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Adapting to Adaptation: Turning YA Literature into Television

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GONE

Season 1, Episode 1

"Poof"

Written by

Name of Adam Weinreb

Based on *Gone* by Michael Grant

INT. PERDIDO BEACH NUCLEAR POWER PLANT. MIDDAY.

The power plant bustles with activity in the middle of the day, with engineers and scientists coming and going.

One engineer, EILEEN, a middle-aged woman wearing a lab-coat, hairnet, and protective mask hanging around her neck walks through the plant holding a clipboard. Attached to the clipboard is a picture of a beautiful auburn-haired woman, a baby girl, and a 4-year-old boy.

She greets another scientist, HAROLD, who is much older and has a southern accent.

EILEEN

Hey Harold, how's she looking today?

HAROLD

Looking good boss, turbine hall is operatin' properly, and the water's movin' smoothly. No Chernobyl happenin' here ma'am.

EILEEN

(happily)

That's what I like to hear.

She continues walking through the plant at a brisk pace. She passes by JANE, a younger woman with blonde hair and an enthusiastic smile.

JANE

Good morning.

EILEEN

I wish, Jane.

JANE

Kids keep you up all night again?

Eileen smiles and sighs.

EILEEN

Always. Ever since Sarah died, it's been just me to take care of them, and it's hard.

JANE

It gets easier.

EILEEN

Really?

JANE

No.

They both laugh, and Eileen looks down at the picture of her kids and wife, smiling.

JANE (CONT'D)

Oh, there was a small fluctuation in the coolant pressure last night.

EILEEN

Alright, I'll check the calibration. Then it's just another day of paperwork for me, as usual.

JANE

(jokingly)
Have fun.

EILEEN

(sarcastically)
Oh you know I will.

Eileen approaches a massive circular door that has "DANGER, RADIATION" sprawled on the floor in front of it.

She casually punches a series of numbers into a pin pad to the left of the door, and the door slowly and loudly swings open.

She enters the reactor and the door closes behind her, making a loud boom when it shuts.

CUT TO:

INT. NUCLEAR REACTOR. MIDDAY.

The reactor is surprisingly empty, although Eileen seems used to the quiet.

She moves adeptly through the narrow platforms above the reactor, and stops to look at one of the screens.

She taps through a few pages and scribbles some notes down on her clipboard.

Suddenly large red flashing lights and a deafening siren fill the room, and Eileen whips her head back and forth, trying to figure out what is going on.

She rushes over to a set of dials, and then freezes, and instinctively looks up out of the top of the reactor, and sees a large meteor shooting down right towards the plant.

She takes a deep breath, looks down at her clipboard, and pulls off the picture of her children and her wife. Tears drip down off her face and splash on the picture.

The meteor crashes into the power plant, and buries deep into the ground.

CUT TO:

INT. MINE SHAFT. MIDDAY.

The meteor hurdles farther and farther into the ground, until stopping deep in a mine shaft.

A green wispy glow emanates from the rock and swirls around the cave.

CUT TO:

INT. PERDIDO BEACH SCHOOL. MIDDAY.

TITLE - 10:24AM

SAM TEMPLE, a fifteen-year-old surfer of medium build with a mop of dark brown hair and blue eyes, sits in his third-period history class near the window.

He stares straight ahead, lost in his own world as his TEACHER drones on about the Civil War.

TEACHER

It was America's deadliest war.
Thirty percent of all Southern men
aged 18-40 just-

Suddenly, the teacher disappears from the room.

The classroom remains quiet, but looks of confusion sweep across the students. No one moves from their desk.

Sam turns to MARY TERRAFINO, a girl of bigger build with dark hair and subdued fashion sense.

SAM TEMPLE

You saw that, right?

Mary ignores him, staring intently at where the teacher stood moments before.

QUINN GAITHER

Um, where'd Mr. Trentlake go?

Sam turns around to face QUINN GAITHER, a tall, well-built man wearing baggy shorts, army surplus desert boots, a pink golf shirt, and a gray fedora.

MARY TERRAFINO
(absently)
He must've left.

EDILIO ESCOBAR, a short Honduran immigrant with a black crew cut and dark brown eyes, sits on the other side of Mary.

EDILIO
(miming with his hands)
No man. Poof.

A few kids in the class chuckle, while others remain silently shocked.

QUINN GAITHER
(stifling a laugh)
Mr. Trentlake...poofed?

STUDENT #1
Hey...where did Josh go?

Students look around, only to see an empty desk.

STUDENT #2
Was he here today?

BOUNCING BETTE, a short girl with waist-length red hair and a bubbly personality, sits in the desk next to the empty one.

BOUNCING BETTE
Yeah, he was here.
(trailing off)
He was right here next to me. He just...disappeared. Like Mr. Trentlake.

The door to the hallway swings open, and all heads in the room quickly swivel and lock on the door.

QUINN GAITHER
(sarcastically)
Alright, good prank Mr. Trentlake, and you even got Josh in on it, hah hah.

ASTRID ELLISON, a tall, extremely intelligent girl with shoulder-length blonde hair wearing a starched white blouse, and sporting an air of authority and power walks through the open door.

ASTRID ELLISON
Where's your teacher?

A few students in the room collectively shrug.

QUINN GAITHER
He poofed.

MARY TERRAFINO
Isn't he out in the hallway?

Astrid shakes her head, confused.

ASTRID ELLISON
Something weird is happening. My
math study group...there were three
of us, plus the teacher. They ALL
disappeared.

SAM TEMPLE
(surprised)
What?

Astrid looks at Sam, frightened but trying to contain it.

ASTRID ELLISON
They all just disappeared.
They're...gone. '

EDILIO
What about your teacher?

ASTRID ELLISON
Gone.

EDILIO
Gone?

QUINN GAITHER
(solemnly)
Poof.

Car alarms sound off in the distance.

Sam stands up from his seat and moves towards the door
stiffly. The other students remain seated.

Astrid steps out of his way, and Sam walks out into the
hallway.

CUT TO:

INT. PERDIDO BEACH SCHOOL HALLWAY. MIDDAY.

Sam looks down the hallway in both directions, surveying his surroundings.

To his left, past the classroom where Astrid's math group meets, a kid sticks his head of a classroom with a look of half fright and half excitement.

To his right Sam hears deafening laughter in the otherwise quiet school, coming from a room of fifth graders.

In the room across from Sam, three sixth graders burst out of the classroom and freeze in their tracks when they see Sam, like he could get them in trouble.

SAM TEMPLE

(annoyed)

It's times like these when I really wish we had a separate high school.

Sam walks down the hallways towards Astrid's classroom, with her and Quinn following closely behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. ASTRID'S MATH CLASSROOM. MIDDAY.

A classroom set up identically to Sam's classroom, is completely empty.

Four math books lie open on the desks at the front of the room.

The word "Polyn" is written on the board, with part of an "o" next to it. A piece of chalk rests on the floor where the teacher would be standing.

