

THE PENALTY

Written by

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Based on Ethan Marek's trilogy, THE PENALTY

Minnesota  
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INT. THE BARN - NIGHT

The KIELSTAD KNIGHTS play the SCYTHER. LIAM LAMPER, 18-year-old hockey player with a beanie hat addiction, sits on the bench amid his teammates & coaches as his gear BURNS IN FIRE:

COACH KIPP, 50s, grouchy head coach. MR. Z, 40s, buff assistant coach. CHESTER, 16, ASH, 18, THOMAS, 16, watch the game standing up.

COACH KIPP

Let's go!

Liam bounces back to reality. His fire burns out.

FINN, 15, short freshman, dodges the bullet-of-a-puck. The puck crashes into the net. COLE, college-commit goaltender, slams his stick against the goal post.

Other teammates on the ice; JAKE, 17, defenseman one, CHARLIE, 17, defenseman two. DANNY, 18, lazy boy, and BEN, 18, selfish jock.

Kipp nudges his foot into Liam.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)

Get your ass off the bench.

Liam stands. Finn leans his stick upon his legs and wheezes. The Knights are losing 0-5.

ASH

Let's switch 'em.

A shadow looms among the bleachers in a black cloak, anticipating the game in invisibility. This... is GHOST.

The boys roll up for faceoff. Liam sees his mom, JENNY, late 30s, and his girlfriend, MARIE, 18, on the bleachers amid the CROWD. He turns his back to them.

Ghost sticks out from the crowd, yet he's the INVISIBLE one.

The REFEREE tweets the whistle. Hockey sticks clack against each other in battle. The Scythe win the puck, but the tides turn when Kielstad steals it back.

Ash and Chester pass the puck to each other as Liam hustles to the Scythe's net. Liam rebounds Ash's shot on the opposing goaltender. He scores.

CHESTER

Way to go, Liam!

JAKE

Nice rebound, beanie!

Liam and his line skate past the bench for fist bumps. But Kipp, he crinkles up his line-sheet. 1-5. Three minutes left in the third period.

INT. THE BARN - EXCRUTIATING LONG HALLWAY - NIGHT

Cole slams into the game doors and leads his angry, pouty team to the locker room.

INT. THE BARN - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

The boys sit in their stalls. Kipp and Mr. Z enter, but Kipp paces furiously. The cold is stiller than ice.

BLAM! Kipp kicks the stick stand down. He whips the sticks around the room, making way for the door.

MR. Z

Practice tomorrow, boys. Shower up.

He leaves. No one moves, besides the tears that streak behind Finn's cupped hands. Liam lays a hand on his shoulder.

INT. THE BARN - CONECSIONS - NIGHT

Beanie-hat Liam walks out. Jenny and Marie are within the small, gathered crowd.

MARIE

There he is.

JENNY

Nice job, sweetie.

LIAM

The boys and I are gonna go out for pizza.

JENNY

Good. It's hard enough to keep the energy up with two lines.

LIAM

Wanna join us, Marie?

MARIE

Go have time with your pals.

LIAM  
You sure?

MARIE  
Yes. Go.

INT. THE BARN - COACH'S LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

A KNOCK at the door, and then it opens. Finn closes it.

FINN  
You wanted to see me, Coach?

COACH KIPP  
Sit down.

Finn follows orders.

FINN  
If this is about how I played  
today, I already know it was rough.

COACH KIPP  
Rough?

Coach Kipp WHIPS a clipboard at the wall.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)  
That's all you got? Rough?

FINN  
I'm sorry--

COACH KIPP  
You should be! I grabbed the wrong  
freshman to pull up on my team. I  
spent all my time and effort in  
you. What a WASTE.

Finn can't handle to look at him.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)  
You'll never make it through high  
school hockey. You'll never make it  
to college. Poor and pathetic.  
That's what you are.

Beat.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)  
Get out.

Finn hurries out before any explosions ignite.

INT. PIZZERIA - NIGHT

A WAITRESS serves a giant, pepperoni pizza to the table. Liam, Ash, Chester, and Thomas grab at it.

WAITRESS  
Anything else I can get for you?

THOMAS  
Your number?

Chester slaps him on the shoulder.

CHESTER  
Dude.

WAITRESS  
I'll be expecting a nice tip from you then.

She walks away. Ash raises a cheesy pizza slice up.

ASH  
She didn't say no.

Liam stares at his empty plate.

LIAM  
Coach needs to be fired.

No one answers.

LIAM (CONT'D)  
He's a fricken psychopath.

ASH  
That's okay. He can't hurt me.

Ash shows his biceps.

CHESTER  
We should've invited Finn.

LIAM  
I asked him. He wanted to be alone.

THOMAS  
What's bothering Finn NOW?

CHESTER  
He's a bully. He puts me down on my ass every time.

LIAM

That's why we turn him in.

ASH

Woah, woah, woah. Slow down. We aren't turning him in.

LIAM

What?

ASH

You're gonna let a bully stomp on your emotions?

THOMAS

Yeah. Build a stronger skull, Liam.

LIAM

Shut up, Thomas.

ASH

Liam, it's too risky. For you and I, this is our last year of high school hockey, and halting the season for this would ruin our chances for college.

Ash digs into the pizza with Thomas and Chester.

LIAM

Maybe I should quit then.

He takes his root beer bottle and leaves the table.

INT. THE BARN - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Finn sits alone with his jersey. He hangs it up. He evaluates his gear. Disappointed.

INT. THE BARN - EXCRUCIATING LONG HALLWAY - NIGHT

Finn walks out of the locker room with flooding eyes. Suddenly, a door behind him slams shut. There's nothing behind him. But in front, a paler Coach Kipp appears.

Suddenly, Finn chokes on thick, black liquid. Black goop puddles the floor-- like a MURDER SCENE. He falls limp against the wall and slides to his last breath.

INT. THE BARN - CONCESSIONS - NIGHT

Liam enters. The ZAMBONI resurfaces the quiet ice arena.

INT. THE BARN - EXCRUTIATING LONG HALLWAY - NIGHT

Liam finds Finn sleeping against the wall. There's no blood.

LIAM

Finn?

Liam shakes him.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Finn!

He's long gone. BLAM! Ghost YANKS Liam away from Finn.

LIAM (CONT'D)

NO! Heeeeelp! Heeeeelp!

INT. THE BARN - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Ghost drops him and locks the door. Liam stumbles back. Ghost takes off his hood and raises his arms for no-harm.

GHOST

Liam Lamper. Tonight, your friend died from a sudden heart attack.

Liam's landlocked.

GHOST (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for your loss.

His eyes puddle up.

GHOST (CONT'D)

A cloak hangs in your stall. I want you to put it on.

The words go through one ear and out the other.

GHOST (CONT'D)

Liam.

Liam breaks and runs out of the room, leaving Ghost to mourn.

INT. THE BARN - ICE RINK - MORNING

Everyone stands around the faceoff circle.

Liam scans around with his wet face. Ben and Danny, dry-eyes. Ash and Chester cry. Mr. Z-- heartbroken. Liam glares at Kipp, and Kipp feels it.

Finn's RELATIVES watch the setting casket. The parents throw plush wolves with him.

EXT. KIELSTAD COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY

Liam parks. He hops out with his string bag (and of course his beanie hat) and up the winter-salted steps.

INT. POOL - LIFEGUARD ROOM - DAY

Liam ventures inside and finds Marie studying. He puts his backpack down and changes into lifeguard clothes.

MARIE

I'm sorry about Finn.

Liam stops digging in his bag.

MARIE (CONT'D)

I know he was like a younger brother to you.

Beat.

MARIE (CONT'D)

After my shift, you wanna go out for dinner or something?

LIAM

He died from a heart attack. Who has a heart attack as a teenager?

MARIE

You don't believe them? When's the last time you ate?

Liam ambles backwards from the room in his lifeguard gear.

LIAM

I gotta go switch with Treena.

Marie's words are at a loss.



INT. KIELSTAD COMMUNITY CENTER - POOL - DAY

TREENA, young adult lifeguard, sits by the kiddie pool. A mushroom feature CRASHES a cylinder wall of water down below, right by a MOTHER with her TWO YOUNGLINGS.

LIAM

You're good to go, Treena.

TREENA

Liam! Hey.

LIAM

Anybody else swimming?

TREENA

No, just the three right now.

Liam nods. Treena notices his change of quietness.

INT. POOL - LIFEGUARD ROOM - DAY

On the break table, Marie's notebook, it reads "SNOWBALL PLANS." Someone walks in. She closes it. It's Treena.

MARIE

Oh. It's just you.

TREENA

I don't know whether to be satisfied or salty about that.

Marie opens her notebook back up.

TREENA (CONT'D)

So how's the plan going?

MARIE

I think it's coming together.

TREENA

Do you know when you're gonna ask?

MARIE

As of now, not for a dang while.

TREENA

Yeah. What's up with him today?

MARIE

His teammate had a heart attack.

TREENA

No-- Oh, poor guy. Marie, we gotta get him ice cream or something.

MARIE

I've tried to get him to eat. He's taking the nuse over a nibble.

LIAM

I wanna quit.

Marie and Treena jump to his sudden appearance.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I wanna quit hockey.

MARIE

Liam! Are you watching the kids?

Marie gets up from her seat and hustles out of the room with her tube. Liam watches her leave for duty. But him and Treena, they're at an awkward standpoint. Treena shuts Marie's notebook for her, then smiles at Liam.

INT. LIAM'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - DAY

Jenny carries Liam's French toast, smothered in maple syrup, and a glass of milk, to the table where him and Marie sit.

JENNY

Liam's father loved French toast. He would cook it every night before his game. Now, when we eat it, we feel like he's still with us.

MARIE

I love that.

Jenny pours them a mug of hot chocolate.

JENNY

Liam. Your father coached you your entire life.

Liam sips, burning his tongue.

JENNY (CONT'D)

My advice is to give it a couple of weeks. People can change.

LIAM

Coach is selfish. He won't.

JENNY

And that may very well be, but only  
the phases of the moon will tell.

Liam sips, burning his tongue again.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Whatever you decide, we're here to  
support you.

Jenny rubs his hair with her hand.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Let's get you to eat now.

INT. THE BARN - ICE ARENA - NIGHTMARE

The Kielstad Knights practice in a small area game.

Ben knocks Liam down in a huge check. Liam struggles to  
stand. Cole laughs, then he turns his net around and traps  
Liam against the boards, like a jail cell.

Liam tries to push it, but it's frozen into the ice. He's  
stuck. Coach Kipp skates over as the other boys follow.

COACH KIPP

Look what we have here.

The boys shake their heads. Liam's appalled. A SLAPSHOT  
occurs behind all of them, and when they move for Liam to see  
who it is-- His jaw drops to the ice. Finn.

Coach Kipp kneels down to Liam, then slides out a kitchen  
knife from his jacket. Oh, how bright it shines. Kipp hands  
the knife behind his head to Ben, keeping his eyes on Liam.

LIAM

No.

Ben skates up to Finn.

LIAM (CONT'D)

NO!

STAB! Finn falls to his knees as his jersey soaks with blood.  
Ben rips the knife out, then skates it up to Danny. Danny  
repeats the motion, then off to Charlie, then to the rest.

Liam tries to kick his blades at the netting, but it's too  
late. He watches his team backstab Finn while Kipp taunts  
him. Liam screams his heart out.

LIAM (CONT'D)  
NOOOOOOOO!

INT. LIAM'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Liam throws his chest out of bed. He catches his breath. A picture of him when he was a younger hockey player, and his Dad, lies beside him.

EXT. LIAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Liam hops into his SUV as the forest sleeps around him. He pulls out of the driveway and leaves his house.

EXT. MINNESOTA FARMLANDS - NIGHT

Liam rolls over the crisp hills, passing the still trees and snowed-over farmlands, all beneath the eerie, overcast night. Kielstad's lights in town bounce off the low clouds.

EXT. THE BARN - NIGHT

Liam parks. He gets out of the car, looks around for any spies, then sneaks around the closed arena.

EXT. THE BARN - THE SHED - NIGHT

Liam reaches the dryland room door which sits next to the outdoor rink. He opens the door.

INT. THE BARN - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

Liam sneaks inside the dark. He grabs the cloak from his stall and puts it on.

GHOST  
Pull your hood on.

Liam raises his chin to Ghost who waits at the door. Liam pulls the hood over his head. Ghost does the same.

