

4.0

FADE IN:

INT. DORM - LIVING ROOM - AFTERNOON

A small boy, YOUNG JAMES MCGARRY (7), Spongebob T-shirt and backpack with shorts and a happy demeanor, bursts through the door.

YOUNG JAMES
Mom, Mom, Mom!

Young James waves a paper around as he rushes into the --

KITCHENETTE

His mother, HELEN MCGARRY (36), cooks dinner with a phone on her shoulder. She doesn't turn around.

YOUNG JAMES
Mom, look! See? Look!

HELEN
(Sighs)
Hang on, Joyce.

Helen turns to find Young James right behind her.

HELEN
What?

Young James holds up a math assignment with both hands. The grade on the top is an A-minus.

YOUNG JAMES
Didn't I do good?

HELEN
You did good...

Young James smiles wide.

HELEN
...if you think an A-minus is good.
It doesn't mean shit if it's not an
A-plus. Next time, apply yourself.

Helen goes back to talking on the phone and turns around.

HELEN
Sorry 'bout that. I had to deal
with James real quick.

Young James looks absolutely devastated as he lowers the paper to his side.

LIVING ROOM

Young James drops the paper and shuffles away. A tear rolls down his cheek.

In the opposite corner of the room, sits --

JAMES MCGARRY (21), black T-shirt and jeans, the friendly demeanor replaced with misery and hate, who relaxes in a black recliner.

He downs a shot of scotch off the table to his right.

Before Young James leaves the room, he glances over at James. They have the same vibrant green eyes.

James pours himself another shot.

The front door opens and in comes --

TYLER QUINN (21), typical skater attire, with an extra spring in his step.

He spots James in the corner of the room.

TYLER

Jesus, do you ever smile?

James tries to smile, but it comes off as ugly and forced.

TYLER

Scratch that. Don't.

Tyler chuckles as he heads into the --

KITCHENETTE

Helen is no longer there.

Tyler grabs a beer from the refrigerator.

He doesn't notice a KNIFE MISSING from the knife block.

TYLER

One day left, man. You believe it?

JAMES (O.S.)

I know.

TYLER

Man, we should have the girls up here. What do ya think?

No response. Tyler looks concerned. He heads back to the --

LIVING ROOM

James downs another shot.

Tyler looks at the near-empty bottle.

TYLER

Wasn't that full... yesterday?

JAMES

I don't remember.

TYLER

Seriously, man, what's up? You bomb that Biochem final or somethin'?

JAMES

(Shakes his head)
Ninety-eight.

Tyler toasts to James.

TYLER

My fuckin' science geek roomie.
Salud, mother fucker. Heh. Thought I did good with a 74.

JAMES

I didn't get my 4.0.

TYLER

Many people don't, man. Shit, I bet you're closer than I am. Three-eighty?

JAMES

Three-ninety-one.

TYLER

I know a thousand people who'd kill for your GPA so quit bein' such a fuckin' downer. Let's celebrate.

James finally comes around and nods in agreement. He stands up and gives Tyler a bro hug.

A SMALL TACK sticks out from the inside of the cushion.

JAMES

Early celebration. Still got one day to go.

TYLER

My man. That's what I'm talkin' about.

James goes to the --

KITCHENETTE

Where he grabs a bottle of champagne.

JAMES

No harm in starting the party early, right?

LIVING ROOM

Tyler picks up and inspects the near-empty scotch bottle.

TYLER

You already started the party early, man.

JAMES (O.S.)

One for the road. Then, we head out. Cool?

TYLER

Just one, though. Last thing we need is for you to black out on the way there.

JAMES (O.S.)

I wouldn't worry about that. Have a seat.

Without looking, Tyler flops down in James' recliner.

TYLER

(Reflexively)
Ow, fuck.

JAMES (O.S.)

You okay?

Tyler lifts his leg and pulls out the tack. He drops it on the table.

TYLER

Your fucking ratty, old chair just stabbed me.

JAMES (O.S.)

Don't call it "old" and "ratty" anymore and maybe it won't.

James comes with two filled champagne glasses.

Tyler eyes them, suspiciously.

TYLER

You hawked in one of 'em, didn't you?

JAMES

Would I do that?

TYLER

(Chuckles)

Would you do that? Fuck, yeah, you would, you slimy, under-handed mother fucker.

Tyler reaches for the glass in James' left hand then switches to the one in his right.

They toast the glasses.

JAMES

To your health.

TYLER

To your 4.0.

They each take a sip as Tyler reclines in the chair.

TYLER

Hey, you know, if you really wanted that 4.0, all you'd have to do is kill me...

JAMES

Is that all?

TYLER

Well, if you believe the new legend. In the old ones, they had to off themselves.

JAMES

Legend?

TYLER

Yeah, you know that old urban legend?

JAMES

But, it's true, though.

