

EXT. BUCHANAN COUNTY, VIRGINIA - PRESENT

A couple of lonely roads wind alongside rivers through the Appalachian mountains on the border of Virginia, Kentucky, and West Virginia. A few thousand people live here and that number dwindles every year.

On these roads are a couple fast food places frequented by truckers.

Several small churches--mostly Baptist.

A gigantic multi-story wal-mart, the escalators inside of which are the most exciting thing in a fifty mile radius.

But mostly just abandoned coal mines and breathtaking wilderness.

In front of crumbling mobile homes and trailers always in the process of either recovering from or sustaining flood damage, a Trump sign in every yard. He is no longer president at this point. Everything and everyone here is just barely holding together.

EXT. HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL

A sprawling mass of brick rectangles. The front entrance is painted with a giant Confederate battle flag.

The school's mascot, a cartoon Confederate soldier, is proudly displayed on a sign that reads "Hurley High School: Home of the Rebels."

INT. HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Everyone speaks in a central/south-central Appalachian accent/dialect.

A calculus class in an institutional, bare classroom. A TEACHER uses a dirty chalkboard to lecture to rows of bored STUDENTS. Every single person here is white. No one looks like they belong in a Hollywood movie. Most don't want to.

Among the students is CONNOR (about 19)--reserved and tightly wound. Always wears long sleeves. He plays his accent down when he feels he can get away with it.

Sitting directly in front of Connor is SILAS (about 19)--effortless in a classic Americana way. Perhaps uncannily so. A football player. Plays his accent up.

Connor can't stop staring at the back of Silas' head, entirely dissociated from the lesson.

TEACHER

Connor, come give it a shot.

The teacher has a problem written up on the board that Connor is supposed to solve. He doesn't process this.

The class laughs lightly at him as he continues to stare. The laughing intensifies the longer he is unable to snap out of his trance.

SILAS

(turning around;
sympathetic)

Connor.

Connor immediately looks away, scared and ashamed. He stands abruptly, his chair squeaking against the floor.

He heads to the board and solves the equation without a thought, then all but runs back to his desk and hides his head in his arms.

The teacher calms the class down. Silas turns to glance at Connor again, but Connor is determinedly pretending not to exist.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

Students pack up and funnel out of the math class. Silas gives it another shot, good-humored:

SILAS

Have I seen you at the lake?

Connor ignores him, focusing on packing up. This isn't mean-spirited--he's afraid.

SILAS (CONT'D)

Math don't make a single bit of sense to me.

Connor spills the contents of his backpack in his desperation. He tries to pick up his things but his hands shake too much.

SILAS (CONT'D)

I'm not gonna bite you--

CONNOR

I'm sorry, I didn't mean it.

SILAS
(privately)
...Well that's a right shame.

Silas picks up Connor's stuff and gives it to him. Lingers for a second.

Connor takes his stuff and books it out of the classroom.

Silas remains, both confused and oddly charmed.

EXT. LAKE - SUNRISE

A calm, secluded lake in the lush wooded mountains. A cloudless, warm day. The natural beauty is staggering.

Connor perches on a rocky outcropping doing some fishing. He works the bait onto the line and casts it out deftly. He knows what he's doing, though his heart isn't in it.

Silas does his own fishing some distance away on the shore, equally competent, finding real joy. As always, Connor is transfixed by him, though he tries hard not to be, and hopes to be ignored.

Silas glances at him, secure in the knowledge that Connor is always staring. Connor glances away quickly. Silas smiles to himself.

Abruptly, Silas sets aside his fishing rod and takes a running jump into the water. It's cold, exhilarating.

SILAS
Hey!

Connor almost drops his fishing rod in his nervousness.

SILAS (CONT'D)
Swim with me.

Connor pretends not to hear. Silas swims over and splashes his legs. This almost makes Connor smile.

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

CONNOR
...It would kinda take a while to explain.

He didn't mean it as a joke but Silas laughs in a good-natured way, which comforts Connor.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
(almost daring to try to
match his energy)
What's... yours?

SILAS
(laughs)
I don't have a problem.

CONNOR
Too bad.

A small shared smile.

SILAS
Come on, jump.

CONNOR
You're kidding--

SILAS
It's deep--

CONNOR
I'll hit my head--

SILAS
(really trying it)
I'll catch you--

CONNOR
(strongly)
No.

SILAS
...Suit yourself.

CONNOR
...You could come up.

Silas climbs up the rocks and sits next to Connor.

He got in over his head and doesn't know what to actually say now. He tries a few times but can't.

Now that Connor could be openly staring, he again can barely tear his eyes from the water.

Silas takes Connor's hand very gently.

Several charged moments. Neither moves a muscle.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
I'm a guy.

SILAS
I noticed.

Several beats.

CONNOR
Haven't you heard you're going to
hell?

Silas again laughs. It might be nervous, ridiculing, or it might be a genuine dark sense of humor.

Connor waits for an answer. Silas doesn't have one.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Thanks.

SILAS
For--?

CONNOR
For noticing.

SILAS
You're welcome.

They look out over the water and Connor squeezes his hand.

In a series of shots, their relationship deepens and grows over their last several months of high school:

EXT. HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL - FOOTBALL FIELD - DAY

Game day-- Silas leads the Hurley High ""Rebels"" FOOTBALL TEAM, a group of several boys who are nominally Silas' close friends, as they run out onto the field, holding the Confederate flag. The energy of the space is for once exuberant rather than exhausted, resentful, nervous.

Silas scores a touchdown, the winning point.

The assembled crowd goes wild. Silas' teammates lift him onto their shoulders. Silas' eyes go straight to Connor, who cheers in the stands, looking genuinely proud, even adoring.

INT. HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Sitting next to each other in calculus now, Connor's sleeve rides up a bit and Silas notices what is definitely a scar from a small knife on his wrist.

Connor yanks his sleeve down right away, horrified. He knows Silas knows and that he won't buy the usual false explanations.

