

ARCADIA

Written by

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Based on the Greek myth of Atalanta

Address  
Phone Number

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

In a dark, still house, an OLD WOMAN (76, Black) reclines in an rust-colored armchair with a BABY in her arms. The baby burbles and squirms.

The woman adjusts the baby, pressing her nose against its cooing brown face.

MONIFA (30s, Black) and DARREN (late 30s, Black) shuffle into the hall dressed to go out. Monifa adjusts her tights, checking for runs. Darren stares on at the old woman. Her dark eyes shine in the half-light. They call out from the entryway.

MONIFA

Mom, we're leaving. We'll pick up your prescription on the way home?

DARREN

(hushed) Are you sure about leaving her here?

Monifa adjusts her earring in the entry way mirror.

MONIFA

My mother?

DARREN

With the baby.

MONIFA

She's fine. You've seen her lately. She's been better.

DARREN

I don't know if I trust "better" with my daughter.

MONIFA

She's my mother. She would never hurt Addy. My mother isn't out to get anybody but herself.

DARREN

She hasn't been on the new medicine very long.

MONIFA

Darren, enough. Mom, we'll be back.

Monifa throws open the door, stepping briskly through. Darren casts one last grave look towards the old woman, who smiles warmly.

The door slams, and Addy laughs in surprise.

The baby stares up at her, straining against her soft green swaddling.

She closes her eyes, lulled by the baby's warm presence.

Something scuffles against the tan carpet. The old woman's eyes flick open.

A brown shape moves in the dark, its sleek beetle-like coat slinking forward in segments, like a string of glass beads.

The old woman holds her breath. The baby responds with a calming coo.

OLD WOMAN

Sh-sh-sh... it's alright.

A patch of moonlight identifies the slinking creature as a SCORPION, blood red, with its tail curled like a beckoning hand.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)

(gentle, but defiant) That's alright, baby. That's alright.

The shadows stir with movement. Unseen insects chirp from the blackened corners of the living room. The walls reverberate with soft skittering noises.

The room fills with overlapping metronomic chitters, getting louder and louder until it seems as though the walls might burst.

And they do. Ants erupt from the wall corners. Spiders run over the tan carpet, edging towards the old woman's feet. The scorpion creeps forward with anticipation.

The old woman quakes gently. Her eyes are filled with tears.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)

(softly) They aren't here for you.

The baby twists in her grandmother's arms. For her, the room is blissfully empty. The stillness of the house presses in like a great, warm blanket.

The old woman begins to sob.

INT. LIVING ROOM - HOURS LATER

The door clicks gently. Monifa and Darren step softly into the hallway.

MONIFA  
(whispered) Mom? We're back.

A hushed whimper sounds from the living room. Darren breaks away from Monifa, finding the old woman in the chair, crying.

DARREN  
Frida?

OLD WOMAN  
She's fine, see. They tried to get her, but I kept her safe.

The baby makes a soft, noise of sleep.

DARREN  
Monifa.

Monifa hurries into the room, finding her mother in hysterics.

MONIFA  
Oh, Mom.

Darren takes the baby in his arms. At the loss of her grandmother, the baby makes a squeak of protest.

DARREN  
This isn't working.

MONIFA  
I know.

OLD WOMAN  
You should get the walls checked.  
It's not good for the house.

MONIFA  
The house is fine.

She looks at Darren helplessly.

MONIFA (CONT'D)  
Move the crib into our room. Mom,  
do you need to go to the hospital?

As Monifa talks down her mother, Darren takes the baby into the hall. As they move further from the living room, the old woman's sobs mix with a dull, passive hissing.

The hissing gets slowly sharper. The baby stirs with discomfort.

The baby's face twists as it struggles to make sense of the noise. It squirms against her father's grip, and Darren secures his grip. The baby fights to get free, tries to twist towards the wails of her grandmother.

At last, with nowhere to go, the baby begins to cry.

EXT. SACRED OATH RACE TRACK - ARCADIA - AFTERNOON

Seventeen years later, in a green California suburb, a high school track team runs laps. ADDY (17, Black) outpaces the others, listening to music through wireless headphones.

In the stands, CARL (12) and JACOB (14) throw pistachio shells in Addy's way. Their Catholic school uniforms have been boyishly disassembled, their dark shoes perched on the bleachers in pairs. The collars on their white polos are intentionally popped. Addy shoots them a dirty look, but keeps her lead.

CARL  
(yelling) They're power-ups! Like  
in Mario Kart!

Addy finishes strong, wiping her face on her shirt.

As she takes a swig from her water bottle, her teammates finish.

HANA (17, Filipina) kicks Addy in the butt. Addy coughs up a mouthful of water.

ADDY  
(gasping) Wha... Hana!

HANA  
(panting) You... smug... bitch.

Addy smiles and spits.

COACH (O.S.)  
Bring it in -- let's go!

The team runs to the center of the track, Addy leading the pack.

EXT. ADDY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Carl and Jacob run up to the one-story Spanish style house and beat against the door. Addy walks up with the keys.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Addy's family eats a quiet dinner. Monifa and Darren sit at opposite ends of the table. Addy ruthlessly attacks a bowl of spaghetti.

MONIFA

How was practice?

CARL

Running is a boring sport. Do a flip or something.

Addy pauses her eating, not bothering to set down her fork.

ADDY

Good. I have a meet on Thursday. I think I need new shoes.

CARL

I want new shoes.

ADDY

Running shoes, Carl.

CARL

I want new running shoes.