GHOST (CONT'D)  
Follow me.

INT. THE BARN - EXCRUTIATING LONG HALLWAY - NIGHTSHADE

The black goop stains the wall and puddles the floor. Liam studies the path. He leads the way down the long stretch, all the way to the game doors.

INT. THE BARN - ICE ARENA - NIGHTSHADE

It's quiet. Too quiet. Ghost follows Liam as their cloaks drag by the goop. It leaks beneath the zamboni door.

INT. THE BARN - ZAMBONI ROOM - NIGHTSHADE

Two Shadows enter the RED-lit room. The door shuts them inside. The zamboni's headlights shine RED. And beneath the engine, the black liquid leaks down to the caged flood-pit.

Liam studies Finn's gutted body beneath.

GHOST

You're in great danger, Liam.

Liam books it out of the room with uncontrollable emotions.

INT. THE BARN - ICE ARENA - NIGHTSHADE

Liam sprints onto the bleachers. The overhead heaters glow ORANGE, paralleling with his shadow. It warms him to a stop.

GHOST

We need your help, Liam.

LIAM

Who are you?

GHOST

Ghost.

LIAM

That's not your real name.

GHOST

Hierarchs don't share their names with the chosen ones.

LIAM

Chosen? What for?

GHOST

To end all pain.

LIAM  
Where are we?

GHOST  
Your Barn. It's more vicious than  
the others.

LIAM  
You're sick. You're a sick, fucking  
freak!

Liam storms past him.

GHOST  
No, Liam. You're sick.

Liam stops and clenches his eyes to the truth.

GHOST (CONT'D)  
I know what it's like to be in your  
skates.

Liam drops to his knees, cupping his hands to his face. Ghost  
places a hand on his back.

GHOST (CONT'D)  
I need your help, Liam. There are  
other hockey players in danger. We  
need someone to help them.

LIAM  
How? How can I help?

INT. THE BARN - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHTSHADE

Ghost grabs both of Liam's skates.

Ghost turns Liam's hand to face the palm upwards. He takes  
the skate and carves a bloody gash into the one hand. Liam  
clenches his teeth and squints.

LIAM  
Why me?

GHOST  
I can see your pain, and your pain  
BURNS like no other.

Ghost gashes the other hand.

GHOST (CONT'D)  
Hold your hands up to mine.

Their hands glue together.

GHOST (CONT'D)  
Apprentice Lamper. Your blood is on  
my hands.

Liam drops his arms along with Ghost.

GHOST (CONT'D)  
Welcome to the Shadows.

Liam blinks to the floor, not realizing what he's done. One  
of the skates drips blood off the end of its blade. DRIP!

EXT. THE BARN - THE SHED - NIGHT

Ghost and Liam sit on the outdoor rink's dinkey boards with  
their cloaks still on. Liam tugs on his cloak.

LIAM  
How does it work?

GHOST  
When you throw the hood over your  
head, you're invisible to the real  
world.

LIAM  
No one can see me with this on?

Liam faces the ice, evaluating this new magical power.

LIAM (CONT'D)  
So we're invisible?

GHOST  
You're invisible until you touch  
someone. When you touch another  
human, you're allowing them to see  
you.

LIAM  
And you made these?

GHOST  
Yes.

LIAM  
How?

GHOST  
I'm a psychologist, but I study the  
evolution of pain.  
(MORE)

GHOST (CONT'D)

These cloaks, they allow us to see the pain in others, like how I've seen you burning in flame.

Beat.

LIAM

How long have you watched me for?

GHOST

Since the start of the season. Your fire burned so much I could see the smoke rising in the sky. You burnt more smoke than a Canadian wildfire.

Ghost and Liam chuckle together, pleased with the thought, but Liam loses his smile fast.

LIAM

Coaches need to be held accountable for their actions.

GHOST

I don't think your coach is your main concern.

LIAM

Why does everyone keep saying that?

GHOST

Pain's a scary thing. But the only way to cure it is to fight what's haunting you.

LIAM

Kipp is what's haunting me.

GHOST

Liam. Pain takes time to unravel. Anger doesn't cure a depression. Patience does.

LIAM

Quitting hockey'll help me cure mine.

Liam hops off the boards.

GHOST

No it won't.

LIAM

Then what will!



Beat.

GHOST  
Your training starts tomorrow.

Liam storms off in the snow, ripping the hood and his beanie hat off his head.

EXT. KIELSTAD HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

Cars pack the parking lot. SCHOOL BELL rings.

INT. KIELSTAD HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - DAY

The hockey team sits on the bleachers. A girl stands beside Mr. Z on the track. KATE, 15, hockey player.

MR. Z  
Boys. Welcome Kate to the team. She played on the Bantam A team. She had the highest record of assists out of all the boys, along with nasty stickhandling skills. Make time to meet her.

KATE  
Thank you, Mr. Z.

She picks a front row spot on the bleachers.

MR. Z  
Today... is Destrier Day.

BEN  
Wooo!

DANNY  
What are you cheering for?

BEN  
It's Destrier Day.

DANNY  
I'm not ready for this.

COLE  
Probably 'cause you drank pop in history class.

DANNY  
I wasn't expecting to run today.

MR. Z

Mr. Glovestone. You should expect to run every day. You're in a gym class.

Danny over-exaggerates a groan.

MR. Z (CONT'D)

Just for that, Danny, Ben, first ones up.

Chester and Ash snicker at each other.

INT. KIELSTAD HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Danny stands at the far end of the track. Ben readies by the bleachers. A flag wraps around their waists.

Mr. Z towers tall, raises an air horn, then BRRMMM!

Ben and Danny run the same direction around the track. Ben cranks around the corner in a sprint. Danny jogs around his corner. Lazy guy.

ASH

Does he ever try at anything?

Ben catches up to him and YANKS the flag off.

DANNY

How are you so fast?

Mr. Z reads from his list.

MR. Z

Kate, and-- Liam. You're next.

Kate hops off the bleachers.

ASH

Play it strategically.

LIAM

Always.

He hops off.

INT. KIELSTAD HIGH SCHOOL - TRACK - LATER

Liam tightens his sweaty fists, ready to burst into speed. Kate readies herself. Both flags are around their waists.

BRMMMM! Kate sprints. Liam steadily runs, keeping a good pace. He looks across the track, eyeing her up. She sprints wild by the weight room, catching up fast. Liam allows her to approach closer to him. And once he notices her--

ASH  
Now, Liam. Now.

Liam EXPLODES with speed.

He banks around the turns, leaving Kate in a dust of wasted energy as she slows down. Liam whips around the bends as the boys on the bleachers cheer them on.

CHESTER  
Let's go, Liam!

DANNY  
Run! Run!

BEN  
You actually know what that word means?

Liam tails behind Kate. His feet bang off the floor, left-right-left-right-left. Almost there, almost there, and BLAM! He yanks Kate's flag. They both slow down to a walk.

ASH  
Nice job, Liam!

MR. Z  
Woo!

Kate spins to Liam and holds out her hand. Liam shakes it.

KATE  
Nice job.

LIAM  
You too.

They walk their own path, catching their breath.

INT. THE BARN - EXCRUCIATING LONG HALLWAY - EVENING

Liam marches down the hall in full gear. The back of his practice jersey (#21) sways. Liam reaches the game doors and pats his stick above them.

INT. THE BARN - ICE RINK - EVENING

Liam jumps on the ice as the zamboni resurfaces. He coasts over to the boards and sits upon the sides.

The zamboni turns around by the scoreboard. The DRIVER's hand cranks the water control wheel. The mop of the zamboni dampens the ice.

The zamboni passes Liam as he watches it creep by. His eyes narrow to something. The faceoff dot sleeps with Finn buried beneath it.

He holds his head high to the lights, then drops it. PEEP!

INT. THE BARN - ICE RINK - EVENING - MOMENTS LATER

Liam shreds cheese, sprinting the ice with his team. Another PEEP slows them to a coast. Coach Kipp stands in the middle with his whistle. He PEEPS it again.

Liam picks up his speed. His skates shove into the ice and kick up snow. His jersey drifts in the breeze.

A triple PEEP settles his speed. He catches his breath as sweat streams down his face.

INT. THE BARN - ICE RINK - EVENING - MOMENTS LATER

From center dot, the boys watch Ben, Danny, and Kate, finish their drill. They score on Cole in net. Thomas plays with his feet, bored. Liam feels sorry for him.

Triple PEEP!

COACH KIPP

Bring it in.

The boys gather beside Liam. Pucks litter Cole's net.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)

Liam. Bucket those pucks for us.

Liam skates to the net with a bucket and picks them up. TING!  
Liam jumps to a firing puck.

Jake stands out from the bunch. He shot the puck. The team, even Kipp, chuckle from his jump scare.

Liam recoups himself.

INT. THE BARN - LOCKER ROOM -EVENING

Hands swipe snow off a skate's blade. Liam hangs them up in his stall. Chester hangs the last of his gear up.

LIAM  
You fricken concord.

Mr. Z enters. All the boys quiet around.

MR. Z  
Bus leaves at three-thirty tomorrow. Stay hydrated, and eat a good meal tonight.

The boys clap. Mr. Z leaves.

BEN  
Team meal at Upside.

DANNY  
Wooooooooooooooooo!

Chester leans into Liam.

CHESTER  
You going?

LIAM  
No.

CHESTER  
Me neither.

Liam stuffs his beanie hat on.

EXT. THE BARN - THE SHED - AFTERNOON

The snow falls. Liam and Ghost exit the dryland room with their cloaks on. They head into the outdoor rink's SHED.

INT. THE SHED - AFTERNOON

What a dinky little warming house. Liam spots the hung-up SPACE HEATER clinking on all by itself, glowing ORANGE.

GHOST  
The Claws. You play them tomorrow.

LIAM  
The Kielstad Knights do. Doubt I'll have much playing time.

GHOST

Please, a team with two lines?  
You'll get plenty of time.

LIAM

Plenty of time to be yelled at-- It  
steals the game from me.

Beat.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Hockey's different now. The greed  
grows the older you get.

GHOST

Business gets involved. Greed plays  
a major role with these coaches.

LIAM

That's why somebody needs to watch  
over them.

GHOST

Are you ready for this?

LIAM

I'm ready to make a difference.

Ghost pats him on the back.

GHOST

Bring your cloak tomorrow. After  
the game, throw it on, and check  
out what happens inside.

LIAM

Will you be there?

Ghost leaves. Liam glances at the outdoor rink.

EXT. COUNTY ROAD 21 - EVENING

A school bus roars past farmlands with a trailer.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - COUNTY ROAD 21 - EVENING

Liam listens to music. The Kielstad boys busy themselves on  
the bus. Liam pulls at his jersey that drapes over the  
window. His vision catches the street sign. County Road 21.  
He turns back, releasing jersey 21 to drape back over.

EXT. DORCHA ARENA - EVENING

The Kielstad bus pulls in with its hockey trailer. Ben and Danny prop the trailer's door open. The boys grab their hockey bags.

INT. DORCHA ARENA - ICE RINK - EVENING

Liam and his team enter the side doors. The roof points to a triangle. Orange splatters all around the arena. TWO BANTAM TEAMS practice on the ice.

INT. DORCHA ARENA - CRAMPED TUNNEL - EVENING

The boys find their locker room through the tight tunnel.

INT. DORCHA ARENA - SKINNY LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

Dim lights. Plain white cinder block walls. One skinny hall of benches. The boys settle themselves inside. Liam places his bag on the ground and digs inside it.

INT. DORCHA ARENA - ICE RINK - EVENING

On the orange bleachers, Liam rests high in the middle. Dorcha's logo of a dragon shows off on center ice. Liam rips off tape from his stick's blade. Bantam players practice on the ice in drills.

Danny, Ben, and Cole sit in the lower corner taping sticks. Liam spirals his tape around his blade.

MR. Z

Ready for the big game?

Mr. Z sits next to Liam.

LIAM

Not sure.

MR. Z

That's an answer I never get from you.

Liam stops taping his stick. He sighs.

LIAM

Hockey doesn't feel the same anymore.

MR. Z

You guys have been through a lot.

LIAM

How do you get through it?

MR. Z

You learn. You set milestones. Then you push yourself beyond the limits till you fail again-- it's a vicious cycle.

Liam looks at the Bantam practice, then continues taping.