Connor once again ashamedly runs off with the rest of the students as soon as class is over, leaving Silas reeling--

But after several moments Connor runs right back inside and hugs Silas hard. Silas receives it, relieved and scared at once.

INT. HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - NIGHT

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

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

He then leaves her as soon as the song is over. She's sad to see him go.

He and Connor spend the rest of the night gluttonously eating and drinking from the refreshments table, talking and laughing.

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT

An innocent but heartfelt first kiss, still in their prom outfits. They share equal enthusiasm for it.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Bordering on poverty but just missing it. Full of real love and a sense of comfort and coziness.

Connor and Silas sit at the counter of a well-used kitchen, working on homework. Connor helps Silas from time to time.

SILAS' MOM--(late 30s, noticeably young), warm but strong and shares Silas' innate spark--pours three glasses of iced sweet tea from a pitcher. She smiles at Connor as she sets his glass in front of him.

EXT. HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Students wait for the bus home. 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 comes over, is appreciative of Silas' effort but remains withdrawn and cautious.

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

Silas assumes the best of his teammate and laughingly shoves him back with no anger or hurt behind it.

INT. CONNOR'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - NIGHT

A small room with no decorations or clutter--Connor has been ready for some time to leave in one way or another.

He neatly places a bunch of things into a bag, for once not nervous at all, as indistinct shouting--a man's voice and a woman's voice--drifts through the walls.

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

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

He opens his second-story window. The drop to the grass below won't kill him, but there's no way he won't get seriously hurt.

Another glance at the door. The shouting grows yet more agitated. Ominous heavy footsteps.

He grits his teeth and jumps out.

EXT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

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

Connor knocks, having just jumped out his window and badly hurt himself. His knees are bloody and he can barely stand.

Silas opens the door. His mom joins him in hugging and fussing over Connor.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

After a few weeks - Connor sits on a stool, bruised but decently recovered. Silas comes in with their final report cards, which were mailed.

They open up the envelopes. Silas fails to disguise his disappointment in himself. Connor likewise fails to disguise his self-satisfaction.

Silas takes Connor's report card and tapes it to his own family's fridge, proud of him.

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 a painting of the Confederate flag on the gym wall, smiling for cameras.

Connor takes a seat off to the side, watching families socialize, watching Silas.

Silas easily, happily talks to a wide array of people from his mom to his teammates to his teachers, who all group up around him to congratulate him. Silas excuses himself from this.

Silas joins Connor. They elbow each other affectionately.

SILAS

Well?

CONNOR

Well what?

SILAS

...What next?

They smile.

EXT. HURLEY HIGH SCHOOL - CONTINUOUS

Still in their graduation gowns, Connor and Silas play around in the parking lot, balancing on the concrete. Silas is finding Connor's suggestions funny.

CONNOR

Richmond... Louisville... Atlanta,
can you imagine--?

Silas is suddenly laughing at rather than laughing with.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

I'd love to see Atlanta.

SILAS

You would.

CONNOR

...Um?

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

(deeply felt)

Course you are. Course.

CONNOR

Atlanta is in Appalachia--

SILAS

Please--

CONNOR

Okay the foothills--

SILAS

(derogatory)

Foothills--

CONNOR

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

SILAS

Right.

CONNOR

Ain't it supposed to change--?

SILAS

You ain't talking about change,
you're talking about just avoiding
your problems--

CONNOR

Yeah I'M avoiding my problems,
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 feels the back of his own neck. Definitely a bit sunburned.

CONNOR
Don't it feel like wasting a chance?

SILAS
Are you really serious?

CONNOR
I don't know...

SILAS
It's damn expensive--

CONNOR
But there's work out there--

SILAS
We can't leave.
(a little desperate)
You can't leave.

Connor picks up on the panic and briefly squeezes Silas' shoulder to comfort him.

CONNOR
I won't leave you.

INT. STORE - DAY - MONTHS LATER

Connor works as a cashier in a seedy gas station convenience store, still in Buchanan County. The florescent lighting is harsh and cold, and one light just above him flickers. It bothers him.

A WOMAN comes up to the counter, listening to music on headphones as she scrolls through her phone.

CONNOR
Did you find everything okay?

She doesn't acknowledge him. He rings her up.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Cash or card?

She doesn't acknowledge him, puts her card into the machine. Connor hands her the receipt and her bagged items.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Have a nice day.

She goes. A MAN approaches.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
You find everything okay?

The man motions for a pack of cigarettes. Connor grabs them and rings him up.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Cash or--?

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

Connor looks up at him for a moment, incredulous, then quickly counts out the total, gives him his receipt.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Have a nice day.

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

INT. STORE - EVENING - LATER

In the back, Connor clocks out and then scans a schedule calendar pinned to the wall, searching for shifts that haven't yet been claimed.

He and Silas' names appear on the schedule, Silas for night shifts and Connor for day shifts, but not frequently, just two of several dozen employees in desperate need of work.

Connor flips through the pages and can't find an extra free shift for weeks.

EXT. HOUSE FOR SALE - SUNSET

Connor walks back home from work along a road with lush green woods on either side. It's still unbelievably, breathtakingly beautiful out here. He notices a little house by the side of the road, modest but in good shape, well cared for.

A moving van is parked out front. A couple with a young son load boxes into it from the house. Connor pauses to watch enviously for a moment.

The FATHER of this family scoops the SON up into his arms and surveys the truck.

FATHER
Hope we'll have space for all this
in Richmond...

Connor moves along.

EXT. WOODS - SUNSET

Silas--wearing camo--crouches in the bushes, confidently aiming a hunting rifle at a squirrel.

He exhales, at peace for a second, and takes the shot.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - EVENING

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

Silas' mom throws the aromatics into a pot with some oil. They sizzle. She adds stock, carrots, potatoes, the squirrel meat.

Silas grabs ground cayenne pepper off the shelf and dumps a good amount into the pot. He considers adding more. She laughingly confiscates the spice from him and smooths his hair down.

