

THE GOSPEL OF JUDAS & JACK

SEASON 1: WYDOW'S PEAK
Pilot: Ring Around the Rosie

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FADE IN:

EXT. DARK WOODS OF CAMP AYAJUANA, WYDOW'S PEAK - 1964 - NIGHT

A swarm of children, their ages ranging from 9 to 12, huddle around a campfire. The fire flickers off their awestruck faces, their eyes wide with fear and excitement.

They are dressed in the unmistakable attire of the mid-1960's summer camp -- shorts, knee-high socks, and shirts donning their camp's logo.

The wind whips through the surrounding trees, causing them to sway ominously, adding to the chilling atmosphere.

Their camp counselor, WILSON, a young man of about 24, relishes the moment, his voice echoing through the darkness. His story, a mixture of horror and folklore, hangs heavy in the air.

WILSON

(low and sinister)

Legend has it that there are parts of these woods that aren't safe. That something is watching. And that those who trespass on this cursed land are punished.

His words cause a stir among the children. Eyes dart around, necks crane towards the darkness, ears strain for any sound that might confirm their worst fears.

WILSON (CONT'D)

You see, deep in this forest, there once lived three sisters... witches. They condemned the land, taking all of its life for their own. And what was once green and new suddenly became fraught with death and decay.

Suddenly, a noise rustles from the bushes. Wilson gasps, and the children follow suit. Their eyes grow even wider, their bodies tenser. Wilson listens, seemingly frightened himself.

WILSON (CONT'D)

What was that? Shhh. You hear that?

The air grows still as everyone holds their breath. Wilson, letting the moment hang in the chilling silence, takes on a theatrical whisper.

WILSON (CONT'D)
(calling out)
Sisters? Is that you? Are you out
there listening to us now?

Only the wind rustling through the leaves replies.

WILSON (CONT'D)
(to himself)
See, you have to understand that it
was blood... They needed blood.
Specifically, the blood of the
young, like you guys, closer to
your inception of life, and the
blood from those who were older and
closer to the conclusion of theirs.
This circle of life was what they'd
use to appease the Black Goat!

From the huddled children, an older one leans in to his
friend, a smirk on his face.

OLDER KID
(whispering)
Sounds like your mom's dildo.

Wilson, oblivious to the older kid's comment, continues with
his tale.

WILSON
And it bestowed the sisters with
the eternal beauty and power to
rule over the dominion on which we
now sit.

Some kids, wide-eyed, continue to nibble on their
marshmallows, while others, entranced by the story, let
theirs burn in the fire.

WILSON (CONT'D)
And so to please the Black Goat
further, these witches tempted all
manner of man, woman, and child
until, after some time, every
youngster and convalescent for
miles around went missing. Until
one day...

He pauses, looking over the children, letting his words seep
into their minds.

WILSON (CONT'D)
A girl was found nearly dead right
under the shadow of the Peak.

He points to the horizon, where, under the moonlight, the top of a mountain glows eerily.

WILSON (CONT'D)

She couldn't have been much older than any of you. When they asked her happened, she spoke of a maiden, a mother, and a crone. Decaying flesh that fed the demon roots of the Wytch Elm. And that's the last she ever spoke.

The kids swallow in fear. One FARTS.

WILSON (CONT'D)

So, Mountain Police investigated. And do you know what they found under its disturbed soil?

The group remains utterly silent. Wilson smirks.

WILSON (CONT'D)

Bodies! Infants. Kids your age. Even older folks like your Grandma and Grandpa. Each one completely drained of its life.

KID #1

Gross!

WILSON

So they killed 'em. On this very night, one hundred years ago, those three sisters were strung up by their necks and hung on separate branches of the Wytch Elm and set on fire. Those that stayed to watch claimed that the women never even uttered a single scream.

The branches above them creak.

KID #2

Did they... die?

WILSON

Well, see, that's where things get weird. The did burn, alright. Along with the Elm, all down to ashes. But just one year later, the Wytch Elm was seen again, fully grown, fully fruiting. As if it had never tasted the town's flames.

Another rustling emanates from the woods beyond.

WILSON (CONT'D)

So that can only mean one thing...
They're out there now! The maiden,
the mother and the crone. They're
listening. Looking for blood. Your
blood, so that they may complete
the Circle of Life once more --

Suddenly TWO SATYR FIGURES jump from out of the darkness into the circle, causing all of the kids to SCREAM in terror and drop their marshmallows.

Their terror is cut severely short by Wilson's laughter as the Satyrs remove their masks and reveal themselves to be two other camp counselors.

WILSON (CONT'D)

Okay, listen guys. All of that
stuff is made up and there's
nothing to be scared of. No
witches, no black goat. Not tonight
or ever, alright?

As the kids calm themselves down, Wilson looks around and realizes two children are missing.

The children's faces are a mixture of fear and fascination, their hearts pounding in their chests. One child nervously lets out a FART, breaking the tense silence.

Wilson presses on, his voice growing more ominous.

WILSON (CONT'D)

So, Mountain Police investigated. And
do you know what they found under its
disturbed soil?

The group remains utterly silent, each child hanging on Wilson's every word. Wilson smirks, sensing their anticipation.

WILSON (CONT'D)

Bodies! Infants. Kids your age. Even
older folks like your Grandma and
Grandpa. Each one completely drained
out of its life.

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The branches above them creak as if in agreement.

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Another rustling emanates from the woods beyond. Wilson leans in, his voice barely a whisper.

WILSON (CONT'D)

And they're out there now! The maiden, the mother, and the crone. They're listening. Looking for blood. Your blood, so that they may complete the Circle of Life once more --

Suddenly, TWO SATYR FIGURES leap from the darkness into the circle, causing all of the children to SCREAM in terror and drop their marshmallows.

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As the children calm down, Wilson looks around and realizes two children are missing.

WILSON (CONT'D)

Dammit. Anybody got eyes on Bryan and Liam?

EXT. DARK WOODS - NIGHT

The moon is obscured by the thick canopy of trees, casting long and eerie shadows on the forest floor.

Two boys, BRYAN RICE and LIAM O'CONNELL (both 12), traverse a path underneath the dark forest canopy with FLASHLIGHTS. They are dressed in the same attire as the others back at camp.

Bryan, athletic and brave, follows a curious Liam, lanky with GLASSES and a SATCHEL. As they move, Bryan blows some warm air into the palms of his hands. Liam studies a MAP.

BRYAN

Do you even believe any of that stuff they say about the Wytch Elm?

LIAM

Hell yeah. My brother Wayne told me all about it. Says it's all real.

Bryan laughs, the sound echoing in the silent woods.

BRYAN

Your brother Wayne is in jail.

LIAM

So?

BRYAN

So, he's full of shit.

Liam frowns, clearly not amused.

LIAM

No, he's not!

BRYAN

Dude, he thinks the colors of M&M's are flavors.

Liam struggles to come up with a defense.

LIAM

Well, just because he's in jail doesn't mean he isn't smart, okay.

BRYAN

No, your brother's in jail BECAUSE he isn't smart. At all. Like, at all, at all.

Liam opens his mouth to protest but can't come up with a valid argument. Bryan rolls his eyes and grabs the map from Liam's hands.

LIAM

If it weren't real, where would he have gotten that map from then?

The boys stop and shine their flashlights on it.

BRYAN

He drew it dumbass... With your crayons, no less!

The map is a juvenile recreation of what a child would think a map should look like, complete with an X to mark a spot.