Addy rolls her eyes.

DARREN

Will anyone important be there Thursday?

JACOB

Father Patrick.

CARL

Father Patrick said God is everywhere, so he'll probably be there too.

DARREN

I mean scouts. Coaches from colleges.

ADDY

Maybe.

She smothers her hint of a smile with a mouthful of pasta.

JACOB

Addy got sauce on me.

MONIFA

Baby. Eat like a person.

DARREN

She's eating like a winner.

Addy nods ferociously before diving back into her plate.

INT. ADDY'S ROOM - LATER

The hiss of shower water from behind the bathroom door. Addy's room is covered in trophies, medals, and Duke University blue.

A photo of ADDY'S GRANDMOTHER in the rust-colored chair sits on her desk in a little silver frame.

EXT. ADDY'S HOUSE - DAWN

Addy runs out the door wearing her Catholic school sweatshirt -- maroon and white -- and her running headphones.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET

When she turns the block she CRASHES into MELVIN (17, Black, nerdy but handsome), knocking him -- and her headphones -- to the ground. Addy takes a few steps back.

ADDY

Oh my god, I knew it.

Melvin hands her the headphones and picks himself up.

MELVIN

Sorry?

ADDY

This corner. This hedge is a huge blind spot -- I always slow down a little bit just in case.

MELVIN

That was slow?

ADDY

Wait. Did you mean "sorry?" like  
you want me to apologize?

Melvin gets up.

MELVIN

Nah. I meant it the first way. You  
go to Sacred?

ADDY

Do you?

Melvin points at the logo on his polo.

MELVIN

I do.

ADDY

Since when?

MELVIN

Since the beginning of the  
semester.

ADDY

It's a small school.

MELVIN

One person bigger with me.

Addy stares at him.

MELVIN (CONT'D)

I'm on the debate team. See?

He flashes his phone at Addy.

His thumb scrolls through pages of densely packed notes.

MELVIN (CONT'D)

I like to talk and walk. It helps  
me memorize.

ADDY

They make you memorize?

MELVIN

Nope. I'm just that good.

He extends his hand.

MELVIN (CONT'D)

I'm Melvin.



ADDY  
Melvin -

MELVIN  
I know it's dorky.

ADDY  
You've got -

Addy steps back. A centipede winds itself around Melvin's finger. Melvin doesn't seem to notice.

MELVIN  
I've got...?

Addy snaps her headphones on.

ADDY  
I've gotta go. I'll see you.

She runs off. Melvin stands there dumbstruck, watching her get smaller in the distance. After a few moments, Melvin sees the centipede. He jumps, and shakes off the insect.

INT. DEBATE ROOM - AFTERNOON

The debate team scrimmages in pairs. CORINNE (17, ginger, Melvin's partner) talks at lightning speed while Melvin scrawls fast notes.

CORINNE  
-Second, we affirm that private prisons stand to profit from the wrongful imprisonment of Black, brown, and indigenous people --

MELVIN  
(under breath) Shrill, Corrine. Why you gotta be so goddamn shrill.

CORINNE  
Please ignore my enthusiastic teammate.

MELVIN  
It's just a scrimmage.

CORINNE  
Right. As in a simulation of the real thing.

Melvin sighs. He underlines the word "shrill" on his notes and turns his attention to the window where:

EXT - RACE TRACK - CONTINUOUS

Addy wins another race, with DELIA (17, witchy, sunflower yellow hair) as a far second. Hana dumps her water over Addy's head, then begs for a sip of Addy's bottle. Delia stares on with jealousy.

INT. DEBATE ROOM - LATER

Melvin and the rest of the debate team pack up laptops and notes.

MELVIN  
Hey, Corinne?

CORINNE  
Yes?

MELVIN  
Do we have a good track team?

Corinne pauses to consider.

CORINNE  
You know how Red Oaks kicked our ass at the last invitational? And Hunter cried and Sadie threw up and Mary-Anne had diarrhea for the entire weekend because Red Oaks found a way to spin her anti-student loans argument into white supremacist rhetoric?

MELVIN  
Yeah. They're legit.

CORINNE  
Okay. Well, our track team is "legit". Why do you ask?

MELVIN  
I guess I just -

The fire alarm rings. Melvin's hands dive instinctively into his hoodie pocket.

CORINNE  
Of course there's a fire drill. I keep trying to tell the admin that -

A TEACHER strides past the open doorway, and Corinne shakes her fist at him -

CORINNE (CONT'D)  
(directed at teacher) - RANDOM FIRE  
DRILLS ARE SUPER ABLEIST!

The teacher scampers off.

CORINNE (CONT'D)  
That's our queue. Melvin? Are you  
good?

Melvin is frozen.

MELVIN  
You're sure it's a drill.

CORINNE  
I'm sure we're gonna get in trouble  
if we don't evacuate.

She pulls him into the hallway by the arm.

EXT. RACE TRACK - AFTERNOON

The after school crowd swarms the track, interrupting  
practice. Addy and Hana sit at the top of the bleachers,  
watching Delia pick dandelions from the field and stuff them  
into a plastic bag.

HANA  
You think she did this?

ADDY  
Delia?

HANA  
Yeah.

ADDY  
Like, do I think she pulled the  
fire alarm?

HANA  
Or like. Cast a spell.

Addy look at Hana sideways.

ADDY  
Hana.

HANA  
What? She's very prominent on Witch  
Twitter. She's like a thought  
leader! And she hates you.

ADDY  
She's just competitive.

HANA  
Right. And you always win.