Connor unlocks the front door. Silas runs to him.

CONNOR
It smells so good in here--

Silas drags him off.

INT. SILAS' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

A small room with two twin beds. Silas' side is cluttered, packed with trophies and accolades. Connor's is still totally bare.

Silas drags Connor inside, then lifts him by the waist and spins him around once before setting him down and kissing his cheek. It cheers Connor up a little.

SILAS
How was work?

CONNOR
The damn light still won't stop
buzzing--

SILAS

I'll take a look, I bet I can fix it--

CONNOR

Might take an electrician. Do you think I'd know if I went crazy or would it just happen?

SILAS

(innocent)

Can I make your day any better?

(not)

Surely there's something I can do for you.

Connor rolls his eyes and kisses Silas.

All at once: footsteps, Silas shoves Connor away hard enough for him to fall back on a bed, Silas' mom comes in.

SILAS' MOM

I'm gonna head to work, just help yourselves when you're hungry--

SILAS

(effortless)

Okay, thanks.

She leaves them be.

Silas extends a hand to help Connor up, too sorry to cheapen it by saying so.

Connor is not in the mood for this today and stands up himself.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

After dinner. Silas and Connor sit on the couch, watching a movie. Silas is enjoying it.

CONNOR

You're gonna be late.

SILAS

I got time.

CONNOR

You don't.

SILAS

I walk fast.

Neither moves. Connor starts quietly repeating words and lines after the movie actors, in the actors' accents. Silas tries to ignore it but can't.

SILAS (CONT'D)
Would you shut up with that?

CONNOR
Do I embarrass you?

SILAS
It don't have nothing to do with you. I can't concentrate.

CONNOR
Okay.

SILAS
Your accent is beautiful. It's a part of you and I don't--

CONNOR
It just *happened* to me, how does that make it part of me? ...I bet in Richmond everybody goes to college at our age, probably don't even leave their city but they get their own space--

SILAS
This ain't Richmond--

CONNOR
So if anything it's weird that you DON'T want some privacy.

SILAS
Didn't say that.

Connor listens hopefully.

SILAS (CONT'D)
Never said that...

Silas continues thinking about it. Connor shuts up.

SILAS (CONT'D)
(not cruel)
Anything else?

CONNOR
No.

Silas gets up and leaves for work.

INT. 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. As he finishes, it electrically shocks him. He winces and pulls his hand back.

But the light stops flickering. Silas smiles.

INT. STORE - SUNRISE

Silas clocks out blearily, having just worked through the night.

He scans the schedule in the same way Connor did, flipping through page after page of no empty shifts.

EXT. HOUSE FOR SALE - SUNRISE

Walking home, Silas passes the house of the young couple, who are now moved out. A sign in the yard--for sale.

Silas deliberates, then takes a look at one of the flyers attached to the sign.

He folds it up neatly and puts it in his pocket before continuing on his way.

INT. HOUSE FOR SALE - DAY

Silas and Connor walk through the house. Silas has been here before, is excited and mostly focused on Connor's reactions.

Connor looks around, trying to be the partner he thinks Silas deserves.

They come upon the kitchen. Silas messes with the stove.

SILAS

Look, it's gas.

Connor smiles as convincingly as he can.

SILAS (CONT'D)

Just imagine. Us. Dinner party hosts. Sophistication. Get together.

(MORE)

SILAS (CONT'D)
(pronouncing phonetically)
Hors d'oeuvres.

CONNOR
(pronouncing the French
way)
Who are we inviting for hors
d'oeuvres?

SILAS
I think the team would enjoy it if
they opened their minds.

Connor laughs halfheartedly, just an acknowledgment that
Silas made a joke. They meander into a spare bedroom.

SILAS (CONT'D)
My cousins could stay for Christmas
and stuff, you'd love them. Or um.
You never know. Extra space. Real
nice.

They wind up in the master bedroom. Silas takes Connor's hand
confidently.

CONNOR
(gently)
How are we supposed to afford this?

SILAS
You like it--?

CONNOR
Well it's-- Course I think it's. A
nice house.

SILAS
I like it too.

CONNOR
Darling. We are broke--

SILAS
At the moment, but--

CONNOR
Do you plan on winning the lottery?

Silas laughs at himself.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - NIGHT

On a bulky desktop straight out of 2006 located in some central living area, Silas does an internet search for Richmond VA jobs. The search takes a minute to load. Silas is patient with it.

Skimming the job listings, he has the sinking feeling that Connor was right about some things.

CONNOR (O.S.)
(calling from some other
part of the house)
Silas.

Silas glances at the time on the computer. He's going to be late for work.

SILAS
Thank you.

CONNOR (O.S.)
Course.

He jumps up and heads out the door without closing his tabs.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - BATHROOM - DAY

Connor sits on the floor, hyperventilating and shaking, scratching his nails over his arms hard. He wants badly to stop, is working hard to resist himself.

All at once he can't hold out any longer, shakily pulls out a pocketknife, flips the blade open--

EXT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - CONTINUOUS

Silas takes a seat on the floor just outside the bathroom door, apparently unmoved, in reality unequipped to even understand what he's feeling, let alone express it.

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

An awful silence.

CONNOR (O.S.)
(through the door)
It was never supposed to be your
problem. You were never supposed to
know.

Silas is relieved.

SILAS

...It won't always be this way.

Silas waits for a response. Connor has nothing to say.

Silas leans his head against the door.

INT. CHURCH - MORNING

A one room church packed with people sitting in creaky wooden pews. Silas spaces out, sitting somewhere in the back with his mom on one side and Connor on the other. Connor pays too much attention, looking pale as he stays as close to Silas as he dares. Silas' mom reacts much like Connor.