LIAM

Well, it's been right so far. Besides, if this Circle of Life thing is true, we're gonna be rich.

Suddenly, Liam TAPS Bryan's groin with a swift backhand. Bryan immediately doubles over in pain.

BRYAN

Ah! Dick!

LIAM

Just making sure you haven't lost yours, Rice! Come on!

Bryan takes a moment to recover.

BRYAN

(pained)

Hold on... If any of this is true, why didn't your brother take it for himself, then?

LIAM

He said he almost did.

BRYAN

Almost?

LIAM

Well, yeah. He said he heard voices and got too scared.

Bryan finally gets back on his feet, apprehensive.

BRYAN

That makes me feel a whole lot better.

LIAM

And I'd feel a whole lot better if you'd stop being a pussy. Now come on, let's go. I wanna get rich!

Liam snatches the map back and they both plunge further into the darkness, their flashlights flickering as they disappear into the inky blackness of the woods.

EXT. WYTCH ELM - MOMENTS LATER

Bryan and Liam emerge from the woods into a dark clearing, their flashlights illuminating their surroundings. Bryan is skeptical, while Liam is engrossed in the map.

BRYAN

I don't even know why you trust that stupid thing. I'll bet ya five bucks it leads us to where your brother busted his cherry.

LIAM

Nah, that was in the garage with Rachel.

BRYAN

Isn't Rachel your cousin?

LIAM

(dismissive)

Only my first cousin -- Anyway, this has to be it. The X is right here. Nowhere else it can be.

Bryan points his flashlight further into the clearing. There is nothing there. He turns to remark to Liam.

BRYAN

See, I told you your brother was full of --

BAM! He suddenly walks into a tree trunk and tumbles down, dropping his flashlight. Liam shines his flashlight at Bryan, revealing the massive WYTCH ELM behind him.

LIAM

Holy shit, Bryan. Look!

Bryan gets back to his feet, nursing his aching forehead. He finally sees that they now standing underneath the numerous, outstretching arms of the towering, decrepit WYTCH ELM.

Dead leaves rustle around its base, and unseen crows caw ominously from its branches.

BRYAN
The Wytch Elm.

LIAM
This is it.

Liam folds the map back and sticks it into his pocket.

BRYAN
How are we supposed to dig this thing up? With our hands?

LIAM
Already ahead of you.

Liam pulls out a small but sturdy looking GARDENING SPADE from his satchel.

BRYAN
Are you sure that's big enough?

LIAM
Big as my dick!

BRYAN
Great, we'll be here forever.

At the base of the tree, the dirt looks disturbed.

LIAM
I think that's where my brother must have dug.

Bryan moves to inspect the dirt.

BRYAN
And it's still fresh? Wasn't he here like a year ago?

Undeterred, Liam places his flashlight on the ground to illuminate the dig spot.

LIAM
Keep watch okay?

Liam pounds the spade into the dirt and begins to remove small piles of earth. Bryan moves out of his way.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Can you imagine, man? The things we could do if we actually find the Circle of Life? I'm think I'm gonna buy a Camaro!

BRYAN

We're 12, dude. You can't drive.

LIAM

So? Rich people can do whatever they want!

Suddenly, a GIRL'S VOICE echoes through the darkness.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

Bryyyyyyyyyannnnnnn...

BRYAN

Whoa, what was that?

Bryan points the flashlight in the direction of the disembodied voice. His face goes pale. The voice calls again, louder this time.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

Bryyyyyyyyyannnnnnn...

BRYAN

Liam, you hear that?

Liam remains engrossed in his digging.

LIAM

(digging)

...and then I'm gonna steal all my dad's Playboys and see if he actually leaves the garage...

Liam's voice drowns out as Bryan becomes hypnotized by the ethereal voice. This time it calls from somewhere in the near distance, more distinct.

GIRL'S VOICE (O.S.)

Bryan!

Bryan takes a step toward it and shines his light. He finds himself standing in front of a sure-as-shit GINGERBREAD HOUSE. It sits illuminated in the darkness.

BRYAN

No way...

A YOUNG GIRL, no older than Bryan, watches from the house's veranda. They make eye contact and she waves at him, luring him to come closer.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

Hi.

Bryan waves back like a dork, and the girl turns away, slowly walking into the house and shutting its door behind her.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

Hey, Liam.

Bryan looks back to Liam who remains in his own world, digging and talking.

LIAM

...so you think Thanos really jerks off with his glove on...

BRYAN

I'll be right back, man.

Bryan, entranced, begins to shuffle towards the Gingerbread House. The trees seem to part and make a path for him. As he moves past them, they sway back, obscuring the path and the Elm's clearing from view.

Slowly, the clearing and Liam's voice fade as Bryan steps into the Gingerbread House's inviting glow.

INT. GINGERBREAD HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Bryan steps inside the dream-like interior of the gingerbread house, leaving the door slightly ajar behind him.

The room is bathed in the warm, welcoming light of a fire burning in a cozy fireplace.

He marvels at the surreal scene, running his fingers over the ICING-FROSTED GINGERBREAD FURNITURE, and pulling down a CUPCAKE from a SUGAR CHANDELIER to sample. He continues to explore the room, his curiosity growing.

He approaches a DESK made from CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES, adorned with VASES full of intricate FRUIT LEATHER FLOWERS. He leans in to sniff the flowers, and his eyes widen in surprise as he discovers their unconventional makeup.

Above the vases, Bryan finds THREE PHOTOGRAPHS displayed in FRAMES made from CUSTARD:

The first is a beautiful young woman, silhouetted against a WAXING MOON.

The second shows an older woman, still attractive, silhouetted against a FULL MOON.

BRYAN
(hushed)
The witches...

Bryan moves to the third photograph. It's an image of an old, decrepit, evil-looking woman silhouetted against a WANING MOON.

The sight of her causes Bryan to catch his breath, his eyes wide with fear --

BOOM!

The door suddenly slams shut behind him, startling Bryan. The flames in the fireplace begin to roar higher, casting an intimidating red glow throughout the room accompanied by an uncomfortably ambient CRACKLE of burning wood.

BRYAN (CONT'D)
Shit. That was... just the wind,
right?

He takes a step back when a fear induced, high-pitched FART escapes from between his trembling legs.

Then, as if in reply, a sudden, shrill CACKLE fills the space behind him, breaking the silence.

Bryan whips back around in terror to find that the beautiful fruit leather flowers have WILTED and died, and the photographs of the witches are now crawling with MAGGOTS.

To his horror, Bryan finds that his half-eaten cupcake is infested with maggots too.

He hastily drops the cupcake and frantically brushes the maggots from his hand. He tries to catch his breath --

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK.

A steady, persistent knocking emanates from the door.

BRYAN (CONT'D)
(terrified)
Shit. Shit. Shit... I really gotta
pee.

EXT. WYTCH ELM - SAME

Liam has been diligently digging a hole underneath the gnarled Wytch Elm, too engrossed in his task to realize Bryan's absence.

LIAM

(panting)

How long do you think someone could survive off of their own pee anyway? My brother reckons a good week, but I don't think so, because if you could, why wouldn't more people do it?

A chilling, almost inaudible whisper seeps out from the depths of the hole Liam has dug.

DARK WHISPER (O.S.)

Liiiiaaaaamm...

Liam freezes, the whisper causing him to recoil slightly. He straightens his glasses, peering into the pit. After a moment of silence, curiosity gets the better of him.

LIAM

(confused)

Um... What?