Addy grins.

ADDY  
I do, don't I?

Hana dumps her water on Addy. Again. From underneath the bleachers, somebody shouts.

MELVIN  
Yo what!

EXT. RACE TRACK - UNDERNEATH THE BLEACHERS - CONTINUOUS

Melvin shakes water off himself. He starts to pull something out of his hoodie - a SLICK BLACK BOX - but he quickly stows it away as Addy jumps down from the bleachers. She lands in front of him.

ADDY  
Melvin?

Hana peeks over the edge of the top bleacher.

HANA  
Melvin? What kind of name...

ADDY  
Your brother's legal name is  
Macaroni.

HANA  
It's a Filipino thing. Don't be  
racist. Also it shortens to Mac or  
Ronnie. It's a great name.  
Extremely versatile.

Addy steps under the bleachers.

ADDY  
So, Melvin. You look... shy.

MELVIN  
Just hot. Needed some shade. You  
know debate kids, we're like  
vampires.

He laughs weakly.

ADDY  
You could take your hoodie off.  
That might help.

MELVIN  
I'm not wearing anything  
underneath.

HANA  
Oh shit. Commando.

ADDY  
Hana? Take a lap.

HANA  
I don't answer to you.

ADDY  
Please?

HANA  
Okay, you've convinced me.

The sound of Hana climbing down the bleachers. Addy and  
Melvin are alone.

ADDY  
Be honest. Were you doing something  
pervy?

MELVIN  
No!

ADDY  
It's okay if you were.

MELVIN  
What?

ADDY  
Just kidding. That would not be  
okay. That would be gross.

Melvin laughs.

MELVIN  
I swear I wasn't.

ADDY  
Are you really commando under  
there?

MELVIN

No. Um, this sweatshirt is kind of sentimental. Special, you know.

ADDY

I understand.

MELVIN

What do you understand?

ADDY

Everybody's superstitious. Athletes especially. When I first started running, I thought wearing stripes would make me more aerodynamic. I looked like a sailor.

MELVIN

Or a convict.

ADDY

Yeah. And when I set the school's record for the 800 meter, I wore those socks to every single meet until they disintegrated.

MELVIN

That's disgusting.

ADDY

Quiet, pervert. I just get it. Some things are so sentimental, you feel like having them on, or around, is the difference between life and death.

MELVIN

Yeah. Right.

Melvin is touched. He shakes the water off his glasses.

ADDY

Sorry about the water.

She takes off his glasses and wipes them on the hem of her shirt.

ADDY (CONT'D)

And about the sweat.

MELVIN

That's okay. I think I'm gonna go home.

ADDY  
Okay. Bye Melvin.

MELVIN  
Bye...

ADDY  
Addy.

MELVIN  
Short for...

ADDY  
Just Addy.

MELVIN  
Just checking.

He grabs his backpack and walks off. Through the slats in the bleachers, Addy spies Delia staring at her, muttering under her breath.

INT. MELVIN'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The living room is large and filled with antiques, and the dark wooded accents give the house an old, traditional look. The lock clicks from outside, and Melvin rushes in, a phone wedged between his ear and his shoulder.

MELVIN  
Don't worry, mom. It was nothing.

LAHARA (V.O.)  
You're sure?

MELVIN  
Yeah, I'm sure.

LAHARA  
Do you want me to come home?

Melvin kicks off his shoes by the door.

MELVIN  
And what? Drive back up to Palo Alto tomorrow? It's fine, mom.

LAHARA  
Were you scared?

Melvin walks into the kitchen.

MELVIN  
Um... yeah. A little.

LAHARA  
Oh, Melvin.

A faint jangling sound comes through the phone.

MELVIN  
Put the car keys down.

Melvin hangs his backpack on a chair. Lahara laughs.

LAHARA  
Okay. Be safe.

MELVIN  
I'm nothing but. Enjoy the  
conference.

LAHARA  
Ha ha.

MELVIN  
Love you.

LAHARA  
Love you.

MELVIN  
Bye.

He hangs up.

INT. MELVIN'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Melvin's bedroom is grand and red, too old and mature for a boy his age. Melvin sits on his bed in a t-shirt and jeans. His sweatshirt hangs on the bedpost. The BLACK BOX sits on the bed.

Melvin runs his hand over the box. He plays with the lid, almost like he's afraid to look. Finally, he lifts the lid.

Staring at the contents of the box, Melvin sighs heavily.

Inside the box is a MEDIUM-SIZED CHARRED STICK.

EXT. ADDY'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

As Addy pulls into her driveway, she spies Delia in the front yard, kneeling in the flower beds. Addy opens the car door.



ADDY

Delia?

Delia turns around, startled. She stands up.

ADDY (CONT'D)

Delia, what the fuck!

Delia takes off.

JACOB

Ohh shit, Addy swore!

CARL

Isn't that girl on your team, Addy?

JACOB

Yeah, she's that white girl with gazelle legs.

Addy snorts.

ADDY

What are gazelle legs?

Jacob gets out of the car to demonstrate. He HALF-RUNS and HALF-TROTS to the front door.

CARL

No, it's more like -

He does a RUNNING FUNKY-CHICKEN and catches up with Jacob. Addy laughs.

ADDY

You guys are mean.

JACOB

Nah, we're observant.

Addy locks the car and tosses Jacob the keys. The boys disappear inside the house.

As Addy crosses the front yard, a strange object GLIMMERS from the flower beds.

ADDY

Delia?

