

BUCHANAN COUNTY

Written by

Sophia Colby

scolby@oberlin.edu
925-784-7094

EXT. BUCHANAN COUNTY, VIRGINIA - DAY

A lonely road winds alongside a river through the Appalachian mountains on the border of Virginia, Kentucky, and West Virginia. Late spring. The sky is clear blue, the trees are lush green.

A few homes--small, damaged from flooding.

Empty and damaged storefronts--a seedy gas station convenience store.

A Dollar Store.

Hurley High School--plain brick rectangles with a big Confederate battle flag painted at the entrance.

A simple brick Southern Baptist church.

INT. CHURCH - MORNING

Inside the church--plain white walls, 70s carpet, half-empty pews of old white people listening to their PASTOR. No one looks like they belong in a movie.

CONNOR (about 18) sits in the pews by himself, staring at the back of the head of the boy in front of him. Connor always wears long sleeves even though it is hot and humid.

Everyone speaks with a Central or South Central Appalachian accent.

PASTOR

(in the background)

Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah from the Lord out of the heavens. Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities and also the vegetation in the land.

Directly in front of Connor is SILAS (about 18), classic Americana cool kid who is not paying attention.

Besides Silas is his MOM (30s, noticeably young). She fiddles with her cross necklace.

Silas senses that he is being stared at and turns around for a short moment, meeting Connor's eyes.

Connor immediately looks away, scared and ashamed.

PASTOR (CONT'D)
 (in the background)
 But Lot's wife looked back, and she
 became a pillar of salt. Early the
 next morning Abraham got up and
 returned to the place where he had
 stood before the Lord.

Silas glances at Connor again, but Connor is pretending not
 to exist.

PASTOR (CONT'D)
 (in the background)
 He looked down toward Sodom and
 Gomorrah, toward all the land of
 the plain, and he saw dense smoke
 rising from the land, like smoke
 from a furnace...

Silas settles back in, amused.

INT. CHURCH - LATER

People get up and mingle with each other after the service.

Silas turns around in his seat, trying to catch Connor's
 attention.

Connor makes himself look busy with a pew Bible.

SILAS
 You're a Randolph right? Where's
 your folks?

Connor ignores him, terrified.

SILAS (CONT'D)
 I seen you at the lake.

Nothing.

SILAS (CONT'D)
 I have. I seen you at Hurley too.
 You do the hard classes.

Connor abruptly moves to leave, dropping the Bible.

SILAS (CONT'D)
 I'm just saying hi--!

CONNOR
 I'm sorry, okay? I didn't mean it.

SILAS
(conspiring)
Didn't mean what?

Silas picks up the Bible and gives it to him. Lingers for a second.

Connor puts it back in the pew and shoves past Silas and other church-goers on his way out.

Silas remains, confused and intrigued.

INT. CHURCH - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connor kneels and retches into the toilet from anxiety, tightly gripping his wrists.

He takes deep breaths, slowly recovers.

He stands and walks out like nothing happened.

EXT. LAKE - SUNRISE

A secluded lake in the wooded mountains on a hot day.

Connor perches on a rocky outcropping doing some fishing.

He works the bait onto the line and casts it out. His heart isn't in it.

Silas does his own fishing some distance away on the shore. Silas has no idea how to properly fish.

Connor tries not to stare, but can't help it.

Silas sets aside his fishing rod.

Silas takes off his shirt and jumps into the lake.

Connor slightly smiles at his joy.

SILAS
Hey!

Connor startles.

SILAS (CONT'D)
Swim with me!

Connor pretends not to hear.

Silas swims over and splashes his legs.

SILAS (CONT'D)
What is your goddamn problem?

CONNOR
I'm minding my business, what's
YOUR problem?

SILAS
What's your first name--?

CONNOR
I ain't got a problem.

SILAS
Too bad.

Short beat.

SILAS (CONT'D)
Jump!

CONNOR
What--?

SILAS
It's deep--

CONNOR
(strongly)
No.

Beat.

SILAS
Okay.

CONNOR
...You could... come up...

Beat.

Silas climbs up the rocks and sits next to Connor.

They sit there in companioned awkward silence.

They can't tear their eyes from the water and the trees.

Silas puts his hand on top of Connor's tactlessly. Connor sharply inhales.

Several charged moments. Neither moves a muscle. Neither exhales.

They simply do not move.

Connor has to release his breath eventually.

They stay put together, frozen.

Their relationship deepens and grows over their last several months of high school:

EXT. HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Silas leads the Hurley High "Rebels" FOOTBALL TEAM as they run out onto the field, waving the Confederate flag.

The energy of the town gathered in the bleachers is for once youthful and exuberant.

Silas scores a touchdown, the winning point.

The assembled crowd goes wild. Silas' mom cheers.

Silas' teammates lift him onto their shoulders.

Silas' eyes go straight to Connor, who looks on in the stands, adoring.

INT. HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Connor and Silas wait next to each other in the lunch line, acting unassociated.

Connor reaches for a tray. His long sleeve rides up a bit.

The slightest hint of scars from a blade on his wrist.

Silas notices. Abject terror.

Connor sees Silas' horror and yanks his sleeve down right away.

Silas lingers, beyond words.

Connor quickly goes to sit by himself.

Silas goes with the football team.

EXT. HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Silas and the football team roll up to prom piled into the back of somebody's pickup truck.

They pass around booze, celebrating. Silas takes a deep drink.

INT. HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - NIGHT

The gym has a painting of the Confederate flag on the wall as well. It has been decorated with streamers and string lights.

Silas stands on a stage in a suit that doesn't fit him, getting crowned prom king.

Connor watches, volunteering at the refreshments table.

Silas dances with the PROM QUEEN, enjoying himself well enough.

When the song is over, Silas makes a tipsy beeline to Connor.

Connor gives him a warning look.

Silas gets refreshments and circles back to his people.

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT

Silas sits on the rock by the lake, still in his prom outfit.

Connor joins and sits next to him.

They are surprised and delighted to find each other here.

Immediately, Silas leans in, ready for a kiss.

Connor does not understand what is happening or what to do.

Beat.

Connor falls against Silas in a hug.

Silas hugs him back.

They adjust and cling to each other.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Silas' home is small, damaged, furnished with decades-old hand-me-downs, cozy and warm.

Connor and Silas sit at the kitchen table, Connor helping Silas on homework.

Silas' mom pours three glasses of iced sweet tea from a pitcher.

She ruffles Silas' hair. She smiles at Connor as she sets his glass in front of him.

Connor smiles back.

EXT. HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - AFTERNOON

After school, Silas hangs out with the football team, roughhousing and joking around.

Silas notices Connor sitting by himself and gives him a bro nod to welcome him over to the group.

Connor is flabbergasted.

Silas nods again, more emphatically.

The bros notice and take interest.

Connor very cautiously goes to Silas.

A TEAMMATE shoves Connor, directly on the line between playful and bullying, and Connor pretends not to be affected.

Silas laughingly shoves his teammate back with no anger or hurt behind it.

Playful roughhousing among the team ensues again. Connor steps back.

INT. CONNOR'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

Connor lives in a miserable, small room with no decorations or clutter, bag halfway packed, ready to leave at a moment's notice.

He throws a handful of things into a bag as indistinct shouting--a man's voice and a woman's voice--drifts through the walls.

He tries his bedroom door. It's barricaded from the outside and won't open.

He digs his nails into the hinges to try to rip them off. It doesn't work.

He throws opens his window. There's a bug screen blocking him.

He reaches into his pocket.

A pocketknife.

He slices the bug screen down the side.

The drop to the grass below won't kill him, but it will hurt...

He falters.

The shouting grows yet more agitated, now accompanied by heavy footsteps climbing stairs.

One last breath.

He grits his teeth and jumps out the window.

EXT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

There's a vegetable garden outside of Silas' house as well as several chickens roaming around.

Connor knocks, having just jumped out his window and badly hurt himself.

Silas opens the door. Connor scares him.

His mom immediately joins him in fussing over Connor.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

After some time - Connor sits at the table, mostly recovered, reading.

Silas comes in with their report cards.

They open up the envelopes.

Silas is disappointed in himself. Connor is pleased with himself.

Silas takes Connor's spotless report card and sticks it to the fridge with a magnet.

INT. HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - DAY

A class of about forty seniors--including Connor and Silas--in red and blue gowns toss graduation caps in front of the Confederate flag gym wall, smiling for cameras.