The hole remains ominously silent. Liam straightens his glasses then leans in closer, listening intently.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Hello?

DARK WHISPER (O.S.)

LIAM!

Liam stumbles backward when a KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK starts vibrating the ground underneath him. He stumbles backward in alarm as the whisper amplifies into a shout.

Suddenly, a rhythmic KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK starts to resonate from the ground beneath him, sending vibrations up his spine.

INT. GINGERBREAD HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK

Panic seizes Bryan as he frantically attempts to pry open a window, desperate to escape the sinister candy house.

Suddenly, his hand SINKS into the gingerbread dough composing the window pane as if it was quicksand.

It tries to pull him in further!

Struggling, Bryan manages to withdraw his hand, only to find it bleeding profusely. The gingerbread dough has left a gnarly BITE WOUND.

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK

The knocking is louder now, insistent, and it sends a chill down Bryan's spine. He swivels around, heart pounding in his chest.

BRYAN
Shit! Come on!

Spotting a large CANDY CANE, he snatches it up, wielding it like a makeshift sword.

BRYAN (CONT'D)
(apologetic)
Look, I didn't mean to trespass. I
can go, I swear! Just... just let
me go, okay?

KNOCK-KNOCK -- the knocking reverberates through the house. In a split second, the candy cane is ripped from his grasp by an unseen force.

BRYAN (CONT'D)
(screams)
AAA!

Suddenly, the front door of the gingerbread house flings open! Without a second thought, Bryan bolts for the exit.

EXT. WYTCH ELM - CONTINUOUS

Liam is frantically scuttling on his hands and knees, trying to evade the menacing knocking that seems to pursue him.

KNOCKKNOCKKNOCKKNOCKKNOCKKNOCKKNOCK!

He throws the garden spade aside and scrambles to his feet.

LIAM
(alarmed)
Bryan, where are you?

The knocking intensifies, growing frantic and threatening. He whirls around to find Bryan missing.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Bryan?

Realization dawns on him - his friend is gone. With all his might, he screams out once more.

LIAM (CONT'D)

BRYYYAAAANNN?!?

Then, all at once, the sinister knocking STOPS.

SILENCE.

Liam's chest heaves as he catches his breath, the rustling of the Wytch Elm's heavy branches the only sound in the quiet night. He scans the surrounding darkness. Nothing.

LIAM (CONT'D)

(murmuring)

Just the wind, right? Like a...
windquake... That can say my name
and knock on the ground...

Then he sees it. A glint catches his eye. His flashlight's beam illuminates the mouth of the hole he dug, revealing a small SHIMMER, brighter than the light itself.

He removes his glasses and wipes his eyes, only to find that the shimmer remains, piercing through the darkness.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Jackpot! Camaro here I come.

Cautiously, Liam inches towards the hole, gripping the garden spade like a weapon.

LIAM (CONT'D)

(nervously)

No sudden movements, okay. Um, I'm
armed.

He sweeps more dirt aside, revealing a shiny object which only grows brighter and more distorted.

As he reaches to grab it when suddenly, a grotesque, decayed CLAW shoots out of the soil, gripping his arm and pulling him into the earth.

LIAM (CONT'D)

OH SHIT!

He comes face to face with the ghastly visage of the OLD WOMAN from the third photo in the Gingerbread House, her face crawling with MAGGOTS.

She pulls him closer, baring her sharp, rotting TEETH. The kid os SCARED!

LIAM (CONT'D)
You smell like ass!

She successfully clamps her mouth over Liam's INDEX FINGER.

LIAM (CONT'D)
AAA! No! Gross!

In a swift, horrifying motion, she BITES down and severs his finger. Liam's blood-curdling SCREAM echoes into the night.

His arm is released, and he collapses on his back, sobbing. Looking up, he gasps to see Bryan towering over him.

LIAM (CONT'D)
Bryan!

BRYAN
Liam! What happened?!

LIAM
(crying)
My hand smells like asshole!

The shrill CACKLE fills the forest once more. Bryan, seeing the blood gushing from Liam's maimed hand, tugs at his arm, pulling him to his feet.

BRYAN
Shit, man! Your hand! We gotta get you to a hospital.

LIAM
(whimpering)
No, man, I can't go to a hospital. People die there!

BRYAN
You're gonna die here! Come on! Let's go!

With the ominous cackle reaching a terrifying crescendo, Bryan drags Liam away, leaving all of their gear behind.

LIAM
Don't leave my finger!

BRYAN
Fuck your finger!

As they disappear into the woods, the cackle is cut short, by a definitive BURP!

After, a beat, a final CACKLE.

FADE OUT.

INT. CHEAP SHOTS PUB - PRESENT DAY - NIGHT

A WOODEN INDEX FINGER taps on the bar next to an empty BEER GLASS. The glass is picked up and replaced with a full one.

LIAM O'CONNELL (60) picks the beer up and turns to his best friend, BRYAN RICE (also 60).

All these decades later, the two have managed to maintain their appearance, though Bryan carries a slight pudg around his midsection while Liam is still tall and lanky (and now, strangely IRISH).

The bar is full of PATRONS. All seem to be enjoying food, drink and each other's company. One GUY PLAYS DARTS nearby.

A football game is on TV causing everyone in the bar to cheer. A first down has just been made and everyone goes wild.

Except for Bryan. Not only is he older, he's broken. He stares down at his half-empty beer glass and untouched cheeseburger. He isn't eating.

Liam, however, is full of life. AND he still carries a satchel around his shoulders. He flicks Bryan's temple with his wooden finger.

LIAM

You know, Rice, when I ask you to come hangout and have a good time with me, I expect you to at least pretend you're enjoying yourself. Now come on and watch the game, you morose bastard!

BRYAN

I'm eating.

LIAM

No. You're not. Now, come on.

BRYAN

I don't like football.

LIAM

You have your letterman jacket framed and hanging on your goddamn office wall, Mr. Two-Time All American!

Bryan sighs. He has no other excuses.

BRYAN

I shouldn't have come.

LIAM

That's what I said. Hey-oh!

The group watching the football game all cheer. Another great play on the television.

Bryan pokes at his burger.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Okay, so maybe not my best joke.

Bryan looks at his eager friend. There is a sadness in Bryan's eyes. He looks away, pulls out his wallet and tosses some cash on a plate.

BRYAN

(rising)

I'm sorry Liam, I'm gonna get out of here. Thanks for trying.

Liam puts his hands on Bryan's shoulders and forces him back down into his seat.

LIAM

No you don't. I said I'd cheer you up. I'm gonna cheer you up.

(to the bartender)

Hey, can we get two shots of Mezcal, right here?

The BARTENDER gives a nod of acknowledgement and pulls out two shot glasses. He pours the shots.

BRYAN

You don't drink tequila.

LIAM

Of course I don't. They're both for you. You need to loosen the fuck up.

The bartender hands the shots to Liam who then slides them over to Bryan.

LIAM (CONT'D)
Drink up, buddy.

Bryan is visibly annoyed now. However he takes both shots down like a pro.

The group cheers at the game yet again.

LIAM (CONT'D)
That's my guy. Now, how many more until I can get a smile out of you? Did I tell you the one about the folk singer and the gerbil?

BRYAN
Liam --

LIAM
Come on, it's got incest in it. I know how much you like your *incest in jest*.

BRYAN
No thanks. Besides you're the one with the cousin sister-in-law.

LIAM
Hey, you leave Rachel out of this. Wayne's still broken up about her leaving him.