No answer. Addy squats by the front steps and stares at the dirt. Again, the object GLIMMERS up at her.

Addy reaches into the dirt, unearthing a MILKY WHITE CRYSTAL.

INT. ADDY'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Addy stares at a cluster of crystals drying on a towel on top of her comforter. Hana's voice erupts from Addy's cell phone.

HANA (O.S.)  
Quartz crystal?

ADDY  
Is that what it is?

HANA  
I don't know, I'm Googling.

ADDY  
You really think Delia would try to curse me with rocks?

HANA  
Hell yeah, I do. I bet if I went to her Twitter, her most recent post would be like, "Just did a quartz curse. Hashtag 'quarse'."

ADDY  
I can't find anything about a curse.

HANA  
Me neither, but the internet says you should clean your quartz with salt to get rid of any negative energy.

ADDY  
Or I could throw them away.

HANA  
That sounds like a major spiritual biohazard.

ADDY  
Do you hear yourself?

HANA  
I'm serious! What if you wake up for Thursday's meet with your legs on backwards all because you're too good to wash your quartz with salt.

ADDY  
That would be nasty.

HANA  
Do you really want to take your  
chances?

Addy sighs.

INT. MELVIN'S BATHROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Melvin sits in a clawfoot tub with a plastic bag filled with various chemicals. He's stripped to his boxers wearing SWIMMING GOGGLES and a SILK BONNET. With GLOVED HANDS, he SPRAYS THE STICK THOROUGHLY, placing each bottle on the bathroom floor before moving onto the next one.

INT. ADDY'S BATHROOM - SAME TIME

Addy pours table salt straight from the shaker into a sink full of water. On either side of Addy, Jacob and Carl brush their teeth.

INT. MELVIN'S BATHROOM

Melvin stands at the sink in his boxers, washing his hands.

INT. ADDY'S BATHROOM

Addy slides the quartz into the sink.

CARL  
Addy, I hath to sthpit.

ADDY  
Toilet.

JACOB  
Wath are you doing?

Addy shakes her head. Jacob shrugs and spits out the window.

INT. MELVIN'S BEDROOM

With the precision of a surgeon, Melvin places the stick back in the box. He CLAPS the lid shut, then TUCKS THE BOX UNDER HIS PILLOW.

INT. ADDY'S BEDROOM

Addy yanks open a dresser drawer and buries the crystals under her socks. She closes the drawer and begins to walk away. Addy glances back at the dresser uneasily.

INT. MELVIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Melvin scrolls on his laptop. He's pulled up Addy's track statistics and is zooming in on pictures of her.

EXT. ADDY'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Addy lifts the lid of the outdoor garbage bin. In her other hand, the quartz rattles around inside a LOOSE GYM SOCK.

ADDY  
(muttering) Am I going to hell if I  
don't recycle this shit?

Addy opens the blue recycling bin only to find it INFESTED WITH BROWN SPIDERS. Some spiders creep up towards Addy's fingers and she drops the lid, stifling a scream. She DROPS the quartz sock, and its contents SPILL ONTO THE YARD.

Addy runs inside, leaving the crystals scattered on the grass.

INT. MELVIN'S ROOM

Melvin zooms in on a photo of Addy. He mouses over her eyes, her nose, her mouth. Suddenly, he SHUTS THE LAPTOP.

MELVIN  
Ugh, creepy. Too creepy. Cut that  
out.

Melvin stows his laptop on his bedside table. He feels for the box under his pillow before turning off the light.

EXT. SACRED OATH - MORNING

Yellow buses line up at the school's entrance. Hana pushes through a crowd of yammering high schoolers, with Addy trailing behind her.

HANA  
There. She's blending in with the  
fucking bus.

Delia leans against one of the school buses, flanked by two WITCHY FRIENDS with jewel-toned hair.

HANA (CONT'D)

Delia, what the hell? We in polite society do not put curses on our teammates.

DELIA

I don't know what you're talking about.

ADDY

Why did you put rocks in my yard?

DELIA

You are so self-focused. Not everything has to be about you.

ADDY

It's my yard.

DELIA

It was the Earth's body way before it was your yard.

ADDY

Please, Delia?

DELIA

Fine.

ADDY

Thanks. Good luck tomorrow.

Delia scoffs.

DELIA

Yeah.

TEACHER (O.S.)

Mr. Sheridan's Chemistry class,  
let's line up!

Addy and Hana break away to line up with their class.

HANA

(over her shoulder) Ecoterrorist!

INT. SCHOOL BUS - MORNING

Addy and Hana stand in line to exit the bus. MR. SHERIDAN (50s, white) addresses the class holding a stapled packet of paper.

MR. SHERIDAN

Remember, no swapping partners.  
Each pair will consist of you and a  
Physics student from Ms.  
Scottsdale's class. Stay in your pre-  
assigned pair or risk facing  
disciplinary action.

Hana turns to face Addy.

HANA

I hope my partner is okay with me  
falling asleep in the planetarium  
and waking me up when it's time to  
leave.

MR. SHERIDAN

Sarah J. and Ana. Peter and Maria-  
Rosa.

INT. ARCADIA SCIENCE MUSEUM LOBBY - MORNING

Addy finds Melvin by the museum fountain. He's in his usual uniform, sweatshirt and all.

MELVIN

Hey, partner.

ADDY

Hey.

MELVIN

Aren't we a too old for a  
scavenger hunt?

ADDY

I'm not.

Addy looks over at the museum door, where Mr. Sheridan and the OTHER CHAPERONES are standing.