The PASTOR gives an abridged reading from Corinthians 6:12-6:20, New International Version:

PASTOR

"I have the right to do anything,"
you say--but not everything is
beneficial. By his power God raised
the Lord from the dead, and he will
raise us also. Flee from sexual
immorality. All other sins a person
commits are outside the body, but
whoever sins sexually, sins against
their own body. Do you not know
that your bodies are temples of the
Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom
you have received from God? You are
not your own; you were bought at a
price. Therefore honor God with
your bodies.

Connor absently clutches his wrists for further security.
Silas' mom worries at a necklace of the cross.

INT. CHURCH - LATER

Another moment of uncharacteristic levity and uplift as
people get up and mingle with each other after the service.

Connor shoves his way past people-- Silas watches him go with
some concern but knows Connor will open up only when he's
ready.

INT. CHURCH - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Connor kneels and retches into the toilet.

[Cut for table read: the pastor invites Silas to help with a church daycare/afterschool program.]

EXT. CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

Connor leans against the wall, more collected. Silas stands next to him.

SILAS

Nobody takes it completely literal
you know, even folks who want to.

CONNOR

You wouldn't make someone so
special just to punish them.

Silas speechless. Connor checks his surroundings and quickly kisses Silas' hand. He manages a smile. They head back inside.

[Cut for table read: Connor doesn't experience sexual attraction but nonetheless chooses to have sex with Silas.]

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - MORNING

Silas' mom sits at the computer with a cup of coffee. She sees the job posting board Silas left open.

He comes through the front door, back from work.

SILAS' MOM

Why didn't you tell me?

Silas freezes, mortified, not sure what she found.

SILAS' MOM (CONT'D)

I just would've liked to have been
told directly.

SILAS

...I don't want you to see me
different.

SILAS' MOM

Sweetie. I mean. Course I'd rather
you not, I'd rather nobody bother
with this. I really thought you
ain't the type--

SILAS

There ain't no type. Okay Connor's the type but ain't nothing wrong with that neither--

SILAS' MOM

It is what it is. Times are changing.

SILAS

Really?

SILAS' MOM

Yeah. I won't pretend I never thought about it myself.

SILAS

...What?

SILAS' MOM

Everybody's doing it these days. Don't think I could forgive myself though. I trust you. Do what you gotta do. But they ain't your friends out there. And you better call me, and you better come home for holidays--

SILAS

What are we talking about, ma?

He checks out the computer. The job listings.

SILAS (CONT'D)

Right, no, agreed, that was Connor's idea--

SILAS' MOM

Oh. Too bad. I'll miss him.

Silas is touched.

SILAS

Connor was looking at it because we were thinking about saving for that house down the way.

SILAS' MOM

He was thinking about it?

SILAS

Yeah.

SILAS' MOM
Just like him to slip away. Well
you tell him he ain't gonna leave
MY house without a proper goodbye.

She sees through him better than he sees himself.

SILAS' MOM (CONT'D)
Come here sweetie.

Silas hugs her. She strokes his hair again. He still won't betray any feeling at all.

SILAS' MOM (CONT'D)
You're gonna miss your friend?

Silas nods.

SILAS' MOM (CONT'D)
But he'll be back in no time,
right?

He nods.

INT. SILAS' BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Alone for a moment, Silas shuts the door and studies himself. His clothes are too nice looking for his tastes. Maybe too much "the type." He rumples himself up on purpose and then hurries out the door.

INT. STORE - DAY

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

Silas bursts through the door and goes to the counter.

Again, Silas can't figure out what to say. He has an intensity that is hard to look directly at, but Connor does now.

CONNOR
Thanks for fixing it.

SILAS
What? No problem.

CONNOR
...You wanna buy something, or...?

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

CONNOR (CONT'D)
(a joke)
You find everything okay?

They both smile with some degree of bitterness.

Silas looks around, stalling. The store is empty save for one other employee.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Just tell me where the body is and
I'll see what I can do--

SILAS
To have a life here that you're
okay with we have to get money and
there's no money here.

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, Connor uncharacteristically exuberant and Silas uncharacteristically somber. 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, non-natural
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, like glass, and
there's theaters, stages, wouldn't
that be cool, to see a play with
real actors, real musicians, and
there's buses, bus stops, the
Virginia capitol building, marble
columns and shit, like some George
Washington shit--

Silas stopped walking at some point in the middle of all this. Connor turns back and goes to him, embarrassed.

SILAS

I bet they don't have a good lake.

Silas briefly, partially reveals a bit of sadness. Connor is very concerned, never having seen Silas like this before. He touches Silas gently but at arm's length, deniable enough for a public space.

SILAS (CONT'D)

I don't want to.

CONNOR

(empathizing)

It's a lot of change--

SILAS

I just always grew up thinking that. That I was gonna. Get married in that church, and send my kids to Hurley, and teach my son to shoot in those woods and I can't--

CONNOR

It's okay--

SILAS

I can't just go--

CONNOR

Look at me.

Silas does.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

You can stay for now. Visit me real real soon. And little by little it won't even feel like a difference anymore.

SILAS

And it'll be over in no time.

Silas takes a few breaths. They start walking alongside each other again.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - EVENING

Silas' mom presents a going away apple stack cake. Connor smiles at her with genuine, deep gratitude.

INT. SILAS' BEDROOM - NIGHT

A clock somewhere reads 4AM. Connor's bag is packed and resting next to the door.

Connor is sleeping soundly. Silas is awake, apprehensive.

Silas slides out of his own bed and into Connor's. Connor puts an arm around him and Silas settles in.

SILAS
...Connor?

CONNOR
Mm?

SILAS
I have a question.

CONNOR
(annoyed)
Si.

SILAS
It's really important.

Connor wakes up to listen.

SILAS (CONT'D)
Would you still love me if I was a
worm?

Connor hits him with a pillow. Silas cracks up.

SILAS (CONT'D)
(serious)
Okay but would you?

CONNOR
...What is the correct answer--?

SILAS
The answer is yes--

CONNOR
But you would be incapable of
complex thought.

SILAS
Why would you say that to me?

CONNOR
You asked.

Beat.