BRYAN
Liam, he stabbed her. Repeatedly. Like repeatedly, repeatedly.

LIAM
(defensive)
Well of course, she was sleeping with their wedding photographer! What would you do?

Bryan sighs and shakes his head.

BRYAN
I just want to go home.

LIAM
And what? Sit alone feeling all shitty again? You can't just sit surrounded by Jeanie's stuff and not feel like shit.

Bryan looks at the empty glasses in front of him, a tear building in his eye.

Liam grasps his friend's shoulder tenderly.

LIAM (CONT'D)

It's not healthy, Rice. You need to get out and... live.

BRYAN

I know.

Liam puts his arm around Bryan and gives him a side hug.

LIAM

I miss her too, mate.

They just sit for a moment, Bryan missing his deceased wife, and Liam just trying to be the good friend.

Liam nods to the bartender and gets two more shots.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I know that none of this will bring her back. I know that. But I'm just trying to bring you back, you miserable prick.

BRYAN

I just can't believe it's been two years already.

He sips his drink. Liam sniffs his and sets it down.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

And I can't expect you to understand how hard that is.

Liam looks into Bryan's face with all seriousness.

LIAM

Rice, I get it. But you're my best friend, and it has been two years. So you've run out of license from me to walk around like a cunt all the time. We've officially reached the Howard Beale: "I'm goddamn fed up and acting like an ass just to cheer you up" stage. And it's making me sore.

A small chuckle and a shimmer of a smile escapes from Bryan's dismal face.

BRYAN

A cunt, am I? Is that what you call it?

Liam grabs Bryan's neck and pulls his friend closer.

LIAM

Yeah. A big gaping one too! Lubed up with tequila.

BRYAN

(riffing)

Oh yeah, you're the one with the overactive bladder, buddy. Look down those mick shorts of yours, I bet the leprechaun's drowned in its pot 'o gold.

LIAM

Is that so?

BRYAN

(a small smile)

Yeah, it is.

Liam laughs and drinks the shot of tequila.

LIAM

Ugh. No me gusta.

Bryan picks up some fries. His smile fades a little.

BRYAN

I still don't know what I'm supposed to do.

LIAM

No. You haven't exactly been good at being alone. Which is why you should start coming out with me more.

BRYAN

(scoffing)

What? To this place?

LIAM

No, man, I got like a whole weekly schedule going. Karaoke Mondays. Plenty of young talent to enjoy. Cue-Ball Tuesdays -- balls and sticks, and plenty of corner pockets if you catch my drift. Wednesday bowling...

(he wags his eyebrows)

... and those league babes in matching shirts.

BRYAN

So it's weekly objectification,
then?

LIAM

No, on Thursdays I do laundry. But
the weekends are for the pub
crawls. And with the right beer
goggles on, I can look a lot like
Jon Snow to the ladies.

BRYAN

More like Jon Snowplow.

LIAM

I don't think I'm that bad.
Seriously though, Rice, you can do
anything. It just kills me to see
you keeping on this way.

Liam holds his wooden finger up, close to Bryan's face,
lecturing him.

LIAM (CONT'D)

And you can goddamn believe Jeannie
wouldn't stand for it either.
That's for damn sure!

He pounds his hand on the bar to punctuate the statement, and
as soon as he does--

THUNK! A rogue DART from out of nowhere suddenly shoots
straight into Liam's wooden finger.

Bryan sighs, remaining unfazed, as Liam's eyes temporarily
widen. He pulls the dart out and spins on his stool to the
bar at large.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Okay, who's the dumb shit?

A douchey DUDE BRO waves drunkenly.

DUDE BRO

Hey sorry, bro.

LIAM

Yeah I bet your mother is sorry.
Watch where the fuck you throw
these things, numb nuts.

Liam throws the dart back at the bro. It hits him dead in the
arm.

DOUCHEY DUDE BRO

Hey, owww!

The crowd cheers again and Liam turns his attention back to Bryan.

LIAM

Fucking millennials.

BRYAN

(rising)

I'm gonna go.

LIAM

Hey-hey-hey, wait. You can't go, I got you a present.

(to the Bartender)

Hey, two more please.

Bryan sits back in his seat with a heavy sigh.

BRYAN

You got me a present? For what?

LIAM

It's your anniversary, right?

BRYAN

Yeah, an anniversary with my dead wife. Not exactly a gift giving occasion.

LIAM

You'll like it.

Liam opens up his SATCHEL and starts to dig around. Bryan chokes another fry down.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Like I said we've all been worried about you, so I just figured that, you know... Well, here. Check it out for yourself.

Liam reveals a BROCHURE. It's brightly colored and tacky.

BRYAN

You got me some gaudy brochure?

LIAM

No -- I mean, well yeah... It's ugly as shit, but take a look anyway. Function over form.

Bryan studies the brochure taking note of the boldly written words: NEW HORIZONS.

BRYAN

Are you kidding? A resort for widowers?

LIAM

Yeah, it's like a weekend mixer sort of thing.

BRYAN

A mixer for depressed people.

LIAM

Not really. My brother Wayne told me that a lot of the people who attend these retreats actually end up *entangled* all weekend.

Bryan looks at the brochure skeptically.

BRYAN

So it's a hook-up weekend thing?

LIAM

Could you find a better way to prepare for retirement?

The Bartender lays two more shots down in front of them. Liam nods him 'thanks'.

BRYAN

How would your brother know, anyway? He take weekend retreats between his stints in County?

LIAM

Hey, just because he's in jail doesn't mean he can't get some.

BRYAN

No. In jail he probably *is* some... Whatever.

Bryan turns to grab his shot, still scanning the brochure. His eyes scan something in the text. He lowers the brochure and looks to Liam.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

(suspicious)

Are you kidding me? Wydow's Peak National Park?

He closes the brochure and tosses it down on the bar.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

Don't tell me you still think about that shit.

LIAM

Why not? Never forget your roots.

BRYAN

Liam, you got your finger bit off.

LIAM

Yeah, and it's been a wonderful conversation piece ever since. Besides, we don't really know what we saw, and it's quite fitting for an apropos holiday.

BRYAN

I don't think you know what that means. And what, weren't we like ten the last time we were there?

Liam holds up two fingers, one of them wooden.

LIAM

Twelve.

BRYAN

Yeah, well I'm not a kid anymore.

Bryan picks up the shot of Tequila. Liam goes to grab the other glass.

LIAM

No, but you're never too old to become a better man either.

BRYAN

Look. appreciate this, Liam, very much. It's just not the kind of thing for me anymore.

Bryan goes to take the shot.

LIAM

Well that sucks 'cause it's too late. I signed us up and we leave Friday.

Liam takes his shot, while Bryan still holds onto his, dumbfounded.

BRYAN
You did what?

The crowd cheers jovially off screen.

INT. BRYAN'S AND LIAM'S HOME - KITCHEN - SAME NIGHT

Bryan and Liam stand in Bryan's kitchen. It is a nice home.

LIAM
I've already done it. I signed us
up.

Bryan, still cradling a shot of scotch, looks at him, incredulously.

BRYAN
Without even thinking to ask me
first?

LIAM
Hey, I footed the bill, mate. And
as I've already thrown my money at
it, we're stuck. It's non-
refundable. Cheers.

With that, he downs his shot in one swift movement. Bryan, seemingly resigned, follows suit, grimacing at the burn.

BRYAN
Christ, Liam, you're not even a
widower. Hell, you've never been
married!