ASTRID ELLISON

She was writing the word
"polynomial"

SAM TEMPLE

(sarcastically)

Yeah, that was my next guess.

QUINN GAITHER

(jokingly)

I had a polynomial once. My doctor removed it.

Astrid ignores him, and Sam gives Quinn a pointed look to cut it out.

ASTRID ELLISON

She disappeared in the middle of
writing the "o."

(quietly)

I was looking right at her....

Her sentence trails off as she stares at the board.

They all stand there quietly, Astrid looking at the board,
Sam looking at Astrid, and Quinn looking at the ground.

A piercing scream from the hallway snaps them all back to
reality, and they head into the hallway.

CUT TO:

INT. PERDIDO BEACH SCHOOL HALLWAY. MIDDAY.

BECKA, a small sixth grade girl with short brown hair, grips
a cell phone tightly while screaming and crying.

BECKA

(hysterically)

There's no answer! There's no
answer! There's nothing!

The hallway, now filled with students of all grades and ages,
goes quiet, with only the rustling of retrieving devices and
dialing.

A cacophony of voices pop up as people try to reach their
loved ones.

STUDENT #3

(panicked)

It's not doing anything!

STUDENT #4

My mom would be home, she would
answer.

STUDENT #5

It's not even ringing!

(CONT'D)

STUDENT #6

Oh my god, there's no internet
either. I have a signal, but
nothing will load!

STUDENT #4
I have three bars.

STUDENT #6
Me too, but it's just not there.

Someone lets out a creepy, sad wail.

STUDENT #7
(scared and bossy)
Someone try 911.

STUDENT #5
(annoyed)
Who do you think I called,
numbnuts?

STUDENT #7
There's no 911?

STUDENT #3
There's no anything!

The hallway was packed with kids now, but no one moved, they stood in place like waiting for an order from a teacher or a bell to ring.

BECKA
(still crying)
What do we do?

STUDENT #7
There must be someone in the
office, the bell went off.

HOWARD BASSEM, a short, weak, and thin black man with a mean streak, and CHARLES MERRIMAN, aka ORC, a glowering thug of a ninth grader, push through the group of panicking kids in the hallway.

HOWARD BASSEM
(obnoxiously)
It's on a timer, moron.

No one calls Howard out, for fear of angering Orc. Sam, Astrid, and Quinn ignore him.

HOWARD BASSEM (CONT'D)
What, School Bus Sam, you aren't
going to save us?

Sam flinches at the nickname.

HOWARD BASSEM (CONT'D)
Come on savior boy, whatcha gonna
do?

CUT TO:

INT. SCHOOL BUS. MORNING.

A school bus cruises along a road on the side of a cliff overlooking the ocean.

SUPERIMPOSE: "THREE YEARS EARLIER"

Sam sits next to Quinn towards the front of the bus, in the window seat.

QUINN GAITHER
Man, do I lo-o-ove field trip days.

SAM TEMPLE
Me too dude, I need the break.

Sam looks to his right left and sees Astrid, staring at her blonde hair.

QUINN GAITHER
Snap back to reality brah. Stop
pining over Astrid.

SAM TEMPLE
I'm not pining, I just think she's
cool.

QUINN GAITHER
She's a nerd. She's not cool.

SAM TEMPLE
Whatever man.

Suddenly, the driver shouts out in pain, and the bus swerves.

Several of the kids on the bus shriek and panic.

The bus swerves again, coming dangerously close to the side of the cliff. More screams and fear pervade the students.

Some kids hold out their phones, recording the disaster.

STUDENT
Someone do something!

The bus driver groans one more time, and passes out.

Sam jumps up and runs to the wheel, steering them onto the side of the road right as the bus is about to go over the side of the cliff.

Transition from Sam saving the bus to the same image printed in the *PERDIDO BEACH GAZETTE*

Headline above the image reads: "SCHOOL BUS SAM" TEMPLE SAVES BUSFUL AFTER DRIVER SUFFERS HEART ATTACK.

CUT TO:

INT. PERDIDO BEACH SCHOOL HALLWAY. MIDDAY

Sam shakes his head and snaps back into focus.

SAM TEMPLE
(confidently, but with a
hint of intimidation)
I've got nothing to say to you
Howard.

He turns his back to Howard, facing towards Astrid and Quinn

Astrid's face lights up as she has an idea.

ASTRID ELLISON
They have a TV in the teacher's
lounge.

The trio sets off running through the swarm of kids, fly down a set of stairs, and head to the bottom floor.

TRACK TO:

INT. BOTTOM FLOOR HALLWAY. MIDDAY.

The bottom floor is much quieter, with fewer classrooms and children to panic in the hallways.

Sam reaches out to open the opaque door of the teacher's lounge.

ASTRID ELLISON
Wait!

Sam hesitates.

SAM TEMPLE
What?

ASTRID ELLISON
(matter-of-factly)
We're not supposed to go in there.

Quinn rolls his eyes and pushes past Sam, throwing the door to the lounge open.

The lounge is eerily empty. The door to the refrigerator hangs open, and a carton of blueberry yogurt lies spattered on the carpet around it.

Sam, Quinn, and Astrid split up looking through the room to find the remote.

Sam looks in the cushions of a ratty old couch, and comes up with nothing except for a few coins, some stale pretzels, and a whole lot of lint.

QUINN GAITHER
Got it.

Quinn flicks on the television, and there is nothing but static on the tv.

SAM TEMPLE
Cable's out.

Astrid unscrews the coaxial cable from behind the television.

Quinn flicks through the channels, and the static and noise change slightly, but still nothing.

QUINN GAITHER
(frustratedly)
Come on, you can always get channel nine. Even without cable.

He flicks through the channels more furiously, angry at the tv, the remote, everything.

SAM TEMPLE
(calmly)
Dude, it's not working. Just turn it off.

Sam gently takes the remote from Quinn and turns off the television as Quinn calms down.

ASTRID ELLISON
(thinking)
Teachers, some of the kids, cable, broadcast, cell phones, all gone at the same time?

QUINN GAITHER
Please tell me you have an idea
about what's going on.

Sam and Quinn wait with bated breath for the logical solution.

ASTRID ELLISON
It doesn't make any sense.

Suddenly two FIFTH GRADE BOYS bust through the door of the lounge, coming in with wild excitement on their faces.

FIFTH GRADER #1
(shouting)
We rule the school!

FIFTH GRADER #2
Yeah! We're gonna bust open the
candy machine!

Sam holds up his hands, trying to get the kids to calm down.

SAM TEMPLE
That's maybe not such a good idea.

FIFTH GRADER #1
(belligerently)
You can't tell us what to do!

SAM TEMPLE
(calmly)
You're right, little dude. But
look, how about we all try to keep
it together till we figure out
what's going on?"

FIFTH GRADER #1
(angrily)
You keep it together!

The other boy chirps in agreement, and they fly out of the room as quickly as they entered.

SAM TEMPLE
(under his breath)
I guess it would be wrong to ask
them to bring me a Twix.