Connor takes a seat off to the side, watching.

Silas chats with the congratulatory swarm that forms around him. Mom, teachers, teammates, pastor, church ladies, prom queen...

Silas excuses himself from this.

Silas joins Connor, takes a breath.

Silas elbows Connor affectionately, smiles.

SILAS

Well?

CONNOR

Well what?

SILAS

What are we supposed to do with ourselves?

CONNOR

(smiles)

We?

Mutual elbowing ensues in a jokey, fond way.

EXT. HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL - PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Still in their graduation gowns, Connor and Silas play around in the parking lot, balancing on the concrete. Green, humid, loud bugs.

Silas laughs at Connor's suggestions:

CONNOR

New York City... Berlin... *Paris*,
I'd love to see Paris--

SILAS

I'd like to take a moment to remind
you that you're a hillbilly--

CONNOR

You're the only one who seems to
think so.

SILAS

(offended)

Course you are.

CONNOR
...What about Richmond?

SILAS
Richmond?

CONNOR
My family's lived in the same 50
miles since 1643--

SILAS
Right.

CONNOR
Ain't things supposed to change
just a little bit--?

SILAS
Leaving ain't changing things, it's
avoiding things.

CONNOR
Yeah I'M avoiding things, that's
what I'M doing.

SILAS
I thought you liked living with us?

CONNOR
(shamed)
I really appreciate--

SILAS
But do you LIKE it?

CONNOR
There's work out there--

SILAS
Nothing they'd hire us for that we
can't do here.

CONNOR
There's the state college.

SILAS
That only works if you're rich
already--

CONNOR
I don't know exactly. But I know
nobody wants me here.

SILAS

I do.

Silas glances at Connor's wrists.

SILAS (CONT'D)

Don't leave.

Connor lightly whacks Silas' shoulder.

CONNOR

How could I leave you?

Beat.

Silas whacks him back, "joking."

SILAS

Promise!

They keep goofing around.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY - MONTHS LATER

Connor works as a cashier in the gas station convenience store, still in Buchanan County.

The harsh light just above him flickers. It bothers him.

A CUSTOMER approaches.

CONNOR

Cash or--?

The customer dumps an entire pocket's worth of loose change on the counter.

Connor looks up for a moment, incredulous, then quickly counts out the total.

The receipt prints out and he passes it over.

The customer goes.

Connor stares at the flickering light like he wants to murder it.

EXT. HOUSE FOR SALE - SUNSET

Connor walks home along the road that borders the river. The trees are lush around him.

He observes a family loading their things into a moving truck, preparing to sell their humble house.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - EVENING

Silas and his mom cook together. Silas chops onions with a sure hand and passes the cutting board to his mom.

Silas' mom throws the onions into a pot. They sizzle.

Connor comes though the front door.

SILAS' MOM
(realizing the time)
Six already? How was work, hon?

CONNOR
Fine, thanks.

SILAS
I got it.

SILAS' MOM
Thank you, sugar.

She heads out for her shift, throwing on a Dollar Store uniform.

Freedom! Connor and Silas share a look.

EXT. WOODS - SUNSET

Silas and Connor crouch in the bushes, wearing camo, dead silent.

Connor guides Silas' hands on a hunting rifle, helping him to hold and aim correctly.

SILAS
This is so embarrassing--

CONNOR
Shh.

On the other end of the rifle, a buck.

It grazes in the woods, sublime, blissfully ignorant.

SILAS
.....I--

CONNOR

Shh!

Connor pulls away and lets Silas have this.

Silas takes a few deep breaths.

A long beat.

Silas feels too badly for the deer.

On purpose, he shoots into the sky.

The buck startles and runs off.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

...

SILAS

Shut up.

CONNOR

...

SILAS

Shut up!

Silas gives the rifle back and stalks off back home.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

Silas and Connor sit on the couch, watching a movie (*Casablanca*), empty plates on a table nearby.

There is a big gulf of space between them. Silas is still prickly.

Connor starts quietly repeating words after the movie actors, in the actors' accents.

Silas tries to ignore it but can't.

SILAS

...What are you--

CONNOR

(passable general US
coastal accent)

I'm practicing--

SILAS

Eugh that's freaky--!

CONNOR
(continues)
What is--?

SILAS
Changing your voice is changing who
you are and--

CONNOR
It doesn't have anything to do with
me. It just *happened* to me.
(back to normal)
That's how people talk in Richmond,
did you know that--?

Connor shuts up.

They linger in uncomfortable silence.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Silas finishes checking out a customer.

He eyes the flickering light.

He gets up on the counter and takes a closer look at it.

He messes with the bulb, unscrewing and re-screwing it,
balanced precariously.

He stumbles and trips onto the counter, knocking stuff over,
not falling a long ways.

But the light stops flickering.

He laughs.

EXT. HOUSE FOR SALE - NIGHT

Silas walks past the house, a "for sale" sign now in the
yard.

He stops walking and looks at it.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - BATHROOM - NIGHT

In the bathroom, Connor sits on the floor, hyperventilating,
scratching his nails over his sleeves hard.

He works hard to resist his temptations using a bunch of
tricks:

He turns on the shower to its coldest setting.

He strips.

He lets the water pour over his head, shivering.

He steps out of the shower without turning it off and opens a bathroom drawer.

There is a cheap ballpoint pen tucked away in the drawer.

He scribbles aggressively over his skin, digging in too hard.

He finds a hair tie and flicks that against himself repeatedly.

The pocketknife is there for him, forming a lump in the pocket of his pants on the floor...

He closes his hand over it through the fabric...

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - CONTINUOUS

Silas takes a seat on the floor just outside the bathroom door. The fear is too overwhelming for him to touch.

SILAS
(is he alive?)
Connor...?

An awful silence.

CONNOR (O.S.)
(through the door)
Yeah?

SILAS
(relieved)
Motherfucker.

CONNOR
What?

SILAS
You okay in there?

CONNOR
Yeah...

SILAS
You sure?

CONNOR

...

SILAS

Ma says you're wasting water.

Connor turns off the shower.

SILAS (CONT'D)

(quiet)

You told me you weren't gonna leave me, so.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connor tries to stop himself from throwing up from stress.

The pocket knife sits on some bloody toilet paper on which it has been hastily wiped off. We never see anything as graphic as the actual wounds on his skin.

CONNOR

I'd never do something so stupid.

SILAS (O.S.)

(through the door)

Good!

Several beats.

SILAS (CONT'D)

You better eat dinner.

He hears Silas leave his side of the door.

EXT. HOUSE FOR SALE - DAY

The SELLER of the house, an old man, unlocks and then opens the door for Silas and Connor on the stoop.

They cautiously enter.

The seller follows them in.

INT. HOUSE FOR SALE - DAY

The paint is peeling off the walls, but it's something. The Seller steps back.

Silas focuses on Connor for a moment. Connor is still untethered.

In the kitchen, Silas messes with the stove.

SILAS
It's gas!

Nothing.

SILAS (CONT'D)
(painting a picture)
Sophistication. Get together. Hors
d'oeuvres...

Nothing from Connor for a while.

CONNOR
We ain't got the money.

SILAS
Yet.

Silas returns to messing with the kitchen stuff.

INT. CHURCH - MORNING

Silas spaces out, sitting with his mom on one side and Connor on the other.

Connor is attentive, nervous, upset.

Silas' mom reacts much like Connor. She fiddles with her cross necklace.

Connor briefly snaps out of his focus to notice how tense Silas' mom is.

Then he turns back to the service.

EXT. CHURCH - LATER

Silas' mom chats with some church ladies in the parking lot.

Connor and Silas lean against the wall of the church, watching.

CONNOR
...You ever wanna meet your dad?

SILAS
What dad?

CONNOR
Yeah.

SILAS

I can't have you starting on this,
it ain't her fault.

CONNOR

I know.

Connor ponders.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - SILAS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Silas' bedroom is divided into two--Silas' side overflows with clutter, photos with friends and family, and athletic accolades. Connor's is totally bare.

Silas lays in his bed in his side of the room. Connor lays on an air mattress on the floor in his side of the room.

CONNOR

What do you think about sex?

SILAS

I don't think about sex.

CONNOR

Me neither.

SILAS

I'm waiting until marriage.

CONNOR

Me too.