MR. Z (CONT'D)

But only the strong survive the harshest storms, only something a BEAST could accomplish.

Liam smiles. Mr. Z leaves him. Liam crashes hard with a chill. He peers up. Dead steel heaters... But over in Dorcha's section, Liam finds-- Glowing red veins.

Coach Kipp stands by the glass. The Dragon's coach, RACCOON FACE, slides beside him.

RACCOON FACE

I'm sorry to hear about your boy.

Coach Kipp sips his styrofoam-cupped coffee.

RACCOON FACE (CONT'D)

How have you been holding up?

COACH KIPP

Why does it matter?

RACCOON FACE

Your boys have just been through a lot lately.

COACH KIPP

My team is none of your business.

The Dragon's coach pats him on the back, making Coach Kipp spill a little coffee on his coaching jacket.

INT. DORCHA ARENA - SKINNY LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

Coach Kipp paces. Liam stares at Coach. He freezes.

COACH KIPP

We need this win.



Danny's water bottle distracts him.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)  
I don't care how tall those  
skyscrapers are.

Jake and Charlie nod in agreement with Coach.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)  
I don't care what their record is.

Thomas stares at Coach while Cole focuses on his helmet.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)  
And I don't care if you guys feel  
intimidated by them.

Ash's jaw tightens. Chester focuses on Coach.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)  
You go out there and rip this game  
from their hands. Let's burn these  
dragons down with their own flame.

Liam stays put amid the CHEERING.

BEN  
Let's go, boys!

DANNY  
Woooooooooooooooooooo!

Jake and Charlie fist bump. Ash and Chester slam sticks against each other's knee pads. Liam buckles his helmet. He stuffs his gloves on, cracks his neck, then wanders off.

INT. DORCHA ARENA - CRAMPED TUNNEL - NIGHT

Liam's bunched in with his team. His eyes glare to the light. The rink ELECTRIFIES in a colorful light show.

COMMENTATOR  
Welcome the Kielstad Knights.

INT. DORCHA ARENA - ICE RINK - NIGHT

Liam, 21 on his back, stands up straight. He rushes through the corridor as a small STUDENT SECTION cheers them onto the ice. He turns on his speed and whooshes by the glass.

Liam catches up to Ash. The boys loop around the net. They spread out along the goal line.

COMMENTATOR

And please welcome, your very own,  
Dorcha Dragons!

The DRAGONS crash out of their locker room and sprint down the spiral staircase. The DORCHA STUDENTS cheer them on.

Dorcha jumps on the ice and laps in their zone. Jake and Charlie look at one another like it's nothing. Charlie shrugs his shoulders.

Liam aims his eyes at Kate. She focuses on the Dragons who hop on the ice. He checks back to Dorcha's team--

He discovers LETHOR, number 21 in orange. Dorcha spreads out on their goal line.

COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)

Good evening, hockey fans. We'll begin with the starting lineups for the Knights.

Kielstad students CHEER in their small posse. Marie and Jenny are up above.

MARIE

Let's go, boys.

Liam breathes in, then out, facing straight ahead.

COMMENTATOR

Starting in goal, number one, Cole Claufield.

Cole skates to the line and stops, facing Dorcha.

COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)

Starting on defense, number seventeen, Jake Jabownsk.

Jake skates up next to Cole.

COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)

Also on defense, number twenty-five, Charlie Cloves.

Charlie skates up to the other side of Cole. Liam taps his skates on the ice, one-by-one.

COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)

Playing center, number five, Ben Reich.

Ben coasts next to Jake.

COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)  
 Playing right-wing, number twelve,  
 Danny Glovestone.

Danny lazes to the line. Jesus, he takes his time.

COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)  
 And last but not least.

Liam's ready to go.

COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)  
 On left-wing, number five, Kate  
 Comb.

Kate sprints to the line. Liam twiddles with his stick. Kate sprays the snow. Ash, Chester, and Thomas, skate up to the line. Liam copies.

COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)  
 The head coach for the Knights,  
 Coach Kipp. Assistant coach, Mitch  
 Zuckerman.

Coach Kipp stays in his serious composure, hands behind back.

COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)  
 And now, the starting lineups for  
 your Dorcha Dragons!

The Dorcha fans RATTLE the rink. But the sound fades out from Liam. He stares straight ahead, then he looks down at his--

Skates. He taps the blade of his stick on the ice. He rolls his shoulders back, then looks up again.

COMMENTATOR (CONT'D)  
 Let's... play... hockey!

INT. DORCHA ARENA - ICE RINK - NIGHT - LATER

Kielstad whirlpools around the zone. Liam coasts as the others vigorously skate. They jump on the net.

COLE  
 Let's go, boys!

CHARLIE  
 Let's beat these flamethrowers.

JAKE  
 Wooooo!

BEN

Alright, boys. Knights on three.  
One, two, three.

KIELSTAD TEAM

Knights!

Ash, Chester, Liam, and Thomas hop on the bench. The first five on each team roll up to the faceoff dot.

Liam sits with his line. But over on Dorcha's side, Liam spots Dorcha's 21. Lethor-- He looks at Liam. He's the only player sitting on their bench.

The REFEREE points his arm at Cole. Cole slaps both goal posts with his stick, then waves. The ref points to Dorcha's goalie. Dorcha's goalie waves.

The ref blows the whistle. Every player gets low, ready for battle. The puck drops. They fight for it.

INT. DORCHA ARENA - SKINNY LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

The boys sit on the bench. Kipp thinks. Mr. Z waits with the boys. The silence bends the room. Kipp SLAMS a water bottle into the wall.

COACH KIPP

I think it's time to pull up more  
Bantam players. What do you think  
Kate?

Her lips stay shut.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)

Too many of you think you're  
fucking spot is safe cause you've  
played on this team last year.

Liam stares to his hockey bag. Kipp leaves.

MR. Z

Why are you here?

Beat.

MR. Z (CONT'D)

Ben. Why are you here?

Nothing.

MR. Z (CONT'D)

Thomas. Why are you here? You haven't played one second of a game, yet here you are.

More nothing.

MR. Z (CONT'D)

Liam. Why are you here?

Liam stares at him.

MR. Z (CONT'D)

Why are you here?

LIAM

I'm here to play hockey, sir!

MR. Z

As are all of you. YOU guys have each other's backs out there. We can't win these games for you, but we can lead you in the right direction.

Mr. Z leaves the room.

CHESTER

Kipp doesn't teach shit.

DANNY

Glad I wasn't the only one.

BEN

You wouldn't learn shit anyways.

Jake and Charlie slap each other in a chuckle.

KATE

Where the hell did he coach before?

COLE

Juniors.

THOMAS

Where the cubs cry, and the wealthy WOLVES grow.

Liam ravel's Thomas' words, studying him.

INT. DORCHA ARENA - CRAMPED TUNNEL - NIGHT

Liam exits with his hockey bag and beanie hat on, strolling through the tight walls. CRACKLES stop Liam in place. Dust falls from the short ceiling. He finds a crack in the cement.

EXT./INT. BUS TRAILER - DORCHA ARENA - NIGHT

In the snowstorm, Liam slides his cloak out of his bag. He sneaks behind the trailer and throws it on.

INT. DORCHA ARENA - CRAMPED TUNNEL - NIGHT

Liam walks to the start of the hall. Ash and Chester approach him. They pass. Liam drops his mouth, then continues forth.

The ceiling closes in tight, slowly inching down. The lights BUZZ and flicker. The concrete CRACKLES with dust falling to the floor. Liam panics as he crouches under the ceiling.

The walls squish him in fast. SPARKS from the lights rain around Liam. He drops to his belly and crawls. Liam groans in the tight squeeze. He reaches a random door and crawls into--

INT. DORCHA ARENA - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

As the locker room closes in, he finds him. Lethor holds a pistol to his head. Liam leaps onto his feet and RIPS the gun out of his hand.

Dorcha Kid opens his eyes, shocked. He checks out his hand. No gun. He squats to the floor and breaks down. Liam observes the locker room. It's back to its normal size.

Liam pulls his hood off. He kneels down to the boy and touches his knee. The boy jumps back, but they hug it out.

LIAM

It's okay. It's okay. I'm here for you. I'm here for you.

The cries upon Liam's shoulder-- They're just devastating. Liam faces the boy closely.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Who did this to you?

LETHOR

My coach! My fucking coach.

LIAM  
What did he do?

LETHOR  
It's what he didn't do. It's my  
senior year, and my ass is still on  
the bench.

He breaks out more, but Liam's inner fury ROARS.

INT. DORCHA ARENA - TUNNEL - NIGHT

Liam storms out with his cloak. The lights stutter, back to normal height. He pulls his hood on.

EXT. DORCHA ARENA - NIGHT

Raccoon Face shuffles through the snowstorm to his car. When he disappears, Liam POPS into the parking lot light, sneaking back like an assassin.

Raccoon Face unlocks the door and hops inside. He starts his car. The lights BLAM on Liam. He stands in his cloak out front. Liam aims the gun and FIRES a bullet at the car.

The airbag BLASTS into Raccoon's face. Liam walks off to the side... And around the airbag, behind the broken window... Raccoon Face is unconscious.

EXT. COUNTY ROAD 21 - NIGHT

Snow protrudes the headlights.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - NIGHT

Liam's head dozes to the side of the window. BUMP! Liam awakens. He checks the front of the bus. He grabs his jersey, but there's something out front.

A DARK FIGURE stands in the middle of the road, silhouetted by the dim streetlight. Liam checks around the bus for any other confused faces. Nothing.

The bus' speedometer accelerates. Liam's voice wants to escape, but it's sheltered inside. The figure of the silhouetted boy, wearing a black beanie hat, jacket, and sweats, closes in on the bus.

Liam ducks in his seat. He CLOSES the sound out with his hands pressed to his ears. A hand double taps his shoulder.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Liam jumps. Jake stands in the aisle of the lighted bus.

JAKE  
Are you okay?

Liam looks outside. They are parked in front of The Barn.

LIAM  
Uh, yeah.

JAKE  
Are you sure, dude?

LIAM  
Yeah. I'm fine.

Liam bolts to the aisle and hops off the bus.

INT. THE BARN - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHTSHADE

Liam sits in his stall. Ghost paces in front of him.

GHOST  
You did what!

LIAM  
I saved the guy's life.

GHOST  
No! No, no, no, no, no. What you  
did was harm somebody else.

LIAM  
That coach was hurting him.

GHOST  
Physically, or emotionally?

LIAM  
What's the difference?

GHOST  
Pf.

He paces more.

GHOST (CONT'D)  
What happened in the arena? What  
did you see?



LIAM  
The walls closed in around me.

GHOST  
Claustrophobia-- What do you think  
that means to the boy?

LIAM  
He felt trapped.

GHOST  
Yes. His emotions trapped him.

LIAM  
All 'cause of his coach.

GHOST  
Yes, Liam. But you can't kill the  
devil. You can only cure the sick.

LIAM  
What was I supposed to do?

GHOST  
Simple! Stop the walls from closing  
in around the boy.

Beat. Ghost sits across from Liam's stall and cools down.

GHOST (CONT'D)  
You have the strength, Liam. Learn  
to use it in the right ways.

Liam wipes his face.

LIAM  
Sorry, Ghost.

GHOST  
Don't apologize to me. Apologize to  
yourself.

Another beat.

LIAM  
Did I kill him?

GHOST  
Assuming it was just the airbag,  
I'm sure he's fine.

LIAM  
And how about the boy?

GHOST

We're gonna recruit him. He's a  
Shadow like us now.

Liam leans back in his stall. He relieves himself.

LIAM

Why does it matter so much to you?

GHOST

Cause I lost my son too.

INT. KIELSTAD PIZZERIA - NIGHT

Ash holds his root beer bottle high. Chester, Thomas, and  
Liam gather around the table.

ASH

For a rough night of hockey, we  
celebrate with a glorious bottle of  
mead.

The boys CLINK their root beer bottles against each other.

BOYS

Cheers!

Ash and Chester down the nozzle. Liam and Thomas finish their  
big gulp. Thomas pats Liam on the back. The waitress places  
the pizza on the table. The pepperoni is shaped into a 5.

THOMAS

What's this?

WAITRESS

It's the first digit to my number.  
You'll have to come in nine more  
times if you want it all.

She leaves. Chester and Ash hold each other from falling.

ASH

Duuuuuuude. THAT'S great marketing.