TYLER

(Shakes his head)

No, pretty sure it's not.

JAMES

That's a real shame. My mom always wanted me to be perfect.

TYLER

It's a shame?

JAMES

Well, yeah, that there isn't some quick fix to a good grade.

TYLER

Dude, you got a three-ninety. That's close enough in my book.

JAMES

Just wishful thinking.

TYLER

That you could hope I die so you can get a perfect score?

JAMES

Tyler, I didn't mean it like that.

TYLER

Then, how'd you mean it? Hate to break it to you, pal, but there ain't a whole lotta ways to spin that.

Tyler rubs his eyes as little beads of sweat form on his brow.

JAMES

I just... Never mind. Hey, you up for that party?

TYLER

Now? I don't know, man.

JAMES

Well, get your ass up, so...

James turns his attention to a desk in the corner of the room where --

PRETEEN JAMES (12), a black hoodie and black jeans, studies hard with three science books open.

Preteen James runs his hand through his hair as he looks at the books really close.

PRETEEN JAMES
(Mumbles)
Alpha Centauri. Uh... um, frickin'
Neptune. It's got, uh, thir--no,
twelve moons. Yea--no. Thirteen.

Preteen James scribbles out his mistake vigorously then SLAMS the pencil on the desk --

SNAPPING it. The sharp end stabs Preteen James' left palm. He screams out in pain.

James gently rubs the scar on his left palm.

TYLER
Hey, you good?

James snaps out of his trance.

JAMES
Huh?

TYLER
I said, I don't think I'm up for
the party tonight.

JAMES
Oh. Yeah. That's cool. We should
probably hang here anyway.

James sees that Tyler is hardly moving.

JAMES
You feeling all right?

TYLER
My arm's gone numb.

JAMES
Oh, okay.

TYLER
Okay, what? What the hell did you
do to me?

James pulls a butcher knife out of his waistband as:

JAMES

Don't worry, Tyler. You won't feel a thing.

Tyler's eyes go wide in terror, but he can no longer move.

JAMES

See, I used to hate science. Never understood it. After a while, I learned to appreciate it.

James steps forward and takes the tack off the table.

JAMES

I found out that it doesn't take much to paralyze. A little tubocurarine on a tack was enough.

James kneels down at Tyler's side and holds his hand.

JAMES

And, I want you to know that I'm sorry. I didn't want it to be you, but I had no choice. I just ran outta time. You have to die. But, you won't feel anything. See?

James slices the top of Tyler's hand. Blood comes gushing out but Tyler has no reaction. His eyes keep following the knife.

JAMES

I hope you understand, but I need to do this. For my mother. I never gave her a perfect score. Now, I can.

James pulls the knife back and STABS Tyler in the abdomen.

A tear rolls down Tyler's cheek as his blood flows onto the chair.

Stab. Stab. Stab. James continues to thrush the blade into Tyler's corpse until it's a mess of bloody pulp.

James stands back, leaving the knife inside Tyler. He seems content about his work.

Just then, the door opens behind James and in come --

OLYVIA (20), in a short, black, party dress and --

EILEEN (20), more casual appearance, with a case of beer.

EILEEN

Surprise!

James turns to them and stands off to the side.

The girls see him covered from head to toe in Tyler's blood with Tyler long-since dead in the chair.

Olyvia puts her hands to her mouth and screams. Eileen drops the beer to the ground.

OLYVIA

TYLER!

Olyvia runs towards Tyler, pushing James out of the way. She checks Tyler's pulse, but he's gone.

Eileen rushes over to James and grabs his shirt collar with both hands. Her gaze is furious.

EILEEN

What did you do? James, what the fuck did you do?!

JAMES

I made my Mom happy.

EXT. COLLEGE SQUARE - NIGHT

Police lights flash everywhere. A CROWD OF ONLOOKERS gather around as --

James is dragged out of the building by TWO POLICE OFFICERS in handcuffs.

Another officer, his nameplate reads REARDON, speaks to Eileen.

REARDON

And that was when you saw him?

EILEEN

Yeah, he, um... there was so much blood. It was everywhere.

REARDON

Did he say anything to you?

EILEEN

He said that he made his Mom happy.

REARDON

Does that mean anything to you?

EILEEN

Doesn't make sense. His mom's been
dead for three years.

REARDON

And, you're certain?

EILEEN

I went to the funeral. I don't know
what the hell he was talking about.

REARDON

Any history of mental illness?

EILEEN

Not that I know of, no.

The two Officers get James to the car.

In the CROWD, James can see Helen looking back at him.

James looks for some kind of sign from his mother.

After a moment, she gives a slight smile and nods. You did
well.

James smiles as he's loaded into the back of the squad car.

One Officer slams the door and walks away.

Helen disappears amongst the sea of Onlookers.

FADE OUT.