SILAS

That's when I'll get round to thinking about it.

CONNOR

Same.

They go to sleep.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - MORNING

Silas' mom sits at a clunky 2000s desktop computer in the main living area with a cup of coffee.

She is shocked by something she finds on it.

Silas enters and busies himself in the kitchen.

SILAS' MOM
...Why didn't you tell me?

Silas freezes.

SILAS' MOM (CONT'D)
I just would've liked if you'd have
asked my advice or something.

SILAS
...

SILAS' MOM
I thought for sure you ain't the
type.

SILAS
I ain't!

SILAS' MOM
(the computer)
What IS this, hon--?

SILAS
Nothing--!

Silas checks out the computer to shut it down.
It's job listings in Richmond!
Unspeakable relief.

SILAS (CONT'D)
Connor wants to go to Richmond.

SILAS' MOM
--! I'll miss him!

Silas is touched.

SILAS
Connor...
(fails to say: is my world
and scares me shitless)

SILAS' MOM
He's a good friend.

SILAS
(upset)
...

SILAS' MOM
But that boy just ain't served here-

SILAS
He belongs here--these mountains,
these rivers, always.

She hugs Silas. He doesn't reciprocate.

SILAS (CONT'D)
We're gonna buy that house down the
way. We're gonna fix it up.

SILAS' MOM
Tell him he ain't gonna leave
without a proper goodbye.

Silas extricates himself from the hug and goes to his room.

INT. SILAS' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alone for a moment, Silas does not fall apart, but shuts the door and studies himself.

His clothes are too nice, too much "the type."

He rumples himself up on purpose, maybe throws in some camo, and then hurries back out the door.

INT. STORE - DAY

Connor works the register. He is once again gazing at the now fixed light.

Silas bursts through the door and goes to the counter.

CONNOR
...You wanna buy something...?

Silas grabs a sweet tea from a fridge and sets it on the checkout counter.

Connor rings it up.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
What's wrong?

SILAS
Nothing. Why are you asking me
that? Nothing's wrong.

CONNOR
...

SILAS

No money here is what's wrong.

Connor pays attention. This is too good to be true.

Silas doesn't back down.

Connor tosses his name tag aside, locks up the till, and turns off the register.

He hops over the counter, stealing the sweet tea as he goes out the door.

EXT. HOUSE FOR SALE - CONTINUOUS

Connor and Silas walk back home. They pass the stolen tea back and forth.

Connor doesn't even look at their potential future home as they pass it, while Silas gives it a longing glance.

CONNOR

--a billion museums, there's natural history, regular history, I think there's three art museums or something like that, and one of them has Vincent Van Gogh paintings, and the James river goes right through the middle, it's gorgeous in photos, it's like glass, and there's theaters, stages, wouldn't that be cool, seeing a play, real actors, real musicians, and there's real buses, bus stops, the Virginia capitol building, marble columns and shit, like some George Washington type of shit, and there's the state university and there's even a private university--

Silas stopped walking at some point in the middle of all this.

Connor turns back and goes to him, embarrassed.

SILAS

Bet they don't have a good lake.

Connor shuts up.

SILAS (CONT'D)

Are you really serious--?

CONNOR
It's okay--

SILAS
How can you just--?

CONNOR
Look at me.

SILAS
This is our home--

CONNOR
Look at me.

Silas does.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
I want us to see each other as soon
as we can.

SILAS
...

CONNOR
When you come to visit, it won't
feel scary. It'll feel exciting.

SILAS
You'll come back to visit in no
time.

CONNOR
We'll see each other soon.

They start walking alongside each other again.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - EVENING

Silas' mom presents Connor with a going away apple stack
cake.

Abruptly, he hugs her.

She hugs him back.

INT. SILAS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

The middle of the night. Connor's bag is packed and resting
next to the door.

Connor is sleeping soundly. Silas is awake, apprehensive.

Silas bites the bullet and slides out of his own bed and into Connor's, under the blankets.

Connor wakes up, surprised.

SILAS
Hi.

CONNOR
Hi.

They grab each other and kiss tactlessly.

They don't let go, don't stop.

EXT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - CONTINUOUS

A warm and loud night outside. Lightning bugs and frogs.

INT. SILAS' BEDROOM - DAWN

Connor wakes up, tangled up with Silas.

He could just stay here...

He carefully extricates himself.

He gets his bag.

He turns back and contemplates Silas.

He goes.

EXT. BUCHANAN COUNTY - DAWN

A pickup truck idles on the side of the road as a few men fill it with lumber. Connor helps them load up.

When the workers are done, they get inside. Connor hops in the back of the truck with the wood.

Connor situates himself and takes in his world anew.

He closes his eyes, folds his hands, bows his head.

The truck pulls into the road and off he finally goes.

The scenery goes by. Mountains and trees.

Connor hugs his bag and smiles. The sun is warm on his face.

EXT. RICHMOND, VIRGINIA - DAY

Connor jumps off the back of the truck in downtown Richmond.

His traveling companions wave a good natured farewell to him and continue on their way.

He looks around, the world spinning.

People, cars, movement, light, energy.

He's too overwhelmed to do anything but stand there.

A pedestrian jostles him, snapping him out of it.

People file around him and completely ignore him. (The population of Richmond is about half Black and half white.)

Beat.

In ecstasy, Connor takes off running down the streets--

Blocks upon blocks of tall, narrow, colonial style brick houses.

Faded, gritty, hot, black asphalt, no trees. A city that once was important.

A bus stop!

A bus!!!

Connor gets on the bus through the wrong door and gets yelled at by the driver!

Connor sits in a bus seat, going for a ride, loving life!

Through the window, he sees: the Virginia capitol building! Marble columns and shit!

Street performers drumming on a collection of buckets outside a theater!

Virginia Commonwealth University!!!!!! An urban state school, seventies brick architecture.

Connor gets off the bus here.

EXT. CARYTOWN - DAY

Connor meanders through the closest thing Richmond has to a "gayborhood," which is an artsy stretch of small businesses near the university.

Rainbow flags!

Fancy movie theater!

Thai food!

He notices TWO MEN--husbands--hanging out, giving their young child a snack. They look like classy professionals.

Connor is euphoric.

The two men notice Connor.

He beams.

They quickly look him over, suspicious, and then turn back to their business.

Connor checks himself. He looks like a hillbilly.

Embarrassed, he looks for somewhere to escape.

He retreats into an independent bookstore with a rainbow flag in the window.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

A bored, potentially hungover cashier greets him. Weird haircut, piercings, funky outfit. This is ALE ("AH-ley," 20s, entirely ambiguous gender and race, Puerto Rican).

ALE

Can I help you find anything?

Connor gets stuck staring at Ale not very respectfully.

ALE (CONT'D)

Can I help you find anything??

Connor looks at them, bewildered.

Ale is not pleased by this.

ALE (CONT'D)

The Communist theory is to your right, between the Satanism shelf and the pornography shelf. Hope this helps.

Connor looks to his right, lost.

CONNOR
 (in his accent)
 Do you sell clothes?

ALE
 It's a bookstore.

Connor keeps glancing around. There are a handful of T shirts hanging on the wall with "in this house we believe"-ish liberal slogans.

CONNOR
 (in Ale's "non-"accent)
 Can I get a medium?

ALE
 Which one?

CONNOR
 I'll do the...

NPR? Science is real? Consent is sexy?

CONNOR (CONT'D)
 ...Ruth Bader Ginsberg shirt,
 please?

ALE
 One Ruther Bader Ginsberg shirt...

Ale grabs one, folds it, puts it in a bag.

A sign next to the register reads "Help wanted, \$20 an hour."
 \$20 an hour!!!

CONNOR
 Can I apply? Can I talk to your
 manager?

ALE
 What if I'M the manager?
 (beat)
 I'll grab her-- You want to work
 here?

Yeah, obviously.

ALE (CONT'D)
 Are you a student?

CONNOR
 (lies)
 Yes.

ALE
What's your major?

CONNOR
(fumbles)
Business-- English. What's your
major?

ALE
I dropped out, honey.

Ale heads to the back.

Connor puts the RBG shirt on over his current shirt. He
scrubs his face and hair with his palms.

Ale comes back with some paperwork.

ALE (CONT'D)
RBG, huh.

CONNOR
I love her work.

ALE
Manager says fill this out and come
back tomorrow morning.

