

Tomorrow's Gone

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Preface by Simon Lupoli

Written in the late 1990s in Crayola's "crayons", Tomorrow's Gone features a frenetic Phase 1. Neither of the other phases are less frenetic, but you are taught how to maneuver them. On my desk, newsreel footage of the space shuttle Challenger, it's getting put together. The dashes on the screen denote heart-beats. No sounds except for the steam and mechanisms exhaling. It is 1985, and...

TOMORROW'S GONE

A Book in Three Phases

Phase One: Time Spent at the Zoo

Beyond the steps, on the moss between buildings, Mr. Ly looks down at a headstone in the black night. It is the one which bleeds strings of Ivy. A lamppost burns yellow.

He walks down the steps, the night behind him, and he takes the only route not coated in charcoal black: the sidewalk that protrudes straight outward.

The Cemetery shrinks with each step. It's bubbled off from the dark by the lone post.

Mud coated boots chug forward then stop.

Mr. Ly's eyes point downward in the shade of his hat. The crevices in his face, tightened up. His brows looking intrigued. A silver dollar rolls along the cement.

A Royal Fool barges onto the pavement. His sharp green outfit is offensive, and his bells whistle and clank.

He reads the script for Tomorrow's Gone. He licks his thumb to turn the page and keeps his focus on that.

Then he tracks the silver dollar rolling along the cement.

ROYAL FOOL: OOPS! I ALMOST DROPPED MY LUCKY PENNY!

Mr. Ly's left him behind. The Fool picks up a silver dollar, bends his face to examine it closer.

The fool slips into the alleyway with his arms slinging. He's flung the script into the garbage.

A little boy of five grabs at Mr. Ly's hand. They walk forward.

BOY: Will you walk me home?

MR. LY: If you know where you live.

BOY: Just up that way.

Ly, 47, takes the hand. He has to slump down, and the boy has to reach way up. They go at it like this for a while.

MR. LY: Where are your parents?

BOY: I don't know. If I ever get lost they tell me to look for someone with kids because those people usually aren't rapists. I couldn't find anyone with kids because of the hour, so I decided on someone old because all the gangbangers die young and old people I reckon get sick of foolin around.

MR. LY: That's wise of you. You live on the fourth floor, don't you?

BOY: Yes I think so.

MR. LY: Well I live on the third. Can you read yet?

Mr. Ly and the boy climb the stairs into the apartment building and disappear. There's moss gumming some of the foundation. Up and up, on the fourth floor, the lights click on and push away the black clouds.

A milky brown hat, attached to a coat hook. There are some plates and books on top of a Grandfather Clock.

On the stove, the egg fries. The yellow bulb in it puffs and screeches.

Charlie, of 13 years, takes care of it. He has a beautiful ruggedness going on with his hair, that comes from not keeping up with it too much.

All 3 of the children in fact, are beautiful mixes of Vietnamese, Chinese, and Anglo-Saxon. Their mother will not appear in the day-time because she is dead.

Mr. Ly shovels papers off of the breakfast table, so light hits the green newspaper stains. His hair is combed stiffly to the side. The papers fall into his bag.

Little Andrew, pulls out the chair across from Sabrina. There are only 3 chairs because two of them mildewed away a long time ago. In their place, against the wall, is a patched up couch.

Mr. Ly drops his bag so that he can put on his coat and hat. Andrew springs to it, holds onto it until he is ready.

ANDREW: Baba can you drive me to the park at 4:30?

Sabrina sips the almond milk off her spoon.

MR. LY: Yes, but then you must learn to walk.

ANDREW: There is always next time.

MR. LY: Don't miss the bus.

CHARLIE: Don't forget your lunch.

Charlie drops a brown paper bag into Mr. Ly's hands, and he kisses him on the cheek. Mr. Ly takes the bag from Andrew and exits the door. Andrew and Charlie stand there. Sabrina sits with her cereal bowl.

A gaudy Catholic Church. High angled ceilings and white marble.

A choir sings. Many old, traditional looking people fill seats. Mr. Ly is the fifth row down, he is kneeling, pressing his head into the pew, his hands are tangled. The bag and hat cast off next to him.

He breathes through his nose with shut eyes.

In the school-lobby,

3 Janitors stand next to a trash can cart that can't roll. The anti-social one looks up at the ceiling. Plaster drizzles into his eyes.

Lots of kids cram the steps behind smoke.

The bus exhaust clouds, dissipates to reveal...

...the High School is a brick shithouse between two buildings. And the students are cramming into it.

Here are your introductions to the movie stars:

The kids walk through the doors in an army of mismatched attire. The security guards don't check things closely enough, though one of them has quite obvious elevator eyes.

Freshman Earnie Banks looks up at a security guard with his mother's old glasses, though these are quite masculine.

Boxes, hauled from the Art Room, make their way through the swarm. And Tucked away, a glass door, labeled, "GUIDANCE."

Behind it,

Sadie Campbell is just getting into her late twenties and in behind her desk. Sabrina Ly sits across in waiting. Sadie is holding 6 things which she is trying to sit down with. 1. A paper cup of coffee 2. Her messenger bag 3-5. 3 files, EARNIE BANKS, SARAH FIELDS, JIM COPPERHEAD 6. Her keys.

Sitting down now, hand holding up her face and the twinkle in her eye. She's very tight in her muscles and especially in her shoulders. Very disoriented. She looks across:

SADIE: What's up baby face?

Oh my, it is the box they call the "staff room":
Over someone's shoulder, Gary Stoll sips coffee, nods.

His dog eyes point at Penelope Schmidt, whom he tries to listen to. They are the only two teachers of color. Gary is a matchbook who gives out his limited energy, freely.

PENELOPE: What do you think of that?

GARY: In the morning I have to shake my arm to get the feeling back.

A milky hand with a gold ring screwed on tightly, waves goodbye to the wife. When she drives away, the hands are stuffed into the pockets of his Red jumper. Lorne Banker works at the bolt from there, on his way in. His hands are veiny and white hairs poke from them and brush against the sweatshirt pockets. And his dyed black hair drips grease. He's tenured.

He's headed to check in on, Frank Griffem.

Frank Griffem leans back with his feet on the desk. He's a big guy with Asthma and Heart problems. His room has broken venetian blinds, which are always strung up to let the daylight in. He never turns on the lights. He rolls out cigarette smoke in a big puff.

Edward Mullen is a late 20s, German-American with a brown mane and a propensity for wearing green. He looks up at the place, the shithouse. Walks inside. His muscles are fragile, and he walks stiff as a new catcher's mitt.

Edward has an awfully sharp smile and the Security Guards think he's a student.

He sniffs around for the smell of funny milk.

MR. LY calls through the crowd: Edward.

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Edward's smile cuts through the swarm. He waves.

EDWARD: Monsieur, how was the summer session?

MR. LY: Quieter.

A lot Quieter.

The Time lapses them as the students walk around it. They cramp the hallway.

Introductions have gone around, you can go back into the story. Weeeeeee

The chalk's carved out 3 pictures, each of a child, and words: Quintus Nemo est.

There's artwork littered all over the place, all amateur.

MR. LY: Hello I am Mr. Ly as in Love-Ly. I will be your Latin I teacher this year. I hope we are all in the right place.

The door squeals open.

MR. LY: What is your name?

JIM: Jim.

MR. LY: Stay there. Read this.

JIM: Quintus.. est Nemo.

MR. LY: Good. Sit where you like.

Jim tries to fit into a desk.