Liam, grinning like a Cheshire cat, retrieves a WEDDING BAND from his pocket. With a theatrical flourish, he slides it onto his ring finger.

LIAM
Yeah, we're aware of that little
detail. But as far as anyone else
is concerned...

His grin morphs into a solemn expression as he raises his hand, showing off the ring.

LIAM (CONT'D)
(adopts a mournful tone)
Her name was Ursula, and she was
the finest woman a man could ever
call his wife.

Bryan shakes his head, disbelief etched onto his features.

BRYAN

Ursula?

Liam's grin returns, wider than ever.

LIAM

Yup. Who would dare to question a man who was married to an Ursula, right?

Bryan pinches the bridge of his nose, a headache threatening.

BRYAN

I can't be a part of this. This isn't right. I can't go under false pretenses.

Liam's grin fades, replaced with a steely determination.

LIAM

Well, you're not going under false pretenses. I am.

BRYAN

This is bullshit, you know that? Since we were kids, you've always dragged me into your bullshit, and this just feels like... more of your bullshit!

LIAM

(smug)
Of course it is.

BRYAN

I'm not going.

Liam's eyes raise to meet Bryan's. It's a moral standoff.

LIAM

(annoyed)
Goddammit Rice, you don't have a monopoly on grief. You're not dead. You're still here, still breathing, still alive.

With a few quick strides, Liam closes the distance between them. He stares deep into Bryan's eyes, his own burning with intensity.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Your heart's still beating, your
blood's still pumping and it's high
time you reminded your cock of that
fact.

With a swift SLAP, Liam delivers a below-the-belt blow. Bryan
doubles over, caught off-guard.

BRYAN

(in pain)

Ah! Jesus Christ, Liam!

LIAM

(surprised)

Aw shit, sorry man. I honestly
thought, at this point, you'd be
devoid of any feeling down there.

BRYAN

You hit me with a wooden finger,
you dick!

Liam, chuckling, claps Bryan on the back before heading out
of the kitchen, leaving Bryan hunched over and still reeling
from the surprise attack.

LIAM

In which case, you took it like a
champ. Good on ya, Rice. I'll see
you in the morning.

Liam's laughter echoes through the house as he exits, leaving
Bryan alone in the kitchen.

LIAM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(shouting)

And you're going, mate!

The sharp THUD of the front door closing punctuates Liam's
decree, leaving an oppressive silence in its wake.

Bryan sighs heavily, one hand still nursing his bruised
pride. He stumbles over to the dinner table and slumps into a
chair, his face a picture of resigned defeat and
contemplation.

INT. BRYAN'S BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Over a sweat-soaked mess of tangled sheets, Bryan tosses and
turns, asleep.

BRYAN
 (mutters)
 Pour me... 'nother shot...

Across the room, a collection of FAMILY PHOTOS decorates a dresser. One photo stands out among the rest -- JEANNIE, Bryan's late wife. Her picture, nestled among the others, seems to hold a special vigil over the sleeping man.

BRYAN (CONT'D)
 (asleep)
 I'll punch... your nuts...

Adjacent to the dresser is Jeannie's DRESSING TABLE. It's a shrine of sorts, preserved just as she left it. Tubes of lipstick, pieces of jewelry, small trinkets of their shared life remain undisturbed. It's a haunting tableau of their once-happy life together.

Suddenly, in a surreal turn, the photo of Jeannie begins to COME TO LIFE. She gazes down at her sleeping husband with a tenderness that transcends the physical realm.

The tranquil moment is punctuated by a loud FART from Bryan, causing Jeannie to grimace in disgust from within the frame.

JEANNIE
 (dreamily)
 Bryan...

BRYAN
 I don't wanna go!

Jeannie rolls her eyes and calls out to her husband.

JEANNIE
 Bryyyyyyyan...

Bryan stirs, rolls over and promptly tumbles out of bed --

EXT. GINGERBREAD HOUSE - NIGHT - DREAM SEQUENCE

-- Bryan lands with a THUD. He blinks, disoriented, and finds himself on the porch of a GINGERBREAD HOUSE.

The inviting glow of the house draws him in, and he sees Jeannie standing just beyond the threshold.

She beckons to him, her image fading in and out like a faulty hologram.

BRYAN
 Jeannie?

In a daze, Bryan gets to his feet and walks into the house. It's different now, eerie, as if the sweetness of the gingerbread has curdled.

Despite the foreboding atmosphere, the sight of his wife stirs a wellspring of emotion within him.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

My God, Jeannie, I've missed you so much.

He reaches out to hold her, only to be met with thin air. His arms pass right through her. Confused and hurt, Bryan looks at Jeannie for answers.

JEANNIE

I've missed you too, my love, but I'm scared. You must find a way to release me from this prison... You won't allow me to leave.

BRYAN

I'm not allowing you? Jeannie, I love you.

JEANNIE

And I love you too, Bryan, that's why you must listen to me! It's imperative!

BRYAN

Anything. I --

JEANNIE

-- Shhh!

Jeannie is suddenly fearful. She turns her head to listen. A faint, unearthly sound precedes... a distant KNOCK.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

There's not much time. You must find it, my love. You must find it and complete it.

BRYAN

Find what?

Her eyes grow WIDE with urgency.

JEANNIE

THE CIRCLE OF LIFE!

Bryan's own eyes abruptly widen, reflecting fire and fury--

Suddenly, a FLASH reveals the CIRCLE OF LIFE - a bizarre EYE with a PHALLIC PUPIL, resembling Sauron's Eye from *The Lord of the Rings* films.

JEANNIE (V.O.)

Keep it secret. Keep it safe.

The eye burns brightly before fading to black, replaced by a pendant that Jeannie wears around her neck.

JEANNIE

Hurry my love. You must release me from this prison. You must complete the Circle of Life. Before it's too late!

BRYAN

Jeannie! Don't leave!

He tries to embrace her once more, his arms causing the apparition to turn into a physical PILE of MAGGOTS, suddenly falling to the floor and covering Bryan's hands and arms in the process.

BLACK GOAT (O.S.)

GRRRR!

A guttural sound GRUNTS from behind him, forcing him to quickly turn around. His eyes sharply widen with terror as he finds a tall and dark satyr-demon, the BLACK GOAT, wearing a DOCTOR'S COAT and HEAD MIRROR.

BRYAN

AAA!

Chuckling, the Black Goat grabs Bryan and forcibly BENDS HIM OVER. It RIPS his pajama bottoms off.

BLACK GOAT

Turn your head!

The demon immediately reveals its monstrously sharp CLAW.

Then it slams it up Bryan's rear end as if some kind of mock prostate exam.

BRYAN

(in pain)

AHHHHHHH --

INT. DOCTOR'S EXAMINATION ROOM - DAY

BRYAN

-- AHHHHH!

Bryan is hunched over, in the middle of getting a prostate examination by DR. LOCKHEART (early 50's).

DR. LOCKHEART

Will you calm down? I haven't even started yet.

BRYAN

Calm down? How can --
(grunts)
-- Oh God. You just did.

Lockheart fishes around.

DR. LOCKHEART

(conversationally)
So, how have you been?

BRYAN

(winces)
Oh, well, you know. It's been tough. Last night was my Anniversary too.

DR. LOCKHEART

Yeah, Liam asked me out to drinks with you guys.

BRYAN

You should have come. It was --
(a grunt)
-- Fun.

DR. LOCKHEART

I know Liam's idea of fun. Fear and loathing in Cialis.