Connor takes the paperwork. Tomorrow morning! \$20 an
hour!!!!

INT. CONNOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Connor comes through the door of his very own new apartment.
It's an unfurnished, hot, dirty studio as big as a closet.

The small window looks out over a highway. Lights. Traffic
noises. Horns. A siren.

A billboard: Where are you going? HEAVEN? Or HELL?

Connor sits on the floor.

He digs through his bag.

A photo of Silas and Connor--the one taken during graduation
day in the gym with the Confederate flag background.

Connor props the photo against the wall.

Connor lays down on the floor and puts his bag under his
head.

He stares at the photo of Silas.

He stares and stares until he can't keep his eyes open anymore.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - SILAS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Silas gazes at the empty bed.

He tosses and turns, and doesn't sleep at all.

INT. BOOKSTORE - BACK ROOM - MORNING

Still wearing the RBG shirt, Connor checks his appearance in a mirror. (Connor will wear this same RBG shirt for the remainder of the film.)

Ale also checks themself in the mirror and touches up some lipstick.

Connor's distaste and bewilderment are especially obvious.

ALE

It's hard to find help when the students leave town.

CONNOR

Is that why they hired you?

ALE

Yes.

CONNOR

(guilty)

They hired you because you're an asset to the company--

ALE

Santa Maria.

Ale goes.

INT. BOOKSTORE - LATER

Connor signs into the register.

Stands there.

Same old, same old.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Silas stands at the register, bored out of his mind.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - LATER

Silas stands at the register as the MANAGER takes inventory of the shelves.

SILAS

Hey, could I take the shifts my friend left open?

MANAGER

Your friend who quit without notice, who you left the store unattended with, and who you stole merchandise with?

SILAS

What? The tea?

MANAGER

You admit it?

SILAS

I can pay for it.

MANAGER

You left the store unattended!

SILAS

We locked it up--

MANAGER

You're lucky you got work at all, young man. Tell your ma hi.

EXT. HOUSE FOR SALE - EVENING

Walking home, Silas catches the SELLER of the house loading a few things into his car in the driveway.

SILAS

You get any offers yet?

SELLER

Been on the market for quite a while. I don't reckon we'll ever get one, to tell you the truth.

SILAS
It's a good house--

SELLER
Everybody's going out to Roanoke
and all--

SILAS
Well maybe if the paint was fixed
up.

SELLER
You think so?

SILAS
Fifty bucks, I'd do it, easy.

Seller ponders, then tosses Silas a key. Silas catches it.

SELLER
What the hell? I'll try anything.
Silas looks at the key in his hand and smiles.

INT. BOOKSTORE BACK ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connor comes in to talk to Ale, who is scrolling through
their smartphone.

CONNOR
Is there a payphone anywhere?

ALE
A what?

CONNOR
It's your turn on register.

Connor heads out.

ALE
Is there a--?

EXT. CARYTOWN - CONTINUOUS

Connor steps in front of the shop and scans for phones.

He is still far less put together than those around him,
despite RBG, and tries not to be noticed.

No payphones anywhere.

Ale follows him out and offers their smartphone.

ALE
Use mine.

CONNOR
That's okay.

ALE
Do you need a charger?

CONNOR
I need a payphone.

ALE
Like, where you put the quarters
in?

CONNOR
That's what a payphone is--

ALE
I have a USB-C--

CONNOR
I'm looking for a payphone--

ALE
Use my phone--

CONNOR
I don't need your phone--

ALE
Yeah, you do--

CONNOR
I need a payphone--!

ALE
Oh my God. Okay.

Ale starts to go back inside.

CONNOR
Can I use your phone?

ALE
No--

CONNOR
Oh my God--!

ALE
Fine. Whatever.

Connor takes it and dials. The two of them stand in front of the shop.

Terrible heartrending pause as it rings.

SILAS (O.S.)
Hello--?

CONNOR
Silas!

Watching Ale watching him, Connor composes himself.

SILAS (O.S.)
Connor? Hi!!! What's this number?
How's Richmond? How are you???

CONNOR
My job pays twenty an hour--

SILAS
No it don't-- What is this voice
you're doing--?

CONNOR
It does, twenty--

SILAS
This'll go even faster then!

CONNOR
Hm?

SILAS
Till you got money--

CONNOR
Oh, yeah.

SILAS
They wouldn't give me your shifts
at the store--

CONNOR
Is your mom there?

SILAS
No--

CONNOR
Silas, there are people here.

SILAS
Right--

CONNOR
("it's gay")
You know, *people*.

SILAS
I am the only *person* in the world
as far as you oughta be concerned--

CONNOR
You see yourself that way? As...?

SILAS
No, I don't.

CONNOR
(quick check over his
shoulder)
I see myself that way.

He is not struck down where he stands. God and the
neighborhood patrons do not seem to presently care about
Connor's drama.

He smiles briefly.

SILAS
...You don't have to.

CONNOR
But I do. I have. I will.

SILAS
What do you want me to say?

CONNOR
Don't you know?

Beat.

Silas doesn't say it.

Connor might cry.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
...I should get back--

SILAS
Wait, wait.

CONNOR
Yeah?

SILAS
I don't know.

Nobody hangs up.

CONNOR
(to Ale)
I'm not gonna steal your phone.

Ale backs off inside but watches through the window.

SILAS
What was that?

CONNOR
(regular voice)
God knows.

SILAS
Oh, it's you!

CONNOR
I'm always me.

SILAS
Everything before you was like a
dream. You know?

A tear slips down Connor's cheek.

Connor hangs up. He tries to compose himself.

Through the window, Ale quickly looks away when Connor makes eye contact with them.

INT. BOOKSTORE - CONTINUOUS

Connor gives the phone back to Ale and brushes past them.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - DAY

Silas listens to the inactive line tone on the family landline, distraught but outwardly stoic.

He slowly puts the phone down.

He stands around in the empty house.

EXT. HOUSE FOR SALE - DAY

Silas puts the key into the lock, turns it. It clicks.

He pushes the door open.

INT. HOUSE FOR SALE - DAY

Sweat dripping down his face, Silas repaints the walls of the house for sale.

He is being way more aggressive than is needed, slamming the roller into the paint pan, pushing it back and forth along the wall.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Connor and Ale weave around each other as they stock a pile of books.

They both grab the same book.

They don't let go of it.

Neither will let the other take the book.

ALE
(sings quietly)
Country roads... Take me home...

Connor is PISSED.

ALE (CONT'D)
(a little louder)
To the place... Where I belong...

CONNOR
(sings back)
Feliz Navidad... Feliz Navidad...

ALE	CONNOR (CONT'D)
WEST VIRGINIA, MOUNTAIN MAMA,	FELIZ NAVIDAD, PROSPERO ANO Y
TAKE ME HOME--	FELIZIDAD--

A customer shushes them.

They shut up.

They mutually move the book to the shelf.

Beat.

ALE (CONT'D)
(whispers)
I know you're gay.

CONNOR
(whispers)
I know you're Catholic.

Mutual offense taken.

ALE
Anyway, if I were you, I'd head to
the bar to the West of us down Cary
street and introduce yourself
there.

EXT. HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL - FOOTBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Bright white lights beam down on the field, attracting moths.

Silas punts a football through the endposts.

It goes through.

He runs to go grab it. He sets it back up for himself.

Kicks it again. It goes through.

He runs to go grab it. Sets it back up.

Kicks it again. It goes through.

A teammate (the same one who pushed Connor) joins Silas on
the field to practice. He takes the football where Silas
kicked it and throws it to Silas.

Silas catches it, tosses it back.

They throw it back and forth to one another in a comfortable
rhythm.

TEAMMATE
Silas. How's your freedom?

SILAS
Freedom?

TEAMMATE
No homework!

SILAS
(beat)
I'm so bored.

Ball gets tossed a few more times.

SILAS (CONT'D)
I could've tried harder at school.

TEAMMATE
What good would that have done you?

SILAS
I don't know.
(beat)
I miss Connor.

Teammate catches the ball and holds it.

TEAMMATE
Do you know the Levys?

SILAS
They moved a few years ago?

TEAMMATE
They had to move. Because of
Connor.
(beat)
Paul Levy got into a fight with
Connor.

Teammate throws the ball. Silas catches it.

SILAS
Connor's not the sort to fight.

Silas throws. Teammate catches.