THOMAS

I don't have the money for that.

CHESTER

That's what we're here for.

Liam bites into his pizza slice, smirking.

INT. LIAM'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Jenny sits on the living room sofa, reading. The door shuts. Liam stomps his shoes off inside.

JENNY  
Must have been a sluggish ride  
home.

LIAM  
I went out for pizza with the boys.

Liam takes his sweatshirt off.

JENNY  
You had a good game tonight. How  
was Coach?

LIAM  
Utterly expected.

Liam stomps upstairs. Jenny folds her book and allows it to sleep on her lap.

INT. KIELSTAD HIGH SCHOOL - ACTIVITY'S OFFICE - MORNING

Jenny shakes hands with PALMER, the activity's director.

JENNY  
Thank you, Palmer, for meeting with  
me this morning.

PALMER  
Not like it was difficult. Parents  
always find the time to discuss  
their matters.

JENNY  
Well if you didn't have a heart of  
coal and steel, I think your  
arrogance would fade, but then  
there'd be nothing left for you.

PALMER  
Seems to me I'm not the one with  
nothing left.

Jenny clenches in anger.

JENNY  
Morky was a great father and coach.

PALMER

So what do you want me to do? Wave a wand and wish a spell to find the perfect coach to replace Kipp?

JENNY

That's your job, isn't it?

PALMER

I don't see what the issue is.

JENNY

Have you seen what he's been putting the boys through?

PALMER

The team suffers from a suicide.

JENNY

Kipp damn well doesn't give a flying F about it. And it's clear neither do you.

Jenny storms off and slams the door on him.

INT. THE BARN - LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

Liam packs his gear. He wears his away-game outfit. His helmet PLONKS onto his head.

LIAM

Ow! Really? There's no other way for you to send a message?

His cloak drapes over him. Liam whips the cloak off his head. He throws it on.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Do you stalk me everywhere I go?

GHOST

I protect you like a mother protects her cubs.

Ghost sits in Chester's stall.

GHOST (CONT'D)

Remember, your blood's on my hands.

LIAM

You might wanna make this quick--

The door opens. Cole enters with his water bottle and snacks.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Too late.

Ghost kicks his head to the side.

GHOST

Come with me.

INT. THE BARN - EXCRUCIATING LONG HALLWAY - EVENING

They stroll side-by-side in the empty hall.

GHOST

Your game today against the Claws,  
there's a boy that needs your help.

LIAM

What's wrong?

GHOST

The first-liners bully the senior  
third-liner on the team. I need you  
to help him.

LIAM

You know I can't leave those  
bullies in peace.

He stops Ghost.

LIAM (CONT'D)

They need to feel what he feels so  
they'll leave him alone.

GHOST

Be wary of your actions, Liam.  
Anything that happens to them will  
affect you and everyone around  
them, even the troubled boy.

LIAM

I'll do what needs to be done.

EXT. CLAWS ARENA - FOGGY EVENING

The bus pulls up to the front. The boys hop off the bus and  
head to the back trailer. Liam grabs his bag and heads up the  
sidewalk. The team enters the rink.

INT. CLAWS ARENA - CORRIDOR - EVENING

Liam treks with his line down to their locker room.

INT. CLAWS ARENA - LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

Liam sets his stuff down. He pulls out a string bag and throws it on.

LIAM  
I'm gonna go roll out.

ASH  
Good boy.

Ash watches him leave.

INT. CLAWS ARENA - CORRIDOR - EVENING

Liam marches out of the room. Kipp stops him.

COACH KIPP  
Get the guys going with warmups.

LIAM  
But we usually do it forty-five minutes before.

COACH KIPP  
They moved the game time up. Get warmups going, now.

Kipp leaves Liam and heads to the locker room. Liam listens to him holler at the others.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)  
Game time's moved up. Warmups, now.

INT. CLAWS ARENA - ICE RINK - EVENING

The boys stretch. Liam stretches his legs wide. He looks at the far clock. Time moves fast. Liam bends his vision down to the floor. His string bag waits for him.

INT. CLAWS ARENA - LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

The boys ready for their game, most of them half-dressed. Liam throws his jersey on. He buckles his helmet. He grabs his stick, then takes his string bag with him.

Ben eyes him down as he leaves the room.

INT. CLAWS ARENA - CORRIDOR - EVENING

Fully dressed, Liam banks around the corner with his string bag, hiding from Coach Kipp and Mr. Z.

With no one around, Liam throws his cloak on over his gear. He tucks the hockey stick in his robe and holds it upright.

Popping out from the corner, Liam marches down the hall looking like a badass, hockey player scythe. He passes right between his coaches. Liam's eyes gaze through his cage.

INT. CLAWS ARENA - CLAWS LOCKER ROOM - EVENING

CLAWS PLAYERS ready for the game. PLAYER ONE spots the door opening by itself. He turns his head away and doesn't think much of it. Liam spots the lineups on the whiteboard.

First line. NINETEEN, TWO, TWENTY-TWO.

A HISSING steals Liam's ears. A GIANT SNAKE wraps around the senior third-liner, TALON. He hides within his headphones, eyeing up the bullies; 22 whispers something in 19's ear, and 19's to 2's.

The snake contracts around the boy as he looks down. Liam walks closer to the kid. He reaches in front of him, squats down, and looks the snake in the eye.

The snake's tongue sticks out at him.

Liam pulls out his stick and points at its face. The snake loosens up and follows the stick. Liam leads the snake closer to the trio.

The snake follows the stick, all the way up to their feet. Liam twirls his stick around the three boys, instructing the snake to constrict them all at one.

And so the snake does. It squeezes tight, and fast.

22 grabs hold of his stomach. 19 chokes on his spit. 2 wraps his hands around his neck. The three boys hyperventilate together. Liam stumbles back.

He leaves with his stick sheathing back in his robe. The other players PANIC.

INT. CLAWS ARENA - CORRIDOR - EVENING

Liam leaves the locker room. Behind him and his cloak, players leave the room and run off for HELP.

INT. CLAWS ARENA - ICE RINK - NIGHT

The Claws and Knights all hold hands with each other, on one knee and around the center faceoff dot, all for prayer.

Liam looks up from the ice. A Claw Player cries with his friend. Everyone's holding hands, sharing the pain. Liam tilts his head back down.

He is an outsider.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - NIGHT

Liam, Ash, Chester, and Thomas sit in their four-square of seats in the middle of the bus. Liam listens.

THOMAS

I just don't get it. Three kids go into cardiac arrest, all at the same time?

CHESTER

Ironic, isn't it?

THOMAS

Like, I understand if someone has severe asthma, but none of them had any health problems.

ASH

Very weird.

CHESTER

Heartbreaking.

THOMAS

I'm happy they made it, though. No one died. I couldn't handle another death in the hockey world.

ASH

Cheers to that.



INT. THE BARN - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

The boys hang out their equipment to dry. Liam lazes with his gear till everyone leaves.

INT. THE BARN - EXCRUCIATING LONG HALLWAY - NIGHT

Liam's head peeks out from the locker room. No one's in sight. He walks out and throws the hood on, and as he does, the lights BLAM off, turning the hall into a gothic realm.

INT. THE BARN - CONCESSIONS - NIGHTSHADE

Liam enters, but the boy in the black clothes stills in the darkness, his back towards Liam.

LIAM

Finn?

The boy wanders forward. Liam follows.

INT. THE BARN - MINI HALLWAY - NIGHTSHADE

The boy disappears behind the closing door of Locker Room One. Liam prepares to follow. He heads inside.

INT. THE BARN - LOCKER ROOM ONE - NIGHTSHADE

A BRIGHT, WHITE, SNOWY FOREST presents itself in between the white, cinderblock walls. The door shuts behind Liam. The boy isn't here, only the still trees.

An OWL lands on a branch. It sits in peace.

A stick on the ground CRACKS beneath the snow. Liam faces down to the naked trees. Behind a tree, a RED-EYED WOLF sneaks with its stealth. Liam steps back.

The wolf growls at him, showing off its white teeth. Liam steps another foot back, tripping in his cloak.

The wolf LEAPS off its paws and chases Liam. Liam jumps back onto his feet. He runs. The wolf dodges through the trees. Liam RAMS into the locked door. He POUNDS on it.

LIAM

Open the door! Open the door!

The wolf LAUNCHES off its paws and crashes into Liam, knocking him through the door and back into--

INT. THE BARN - MINI HALLWAY - NIGHTSHADE

Liam's body CRASHES into the wall. He falls to the floor. The door to the locker room closes. No wolf in sight. Ghost positions himself in front of him like a skyscraper.

LIAM

What the hell was that?

Liam hyperventilates.

LIAM (CONT'D)

That wolf almost killed me.

GHOST

Liam. That wolf is a metaphor.

Liam controls his breath work.

LIAM

That fricken beast was real!

GHOST

What you saw were your own emotions, Liam.

Liam calms himself.

LIAM

What?

GHOST

You're scared of your surroundings, and The Barn senses that.

Ghost pulls Liam onto his feet.

GHOST (CONT'D)

To win a war, you have to fight.  
But to grow, you have to learn.

LIAM

Learn what?

GHOST

To let go.

Ghost reaches inside his cloak. Liam, carefully, watches what he reaches for. Ghost slides out an ax and holds it in front of him.

GHOST (CONT'D)

Your feelings are your worst enemy.  
Fight 'em.

Liam reaches out for the ax. A hand locks on, then the other. Ghost lets go of the ax and bows his head down.

INT. THE BARN - LOCKER ROOM ONE - NIGHTSHADE

The door opens to an ambitious Liam. His feet push into the snow, then he stops in front of the closing door, staring down to his metaphorical fear.

The wolf stares back through the snow with those RED EYES. It growls, releasing the foggy breath from its hot mouth.

Liam's fog floats out from his nose. He is calm. The wolf digs a paw into the snow. Liam cranks a foot back, ready to run. The wolf loads back, then EXPLODES off its legs.

Liam stays put.

The wolf's legs dash through the snow. Liam readies the ax above his head. The wolf JUMPS in the air. Liam SCREAMS with all his might and SLAMS the ax down.

Blood SPLATTERS upon his face with a WHIMPER from the wolf. He rips the ax back in his grasp. He looks up to a tree. The owl flies off and disappears behind the branches.

INT. KIELSTAD COMMUNITY CENTER - CONCESSIONS - DAY

Hot coffee trickles into a styrofoam cup. Treena's hand passes it off to Liam.

TREENA

I've never seen you drink coffee before.

LIAM

Me neither.

He sips at it, burning his tongue.

TREENA

You know you're supposed to let it cool off, right?

LIAM

I'll put some snow on it.

Liam leaves her.

INT. KIELSTAD COMMUNITY CENTER - POOL - DAY

Through the doors and down the steps, Liam halts on the pool deck. He watches something in the water.

Marie, arms behind her back, floats in the center of a round lifeguard tube. Cardboard cutouts spell the rest of the word out: Snowball.

Liam gets PELTED with a snowball. He drops his mouth. He backs away from the water, dropping his string bag and placing his spilled coffee down.

Marie clenches her teeth.

MARIE

Maybe the snow wasn't necessary.

Liam wipes his face. He cannonballs in the pool. Marie screams from the splash. He resurfaces in front of her.

LIAM

The snowball was necessary.

INT. POOL - LIFEGUARD ROOM - DAY

Liam, soaked as ever, drenches the floor. He takes his towel and dries his hair out. BOOM! Liam jolts around and searches the room.

A giant, metal door is locked on its own concrete portico. He spots the key lock. BOOM! The key lock breaks off. It flies across the room and lands on the floor.

Liam inches closer to the door, then he opens it.

Dark. And deep. He leans his head over the pit... Overflowed pool water. But when the light hits right, and the water slows its ripples-- Liam squints at it.

A hockey net traps a dead, ghostly Finn at the dark bottom. Liam forces himself away from the pit and slams into the wall. He collapses to the floor.

V.O. LIAM

He's follows me wherever I go.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Liam, Ghost, Lethor, and Talon, keep warm around a campfire in the middle of the peaceful, winter woods.

LIAM

It's like he's latched onto my back  
and I can't get him off.

GHOST

And what about the owl? You said  
you first saw it in Locker Room  
One, and now you're seeing owls  
everywhere you go too?

LIAM

Everywhere and anywhere. In the  
trees, in my dreams, in my  
thoughts. It's taunting me.