They laugh together. Connor pulls him closer. Silas accepts it happily, is more at peace.

[Cut for table read: Connor hitches a ride with some house contractors heading to Richmond. In a montage, he takes in some city sights, then stumbles upon a coffee shop in a fancy mall.]

INT. CHAIN COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Customers write in expensive leather notebooks about being sad, grow their professional networks, and otherwise act like the main character.

Connor collects himself and goes to the counter, but struggles to make sense of the menu.

ALE (Spanish short for Alejandro/a: "AH-ley") (early 20s, Latino, any pronouns) works at the register. They exude influencer energy. Long hair trendily clipped up, with full face makeup looks. Has a flippant sense of humor and a bad hangover, always.

ALE
Hey, what can I get started for
you?

Connor is totally stuck, again staring. It's not a totally respectful stare this time.

ALE (CONT'D)
(an in-joke)
Iced coffee?

Connor looks at them, confused.

As an explanation and another in-joke, Ale lets their wrist go limp. Connor is more confused.

ALE (CONT'D)
Okay...

Connor continues to be stuck. Ale is patient for a while although also put off, then glances behind Connor to check on the line.

ALE (CONT'D)
You want some water?

CONNOR
(accent comes out)
That'd be--

He shuts up before he can mess up more.

ALE
Ice in that?

A sign next to the register--"Help wanted, \$14 an hour, full time with benefits."

CONNOR
Is this real? Can I talk to your manager--?

ALE
What if I'M the manager? Did you think of that?
(beat)
I'll grab her.

Ale heads to the back.

INT. CONNOR'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Connor checks out his new place, an old studio apartment about as big as a closet, unfurnished, dirty. The one window looks out onto a highway. Traffic noises drift in. The sounds of an ambulance.

Connor sits on the floor in the corner. He digs through his bag and finds a photo of Silas--the one taken during graduation day in the gym with the flag background--which he carefully props up against the wall.

He lays down on the floor and puts his bag under his head, stares at the photo of Silas until he can't keep his eyes open anymore.

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

Silas stares at the empty bed. He doesn't sleep.

INT. CHAIN COFFEE SHOP - BATHROOM - DAWN

Connor puts on his uniform apron and nametag and checks his appearance in the mirror. Ale does the same. Unsatisfied, Ale takes out a lipstick and touches up. Connor's distaste and second-hand embarrassment are especially obvious.

Ale knows full well what he's thinking but chooses to ignore it.

CONNOR

Why do you make yourself look like a woman?

ALE

(serene)

Why do YOU make yourself look like you just hopped off a pickup truck from fuckall, Kentucky?

CONNOR

It's a Brokeback homage...

ALE

Oh. I'm genderfluid.

CONNOR

Why are you making things harder for yourself?

ALE

Beauty is simply my burden to bear.

CONNOR

But actually.

ALE

Have you tried a niacinamide serum?

CONNOR

What?

ALE

For your skin barrier.

CONNOR

What?

ALE

It's damaged.

Connor pretends not to let this affect him. Ale goes.

Connor slowly touches his face, inspecting his pores. His skin barrier probably IS damaged, whatever that means. He stops himself and follows Ale out.

EXT. MALL - CONTINUOUS

[Cut for table read: they work a bit. Connor finds a payphone, he and Silas chat. Silas reaffirms that he expects this to be over soon.]

CONNOR

I met a real homosexual. At the job. And I saw two others who were married I think.

SILAS

I am the only homosexual in the world as far as you oughta be concerned--

CONNOR

(laughs)
Relax, he ain't my--
(serious)
Didn't know you thought of yourself that way.

SILAS

Neither did I.

CONNOR

(quick check over his shoulder)
I do. Think of myself as... as gay.

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

SILAS

...You don't have to label yourself anything though.

CONNOR

But I do. I label myself gay.

SILAS

...What do you want me to say?

Connor's joy fades a bit. He is suddenly reminded of the approaching time limit--on the payphone and on his break.

CONNOR

Si I gotta--

SILAS

Wait wait.

CONNOR
What?

SILAS
Would you love me if I was a tree?

CONNOR
Everything before when I met you
was like being unconscious.

The time runs out. Connor has no more change. He hangs up the phone.

He notices Ale [who has been within earshot for a bit].

ALE
You can just use mine.

Connor has mixed feelings about this intrusion.

CONNOR
My break's probably over.

He heads back inside.

INT. CHAIN COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Connor and Ale weave around each other, having mastered the dexterous task of making ten coffees at once by now. Connor notices Ale has a small tattoo somewhere. It's not of anything meaningful.

CONNOR
...You have a tattoo.

ALE
Mhm.

CONNOR
Did you get it somewhere?

ALE
It's a stick and poke from a girl I
met at a bar in Carytown.

They continue making drinks for a while.

ALE (CONT'D)
I wouldn't have said that if I knew
you actually just hopped off a
pickup truck from Kentucky.

CONNOR
I'm from Virginia.

ALE
Me too.

Doesn't compute with Connor. Ale is subtly frustrated. Connor notices.

CONNOR
I don't have anything against
anyone. Transvestites, Hispanics.
Jews. Anyone.

ALE
On behalf of the transvestite
Hispanic community, mazel tov.

An impasse. Connor knows he's being made fun of but doesn't know why. He busies himself in his work. Ale follows suit.

EXT. MALL - MORNING

The next day - Connor goes to use the payphone. He notices a stack of quarters discreetly set on top of it. He's too desperate not to take them.

[Cut for table read: Ale and Connor have an awkward conversation, determined to be nice to each other. They have nothing fun to talk about and Ale suggests they go out.]

EXT. RICHMOND - EVENING

Ale and Connor step up to order some empanadas from a food truck.

EMPANADA SELLER
Que te traigo señor?

ALE
Ummm. I'm sorry--?

EMPANADA SELLER
What can I get you?

EXT. RICHMOND - LATER

Ale and Connor leisurely wander around eating the empanadas, taking in the sights.