TEAMMATE
But he is the sort to stare.

Teammate throws. Silas misses it.

A few beats.

Silas goes and grabs the ball.

He throws it hard. Teammate catches.

They continue to pass back and forth, more like they're
trying to bowl each other over than play catch...

INT. GAY BAR - NIGHT

In a dark, hot, crowded bar, music plays and bodies press
densely together--dancing, mingling. It's difficult to move
and to see.

Connor comes in, utterly terrified.

He hugs the wall and watches the dancing, the drinking, the flirting.

A drag queen is dressed to the nines.

Someone smokes.

A group of three all dance pressed together.

TYLER
First time?

It takes Connor a few seconds to realize he's being addressed by TYLER, 20s, a classy, white twink.

TYLER (CONT'D)
(a come on)
I LOVE to welcome the newbies.

CONNOR
??????

TYLER
Something to take the edge off?

CONNOR
??????????????

TYLER
(he's weird)
You're adorable.

Tyler signals the bartender for something.

TYLER (CONT'D)
Stay put.

CONNOR
--

Tyler fetches him a strong drink.

Men wearing makeup?!

Interracial relationships?!

LESBIANS?!

Tyler's hand brushes Connor's as he passes over the drink.

Connor deliberates for a second, then drinks.

He coughs.

He comes back and drains the whole thing.

INT. BAR - LATER

Connor sits on a couch with Tyler and his posse including FRIEND 1, FRIEND 2 (also 20s white guys). Connor is drunk and yearns for a home.

Tyler and friends are intrigued and laughing at Connor's babbling.

TYLER'S FRIEND 1
Ew, are you serious--?

CONNOR
(in between accents)
Why don't y'all believe me--?

TYLER'S FRIEND 1
Did you actually, like, live in trailers and shoot squirrels--?

TYLER'S FRIEND 2
Oh my God, you can't ask that--

TYLER
Of course he didn't. Did you?

CONNOR
Ew! Gross!

TYLER
See.

TYLER'S FRIEND 2
You're vegan, right?

CONNOR
...

TYLER'S FRIEND 2
(louder, assuming he
misheard)
You're vegan, right?!

CONNOR
Absolutely--

TYLER
When I'm done at VCU Arts, I'm
going to New York to be a designer!

Tyler's friends laugh at him. They don't believe there is even a chance of this happening.

CONNOR
(honest)
That'll be amazing!

It doesn't mean anything beyond this tipsy moment, but Tyler is moved by the support.

TYLER'S FRIEND 1
Why didn't you just tell your
parents you wanted to transfer high
schools or something?

CONNOR
I didn't wanna get locked in my
room!

He meant it as relatable humor but it is not.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
(fumbles)
I mean--

TYLER
(heartfelt)
Are your parents, like, homophobic?

The assembled group throws an infuriating pity party.

TYLER'S FRIEND 2
They come around eventually, babe.

No, not always.

Connor gets up and wades through bodies. It's too dark, too crowded.

Connor sits on a different couch, disoriented.

A few beats.

Tyler sits down next to him.

Connor manages a small smile, enjoying having been followed.

Tyler smiles back.

Tyler scoots a little closer. Connor is not aware enough of Tyler's intentions to be uncomfortable.

CONNOR
...Tell me about New York--

Tyler grabs Connor's shoulder and goes right in for a kiss.

Connor is so shocked that it simply happens.

It goes on for a second longer than it should, after Connor realizes what is happening.

Connor pushes Tyler off.

They sit there in that.

TYLER

...Hick.

Tyler lingers for a moment, watching it hurt. Then walks off.

Connor sits there.

INT. BAR - LATER

It's past midnight. Connor sits alone on the couch sipping a mini bottle of prosecco.

A somewhat slower song plays, a more romantic mood set. People sway together. Not Connor.

Ale crashes down next to him, tipsy, in some gender-bending attire. This conversation is needlessly loud.

CONNOR

Not in the mood--

ALE

(sings)

Sweet home Alabama--

CONNOR

Immigrant.

ALE

That's not a slur, faggot. Is that... prosecco?

Connor looks at his drink. He doesn't know or care. Ale takes it and drinks.

ALE (CONT'D)

What, you don't want smack and an orgy? Not even, like, Molly?

CONNOR

Who?

ALE
Drugs.

CONNOR
Probably not.
(immediately
reconsidering)
Well--

ALE
I wasn't offering MY drugs, get
your own drugs.

Connor looks out at the couples dancing intensely close.

ALE (CONT'D)
STOP that.

CONNOR
I'm not doing anything--!

ALE
You're looking FORLORN--

CONNOR
This is my face--!

ALE
Well, change it!

Ale extends their hand.

Connor does not want to do this.

ALE (CONT'D)
Latino isn't contagious, asshole.

CONNOR
I'm sorry I called you an
immigrant, that was so mean--

ALE
Stop. Just, come on.

Connor has been checkmated into having to accept the dance.

Ale pulls him to his feet and they dance (more accurately,
stagger) platonically for a while to the music.

("Someday he'll come along... the man I love... And he'll be
big and strong... the man I love... and when he comes my
way... I'll do my best to make him stay...")

ALE (CONT'D)
 ...What if I left now?

CONNOR
 We can--

ALE
 Shh. I would do pilates. I would
 enjoy the consistency of overnight
 oats. I would enroll in community
 college for hospitality
 management...
 (cries)
 I'd have one of those stupid travel
 blogs where it's just pictures of
 my partner leading me across scenic
 vistas by the hand--

CONNOR
 (himself emotional)
 Yeah. Yeah...

ALE
 That shit's so fake--

CONNOR
 It's FUCKING FAKE.

ALE
 They probably hate each other--

CONNOR
 (cries)
 They're gonna break up--

ALE
 Oh God, oh no, why--?

CONNOR
 Because... because... Because the
 one is always leading the other and
 the other doesn't always want to
 follow--

ALE
 (comforting)
 Connor we made them up, they can
 stay together.

CONNOR
 Really?

ALE
 They'll always be together.

CONNOR
Promise.

ALE
I promise!

CONNOR
Promise!

ALE
I promise forever and ever.

They both wordlessly agree on another drink.

INT. ALE'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ale lives in an apartment not too different from Connor's, but cluttered and decorated in a maximalist, colorful, extravagant fashion.

Animal print rugs, sequined curtains, gilded mirrors, floral wallpaper. A novelty ashtray rests on a coffee table.

Connor wakes up on Ale's velvet couch, horrifically hungover.

He squints against the sunlight and shoves a tasseled pillow over his face.

INT. ALE'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connor stumbles in, finding Ale about to throw up into the toilet.

He kneels next to them and holds their hair back. They spare him a confused, grateful, pained look.

ALE
Is he in the living room?

CONNOR
Who?

Ale's face falls, but they're not surprised. They throw up.

INT. ALE'S APARTMENT - LATER

Ale sits on the couch next to Connor. Both hungover.

ALE
Coffee and a Prozac is really like
booze and a cigarette for healthy
people.

Connor has concerns.

ALE (CONT'D)
Silas is someone you're in love
with.

Connor stands to leave.

CONNOR
Let's not do this ever again
please.

ALE
You'll feel better if you eat
something.

Connor is interested.

EXT. RICHMOND - MORNING

Ale and Connor step up to order some empanadas from a food
truck. This is a gritty Latino neighborhood.

EMPANADA SELLER
Que quieres?

ALE
(doesn't speak Spanish)
...

EMPANADA SELLER
What do you want?

ALE
Um, two pork please. Thank you.

They wait and then get their empanadas.

EXT. RICHMOND - LATER

Ale and Connor sit on the curb and eat the empanadas.

CONNOR
I don't usually like Mexican food,
but this isn't spicy.

ALE
I'm literally Boricua.

CONNOR
I don't know what that is.

ALE
That's okay.

CONNOR
Silas likes Mexican food. He likes cooking.

(beat)
We'll get these with him when he comes over.

ALE
I see.

CONNOR
He's gonna come over!

ALE
Okay.

CONNOR
Come with me.

They go.

EXT. ALLEY - LATER

Somebody tossed out an old rug. It sits on top of the garbage. Connor and Ale walk past.

Connor doubles back and inspects the rug closer.

He and Ale lift it and take it with them.

INT. CONNOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Connor and Ale roll the rug out.

Connor surveys the apartment. The rug makes it his.