Talon plops a marshmallow on a stick and bakes it.

GHOST

How 'bout you, Lethor?

LETHOR

Rooms close-in around me, sometimes  
the ground feels like its falling  
beneath my feet. Just depends on  
the day.

Talon swipes the marshmallow into his crackers and chocolate.

GHOST

What do you experience, Talon?

He bites into his s'more.

GHOST (CONT'D)

What phenomena affects your life?

TALON

Snakes. I-- I don't know why. I was  
never afraid of snakes. They wrap  
around me like rope. My sweat'll  
turn into slime too.

GHOST

Do you feel humiliated when it  
happens?

TALON

I know it's all in my head... But  
yeah, it still does.

The flame dances in front of the clan. This is the first time  
they haven't worn their cloaks in front of each other.

GHOST

I didn't bring you guys out here at random. The fire in front of you grows and shrinks. When you throw in more wood, you feed the flame, and it grows.

Talon hands Lethor a s'more, then Talon hands it to Liam.

LIAM

Thank you.

GHOST

Just like the fire, pain feeds your fear, and your pain is triggered in its own unique way.

Liam hearken's to Ghost's words.

GHOST (CONT'D)

Don't ignore the pain. And remember, I can't heal your feelings. Only you can heal yourself.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Liam, Talon, and Lethor hike through the snow-thinned woods.

LIAM

Thank you guys for coming.

LETHOR

Well, I wouldn't be here if you weren't there for me.

LIAM

Every hockey player's a part of the family, right?

LETHOR

Absolutely.

LIAM

How 'bout you, Talon?

TALON

I don't know. I feel odd.

LIAM

Odd?

TALON

Why am I in the middle of the woods  
at night? Why am I here?

LIAM

Change scares the hell out of me  
too. But we're in this together,  
okay? Please don't feel alone in  
all of this.

LETHOR

My JV coach once told me, time is  
patience, and patience is time. And  
I've learned that rushing to what I  
want in life is gonna be hurt me  
most.

LIAM

But yet it's fair for a life to be  
taken away like a squall.

Their shoes CRUNCH the snow, filling the silent gap.

TALON

Sorry to hear about your loss,  
Liam.

LIAM

You know, I still feel like he's  
with me... But when I think of him,  
I get angry... wrathful. My blood  
boils till it burns my heart out. I  
sometimes just want to slam my fist  
into the fucking ground and make  
the whole world disappear... Why?  
Why did it happen?

The two boys don't know what to tell him.

LIAM (CONT'D)

And I've lost my love for the  
sport. Hockey's not the same this  
year.

TALON

Hockey's a business now. We're just  
pawns in a coach's chess game.

LETHOR

I wish my coach would play me, JUST  
for one game. He has no faith in me  
as a player.

TALON

My teammates don't care about me.  
I'm the quiet kid in a hoodie in  
the locker room. But I'm happy I  
have you guys by my side.

LIAM

Same here, Talon. Same here.

SPLISH! A creak of wood splashed into the soft snow behind  
the boys. They spin around.

LETHOR

Was that Ghost?

Liam finds him. Finn, in his full, black attire, holds a  
hockey stick with a blade so sharp it slashed through a  
tree's trunk.

LIAM

He's too short.

LETHOR

Wait, you see someone?

LIAM

You don't see him?

LETHOR

Liam. There's no one there.

LIAM

He's right there.

TALON

It's your fear, Liam.

LIAM

What?

TALON

Like Ghost talked about. You have  
to fight your fears.

Finn steps toward him.

LIAM

I'm not fighting him.

Finn WHACKS the hockey stick scythe, called a HYTHE, through  
another naked tree. The boys back up from the approaching  
force, although, only Liam sees the ghostly presence.



LIAM (CONT'D)  
Get out of here.

Finn WHACKS a third tree down.

LIAM (CONT'D)  
Go!

Liam books it through the trees. The boys follow. Finn stops in place. He looks to both of his sides. The pack of red-eyed wolves dodge through the trees, chasing the boys down.

LIAM (CONT'D)  
Hurry up!

TALON  
What are we running from!

Talon's taken down by an invisible BEAST! Liam stops to look back at Talon's SCREAM!

The red-eyed wolf holds Talon's ankle in its teeth. Liam hurries over to the wolf and kicks it in the jaw. It releases. Liam grabs Talon's hand and pulls him to his feet.

LIAM  
Get to the cars, NOW!

The wolves dash behind, catching up closer to them.

LIAM (CONT'D)  
Go, go, go!

A wolf rips Liam to the ground. Liam SCREAMS in pain!

LETHOR  
What's happening!

TALON  
My truck!

LETHOR  
What?

TALON  
I see my truck!

Liam bleeds from both his legs. Two wolves tug on his legs, dragging him through the snow and deeper into the woods. BLAM! An arrow penetrates through a wolf's body.

BLAM! Another arrow darts through the other wolf. The pack WHIMPERS and DISAPPEARS into the woods. Talon and Lethor wear their cloaks, and Talon holds a hunting bow in his hands.

Liam rests his head in the snow.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

A cozy sleepover glows through the windows upon the snow.

V.O. LETHOR

Your mom really booked a hotel room  
for us?

V.O. LIAM

Yeah.

INT. HOTEL - SUITE - NIGHT

Liam readies his bed as the other two chill out.

LIAM

She'd rather we stay put for the  
night with all the black ice on the  
roads. Besides, it's the weekend.  
We can have a little fun, ay?

LETHOR

Touché. Talon, I didn't know you  
hunted?

TALON

Buck. Every fall.

INT. HOTEL - HOTTUB - NIGHT

The three guys relax in the hot springs.

LIAM

Do you guys ever think about  
quitting hockey?

LETHOR

I thought about quitting life.

Lethor smirks, then the boys laugh with each other.

LETHOR (CONT'D)

Only a Shadow's joke.

LIAM

But seriously, none of my teammates  
want to turn my coach in. Only me.

TALON

At least you get some playing time.  
Mine won't budge.

LETHOR

Ghost probably wants you to stick  
with it for the missions.

LIAM

He doesn't even realize my coach is  
my worst enemy.

LETHOR

Who does he think is?

LIAM

My deceased teammate. I didn't  
realize that until he was holding  
the hockey stick tonight.

TALON

That wasn't a scythe?

GHOST

It's called a hythe.

The boys spin to Ghost who pulls off his hood at a table.

GHOST (CONT'D)

A hockey stick with a blade so  
sharp it slashes through flesh.

LIAM

We're you watching the wolves maul  
me into pieces?

GHOST

I had to. You finally realized  
who's been haunting your feelings  
all this time.

LIAM

Kipp has too.

GHOST

But remember Liam, you can't kill--

LIAM

The devil, you can only cure the  
sick. Got it. But then what do I do  
with my feelings towards coach? I  
can't handle it anymore.

(MORE)

LIAM (CONT'D)

He's ripped the love of my life  
from my hands. He's stolen the joy  
of hockey from me!

TALON

I was always told to follow the  
Golden Rule. Treat others the way  
you want to be treated.

GHOST

Listen to Talon. Maybe if he's  
stolen the game from you, you can  
steal the game from him.

Liam crosses his arms, sits back, and sighs.

LIAM

Do you watch us in our sleep too?

GHOST

Liam. Please. I'm not a creep.

LETHOR

He sleeps with his eyes open.

Talon laughs.

EXT. KIELSTAD - MAIN STREET - MORNING

Another snowy day falls upon the busy morning street.

INT. KIELSTAD DRESS STORE - MORNING

Treena sits on a bench. She watches Marie spin out from the  
curtains in a solid, red dress.

MARIE

So, what do you think?

TREENA

You make that dress pop! It's  
absolutely gorgeous on you.

Marie checks herself out in the mirror. Her joy fades away.

TREENA (CONT'D)

What is it? Too bold?

MARIE

No, no. I actually had a funny idea  
that I kinda wanted to do.

TREENA

Oh my. You know how many times I've heard that come out of your mouth?

MARIE

It's something I always wanted to do with Liam for the dance, but I don't know how I feel about it anymore.

TREENA

Marie, feel about what?

She takes a deep breath in, and spits it out.

MARIE

Him and I.

TREENA

Oh, Marie.

Treena stands up and hugs her.

MARIE

He's changed. He's not the same Liam as before.

TREENA

The tough guy's been through a lot.

MARIE

I've lost him. He's been disappearing to places. He rarely smiles anymore.

TREENA

What are you gonna do?

MARIE

I wanna break up with him, Treena.

TREENA

No, no. Not now. You can't do that to him before the dance.

MARIE

No, no. I know. But after the dance, how am I going to do it? I'm scared he's gonna kill himself.

TREENA

Give him the night of his life. Be there for him like the best friend you are.

Marie nods. She calms down.

TREENA (CONT'D)  
Now, what was this over-the-top  
idea you had?

Marie checks around the store, then whispers into Treena's ear. Treena's chin drops to the floor. She loves the idea. Marie's smile returns.

TREENA (CONT'D)  
Do it.

MARIE  
Aw! I'm so excited!

Marie spins back into the changing room with joy. Treena watches the snow fall, waiting for the avalanche.

INT. HOTEL - MORNING

Talon, Lethor, and Liam grab their waffle breakfast and eat around a table.

LIAM  
We're staying for another night.

LETHOR  
Really?

TALON  
Awesome!

LIAM  
The blizzard's pretty bad. I'm okay  
with being stuck here though. I get  
to miss my game today.

LETHOR  
What? You're missing your game?

TALON  
Does your mom know?

Liam shoves down a bite of his big waffle.

INT. LIAM'S HOUSE - MORNING

Jenny paces in the kitchen.

JENNY

(on the phone)

They're what? (beat) They're not cancelling the game? (beat) Well of course he's not. He's worried about the stats of his team. (beat) The athletic director is on his side. (beat) Because it's an ego game at this point. That's all it is. (beat) Well I hope Ash stays safe. Liam's not in town. He's stuck up North in a hotel.

INT. HOTEL - LOBBY - MORNING

Liam, Lathor, and Talon keep warm by the fire. A PEEWEE HOCKEY TEAM enters. Liam sees a kid carrying a gaming counsel. He launches out of his chair and approaches him.

LIAM

Did you bring 'Chel?

COUNSEL KID

You betchya.

Liam smiles at Lathor and Talon. They're gonna have the best day of their lives.

INT. HOTEL - ROOM - DAY

All the Peewee players surround Liam, Talon, and Lethor, as they game away at 'Chel. When the three score a goal, they all jump and CHEER the day away.

EXT. THE BARN - DAY

The Kielstad Knights load up the trailer for their away game. Almost everyone's on board, besides Chester and Ash.

CHESTER

Where's Liam?

Ash throws his bag in the trailer.

ASH

Not coming.

CHESTER

What?

Ash hops on the bus. Chester tosses his bag in the trailer. Coach Kipp exits the arena. Chester approaches him at the bus' steps.

CHESTER (CONT'D)  
Liam isn't playing today?

KIPP  
His loss.

Mr. Z exits the arena.

CHESTER  
Mr. Z. Where's Liam?

MR. Z  
He's stuck up north.

CHESTER  
Up north? What's he doing there?

MR. Z  
In all honesty Chester, we shouldn't be having a game today in the first place.

CHESTER  
So, why are we?

MR. Z  
I'm not the one who makes the decisions around here.

He pats Chester on the back and boards the bus. Chester eventually follows him. But hiding in the back... FINN stands with the hythe.

INT. HOTEL - HALLWAY - DAY

Liam, Talon, and Lethor leave the room.

LIAM  
We LIT those kids up!

TALON  
Did you see my dangle around the defender? I never knew you could do that in the game.

LETHOR  
It's the perks of memorizing the controls. We'll have to watch Easter egg videos on it.



LIAM  
Oh, the good 'ol days, gaming 'Chel  
all night at the weekend tourneys.

TALON  
I've never seen you this happy  
before, Liam.

Liam stops. His smile flips upside down.

LIAM  
I turned him in.

Beat.

LIAM (CONT'D)  
And I'm scared.

Lethor and Talon glance at each other. Liam coughs, then he  
glides his back down the wall, losing his breath.

TALON  
Liam?

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Chester coughs. But then, he hears others cough too. Even the  
BUS DRIVER coughs.

EXT. THE BARN - DAY

As the bus rolls out onto the road, Finn observes it. Packed,  
frozen snow blocks the muffler.