MR. LY: These are my kids, Mei Felius...

Margot wears glasses in the front row, chomps down on gum.

"...My Second son is Andrew..."

Earnie looks up from scribbling notes.

"...if I were an Ancient Roman, I'd probably name him--"

Bang! A student falls out of his chair from sleeping.

--Sec. un. dus...

Very creative, the romans."

The Ink spills all Black!

The bell rings five times in the dark.

Two boys peel their shirts from their bodies in the mens room.
The shorter one checks on the larger one's cock to see if he has
something to worry about.

The boys' room door is stuck between concrete bricks, and behind
the people walking. Bam! The seal is broken and two naked boys
catapult out of it. People in the crowd get excited. Some keep
walking. A girl gets horribly upset.

A teacher grabs the two boys by their neck-meat. And he drags
them to the principal's office bare. Behind him, Edward and Gary
walk beside lockers.

EDWARD: Gary cheer up a little midterms are coming up.

Sadie passes by. She looks at Edward sourly. Edward gives her his
famous smile.

EDWARD: What're you lookin at me like that for?
She turns back, SADIE: Go to class.

Edward shrugs.

GARY: You want some gum?

EDWARD: Yeah.

Gary peels some gum off his tongue, sticks it in Edward's mouth...

Edward holds up his chin with his palms. Gary leans back with his feet on the back table.

Mr. Ly's voice is teaching.

EDWARD: Shoot I'll tell ya, he sure is a handsome man.

Gary smiles his shiny white teeth.

Edward looks to - the Bell. It rings. Very harsh, between a siren and an alarm clock. The bell incinerates everyone.

The classroom is empty of people save for Mr. Ly, clicking and clacking at a word processor.

Jim knocks on the open door.

JIM: I was wondering if we could go over what I missed today.

Mr. Ly chews on a sandwich in his off seconds. He moves like he has a third arm.

MR. LY: Introductions. I am Mr. Ly, are you satisfied?

JIM: Um sure well maybe you could help me get a-head?

Mr. Ly considers Jim's features.

Back inside the "Staff Room," Lorne yaps.

LORNE: The computer man is giving out standardized tests. What's he know about schooling you say? Well nothing, but he has a little of this.

Lorne makes the money gesture. Edward plugs his ears.

LORNE: Edward I'm trying to reach you.

Edward sticks out his tongue and makes worms with his fingers.

EDWARD: Blehhhhhhhhhh

Frank puts his elbow on the table. Smiles all sly.

FRANK: Hey, Gary, I was wondering if you could get your ass out there and sub for me. I need to buy cigarettes and besides, we're playing football.

GARY: I don't know much about that.

Frank raises a brow.

FRANK: Alright then. Edward do you-

EDWARD: No you can have some of my cigarettes though

Edward tosses a box over from Lorne's pocket. Lorne doesn't notice, Frank catches the box with two hands.

Edward returns his face to Lorne.

EDWARD: Oh yes I had a dream about Mr. Ly, He was rolling down a hill and went ahhhhhhhhhhhh.

Edward makes rolling motions with his arms.

A frightened boy wavers his arms in the same way in healy's. They take him forward and the lockers pass by. (Hallway).

BOY: Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh.

He zooms past Gary who doesn't notice him. He is close next to Sabrina.

GARY: It's not about who's right or wrong. You don't have to make people feel stupid just because you're smarter than them.

SABRINA:
I'm not smarter than them.
GARY: Fine then.

Gary sighs out of his nostrils.

GARY: We're going back inside.
SABRINA: No.
GARY: You get an A if you come back in.
SABRINA: I want an F.
GARY: Oh kiss my foot then.

Sabrina bends over.

GARY: No I didn't mean it that way
Sabrina!

Sabrina grins.

GARY: Come back inside.
SABRINA: Fine.

Meanwhile, Sadie watches the lunchtime action. Edward steps in. Sadie pockets both her hands and keeps them there. Edward pokes her nose so she smiles. He points like a child

EDWARD: Look over at the Grinch, carving the roast beef.

There is a table, filled with mismatched "outsiders." Some in leather some SPED-ED, a child with horrible burn marks heads the table. She smiles.

SADIE: It's so beautiful.

Penelope waves, coming into the hallway which overlooks the lunchroom, shyly. Edward runs over and swoops her up in his arms. Laughing, she pretends to hit him so he'll "put her down!"

Sadie stands alone and watches them. They have wedding rings on their fingers.

Some mulch-like roast falls from a boys spork to the floor.

Meanwhile, (classroom antics), Sabrina walks in and shuts the door, pressing her hands behind her into it.

Lorne looks over from the window.
He starts toward her.

SABRINA: I wanted to tell you something.

LORNE: What's that?

She backs away into the other corner of the room.

SABRINA: Never mind.

Lorne pushes her against the chalkboard.

LORNE: You can talk to me, you know.

SABRINA: Sure.

She looks up to the fire in his eyes. He kisses her, she turns to give him her cheek.

LORNE: Beg for me. Tell me you want it, or you get no more.

Sabrina looks down. He shakes her violently. Her eyes, struck by fear. They stare wide.

SABRINA: Kiss me.

Lorne crushes his palms into Sabrina. And holds her in, she lets him have her and he forces his tongue in. She's 16.

SABRINA: That's the last of it.

Lorne grips her chin.

LORNE: You always say that, my dear.

Sabrina forces out a small smile.

Small smile.
She sits at a student chair-desk.
Her eyes are tired and down-cast.

LORNE: You use to have so much more - fire! What happened to that bite?
SABRINA: You did.

Lorne grins to himself but it gets out.
Sabrina looks down at composite.

Lorne steps out of the classroom. Edward's waiting.

EDWARD: Is she in there?
LORNE: She feels bad enough about what she did already. I wouldn't reprimand her.

Edward looks at Lorne with fumes coming.

LORNE: What do you think I am some type of animal? It's natural really.
You are strung up so tight Edward.

Lorne presses on Edward's should- EDWARD: Don't touch me.
LORNE: Suit yourself. Don't go in there.

Edward pauses. Walks away. Lorne starts toward the cafeteria. The other direction, but also away.

Edward looks shitty now. He bumps into Gary on his walk. Gary's not moody just tired.

GARY: Now your the one who's all upset.
EDWARD: Eh what the hell.
Gary shoves Edward into his classroom, playfully enough.
STUDENT: That was one long bathroom break Mr. Mullen!

Wadded up paper is tossed about. Chatter and Chatter with squeaking.
Margot looks over at Chop, who's real name is Lambros Economides, the Greek baseball pitcher.

Edward stumbles in and people hush up a bit.

EDWARD: Alright Gary- Mr. Stoll. The flu got him. I will be subbing for him.

Edward makes depressed finger guns.

EDWARD: Yeah.

The students raise their eyebrows collectively. In their desks placed in nice straight grid lines. It's quiet enough to hear the screeching desks from up above.

One floor above... Relentless chatter from the students all around. Penelope stares at the ceiling. She tracks the plaster as it falls down into her coffee.

Back in Guidance... Gary lets out a smile as he walks in. Sadie looks up from paperwork, stands up and smiles back. Gary makes himself serious.

GARY: You need any help with anything?

SADIE: Sure, you can help me go through Mr. Barrett's things.

Sadie gets out a topless cardboard box filled of colorful trinkets.

GARY: He finally quit like he said he was going to?

SADIE: He died.

GARY: Oh? Well that's one way to do it.