Ale lays down on the rug to test it.

Connor shows Ale the photo.

ALE
--!

Connor points Silas out in the photo.

CONNOR
There--

ALE
Oh, gorgeous--

CONNOR
He's mine--

ALE
Yup, you can have him.

CONNOR
(offended)
You're not even gonna try?

Ale stands, still holding the photo. Time to go. Connor gets nervous about the photo.

ALE
Tyler is fine, but awfully vanilla,
and he gets bored quick. His loss,
not yours.

CONNOR
(the photo!)
Um--

Ale considers it. It repulses them.

ALE
...Spanish was my first language,
you know. But I forgot it.

Connor doesn't know what to make of this.

Ale puts the photo back in its place and goes.

INT. HOUSE FOR SALE - DAY

Silas polishes the hardware in the kitchen.

INT. CONNOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Connor lays on his rug.

He gazes at the photo, falling asleep. Complicated feelings.

He rolls onto his back and closes his eyes.

The billboard through the window: Where are you going?
HEAVEN? Or HELL?

INT. GAY BAR - NIGHT

An amped up atmosphere. Ale pops a pill or two. The world softens out and glows.

They find a MAN to dance with. They touch him, they enjoy themselves.

INT. ALE'S APARTMENT - LATER

The fun continues as Ale backs their guy into their bed.

INT. ALE'S APARTMENT - DAY

In the morning, Ale lays there with the curtains drawn, alone.

INT. ALE'S APARTMENT - BATHROOM - LATER

Ale is curled into a ball in their empty bathtub, hyperventilating.

They get to their feet, slipping a little and catching themselves on the sink.

They open the medicine cabinet and find a bottle of pills.

They pop more than they should.

They lay back down in the bath, letting oblivion wash over them.

ALE
(whispers)
Thank God...

They shut their eyes. It's better.

INT. BOOKSTORE BACKROOM - MORNING

Connor checks himself out in the mirror.

He brushed his hair differently and isn't sunburned, and almost passes as a city person.

Mixed feelings.

He regroups and continues with his day.

INT. BOOKSTORE - LATER

Ale stands at the register, in bad shape.

CONNOR
Can I use your phone?

They want to withhold it.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Please?

They offer it to him.

EXT. BOOKSTORE - LATER

Connor dials Ale's phone.

He waits.

There is no response.

He dials again.

He waits breathlessly.

SILAS' MOM (O.S.)
Hello?

CONNOR
(Appalachian)
Hi, it's Connor.

SILAS' MOM
Darling, how are you? Remind me,
what is it that you do out there?

CONNOR
Retail.

SILAS' MOM
Oh...

CONNOR
It's nice to hear from you.

SILAS' MOM
You too. Everyone misses you loads
round here. Silas sure does.
(MORE)

SILAS' MOM (CONT'D)
He ain't been the same since you
left to tell you the truth.

CONNOR
Is he okay?

SILAS' MOM
Are YOU--?

CONNOR
Is he there?

SILAS' MOM
No, but I'm happy to pass your
message along--

CONNOR
What is he doing?

SILAS' MOM
I imagine he's working on the house
down the way--

CONNOR
Would you tell him to stop doing
that?

SILAS' MOM
No.

Awkward silence.

CONNOR
Okay, thanks, ma'am.

SILAS' MOM
Take care.

CONNOR
You as well, ma'am.

He hangs up.

EXT. HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Silas watches the team practice without him.

Somebody else scores an impressive touchdown. Somebody else
gets the cheers and the applause.

The little world of Hurley spins without him at the center.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Silas pulls out the yellow books.

He scans the last names: Levy, Levy, Levy...

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - DAY

On the family desktop, Silas looks up Paul Levy. Silas' mom watches something on TV in the background.

Paul's Baseball records.

His high school graduation notice in the newspaper. From Grundy High, not Hurley High.

A white boy, good looking, regular, a lot like Silas...

SILAS' MOM

Why don't you come watch this with me, hon?

No response. Silas is locked in.

SILAS' MOM

Silas?

No response. She turns back to the TV, knowing something is really wrong.

INT. CHURCH - MORNING

Silas and Silas' Mom, alone in the pew. Silas' Mom continues to know something is wrong.

PASTOR

(reading the Bible)

I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to undergo, and what constraint I am under until it is completed! Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three...

INT. GAY BAR - NIGHT

In the busy nightclub, Connor sits on the couch again, alone, sober.

Ale comes to him.

Connor

EXT. RICHMOND - NIGHT

Ale and Connor walk along the sidewalk.

PASSERBY
FAGGOTS.

Ale grabs Connor's arm and keeps him walking along.

INT. ALE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ale curls up on the couch and smokes a cigarette. There are butts in the ashtray.

CONNOR
Can I ask you a question?

ALE
I never wanted to be a princess, I never played with dolls, I never put on my mom's heels. I know I'm not a real man, I don't feel like a woman, I don't feel like anything. I feel like shit.

CONNOR
Oh.

ALE
Was that not the question?

CONNOR
It was the question.
(the smoking)
That's really bad for you.

ALE
So is cutting yourself.

Connor gets up and leaves.

ALE (CONT'D)
BYE.

EXT. WALMART - DAY

PAUL LEVY (early 20s) leans against the wall on his smoke break. His nametag reads Paul.

The cigarette smoke drifts up.

INT. WALMART - DAY

Silas shops around for nothing.

He checks out the employees discreetly.

INT. CONNOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Connor fiddles with his pocket knife, just staring at it, thinking.

EXT. WALMART

Silas, holding a plastic bag, catches Paul smoking.

SILAS
Paul Levy?

Paul looks up.

Silas drops the bag and shoves him back against the wall, pinning him there. Paul drops the cigarette. Silas punches him in the face.

PAUL
Silas Hughes???

Silas punches him again.

PAUL (CONT'D)
What the FUCK, man?

Paul is more used to fighting and quickly extricates himself from the wall.

Paul's punch is harder. Silas' nose bleeds.

INT. CONNOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The blood on Connor's pocketknife...

EXT. WALMART - CONTINUOUS

Silas gets another swing in.

He and Paul scrabble against each other, kicking and scratching.

Paul hits Silas in the jaw. Silas gets knocked backwards onto the pavement.

They assess each other.

Silas spits out blood.

Paul walks off.

INT. BOOKSTORE - DAY

Ale's phone rings. They answer.

ALE
Hi, it's Ale.

SILAS' MOM
Hello? I'm looking for Connor.

They consider.

ALE
What's going on?

INT. CONNOR'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Connor's apartment now includes an air mattress on top of the rug.

He wakes up to a car horn.

Just as he settles back in, the horn honks again.

He sits up.

Whoever is honking just leans on the horn.

He knows who it is, smiles privately.

He throws on some clothes and runs outside.

EXT. CONNOR'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Ale is pulled up to the curb in some kind of fuel efficient hybrid type of car with a rainbow sticker on the bumper, leaning on the horn.

They stop when they see him.

CONNOR
You're gonna wake up the whole
block, asshole.

ALE
Get in, loser.
(beat)
I'm taking you home, stupid.

This is appealing to Connor.

Ale sees it and opens the passenger door.

Connor enters.

Ale pulls into the street.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

PASTOR
(reading the Bible)
Do you have anyone else here--sons-
in-law, sons or daughters, or
anyone else in the city who belongs
to you? Get them out of here,
because we are going to destroy
this place.

INT. SILAS' BEDROOM - DAY

Nose still bloody, Silas rips down his photos, his ribbons,
his accolades, and all his things.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

PASTOR
(reading the Bible)
The outcry to the Lord against its
people is so great that he has sent
us to destroy it.

INT. HOUSE FOR SALE - CONTINUOUS

Silas drops all his many things on the floor of the kitchen.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

PASTOR
(reading the Bible)
Flee for your lives! Don't look
back, and don't stop anywhere in
the plain!

INT. HOUSE FOR SALE - CONTINUOUS

Silas lights the gas stove. A flame.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

PASTOR
(reading the Bible)
Then the Lord rained down burning
sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah--from
the Lord out of the heavens.

INT. HOUSE FOR SALE - CONTINUOUS

Silas lights his things on fire using the stove.
They burn in a little pile on the kitchen floor.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

PASTOR
(reading the Bible)
Thus he overthrew those cities and
the entire plain, destroying all
those living in the cities.