Astrid's eyes light up, like she had an epiphany.

ASTRID ELLISON
Sixteen.

QUINN GAITHER

No, man, they were, like, ten.

ASTRID ELLISON

No, not them. The kids in my class. Jink and Michael. They were both math whizzes, better than me, but they had learning disabilities—dyslexia—that kept them back. They were both a little older. I was the only fifteen-year-old in the class.

SAM TEMPLE

I think Josh was fifteen, in our class.

QUINN GAITHER

So?

SAM TEMPLE

So he was fifteen Quinn. He just...just disappeared. Blink and he was gone.

QUINN GAITHER

No way.

He shakes his head in disbelief

QUINN GAITHER (CONT'D)

Every adult and older kid in the whole school just disappears? That makes no sense.

ASTRID ELLISON

(somberly)

It's not just the school.

QUINN GAITHER

(snapping)

What?

ASTRID ELLISON

The phones and the TV...

Quinn paces back and forth, half smiling and shaking his head.

QUINN GAITHER

(in denial)

No, no, no, no, no. It can't.

SAM TEMPLE
(absently)
My mom....

QUINN GAITHER
(scaredly)
Man stop this! Alright? It's not
funny.

Sam swallows hard, scared.

ASTRID ELLISON
We have to go see.

Quinn lets out a loose, sobbing breath, and turns away from
the others.

Sam places a hand gently on his shoulder, and Quinn flinches.

QUINN GAITHER
(stressed)
Get off me, brah. I have to go
home. I have to see.

SAM TEMPLE
We all have to see. But let's go
together.

Quinn tries to pull away, but Sam tightens his grip.

SAM TEMPLE (CONT'D)
Quinn. Together. Come on, man, it's
like a wipeout, you know? You get
launched, what do you do?

QUINN GAITHER
(muttering)
You try not to get worked up.

SAM TEMPLE
That's right. You keep your head
straight through the spin cycle.
Right? Then swim toward daylight.

Quinn's body relaxes and his breathing slows.

QUINN GAITHER
You're right. But we go to my house
first.
(muttering to himself)
This is messed up. This is so
messed up.

Sam looks over at Astrid, who watches.

SAM TEMPLE

Astrid?

Astrid hesitates, uncertainty flashing in her eyes.

SAM TEMPLE (CONT'D)

Come on, Astrid. We'll be safer together.

She flinches at the word safer, but quietly nods her head in agreement.

FADE TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE OF PERDIDO BEACH SCHOOL. MIDDAY.

Kids pour out of the school, some alone, some in small groups huddled together.

Some cried, some just looked scared, and others ran around like nothing was out of the ordinary. The kids are bewildered, confused, scared, and hysterical, all at the same time.

All the kids are just wandering, unsure of where to go or what to do.

Sam, Astrid, and Quinn walk through the dispersing crowd of kids, from first grade all the way through to high school.

SAM TEMPLE

What about all the little kids?
What if they wander into the roads
and get run over?

Quinn stops and stares down the street.

QUINN GAITHER

Brah, you see any cars moving?

The stoplight in front of the school flicks from green to red, but there are no cars to pass through the light.

SAM TEMPLE

And what about the kids at
Barbara's Day Care?

ASTRID ELLISON

First we see our parents. It's not
like there aren't adults anywhere.

(pausing)

I mean, it's unlikely there are NO
adults.

SAM TEMPLE
(unconfidently)
Yeah. There must be adults.
(pausing)
Right?

They stare ahead in silence for a moment.

ASTRID ELLISON
My mom will most likely either be home or playing tennis. My mom or dad will have my little brother. My dad's at work. He works at Perdido Beach Nuclear Power.

QUINN GAITHER
(surprisedly)
You mean the place that got hit with an asteroid in that freak accident a whole lotta years ago? The place that got us nicknamed "Fallout Alley?"

ASTRID ELLISON
That's the one.

QUINN GAITHER
Great. Well, my parents will be at home.

They head out down the street towards Quinn's house.

With every few steps, Quinn speeds up, and he is a few paces ahead of Sam and Astrid. They can still hear the sounds of car alarms in the distance.

They turn the corner and the alarm gets louder as they see a sedan crashed into a parked SUV. The SUV is empty, and the doors on both cars are shut and locked.

SAM TEMPLE
The doors are still locked. That means...

ASTRID ELLISON
(interrupting)
...no one got out of the car after it crashed.

QUINN GAITHER
Someone was driving and blinked out.

Astrid nods her head slowly.

Quinn tries to stay calm, but suddenly takes off in a sprint down the road towards his house.

Sam and Astrid race behind them, but Quinn is quicker than both of them.

Quinn's hat flies off his head, and Sam bends down and picks it up as they run.

By the time Sam and Astrid catch up, Quinn's front door is wide open and he is already inside.

CUT TO:

INT. QUINN'S HOUSE. AFTERNOON.

Sam and Astrid walk into Quinn's house and head into the kitchen.

Quinn is upstairs, yelling for his family frantically.

QUINN GAITHER
Mom!? Dad!?

The sound of doors opening and slamming closed echoes through the house.

QUINN GAITHER (CONT'D)
(frantically)
Come on! Mom! Dad! HEY!

Each time Quinn yells, his voice cracks a little bit more, and his sobs become clearer.

Quinn comes rushing down the stairs, still yelling for his family, tears streaming down his face

QUINN GAITHER (CONT'D)
MOM! DAD! SOMEONE!

Sam gently places Quinn's fedora on the counter.

Quinn stops in the kitchen, breathing heavily.

QUINN GAITHER (CONT'D)
(through tears)
She's not here, man. She's not here.

Quinn brushes away the tears from his face and tries to regain his composure. He clears his throat.

QUINN GAITHER (CONT'D)
(less frantically)
The phones are dead. Did she leave
a note or anything? Do you see a
note? Look for a note.

Quinn tears through the kitchen, pulling open drawers,
looking for some reason his parents would be gone.

Astrid flicks a light switch, and the lights in the kitchen
flicker off.

ASTRID ELLISON
(contemplatively)
The power's still on....

QUINN GAITHER
(growing frantic again)
What if they're dead? This can't be
happening. This is...it's just some
kind of nightmare or something.

He sits down at a stool in the kitchen, and hyperventilates.

QUINN GAITHER (CONT'D)
(between breaths)
This-this-isn't-even-possible.

He stands back up quickly and grabs the phone, punching in a
series of numbers. He only hears a dial tone.

He continues to dial, over and over again, pressing harder
and hard each time until he throws the phone against the
wall.

It shatters with a loud crash, making Astrid and Sam jump.

Quinn stops, staring at the phone hanging off of the wall,
broken.

QUINN GAITHER (CONT'D)
(quietly)
We had a fight last night. Me and
my dad.

ASTRID ELLISON
Don't start thinking that way. One
thing we DO know is that YOU didn't
cause this.

She puts his hand gently on his shoulder.