ALE
Good, right?

Connor agrees.

ALE (CONT'D)
Well what brings you here?

CONNOR
It's not home.

ALE
So true.

[Cut: On a whim - a gay usher sneaks them into a theater for a show. They later find a rug being thrown out and take it back to Connor's place so he finally has one (1) piece of decor.]

INT. HOUSE PARTY - NIGHT

[Cut: A different night - Ale takes Connor to a huge, rich, gay party. TYLER (20s white guy) is snide to Ale, who escapes into the party to avoid him.]

Connor sits on a couch with Tyler and his posse including FRIEND 1, FRIEND 2 (also 20s white guys), regaling them with tales of Buchanan County. They're laughing, buzzed but not drunk. This is the largest taste of fitting in Connor's ever had.

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

CONNOR
Yeah, they painted it on the doors of the school, every time you go in or out it's right in your face--

TYLER'S FRIEND 2
Holy shit--

CONNOR
So trashy, right?

Laughter.

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
Course he didn't. Did you?

CONNOR
Not me personally--

TYLER
See.

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

CONNOR
No.

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

CONNOR
It's hard to find vegan options--

TYLER
Yeah well that's Virginia for you.
When I'm done at VCU Arts, I'm
going to New York to be a designer.

His friends laugh at him, not believing it.

CONNOR
Wow, that'll be amazing.

Connor's earnestness is disarming to Tyler, a sudden breath of air in the toxic mess. It doesn't mean anything beyond this tipsy moment, but Tyler thinks about Connor with him in New York.

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

CONNOR
For one thing I didn't wanna get
locked in my room.

He meant it as relatable humor but it is not.

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

The assembled group looks at him with an infuriating, well-meaning pity.

CONNOR
Are yours not?

The group looks among themselves.

TYLER'S FRIEND 1
They come around eventually.

Connor is long past wanting them to come around. He's on a whole different planet from them coming around. He gets up, looking for Ale.

He wades through bodies. It's too dark and dense to possibly pick one person out from the crowd.

Connor sits on a different couch, disoriented.

After a few moments, Tyler sits down next to him. Connor manages a small smile, enjoying having been followed, still open to being friends. Tyler smiles back.

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

Tyler grabs Connor's shoulder and goes right in for a kiss. Connor immediately cringes and pushes him off.

TYLER
...Hick.

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

Connor sits there. He is upset that this word upsets him.

INT. HOUSE PARTY - LATER

It's late. Connor sits alone on the couch, sipping something, drunkenly people watching. A somewhat slower song plays, a more romantic mood set. People sway together. It's packed and yet he's more alone than he was in the woods of Grundy.

Ale crashes down next to him, also drunk. This conversation is needlessly loud.

[Cut: Connor contemplates doing drugs, but Ale isn't about to give away their drugs. Ale asks if Connor is asexual and he doesn't know what that means--but he is.]

ALE
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 boyfriend leading me across scenic vistas by the hand, like the held hands are in the shot and it captures a sense of spontaneity and movement?

CONNOR

(himself emotional)

Yeah. Yeah...

ALE

That shit's so fake--

CONNOR

It's SO fake--

ALE

They probably hate each other--

CONNOR

(cries)

They're gonna break up--

ALE

Oh no, why--?

CONNOR

One is expecting the other to always follow, even though the other is the most special and important person with his own goals and dreams-- And he just can't have it on his conscience anymore that he's holding the most beautiful person back from reaching his full potential--

ALE

(comforting)

Connor we made them up, they can stay together.

CONNOR

Really?

ALE

They'll always be together.
Shooting candids in national parks.

CONNOR

Okay...

Another round of shots gets poured. They both wordlessly agree on going over and having another one.

[Cut: The resulting awful hangover. Connor helps Ale through it. Ale isn't used to having someone there in the morning.]

[Cut: Ale struggles with addiction and gets fired for coming in super late and intoxicated. Connor knows that he's drifting away from Silas and that his work here is the same meaningless stuff as what he was doing at home.]

INT. ALE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Ale is curled up on the couch, motionless as if in shock. Clutter and now also garbage everywhere. Connor lets himself in the front door, which is unlocked.

Connor takes everything in and understands. [Cut: Connor tries to offer them some chocolate to cheer them up, it doesn't work.]

CONNOR

Can I ask you a question? Do you
want a blanket?

ALE

I guess. Something tells me that's
not the question.

Connor tosses a blanket over them.

ALE (CONT'D)

Look, I don't know, everyone
expects me to have a speech but I
don't know shit. I never wanted to
be a princess, I never played with
dolls, I know I'm not a man, I
don't feel like a woman, I don't
feel like anything. The depression
slightly lets up in the women's
clearance section of Walmart and
I'm figuring it out, that's all I
got for you.

CONNOR

Oh.

ALE

That was also not the question?

CONNOR

No, but, that's cool.

Ale nods.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Why did you start in the first place?

ALE

It's freedom-- from your own shitty personality.

CONNOR

But--

ALE

Why'd you start cutting yourself?

Connor is flustered and ashamed for a moment, yanking his sleeves down, but collects himself.

CONNOR

How'd you know?

ALE

You're not subtle.

CONNOR

It's the only thing strong enough to distract me from what I'm feeling when I do it.

ALE

Haven't you heard? Knifing your wrists is not very good for your health. Just stop. Simply no longer do it. All better now--

CONNOR

Okay, god--

ALE

You're an addict too.

This is hurtful to Connor because he recognizes it's true.

Ale looks at him intensely, regretfully, somewhat indecipherably. Connor exits. He leaves the chocolate on a piece of furniture on his way out though.

[Cut: Over the phone with Silas, Connor accepts himself as Appalachian, and also says that he's going to get a tattoo of Silas' name. Connor's manager offers him a promotion to assistant manager but it feels hollow.]

INT. CONNOR'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Connor's apartment now includes a twin 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, throws on some clothes and heads outside.