INT. HOUSE FOR SALE - CONTINUOUS

Silas sits and watches it burn.

INT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

PASTOR
(reading the Bible)
He looked down toward Sodom and
Gomorrah, toward all the land of
the plain, and he saw dense smoke
rising from the land, like smoke
from a furnace...

INT. ALE'S CAR / EXT. BUCHANAN COUNTY - DAY

Ale's car tears across the rural highways.

INT. HOUSE FOR SALE - CONTINUOUS

The seller comes in, coughing, waving the smoke away.

He sprays everything with a garden hose.

He finds Silas sitting there, bloody, unhinged.

He drags Silas out by his shirt and tosses him on the
doorstep.

EXT. HOUSE FOR SALE - CONTINUOUS

Silas listens to the door be locked behind himself.

EXT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - EVENING

Ale pulls up to Silas' house and parks. Connor is still
wearing the RBG shirt.

CONNOR
(whispers, Appalachian)
Don't leave me here.

ALE
What?

CONNOR
It wouldn't be funny.

Connor gets out before Ale can respond.

Connor finds Silas sitting by the front door, nose bandaged.

They stumble over to each other and hold each other and kiss.

Ale unobtrusively comes over to them. They don't notice.

Silas finally notices Ale and pulls decisively away from Connor.

This hurts.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
(to Silas)
This is my friend.

Silas is skeptical. He stands and gives Ale's hand a firm shake.

SILAS
Silas.

ALE
I've heard so much about you. I'm
Ale.

Silas drops their hand. He and Connor fuss over each other.

SILAS
Look at y'all, so skinny, what do
they feed folks out there--?

ALE
Thanks--!

CONNOR
What happened?

SILAS
Nothing.

CONNOR
Did you get in a fight--?

SILAS
Come in, I'm making dinner.

Silas holds the front door open and Connor goes inside. Ale hesitates.

SILAS (CONT'D)
Come in.

Ale does.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - LATER

Silas pulls out all the stops. Skillet cornbread. Chow chow. Soup beans. Fresh ramps. Fried chicken.

At some point, Connor and Ale drift in and pick up an onion. Silas confiscates it.

SILAS
Absolutely not, make yourselves comfortable.

CONNOR
Is your mom working?

SILAS
She'll be back by ten.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - CONTINUOUS

Ale and Connor sit on the couch, not really watching a rerun of some old show on TV, waiting.

Connor feels the smallness of the space.

CONNOR
(abruptly)
I'm sorry.

ALE
Hm?

CONNOR
I don't know what's happening, but it's gonna take some time.

ALE
I have time.

CONNOR
...I can take the couch if you want? I don't know.

ALE
I was gonna get a hotel room.

CONNOR
You sure?

ALE
You guys need whatever shred of privacy you have.

CONNOR
Do you like him?

ALE
Has anyone ever *disliked* him?

CONNOR
No.

ALE
(quietly)
That's not good.

CONNOR
Yeah...

Ale takes a deep breath of all the smells coming from the kitchen.

ALE
It smells like home.

Ale busies themselves with their phone. But there isn't service, and there isn't wireless internet.

They just sit there in the quiet.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - LATER

Having nowhere to eat that properly fits three people plus the feast that Silas has made, they all sit on the floor of the kitchen and pass dishes around.

Ale takes a bite of food. They stare at Silas with renewed interest.

ALE
It's seasoned. You seasoned it.
This is food with seasoning. This
is well-seasoned food.

Ale has unwittingly won Silas over now.

SILAS
Try the chicken.

ALE
It's all great, thank you--

SILAS
It's fresh, I just killed it two
days ago.

Ale and Connor are concerned.

SILAS (CONT'D)
You just chop fast, not too bad.
Bet you could do it.

CONNOR
(something is wrong!)
Silas--

ALE
(oddly flattered)
Really?

SILAS
Really.

They all continue eating quietly.

EXT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Ale pulls into the parking lot of a seedy little motel in Grundy.

INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Ale sits at the desk of an accordingly seedy little room and unpacks some makeup and clothes.

They try to connect to the internet. There is still no internet or service.

There is nothing at all to do.

They let out a breath. Relieved.

They crawl in bed and fall asleep.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - SILAS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

Silas sits on his bed watching Connor change out of his RBG shirt into one of Silas' football-related shirts.

He discreetly tries to clock the state of Connor's wrists.

Connor notices. But doesn't show him.

Connor puts on another long sleeved shirt and sits next to Silas.

Beat.

CONNOR
You know, Lexington ain't even far,
as places go.

SILAS
Are you still on this--?

CONNOR
There has to be something more.

Connor searches Silas' eyes.

He doesn't find what he's looking for.

Beat.

Connor takes out his pocket knife and gives it to Silas.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Will you put this somewhere I'll
never find it?

Silas nods, immediately putting it in his pants pocket, too
uncomfortable to hold it.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
I'll just end up getting a new one.
But--

SILAS
You'll never see it again.

Beat.

Slowly, Connor brushes Silas' cheek with his thumb.

CONNOR
You're the most beautiful person I
ever saw.

With great effort, Silas does not cry.

Silas catches Connor's hand.

They weave their fingers together.

They remain in that.

The sounds of Silas' mom coming in from work.

They keep holding hands.

Connor wonders if this is finally the time to be discovered.

Silas freaks out.

They keep holding hands.

At the last possible second, Silas drops Connor's hand and gets up to go greet her.

SILAS
Hi, ma!

SILAS' MOM
Hi!
(sees Connor wearing the
shirt)
Hello.

CONNOR
Hi, ma'am.

She is suspicious.

SILAS' MOM
...Why don't you go sleep in the
living room?

Connor looks to Silas.

Whatever is left of Silas is breaking, but he says nothing.

CONNOR
Of course.

Connor goes.

EXT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - EARLY MORNING

Ale and Silas stand out back, by the woods, drinking coffee.

SILAS
I can wake him up, I guess.

ALE
I wanna know. I wanna know if I
could kill a chicken.

SILAS
I need the rest of my chickens.

ALE
Understandable.

SILAS
You ever shoot, though?

Ale gives him a look that says "obviously not."

Silas briefly heads inside and comes back with a locked storage case.

He opens it.

A hunting rifle.

He exchanges it for Ale's mug before Ale can realize what's happening.

ALE
Holy shit, is this loaded?

SILAS
Find out--

ALE
Don't fuck with me right now,
that's so--

SILAS
It's empty! Jesus!

Silas watches Ale with interest as they are morbidly fascinated by the thing.

SILAS (CONT'D)
Connor taught me.

Ale puts it down in the case and listens.

SILAS (CONT'D)
It's usually a thing your dad
teaches you and um... Yeah, Connor
taught me. He probably told you
that.

Ale nods.

Silas knows they're lying.

EXT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - DAY

Connor hacks away at a pile of firewood. He's already getting sunburned again. His hair is messy. He's somehow more in his natural habitat even as he feels extremely constricted.

He gazes at the rainbow bumper sticker on Ale's car as he chops the wood.

He sweats, breathing hard, growing nauseous.

Ale comes outside, holding a bottle of sunscreen.

Connor nods in the direction of Ale's car.

CONNOR
You have to cover it.

ALE
The car?

CONNOR
Ideally.

Ale realizes he means the sticker.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Just tape over it. You don't want
someone to slash your tires.

ALE
Would that really happen?

CONNOR
...I don't feel good.

ALE
Take a break--

CONNOR
I'm gonna walk for a while. Can you
tell him?

Connor meanders off.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Silas and Ale crouch in the bushes, side by side. Silas has
his gun at the ready.

Ale gasps. A group of deer in the distance.

Silas looks at Ale, ready to give them this chance.

ALE
(wonder)
--!!!

SILAS
(whispers)
It lived a good life out here.
Free. In its home...

Silas aims and guides Ale's hand over the trigger.

Ale squeezes their eyes shut, hesitates.

Ale pulls the trigger. They flinch at the noise.

They open their eyes slowly. A deer lies dead. The rest took off.

A moment of silence.

Birds.

Sky.

Grass.

SILAS (CONT'D)
You alright?

ALE
Yes.

Silas stands, flips the safety latch, and straps the rifle to his back.

SILAS
When you go back, you tell your friends you hated it, you say "only white trash out there." Don't want nobody coming over, figuring out what all is left here to take. You understand?