MR. SHERIDAN

Before we enter the hallowed halls  
of this educational sanctum of  
knowledge, preservation...

MELVIN  
Are you stretching?

ADDY  
No. What?

MELVIN  
You are. You're stretching your  
legs.

MR. SHERIDAN  
...and remember that trips like  
these are a privilege that should  
ultimately be cherished with an air  
of respect..

ADDY  
What? I want to win.

MELVIN  
How can a field trip have winners?

ADDY  
Get ready to run.

MELVIN  
What?

MR. SHERIDAN  
Remember to meet in the courtyard  
for lunch at noon. Alright -

Mr. Sheridan cracks open the door. Addy narrows her eyes.

MR. SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
Feel free to begin your worksheets  
and explore the museum starting -

ADDY  
(to Melvin) Now!

The STUDENTS rush the door. Mr. Sheridan dashes behind a stone pillar, and Addy shoots off towards the entrance, forcing Melvin to run after her. The BLACK BOX begins to SLIP OUT OF HIS SWEATSHIRT POCKET, but Melvin shoves it back in. He stuffs his hands in his sweatshirt.

Melvin scans for Addy in the crowd of overexcited teenagers.

ADDY (CONT'D)  
Melvin! Follow my voice!

MELVIN  
What the hell?

MR. SHERIDAN

Language!

Melvin looks at Mr. Sheridan helplessly.

ADDY

Melvin!

Melvin shoulders through the crowd. Across the lobby, Addy stands at the mouth of the ASTRONOMY WING. Kids funnel past her, and she jumps in exasperation.

INT. ASTRONOMY WING

Melvin and Addy stand next to a human-sized model of Jupiter, its lifelike texture generated by a series of light projectors. Melvin reads from an informational placard.

MELVIN

The average temperature on the surface of Jupiter is... -238 degrees.

He starts to scribble on his own paper.

ADDY

Write faster.

MELVIN

A first grader could do this.

ADDY

Then why are you making it look so hard?

Melvin cracks a smile.

MELVIN

Done.

Addy yanks Melvin to his feet and the BLACK BOX begins to slide out of his sweatshirt. Addy runs ahead of him, and Melvin adjusts his sweatshirt before running after her.

INT. EARLY LIFE WING - DAY

Melvin and Addy duck inside a giant egg decorated with informative plaques about DNA. Addy jots down the information, using Melvin's back as a flat surface. He jumps at the contact.

INT. PLANETARIUM - DAY



Melvin and Addy sit in reclining chairs while a droning MUSEUM DOCENT delivers a speech about seasonal constellations from a hidden podium. Above them, a projector casts a video of the changing night sky onto the ceiling. A few seats away, Hana and HER PARTNER are both fast asleep.

ADDY

Aw.

Melvin's eyes flutter shut, but he's quickly revived when Addy grabs his hand.

With quiet forcefulness, she pulls him to his feet, and they approach the docent's podium at the back.

MELVIN

(whispers) What are you doing!

The docent looks at them, but doesn't break the sleepy rhythm of their speech.

ADDY

Hi. This is SO interesting, but I'm actually more of a visual learner.

She grabs the docents script and rifles through the pages.

The docent covers the microphone.

DOCENT

What are you doing?

ADDY

We just need one...little...fact-here. "Virgo". Melvin, write that down. (to docent) Thanks. Sorry.

Addy slaps down the piece of paper and pulls Melvin towards the doors.

In the partial darkness, Addy trips on an untaped extension cord, sending them both crashing onto the arcade-style carpet.

Behind them, the docent begins the next segment of their talk, shooting Addy a vengeful look.

While Addy picks herself up, Melvin feels around for his box, finding it missing.

MELVIN

(quietly) Fuck.

The darkness makes it impossible to see more than two feet ahead of him. He feels around wildly.

ADDY  
Drop something?

MELVIN  
(stammers) Uh. Yeah. I think I  
dropped my phone somewhere. Maybe  
check outside?

Addy nods and slips into the hallway.

Melvin feels around some more. After a while, he spots something reflective underneath one of the planetarium seats.

He surges forward, finding his box face down on the carpet, its contents half-spilled.

He stuffs the stick back inside and clutches the container to his stomach.

INT. ECOLOGY WING - DAY

Melvin and Addy wade through rubber plants and projections of wildlife in a MULTILEVEL SIMULATED RAIN FOREST.

Melvin wears a hard, angry look.

Addy's noticed this. She gives him a puzzling glance.

ADDY  
I'm glad you found your phone.

Melvin grunts.

From a level above them, ANOTHER PAIR accidentally drops their scavenger hunt sheet and pencil from a vine-covered balcony.

Addy jogs towards the fallen paper.

MELVIN  
Addy, don't.

ADDY  
Don't what?

Addy collects the paper and pencil. She runs up the staircase, meeting the other team in the middle.

CLASSMATE  
Thanks, Addy.

ADDY

Yup.

Addy glares at Melvin from the staircase.

ADDY (CONT'D)

You thought I was going to rip up their shit!

MELVIN

Addy, you interrupted the speaker at the planetarium. There are easier, less volatile ways to get answers.

ADDY

What, like Google? I don't cheat, Melvin.

MELVIN

That's not cheating?

Addy sighs. She jogs over to Melvin.

ADDY

When you race, you try your best to stay on the inside of the track. It's not cheating. It's running the shortest distance. That's tact.

MELVIN

You know other people are gonna Google the answers, right?

ADDY

So what? There's no prize for finishing first.