INT. HOTEL - POOL - DAY

Lethor sits Liam down at a table. Talon enters with a cup of  
hot chocolate.

TALON  
Here's some hot cocoa, Liam.

LIAM  
Thanks, Talon.

He coughs more.

LIAM (CONT'D)  
It's hard to breathe.

LETHOR

Do you need an ambulance?

Liam shakes his head.

LIAM

No. Something's not right.

TALON

Do you see him?

LIAM

Go get my cloak.

Lethor books it out of the room. Liam coughs out blood onto his hand. Talon grows big eyes. Liam chokes on his breath and collapses to the floor.

TALON

Liam!

Talon drops to the floor with him. Liam crawls to the poolside. He stares at his pallor reflection.

Lethor storms in with all of their cloaks. Talon helps Lethor put the cloak on Liam. When his hood flips up, Talon and Lethor put their's on.

Liam stoops onto his legs. He stares out into the bright light from the snowstorm outside. But what's outside horrifies them all.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - DAY

The school bus pushes through the heavy snowfall. Fast.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Coughs expel from the Kielstad Knights here and there. The bus escalates in speed. The driver's head limps to the side.

Chester swings his head, dizzy and woozy.

EXT. COUNTRYSUDE ROAD - DAY

The school bus drives over the middle of the road, heading FAST to the other ditch.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Mr. Z stands up from his seat, heading up to the bus driver. But out in front of the windshield, there's no visibility. It's all white snow falling from the sky.

BLAM! They're tossed around like minnows in a plastic bag.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD

The school bus tips over, gliding through the snow on its side. It halts in the never-ending white, and no other vehicles in sight. They are all alone.

INT. HOTEL - POOL - DAY

Liam's nose barely touches the window. Lethor and Talon walk up to his side. Liam holds his throat with his hands, unable to speak. He chokes.

TALON  
Do something!

LETHOR  
Like what!

TALON  
I don't know!

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Chester, bloody and woozy as ever, wakes up with snow and shattered glass under his head. He uses his beanie hat like a gas mask. He looks around the bus. Everyone's down.

Chester limps, but he gets up, and he climbs the seats. He reaches the emergency window and pops it out. He climbs down, reaches the front of the bus, and turns it off.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - DAY

Lying in the snow, the bus falls asleep in the cold.

INT. HOTEL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Liam faces the bus that sleeps on its side. He falls to his knees and sucks in all the air he can. Lethor and Talon support his fall.

LETHOR  
Thank God, Liam.

LIAM  
The bus! It's the bus!

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - DAY

Chester opens the back emergency door to the bus. Him and his teammates crawl outside. Kipp and Mr. Z follow them. Their coughs continue to expel in the cold storm.

One person didn't crawl out though. Chester panics.

CHESTER  
Ash?

INT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Chester walks inside the tipped, quiet bus. He steps on broken glass and lunges over seats. He reaches Ash, hyperventilating.

CHESTER  
It's okay. It's okay. Where's your  
inhaler now?

Chester feels inside Ash's pockets and finds the inhaler. He puffs it for him. Ash breathes in. Chester spots the dead bus driver. He ignores it and continues to help Ash.

INT. HOTEL - ROOM - EVENING

Liam shivers, wrapped in many blankets, beanie hat on. Lethor and Talon sit beside his shivering body.

LIAM  
They're still out there.

LETHOR  
How haven't they found them yet?

LIAM  
Too much snow.

TALON  
And it's getting dark.

LIAM  
They're suffering because of me.

LETHOR  
Oh c'mon, don't say that.

LIAM  
If I hadn't turned coach in, my feelings wouldn't have attacked them.

LETHOR  
How would they attack them?

LIAM  
Finn. He's my fear. He's the fear I need to fight. He's the one I need to kill.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - NIGHT

The team bundles up together behind the school bus, shivering amid the storm.

THOMAS  
Where... are... they?

Ash and Chester are speechless, numb to the nose.

Mr. Z and Kipp sit off to the side.

MR. Z  
When did you get the message?

KIPP  
This morning.

MR. Z  
Do you know from who?

KIPP  
I know who turned me in.

Mr. Z nods.

MR. Z  
Yet you still sacrificed your team to play amid the storm?

KIPP  
We all have goals in life, Mr. Zimmerman.

MR. Z  
Some in which stand in the way of others. Selfish goals you have.

Mr. Z stands up and heads inside the back of the bus.

INT. SCHOOL BUS - EVENING

Mr. Z pushes through the damaged bus. He reaches the front and turns the bus on, illuminating the LIGHTS.

EXT. SCHOOL BUS - EVENING

The lights SHINE in the darkening storm. Mr. Z exits the bus. And off in the distance, a HELICOPTER flies over the dead woods and finds the team in their shivering huddle.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Liam stops shivering and warms, sweating up a storm. He's unusually sweating the night out. On both his sides, Talon and Lethor sleep.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - POOL - NIGHT

Liam rests his head on the poolside, cooling his body off. Ghost enters the room, hood of his cloak off.

LIAM

I'm wishing I didn't let my emotions get in the way.

GHOST

Liam. I'm proud of you.

Liam lifts his head up and faces Ghost.

GHOST (CONT'D)

You did the right thing.

LIAM

Putting my teammates in jeopardy?

GHOST

Change is a scary thing, yet you found a way to fight through it.

LIAM

And now I'm suffering the consequences.

GHOST

What are you gonna do now?

LIAM  
Shouldn't you know?

GHOST  
I want to hear what's on your mind.

Beat.

LIAM  
I wanna kill him. I want to kill  
Finn. It's time to fight the big  
bad wolf.

Ghost smiles. Liam's ready to fight.

EXT. HOTEL - MORNING

Liam, Lethor, and Talon load up their vehicles.

LIAM  
Thank you guys for the great  
weekend. I sure hope we can meet  
again soon.

TALON  
It sucks going back to reality.

LIAM  
Hey. It's gonna get better. Just  
keep fighting those monsters.

Liam winks at him.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE ROAD - MORNING

Liam drives over the sanded, salted road.

INT. SUV - MORNING

Liam bites his lip. He's not heading home. Not yet.

EXT. THE BARN - MORNING

Liam freezes like ice, looking up at the towering Barn.

INT. THE BARN - MORNING

He pushes through the double set of French doors. The arena  
warms with a HOCKEY GAME on the ice.

INT. THE BARN - EXCRUTIATING LONG HALLWAY - MORNING

Liam stares down the hall. All the lights swing side to side.  
He hurries down to--

INT. THE BARN - LOCKER ROOM - MORNING

He bolts inside. No one's present. But he spots Chester's and Ash's gear hanging in their stalls. Liam sits down with relief. They made it back in one piece from the accident.

COACH KIPP  
(behind the lockers)  
I was expecting you.

CHILLS spiral down Liam's spine.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)  
Alone as always.

LIAM  
I beg to differ. It seems to me  
you're the loner now.

COACH KIPP  
I find it very intriguing how a  
pathetic, sensitive young boy like  
you ended up in this sport.

LIAM  
You're right. Hockey's for the  
strong and committed. That's why I  
play.

COACH KIPP  
Strong? Maybe in the weight room.  
But your mentality is weak, frail,  
debilitated, just like your  
suicidal squirt.

LIAM  
He was selfless, something you'll  
never be.

COACH KIPP  
Maybe so, but neither you nor him  
match my power, kiddo.

LIAM  
Seems to me you're losing yours.

COACH KIPP  
How so?



LIAM

You're scared of me. Isn't that why  
you're here? Trying to scare me?

Liam reaches up for his skates. Coach Kipp laughs. Liam  
unclips the blades quietly from his skates, holding two  
blades in his hands now.

COACH KIPP

You think I'm scared of you?

LIAM

I know you're afraid to lose your  
title, one that you've worked your  
whole life for.

COACH KIPP

That's right. I worked my whole  
FUCKING LIFE for my position,  
something YOU couldn't fulfill.

Liam gets up from his spot and tiptoes around Kipp's words,  
sneaking to the door.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)

Ohhhh, sensitive, little Liam. A  
boy who's mental health drowned him  
a long, long time ago.

Liam sneaks behind the stick stand and peeks the door open.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)

And a little boy who drowned his  
team with him!

Liam SCREAMS as Kipp slams his hand against the door, keeping  
him in. Kipp towers over him.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)

I want you to know one thing.

Liam hides his face from his voice.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)

I'm not gonna go easy on you, and  
I'm gonna make sure I drown you in  
a depression like you've never  
experienced before.

Kipp KICKS the door. Liam jolts.

COACH KIPP (CONT'D)

Just remember me, Liam. I want you  
to remember the words that are  
about to come out of my mouth...  
I'm the one who destroyed your  
hockey career.

Kipp takes his hand off the door. He breaks out laughing.  
Liam books it out of the locker room.

INT. THE BARN - EXCRUTIATING LONG HALLWAY - MORNING

The lights SWING FASTER than before. Liam sprints. Suddenly,  
HANDS rip Liam into the dryland room.

EXT. THE BARN - THE SHED - MORNING

Ben, Cole, and Danny pull Liam to the outdoor ice. Ben takes  
over and SLAMS Liam's head against the ice. Liam rolls to his  
side in pain, dropping the skate blades from his hands.

BEN

Think it's cool to ruin our future?  
All for your fucking, feeble  
feelings?

Cole uses a skate blade and SLASHES a cut across Liam's leg.  
Liam cries it out.

LIAM

Stop! Please.

Danny grabs the blade and GASHES another line in his leg.  
Danny passes it to Ben. Ben follows for one more cut.

BEN

Now you can join the cutters.

Cole pulls Liam's beanie hat over his face, wraps his hoodie  
over his hat, and Danny scoops up snow and smushes it into  
Liam's face. Ben tightens the strings to the hoodie.

BEN (CONT'D)

(to his trio)  
Let's go.

Ben, Cole, and Danny leave Liam to bleed on the ice. Liam  
struggles with his hoodie, but he gets it off, pushing the  
snow off his red-beat face.

He cries and cries and cries. And off in the back, Ghost watches in his cloak, doing nothing but leaving Liam alone. He turns around and leaves.

INT. KIELSTAD HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - OVERCAST MORNING

The Kielstad Knights sit on the bleachers. Mr. Z leans against the track's fence.

MR. Z

As of now, our season's at a pause.

The trio doesn't look at Liam, but Kate does.

MR. Z (CONT'D)

The faster we can get through the investigation, the better our chances are to continue on with the season. I recommend we work hard in the weight room, keep our stamina up, and I was cleared to setup one-on-one counseling with you guys. Is that understood?

A few of the guys nod, most sober in their minds. But Kate, she leans close to Liam.

KATE

I'm proud of you, bud.

She smiles, sets a hand on his knee, then backs away. Liam frowns it off.

INT. LIAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jenny hears the door open. Liam stomps the snow off and carries his string bag with him.

JENNY

There you are.

She jumps up and approaches for a hug, but Liam rubs it off.

JENNY (CONT'D)

Are you alright, Liam?

LIAM

I don't want to talk about it.

JENNY

Why not?

LIAM

I don't want to talk about it.

JENNY

Your teachers are seeing a drop in your performance, Liam.

LIAM

I'm tired, mom! Is that what you want to hear?

JENNY

Can't we talk about this, Liam?

LIAM

There's nothing to talk about!

Liam heads upstairs.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Dad's dead! He's never coming back!

Jenny wipes her face.

INT. LIAM'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Liam closes the door. He lays on the bed with the picture of him and his dad. He then turns his eyes to the string bag.

EXT. WINTER WOODS - DAY

Marie and Liam hike through the trees. They hold hands.

MARIE

Beautiful, isn't it?

LIAM

I never knew whether I liked winter or not.

MARIE

They don't call it the winter depression for nothing.

LIAM

Yeah. We barely get to see the sun.

MARIE

It's been cloudy for too long.

EXT. WINTER WOODS - STAIRS - DAY

Liam and Marie hike down a giant, stair structure.

MARIE

Have you ever been out here?

LIAM

I don't think so, but yet I can't say because you won't tell me where we are.

EXT. WINTER WOODS - FROZEN WATERFALL - DAY

Marie covers Liam's eyes with her sweatshirt sleeves.

LIAM

Are we there yet?

MARIE

Not yet-- Oh, watch your step.

LIAM

Ope, water in my sock. Cold water in my sock.

MARIE

Sorry.

She stops him.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Okay. We're here. Ready?