Ale does.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - LATER

Ale and Silas share a strangely energetic moment of connection as they both clean the kitchen.

ALE
So your whole life has been here in appa-LAY-sha--

SILAS
(laughs)
Appa-LATCH-a. Like how it's Derry and not Londonderry--

ALE
And I'm Boricua, not Puerto Rican, gotcha.

EXT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - EVENING

Connor lays in the grass among the plants. The chickens are in the coop.

Ale comes out and sits next to him.

CONNOR

...Does it mean that I hate myself
if I choose to be this first?

ALE

...Can you even separate it?

Beat.

Ale leaves him alone.

Lightning bugs!

Frogs!

Stars!

Trees!

Moon!

Air!

Breath!!!

Connor picks himself up.

He goes and knocks on the front door.

Silas joins him for a walk.

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT

Connor sits on his old rock with Silas, gazing into middle distance. Silas sits beside him.

Neither breaks the silence for a while.

CONNOR

The economy here is not good.

SILAS

...

CONNOR

You wanna wait until they put the coal back in the ground for you--?

SILAS

People like you have to stay if it's ever gonna get any better.

CONNOR

I ain't sacrificing our safety for it to get better for these people--

SILAS

For YOUR people--

CONNOR

They sure as hell destroy any chance of it ever getting better for us! None of this stupid perfect hillbilly act is gonna matter when they find out you wanna fuck men--

SILAS

I don't--

CONNOR

Jesus Christ, Silas--

SILAS

I don't wanna fuck men, I wanna be with you. You could go home to a penthouse apartment, these mountains would be clawing at your insides, calling you home.

CONNOR

Who punched you in the face!

SILAS

Paul Levy but I started it.

CONNOR

Paul Levy???

SILAS

Yep. I started it.

CONNOR

Paul ain't gonna change shit with your ma.

SILAS
(wants to believe but
doesn't)
I don't care what she thinks about--

CONNOR
So you won't mind if I just tell
her then--

SILAS
Go ahead--

CONNOR
Maybe I will--

SILAS
She's a good person--

CONNOR
Never said she wasn't. Maybe I'll
actually--

SILAS
Please do. Didn't think you were so
shallow--

CONNOR
Sorry I want us to stand a chance
in life--

SILAS
All I wanted was a life here with
you--

CONNOR
This ain't life, it's survival--

SILAS
Yeah and what's there in the city?
More survival! And concrete and
pollution and traffic. And men to
have sex with I guess--

CONNOR
Do I have a boyfriend to cheat on,
Silas?

SILAS
You cheated--?

CONNOR
No!

Right...?

Silas knows. He still does not cry.

SILAS
I'm sorry that this feels like
survival to you.

CONNOR
If you wanna be a martyr, fine, but
don't lie to yourself about it.

Silas shoves Connor into the dark water. He comes up coughing and gasping for air.

Connor drags him under by the ankles.

They briefly struggle to alternately shove each other under and keep each other afloat.

Freezing, they both get tired of the struggle and swim to shore.

They trek through the woods side by side, not looking at each other, not touching, ignoring the other's cold.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - EVENING

Ale sits on the couch, waiting. They don't reach for their phone.

Where the hell is everyone?

Ale leaves for the night.

EXT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - CONTINUOUS

Ale passes Silas' mom as they walk to their car.

She is so shocked by them that she goes completely still and stares.

They keep walking, unfazed.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Silas, Connor, and Silas' mom all sit in their typical positions for the church service.

A few community members lead the people in a song.

Silas is more nervous than Connor now, trying to subtly scoot towards Connor and away from his mom.

Connor has moved on from this situation.

Connor notices Silas' fidgeting and leaves the room, subtly pulling Silas along with him.

Silas' mom watches them go, upset.

INT. CHURCH - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connor kisses Silas once, extremely gentle, nearly chaste.

Silas freezes in terror, then accepts it.

A stall door opens. It's the pastor, too stunned to speak or move.

Connor tries to step back just a moment too late--Silas takes his hand to stop him.

The three of them just look at each other.

Silas walks out, not letting go of Connor.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Connor lingers in the entryway as Silas' mom tries to cook something in the kitchen.

Her hands shake.

SILAS' MOM
Let me fix you something.

CONNOR
I ain't hungry.

She compulsively continues anyway for a bit, then glances at him.

She stops.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
How are you doing with all this?

She nervously laughs, then turns back to cooking for several beats.

SILAS' MOM
I wish your folks had been better,
I do.

He takes a few steps over to comfort her.

SILAS' MOM (CONT'D)
Please don't come round here ever
again.

That stings.

CONNOR
You'll go to his wedding, you'll
hold his child, hell you'll be at
his side when he's elected
president or something, and it
still won't be enough to make him
forget if you mess this next part
up. Thanks for everything.

He takes it in one last time, then goes.

INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Silas sits at the table in Ale's room. Ale bought some booze,
which is on the table.

Ale sits at the foot of the bed--interrupted in the middle of
doing some fun makeup.

Silas has other things on his mind.

ALE
(not necessarily offering)
Do you drink?

SILAS
No.

ALE
What's your secret?

Silas grabs a bottle with a vengeance, then takes a delicate
sip and struggles to swallow.

SILAS
Tastes bad.

Silas' second attempt at having a drink is more successful.

He passes the bottle to Ale, who fights herself, loses, also
takes a swig.

SILAS (CONT'D)
How did your folks take it?

ALE
 You have to choose--between
 yourself and others--I hope you
 disappoint others.

SILAS
 I hope you disappoint others too.

ALE
 (touched)
 I do.
 (beat)
 I disappoint myself also.

Silas sits beside Ale on the bed.

SILAS
 Think you'll visit?

ALE
 Think you'll want me to?

Silas doesn't know.

ALE (CONT'D)
 You know, some gay people are
 promiscuous lonely drug addicts,
 but so are the interesting straight
 people.

Silas is in no mood for joking around.

ALE (CONT'D)
 Come here.

Ale lays down on their side.

Silas tentatively joins.

Beat.

SILAS
 There's gonna be a renaissance.

ALE
 Okay--?

SILAS
 Do you believe me?

They stare at each other.

ALE
 I do.

Silas slowly reaches out--

Ale gives a little smile to let him know it's okay--

And Silas brushes his thumb across their cheek and then lets them go.

INT. MOTEL - DAWN

In the shower in Ale's room, Silas hugs his knees and CRIES as the water rolls down his back.

He's inconsolable, and there's a healing in that. This is a baptism.

Eventually, he shuts the water off.

He dries himself off.

He reaches into his pants pocket for Connor's knife and carefully wraps it in toilet paper.

He places it in the trash can.

EXT. MOTEL - MORNING

Lush woodland surrounds a parking lot.

Connor waits near Ale's car with his bags, having walked over.

He watches Ale and Silas come out the motel door together.

He's surprised, but not angry.

Silas looks right back at him, assertive.

Ale looks at Silas. Silas notices and gives them the barest hint of a nod.

Ale goes and waits in the car.

Silas and Connor try to find something to say to each other.

They try for a long time.

But all the words have already been said.

Silas kisses Connor's hand and walks off down the road.

Connor watches him leave for a while, then takes a few hurried steps to follow him, then stops himself.

Beat.

They let go. They go their separate ways. At least for now.

Connor notices a deer in the distance in the woods.

It stares at him, intense and frightened.

He takes a step toward it. It runs off.

INT. ALE'S CAR - DAY

Connor hops in the passenger seat.

Ale lingers, adjusting things in the car.

CONNOR
I wanted to set him free.

Ale pulls out of the parking lot and into the street before speaking.

ALE
I know.

They glance at each other. They can't find it in themselves to be mad at each other.

CONNOR
He'd take good care of you.

ALE
Probably. Where are we going?

CONNOR
Don't know if it matters, really.

Ale nods.

EXT. BUCHANAN COUNTY, VIRGINIA - CONTINUOUS

They drive, Ale lost in thought, Connor looking at everything with nostalgia now, through the lens of his memories of Silas:

--Past the house that is still for sale.

--Past the high school.

--Past the Walmart.

--Past Silas' family home.

--Past the church.

--Past the convenience store they used to work at.

--Past empty coal mines.

--Past Connor's former house:

Connor motions to Ale to slow down.

They pause to look at his window.

The bug screen is still cut open. The blank room is visible beyond.

Ale drives.

It disappears into the rear view mirror.