ASTRID ELLISON (CONT'D)
(softly)
None of us caused this.

Quinn openly sobs, and falls to his knees, knocking the sunglasses off his face. His head goes limp in his hands.

ASTRID ELLISON (CONT'D)
It's going to be okay.

SAM TEMPLE
Yeah, of course it is. This is just some....

His sentence trails off, clearly not believing his own words.

QUINN GAITHER
Maybe it was God.

Quinn looks up, eyes bloodshot and filled with tears. He looks manic.

QUINN GAITHER (CONT'D)
It was God.

SAM TEMPLE
(hesitantly)
Maybe.

QUINN GAITHER
(manically, angrily)
What else could it be, right?
(stuttering)
S-so-so-so-

He swallows the choked-up stutter.

QUINN GAITHER (CONT'D)
So it'll be okay.

He breathes deeply, and wipes the tears away from his eyes. He releases a nervous chuckle.

QUINN GAITHER (CONT'D)
Duh, of course it will be okay.
It'll totally be okay.

Sam helps Quinn to his feet.

ASTRID ELLISON
Can we go to my house next?

SAM TEMPLE
Yeah, of course.

Quinn scribbles down a note on a yellow legal pad, and leaves it out on the counter.

QUINN GAITHER

Ready.

They walk out of the kitchen and head towards Astrid's house.

The note reads "If you see this, Mom or Dad, call me. And I'm sorry about what I said last night. I love you guys. -Quinn."

FADE TO:

INT. ASTRID'S HOUSE. AFTERNOON.

Inside of Astrid's two-story colonial house, complete with a pool in the back, Sam, Astrid, and Quinn search for Astrid's parents and brother.

Astrid's home is completely safety proof. There are plastic inserts in all the sockets, the knives are in a cupboard with a childproof handle, and there are childproof knobs on the stove.

Sam looks around the kitchen, running his fingers across the stove knobs.

ASTRID ELLISON

They're for my brother. Not me.
Little Pete, that's his name.

SAM TEMPLE

I know. He's....

ASTRID ELLISON

He's autistic.

She looks around the kitchen.

ASTRID ELLISON (CONT'D)

Well, no one here.

SAM TEMPLE

Where's your brother? He wouldn't
have poofed.

Astrid quickly grows frustrated.

ASTRID ELLISON

(shouting)

I don't know, alright! I don't know
where he is!

She covers her mouth with one hand, eyes wide.

QUINN GAITHER

(calmly)

Call to him.

ASTRID ELLISON

(through gritted teeth)

Call to him? He won't answer.

Her knuckles turn white in her left hand as she squeezes it into a fist.

ASTRID ELLISON (CONT'D)

He's autistic. Severely. He doesn't...he doesn't relate.

(repeating)

He won't answer, alright! I can yell his name all day.

SAM TEMPLE

(calmly)

It's okay Astrid. We're going to make sure. If he's here, we'll find him.

TIME SPEEDS UP as Astrid, Sam, and Quinn search the house, looking under beds, checking behind couches, scouring every inch of the home.

Eventually they all end up back in the kitchen. The formerly perfectly neat house is now a mess, the result of hours of searching.

ASTRID ELLISON

(worriedly)

He's not here. He must be either with my mom at tennis or my dad at work. Our babysitter is out of town, so they must've taken him. They have to have.

SAM TEMPLE

Let's keep moving. Don't worry about Little Pete. We'll find him.

ASTRID ELLISON

Is that meant to be a pro forma reassurance or a specific commitment?

SAM TEMPLE

(confused)

Sorry?

ASTRID ELLISON

No, I'm sorry.

(quietly)

I meant, you'll help me find Petey?

SAM TEMPLE

Sure.

They walk out of Astrid's home.

EXT. ASTRID'S HOME. AFTERNOON.

Birds circle in the blue sky above Sam, Astrid, and Quinn.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD OUTSIDE PERDIDO BEACH. MIDDAY.

TITLE - 10:21AM.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR sits in the front seat of a rusty, rickety, formerly red pickup truck. She has lank dark hair and olive skin, and is a bit of a rebel in both personality and attire.

Her grandfather, GRANDPA LUKE drives the truck. He's a very old Chumash native, with many wrinkles. He adorns a sweat-stained straw cowboy hat and dark sunglasses.

Lana turns around to check on PATRICK, her yellow lab, in the backseat.

GRANDPA LUKE

(grumpily)

He's fine. Stop fretting

LANA ARWEN LAZAR

(annoyed)

He could jump out.

GRANDPA LUKE

He's dumb, all right. But I don't think he'll jump out.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR

(indignant)

He's not dumb. He's a very smart dog. If you had just let me keep him upfront, I wouldn't have to worry.

She crosses her arms and rolls her eyes. Grandpa Luke switches on the radio, and country music blares loudly from the speakers.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR (CONT'D)

What am I supposed to do for the rest of the day?

GRANDPA LUKE

Do whatever you want.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR

Your ranch is in the middle of nowhere. You don't have a TV or a DVD or internet or anything!

GRANDPA LUKE

You brought some books, didn't you? Or you can muck out the stable.

He laughs to himself while Lana continues to pout.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR

I saw a coyote up on the hill.

GRANDPA LUKE

Coyote's harmless. Mostly. Old brother coyote's too smart to go messing with humans.

Lana winces every time Grandpa Luke pronounces "coyote" "kie-oat."

LANA ARWEN LAZAR

I've been stuck here for a week. Isn't that long enough? I wanna go home.

GRANDPA LUKE

Then you shouldn't have stolen vodka for that punk.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR

(annoyed)

Tony is not a punk.

She crosses her arms, and turns away from her grandfather, staring out the car window.

GRANDPA LUKE

A boy who uses a girl like that, get's him in the middle of his mess, that's a punk.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR

If I didn't get it for him, he
would've used a fake ID and gotten
in trouble.

GRANDPA LUKE

Fifteen-year-old drinkin' booze,
he's invitin' trouble. I started
drinkin' when I was fourteen. I
wasted thirty-five years of my life
on the bottle. Sober now for thirty-
one years, six months, five days,
thank God above and your
grandmother, rest her soul.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR

Animal knowledge and alcoholism?
You're a walking Native American
stereotype Grandpa.

Grandpa Luke scoffs.

GRANDPA LUKE

Says the rebellious wealthy white
teenage girl.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR

Touché.

Grandpa Luke chuckles, and a smile tugs at the corner of
Lana's mouth.

The truck bounces along a shaky patch of road along a dry
gulch that went down a hundred feet.

Suddenly, the truck veers off the road.

Lana looks over, and Grandpa Luke is gone. The truck flies
straight down the cliff.

Lana lurches against the seatbelt, thrown around at the mercy
of the truck.

The truck picks up speed and slams into a sapling, snapping
it in half.

Lana tries to reach for the steering wheel but cannot get a
hold of it, and continues to smash around the cabin, being
battered by the windshield, gear shift, and more.

The truck comes to a stop.