MELVIN

(rising anger) Then why are we running around like there is?

ADDY

Because it's fun. I thought we were having fun.

Melvin cracks an unwilling smile.

MELVIN

Yeah, sorry. I just get really nervous... about losing my phone. I only have one phone, so when I think I've lost it...

ADDY

I think everybody feels that way  
about their phone.

MELVIN

Yeah. I guess.

ADDY

So, what's left?

Melvin checks the sheet.

MELVIN

Uh. Just the Insect Corner and the  
special exhibit questions.

Addy frowns.

ADDY

Insect Corner?

Melvin points at a hanging sign adorned with a massive  
butterfly sculpture.

ADDY (CONT'D)

Do you want to split up? I can take  
the Special Exhibit, and you can do  
the Insect Corner?

MELVIN

I don't think the Insect Corner  
will take that long. It's just two  
questions.

ADDY

I'm gonna run to the bathroom. You  
can go, though. Don't let me slow  
you down.

She gives him a wavering half-smile.

MELVIN

Are you feeling okay?

ADDY

We're losing time, Melvin.

Addy jogs off, and Melvin sets off towards the Insect Corner  
alone.

EXT. SPECIAL EXHIBIT - TREE OF LIFE - EARLY AFTERNOON

A portion of the museum's back lawn had been converted into a plastic maze, evoking a larger, more educational McDonalds play pen.

A sign above the structure reads "THE TREE OF LIFE".

ADDY

This is it. Where single-celled organisms become men.

MELVIN

That's clever. For a jock.

ANOTHER TEAM barrels past Melvin and Addy, practically throwing themselves into the maze.

Without a word, Melvin and Addy bolt in after them.

INT. MAZE - MINUTES LATER

Addy and Melvin crawl through a green plastic tube. A thick dashed line traces the floor.

MELVIN

So this whole thing is a big evolution tree?

ADDY

Yuh-huh. We just have to find the organisms on this list and write down the fun facts. Hey. Algae.

Sure enough, the dashed line has led them to a cartoon portrait of algae, its scientific name and some fun facts printed directly underneath.

VOICE

(distant) Algae?

Melvin and Addy look to their right, where YET ANOTHER PAIR are making their way through a parallel branch in the maze. The other pair stare at Melvin and Addy through the translucent green plastic, before quickly changing course.

ADDY

We gotta move.

MINI MONTAGE:

Addy and Melvin speed-crawling through the maze.

Addy and Melvin climbing a rock wall meant to look like a tree covered in mushrooms. Addy almost loses her footing attempting to copy down a fun fact. Melvin reaches out to help, but Addy steadies herself.

Addy and Melvin jogging across a wooden bridge. Sillier!

One more thingie

END MONTAGE.

EXT. TOP OF MAZE - AFTERNOON

Addy and Melvin stand at the top of the structure in a plastic crow's nest. On the wall is a drawing of a human man.

He's a little caveman-looking, with a protruding brow and an unfortunate underbite.

ADDY (CONT'D)

That's what you look like.

MELVIN

That's a white dude.

Addy laughs. Melvin kneels, using his knee to write the last fun fact.

ADDY

Do you think we're the first group to finish?

MELVIN

Probably. I can't imagine anyone cares as much as we do.

ADDY

I'm glad we BOTH care.

MELVIN

Yeah, yeah. Did you know that "Scientists theorize that man became bipedal in reaction to a drier, hotter climate"?

There's movement at the entrance. Addy turns, finding Delia curled at the mouth of the tunnel. She lingers for a split second before disappearing down the dark tubing.

ADDY

Goddamn, that bitch is everywhere!

MELVIN

Delia? Isn't she on the track team with you?

ADDY

Hana thinks she tries to put curses on me during practice. Sometimes I think she's right.

MELVIN

Stranger things have happened.

ADDY

You know what? She can win, just this once. Maybe that will get her off my back.

MELVIN

Wow, Addy. That's big of you.

Addy shrugs before ducking into the exit.

EXT. MUSEUM COURTYARD - MINUTES LATER

Mr. Sheridan sits at a shaded wire table with wired headphones in. He bops his head to the filthiest rap song you've ever heard.

MR SHERIDAN -

(muttered) "Move bitch..."

Addy runs up to him.

ADDY

Mr. Sheridan, we finished.

He scrambles to stuff his headphones into his pocket, but the music blasts relentlessly through the tiny speakers.

MR. SHERIDAN

(fumbling with his phone) Nice job. First in.

ADDY

We won!

MR. SHERIDAN

I wouldn't say there are winners or losers...

ADDY

Mr. Sheridan?

He manages to turn off the music.

MR. SHERIDAN

Yes.

ADDY

(grinning devilishly) You know what.

A breathless Melvin appears at Addy's side.

ADDY (CONT'D)

Hey. We won.

MELVIN

(keeled over) Cool.

ADDY

I wonder what happened to Delia.

Hana bounds towards Addy. Slowly, the rest of the class funnels into the lobby.

ADDY (CONT'D)

You look well-rested.

HANA

I am. The planetarium lady sounds so much like the girl from my sleep hypnosis podcast. Do you think she's moonlighting? How's it going, Melvin?

MELVIN

It's hard to run in slacks. Also, I don't think this polo shirt is moisture wicking.

HANA

One time me and Addy were paired together for a diorama project, and I realized when it was over that I had developed abs. No idea how.

MELVIN

That sounds plausible.

MR. SHERIDAN

Hey, Addy?

He jogs over.