LIAM

I'm ready.

She uncovers his eyes. He unveils pure joy.

A magnificent, frozen waterfall presents itself in front of him. The beauty of the ice structure, the topping of the fresh snow, and the areas of rushing water-- wow.

Liam hikes up closer to the moving water. They stand in front of the waterfall and exposed cliffs.

INT. CAVE - DAY

Liam and Marie eat a picnic brunch, containing cheese sandwiches, yogurt, crackers, and root beer.

LIAM

How do you know about this place?

MARIE

Oh, I spent a lot of time out here when I wanted to escape reality for a while.

LIAM

It sure feels nice out here. I feel as if there's a shield around the park, and it blocked my thoughts from traveling with me.

MARIE

I knew you'd love it out here.

The waterfall sounds faint. They look outside.

MARIE (CONT'D)

For Snowball-- What if I said I wanted to do something different? Something everyone would remember?

Liam smirks. Marie grins right back.

INT. KIELSTAD HIGH SCHOOL - GYM - DAY

Marching down the aisle from the darkness and into the studio lights, Liam and Marie wear a KNIGHT'S SHINING ARMOR.

Marie's red cape blows majestically behind her. The light GLOWS on Liam. Liam and Marie stand on the podium, facing the whole gym.

COMMENTATOR

Liam Lamper and Marie Worth.

The gym IGNITES to their stunning armor-- Jenny amid it all.

JENNY

Woooooo!

After the podium pictures, they go onto the runaway. Marie's eyes peek over to Liam through the thin visor. Liam gazes ahead. He feels his power.

EXT. FANCY RESTAURANT - DAY

A fancy carriage pulls up to the red carpet behind horseback. Liam hops out and stands beside the steep drop. He holds Marie's hand to help her out. Marie's boots hit the ground.

MARIE

Thank you, your majesty.

Liam closes the door. Keeping their knightly composure, they walk shoulder to shoulder up the red carpet. They own the entrance to the fancy palace.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - DAY

Marie and Liam sit at a nice two-seated table with their helmets beside them. Marie has a plate of fancy delights. Liam's plate has buttered noodles with over packed Parmesan.

MARIE

Buttered noodles?

LIAM

I'm a picky eater.

Marie's lips widen as she takes her first bite.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Don't worry.

Liam holds up a chocolate drizzled crescent.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I didn't forget dessert.

He bites into it. Marie smiles and continues to eat.

INT. THE BARN - LIBRARY OF SKATES - EVENING

Chester enters. On the office desk, he grabs his skates. He walks into a small, open closet area. Chester slides his skates into the OVEN.

He presses the dial to bake at 400 degrees. He leaves the closet space as the oven heats the skates inside.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - EVENING

Ghost drinks a cup of coffee. A stream of blood drips out of his nose. He taps at it. There it is. Blood on his fingers. He leaves his coffee cup at the table in an instant.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Liam's on the dance floor with Marie. Marie hugs her girlfriends as they scream at each other.

LIAM

I'm gonna get some punch.

MARIE

You know where to find me.

Liam leaves the dance floor and to the punch table. He pours a cup for himself. Ash bumps in beside him.

ASH

They should kick these drinks up a notch. I don't know how long I'll be able to stay up for this.

LIAM

Didn't you slam down shots before coming?

ASH

Heck yeah, I did!

LIAM

It's best for you to be sober when you drive your girl back home.

ASH

I don't have to worry about that anymore.

LIAM

Why?

ASH

She ditched me.

Liam halts to drink his punch.

INT. THE BARN - LIBRARY OF SKATES - NIGHT

The oven TINGS. Chester grabs his skates and walks to a chair. He sits down and throws on both skates. He ties them as tight as can be. Chester lays back in the chair.

The oven... it's off... till it's not. The red numbers turn back on... RISING... and RISING... Over 400 degrees. Over 800 degrees. It's VERY HOT.

INT. FANCY RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Liam and Ash sit at the two-seated table, drinking punch.



LIAM

Chester never found someone to go with?

ASH

He'd be embarrassed if he did.

LIAM

Why would he be embarrassed?

ASH

He'd kill me for telling you.

Liam questions him with his eyes.

ASH (CONT'D)

Chester's not fond of girls.

LIAM

Poor guy. No one would make fun of him.

ASH

Besides a few of our classmates.

LIAM

Oh, c'mon. Girls sometimes bring their girlfriends as dates.

ASH

Yeah, but guys together have a bad reputation to some.

LIAM

But Chester should know it doesn't matter what others think. People thought my father was speeding down twenty-one the night he died.

ASH

But it was carbon monoxide poisoning. I know your dad always drove safe, almost too safe.

Beat.

ASH (CONT'D)

I miss our youth days.

LIAM

Nothing could beat those road trips.

ASH  
Like that time we played 'Chel all  
the way up to Duluth.

LIAM  
Yes. Like that.

Ash looks at the dance floor.

ASH  
You're right though. I do wish  
Chester were here.

Liam's nose trickles a stream of blood. Ash points at it.

ASH (CONT'D)  
Liam. You're bleeding.

Liam taps his face. He looks at the blood on his fingers.

LIAM  
I gotta go.

Liam pushes off from the table.

ASH  
Liam?

Marie spots Liam leaving. Liam hurries to the doors. Marie catches on as Ash stops chasing him down. He shrugs his shoulders at Marie.

EXT. KIELSTAD HIGH SCHOOL - NIGHT

Marie runs up behind Liam.

MARIE  
Liam?

He doesn't budge around.

MARIE (CONT'D)  
Liam!

Liam keeps pushing.

MARIE (CONT'D)  
We're done!

Liam stops, but he doesn't face her.

MARIE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, but I've been staring at your back for too long. You don't talk to me like you used to. It's affecting my life too, Liam, but I can't let that stand in the way of my life.

LIAM

You're selfish like the rest of them!

Marie takes a step back.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I don't matter to you anymore, do I? Kipp wants his title. My teammates want commitment to a college team. And you, you don't fricken care about me anymore!

MARIE

You're the selfish one, Liam! I've been here everyday for you, but you've never asked me how I was doing? You never asked me to hang out with you anymore. I was the ghost in your life!

LIAM

I guess we all turn out selfish in the end. We do what's best for us and rid of the poison that pollutes us. But if I have to fight alone, I will.

MARIE

Goodbye, Liam.

Marie tears up, running back into the school. Liam clenches his teeth, ready to taste flesh on his tongue.

INT. THE BARN - ICE RINK - NIGHT

Chester skates on the ice in full gear. He stickhandles a puck and skates to the net. He shoots at the net and scores.

INT. THE BARN - CONCESSIONS AREA - NIGHT

Ghost watches Chester skate on the ice from the warming area. He hears a CRACKLING from another room. He turns and walks.

INT. THE BARN - LIBRARY OF SKATES - NIGHT

Ghost finds the CRACKLING noise. The oven. It MAXES OUT, smoking, and then, SPARKS. The power THUMPS out.

INT. THE BARN - ICE RINK - NIGHT

The lights shut Chester in the dark on the ice.

INT. THE BARN - ZAMBONI ROOM - NIGHT

The zamboni door magically opens by itself.

INT. THE BARN - ICE RINK - NIGHT

Chester looks over in that direction.

INT. THE BARN - ZAMBONI ROOM - NIGHT

The garage finishes its RATTLE. Then-- BOOM, the zamboni's headlights flash on-- RED.

INT. THE BARN - ICE RINK - NIGHT

Chester stares at the zamboni, terrified. He moves a skate, but then, he looks down to them. His skates melted through the ice, and now, he's stuck.

He pulls at the laces, but the skates melt on top of his feet from the heat. He groans at first, then it turns into panic. Chester YELLS the pain away.

INT. THE BARN - CONCESSIONS AREA - NIGHT

Ghost hears the YELLING. He runs to the doors and enters the ice rink.

INT. THE BARN - ZAMBONI ROOM - NIGHT

The zamboni pushes out its side brush, SPINS off the brush itself, and then, it stops. A SAW BLADE connects to the arm. The zamboni slides it back to its sleeping position. It reverses and hops onto the dark ice.

INT. THE BARN - ICE RINK - NIGHT

The zamboni inches toward Chester's body. Ghost runs along the bleacher's walkway to the player's entrance. Chester realizes the zamboni heads toward him.

He freaks out, pulling more at the skate, but the stretchy, hot goop BURNS his hands. Ghost hops on the ice. Ghost runs over to him... But he slips.

BANG! His head slams into the ice. Blood floods under his head. The zamboni passes them, backing up to the middle of the ice. Chester SCREAMS in agony as the skates lose ankle support. He falls to the ice.

Ghost blinks slow, then he turns his head to him. Chester feels a hand GRAB his arm. He sees-- Ghost.

GHOST  
(rough voice)  
Chester.

Chester whimpers in fear.

GHOST (CONT'D)  
Grab my cloak. Wear it.

Chester doesn't move a muscle. Ghost checks back at the zamboni. The saw blade swings out.

Chester finds the saw blade. Once the arm is out, the saw blade SPINS ON. Chester shivers. He's quiet.

GHOST (CONT'D)  
Chester.

Chester looks back at Ghost.

GHOST (CONT'D)  
Grab it, NOW.

The zamboni rolls forward. He crawls on the ice to Ghost. The saw blade approaches them, closer and closer. Its eyes glow RED. Chester wraps the cloak around himself as the lights blind behind, creeping very close to him. He crawls fast.

Chester dodges the wheels, just missing them. He flips around, facing the zamboni. The saw CUTS into something-- Ghost's blood SPLATTERS on the boards.

Chester freaks, then he turns and crawls fast to the benches.

INT. THE BARN - CONCESSIONS - NIGHT

Liam enters. He slows down to study the happenings on the ice, flipping the hood of his cloak on--

LIAM

Oh my God.

INT. THE BARN - ICE RINK - NIGHT

The zamboni mops a flood of red, fresh blood onto the ice, making its laps around for resurfacing. Liam runs on the bleacher's walkway.

The zamboni finishes its last aisle of ice to resurface. Liam steps off the walkway and hurries to the zamboni room. The red zamboni eyes bump off the ice. The snow mop lifts and drops the red snow. Liam sees Ghost's dead body.

But over on the player's bench, Liam hears soft groaning.

LIAM

(to himself)

Chester.

Liam hustles out of the zamboni area, but he halts. Finn and his hythe stake at center ice.

Liam stops to take it all in.

BOOM! The air ducts in the arena EXPLODE with black oilwater, cascading Liam out of control like a wild river.

INT. THE BARN - EXCRUTIATING LONG HALLWAY - NIGHT

The oilwater slams Liam into the hallway. He throws his hood off, then all the oilwater disappears. Once he's back on his feet, he finds Kipp at the end, pointing a pistol at him.

KIPP

The Barn's not your home anymore.

LIAM

Then make it my grave. You'd be saving me from a lot of wasted time with your words.

KIPP

I'll make sure you go out slowly.

Liam FLIES in the other direction. Kipp fires many rounds, missing every one.

INT. THE BARN - ICE ARENA - NIGHT

Liam breaks through the Game Doors and looks for a hiding spot. Behind the bleachers, a door leads into a storage hideaway. He sneaks inside and closes the door behind him.

It's quiet. Too quiet. Liam slithers beneath the bleacher supports, keeping as quiet as a mouse.

The lights BLAM OFF. Liam holds his breath. He pulls his hood back on. He reaches the other door to the hideaway. BANG! The hythe SLASHES through the door and cuts Liam's arm.

He backs away. Finn slashes the door down like an axe and sees Liam eye to eye again. Liam breaks out of the hideaway from the way he entered.

He attempts to open the emergency doors, but they're locked. Finn marches behind the bleachers, taunting Liam in his trap. Liam SPRINTS onto the bleachers as fast as he can.

INT. THE BARN - MINI HALLWAY - NIGHT

Liam slows down. The door to Locker Room One speaks to him. He looks back, then heads inside. Coach Kipp pops out around the corner, aiming his pistol down the hall.

COACH KIPP

You can't hide forever! The  
darkness is on my side.

INT. THE BARN - LOCKER ROOM ONE - NIGHT

Liam looks up to the winter trees again. Then, as he's deeper into the woods, Finn stakes by the closing door.

The boy in the black beanie hat, pants, and jacket, stakes into the ground at the other end.

Liam studies him from afar.

LIAM

Did you kill my master, Finn! Did  
you kill him!