EXT. CONNOR'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Ale is pulled up to the curb in something humorously liberal-- a prius, a smartcar, a civic, something hybrid--with a rainbow sticker on the bumper.

Connor laughs and goes up to them.

CONNOR

You're gonna wake up the whole block-- what are you doing here?

ALE

It's your day off, right? What do you wanna do?

CONNOR

Sleep in?

ALE

Boooo. Boring. I'll drive you anywhere you want.

This is deeply appealing to Connor. Ale sees it, opens the passenger door.

CONNOR

Anywhere?

ALE

Well. You might need to help pay for gas.

CONNOR
Anywhere anywhere?

ALE
Within the continental U.S..

A bunch of exciting possibilities flash through Connor's mind. He sets them aside and hops in the car.

CONNOR
Grundy.

ALE
Bless you?

CONNOR
Grundy Virginia.

ALE
(surprised)
Sure.

Rafe pulls into the street.

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

Ale's car tears across the rural highways.

CONNOR
You don't need to subject yourself
to Buchanan County for me. It's
okay.

ALE
Um... I don't trust myself to be
alone right now.

EXT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - EVENING

Ale is still fully driving at ten or twenty miles per hour down the road. (On Connor's behalf, not intoxicated.) Ale notices Silas, charming as ever, waiting in the front yard with a huge smile on his face. Ale can't help but smile too.

Connor throws open his door and dives out without waiting for the car to stop. He stumblingly runs to Silas.

Silas tackles Connor to the ground in an exuberant embrace. They kiss.

Ale smiles harder, carefully navigates the chickens and the patches of garden as they find a place to park.

Connor winces and laughs, sprawled out on the dirt in Silas' arms.

CONNOR
This is the welcome I get from you?

SILAS
You said soon. You said it'd be
over soon.

Ale unobtrusively comes over to them.

CONNOR
(embracing the accent)
Did I say that? There's so much to
do--I got promoted...

SILAS
When will we have enough saved?

CONNOR
If you're in a rush you can come
over and it'll go faster.

SILAS
Well. You're here now.

Silas finally notices Ale, scrambles away from Connor like Connor has the plague, realizes too late this was his second strike.

CONNOR
They're my friend.

Silas squeezes Connor's arm as an apology and takes Ale in, confused, worried, grateful. He stands, somehow finding dignity, and gives Ale's hand a firm shake.

SILAS
Silas.

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

Silas drops his hand, helps Connor stand up, fusses over him.

Ale touches his own palm, absently replaying that little moment.

SILAS

I am never letting you out of my sight AGAIN Connor Gabriel-- Look at y'all, so skinny, what do they feed folks out there?

ALE

Thanks, um, the key is clean macronutrients.

Silas gives Connor a pitying look. He holds the front door open and Connor goes inside. Ale hesitates.

SILAS

Come in.

Ale does.

[Cut: Silas cooks dinner. Ale says they're going to sleep in a hotel to respect whatever shred of privacy Connor and Silas have.]

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - LATER

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

Ale is slightly hesitant. Connor notices.

CONNOR

I don't know what you've heard but--

SILAS

Oh, you think I fixed squirrel or something--

(the audacity of expecting
this treat)

For YOU? Nah.

CONNOR

They put snail slime on their face.

ALE

It's a hydrating K-beauty staple Connor--

SILAS

Gross, I wanna try.

Ale takes a bite of food. He stares 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. Connor silently suffers from the spice level.

Connor looks between the two of them as they lock eyes for just a second too long. He understands exactly what is going on more than they do.

SILAS
Try the chicken.

ALE
It's all great, thank you--

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

This again throws Ale for a loop.

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

ALE
(oddly flattered)
Think so?

CONNOR
I can't. I throw up...

He ruined the vibe. They continue eating quietly.

[Cut: A couple shots of Ale falling asleep in the hotel, without an internet connection.]

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

Silas sits on his bed watching Connor change out of his shirt. He discreetly tries to clock the state of Connor's wrists.

Connor glances over and knows Silas is looking. He smiles.

On Connor's wrist--the tattoo of Silas' name is small compared to a bunch of decorative ornamentation of plants and such, covering up a bunch though not all of the damage done.

He's not confident enough to cover up everything yet and it's not like the scars are invisible, but they're not the first thing to grab attention about that patch of skin anymore.

CONNOR

Also, um.

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

CONNOR (CONT'D)

Please put this somewhere I'll never find it.

Silas nods speechlessly, immediately putting it down, too uncomfortable to hold it.

CONNOR (CONT'D)

I mean I'll probably just end up getting a new one. But--

SILAS

You'll never see it again.

Connor likewise speechlessly grateful.

Silas pulls up his own short sleeve. Connor's name is on his shoulder, just out of sight.

Connor sits next to him and touches the ink.

CONNOR

(worried)

You're stuck with me forever now.

SILAS

I hope so.

Connor tucks his head against Silas' shoulder. He closes his eyes, distraught.

CONNOR

What about Charleston? It's so close. It's not even the foothills.

SILAS

Are you still on this...?

Connor knows it's a lost cause.

CONNOR

I love you.

SILAS

I love you too.

EXT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - 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 doesn't understand him. Silas briefly heads inside and comes back with a locked storage case. He opens it. It's his rifle. He passes it to Ale before Ale can realize what's happening.

ALE
Shit, is this loaded?

SILAS
(laughs)
You can find out--

ALE
Don't fuck with me right now--

SILAS
Nah, it's empty, of course.

Silas watches Ale with interest as he is morbidly fascinated by the thing.

SILAS (CONT'D)
Connor taught me first.

Ale puts it down in the case, listens.

SILAS (CONT'D)
It's usually a thing your dad
teaches you and um... Connor's dad
taught him. And Connor taught me.
But he probably told you that?

Ale nods. Silas knows he's 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 if 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 runs outside with the intention of slathering Connor with 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'm not feeling well.

ALE
Let's get you some water--

CONNOR
I'm just gonna walk for a bit. 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 him, ready to give him this chance.