MR. SHERIDAN (CONT'D)  
Did you say you'd seen Delia?

ADDY  
Yeah, I saw her in the maze a while ago.

MR. SHERIDAN  
Great, thanks.

Mr. Sheridan strides off.

HANA  
(whispered) What do you think she's up to? I bet she's reanimating dead bugs at the Insect Corner.

Addy makes a gagging face.

ADDY  
It must be exhausting to live in your brain.

HANA  
It is. But so fun.

Melvin takes a seat with the Corinne and the rest of the debate team.

CORINNE  
You must be happy.

MELVIN  
Why?

CORINNE  
Your fortuitous coupling.

MELVIN  
Whenever you get smug, you talk like a pilgrim.

CORINNE  
(evilly) When you get all hot and bothered, you blush.

Melvin glares at Corinne. He extracts a bagged lunch from his backpack.

MELVIN  
I'm not hot and bothered. I'm tired. And sweaty.

CORINNE

Did Gwyneth Paltrow pack your lunch?

MELVIN

Hm?

He's laid out his meal -- a yellow apple and a Ziploc bag of Veggie Sticks.

MELVIN (CONT'D)

(defensively) I packed this.

CORINNE

You're missing a few food groups.

MELVIN

My mom's out of town and we're running out of groceries. I'm a busy guy!

CORINNE

With a blossoming social life.

HANA (V.O.)

(faraway, but loud) HOLY SHIT.

The students of Sacred Oath exchange eager looks. In a near-stampede of collared shirts and plaid, they rush inside, leaving their chaperones behind in a cloud of dust and trash.

EXT. SPECIAL EXHIBIT - TREE OF LIFE - SECONDS LATER

Delia and her scavenger hunt partner EUGENE (17, Chinese-American) are tangled in the rope bridge, obscenely close to one another.

They're in a clearly compromising position, with Eugene's hand in Delia's back pocket and Delia's hair stuck in Eugene's mouth.

Eugene spits, accidentally spraying Delia with saliva. She seems unfazed, glaring only at Hana and Addy.

HANA

(gleefully) I'm mortified.

ADDY

She's gonna think we did this one purpose.

A ways above them, a frazzled and fuming MR. SHERIDAN squeezes through a clear tube.

His every movement elicits a squeak of friction from the clear acrylic. The structure creaks beneath his weight.

HANA

Do they still do corporal punishment? Spanking and stuff? Knowing these two, they'd probably like that stuff. Nudge, nudge.

ADDY

I hope nothing happens to them.

HANA

Eugene is nice. We're in drama together. He's a really generous scene partner.

Addy fights a smile.

ADDY

I'll bet.

A rumbling sound. All at once, the courtyard floods with students. At the sight of the illicit lunchtime spectacle, they are stunned to silence.

HANA

(leaning into Addy) Check your shoes for frogs tonight.

A beat.

ADDY

Can I sleep over?

INT. HANA'S BEDROOM

Hana lays on one side of her bed with her eyes closed. On the nightstand, her phone blasts loud, grainy white noise.

By dim lamplight, Addy sits in the floor in a highly involved hip stretch.

Outside, crickets scratch a staccato rhythm into the night. Addy shivers and closes her eyes. She breathes in deeply.

Addy releases her breath, and stares ahead calmly.

EXT. TRACK MEET - SACRED OATH RACE TRACK - NEXT DAY

Addy bounces her against the track, turning her ankles in quick circles -- a nervous, almost undetectable ritual.

Melvin sits on the bleachers, part of a meager home team crowd. Darren, Carl, and Jacob sit a few tiers beneath him.

CARL

Let's go, Addy! Run like the wind!

Addy flashes a quick smile in their direction, quickly sinking back into a place of focus.

The first seed girls file into their lanes.

Addy hunches in a ready position, with one foot against her starting block. She tests the block against her heel.

A muffled announcer identifies the racers by school.

ANNOUNCER

That's Sacred Oath in 2... Arcadia  
Charter in 3... Sacred Oath in 4...

From the forth lane, Delia looks over at Addy, her mouth twisted into knot. Addy stares ahead, oblivious.

At the sound of a blank, the girls surge into motion.

Addy leaps off the block and pushes into first.

JACOB

GO ADDY!

Melvin watches her round the first bend with the next girl three feet behind her.

MELVIN

Jesus.

VOICE (O.S.)

Excuse me?

Melvin looks over his shoulder, where FATHER PATRICK (47, fading red hair) is sitting in full church dress.

MELVIN

Sorry, Father Patrick.

He turns back towards the race. Addy is halfway around the track, and the next girl is ten feet behind her. Behind that girl, Delia fights for third.

EXT. RACE TRACK - MINUTES LATER

At the side of the track, Addy pours herself a cup of water from the team's jug.

She's shiny with sweat, and still slightly out of breath.

Jacob and Carl leans over the bleacher railing, trying to kick at Addy's head.

DARREN

That wasn't a P.R., was it?

Addy frowns.

ADDY

No. Close, though. Did you see anybody?

She scans the crowd for Duke blue.

DARREN

Nobody obvious. Maybe her?

He nods at a NUN in her sixties wearing a deep blue habit.

ADDY

Sister Katherine? You think she's here undercover from UT Austin?

DARREN

Huh. Should we start coming to parent nights?

ADDY

That's okay. I'm getting a high quality, free education.

DARREN

That's what I like to hear. Is that your last race?

ADDY

Just the relay. We won't win.

DARREN

Alright, I'm going to take the boys for dinner. Text me.