They unpack a while. Trash this, attach themselves to that.

They both like a Shakespeare play, they pull it back and forth and set it down to fight about it later.

SADIE: Do what?

GARY: Get out of here.

Students fill up busses from the curb. When the bus is filled it runs along, and another takes it's place, like clockwork.

The students leave Edward's room and hand him doodles, sentences, and blank pages of all sorts. Donny hands him a song written in bass clef.

EDWARD: Why's there a frowny face?

This makes slim Donny's face light up.

DONNY: Well it's a way to organize notes you see instead of the staff, that's for old head's some of the time...

Mr. Ly and Jim (you remember Jim) have pushed two desks together. There are many pages between them of written work. Their heads are down and they are still at it.

In the schoolyard there is a fight every afternoon.

Today, The winter sun is setting.
 The dogs bark near the links in the fence.
 A lanky one cracks a heavy one across the jaw.
 Blood spits onto the asphalt.
 There are students but their cheers are silenced. They just make a commotion and a semi circle around the fence.
 The heavy one sits by the fence and is beaten down.

Now the sun has set. It is time for drinks. The music shouts loudly at the bar. Mr. Albert slides next to Edward who is a few in. His sparse white hair sticks out of his scalp like wires.

MR. ALBERT: I'm a writer. Fiction not journalism. So I just have to ask, how do you do your job teacher? All those brats lined up in there, hating you. Shit pay. How do you do your Job?

EDWARD: I don't I drink!

Edward holds up two different drinks and sends them down the hatch. Sadie glares at him, her beer is missing.

A boombox fuels the backyard party. A crowd makes a circle. A fire is lit. The backyard is fenced off.

Inside the circle, Chop holds a Live Slug in his hand.

SIDE CHARACTER: Ayo man Chop-Daddy isn't that thing going to eat your brain?

CHOP: Stop. Stopit. Your puttin me out a little. I want to be in my zone.

Chop swallows the slug, down the hatch, slopping up the innards of his throat; his eyes flash the sensation of it wiggling in his gut.

Chop smiles and drools green from his K9s.

CHOP: Alright!.. Who wants to kiss me?!

A collective ulk. The crowd fleas, except for gum-smacking, still pretty Margot. Chop and "Kyle" slap hands.

CHOP: Margot this is your only shot at this!

Margot looks down and walks away. Chop and "Kyle" grin at each other. Chop discharges some of the goo with a hacking sound.

Sadie and Gary help Edward walk the west-side of the city.

EDWARD: Hey it's an ant. Hello. Melvin. You're closer to me in size. Than I am to the stars.

They get Edward moving again.

EDWARD: Oh lock me up I'm gonna wail on somebody.

GARY: Just make it to the next bar.

They pass by a brick town-house that none of them like. The bad things have happened there for years. It is where Lorne Banker and Mrs. Banker live. Inside:

Hands are re-bricking the mantle. The cement-glue is slathered on.

SABRINA half-sobs: I'm gonna tell on you.

There is a lone brick near the floor.

LORNE: What is there to tell? That you seduced me?

There is a lone brick near the floor. Lorne wraps his fingers around it.

LORNE: That you wanted your teacher.

SABRINA: No!

LORNE: Don't say no to me. You can't say no to me You bitch!

He picks up the brick.

Sabrina's small hand trembles on a glass table.

LORNE: Kiss me and it'll be alright. Kiss me and I'll be alright.

Sabrina looks up with small tears trickling out. She shakes her head.

The hand comes up. The brick cracks skull. The glass shatters. Brick comes up. Pieces fall from wounds. Soaked with blood. Brick strikes again. Shrieks horribly. Cries horribly. The brick cracks off the jaw.

The beating doesn't cease.

The shit is hitting the fan back at the school.

The spider on the ceiling looks down at the ruse:

Jim sits with a big textbook as long as his forearm, the classic, Algebra 1 look.

Mr. Ly puts on his glasses. They are square and well built.

MR. LY: I was taught-

JIM: You can't write in the book.

MR. LY: I was taught to do it by balancing everything.

JIM: That's not how they want us to do it.

MR. LY: Then how do they want you to do it since you know so well!?

JIM: I don't know just not that way!

Mr. Ly wipes his forehead with his hankie.

JIM: I can't do this.

MR. LY: Take it one piece at a time. Find x .

JIM: They want us to parenthesis, exponent-

MR. LY: Just find x and then go from there!

JIM: Fine!

Mr. Ly cracks open a can of beer and sips the foam.

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Behind the links of a fence, little Andrew's swing creaks each time he comes down.

A figure, well what seems to be a figure, protrudes from the darkness. The leaves rustle away.

Andrew's legs go real still. He lets the swinging die out.

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At another bar. A dance taking place behind them. Sadie between Gary and Edward. Edward gnaws on an orange. Gary sits with his beer. Edward pulls a slice from the orange and passes it to Gary.

EDWARD: I hate myself sometimes I mean why couldn't I a-

GARY: Edward. Leave all that shit in the past. It's shit just bury it somewhere.

EDWARD: But she had a great healthy chest. Unlike you Sadie.

SADIE: Well at least I don't have arthritis.

EDWARD: You'd fuck a horse if it gave you attention.

SADIE: You don't know the first thing about me!

EDWARD: Well at least I didn't starve myself for boys who didn't know you existed!

SADIE: YOUR PARENTS DON'T FUCKING LOVE YOU!

EDWARD: You got the whole bar looking at your flat chest are you happy ARE YOU?!

Sadie smiles. Edward gives her his movie-star grin.

EDWARD turns his own volume down: I actually think you're very attractive.

GARY: I haven't had enough beer.

Gary hands the rest to Edward (orange).

The three of them sit there, kind of burnt out. They all stare at what's in front of them.

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In the king bed, Sadie kicks her feet at Gary and fights with Edward for the blanket. They are in their work clothes. Gary slumbers. The tugging back and forth gets him to rub his forehead but that's about all. His eyes stay shut. He kills the lamp.

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In Edward's Parents' house, Penelope reads with glasses and a reading light.

In the trashcan are two pregnancy tests.

In his classroom at his desk, Mr. Ly puts the final touch on a roman sculpture (foam), a head which has stabbed pine needles into it, looks like a human porcupine, or Mr. Albert.

There are dots of yellow and blue paint on the under-eye, the rest gray. The visage screams in morbid pain.

The two chair-desks are still put together, but all of Jim's papers and things are missing.

The phone rings out a few times.

Mr. Ly places the sculpture on its neck so it stands.

He picks up the phone and listens to the receiver a few seconds. Then the lava in his vocal cords pours out:

MR. LY: What have you done?

LORNE: Mr. Ly? Mr Ly?

MR. LY: What is this?

On the other end of the Jail Phone line, the lower body of a man, with blood soaked through his jeans and the zipper.

He stands with his crotch protruding out as far as possible.

LORNE: We were in love. Mr. Ly I was in love with your daughter.

Mr. Ly smiles and releases a teen-y bit of amusement. He continues this line of thought:

MR. LY: What changed?

LORNE : She died.

Mr. Ly shudders once, into sternness. Belts:

MR. LY: What!?

Lorne holds up a chipped phone.

LORNE: I killed her as we made love, it was accidental. I loved her.
Mr. Ly breathes on the other end of the line.

LORNE: How come you got so much time with her how? She hated you.

Mr. Ly in his face, you can tell, he has too many scrambled signal thoughts.

Only LORNE's lips move freely: I tried to keep her warm afterward. A blanket wouldn't, so I gave her myself.

