

They break away. Arthur leaves a hand on the Boss' shoulder and smiles. The Boss smiles back.

With a final pat on the shoulder, Arthur stands up. He starts to walk to the elevator. The Boss watches him go calmly.

Arthur gets in the elevator and pushes the button. He smiles and waves at the Boss. The Boss smiles and calmly waves back.

The doors close. The Boss lowers his arm and stares at where Arthur was. The cylinder lowers.

The Boss is alone. High above, we see the lights on the catwalks go out layer by layer, descending towards the dome. The lamp flickers and begins to fade. The remaining lights on the bar go out. The Boss melts away into dust. First his body, leaving his clothes in a heap behind. After a moment, they too fade to dust.

The lights go out.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

The living room is now empty. Blankets lie neatly folded in one corner of the room.

April sits in Arthur's chair, knees to her chest. The glass of water sits on the side-table, half-empty.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

A RUMBLING from down the hallway. April perks up cautiously. The rumbling gets LOUDER as it comes closer. April gets out of the chair.

A CRASH and THUMP from the hallway frightens April.

ARTHUR (O.S.)

Ow, fuck!

Suddenly a light flicks on from the hallway. Arthur stands there leaning against the wall, hand on a light switch. His face is twisted in pain as he stands on one foot, his other hand holding his foot up.

He looks up at April, smiling through the pain.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I stubbed my friggen toe!

April rushes over, almost tackling him with a hug. Arthur laughs and struggles to stay upright. Behind him, we see that the hallway, now illuminated by a light on the roof, is short, ending just after the bathroom with a closet.

Arthur rights himself and returns the embrace. They break for a moment and dive into a kiss.

They break after a moment. Arthur CHUCKLES.

APRIL

I was worried.

ARTHUR

I can see that.

APRIL

I wasn't sure if you were coming back.

ARTHUR

Neither was I.

APRIL

Your house is fucking weird.

ARTHUR

Yeah. I think it's less weird now though.

With a final kiss, they break apart. They stare at each-other for a moment, smiling.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Would you like that coffee now?

APRIL

(laughing)

Yes. Yes I would.

Arthur smiles and picks her up; April laughs in surprise, wrapping her legs around Arthur, hugging him tightly.

LIFE MONTAGE. Note: As each part progresses, the forthcoming scene fades into it, overlaying with a cross-fade match to show the evolution of Arthur and April's life, their relationship, and the house.

-Arthur and April share a coffee on the bay-window seat. They laugh and enjoy each-other's company.

-Arthur and April are in grubby clothing, each equipped with various cleaning tools. April scrubs a wall and Arthur mops the floor.

-Arthur and April are naked, wrapped in blankets on the floor, holding glasses with amber liquor. Light from a nearby fireplace glints over their smiling faces. They talk and talk. There is a picture or two on the wall.

-April sits on a couch reading a book, wearing street clothes. There's a coffee table which has some forks and knives on it, as well as two clear glasses with wine. Arthur, also wearing street clothes, comes from the kitchen with two plates, setting them on the table.

-April and Arthur are painting the room, moving around covered up furniture. April flicks paint at Arthur, and the scene quickly devolving quickly into a playful paint fight. Arthur catches April and pulls her in for a kiss.

-Arthur paces around the room with a notebook. He's lost in thought, tapping his head with a pen. Suddenly he starts writing in the book. Around him, there are more pictures, furniture, things. The room feels lived in, more of a home.

-Arthur sits on a couch, pouring over notes strewn all over the coffee table. April comes through the front door, holding two brown take-out bags.

She raises them up excitedly, and Arthur raises his hands in victory, leaping over the couch to help.

-April and Arthur lie asleep on the couch, snuggled together under a blanket. There are more pictures on the walls, more things.

-Arthur stands, enacting some big scene to April, sitting on the couch. She thinks and provides feedback before Arthur launches into another ridiculous, theatrical move. She laughs, and he tries to keep a serious face.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EARLY MORNING

Arthur and April's house. It's completely transformed, and for the better. Pictures and decorations line the walls, there's more furniture, more books and hobby items.

Through the bay window, curtains drawn back, we can see light barely kissing the horizon.

Arthur sits on the couch, looking at notes. He reads and passes through them, taking mental notes. April comes from the kitchen with a full glass of water.

She walks up behind Arthur and kisses him on the head, rubbing his shoulder. Arthur smiles and places his hand on her hand.

APRIL

I'm going to bed honey.

ARTHUR

Sounds nice. I'll be there in a minute.

April walks away and down the hall. Arthur continues to look at his notes as we hear a door CLICK SHUT.

The house becomes quiet. Moments pass.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur pauses. He looks up at the clock. It's still broken, the TICK. TICK. TICK. of the seconds hand loud as it pops back and forth in the same spot.

He looks at the typewriter.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur stands up, grabbing his notes. He walks over to the typewriter and looms over it. He puts his hand on it, feeling the keys for the first time in ages, if not ever.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

Arthur puts the notes beside the typewriter. He pulls out the chair and sits. He adjusts it so he's at a good distance, then adjusts the paper in the machine. He places his hands on the keys. He begins to type.

TICK TICK TICK TICK TICK TICK

INT. ARTHUR AND APRIL'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Morning light pours through the window, curtains drawn back, painting the room in a warm glow. The pictures and decorations on the wall glint, especially a framed photo of Arthur and April underneath a lamp on the bedside table. A full glass of water sits untouched on the same table.

The rumpled blankets cover someone in the bed pushed up against the corner, breathing softly. After a moment, the person twists over and puts their hand on the empty space beside them.

The hand feels around. April lifts her head up groggily, confused - *Where is Arthur?*

She lifts herself up and swings her legs over the edge of the bed. She's wearing a baggy shirt and underwear. She yawns and before lifting herself off and exiting the room.