She tries to reach for the door, but her right arm cannot
move. She looks over, and screams when she sees her arm.

Her right forearm is twisted into a gross, flattened "V" shape, not the way an arm should look. It was rotated so her palm faced out, and the jagged ends of broken bones threaten to poke through her skin.

She thrashes in panic, crying and screaming.

She passes out.

The same vultures circle above, waiting.

CUT TO:

EXT. SAM'S STREET. AFTERNOON.

Sam, Astrid, and Quinn walk down the road, in a different, more run-down part of town.

They walk by a delivery truck crashed into a house with the engine still idling.

Across the street, two kids, a FOURTH GRADER and his LITTLE SISTER, play catch on their lawn.

FOURTH GRADER

Our mom isn't home, but I have piano lessons this afternoon. How do I get there?

LITTLE SISTER

And I have tap dance. We're getting our recital costumes!

Sam pauses momentarily to think.

SAM TEMPLE

You know how to get to the plaza in town?

FOURTH GRADER

I guess so.

SAM TEMPLE

You should go there.

FOURTH GRADER

I'm not supposed to leave the house.

SAM TEMPLE

I know. Maybe go wait down at the plaza anyway. Do you have any cookies or ice cream in the house?

FOURTH GRADER

I guess so.

SAM TEMPLE

Well, there's no one telling you not to eat a cookie. Your folks will show up soon, I think, but in the meantime, have a cookie, and come to the plaza.

Astrid's brow furrows and the children head into their house.

ASTRID ELLISON

(quietly)

That's your solution? Have a cookie?

SAM TEMPLE

No, my solution is to run down to the beach and hide there until this is all over.

Sam continues walking down the road, and speaks back to Astrid over his shoulder.

SAM TEMPLE (CONT'D)

But a cookie never hurts.

The trio heads down the road.

FADE TO:

EXT. SAM'S HOUSE. AFTERNOON.

Sam, Astrid, and Quinn arrive at Sam's squished-looking one-story house with a tiny fenced-in backyard and no front yard.

SAM TEMPLE

This is it.

(sheepishly)

We don't believe in showing off with a big house and all.

Astrid half smiles and looks down at her feet awkwardly. She looks back up at Sam.

ASTRID ELLISON

Well, you live near Town Beach. That's nice.

Sam nods.

SAM TEMPLE

Yeah. Two minute walk. Less if I cut through the yard of the house where the biker gang lives.

ASTRID ELLISON

(surprised)

Biker gang?

SAM TEMPLE

Well, just Killer and his girlfriend/accomplice.

He grins a little but it fades quickly when he sees Astrid's look of concern. His face falls back to seriousness.

SAM TEMPLE (CONT'D)

Sorry, bad joke. It's not a great neighborhood.

Sam walks up the faded, creaky gray steps of his home and heads inside, Astrid and Quinn following after him.

CUT TO:

INT. SAM'S HOUSE. AFTERNOON.

The house is quiet, except for the buzz of the old refrigerator.

Sam moves in cautiously, as if afraid to disturb the quiet.

SAM TEMPLE

Mom?

Silence.

QUINN GAITHER

Maybe she's up the hill. You know, at Coates Academy.

SAM TEMPLE

No. She's gone. Like all the others.

Sam looks over and sees that the stove is lit, with a pan containing a now unrecognizable burnt substance in it.

SAM TEMPLE (CONT'D)

This is going to be a problem all over town.

ASTRID ELLISON

Cars left on, stoves running.
Somebody needs to go around and
make sure things are off and the
little kids are with someone. And
then there's pills, alcohol, and
guns.

SAM TEMPLE

In this neighborhood some people
definitely have artillery.

QUINN GAITHER

It has to be God. I mean, how else,
right? No one else could just make
all the adults disappear.

He slumps down in one of the kitchen chairs, dejected.

ASTRID ELLISON

Everyone sixteen and older. Sixteen
isn't an adult. Trust me, I was in
class with them.

She turns to Sam.

ASTRID ELLISON (CONT'D)

Can I use the bathroom?

SAM TEMPLE

Yeah, it's-

ASTRID ELLISON

(interrupting)

I see it. Thanks.

She closes the bathroom door.

Sam continues to move through the kitchen while Quinn talks
in the background.

QUINN GAITHER

What did we do? That's what I don't
get. What did we do to piss God
off?

Sam opens the refrigerator and stares at its contents. Milk,
a few sodas, half a watermelon face down on a plate. Eggs,
apples, and lemons.

QUINN GAITHER (CONT'D)

I mean, we did something to deserve
this, right? God doesn't do things
like this for no reason.

Sam continues to stare at the food in the fridge.

SAM TEMPLE
I don't think it was God.

ASTRID ELLISON
Maybe Quinn's right.

They both spin around, not having heard Astrid exit the bathroom.

QUINN GAITHER
Let a man know you're coming next time, geez.

ASTRID ELLISON
There's nothing, you know, normal, that can do this. Is there" It doesn't make any sense. It's not possible and yet it happened.

SAM TEMPLE
Sometimes impossible things happen.

ASTRID ELLISON
(snapping)
No, they don't. The universe has laws. All the stuff we learn in science class. Impossible things don't happen. That's why they're impossible.

Sam and Quinn remain quiet, avoiding eye contact with Astrid.

SAM TEMPLE
I'm going to change my shirt, okay?
In my room. I'll be right back.
Help yourself to anything in the fridge.

Sam walks into his room and closes the door behind him.

CUT TO:

INT. SAM'S ROOM. AFTERNOON.

Sam's room is small, with a translucent gray window that looked out onto an alley between houses.

He rolls his eyes as he looks around, and mutters to himself.

SAM TEMPLE
I hate this place.

He sits down on the bed, and looks around.

CUT TO:

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM. THREE NIGHTS BEFORE.

FLASHBACK.

A thunderstorm rages outside of Sam's house. His mother, CONNIE TEMPLE, is wearing scrubs and readying herself to head off to work. Sam sits in the living room, watching TV.

CONNIE TEMPLE

Sam, honey, make sure you lock up
the house while I'm at work.

She walks over and rustles his hair. He swats her hand away and rolls his eyes, fixing his hair.

CONNIE TEMPLE (CONT'D)

You're the man of the house now,
but I'd still feel better if I knew
you had the door locked.

Connie leaves, and Sam locks the door after her. He goes into his bedroom and closes the door.

CUT TO:

INT. SAM'S BEDROOM. 10 PM.

Sam's room is completely dark except for the faint light of a floor lamp, and he climbs into bed.

He falls asleep.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. SAM'S ROOM. MIDNIGHT.

A loud crack of thunder booms, and Sam jolts upwards in bed. He breathes heavily, terrified of the dark house.

Sam breaks down, crying out to no one.

SAM TEMPLE

(desperately)

Mom?

He reaches out his hand for her, hoping somehow she'd be there.

When he does, a ball of light flies out of his hand and lights up the room. It lands in his closet.

Sam stands up and walks over to the ball cautiously.