BRYAN

Hey, you're the one who prescribed it to him.

DR. LOCKHEART

Yeah well, my bad. I've met frat guys with more restraint.

Dr. Lockheart removes his hand. Bryan exhales.

DR. LOCKHEART (CONT'D)

There. Now was that so bad?

BRYAN

In there a little longer than necessary, Bill, you trying to get on the 6 o'clock news?

DR. LOCKHEART

Woulda been quicker if you weren't such a tight ass.

BRYAN

Should I take that as a compliment?

DR. LOCKHEART

(chuckles)

Not if *I* ended up a digit short.

The Doctor pulls his gloves off and washes his hands.

Bryan pulls his pants up and seats himself back on the edge of the examination table.

BRYAN

So what is it then? What's going on with me?

Lockheart dries his hands off and makes a couple notes in Bryan's file.

DR. LOCKHEART

You, my friend, are completely fine.

BRYAN

Fine? Bill, you don't go around feeling like I do if you're completely fine.

DR. LOCKHEART

Well, you're blood pressure's still a bit high, you could stand to lose a few pounds, and I really wish you would've done a more thorough wipe this morning, but other than acting like a schmuck, you're fine.

Dr. Lockheart moves to wash his hands.

BRYAN

What do second opinions go for around here?

DR. LOCKHEART

You want a second opinion? You're ugly, too.

BRYAN

This can't be right, there's gotta be something wrong. I mean I get up to take a piss in the middle of the night and it's like I'm standing there till sun up. And that's just to build up to a decent stream. And even then I'm not completely relieved. Wouldn't that be like a bladder thing? Or a kidney thing?

Bill wipes his hands and sits down in a chair opposite Bryan.

DR. LOCKHEART

Maybe you should start sitting down to pee.

BRYAN

Right... And what about the dreams, then? Any med speak for those?

DR. LOCKHEART

Menopause?

BRYAN

I'm serious, Bill!

DR. LOCKHEART

Bryan, you're more than welcome to disagree with my prognosis. You've been doing it for twenty years. But if it's cancer you're looking for, then just keep on like you are. I'm sure it'll eventually find its way to you. Or, you can listen to your Doctor and friend, and just relax.

BRYAN

You sound like Liam.

DR. LOCKHEART

Well, I'm not going to suggest you go full Hugh Hefner, but it wouldn't hurt you to spend an evening with someone whose voice register is higher than Liam's.

Bryan bites his lip, embarrassed.

BRYAN

Yeah... Well, t'jat's another problem. See, I can't... Well I can't seem to get it up anymore.

DR. LOCKHEART
Really? Nothing?

BRYAN
(shrugs)
I mean, ever since Jeannie.

DR. LOCKHEART
Should I put the glove back on?

BRYAN
Bill.

DR. LOCKHEART
(chuckling)
Alright, I'm hearing you. Have you taken anything?

BRYAN
I stole some of Liam's Cialis a while back. Turns out it was expired, and all I got off was a hand cramp.

DR. LOCKHEART
Fair enough. Look, there's times where even eye think it's wise to take your eyes off of western modalities. And in your case, I think there's something much simpler going on.

BRYAN
Okay.

DR. LOCKHEART
Have you ever stopped to think -- and bear with me here, Bryan -- But maybe all these current symptoms you complain about are due to an inability to let things go? That they're actual manifestations of you being a severe tight ass?

BRYAN
You're kidding me right?

Dr. Lockheart waves his index finger in front of Bryan, mimicking Liam's wooden finger again.

DR. LOCKHEART
If the glove fits.

BRYAN

(rising)

Yeah okay, O.J. And how much am I paying you for the opinion of a Facebook Bartender?

Bryan moves to grab his coat from the back of the chair.

DR. LOCKHEART

Well, maybe that's what you need right now. I know the past two years have been hard on you, but you can't forget who you are. Life's the prescription. And you can't exactly fear the circle of life forever.

FLASH OF: THE CIRCLE OF LIFE. It SPLITS apart.

BRYAN

What'd you say?

Lockheart's hands rest on Bryan's shoulders and the Doctor looks directly into his eyes.

DR. LOCKHEART

All I'm saying is you'll be fine, if you let yourself be fine.

Bryan stands, still a bit stunned from the image in his head.

DR. LOCKHEART (CONT'D)

Okay?

BRYAN

Yeah sure, Bill. Thanks. I guess I'll see you next month then...

DR. LOCKHEART

Hopefully not.

Bryan smiles at Lockheart and leaves the room.

INT. BRYAN'S BEDROOM - LATER

Bryan walks swiftly into his bedroom and makes his way to Jeannie's untouched dressing table.

He searches through the drawers, rustling things around and out of the way until he comes across her antique JEWELRY BOX.

Opening the jewelry box, something flashes from underneath all of the other ornaments, catching his eye.

He places the box down on the dressing table and removes a necklace connected to a tarnished, semicircular PENDANT which echoes one HALF of the Circle of Life seen in his vision.

It is also one HALF of the pendant Jeannie wore in his dream.

Bryan studies it closer and tries to wipe some of the tarnish off of it with his coat.

He blows on the pendant and notices bright, elven-looking MARKINGS appearing and disappearing all within a beat.

He puts his GLASSES on to get a better read, but the markings are gone.

He wipes it with his coat again, but still, nothing.

Bryan blows on the pendant once more and the markings return, just as bright as ever, and just as quickly, disappear.

He blows again, prolonging his breath, and the markings return. This time he is able to make out the inscription before it disappears--

BRYAN
 (to himself)
Circulus vitae rumpitur?
 (a pause)
 The hell does that mean?

Bryan lays the necklace down on the dressing table next to the jewelry box and pulls his phone out, holding it up to his mouth to trigger it's voice assistant.

BRYAN (CONT'D)
 Hey Siri, what does *Circulus witae rumpitur* mean?

SIRI (V.O.)
 Here's what I found on the internet.

BRYAN
 (annoyed, then louder)
 No -- What does *Circulus witae rumpitur* mean?

SIRI (V.O.)
 A circular white rumpus is an article of clothing worn by men of South France in the Summer.

BRYAN

No dammit! What does *Cir-cu-lus wi-tae rump-i-tur* mean?

SIRI (V.O.)

Here's what I found on the internet.

BRYAN

Oh for fuck's sake.

Bryan punches the question into Google and reads --

BRYAN (CONT'D)

"The circle of life broken."

He stares at his phone.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

The hell does that mean?

SIRI (V.O.)

That: pronoun. Used to identify a specific person or thing observed by the speaker --

BRYAN

-- Oh, shut up!

Bryan pockets his phone and picks the necklace back up.

Suddenly, he hears a faint guttural growl coming from somewhere deep in the house -- the same growl from his dream.

He looks over his shoulder and nothing is there.

Slightly alarmed, he carefully places the necklace in his coat pocket, his gaze travelling to his wife's photograph.

He steps closer to it.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

Jeannie. Can you hear me? Is that you? Please, honey, just tell me I'm not crazy. Let me know if it's you.

SOUND: BURRRRRRRRP!

The guttural growl now makes itself known from directly behind him.

He turns around, terrified, only to find Liam standing in the doorway holding a BEER.

LIAM

Ghosts don't talk back, Rice. But if they did, they'd tell you it was high time to pack. Now, hurry up.

Liam walks away leaving Bryan to stare back at his wife's photograph, foolishly.

BRYAN

Aww, Christ, who am I kidding, anyway?