Addy nods. When Darren and the boys are gone, Melvin stands at the railing, grinning strangely.

MELVIN

You were great.

ADDY

Melvin! I didn't know you came to these.

MELVIN  
You're really fast.

ADDY  
That's my whole thing.

MELVIN  
Congratulations.

ADDY  
Thank you.

Melvin stares at her, still grinning.

ADDY (CONT'D)  
Melvin...?

MELVIN  
(rushed) Will you go out with me?

Addy takes a drink of water, swishing it around in her mouth.  
She spits it into the trash.

ADDY  
Really?

MELVIN  
Yes.

ADDY  
I don't get asked out a lot.

MELVIN  
Oh. That doesn't make sense.

Addy smiles.

ADDY  
I'm kind of sweaty most of the  
time.

MELVIN  
You're killing me.

Addy considers Melvin.

ADDY  
Take off your glasses.

He does. Addy gasps theatrically.

ADDY (CONT'D)  
You're stunning.

HANA  
(distant) Addy! Relay!

At the center of the track, Hana jumps up and down on the grass, shaking a relay baton in the air.

ADDY  
I... can't. I spend all my time on track. I can't get distracted.

She another cup of water and jets off towards the rest of her team. She twists back mid-jog.

ADDY (CONT'D)  
(calling) I think you're great, though. Let's be friends.

Melvin watches as she joins the pack of runners. He locks eyes briefly with Hana, who waves.

Hana wipes Addy's sweaty face with her dry jersey. Addy briefly lets her before ducking away.

HANA  
What was that with Melvin.

Addy stretches her legs, stalling. She turns her back to Hana, reaching towards her foot.

ADDY  
He asked me out.

HANA  
You said no.

ADDY  
How do you know?

HANA  
Didn't you?

ADDY  
Yeah, but how do you know?

HANA  
You are not the enigma you think you are. Melvin's cute.

ADDY  
Yeah.

HANA  
Really cute. And nice.

ADDY  
What's your game here?

HANA  
Just saying.

ADDY/HANA  
I don't have time to date.

Addy stares at Hana. Hana looks back smugly.

ADDY  
You don't think he's dorky?

HANA  
The dorkiness is important. It's endearing.

ADDY  
Yeah. It is.

COACH  
(calling) Runners on the track!  
Let's go!

Addy quickly turns back to the stands. She scans the crowd, but Melvin is already gone.

TO BE CONTINUED.

SECOND HALF SUMMARY:

SCHOOL

Melvin asks out Addy, who tells him she doesn't have time to date. Addy agrees to help Melvin train for a half marathon he makes up. He tells her he has a chronic illness and needs to start running to help his symptoms.

ADDY'S HOUSE/STREET/TRACK

Melvin and Addy train together and get to know each other. When Addy's brother almost catches Melvin on fire, he freaks out again, and Addy tells him that she had to start running to manage her stress.

ADDY'S HOUSE



One weekend, Melvin goes away for a debate tournament, and Addy is lonely. She calls up some track friends.

#### DELIA'S HOUSE

Addy hangs out with some friends from track, including Delia. They play drinking games, and in a game of Truth or Dare, Addy admits that she's afraid of bugs.

#### SCHOOL

Melvin returns from the tournament. Addy is about to ask him out when she finds out a coach is coming to her next meet. She pulls away from Melvin, and Delia offers to help him win her over.

#### ADDY'S HOUSE

Melvin challenges Addy to a race, which she agrees to in order to get him off her back.

#### STREET/SCHOOL

Throughout the week, Addy and Melvin each see the other training.

#### MELVIN'S HOUSE

Empowered by his time with Addy, Melvin decides to leave his box at home.

#### SCHOOL

Melvin accepts Delia's help, determined to win the race. She promises that when the time comes, she'll take care of the race.

#### SCHOOL (CONT'D)

On the day of the race, Addy is positioned to have a clear victory over Melvin. At the last moment, Delia releases insects onto the race track, and Addy loses in an attempt to escape them.

#### TRACK MEET

The next day at Addy's meet, she is rattled by the loss and surrenders first place to Delia. None of the scouts present approach her, and she falls into a depression.

#### MELVIN'S HOUSE

Seeing what he did to Addy, Melvin attempts to singe the piece of wood tied to his life, but the pain becomes unbearable, and he has to stop.

#### SCHOOL

At school, Addy makes plans to go through with the date. Melvin can't bring himself to admit the hand he played in Addy's loss.

#### MINI GOLF

Addy and Melvin go mini golfing. In the middle of their date, Melvin admits what he's done and how we worked with Delia to beat Addy. He shows Addy the piece of wood, explaining that the wood is part of a family curse left over from centuries ago. When Addy doesn't believe him, Melvin burns the end and he catches fire. Addy pushes him into the water in a heroic act of catharsis. Addy explains her fear of insects, telling Melvin that she has fears of becoming like her grandmother, and losing herself to hallucinations. For Addy, running is a form of therapy.

#### SCHOOL

Melvin and Addy get Delia suspended for witchcraft. Addy gets an athletic scholarship from Duke.

#### MELVIN'S HOUSE

Melvin stays home sick, exhausted from all the damage done to the piece of wood. Addy visits him after school, and they bond over their respective curses. Addy kisses Melvin.

#### SCHOOL

Months later, Addy and Melvin goof off on the track, almost missing their graduation. They run together, with Addy dragging Melvin by the arm. Melvin's box almost falls out of his suit jacket pocket, but Addy catches it.