He reaches out to touch it, and his hand passes right through it.

SAM TEMPLE (CONT'D)
(muttering to himself)
I can't let mom see this.

Sam closes the closet door, but the light passes right through it as if the door isn't even there.

He opens the door again, and throws some clothes over the top of the closet door to block the light. The light still shines through but most of it is blocked.

SAM TEMPLE (CONT'D)
That's not going to last long.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SAM'S HOUSE. PRESENT AFTERNOON.

Sam stands up hesitantly and walks over to his closet, pulling away the hanging clothing that poorly disguises the ball of light.

He stares at it, still in disbelief that it even exists. He reaches out as if to touch it, but before he does, there's a knock on the door.

ASTRID ELLISON (O.S.)
Sam?

SAM TEMPLE
Uh, yeah, one sec.

Sam quickly throws the clothes back over the ball, changes his shirt, and heads out to the living room.

Astrid is in the living room, standing over an open computer.

ASTRID ELLISON
Your mom was writing on her laptop.

Sam sits down and looks at the screen, which is open to a word document. The document is titled "Diary."

Sam cuts away, and Connie is sitting in the chair, in the same position, typing away.

CONNIE (V.O.)
 It happened again last night. I
 wish I could take this to G. But
 she'll think I'm crazy.

Connie cuts back to Sam, whose eyes scan the page.

CONNIE (V.O.)
 I could lose my job. She'll think
 I'm on drugs. If I had a way to put
 cameras all over, I could get some
 proof.

Cut back away from the screen, and Connie is in the chair
 typing once again.

CONNIE (V.O.)
 But I have no proof, and C's
 "mother" is rich and generous to
 CA. I'd be out the door. Even if I
 tell someone the truth, they'll
 just put me down as an overwrought
 mother.

Cut from screen back to Sam in the chair, heart racing.

CONNIE (V.O.)
 Sooner or later, C or one of the
 others will do something serious.
 Someone will get hurt.
 (pause)
 Just like S with T.

Sam looks away from the screen for a brief moment, closing
 his eyes and shaking his head. When he opens them, it's
 Connie back in the chair.

CONNIE (V.O.)
 Maybe I'll confront C. I don't
 think he'll confess. Would it make
 any difference if he knew everyth-

The diary cuts off mid-sentence. Sam's heart pounds, and when
 he notices Astrid subtly reading over his shoulder, he slams
 the laptop shut.

SAM TEMPLE
 Let's go.

QUINN GAITHER
 Where?

SAM TEMPLE
 Anywhere but here.

Sam stands up and walks out of the house, not looking back.

FADE TO:

EXT. A STREET. DUSK.

Sam closes and locks the door to his home, and turns around, ready to leave.

SAM TEMPLE
Let's head for the plaza.

QUINN GAITHER
Why?

ASTRID ELLISON
It's where the people will probably go. There's nowhere else, right?

Sam, Astrid, and Quinn walk along the road in silence, looking around at their surroundings.

There is another car crash, in the middle of the road. There is no one in either car.

They pass by a road sign that reads "Clifftop Resort Hotel: .75 miles. Coates Academy: 2.5 miles. Perdido Beach Nuclear Power: 10 miles."

As they keep walking, more and more kids appear to be heading in the same direction that they are.

When they are about half a block away from the plaza, they spot smoke rising and saw kids running towards the smoke.

Sam immediately takes off towards the smoke, sprinting to the plaza.

CUT TO:

EXT. BOTTOM OF THE GULCH. NIGHT.

Lana lies at the bottom of the gulch, staring up at the stars. She chokes out a combination cough/sob. Her body looks broken, irreversibly so.

Her dog sits next to her, seemingly unharmed.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR
(croaking)
Do you still think I'm pretty
Patrick?

She laughs, and winces in pain immediately after. Her voice is weak and raspy.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR (CONT'D)
Where'd Grandpa Luke go? Did you
see it Patrick?

Patrick wags his tail, not moving from her side.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR (CONT'D)
Crazy. This is crazy. I'm just
dreaming or something.

She yelps in pain as she tries to move her arm. Tears stream down her face.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR (CONT'D)
So thirsty...

She raises her head ever-so-slightly and twisted it until she could see the truck, in excruciating pain.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR (CONT'D)
That's not going anywhere.

Something scuttles across her neck, and Lana cries out in pain and terror.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR (CONT'D)
Don't let anything get me Patrick.

She lets out a few more tears, and then stifles them.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR (CONT'D)
I guess Mom will be happy she sent
me here.

Suddenly Patrick stands up, bristling and growling. Lana sees a pair of green eyes hovering in the darkness, disembodied.

The eyes blink slowly while Patrick continued to bark, louder and louder each time.

The eyes moved closer, and Lana could see the outline of a mountain lion.

Lana screams with all her might, but her voice is weak and pathetic.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR (CONT'D)
Go away! Leave me alone!

Patrick runs back to Lana and faces the mountain lion, as if protecting her.

Suddenly the mountain lion leaps, and Patrick leaps as well, and the two animals scuffle in a brutal battle. Growling, scratching, and snarling echoes through the otherwise silent gulch.

It's over in less than a minute, and the green eyes reappear farther away. They blink, and then are gone.

Patrick slowly moves back over to Lana, and slouches.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR (CONT'D)
 Good boy, you scared off that old
 lion. Good boy.

Patrick weakly wags his tail.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR (CONT'D)
 Did he hurt you, my good boy?

She runs her still-working hand over Patrick's body, and his coat is wet. She holds her hand up to her face, and sees blood in the moonlight.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR (CONT'D)
 (breaking down)
 No, no, no. You can't die. You
 can't die. You can't leave me
 alone.

Tears once again come streaming down Lana's cheeks, and she yells out with all her might into the night air.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR (CONT'D)
 Mommy! Mommy! I want my mom! I just
 want to go home.

She hugs Patrick in close to her, placing her good hand on the wound in his neck, pressing down as hard as she could to stop the bleeding.

LANA ARWEN LAZAR (CONT'D)
 Good...boy...

Lana passes out, and slowly, her hand slips from Patrick's neck.

FADE TO:

EXT. APARTMENT ABOVE FLOWER SHOP. NIGHT.

Sam rushes into the plaza. It's a small open space, with patches of open grass and a fountain in the middle that never works. There are benches and brick pathways.

There's a church and town hall at the top of the square, and above many of the stores that ringed the plaza there are apartments.

Sam comes to a stop in front of the burning building, panting. It's an apartment building above a long out of business flower shop.

A crowd of a few dozen kids stares up at the burning building, unmoving.

ASTRID ELLISON
Is anyone in there?

SAM TEMPLE
It could spread.

KID #1
There's no 911.

KID #2
You see any firemen anywhere?

Sam looks around quickly, and takes in his surroundings.

SAM TEMPLE
We can't let the fire reach the daycare.

Sam grabs KID #1 and KID #2.