INT./EXT. BRYAN'S VOLVO - MID-DAY (DRIVING)

The outside of Bryan's car is just as rough as the inside. A huge dent pushes in the passenger side door and one of the tires has obviously low pressure. It really is an accurate representation of Bryan's inner turmoil.

They drive under a tree canopy on a mountain road.

LIAM

You need a new car, Rice. Or at the very least a new car wash.

BRYAN

Sorry if you find my chariot not up to task for your epic pussy quest, O Ser Lame-os, but you can blow me just the same.

LIAM

(looks over at Bryan)
Holy shit it's alive!

BRYAN

By default.

Liam notices that Bryan holds a hand on his crotch, shielding them from any potential attack.

LIAM

How's your balls?

BRYAN

Not detecting any temperature changes yet... Prick.

LIAM

Yeah, now you're talking. Keep it up, because, as your wingman, I guarantee you that's where you'll wanna keep your conversations heading.

BRYAN

Excuse me if that doesn't fill me with confidence.

LIAM

Yeah, yeah. Hey, you mind stopping at the next drug store you see?

BRYAN

What do you need a drug store for?

LIAM

(solemn)

Protection.

BRYAN

Protection -- what, you mean condoms?

LIAM

(still solemn)

Protection.

BRYAN

Jesus Christ, you telling me you still think you're fertile?

Liam raises his eyebrows and gives his friend a "you never know" look.

LIAM

Just saying. I mean, I still have a monthly appointment at the sperm bank.

BRYAN

You donating sperm?

LIAM

Yep.

BRYAN

What, like two at a time?

LIAM

No.

BRYAN

If you actually think you still have swimmers in those dusty old mothballs, I'll --

LIAM

-- Hey buddy, you'd need the fastest scientific calculator just to begin to add up my sperm count --

BRYAN

-- Yeah and you probably shoot as much dust as your decrepit asshole.

LIAM

Decrepit? Listen man, the only thing that's ever been decrepit around here is this car!

Liam looks up and suddenly sees the evil OLD CRONE standing in a PILE OF MAGGOTS, right there in the middle of the road. She smiles horrendously holding her arms up, as if challenging them. They speed right toward her.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Holy shit, Rice, look out!

Liam grabs at the wheel to swerve out of the way. Bryan overpowers him and gets the car back under his control.

Liam looks over his shoulder and back at the road; nothing is there except a stretch of empty road.

BRYAN

Fucking A, Liam! What the hell was that?

LIAM

Whadaya mean? You didn't see that old woman?

Bryan looks in the mirror. He sees nothing.

BRYAN

Woman? Christ, Liam, the KY and patchouli finally get their last brain cell?

LIAM

I just... I swear I saw...

BRYAN

It's been a clear road, pretty much all the way up here.

LIAM

You didn't see an old woman
standing in the road back there? In
a pile of maggots?

Bryan glances at his friend. He's taken aback now too.

BRYAN

Pile of maggots...? Look, if I did,
you think I'd need your help
swerving out of the way?

LIAM

No... Of course not... Shit.

Liam rubs his head. Bryan glances at him again in concern.

BRYAN

What is it?

LIAM

It's nothing --

EXT. WYTCH ELM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

-- It is 1964 and Liam, as a boy, cries in pain at the foot
of the Wytch Elm, his finger missing.

INT. BRYAN'S VOLVO - DAY

Bryan continues to shoot Liam gazes of concern.

BRYAN

Are you sure?

LIAM

Of course I'm sure. Let's just get
to a drugstore.

Liam goes quiet. Bryan drives, concern on his old face.

On the road behind him, a PILE of MAGGOTS.

EXT. SERVICE STATION - LATER

A large service station sits along the side of the road. It
is populated by a few 356kmm interesting HILLBILLY
characters:

-An overweight, overalls-and-nothing-else, BEARDED GUY
drinking a beer on an inner tube.

-A very BUTCH WOMAN in a trucker hat who looks to be swiping through a Tinder type app on her smart phone. -A young dirty pig-tailed GIRL wearing the same trucker hat, brushes the hair of a dirty pig tailed DOLL.

-A mullet headed TEENAGE KID in a long tank top eats WET EGGS from a jar he holds under his sweaty arm.

THIS IS THE ONLY CIVILIZATION AROUND FOR MILES.

All eyes turn to Bryan's busted-ass Volvo as it pulls in along side two gas pumps: one side reading 'UNLEADED' and the other side, defaced, reading 'COCK-DIESEL', with the additional word written in bold black ink.

Inside the car, Bryan switches the engine off and looks around at the surroundings. The Hillbillies stop staring at them and go on about their business.

BRYAN

We just stumble onto your family reunion?

LIAM

Pfft. Ha. Nice try, pal. You're more the *Deliverance* type.

He pantomimes plucking strings and whistles the DUELING BANJOS.

BRYAN

Why don't we ask your brother about that one?

LIAM

Hey, just because he likes to be close to his --

BRYAN

-- Yeah, yeah, just make sure you're condoms aren't lubricated with DEET.

They exit the car.

LIAM

(humps the air)
Further protection.

Bryan grabs the gas nozzle to start pumping.

BRYAN

And some of that coin purse's change on number three, please?

LIAM

Yup.

As Liam walks toward the service station, the mullet-headed teenager enters Bryan's personal space holding up a dripping egg fresh from the jar.

TEENAGE KID

Want one, Mister?

Bryan suppresses a gag.

BRYAN

No thanks.

The teenager shrugs his shoulders and moves on, eating the egg himself.

As Liam nears the entrance doors, a HORNET flies near his head. He swats it away, casually.

INT. SERVICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Liam steps into the store and immediately scans the place. He obliviously passes a COMMON WALL where numerous MISSING PERSON POSTERS have been pinned up. All the posters look to be of men around his own age.

A sketchy looking old man, HARBINGER JOE (73), scrutinizes Liam from behind the register.

HARBINGER JOE

Whadaya want?

Liam approaches the old man at the counter. Harbinger Joe then JERKS fully toward him, revealing a terribly unattractive GLASS EYE.

LIAM

(jumps off guard)

Oh shit!

(beat, chuckles)

Sorry, pal.

Liam pulls out a \$50 dollar bill and places it in front of the attendant.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Fifty on number three.

Harbinger Joe glares at Liam but triggers the pumps and places the cash in the register. Liam holds the stare a beat.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Thanks.

He moves to peruse through the aisles. The creepy old man watches him and stuffs some chewing tobacco under his lip, chewing disgustingly.

EXT. SERVICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Bryan pumps gas. He latches the nozzle in place and removes Jeannie's NECKLACE from his coat pocket.

His eyes squint as he studies it, as it's shimmer INCREASES in the mountain sunlight. It's beautiful.

LITTLE GIRL (O.S.)

Wow. What's that?

BRYAN

Huh?

The little pig-tailed girl in the trucker hat looks up at him, the gasoline line separating the two.

She holds her dirty doll in her arms. Something is definitely OFF about her.

LITTLE GIRL

What is that? Sure is shiny?

Bryan pockets the necklace.

BRYAN

It's just my... good luck charm.

LITTLE GIRL

Can I see it? I bet it would look pretty on Laura, here.

She holds up the ugly doll. There are strangely placed RIPS on the doll's face. Bryan smiles uncomfortably.

BRYAN

Probably.

LITTLE GIRL

Where you going?

BRYAN

Just on a trip.

LITTLE GIRL

You gonna have sex with ladies on your trip?

Bryan is caught off guard by the direct and strange question.