ALE
They're beautiful.

SILAS
I know.
(beat)
It'll only feel a second of pain.
It lived a good life out here.
Free. In its home... As it should
be, right?

ALE
...Yeah.

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

Ale squeezes his eyes shut, hesitates, pulls. He flinches at the noise.

He opens his eyes slowly. A deer lies dead. The rest took off.

SILAS
Doing alright?

ALE
I'm fine.

He takes deep breaths, listens to the birds, enjoys the nature. For the first time in a while, they are actually fine.

ALE (CONT'D)
I can't believe I never noticed...

SILAS
You weren't meant to.

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

SILAS (CONT'D)
Usually when outsiders find our
mountains they blow the tops off
them... When you go back, you tell
your friends you hated it, you say
"only stupid poor people 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 - EVENING

Connor lays in his bed, troubled. Ale checks on him.

CONNOR

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

ALE

You can't actually separate it.

Silas comes in. Ale leaves them alone.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - EVENING

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

Connor and Silas' voices, a bit muffled through the wall, rise and fall.

CONNOR

The economy here is ruined, it's
ruined, please just face it--

SILAS

Okay it's ruined but that doesn't
mean it can't--

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 going to get better--

CONNOR

I ain't sacrificing our safety for
it to get better for these people!
They sure as hell have destroyed
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

You could go home to a penthouse
apartment and you'd still be white
trash and until you learn to take
pride in it--

CONNOR

Do you understand you will never be
welcome in this house again!

SILAS

(wants to believe but
doesn't)

That's not true--

CONNOR

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

SILAS

Go ahead, I'm not ashamed--

CONNOR

Maybe I will--

SILAS

They're good people--

CONNOR

Never said they weren'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 ever wanted was a life here
with you--

CONNOR

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

SILAS

I'm sorry that it feels that way to
you--

CONNOR

It IS, and fine if you wanna pick
that but don't lie to yourself--

Ale gets up and goes.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

A typical Sunday church service. Silas goes to sit toward the back. Connor indicates a very visible spot in the front, in the middle. Silas takes a shaky breath and sits with him there.

The service proceeds as usual. They listen to the sermon, kneel, sing. All with a certain zeal, searching desperately for their places in this meaning.

At the last moment, they share an intense look, then Connor kisses Silas. Silas freezes in terror, then accepts it as the room silently stares.

INT. SILAS' FAMILY HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Connor lingers in the entryway.

SILAS' MOM
How you been, hon?

She starts immediately fixing something to eat, but her hands shake.

CONNOR
I'm not hungry.

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

CONNOR (CONT'D)
How are you doing?

She nervously laughs.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
With Silas being gay.

She seems not to hear him, turning back to cooking.

CONNOR (CONT'D)
(repeats)
Silas is gay.

She stops. She waits for more but it doesn't come.

SILAS' MOM
He's a child.

Several beats. She falls back against the counter.

SILAS' MOM (CONT'D)
Were you two-- in my house?

Connor doesn't know what to tell her.

SILAS' MOM (CONT'D)
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 again.

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.

EXT. LAKE - NIGHT

Connor sits on his old rock gazing into middle distance.
Silas joins him.

For several seconds neither breaks the silence. Neither wants
to cross this line.

SILAS
I guess it's over?

CONNOR
It has been, though.

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

Silas tries to walk off but Connor drags him under by the
ankles.

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

CONNOR (CONT'D)
Hate me if you have to, but don't
waste your life--

SILAS

CONNOR (CONT'D)

We are hardly the most hated individuals in Appalachia and if you took your head out your ass for two seconds maybe you'd realize-- you know there's something called police brutality. Have you even seen a crime--?

--If they're smart they'll get out and they won't look back--

Please. I'll commit one just for you, would you like that?

Freezing, they both swim to shore. They trek through the woods side by side, not looking at each other, not touching, ignoring the other's cold.

INT. MOTEL - NIGHT

Silas sits at the table in Ale's room. Ale sits at the foot of the bed. Not having expected company, they are presenting much more femme than they have so far. Silas has no response to this. Ale knows more or less what happened. Total silence.

Silas stares at a small collection of alcohol Ale brought.

ALE

(not necessarily offering)
Do you drink?

SILAS

No.

ALE

What's your secret?

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

SILAS

Taste buds.

Silas' second attempt at having a drink is more successful. He passes the bottle to Ale, who fights himself, 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. Gently, he takes Ale's hands and leans back. He closes his eyes, a certain type of release washing over him, but not peace.

ALE (CONT'D)
What are you doing?
(sensing)
Some gay people are promiscuous
depressed addicts but so are the
interesting straight people.

That was meant to be a little funny but Silas is in no mood to acknowledge it.

ALE (CONT'D)
Come here.

Ale pulls him to the headboard and lays down with him. Silas continues to be in a state of slowly simmering panic.

SILAS
There's gonna be a renaissance.

ALE
Okay--?

SILAS
Do you believe me?

Small beat. They stare at each other. Silas' conviction in this moment is impossible to argue with.

ALE
I do.

Silas slowly reaches out-- Ale gives a little smile to let him know it's okay-- and Silas just 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 unrestrained, but not inconsolable. There's a safety to it. It's out there, it's on the surface now.

Eventually he shuts the water off. He reaches into his pants pocket for Connor's knife and carefully wraps it in toilet paper and 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 not surprised. Silas looks right back at him, defiant.

Ale looks at Silas. Silas notices and gives them the barest hint of a smile. Ale goes and waits in the car.

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

CONNOR

If you change your mind...

SILAS

Back at you.

CONNOR

Are you gonna be okay?

SILAS

Are you?

They let go, go their separate ways.

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, hand on the steering wheel. He adjusts the air conditioning, the radio.

CONNOR

I just wanted to set him free.

Ale pulls out of the parking lot, 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 wal-mart.

--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 second-story window. It disappears into the rear view mirror.