SAM TEMPLE (CONT'D)
Go to the daycare, tell them to get the littles out of there.

The kids stare at him, unmoving.

SAM TEMPLE (CONT'D)
Now!

They run off to the daycare.

Sam looks over, and grabs two more kids, KID #3 and KID #4.

SAM TEMPLE (CONT'D)
You and you. Go into the hardware store and get the longest hose you can find. And a spray nozzle.

They stare at him blankly.

SAM TEMPLE (CONT'D)
Dudes: not tomorrow. Now. Go!

Sam turns to Quinn.

SAM TEMPLE (CONT'D)
 Quinn, you better go with them. We need to wet down the hardware store, that's where the fire will go next.

Quinn hesitates. Sam stands up on a bench in the midst of the group of stunned kids.

SAM TEMPLE (CONT'D)
 Hey, listen up! This isn't Disney Channel. We can't just watch this happen. There are no adults. There is no fire department. WE are the fire department. So MOVE!

Edilio appears from the group of kids.

EDILIO ESCOBAR
 Sam's right. What do you need?

SAM TEMPLE
 Quinn, hardware store. Edilio, let's get the big hoses from the fire station.

EDILIO ESCOBAR
 I'll need some strong guys.

SAM TEMPLE
 Take whoever you need.

Suddenly, a loud wail comes from the building. Sam freezes, and turns towards the fire.

KID #5
 There's someone in there!

SAM TEMPLE
 (shouting)
 Quiet!

The kids in the plaza fall silent. The wail can be faintly heard through the crackling of the fire and the ringing of distant car alarms.

GIRL IN FIRE (O.S.)
 Mommy!

ORC
 (mockingly)
 Mommy, I'm scared.

Kids moved away from him.

ORC (CONT'D)

What?

HOWARD BASSEM

(sneering)

Don't worry, School Bus Sam will
save the day, won't you Sam?

Sam turns away from Howard and Orc back to Edilio, breathing heavily and trying to think.

SAM TEMPLE

Edilio, go. Bring everything you
can.

EDILIO ESCOBAR

You can't go up there, man. We'll
get an air tank or something from
the fire station.

SAM TEMPLE

There's no time for that. Just go.

GIRL IN FIRE (O.S.)

(faintly)

Mommy!

Sam starts towards the door to the building, but Astrid stops him.

ASTRID ELLISON

Wrap this around your face.

She hands him a wet cloth. Sam nods silently and heads into the building.

TRACK TO:

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING HALLWAY. NIGHT.

Sam runs through the hallway and sprints up the narrow stairs.

At the top of the stairs, he runs into an opaque wall of smoke and stops for a moment. Tears sting in his eyes, and with one breath he falls to his knees, choking and gagging.

SAM TEMPLE

(rasping)

Kid, can you hear me? Yell, I need
to hear you.

He crawls along the hallway of the apartment building.

GIRL IN FIRE (O.S.)
(quietly)
Mommy!

Sam hears the voice coming faintly from down the hall. A light overhead flickering pale light in the gray smoke.

Sam reaches a doorway and rolls over onto his back, trying to kick the door in. The door doesn't budge with Sam's kicks.

He jumps up, and coughs violently. He slams his body into the door, and it shakes but doesn't move. He throws it at the door again, and again, but nothing. Finally, on the fourth slam, the door flies open.

The smoke from the room erupts into the hallway. Sam drops back to the floor and takes a breath of the fleeting breathable air.

For a second, the smoke in the apartment appears to break, before filling in once more.

Sam sees a young black girl, no older than five years old, laying on the ground, gagging.

SAM TEMPLE
(weakly)
I'm here. Don't worry.

Covered in soot and ash, like a giant monster, Sam moves towards the young girl.

She sees him coming and screams, throwing her hands out to stop him, and two jets of pure flame come flying out of her hands.

The blast barely misses Sam, and he stops, staring at her in disbelief before wracked with another coughing fit.

The little girl holds up her hands again, and instinctively Sam holds out his hands to stop the blast, and a flash of light flies out of Sam's hands.

The girl crumples to the ground. Sam rushes over to her, panicked.

SAM TEMPLE (CONT'D)
(frantically)
No, no, no, no.

The wall to his right falls inward, and the fire continues to rage inside the wall.

Sam holds the girl in his arms and stumbles towards the window. He collapses against it, hanging half out of it, gasping for air.

Two hands reach through the smoke and grab the girl. Then Edilio appears and grabs Sam, pulling him down the ladder. His head bangs on every rung as they descend.

Someone sprays Sam with a hose, and he opens his mouth, gulping at the water.

He passes out, and his vision goes black.

FADE TO BLACK:

EXT. THE BEACH. MORNING.

Sam floats on his back in the shallow water on the brink of the beach. His mother sits next to him, looking straight ahead.

SAM TEMPLE

What?

CONNIE

It smelled like fried chicken.

SAM TEMPLE

(confused)

What?

His mother turns towards him, and slaps him hard across the face.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE APARTMENT ABOVE FLOWER SHOP. NIGHT.

Astrid stands over Sam, who groggily comes to.

ASTRID ELLISON

Sorry, I needed to wake you.

She kneels beside him, and places an oxygen mask over his mouth. Sam breathes in deeply, and coughs.

He pulls the mask away and throws up in a sewer grate next to where he is sitting. He pulls the mask back over his mouth and breathes in again.

Looking over towards the burning building, Sam sees Quinn and Edilio putting out what remains of the fire with the garden hose and the larger fire hose from the station.

There are eight or so kids wrestling the larger hose to maintain control of it.

Sam sits up, still woozy from the smoke inhalation.

He nods over towards a crowd of six kids kneel around the little girl who had started the fire. The hair on one side of her head is burned away, and on the other side a pink scrunchy still holds a pigtail tight against her head.

He looks over at Astrid, his eyes begging for her to be okay even though he already knew.

Astrid shakes her head silently, and a tear drips down her face.

Sam looks down at his hands and cries.

FADE TO:

EXT. PERDIDO BEACH PLAZA. NIGHT.

Nearly a hundred kids now stood around the Perdido Beach Plaza aimlessly. The streetlights have turned on, adding an ominous lighting to the already bleak scene.

The apartments atop the flower shop were completely destroyed. The roof is collapsed, and half the upper floor has caved in. Smoke still rises in smaller quantities from the wreckage.

Sam and Quinn sit on the sidewalk. Sam holds a Dr. Pepper, and an empty PayDay wrapper rests on the sidewalk next to him. Quinn rocks back and forth, hugging his knees to his chin.

Bouncing Bette and her little brother walk over to Sam nervously.

BOUNCING BETTE

Sam, do you think it's safe to go to my house? We have to get something.

SAM TEMPLE

(tiredly)

Bette, I don't know any more than you do.

Bette nods and walks away. Two other kids approach Sam, a MALE FIFTH GRADER and FEMALE FIFTH GRADER.

FEMALE FIFTH GRADER
Do you know what's going to happen?

SAM TEMPLE
No, guys, I don't.