INT. BATHROOM

In the bathroom, April sits on the toilet peeing. She washes her hands, brushes her teeth, and brushes out her hair.

INT. HALLWAY

She passes through the hallway and into the bedroom. In the background we can see Arthur standing near the bay window, fully dressed, facing away, holding something.

INT. LIVING ROOM

April, still a bit groggy, comes out of the bedroom with her glass of water. She's on her way to the kitchen, but notices Arthur on the way.

APRIL
Hey baby, want some coffee?

Arthur doesn't react. April stops before she gets to the kitchen.

APRIL (CONT'D)
(concerned)
Honey? Is everything alright?

Arthur doesn't react. He's holding something in his hands, staring down at it.

April cautiously moves forward through the living room, coming up behind Arthur.

APRIL (CONT'D)
Arthur?

April looks at what Arthur's holding. It's a stack of white, typewritten pages. It's a SCRIPT.

APRIL (CONT'D)
Oh my god, is that...?

ARTHUR
Yeah.

APRIL
When?

ARTHUR
Last night.

APRIL
Holy shit. All of it?

ARTHUR
Yeah.

They both stare at the stack of papers. A moment.

APRIL
Coffee?

ARTHUR
Yeah.

April heads to the kitchen.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

April and Arthur sit on the couch with coffee. The script lies between them on the coffee table.

APRIL
I can't believe it.

ARTHUR
Me either.

A moment.

APRIL
What are you going to do?

ARTHUR
I dunno. I mean...I have to show
someone probably, right? Let them
read it?

APRIL
Yeah.

ARTHUR
Yeah.

A moment passes. They sit in silence.

APRIL
When?

A pause.

ARTHUR
Today.

APRIL
Oh.

April looks away. Arthur looks at the front-door. A moment passes.

APRIL (CONT'D)
Are you ready?

Arthur thinks for a moment.

ARTHUR
Yes. I think so.

APRIL
(difficultly)
I think so too. It's been a long
time coming.

Arthur smiles. He grasps April's hand and looks at her.

ARTHUR
Yeah, I guess it has, hasn't it?

A moment. Arthur lets go of April's hand and sets his cup on the table. He grabs the script and stands up.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)
We can grab breakfast while we're
out. Shall we?

Arthur proffers his hand to April. She looks at it.

APRIL
Yeah.

April puts down her coffee and hesitantly takes Arthur's hand. She stands up.

APRIL (CONT'D)
Mind if I get dressed quickly?

ARTHUR
(laughing)
Of course! Probably a good idea.

April turns away from Arthur, forlorn, and makes her way to the bedroom. Arthur looks around the living room, happily surveying the memories.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

April emerges from the bedroom, fully dressed. Arthur sees her and smiles.

ARTHUR
You look great. Ready?

April hesitantly nods, putting on a smile. Arthur grins, and makes his way to the door. He puts the script on a little table. He grabs a coat off the rack and puts it on.

April moves through the living room, stopping. She looks around the room, at all the photos and things.

Coat on, Arthur notices that April has paused.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Coming?

April doesn't react. Concerned, Arthur makes his way over to her. She's shuddering, holding back tears, arms wrapped around herself.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

APRIL

I don't know if I can leave.

ARTHUR

Why?

APRIL

I don't want to abandon this. Leave what we built.

She motions to the home around them. She touches Arthur lovingly.

APRIL (CONT'D)

I don't want to lose you.

Arthur smiles lovingly, feeling the warmth in her touch. He holds her.

ARTHUR

We will always have this place.
It's as much a part of you as it is
a part of me. And you will
certainly always have me.

Arthur motions to the door.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

Our future is out there — a home is
just a symbol. Where ever you are,
April, is where home is for me.

Arthur reaches up and touches her face. She smiles, tears falling down her cheeks. He wipes them away.

ARTHUR (CONT'D)

I would do anything for you. So if
you want to stay, we can stay. As
long as I'm with you, I can be
happy anywhere. I love you April.

April touches his hand on her cheek. She smiles lovingly.

APRIL
I love you too Arthur.

They kiss as only soulmates can, and break. April takes a deep breath.

She nods, resolute.

APRIL (CONT'D)
Let's go.

Arthur looks at her.

ARTHUR
Are you sure?

APRIL
I am.

They put their foreheads together, closing their eyes.

ARTHUR
Forever?

APRIL
Forever.

They smile and open their eyes. Arthur grips April's hand, and they move to the entranceway. They put on their shoes together, and April puts on a jacket.

April picks up the script, clutching it to her chest. They both stare at the door.

ARTHUR
Ready?

APRIL
Ready. You?

Arthur looks at the door and turns to her, nodding with a smile.

ARTHUR.
Yes. Yes I am.

April smiles and nods. Arthur turns to the door, reaches out, and wraps his hand around the doorknob. He twists and pulls.

The door swings inward, letting in warm morning light. A breeze ripples by, slowly caressing them and weaving through their clothes. The sounds of the outdoors fill the house —
WIND RUSTLING THROUGH LEAVES, BIRDS CHIRPING, A CREEK.

Arthur and April smile at the beautiful and inviting scene.

ARTHUR

After you.

April strides through, followed by Arthur. They pass through, and the door CLICKS SHUT.

For a moment, we sit in the foyer.

Their FOOTSTEPS FADE AWAY; slowly replaced by a constant TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

We wander through the entranceway and around the living room, admiring their home. Memories, love, and comfort are in every nook and cranny.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

We come to the still, calm typewriter, devoid of paper.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

We rise up to the clock.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

TICK. TOCK. TICK. TOCK. TICK. TOCK. TICK.

End.

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