A cop walks his way down past Jail cells.

Only the LIPS: I just wanted her to be warm as she made her way up to heaven.

COPPER: BANKER! GET OFF THE LINE!

LORNE snarls his jaws back: I AM TALKING TO HER FATHER!

COPPER Ohh. Ok. Will you ask him to come down to ID the body?

In the school-room Mr. Ly listens to what is told on the phone, but he doesn't hear it. He stares up blankly, at the clock, for a long while, the wind knocked from him, unaware of his breath, just staring really, just a stare.

Staring at Kansas, again. Utah. Of the places they planned to go, the two they went.

The kids are tired and whine-y.

In the night above, it is like you can see the entire universe.

They are camped out. Mr. Ly and the three kids. With only the light of a lantern, and the stars.

The kids and their dad look up at them, placed so close together.

Little Andrew looks at the flame and his mother dances in slow-time. In a crown of roses- stabbing her scalp.

Mr. Ly's eyes strike wide open.

Jail Cell Pale, white-snow hands match a bedsheet and tie the bedsheet tightly.

A shadow runs along the underpass wall.

MR. LY: ANDREW!

ANDREW!

ANDREW!

Mr. Ly tears his knees jumping the fence. Rolling onto the playground.

In the kitchen is a note that says thanks baba I learned to walk in the Sabrina's bedroom there is a made bed, Mr. Ly shuts that light off.

Mr. Ly bursts into Andrew's room and hugs him as he cries and kicks him. ANDREW: Get off a me!

Mr. Ly sobs more and holds onto Andrew, who screeches and cries at his father's touch.

The white-pale-feet leap from the the bed frame and swing back and forth in the air. Lorne's flying. Like Peter Pan.

The feet become still and protrude to the floor. They swing out, side to side. Side to side. The life breath snuffed out.

The pendulum on the grandfather clock swings side to side. Side to side.

Bing Bong Bing Bong
Bing Bong

The feet swing to complete the Bing Bong Bing Bong.

in the Kansas, A river of green pours through the
sky, as they sleep.
beneath it.

Phase 2:

Mr. Ly reads Camus

Sadie: How is it that sleep overtakes us?

Gary: We tired out.

XXV "Salaries"

Edward looks at himself in the mirror. He pulls on a crevice that has formed between stubble. He tries to sift a thick gray hidden into the rest of his hair as he combs it. With his fingers.

It is very dark outside.

EDWARD: Comedy is unexpected Comedy is unexpected.

No matter how carefully spotted, the hairs fall right back out of place as soon as he takes his hand away. He gives up.

EDWARD: I had sex with a triceratops! No that's no good. People would worry about how I got the time machine to meet him.

Edward pulls a revolver from his waist-pocket. He makes sure the safety is on, and then puts it back in, the handle sitting on his belt buckle.

Edward walks down the stairs, his hair looks fine but it isn't how he wants it. In place of the usual family portraits, that would live behind the rails, on the open stairwell, are pictures of clowns. Everybody loves a clown.

Edward's parents are in the sunroom, playing cards and drinking coffee. Father has a newspaper still closed, unread. Edward rubs at his hands.

Mother is small and constricted in her movements. Father stares sternly at the table. A meager body and profuse baldness running from his forehead to the lines on the back neck. The sides still clean and nice enough. He's in a wheelchair.

Edward motions to ask for something, rubs the back of his neck without disturbing them.

EDWARD: How about if you guys borrowed for the payment this month?

Neither looks up.

MOTHER: Banks don't loan to people old as us.

EDWARD: I'm stretched too thin as it is-

MOTHER: We need it more than you.

EDWARD: Ma a baby's on the way.

MOTHER: I raised you. He raised you.

EDWARD: But Ma the baby's on the way.

Mother goes back to the cards.

MOTHER: We need it more than you.

Edward takes the hand off his neck.

EDWARD: Goo-goodbye now.

Neither looks up. They are playing gin.

MOTHER: See you.

Father takes the pot off the coffee-maker and fills another cup.

Edward pulls off his wedding ring and puts it on the counter.

PAWNBROKER: I'd give you 80 dollars for it

EDWARD: 80 Bucks?

PAWNBROKER: Yes.

EDWARD: Yeah that's alright

At the station,

Edward forces 80 dollars into Penelope's hands. Her glasses fog in the morning's dew. She rubs Edward's knuckles. He hugs her tightly with his free arm. Her glasses, get shoved crooked.

The tracks carry straight on through, as far as can be seen.
An engine creaks and whirls behind them.

The sun is rising and killing the paleness of the sky. It pours layers of rays in stacks, from the half-bulb firing out there in space, glinting every shard of gravel.

The shadow of a train appears and then the thing itself.
The train chugs along musically. The smoke tunnels up and is left behind to drift.

Penelope sits next to Edward who looks out the window with his hand wrapped along his chin.

She looks at the head of the seat in front of her. Sits stern as if bolted into place.

The train churns and beats its wheels.

She breaks the stillness: Is it here-

EDWARD: Yes this is the one.

It shrieks along the railway to a stop, at a very small station, with a teen-y ticket booth, and an overhang that is poor shade.

Edward walks off the train stiff, the dawn behind him and starting to sear.

XXVII Conversation in Diner at Dawn

The diner is in a ghost town, on the edge of the city.

The glares of sun rip highlights off of it.

Mr. Ly, has his loose tobacco on the corner of the table. He rolls it up and smokes. This makes him nauseous, but where he's at, most things do.

Edward sits across from him. Chews on his lips between bits of bacon and egg. He can't eat much.

Mr. Ly shoves his full plate to the center of the table.

Fat waiter comes by pours coffee. Mid-discussion:

MR. LY: I don't care.

EDWARD: But are you following?

MR. LY: No.

EDWARD: If some high up space-man can see your life in a single pane, then it is always going to be that way, you can't change what happens to you so just live in it or think in it.

MR. LY: I want to die.

EDWARD: Are you?

MR. LY: I never get what I want. Who's the spaceman watching my life in a single pane?

EDWARD: The script writer, the director.

Mr. Ly scoffs.

EDWARD: It's just a fun way to think of how we live. How we can never think around doing what we were always going to do.

Mr. Ly punches Edward's nose. His mind fuzzes over.

MR. LY: You are stupid. You can do whatever you want you can rob this place blind.

Edward pushes over the steaming cup of coffee. It rolls and puddles over.

He cocks his pistol and marches over. Shellings crack into the ceiling plaster. It floats down.

EDWARD: I am robbing this place! This is a robbery.

A few more shots.

Mr. Ly's eyeballs bloat and his mouth stretches open as he hears shots ring out. Dollars fall from the bag as Edward crosses the table and out the door.

XXVIII Confession to You

Mr. Ly sits in the shadows of the dark wood box. He leans close to the honey comb screen. Lets the smoke bushel out of his cigarette lips.

PRIEST: Do you believe in the father almighty, creator of heaven and earth?

The priest stays where he can't be seen.

MR. LY: I don't think so.

PRIEST: Then why are you here?

MR. LY: I think that by pretending to believe, maybe the pain will leave me.

PRIEST: You must believe.

MR. LY: Why?

The sweat drips from Mr. Ly's face.

PRIEST: :You must.

MR. LY: Belief is the refuge of people who don't want to be wrong. It can't be proven right or wrong so it is useless, it is a rejection of what you see. It is just what you believe and I think it is bullshit. Better to be wrong about most things, and right about some things, than to live a life swimming in bullshit. What do you know about bullshit father?

PRIEST: God has been kind to me.

MR. LY: He has been kinder to me.

Edward pulls prop money from its plastic. He drops it on wood fire in the sunshine. The fire ripples some more. He is on a lonely side of the train tracks.

He tosses his robbery bag onto the flame. And his magnum revolver.

Mr. Ly holds out cigarettes to Gary.

MR. LY: My lungs feel like charcoal you take them.

Gary rubs at his forehead and accepts. Can't say no when man like this.

Mr. Ly marks the chalk board with January 28, 1986. He wipes sweat from his face with a hankie.

MR. LY: Before we work on our PCS Projects..

Jim sits up, he tries to keep his eyes on the board, not on Margot. Margot tries to keep her eyes on the board, not on Jim. But on the board is a pitiable sight.

MR. LY: I'd like to review some of what we were working on before break.

Elena is the platinum Blonde huddling and whispering with her friend, facing the board. Whispering.

ELENA: It's so stupid. It reads like it's written by a predator.
Her friend points out Mr. Ly.

MR. LY: We'll start with Sabr?- Jim today.

Elena goes red in the face. Quiets down.

MR. LY: Jim what do you think the noise the imperfect case makes?
JIM: I dunno.

Earnie looks over, trying to keep up his own breath, at Jim.
A hand scratches a sheep onto the board with three legs. Shaking.

MR. LY: Cmon what sound does tripod the sheep make?

Jim looks over to his left as he's sure he felt someone's eyes.

MR. LY: The sheep.

JIM: Ba.

MR. LY: Yes. ba, bas, bat, bamus, batis, bunt.

CARL: Did you catch Out of The Darkness last night?

His hand scratches more chalk. He wipes his forehead with the handkerchief that is damp now in his other fist.

MR. LY: Uhm how about Quintus Darēbat pecunias Marcō. Carl?

JASON: Real good yeah it- real good

CARL: Quintus was giving money to Marcus...

CARL: Yeah it was just-

MR. LY: Um. Quintum Flacus salvēbat torrentē fluminē

JASON: You didn't like it?

EARNIE: Flaccus was saving quintus from the rushing stream.

CARL: No I did. It's just the name. The son of Sam,

MR. LY: Was saving sounds out of place in context. Try Sabīt.

CARL: I dunno, it's just not metal enough for me.

EARNIE: Saved.

JASON: Oh I can see that. I like his other name. The 42 Caliber killer.

MR. LY: Yes that's better.

EARNIE turns to Carl and Jason: Really not tha time.

Jason springs from his chair and points:

JASON: SHUT UP QUEER!

Jason sits back down.

The hand tremors and skips out as it writes the next:

MR. LY: Uh Flaccus Deserīt Quintum. Sabrin-Elena-

ELENA: Flaccus left or deserted Quintus.

The grid of desks is completely hush. Still.

MR. LY: Yes. Try to avoid derivatives. Another interesting fact about Deseribat is it can also mean to fail.

Mr. Ly stands there. In what was the Drama Room when Lorne Baker went here, but now it is the Connie High Philosophy room.

Mr. Ly wipes the sweat from his face with a handkerchief.
A boulder, pushed up the hill by Sisyphus, drawn in chalk, as a stick figure.

MR. LY: If we imagine Sisyphus, pushing the boulder, this is his life. Pushing the boulder is all he has, therefore, he must enjoy it.

GIRL: Why must he enjoy it?

Mr. Ly stares at her. She looks like Sabrina. She's put her hand down. And crunched her shoulders inward. Looking at her desk.

MR. LY: It is a difficult question to answer. It is all he has. For us it can be strenuous to imagine pushing a boulder, as anything other than dull because we have so many arcades to visit. For Sisyphus, the word arcade is not in his vocabulary. Just as his words for describing the way his muscles twitch, or the boulder's patterns of textures, or the patterns of endorphins he experiences, are not in our vocabularies. I suppose a better way to phrase the Sisyphus argument, is that if you can imagine Sisyphus as enjoying his life, you can laugh at all the meanings we attribute to life. If such a meaningless, dull existence can be enjoyed, than certainly life's meaning is not definite, and maybe what we hope to find in the abstraction of meaning, is simply a reflection of what we have.

The class is trying to keep themselves awake in all different manners. The classic, palm keeping up forehead, other hand desperately writing. The droopy eyes falling away. Slouched back, way back in the chair-desk. Trying to find a position for the head that is not straining and painful.

But what if it was all they had?

XXX is just checking in.

On the corner table is cash, cards, a cup of coffee and cigarettes. Gary pulls in smoke from a cigarette, unfiltered. It's stuck between his lips. They are playing Whist. About 8 hands in. Sadie has a lot of money. The radio is on.

Sadie flips the trump card: Queen of Diamonds.

Sadie's hand is all diamonds. The radio is on. Gary goes all in, Sadie matches.

Gary blows out a puff of smoke that hangs onto the light. He drops an ace of diamonds.

Sadie trumps with a JOKER card. She tosses in some cash.

Gary sighs. He tosses in his leftover cigarettes, which fall out of their tin wrapping- a little bit.

In the hall downstairs,
Edward puts a schoolbag, packed with money into a locker, zips it.
Combination Lock goes on. He tries to ignore Mr. Ly's staggers, intruding the corner of Edward's eye.

Mr. Ly is handed a cross.
He goes to the teacher printing room.

The walls are pale green. Mr. Ly rests his hand on the table next to the printer. His hand is wobbly.

He's stuck inside a staged documentary.

EXT. STARLET SERIES - 16MM - TRAIN TRACKS - DAY

The two stand, Sue on the tracks, Jun on the leaves.

SADIE (O.S.)

Jun Ly, 17, alter boy. 15, Sue
Ly.

She skips between sleepers, avoiding the gravel, woozy. Jun pulls at her. She has thick, blown out tufts of black hair.

JUN

Sue. Get away from there.

Sue dances her neck and looks at the leaves wrinkling together, in the trees.

JUN

Sue.

Mental Shot: The dog rips through the screen door.

JUN

Sue.

The train horn blows and gets louder.

BACK TO:

Mr. Ly cries fistfuls of tears.

His head falls from the composite table. And he stirs his limbs from the floor.

Through the glass on the door, with lined rhombus patterns, Edward watches, then looks the other way.

Edward whispers in Penelope's ear, her face goes cold. She Nods.

Edward sits next to her and their legs hang off the stage. Penelope picks up his hand with two of hers. In an empty auditorium.

EDWARD: When I was little I had to grow into them. I had big hands.

PENELOPE: Like a puppy with big paws.

EDWARD: Yeah I suppose.

PENELOPE: I still see you as a puppy.

EDWARD: Well I'm sure glad about that.

They sit there until Penelope goes to her class.

Gary comes by and Edward stands up.

Principal Thomas comes by. He hands them both their pay, which is a scratch off ticket.

GARY: Swap with me you get luckier if you swap.

Edward's is a dud. He hands the penny to Gary for scratching.

GARY: Hey I won five bucks!

EDWARD: Give me that!

Edward pulls it out of Gary's hand.

GARY: I better see some of that money.

GARY: You still want me to sub for you?

EDWARD: Yeah that would be good.

GARY: I better see some of that money.

Edward shakes his head, eyes down-cast. He sits there.

Earnie licks his lips in the office. His eyes are mad. He still wears his mother's old glasses even though in the glass are cracked holes that threaten to stab his mad eyeballs.

Principal Thomas is broad from the shoulders down. His hands are folded on his desk. He reveals a bullet casing.

THOMAS: Do you know what this is?

Earnie clicks a finger gun, and his tongue.

EARNIE: A round from a .22

THOMAS: I'm very concerned about you.

EARNIE: You're not my father.

Principal Thomas lets out a deep bellow: Hahaha you're right! I'm not!

Penelope, give him his bag back!

Stevie Wonder plays the Ed Sullivan show, on the office flat screen.

Penelope grips the bag tightly. Her fingers dance. She also gets to be there.

PENELOPE: We should search it. We are allowed to search it under the circumstances.

THOMAS: Fine.

Stevie wonder lets loose.

Penelope holds a .22 Pistol, pinching the handle, trembling.

THOMAS: Well give it back to him.

Earnie looks at him confused.

THOMAS: Give it back to him. What's he going to do? Shoot me? His life would be over.

Stevie dances.

EARNIE: My life is already over!

THOMAS: Oh grow up, will you, what are you 15?- Give him his fucking bag back!

Penelope hands it over. Sweat sunk into the straps.

The channel switches to the news broadcast.

Gary has the Box TV set up for Edward's students. Gary likes showing video tapes in the classroom.

But today on the TV, the teachers board the challenger.

Police come. Edward sticks his hands out for the cuffs.

The challenger goes up and explodes.

A river of smoke pours through the sky.

In their reactions, the students don't know what to make.

Gary looks tired.

The blast Echos throughout the school.

Edward is walked off campus.

Penelope paces out of the office screaming. She collapses into "Guidance," the next door office.

Sadie Campbell, who had never known Penelope very well before- well I suppose that doesn't matter.

PENELOPE trips into the office and from the floor: Why is everyone at this school fucking crazy?! so fucking crazy?!??

Sadie steps into the closet and Penelope crawls to follow.

PENELOPE: Ahhhhhhhh AHHHHHHhhhhh !

Sadie touches her face firmly. Through the wall in the next door room, Stevie is back on.

SADIE: Babe, it's just you.

Penelope inhales.

PENELOPE: That's a lot less scary.

SADIE: Right?

Penelope pokes her face and they smile and laugh and giggle and hold onto each other in the closet.

They don't hear the gunshots.

Gun flashes yellow. Bullet holes. In dark gray locker. Mr. Ly rubs his fingers together.

MR. LY: Give it to me. Give it to me. I wont have you hurt yourself give it to me.

Mr. Ly pries the gun from Earnie's hand.

MR. LY: Where the hell did you get this?

The gun clamps the desk loudly and slithers along, into Frank who juggles it and slams it down once more.

FRANK: You could've killed me!

MR. LY: The safety was on don't bother. Why did you have it?

The sunlight is blocked by the neighboring building, the lights are off, it is dark.

FRANK: I want to kill myself.

MR. LY: Do it at home.

FRANK: You don't understand, my home, I can't go there. It's so empty. Nothing there for me, none at all, I just want kids is all, I don't want to let my father's name die because I'm too scared of women.

MR. LY: You want to die because you don't have kids?

FRANK: My brain is all foggy and boogers stick to my eyes. I don't move around so much anymore. Not even to pace back and forth.

MR. LY: But because you don't have kids?

FRANK: Yes Mr. Ly.

MR. LY: You should take mine.

FRANK :Huh?

MR. LY: I want you to take them.

FRANK: Your? Oh but I couldn't.

MR. LY: Oh but you must. Yes I want you to take them.

FRANK :Welp, if you insist.

Mr. Ly wipes the sweat from his face.

Mr. Ly pushes Charlie, screaming, crying out the door and locks it.

CHARLIE, muffled by the door: YOU CANT THROW ME AWAY! YOU CAN'T GET RID OF ME THAT EASY! I SLAVE FOR YOU. I COOK FOR YOU--

Packed bags are on the floor. Mr. Ly wipes the sweat off his face with a handkerchief.

MR. LY: How come I can't catch a break Andy?

MR. LY: Andrew, c'mon Andrew pack your bags so we can go on our trip.

ANDREW: Baba you have to view my presentation first.

MR. LY: What is it that you want this time?

ANDREW : Just hear me out please like they do on Television.

Mr. Ly nods and sits at the table. Andrew wheels out the whiteboard. It has drawings of children and countries and says, "why we should adopt a child." Some knocks hit the door rapid-quick and then give up.

ANDREW: Why we should adopt a child. First off, whenever I don't finish my food, you complain about all the starving children in Africa, so we can adopt one, and then I can give her my leftovers.

Second, I will have someone to play with. I've thought about this, and even though boys are better than girls, I would like a girl because Sabrina was much nicer than Charlie.

Third reason we should adopt a child is that you can't make a baby like mom could.

This is the end of my presentation.

Frank opens the door to the two boys and the car speeding off.

Mr. Ly pours the whiskey from the paper bag down his throat.

Frank's made the boys roast beef and asparagus, it's just him and the boys, they eat at a gaudy table in silence.

Mr. Ly sloshes wine with the edges of his glass.

He sits at the breakfast nook, with a well garnished steak dinner.
He cuts open the steak, puts a piece of bleeding meat in his mouth.

He chews it.

XXXVI

Sadie and Gary help Penelope trot through to the center city Theater House.

There aren't as many lights as there should be.

Penelope is a few months along. Has a noticeable bump. She hears the following as if she were underwater:

GARY: Edward always told me she was a square!

SADIE: Oh no! She is no box of matches either!

City sounds back normal:

Penelope curves her lips up to a smile. Her eyes are wide and still she is shy.

Many people pack into the theater house, trying to mark their tickets under the yellow light bulbs...

In the dark, Penelope sits between Gary and Sadie, all the other seats- full. They gaze on at the show.

SCENE FROM: "ROTTING ACORNS"

A Royal Fool trots onto stage.

ROYAL FOOL

In the scene which follows me. These two
people are to fall in love.

He exits.

THE HOUSE OF STEINWICK. A candlelight sits on a
table, between the sitting, hyperactive Linus, and the
standing Johana, who tends to the fireplace.

Johana rubs down the table with a bleach towelette, then
she rubs down her face. She steadies Linus' head and
therefore his hyperactivity, if only for a few seconds.

It is a surprise, Linus is Gary, pretending to be Edward. Johana is Sadie.

LINUS

You're getting fatter. It grosses me out.

Johana adds another sentence with the quill
pen. She runs her finger along the line.

LINUS

I wish-

She slaps him.

LINUS

Hey! Et aliquid volō esse, quod essem, non esset nocendum.
Linus rubs up his tufts of hair.

Johana smiles with her pretty teeth and
sad eyes. Maybe with a touch of jealousy.

LINUS

Oh get over it, won't you. You can still read books. I haven't shattered
your glasses yet.

Johana writes another.

LINUS

Oh you bitch.

Johana strikes his knuckles.

LINUS

Flaccus inquit, "in viā video te ad me respicis et eam clāmēs."

LINUS

I'm not reading anymore.
C'mon hit me.

She writes another line. He punches her.
She falls to the ground.

LINUS

Fight back!

He pulls her up off the ground. Her glasses
have fallen off. He turns his own cheek and
slaps it.

LINUS

Hurt me more!

She shakes her head violently.

FATHER

Son!

Linus jumps and turns.

LINUS

Dad! Look at my Latin work. Amō tū-

FATHER

You have grease in your hair you geek.

Father grabs him by the neck and Linus smiles. He's thrown in front of the fire.

OFF

Steinwick!

Father sighs and leaves. Linus pulls himself up to reach for father and then makes himself sit down with his Latin.

LINUS

Tē amō. Semper tuī exaltantis sum-

She shakes her head.

LINUS

Tē amō. Semper tuī exaltor-

She shakes her head and points.

JOHANA

Eng.-dis, ung.-les, ong.-les.

LINUS

I am always proud of you. I never meant to hurt you. I love you.

Johana pulls on his cheek. Linus falls on the floor. Johanna sets down and strokes his hair. She smiles her pretty smile, but the tears flood from her eyes.

Penelope hangs onto Gary.

Sadie waves on a Taxi. Gary reaches from his neck and kisses her lips. The Taxi arrives. Gary is pushed inside.

SADIE: Get her home Gary.

Taxi leaves Sadie alone. Gary presses his head into the window.

A lovely song plays on the radio. Penelope snuggles up next to Gary. The song is very special to him. Penelope is not.

He rubs at his forehead. He looks out the window. At the city lights passing by.

Edward sits opposite the glass. He can see his own breath in the cold air. It spirals out of him between words.

Sadie leans on the other end of the line. They are real quiet. Her eyes drool almost-tears. It is like a tin can phone line of string.

A copper puts a styrofoam coffee beside Sadie. She thanks him quietly.

EDWARD: This challenger thing, you know stuff like that chews you up sometimes.

SADIE: How'd Penelope take it?

EDWARD: I don't know she seemed to take it fine... I was gentle.

Sadie sips her coffee.

EDWARD: What're you smiling at.

SADIE: My reflection.

Edward smiles with all his heart palpitations. Sadie snickers a little because she can't quite mute all of it.

XXXVIII

Mr. Ly's eyes get lazy. He reaches for the empty bottle and drops it.

He mounts his claws on the paper from six days ago.

He reads the same newspaper page over and over again.

The TV screen is his only reading light. It plays the video tape Mr. Ly bought in the section for violent pornography.

On it, a platinum blonde lady named Ella Valentine is coerced. He touches her feet. She shakes her head. Does the feet anyway.

He has the TV set on mute, so there is only the digital noise, and the hum of the VHS player.

Mr. Ly reads his page. It is a self help column. It isn't insightful but he forgets this as soon as he tries to move onto the next, and the world starts spinning.

Sadie gets into her office late in the night-time.

There's:

The big steel file cabinet. A drawer slides open.

Sadie peels through the files. ... Jim... Everet... She stops.

On a white-yellow folder, there is a tiny white rectangle label, reading "SABRINA LY."

Sadie takes off her hat and takes a seat. Opens the file to see the handwritten notes.

EXT. STARLET DOCUMENTARIES - 16 MM - SABRINA LY -
FIELDS - DAY

Jun Ly's little girl plays among the plants. Some are very tall, but she moves her hand from the top of her head, in a straight line, to prove none are taller than her.

SADIE (V.O.)

As a child in middle school, she
was made fun of for her tap
dancing.

INT. CONNIE MIDDLE - AUDITORIUM - AFTERNOON

A little girl dances on stage.

Boys in the crowd, ones without acne, begin to
clap.

SADIE (V.O.)

They would clap on 1, 2, 3, and 4,
in order to drown her out.

The boys smile and clap, along with the other children now.

The teachers hang onto the rails. The seats are too small for them. Their eyes have monstrous bags.

Sabrina tries to continue dancing and tries to smile.

INT. CONNIE MIDDLE - ART ROOM - DAY

Mr. Jones sits at his desk. The sunlight comes from the window and breaks through his cups of paint brushes.

SADIE (V.O.)

In the sixth grade, she took to painting.

Mr. Jones looks up from drawing in different point-perspectives, looks up for his interview.

MR. JONES

Oh yes she would always show me all her paintings she had made that day, liked showing them a lot... I would describe their contents as, abbey-normal.

Mr. Jones picks up a brush with bristles that have hardened into each other.

MR. JONES

She could never figure out how to put her brushes into the wash properly, but she was too enthusiastic for me to correct her.

INT. CONNIE HIGH - MR. STOLL'S ROOM - DAY
Gary's face and kind eyes pop out from the underexposed chalkboard.

GARY

Oh she was a liver, always, not the intestine but someone who wasn't afraid to go and get what they wanted.
She was reluctant too, oh and a little trouble maker.
But never in a mean way, well not to other students just--

Sadie shuts the file and tosses it.

It skids across the floor.

She puts her elbow down and then her face on top of that.

With her free hand, she plays with the skin on her arm.

Her head wont leave her desk for a while.

She picks up the Shakespeare play, A Midsummer Night's Dream, tries to read a page, slams it shut and picks it up and slams it again.

She goes back to the spot she was in, with her head on the desk.

Ring Ring Ring

Sadie pulls the phone off the desk.

His kitchen has been consumed by wreckage. Splintered chairs, a bent pot.

Mr. Ly holds the bruise on his butt and caresses his lower back. His other hand holds the phone, as he wobbles about.

MR. LY: I will!

Mr. Ly belches purple wine all over the floor.

MR. LY: I WILL BE THE BEST PERSON YOU WILL EVER KNOW-

Sadie hangs up the phone, back on the wall. She's holding up her head with her elbow on her own kitchen counter. She reads A Midsummer Night's Dream.

Mr. Ly looks at the phone beyond pop quizzically. He puts it back on the wall. He woozes and swoons.

He bumps into the table trying to get to the couch, so he sits down in a chair, and he's out on the table.

Above him, the ceiling has a pattern of black shadows.

XL More or Less of the Same Dream

Mr. Ly dreams with colorblind eyes. He can look up, and down, but can't move. A figure hovers over him with pliers. Inside his mouth a molar is pulled. Ly opens wide as if to scream, another tooth is pulled, and is flung down his own throat.

Mr. Ly walks in, the courtroom is colored in dark brown wood and shadows. It is akin to a church, but it is a court.

Edward smiles his movie-star smile and waves from the Jury. Penelope, Gary, Lorne, Frank, Albert, make out other faces.

The judge is Principal Thomas. He has a bald head and very small eyes, which are separated aptly, under a smooth forehead. He smiles with only his mouth. His eyes remain dead, his complexion still ghastly. He has gaps in his teeth.

THOMAS: The board has reviewed you. We have Sequestered your body until you reveal to us your inner most thoughts. We have done this because we are unsure how to proceed.

THOMAS: Why do you care so much for appearances?

Ly opens his mouth but cannot speak. He's choking on a sea of red and bone.

He spills it onto the floor and it forms a wide patch.

THOMAS: Why do you care so much for appearances?

Some of the pews and legal stands sink into the blood. It has become quicksand.

Ly tries to claw out of it. His arm wavers trying to clasp a church ceiling lantern.

Phase 3:

**Time Goes Out To Lunch
Mr. Ly Bubbles With Growth.**

On the alarm clock, 11:00, with the dot marked for AM.

Mr. Ly groggles his way out of bed with his six-day beard. He wipes his forehead, his eyes strike the clock. He pushes the button to stop the buzzing.

He closes them up deeply and tries to keep balance with the bowling ball on his neck.

He wipes his forehead with the hankie on the dresser. Tries to find his clothes.

Gary holds a box full of his things. He and Sadie stand up straight.

SADIE: If you're leaving just go.

GARY: I have things to say.

SADIE: I don't want to hear them.

GARY: I love you you know that?

Sadie combs through files, keeping her focus on the cabinet.

SADIE: I said I didn't want to hear it.

Gary leaves with his box. Sadie's eyelids droop. She keeps moving the files.

Mr. Ly throws empty bottles and the full ones into trash boxes.

He picks up a family photo of the wife, little Sabrina, and the small boys, and dumps that one as well.

Sadie sits at her desk with her telephone dial.

SADIE: Hello.

Mr. Ly pulls over a chair so he can sit down.

MR. LY: Hi.

SADIE: Where are you?

MR. LY: Home, sitting by the phone.

SADIE: Jesus Christ you know what I meant.

MR. LY: I'm trying to make sense of things.

SADIE: I don't feel well about any of it.

MR. LY: That's part of the gig.

SADIE: What's that?

MR. LY: Feeling down some of the time.

SADIE: You don't know anything about feelings. I miss your daughter more than you do.

Mr. Ly looks at the floor. He hangs up.

Sadie hears the noise from the line. She shakes her head, and puts the phone back.

Gary has drawn himself, Penelope, and Sadie on the board. Mid Love Triangles Lecture:

Gary strikes a dot next to his Penelope.

GARY: And the one that likes you, you don't fall for, and the one you like rejects you, so you have a big, unhappy, bush.

XLI

Mr. Ly holds up a razor.

Behind his eyeballs, the white disks, the mirror itself crosses into each other.

In the mirror is a clean face. He has several mouths, extra sets of lips, deep caverns into his face. Red lips quiver on his temple. A big tongue flops out of his cheek.

He tries to send the tongue back into his head, to poke it, but he just gets trapped, running a long the flesh. The tongue tries to take him into the abyss and he runs the other direction. It is a flesh treadmill.

XLII

Mr. Ly navigates the highway system in the driver's seat, the jammed up traffic. He never got to shaving. His beard stubble is turning gray.

JIM: I don't understand this passive active nonsense.

Mr. Ly, has pulled a chair-desk up to Jim's. There are charts, drawings, and all five of this quarter's tests on the two desks.
It is black in the night around them. Velvet Darkness.

JIM: Why do we learn two ways to say the same thing?

MR. LY: It is not saying the same thing!

Jim is a-taken back.

MR. LY: In English we are taught to forget passive voice, but it is beautiful. It is the difference between saying I exist. and I've been here all along.

There is a honking.

XLIII

Mr. Ly, shoos off the truck, and pulls into a parking spot's white lines.
Mr. Ly walks out of his car and toward the Jail.

Edward sits behind the glass.

MR. LY: Can you kill him? It would bring me very much closure. To know he cannot ever do it again.

EDWARD: Mr. Ly.

MR. LY: Call me Jun.

EDWARD: Lorne's been dead for months.

Mr. Ly rubs the glass. It smudges.

MR. LY: Oh. Oh yes. That slipped my mind. Hung himself, didn't he?

EDWARD: Right from the bedding.

MR. LY: Oh.

Mr. Ly misses a very long beat. He and Edward share the silence.

XLIV

Mr. Ly nods but he has no idea what the lady is saying. He's given a lanyard, and he walks.

The black hairs on the back of his head are short and rich. They are stiff, unmoving.

He takes his seat and the jail phone.

Edward looks over his shoulder as he walks to. He checks again. He sits.

His eyes are bloodshot, and he looks torn in half.

MR. LY: Do you think about the past Edward?

EDWARD: What I had is easy enough to forget. What I have now is what it is.

MR. LY: Fascinating. Are you happy?

EDWARD: No.

MR. LY: Does Penelope visit you?

EDWARD: Oh no. Good thing though, it's difficult isn't it, to forget how much you love someone, when they wont quit reaching out.

MR. LY: All the people I love are dead.

MR. LY: Or in jail.

Edwards lips bend up. The corners of his eyes crinkle.

XLVI Graveyard Visit

Mr. Ly walks to the grave. Emily Ly, Sabrina Ly, Sue Ly. They are all there. 1956, 1980, 1986.

XLVII

There is a knock on the dark wood door.

It is blue-dark outside.

Mr. Ly is outside Frank's Father's house.

It is gaudy and devoid of any charm.

Frank watches the TV with Charlie asleep on his arm.

FRANK: Andrew can you get that?

Little Andrew opens the door.

Mr. Ly looks at the product he made.

MR. LY: I've been thinking about Utah, Kentucky, the places we went after mother died. To see the countless stars.

ANDREW: I don't remember.

Mr. Ly tries to smile but there's too much jaw.

MR. LY: I'm sorry Andrew. I'm sorry and I've changed.

ANDREW: Is that all?

MR. LY: Yes.

Andrew shuts the door.

Mr. Ly walks along, the houses, the fluffy neighborhood.

XLVIII

The students pass around Mr. Ly. He puts his hands on his head. Quits his gait for the metal detector, for a small moment, then he walks along, the students swarm around him.

They suffer so much, and yet they are obedient. His sulken face is torn up, but not by blades. By crevices, and scars on his mind. A girl cries as people walk over her.

MR. LY: What is it that's wrong?

She turns away from him. Mr. Ly looks at her hairs with his sunken face.

MR. LY: Am I intruding by sitting here with you?
She shakes her head. He sees the back of her neck.

The students have left the halls. It is just them now.

XLIX

Gary sips a beer at the kitchen table.

A young girl says, "Why are you so miserable? Why don't you be happy and smile? Smile."

Gary shows his teeth but he can't be convincing.

Gary sips his beer. Sabrina is sitting next to him.

SABRINA: I'm not happy much either. I feel bad about it. Do you hold it against me?

GARY: Never, I hold everything against everybody. But not you, never.

SABRINA: Why not?

GARY: I think we make choices and our options get slimmer and slimmer as we try to run along. But you're just a kid and I love you.

Gary stands. Sabrina wraps her arms around his waist. Presses her ear into his gut. He holds the back of her shoulders, with his palms.

SABRINA: I'd like you to read me Curious George.

GARY: Some other time, when my eyes are feeling better.

She's sleepy so she leans on his side, as he walks her to the bedroom. Where the light is very bright.

Epilogue:

A celebration of the Living.

There's a banner that reads in Green
Ink, "Mr. Ly Has Been Diagnosed With
Lung Cancer!"

Chop is there, Gary. There is punch and lollipops. And a grand piano, with 52 keys, that Donny sits at.

Mr. Ly has a bleach white beard with hairs that fall straight downward.

Gary sits in a corner. A young lady smiles into the eyes of a devil with slicked back hair, the two are what Gary is watching.

Gray patches of hair stick along Gary's face. Edward laughs in the other corner with his daughter who calls her aunt 'Sadie.' Sadie, who is older now too.

Her eyes sag just a bit, she's no longer quite as tense.

MR. LY: As I look back as I celebrate my life, I see hundreds of moments, whose reproussions, are something I'll never have the answer to. I tried to keep my feet clean, and never touch the little girls or boys who tempt me. And looking back at it all, I just feel like singing. Hit it Donny for me!..

The piano's hands riff a-long: Mr. Ly raises his glass.

MR. LY: Hey! Hobo man
 Hey, Dapper Dan,
 You've both got your style,
 But Brother you're never fully dressed without a
 smile

ALL: Your clothes may be beau brummell-y,
 They stand out a mile!
 But brother you're never fully dressed
 without a
 smile...

It's all over, over now.