MALE FIFTH GRADER
Well, what should we do?

SAM TEMPLE
I guess just hang out for a while.

MALE FIFTH GRADER
Here?

SAM TEMPLE
Wherever feels right.

FEMALE FIFTH GRADER
We aren't scared.

SAM TEMPLE
Really? I'm so scared I wet my pants.

FEMALE FIFTH GRADER
(laughing)
No you didn't!

SAM TEMPLE
You're right. But it's okay to be scared. We're all scared.

The two kids walk away. Astrid reappears, and walks over to Quinn and Sam.

ASTRID ELLISON
I still can't find him. Petey isn't here, no one has seen him.

Sam hands her a soda.

SAM TEMPLE
Here, drink something.

ASTRID ELLISON
I don't usually drink this stuff.

QUINN GAITHER
(snapping)
You see any 'usually' around here?

Quinn's eyes flit from person to person, restless.

ASTRID ELLISON

Thanks Sam. Kids are saying it's some military thing gone wrong. Or terrorists. Or aliens. Or God. Lots of theories. No answers.

QUINN GAITHER

Do you even believe in God?

ASTRID ELLISON

Yes, just not in the God who disappears for no reason. To me, God is love. This doesn't look like love.

SAM TEMPLE

It's like the world's worst picnic.

A LITTLE BOY holding a teddy bear approaches Sam.

LITTLE BOY

Do you know where my mom is?

SAM TEMPLE

No little man, I'm sorry. You know what I bet? I bet they have cookies at the daycare. It's right across the street. See?

LITTLE BOY

I'm not supposed to cross the street.

SAM TEMPLE

I'll watch while you do it.

The little boy walks across the street to the daycare slowly. He turns back to look at Sam, and Sam nods reassuringly.

ASTRID ELLISON

Kids come to you, Sam. They're looking to you to do something. They sense you're a leader, Sam.

SAM TEMPLE

I'm not a leader of anything. I'm as scared as they are. I'm as lost as they are.

ASTRID ELLISON

Someone needs to do something.

Sam jumps to his feet, and draws the attention of dozens of nearby kids. He stands up on a large rock in the plaza.

SAM TEMPLE
(under his breath)
Fuck.

Sam turns to address the crowd.

SAM TEMPLE (CONT'D)
Look, all we have to do is hang tight. Someone is going to figure out what's happened and come find us, okay? So everyone just chill, don't do anything crazy, help each other out and try to be brave.

A ripple of voices repeats Sam's words, and the mood in the crowd lightens.

Astrid mutters under her breath.

ASTRID ELLISON
Everyone listens to the straight white guy.

Quinn turns to her and whispers quietly to her.

QUINN GAITHER
Bi.

ASTRID ELLISON
What?

QUINN GAITHER
Not just another straight white guy. A white guy, yes, but not straight.

ASTRID ELLISON
Oh.

Sam steps down off the rock, and Astrid watches him closely, thinking. She then turns to Sam and Quinn.

ASTRID ELLISON (CONT'D)
I have to find my brother.

SAM TEMPLE
Where else could he be?

ASTRID ELLISON
With my parents. Either at my Dad's work or where my mom plays tennis.
(MORE)

ASTRID ELLISON (CONT'D)
Clifftop Resort. Probably Clifftop.
Would....

She pauses.

 ASTRID ELLISON (CONT'D)
Would you guys come with me?

 QUINN GAITHER
Now? At night?

 SAM TEMPLE
Got nothing else to do.

 QUINN GAITHER
I hear the food is great up there.

He sticks out his hand for Sam to help him up, and Sam pulls him to his feet.

The trio heads out of the plaza off to Clifftop, passing by Howard and Orc's posse, who sit beneath the light at the intersection. They have a small, weak fire burning and a six-pack of beer in an ice-filled cooler.

 HOWARD BASSEM
Hey. Where do you think you're
going.

 SAM TEMPLE
For a walk.

 HOWARD BASSEM
Two surfers and a dumb genius?

Sam stops.

 SAM TEMPLE
That's right. We're going to teach
Astrid how to surf. Got a problem
with that?

 HOWARD BASSEM
You think you're the man, don't you
Sam? School Bus Sam. Big deal. You
don't impress me.

 SAM TEMPLE
That's a shame, Howard. I lived my
entire life with hopes of
impressing you.

Howard stands up abruptly, annoyed.

HOWARD BASSEM
Sam, Sam the Surfer Man.

Sam starts walking again.

SAM TEMPLE
We're going to go now.

HOWARD BASSEM
Ah, ah, ah.

Howard gestures with his baseball bat towards the red stoplight.

Sam clenches a fist and looks towards Howard angrily, and as he is about to make a move, the light turns green. Howard laughs and sits back down and Sam relaxes, walking past Howard into the night.

FADE TO:

EXT. CLIFFTOP RESORT HOTEL. NIGHT.

Sam, Astrid, and Quinn approach Clifftop under a starry night. The front entrance is grand, and lit up like Christmas already, with white twinkling lights.

ASTRID ELLISON
The stars are still there.

She stops, looking out at the horizon.

ASTRID ELLISON (CONT'D)
Wait, no. The stars are up, but not the ones just above the horizon. I think Venus should almost be setting. It's not there.

Sam and Quinn turn to look out at the horizon, past the beach just below Clifftop and onto the flat, open ocean.

ASTRID ELLISON (CONT'D)
The horizon looks higher than normal.

SAM TEMPLE
Did anyone watch the sun go down?

Astrid and Quinn both shake their heads.

SAM TEMPLE (CONT'D)
Let's just head inside.

They walk into the Clifftop lobby.

FADE TO:

INT. CLIFFTOP LOBBY. NIGHT.

The lobby is open and airy, with a polished blond wood counter, a bright tile floor, and gleaming brass accents leading toward a more shadowy bar.

At the elevators, one stands open, waiting. There is a TV on in the bar, playing static.

Their footsteps echo on the tile.

QUINN GAITHER

There's no one here.

They look around, and see nothing but emptiness.

ASTRID ELLISON

Come on, the tennis courts are this way.

She leads Sam and Quinn to the far side of the lobby.

ASTRID ELLISON (CONT'D)

That's where mom and Little Pete would be.

They leave the lobby.

TRACK TO:

EXT. CLIFFTOP TENNIS COURTS. NIGHT.

They walk out onto the tennis courts. Cutting across the far court, slicing through the well-tended landscape, and cutting through the swimming pool, is a barrier.

The barrier shimmers ever so slightly. It is not opaque, but whatever light comes through is milky. The wall is reflective, like looking into a frosted glass window.

It makes no sound, and does not move.

The barrier rises endlessly into the sky, to the left and to the right, as far as they can see.

QUINN GAITHER

What is it?

They all look up in awe.

QUINN GAITHER (CONT'D)

(urgently)

What is it?

SAM TEMPLE

It's a wall.

They stare at the wall cutting through the court, unmoving.

CUT TO BLACK.