Finn doesn't twitch a muscle.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I should've known. My emotions  
haunt me. But the pain I feel is  
not my fault.

FINN  
Unfortunately, it is. You should  
feel all the guilt in the world.

LIAM  
You're the one who blocked me out!  
I tried to help, but you didn't  
want my help!

FINN  
It's sad to see your own arrogance  
blocks you from the truth.

Liam bows his head down, but keeps his angry eyes on Finn.

FINN (CONT'D)  
I expected you to kill Coach for  
me, but you're so weak, and you  
don't even know it.

LIAM  
You should be afraid of my power.

FINN  
Oh, really? And what's that?

LIAM  
Pain.

FINN  
Then what are we waiting for?

The OWL SWOOPS from the trees with a whole FLOCK of owls  
behind itself. They swarm Finn. He slashes the hythe at them.

Liam runs around Finn and exits the room. Finn POUNDS his  
hythe into the snow, awakening his PACK OF WOLVES. The wolves  
attack the owls, eating them alive as they swoop low. It's a  
feeding frenzy.

Finn turns around angry and storms to the door. The wolves  
catch on and follow.

INT. THE BARN - EXCRUTIATING LONG HALLWAY - NIGHT

Liam sprints to the locker room.

INT. THE BARN - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

He locks the door, runs to his stall, takes his cloak off,  
and throws on all of his HOCKEY GEAR. He disconnects two  
blades from Ash's skates. He's a badass assassin now.



INT. THE BARN - EXCRUTIATING LONG HALLWAY - NIGHT

As he exits the locker room in hockey gear, Finn stares him down. Liam clasps tightly around his hockey stick. Finn moves a foot-- and he targets straight for Liam.

Liam BLOCKS Finn's hythe with his hockey stick. They sword fight with their weapons as Liam's pushed backwards. Finn SLASHES Liam's stick in half. He has no weapon.

Finn SWINGS at Liam, but Liam slips under Finn's arms, running to the concessions.

FINN

I wouldn't do that if I were you.

HUFF. HUFF. The wolves dash around the corner. Liam walks forward, then runs at the wolves, unsheathing the skate blades he grabbed from Ash's stall.

He STABS them one-by-one, fighting them off with the blades-- in both his hands and the blades ON HIS FEET. But there are too many.

The wolves bite onto Liam and pull him to Finn. Liam lies on the ground, face-to-face, with his worst fear.

FINN (CONT'D)

You're alone, Liam. You can feel the same pain you put me through.

LIAM

I thought differently of you, Finn. I saw you as a brother.

FINN

If you were my brother, you would've been there with me that night.

LIAM

You just had to ask, Finn! You never asked for help.

FINN

You'll never understand what it's like to feel alone.

LIAM

But I have learned, Finn. I've learned how to escape the pain.

Finn raises the hythe's blade over his head.

FINN

You haven't escaped yet.

Finn THROWS the hythe's blade at Liam's chest. Liam closes his eyes and holds his hands out in front of him. Then suddenly, Finn SCREAMS! Liam CATCHES the hythe in his hand, meeting the hockey stick's blade face to face.

Liam stands up with the hythe. SNAKES latch around Finn, injecting their venom into him. The wolves WHIMPER from all the snakes, led by both Talon and Lethor in their cloaks.

Finn falls to his knees, looking up to Liam and his hythe.

LIAM

It's time to let go.

FINN

No! LIAM!

Liam AXES DOWN Finn with the hythe. He rips it out of Finn's body and regains his breath. Talon and Lethor come around the corner. They wrap their arms around each other.

LIAM

How did you guys--?

TALON

Our blood boiled, Liam. We knew something bad happened.

LETHOR

Thank God it wasn't you.

LIAM

It was Ghost.

He breathes again.

LIAM (CONT'D)

It was Ghost.

COACH KIPP

(in the background)

I'm not done with you yet, boy!

Liam disconnects from their hug.

TALON

Do we leave?

LIAM

Golden Rule.

TALON

Treat others the way you want to be treated.

Talon smiles with Liam.

INT. THE BARN - CONECSIONS - NIGHT

Talon and Lethor follow Liam and his hythe. Talon redirects the snakes to constrict around Kipp's hands, forcing him to drop the gun. Lethor closes the walls in around him.

Kipp freaks out and leaves the arena. The boys laugh.

INT. THE BARN - ICE ARENA - NIGHT

Liam hurries onto the bench. Lethor and Talon stay behind. Liam kneels down by Chester. And on Chester's feet, the melted skate wounds heal by themselves.

Liam feels it too. He checks the slashes on his legs and arms. They heal by themselves.

CHESTER

What happened?

Liam chuckles, tears of joy.

CHESTER (CONT'D)

Was it something I said?

LIAM

I'm just happy you're back.

CHESTER

Did I black out?

LIAM

Something like that.

Chester observes the guys.

CHESTER

Nice outfits.

He falls back asleep. Liam grabs the cloak off of Chester and takes it with him.

INT. THE BARN - ICE ARENA - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Talon, Lethor, and Liam walk along the glass, heading to the zamboni room. The bloody ice fades away to its normal base.

EXT. THE BARN - THE SHED - NIGHT

Liam covers Ghost's body with the cloak behind the boards.

LIAM

Thank you for everything.

Liam pulls the hood over Ghost's head. The boys take one last look at their mentor before leaving in the nighttime.

EXT. WINTER WOODS - NIGHT

A campfire CRACKLES as the Kielstad Knights cozy around.

Liam, Ash, and Chester arrive.

CHARLIE

There he is.

JAKE

Mr. Blackout.

Chester smiles.

THOMAS

How did it happen?

Ash and Liam sit on an open log.

CHESTER

I barely remember anything. The last thing I can remember was my amazing snipe of a shot.

Liam smiles, hiding it away from the fire. Ash finds the s'more's stuff and makes one.

KATE

So, what's the word on the team?

LIAM

The school fired Kipp.

The boys, and Kate, HOWL out in the night in happiness.

DANNY

Wait. So, who's coaching our team?

Liam smirks at Ash.

LIAM

Let's just say my mom knows how to  
blackmail an athletic's director.

COLE

Jenny's gonna be our coach?

DANNY

I love Jenny!

Ben slaps Danny on the arm.

BEN

Dude.

Ash hands Liam a s'more. He CRUNCHES into it. Ben moves over to Liam's side and sits down. Ash leaves them to talk.

BEN (CONT'D)

Liam. I don't even know where to  
start. I-- I had no control of my  
emotions. I-- I went haywire on  
you, and it hurts me every night  
since. I wish I could take it back,  
but I know I can't.

Liam stays quiet. But Ben pulls up his sleeve, revealing all the cuts on his arms.

BEN (CONT'D)

Guess I couldn't face my own truth  
head on. I'm not as strong as I  
thought.

LIAM

Ben. I'm happy you're here.

Ben smirks, then leaves Liam to be.

Jake smears melted chocolate on Kate's face. Kate chases Jake with the marshmallow stick, which has a marshmallow on fire.

ASH

Ay, be careful, fricken squirts.

The team laughs the night out.

INT. WALLEYES ARENA - ENTRANCE - NIGHT

The TICKET LADY watches it-- The door magically opens by itself. She squints.

Liam eyes her up in his cloak, then continues forth, skipping the ticket stand in his invisibility. He dodges around people to the busy, main rink.

INT. WALLEYES ARENA - ICE RINK - NIGHT

The WALLEYES play the FALCONS. One boy slams into the glass from a nice shoulder check.

The goaltender covers the puck. The REFEREE blows the whistle. Falcon's HEAD COACH moves to the ASSISTANT COACH. He hides his lips behind the paper.

ASSISTANT COACH

I agree.

The head coach bends down to the BENCHED GOALTENDER.

HEAD COACH

We're gonna switch you guys at ten.

The goalie nods. On the filled bleachers, Liam passes the crowd in his cloak. He grabs an open seat.

The ref drops the puck. The players move the puck down to the other end of the ice. As Liam watches the play, he eyes down a troubled player.

THIRTY-FOUR, high school hockey player, hears a liquid black-GOOP form. The top of his helmet melts over the round bulge of his cage. It falls around the hemisphere like an invisible astronaut's helmet.

Liam catches onto it.

The boy panics, tosses his gloves off, and attempts to rip off the helmet, but the goop cemented over the straps. The goop blocks 34's vision, dropping him into darkness.

As he panics, the goop seals the last gap in the helmet's cage, blindfolding his head in its trap.

Liam scribbles his notes down fast.

INT. THE BARN - LOCKER ROOM - NIGHT

The Walleyes bang into the locker room, angry and upset. 34 enters blindly with his helmet's goop. It's polluting him. He sits down with the rest of his guys. He keeps his gear on as the other's undress around him.

INT. THE BARN - ICE ARENA - NIGHT

Liam stays put as the last of the crowd passes by on the bleacher's walkway.

INT. THE BARN - ICE ARENA - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

Liam sneaks with his cloak over to the locker room. Another boy leaves the room. He sneaks inside the closing crevice.

INT. THE BARN - LOCKER ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A STRAGGLER finishes his pack up, but 34 is frozen in his black-gooped gear.

WALLEYE STRAGGLER

C'mon, man. You know we're not gonna wait for you this time.

The straggler leaves. Liam walks up to the boy. Liam sets a hand on the kid's knee as he crouches down.

LIAM

I'm here to help you.

The boy's teeth shiver. He nods, frightened. Liam grabs the boy's water bottle from his bag.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I was in your skates not long ago.

Liam unscrews the cap to the full-filled bottle.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I know the pain you feel right now.

The boy continues to shiver in fear.

LIAM (CONT'D)

It stains darkness over you.

Liam lifts the bottle over the kid's helmet.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Water's a natural gift from God himself.

He pours the water over the boy, rinsing away the goop.

LIAM (CONT'D)

And water just happens to be a nice cleansing to a depression.

The boy watches the goop wash away. It streams down to the floor's drain.

LIAM (CONT'D)

But water can only do so much.

34 looks into Liam's eyes.

LIAM (CONT'D)

Let's take that helmet off.

34 takes his helmet off. Liam keeps his hand on the boy. The boy tosses his helmet in his bag.

LIAM (CONT'D)

I want you to know I'm here with you, every step of the way.

The boy tears up.

34

I'm so overwhelmed. With honor classes, with hockey, I can barely find the time to sleep anymore.

LIAM

You're not alone in this fight. There's a whole clan waiting to meet you.

The silence is strong between them.

EXT. COTERIUM - NEW MOON MORNING

Redwater rivers down the marble steps of a mansion. Liam and 34 walk up the steps in their cloaks to Talon and Lethor, inviting them inside.

LETHOR

Welcome back, Liam.

LIAM

Thanks, Lethor. Thank you, Talon.

They head inside.

INT. COTERIUM - NEW MOON MORNING

Painted in white and gold, SHADOW MEMBERS pack the meeting room. Liam tours 34 around, Lethor and Talon meet up with other shadows.



34

What is this place?

LIAM

This is the Coterium, our master's home. We meet every new moon for tradition. The Shadow Clan's like a group of scouts, but instead of ranking players onto teams, we rank the relationships within the team.

34

Like how healthy they are?

LIAM

That's the idea. We study the coaches, the players, we even study the fans in the stand, and it's perfect because we blend in with the crowd. No one knows who we are.

34

Like secret agents. But what's the point then?

LIAM

We're building our clan. Once we're big enough, we'll start taking control of pain. We'll start holding people accountable for their actions.

34

Like a fear tactic?

LIAM

It's not always healthy to implement fear, but it's best to keep the bullies on their toes at all times. One day, they'll know we're watching them.

34

I like it.

LIAM

What do you say? Do you wanna join?

34

Absolutely.

LIAM

Hold your hands out for me.

Liam unsheathes the hythe from beneath his cloak. He gashes a cut in both of 34's hands.

LIAM (CONT'D)  
Now, hold your hands up to mine.

34 glues his bloody hands to Liam's.

LIAM (CONT'D)  
Your blood is on my hands.

They drop their arms.

LIAM (CONT'D)  
Welcome to the Shadows.

INT. COTERIUM - BASEMENT WINERY - NEW MOON MORNING

Liam sneaks into the quiet basement, passing by giant wine barrels sleeping on their bases. Liam opens a door to a magnificent room... A room that speaks his future for him.

A giant winery of BLACK CLOAKS.