BRYAN

That's a really weird question to ask. Especially at your age.

LITTLE GIRL

Old people like you always come through here on their way to have sex with ladies.

BRYAN

Yeah, so where are your parents?

LITTLE BOY

My brother says guy's thingies don't work too good when they get old.

BRYAN

(reflexively defensive)

Well, you're brother is a fucking...

(calms)

...Look, I'm sorry little girl, I'm just waiting on my friend. We're gonna get going soon. Okay?

LITTLE GIRL

Then can I see that necklace?

BRYAN

Sorry, but I'd rather not.

LITTLE GIRL

Pretty please?

BRYAN

No.

The Little Girl drops her arms, leaving the doll dangling at her side. Her tact becomes aggressively darker.

LITTLE GIRL

I said let me see it!

Bryan takes a defensive step back.

BRYAN

Whoa, Rhoda! That's not cool. Why don't you just run along, now? Those trucker hats sure look to be quite the catnip around here, I'm sure you'll find someone else to play with soon enough.

The Little Girl backs up with a sinister expression.

LITTLE GIRL

Indeed.

Bryan turns his back to the departing girl and exhales. He's completely weirded out.

BRYAN

Wow... gene pool must be shallower around here than I thought.

The gas nozzle JERKS indicating the gas tank is full.

No sooner does Bryan remove it when a HORNET comes flying in dangerously close to him.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

Oh shit!

He immediately drops the hose and grows frantic as he fearfully swats at the hornet.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

Fuck! Get away from me! Fuck!

The Hillbillies watch Bryan. He looks as if he is in the middle of some kind of wacky tribal dance.

Unfortunately, for him, a SECOND HORNET joins in on the fun.

BRYAN (CONT'D)

Ahhh shit!

INT. SERVICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Liam drops a bunch of items down on the counter:

-Two boxes of CONDOMS, dubbed 'Lumberjack'.

-Two travel sized bottles of BABY OIL.

-One big bottle of HAND SANITIZER.

-An aerosol can of POTPOURRI.

-A bottle of INSECT REPELLENT.

Harbinger Joe eyes the items, and Liam, with disdain.

LIAM
You take Amex?

Harbinger Joe begins scanning the items and places them into a paper bag.

HARBINGER JOE
(darkly)
You're gonna pay for this...

Liam, unfazed, holds up his card.

LIAM
There a surcharge or something?

Harbinger Joe snatches the card from Liam, his attention diverted to the wooden finger.

HARBINGER JOE
Your kind shouldn't have returned here, O'Connell. It's a curse.

Outside the window, Bryan frantically BATTLES an onslaught of HORNETS, but neither Liam nor Harbinger Joe notice.

LIAM
What did you just say?

HARBINGER JOE
They said you'd return to these woods.

Amused, Liam grins, looking at the old man as if he's the butt of some joke.

LIAM
How do you know my name?

HARBINGER JOE
Doesn't take a genius.

LIAM
(scoffs)
Clearly not.

The two men lock eyes, a silent challenge passing between them. Harbinger Joe then holds up the AMEX CARD.

HARBINGER JOE
It's on your card, asshole.

Liam smirks, nodding his head.

LIAM
Oh, so you can read.

HARBINGER JOE
And your finger. Everyone around
here knows what happened to that.

LIAM
My finger?

Liam wiggles it, considering the old man's statement before shrugging.

LIAM (CONT'D)
(shrugs)
People will talk.

Harbinger Joe looks back at Liam, widening his glass eye. Liam can't help but continue to smirk, smugly.

HARBINGER JOE
You don't think I SEE what's
happening here?

LIAM
Well, I'm sure you can't keep your
eye on everything.

HARBINGER JOE
I've been watching you.

Liam's smile fades as he raises an eyebrow.

LIAM
That's... unsettling.

HARBINGER JOE
It's your wood.

LIAM
You've been watching my wood?

HARBINGER JOE
Your wood is tainted, O'Connell. It
brings turmoil.

LIAM
Well, I do brings the muthafuckin
ruckus.

HARBINGER JOE

Your presence will only serve to strengthen them. And the Black Goat.

Liam's eyes narrow at the mention of the Black Goat.

LIAM

Black Goat? That some kind of dildo or something?

Just then, the cash register CHIMES, breaking Liam's concentration. Harbinger Joe suddenly speaks in a normal tone.

HARBINGER JOE

Okay that'll be \$26.20.

LIAM

Huh?

HARBINGER JOE

Your total. \$26.20.

LIAM

Oh... right.

Harbinger Joe swipes Liam's card and hands it back, resuming the role of ominous prophet.

HARBINGER JOE

If you know what's good for you, you'll leave this place immediately! Your presence invites only death and decay!

LIAM

You're one to talk.

HARBINGER JOE

Remember your past, O'Connell. Count your fingers or face the consequences.

Liam stares at the old man for a moment.

LIAM

Are you fuckin' yanking me?

Just then, Bryan bursts through the door, his face SWOLLEN and red. He storms up to Liam, thrusting the car keys into his hands.

BRYAN
You're driving!

Liam stares at his friend in surprise.

LIAM
Rice, what the hell happened to
your face?

Bryan grabs the bathroom key off of the counter, which is attached to an old piece of wood.

HARBINGER JOE
(re: the bathroom)
In the back.

Before heading to the bathroom, Bryan grabs a bottle of water from the cooler, the door slamming shut behind him.

Liam, still shocked, turns back to Harbinger Joe. The old man's one good eye is fixed on him again.

HARBINGER JOE (CONT'D)
That, my friend, is called an omen.
It's happening again.

LIAM
What, his allergies? Probably got
stung by a bee or something.

HARBINGER JOE
Tread carefully then O'Connell.
There's no salvation for you here.

Liam squints at the old man, slowly shaking his head.

LIAM
You're weird.

INT. BATHROOM STALL - SERVICE STATION - CONTINUOUS

Bryan pushes open the stall door, recoiling in disgust at the unsightly MESS inside.

BRYAN
Ah!

He steps into the stall, securing the door behind him. He pulls a generous amount of toilet paper from the roll, using it to line the seat.

Sitting down, he leans back against the wall, catching his breath as he gulps down water. The sound of the bathroom door swinging open interrupts the silence.

LIAM (O.S.)

Rice?

Liam's footsteps approach the stall.

LIAM (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(louder)

Rice?

BRYAN

(agitated)

God, Liam, can't I just have a couple of minutes?

LIAM

Yeah. Chill, man. I just brought you some antihistamines.

A box lands in Bryan's lap as Liam tosses it over the stall door.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Pop a few of those and you'll be back to normal in no time.

BRYAN

Yeah sure. Thanks.

LIAM

You okay?

BRYAN

Just dandy.

LIAM (O.C.)

You taking a dump?

BRYAN

Liam! Can you please just give me five minutes?

LIAM

Alright, alright. Okay.

The sound of Liam's footsteps recedes as he leaves the bathroom, letting the door slam shut behind him. Bryan, now visibly SWOLLEN and RASHY, sighs. He tears open the box in his lap, extracting the antihistamine pills.

He swallows two with a swig of water. As he lowers the water bottle, his eyes catch something odd on the toilet paper -
RED WRITING.

Curious, he unrolls the toilet paper further. Sure enough, the words: "*DON'T FEAR THE CIRCLE OF LIFE*" are scrawled along a long strip.

It appears to be written in blood.

BRYAN

Son of a bitch.

CUT TO BLACK: