

ODE

By Brian Kowalchuk

First 30 pages.

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EXT. ALLEN'S STUDIO APARTMENT

ALLEN, 35, a mystical, bearded dwarf [little person], watches from a nearby apartment window. In his hands is a book entitled Quantum Structure Of The Soul. Beside him another book title reads: Following The Illuminated Path.

The apartment is full of GOTHIC FURNISHINGS, including posters and published literature on WARLOCKS, VAMPIRES, GHOSTS, ZOMBIES, ETC.

A particularly cool movie poster is titled SHAPE SHIFTER WARRIORS.

EXT. WELMAN COLLEGE BUILDING ROOFTOP

A part-time security guard, PAUL, African-American, 30, approaches Brandon. His guard uniform is TOO BIG and has way too many items on the belt, ie. 2 pepper sprays, 2 sets of handcuffs, 2 batons, etc.

Paul is also Brandon's TEACHING ASSISTANT.

BRANDON

(still gazing into the dark)

That's never happened before.

PAUL

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

BRANDON

(turns, brightens)

Paul! Do you know why Greek mythology is so significant to historians?

PAUL

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

BRANDON

(drunkenly)

I never said anything of the sort!

He lights a good cigar, puffs on it.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

In fact, poets and philosophers are our greatest historians! Mythology is significant because it represents the infinite, sir. And, infinity is a poet's best friend.

(gazes below)

The Greeks had a lot of statues.

Brandon reaches for the Yukon Jack bottle, pours two shots, and offers one to Paul, who DECLINES.

PAUL

I need my job, prof.

Brandon downs both shots, tosses the glasses over the edge.

PAUL (CONT'D)

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

BRANDON

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

(grins drunkenly)

The glasses are plastic, sir.

(laughs in delight)

Plastic!

EXT. WELMAN COLLEGE DEAN'S HOUSE

The Dean of Welman College, Professor Emeritus COLLIN SOMERSBY, 80s, stands on his back porch in his housecoat, watching the unfolding drama across the commons grounds. He is not too pleased.

EXT. WELMAN COLLEGE BUILDING ROOF

Brandon lifts another shot glass, teetering near the edge.

BRANDON

Yukon Jack doesn't mind plastic.

PAUL

(quietly)

Maybe we should get goin'.

BRANDON
 (straightens)
 Sir, are you offering a security
 escort home? Because if you are, I
 accept!
 (steps back)
 If, and only if, you present
 Moonlight Road.

PAUL
 (smiles)
 I'll do the first verse.

BRANDON
 First verse it is!

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

THE SOUND OF A SIMPLE PIANO, playing Chopsticks, is heard
 faintly, gradually increasing in volume.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 You really are a good student, you
 know. I'm very glad you're my
 teaching assistant.

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

The piano music grows a bit louder, and more sophisticated,
 as the full moon BECKONS.

EXT. BRANDON'S NEAR-CAMPUS RESIDENCE AN EMPTY LOT WITH A
 TRAILER HOME PARKED IN THE MIDDLE - MINUTES LATER

Paul approaches the trailer home, carrying the professor over
 his shoulder. The lot's grass is UNCUT. A rusted, drooping,
 children's swing set is off to the side. A dusty 1966
 Pontiac Laurentian is parked nearby.

INT. BRANDON'S TRAILER

Paul enters and DUMPS Brandon on a worn, overstuffed, leather sofa, props a pillow under his head, then chuckles at a pair of pink LADIES PANTIES dangling on the NECK OF AN EMPTY WINE BOTTLE. The trailer is mainly unkempt, with bookshelves full of literary tomes, stacked piles of documents. But, it has a touch of class, some nice antique furniture, combined with contemporary artworks. An unfinished oil painting, a self-portrait of Brandon beside a DARK-HAIRED GIRL.

BRANDON

(as Paul reaches the door)

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

(fading away)

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

PAUL

What're you so stressed about, prof?

BRANDON

Everything. You know, all of it. Existence. Mankind's burden. The beginning of Time.

(drifting off)

I've never had a vacation, y'know. Never. My life is not interesting anymore. I need to do something interesting. Before I die. Something interesting.

Paul leaves quietly.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

(barely audible)

Something interesting.

The PIANO MUSIC hits a wrong note, pauses, plays the right note, and then continues.

INT. WEBSTER HIGH SCHOOL NEXT DAY - MORNING

In a music room, a DARK-HAIRED, 15 YEAR-OLD GIRL, KATEY LARMIKE, plays the piano music. Katey is BRANDON'S DAUGHTER. The music, and the girl, have a certain mystery. OTHER STUDENTS walk by the open door. ONE STUDENT stops, says something to Katey, but the ONLY SOUND is still the music.

EXT. DOWNTOWN WEBSTER - SAME TIME

A five-sided central town square. As if time had stopped in the 1950s. Little businesses and shops, the local Court House sits in the middle.

On a corner sits MARNY'S UNIQUE FLOWERS & PLANTS SHOP. A front window sign reads: *Award-winning Hybrids - PARIS Fleurs de Grand Prix runner-up 1974, 1982 & 1987.*

On the roof are golden CHILD ANGEL FIGURINES.

Circling the Court House are three statues honoring the local Harris Brothers, heroic World War II soldiers. A 4th statue commemorates fallen soldiers from the Vietnam War.

One of the more UNIQUE SHOPS on the square is a walk-in PSYCHIC GYPSY.

INT. MARNY'S FLOWER SHOP

The top part of a white FLOWER is just starting to blossom.

MARNY is BRANDON'S MOTHER, AND KATEY'S GRANDMOTHER. A CLASSY WOMAN, 70ish. Wonderful, warm smile with well-earned crow's feet that adorn the corners of her wise eyes.

MARNY
 (examining the flower
 closely)
 I don't know. I don't know.

THE SHOP is quite tiny, but tastefully stocked with exotic flowers, unique plants and cactus.

ALLEN, the little person who had earlier been observing Brandon, prepares a floral centerpiece on a work table. Allen is gay, has a gruff attitude, and is a loyal employee.

ALLEN
 You don't know what?

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

ALLEN
 You could win this year, Marny.
 That flower is special.

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

A STRANGE LIGHT BRIEFLY FLICKERS IN A CORNER,
 unnoticed, then is gone.

INT. WEBSTER HIGH SCHOOL MUSIC ROOM

KATEY'S HANDS work up the keyboard, until she hits a key that
 is not working.

The recess bell rings but Katey continues to plunk the piano
 key. ANOTHER TEENAGE STUDENT, JASON, notices as he walks by
 the open door.

INT. WELMAN COLLEGE HUMANITIES BUILDING BRANDON'S OFFICE

The trash can from the previous night blocks the HUNG-OVER
 professor's entrance into his office. An attached note
 reads: *HAPPY MORNING, PROF' - PAUL*

Brandon unlocks his office door and enters the cluttered,
 but, cozy office. He sits behind his sturdy, wooden desk and
 picks up an aspirin bottle, shakes out five pills, then
 washes them down with leftover Gatorade.

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

BRANDON
 (polite smile, then)
 Sit down, Jill.
 (she does)
 What is an adjective?

JILL
 A descriptive word preceding a
 noun.

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

JILL
 Subliminal.

Brandon takes the paper, reads the first part aloud.

BRANDON

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

(hands the paper back)

Read your answer, please.

JILL

(clears throat, reads)

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

BRANDON

All of it.

JILL

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

BRANDON

Go to the second page.

(she does)

Read the last paragraph.

JILL

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

(looks at him)

--- blah'.

(brightly, selling it)

You're always emphasizing creative simplicity!

BRANDON

That I am.

(nicely)

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

JILL

Definitely. Prof, I'm trying to say that I think the premise is boring, and I don't care about it.

(MORE)

JILL (cont'd)
 I'm letting people know, I'm giving
 them insight into the fact that
 classical philosophical discourses
 are an -- acquired -- taste.

BRANDON
 Huh. Anarchy in the classroom.
 (sighs, reaches for the
 term paper)
 I suppose that's worth something.

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

INT. WELMAN COLLEGE DEAN'S OFFICE - SAME TIME

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

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

INT. WELMAN COLLEGE BRANDON'S OFFICE

BRANDON
 (into the phone)
 Okay.

He slowly cradles the phone, then takes out a bottle of New
 Crew COLOGNE and splashes on AN UNSEEMLY AMOUNT.

INT. MARNY'S FLOWER SHOP

Marny looks out the front window and can see the roof of the
 Welman College building that Brandon was on.

MARNY
 Allen, did you hear the thunder
 last night?

ALLEN
 (he did)
 No, but, I saw Brandon on the roof.
 Again.

MARNY
 How could you not hear it? Why is
 Brandon going on the roof so much?
 Was he drinking again?

The POSTMAN, a stoner, 20s, arrives with the mail.

POSTMAN
 (lingers on an envelope)
 This one looks important, Marny.

Marny RUBS HER EYES, opens a letter from the bank, which states that the mortgage on her house is PAID IN FULL.

MARNY
 (totally surprised)
 I own my house! Outright.
 I'm out of debt!

POSTMAN
 Very groovy, Marny. Way to go!

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

Marny touches the document gently, as the Postman hastily departs.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
 Can you believe that guy? What is this, the 60s?

SUDDENLY, MARNY'S ENTIRE VISAGE SHIMMERS BRIEFLY AS FLICKERING LIGHT PASSES THROUGH HER. Allen sees it. Marny glances at a 1944 framed picture of herself, exuberant in a Bobby Sox outfit, PREGNANT, in the arms of her handsome husband, HUBBY, who is in a World War II soldier's uniform.

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

ALLEN
 Marny.
 (intently)
 You need to go to Paris.

Marny looks at him quizzically.

ALLEN (CONT'D)
 Follow your path.

MARNY
 You, my dear sir, are unusual.
 (finally)
 Well, alright. Then I'll follow my path. To Paris!
 (MORE)

MARNY (cont'd)
 (then)
 I'll need an overseas booster shot.

INT. BRANDON'S CLASSROOM - LATER THAT MORNING

Brandon sits at a chair NEAR THE WINDOWS.

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

As if directing an orchestra, motions with his hands.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 One-two-one-two. One-three-two-
 four. Don't be afraid to stand out
 from your spoken word
 contemporaries. Although spoken
 word does have it's place.
 (looks out the window)
 Just not in classic literature.

PAUL
 (from back of the class)
 Spoken word is already a classic
 form of literature!

BRANDON
 A note of dissent from our trusty
 teaching assistant.
 (turns)
 Has anybody actually written
 something?

An EAGER STUDENT raises his hand.

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

Jerry rushes to the front of the class, brings out and
 straightens a CRUMPLED sheet of paper.

JERRY
 (takes a breath, reads)
 'In stillness, I see what you bring
 In honor, I know what you truly
 desire
 (MORE)

JERRY (cont'd)
 The opera diva, of course, stands
 poised to sing
 I am ready, she is ready, to put
 our hands into the raging fire.'

The class settles in to listen as Brandon moves away from the window and walks out of the classroom.

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

INT. WELMAN COLLEGE SECRETARY'S OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

Brandon peeks his head around the corner, sees the SECRETARY who waves. He walks past her desk, knocking on it for good luck, and ENTERS the Dean's office.

INT. DEAN SOMERSBY'S OFFICE

QUIRKY and LIKEABLE, Somersby sits behind his desk, hands pursed against his mouth, ponderous, as Brandon stands before him.

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

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

BRANDON
 (interrupts)
 The shot glasses were plastic.
 Just plastic!

SOMERSBY
 (sniffs the air, sneezes)
 That's not the issue.

Brandon glances out a window. A CROW in the sky being chased by a SPARROW.

SOMERSBY (CONT'D)
 Late spring is a grand season.

BRANDON
 I prefer Autumn. Not so much
 light.

SOMERSBY

Are you not happy at Welman
College, young man?

BRANDON

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

SOMERSBY

Let's focus on the happy part.

Brandon stares out the window.

SOMERSBY (CONT'D)

Is there something out there that
interests you?

EXT. WEBSTER GENERAL HOSPITAL

Marny drives into the parking lot in her faded two-tone, 1964
Volkswagon van, with flower decals.

INT. DEAN SOMERSBY'S OFFICE

Somersby pushes a thin legal document toward Brandon.

SOMERSBY

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

BRANDON

Not sure I want to.

SOMERSBY

The money's good. In fact, it's
excellent. But, the faculty board,
and I, have a serious concern. It
has nothing to do with your
teaching ability. Your creative
writing class is one of Welman
College's most popular ever.

(pause)

You see, there was another talented
professor who spent time on that
roof over there. He also liked
guns. Had a very nice revolver.
The bullet entered and exited the
sides of his head in a very nice
straight line.

He puts his finger to his temple, pulls the trigger.

SOMERSBY (CONT'D)

Kapow!

(dryly)

A Psychology professor.

(then)

What do you want out of life,
Brandon?

BRANDON

(overly eager)

A really, really interesting
vacation! Hula girls in grass
skirts. ENORMOUS, UNUSUAL
beverages with pineapple wedges!

SOMERSBY

That's what you want out of life?

BRANDON

(totally serious)

How could it be better than that?

INT. WEBSTER GENERAL HOSPITAL

DOCTOR JOE'S HAND pushes the plunger on a hypodermic needle.

When DOCTOR JOE, UNEVEN HAIRPIECE, withdraws the needle, he
sees Marny rubbing her eyes.

DOCTOR JOE

What's with the eye rubbing?

MARNY

Oh, probably allergies.

Doctor Joe picks up an ophthalmoscope and flashes it ON.

DOCTOR JOE

Let's have a look.

INT. BRANDON'S OFFICE - EARLY AFTERNOON

Brandon is taking a NAP when his phone RINGS and he answers.

BRANDON

Yes.

MARNY (OVER THE PHONE)
Brandon, it's me. Just your mom.
Are you busy?

BRANDON
No, what's up?

INT. WEBSTER GENERAL HOSPITAL HALLWAY PAY PHONE

Marny wears a HOSPITAL GOWN and is talking on the pay phone.

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

BRANDON (OVER THE PHONE)
In the hospital?

MARNY
I'm sure it's nothing. Listen, I
want you to pick Katey up from
school.

INT. BRANDON'S OFFICE

BRANDON
(pause)
I guess I could do that.

MARNY (OVER THE PHONE)
Of course you can.

EXT. WEBSTER HIGH SCHOOL - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Katey is standing by the street curb, looking around,
wondering where her ride is.

INT. WEBSTER GENERAL HOSPITAL EXAMINATION ROOM

Doctor Joe is looking at X-rays of Marny's chest, then checks
her forehead for fever.

DOCTOR JOE
(frowns)
I need to run a few more tests.
You'll have to stay overnight.

MARNY

But, my plane leaves for Paris in
three days, Doctor Joe!

DOCTOR JOE

We'll know more in the morning.

INT. BRANDON'S 1966 PONTIAC LAURENTIAN

Brandon, puffing on A CIGAR, sees Katey, steers the car over.
He reaches across, opens the passenger door, and clouds of
SMOKE billow out.

BRANDON

Hey, monopod!
(Katey steps back to avoid
the smoke)
Grandma couldn't make it.
(Katey frowns)
C'mon, get in!

Katey is very hesitant.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

You still playing Chopsticks?

She steps forward, slams the door SHUT and starts walking.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

(tosses the cigar)
Here we go.

Drives the car up beside Katey.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

I got rid of the cigar!

Katey stops, takes a large NOTE PAD and a black marker pen
from her backpack, and writes: **SMOKE LINGERS! PLUS COLOGNE!**
She holds it up so Brandon can read it. Katey turns over the
page, writes another note: **WHERE'S GRANDMA?**

BRANDON (CONT'D)

(reluctantly)
In the hospital.

Katey turns and starts RUNNING.

BRANDON (CONT'D)

(under his breath)
Stuff. Always stuff!

As he grinds the car in gear to catch up with Katey, the vehicle backfires and STALLS.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 (tries to restart it)
 C'mon, c'mon.
 (smoke starts to pour from
 the hood)
 C'mon, you stupid piece of junk!

Frustrated, he gets out of the car and SHOUTS OVER at his quickly departing daughter.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
 Katey, wait!

Katey turns a corner and disappears behind a row of BUILDINGS. Brandon kicks the curb, hurting his foot, then limps over and opens the car hood. He is instantly engulfed in a HUGE plume of thick, black engine SMOKE.

EXT. WEBSTER GENERAL HOSPITAL - MINUTES LATER

Katey strides QUICKLY through the hospital's front entrance.

INT. WEBSTER GENERAL HOSPITAL NURSE RECEPTION DESK

Katey approaches the desk, takes out her writing pad and writes: **MY GRANDMA IS MARNY LARMIKE.**

DESK NURSE
 (reads the note)
 And you are?

KATEY
 Katey.

DESK NURSE
 Why do you write when you can talk?

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

KATEY
 Grandma?

MARNY (OVER THE PHONE)
 Hi, Katey pie!

Katey wants to say more, but, doesn't.

MARNY (OVER THE PHONE CONT'D)
 Everything's alright, honey. I'll
 be home tomorrow.

KATEY
 Promise?

INT. WEBSTER GENERAL HOSPITAL MARNY'S ROOM

POV MARNY. AS THOUGH SHE IS LOOKING THROUGH A
 TRANSLUCENT SHEET OF THINLY-FROZEN ICE. She continues
 to talk on the phone.

MARNY
 Promise. Is your father with you?

KATEY (OVER THE PHONE)
 No.

MARNY
 Why not? Katey?
 (silence)
 What happened?

KATEY (OVER THE PHONE)
 Smoke. Cologne.

INT. WEBSTER GENERAL HOSPITAL RECEPTION AREA

KATEY
 Room?
 (takes a breath)
 Number?

MARNY (OVER THE PHONE)
 Third floor. Almost in the middle.
 Facing West.

INT. WEBSTER GENERAL HOSPITAL MARNY'S ROOM

Marny hangs up the phone and goes to her window, drawing back
 the curtains. Major CONCERN lines her face as she looks down
 to the sidewalk, and waits.

Moments later, Katey walks into view, looking up, arms folded
 around her backpack. She SEES her grandma and stops.

Marny smiles bravely and waves as THE TRANSLUCENT ICE
 SHEET VISION EFFECT COMES ON AGAIN.

MARNY

Dear God.

EXT. WEBSTER SIDE STREET - AN HOUR LATER

Brandon sits on the sidewalk, watching A TOW TRUCK OPERATOR raise his disabled vehicle in the air. Brandon's face is covered with OIL and his clothes are SMUDGED with grease.

TOW TRUCK OPERATOR

Yah, the wife just won't let me watch the games no more. Wasn't like that when I married 'er! You tell me what's wrong with spendin' afternoon in front of tube on Sunday, during NFL football season.

Brandon tries to clean a glob of grease from his tweed jacket. The tow truck operator finishes raising the car, spits out a stream of chewing tobacco juice.

TOW TRUCK OPERATOR (CONT'D)

You really should let mechanics take care of dirty work, chief.

BRANDON

I've worked on cars before.

TOW TRUCK OPERATOR

(chuckles, pats him on the back)

Yah, I can tell.

The tow truck operator turns and sees A STRAY DOG urinating on Brandon's back tire.

TOW TRUCK OPERATOR (CONT'D)

Hey!

The dog barks back, and continues to urinate.

BRANDON

(dryly)

Perfect.

EXT. UNCLE VLADIMIR'S SERVICE STATION - LATE AFTERNOON

The Service Station owner, a cowboy hat-wearing Russian, UNCLE VLADIMIR, peers up from under Brandon's jacked-up vehicle.

UNCLE VLADIMIR

Well, professor, it looks like oil filter housing cracked.

(stands up, wiping his hands)

All the oil spill on exhaust. That's where black smoke come from. Anyway, it take three days to order part from Des Moines.

BRANDON

You think she's worth fixing?

UNCLE VLADIMIR

Sure, them Pontiac Laurentians are good vehicles. Still a buncha miles left on 'er.

He takes some keys out of his pocket, nods over at a bashed-up '65 Ford F150 pickup truck.

UNCLE VLADIMIR (CONT'D)

She rides rough, but, does job.

Uncle Vladimir tosses over the keys. Brandon notices a SHINY, GOLD KEY that seems out of place.

BRANDON

What's this for?

UNCLE VLADIMIR

I gotta yacht moored up at Lake Santa Claus. You can take 'er out fishin' if you like.

(lowers his voice)

You kind of look like you could use a fishin' vacation, pardner.

BRANDON

(gets in the truck)

Thanks, Uncle Vladimir. I might take you up on that.

UNCLE VLADIMIR

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

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

INT. MARNY'S FLOWER SHOP - 5:55 P.M.

Katey helps Allen close up shop for the day. Allen carefully puts the Angel's Kiss Chrysanthemum in it's own special place in the walk-in refrigeration area. He checks the thermometer, adjusts the flower position slightly.

The STRAY DOG trots by the open front door, glances inside.

INT. BRANDON'S TRAILER - EVENING

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

As he flushes the toilet, he accidentally knocks his hair brush into the bowl, forcing him to hurriedly reach in and rescue it. He brushes his hair without rinsing the brush, then splashes on a ton of New Crew cologne.

THE PHONE RINGS as he grabs a leather jacket, and heads for the front door. The answering machine comes ON and he stops.

BRANDON'S OUTGOING MESSAGE

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

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

MARNY'S VOICE

I wish you'd change that message.
Anyway, it's just me, Mom.
(Brandon moves toward the
phone)
Brandon -- Katey is not going to
live with you until you stop the
cigars and cologne. And all that
drinking and running around. It's
time for you to start being a
better father!

Brandon presses the SPEAKER button, speaks.

BRANDON

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

MARNY (THROUGH PHONE SPEAKER)
 Brandon -- why would you ask a
 question like that?!
 (then)
 What's going on with you these
 days? I want to know.

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

MARNY
 Well, you should have other
 friends.

He doesn't respond.

MARNY (CONT'D)
 Brandon?

He just stares into the phone.

EXT. MOOKIE'S HIDEAWAY BAR & RESTAURANT - 15 MINUTES LATER

A lively bar in the town square. A neon sign reads: *1/2
 PRICE HAPPY HOUR DRINKS AND BAR MENU BEFORE 9:00 P.M.*

Brandon parks the truck and goes in.

INT. MOOKIE'S HIDEAWAY BAR & RESTAURANT

Brandon saddles up to the bar.

BARTENDER
 JD on the rocks, Coke back,
 professor?
 (grimaces)
 Nice cologne.

BRANDON
 Thanks.
 (grins)
 And a menu, please. You know how
 we do it.

The bartender pours the drink, and Brandon downs it in two
 gulps, ignoring the Coke.

EXT. MARNY & KATEY'S HOME - LATE EVENING

A friendly two-story, 1940s era, brick house, with a great front porch, on a corner lot. Only a few lights are on.

INT. MARNY & KATEY'S HOME

Katey stands in her grandmother's bedroom. There are two open, empty suitcases on a cedar chest. A PARIS PLANE TICKET sits nearby, on a lamp table.

Katey enters the living room, where a TV beams an episode of The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson.

She sits at a piano and starts to play CHOPSTICKS.

INT. MOOKIE'S HIDEAWAY BAR & RESTAURANT - 1:50 A.M.

Brandon is slumped over at the bar. The bartender taps him on the shoulder, Brandon lifts his head.

BARTENDER
Time, Mr. Larmike.

BRANDON
(slurs his words)
Yes. Of course.

The bartender puts the check down, Brandon adds a tip, signs unsteadily, almost falls off his bar stool.

EXT. MOOKIE'S HIDEAWAY BAR & RESTAURANT

At the door, the BOUNCER stops him.

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

BRANDON
(swaying on his feet)
I'm okay to drive, partner.

The bouncer smiles and reaches into Brandon's pocket, removing the keys while Brandon NOTICES THE STRAY DOG, which is eyeing him from across the street.

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

The dog starts to growl.

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

The dog BARKS.

Brandon gets down on his hands and knees and BARKS BACK.

EXT. WEBSTER GENERAL HOSPITAL - VERY LATE AT NIGHT

Light shines from Marny's window.

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

MARNY'S MOVING SHADOW traces on the curtain as *Summer Wind*
plays on a transistor radio inside her room.

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

EXT. WEBSTER GENERAL HOSPITAL - NEXT MORNING

NIGHT has changed to DAY outside Marny's window.

INT. WEBSTER GENERAL HOSPITAL MARNY'S ROOM

Doctor Joe examines the new set of X-rays. Marny looks out
the window, RUBBING HER EYES again.

DOCTOR JOE
It's not good, Marny.

EXT. MARNY & KATEY'S HOME STREET OUT FRONT

Brandon, hung-over, snoozes in the front passenger seat of
Uncle Vladimir's truck.

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

KATEY

Go!

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

KATEY (CONT'D)

GO!!

Brandon accidentally jams the truck into reverse, and when he lets out the clutch, Katey ends up ON HER BUTT. Brandon grimaces, quickly shifts to the proper gear and the truck lurches forward.

INT. WEBSTER GENERAL HOSPITAL MARNY'S ROOM - MINUTES
LATER - CONTINUOUS

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

MARNY

You look so tired, Brandon.

BRANDON

Tell me what the doctor said.

MARNY

I can't go to Paris.

(then)

Maybe you can go. Katey's too young. Allen has to mind the shop.

BRANDON STARTS TO HEAR THE SOUND OF HIS OWN BREATHING.

MARNY (CONT'D)

Anyway, they don't know what I have, Brandon. I should probably write a will.

Brandon gets up and walks out of the room.

MARNY (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

Still hearing himself breathe, he passes by Katey sitting in an alcove down the hall.

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

Brandon takes the stairs down and EXITS the hospital.

EXT. WEBSTER GENERAL HOSPITAL PARKING LOT

Brandon gets into his truck, breathing heavily. He rips off the sterile mask.

INT. MARNY'S FLOWER SHOP - MINUTES LATER

Brandon STARES at the Angel's Kiss chrysanthemum, which has bloomed a little more since the day before. Allen nervously spills dirt on the floor.

ALLEN

Dammit!

BRANDON

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

ALLEN

(pauses, then)

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

EXT. OUTSIDE THE FLOWER SHOP

Brandon gets into the truck and drives away. Katey, who has been waiting around the corner, comes into the store and hugs Allen.

The truck drives half-way around the town square, and Brandon sees the STRAY DOG trotting along the sidewalk. He BARKS at it.

DOG

(stops)

Hello, Brandon.

(Brandon's jaw drops and the dog SMILES)

Follow me, buddy!

The dog darts down the block and STOPS right in front of the PSYCHIC GYPSY SHOP. Brandon catches up in his truck, parks.

BRANDON

(reads the sign)

'Crystal energy. Curses Granted.

Reverse Curses. Aura Cleansing.

Chakra Balancing. No Voodoo.

(MORE)

BRANDON (cont'd)
Free Zodiac key chain Tuesdays and
Wednesdays.'

The dog LAUGHS. Brandon glances inside the open shop door,
then glances around to see if anybody is watching.

INT. PSYCHIC GYPSY SHOP - MOMENTS LATER

FANTASY SEQUENCE. *When Brandon enters the shop, it's like stepping into a Jamaican beach vacation dream. He is still dressed in his regular clothes, but, a LINE OF BEAUTIFUL, BIKINI-CLAD WOMEN dance seductively, blowing air kisses. He air-kisses them back as he is handed a tropical alcoholic beverage with a chunk of pineapple wedged on top.*

INT. PSYCHIC GYPSY SHOP - SAME TIME

Brandon is seated at a table, air-kissing the PSYCHIC GYPSY, a UNIQUE, EDGY WOMAN WHO WEARS TOO MUCH SPARKLING BLUE EYE MAKE-UP. The Psychic Gypsy has hold of his hands.

PSYCHIC GYPSY
Look at your hands.
(Brandon's eyes blink
open)
Look at your hands, you fool!

Brandon holds his hands in the air so he can look at them as the stray dog peeps his head around the corner, panting.

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

Brandon is still looking at his hands.

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

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

PSYCHIC GYPSY
How do you know?

BRANDON
I don't. Maybe you can tell me.

PSYCHIC GYPSY
(leans forward, whispers)
Death is always whimsical.

She examines one of his hands.

PSYCHIC GYPSY (CONT'D)
You need to find your soul. It is
lost.

BRANDON
You don't understand. I want to
bear my mother's burden.
(shivering)
I want to replace her death with
mine.
(leans forward)
Would you know how to do something
like that?

PSYCHIC GYPSY
(sizes him up, ENORMOUS
smile)
Of course. But I need to get paid
first. How much money do you have?

Brandon takes out a clump of currency as THE SCENE COLORS
SHIFT SLIGHTLY.

BRANDON
About a hundred, maybe one-twenty.

Brandon starts hearing the sound of his own, exaggerated
breathing again.

The psychic gypsy picks up the truck keys, singles out the
GOLD BOAT KEY, says something.

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

She picks up a pitcher of water, pours it on Brandon's head.

PSYCHIC GYPSY
Go spend time on the Green Monster.
It is a good boat.
(MORE)

PSYCHIC GYPSY (cont'd)
 Uncle Vladimir is my dear friend.
 (gives him the truck keys)
 Now go.

Brandon takes the keys, grins enthusiastically through his dripping hair.

BRANDON
 Very interesting!

PSYCHIC GYPSY
 (points to the door)
 GO!! Leave the money!!

Brandon puts his remaining cash on the table. On the way out, he picks up A DISCOUNT FLYER.

INT. WEBSTER GENERAL HOSPITAL MARNY'S ROOM - EARLY EVENING

Marny is in a deep sleep in her darkened room when HER VISAGE SHIMMERS AGAIN AS MYSTERIOUS, LAYERED LIGHT PASSES THROUGH HER. She opens her eyes, and smiles slightly.

EXT. LAKE SANTA CLAUS

Many row boats are moored at various points around a quaint municipal lake, which features a tall STATUE OF SANTA CLAUS in the middle. Brandon stands on the shore, looking around.

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

BRANDON
 Excuse me. Where are the yachts?

LOCAL
 Ain't no yachts around here.
 Probably a boat. Got a name?

BRANDON
 The Green Monster.
 (looks around)
 I haven't been here since I was a kid.

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

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

LOCAL (CONT'D)

(chuckling)

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

BRANDON

(discouraged)

Huh.

EXT. LAKE SANTA CLAUS - AN HOUR LATER

Brandon sits slumped in the boat, in the middle of the lake, looking at the Santa Claus statue. The lake is illuminated with facility lights. His fishing pole line dangles in the water. It is raining, and his cigar is soaking wet.

BRANDON

(to his cigar)

In the eye of the beholder.

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

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Statues!

INT. PSYCHIC GYPSY KITCHEN

In a darkened kitchen, as if coming out of A TRANCE, the seated Psychic Gypsy blinks, then picks up the cash Brandon left on the table, puts it in her purse.

She takes a leftover chicken drumstick from a plate, eats the remaining meat, tosses the bone into a soup bowl. The bowl BEGINS TO VIBRATE.

EXT. LAKE SANTA CLAUS

Suddenly, Brandon's fishing line takes a huge dip, and line begins spooling out of the reel.

BRANDON

(stands up, yanks back on the rod)

Merry Christmas, fish! HAH!