

UFOLOGY

by

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FADE IN:

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

A grimy concrete stairwell. A door opens, and out steps MAX FRANCO, 15. Max stands apprehensively and looks up at the stairs, a lump in his throat. He begins ascending the stairs, slowly at first but picking up pace, leaping up two or three stairs at a time. Reaching the top after several flights, he bursts through the door.

EXT. CARPARK ROOF - DAY

Max paces across the rooftop, which is deserted sans the cars left there. His expression is hard to read; equal parts fear, pain and determination. He reaches the end of the carpark and climbs onto the crest of the roof, looking down over the ledge. He is three stories up.

Max looks up at the sky as birds fly overhead, squinting in the harsh sunlight. His feet slowly shuffle. Max takes a deep breath, and takes a step off the ledge, his foot moving forwards and downwards into thin air.

CUT TO BLACK.

UFOLOGY

FADE TO:

EXT. PARK - DAY

MUSIC UP: "A Crippling Blow" - The Killers

Feet fall on the path as Max walks briskly through the park with headphones in his ears. His hair is now significantly longer and he is clad in a hoodie and baggy jeans, school backpack sloppily hanging off his shoulders. His hands are perpetually jammed into the pockets of his jeans. Max is the only one walking in his direction; all other pedestrians are walking in the opposite direction and appear to be engaged in pleasant conversation with each other, or chatting happily on cell phones. Max on the other hand is cocooned in his own little world.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES - DAY

As Max approaches the school gates, he is noticed by DANNY MOORE, 16, a large jock type who is flanked by CRAIG and NICK. Danny steps in front of the gate opening, blocking Max's entrance. They surround him.

DANNY
Morning, Franco.

Max is silent and still, looking up at Danny in reserved fear.

DANNY (CONT'D)
I said, *good morning*.

He shoves Max viciously, grabs his headphone cord and yanks it, pulling the earbuds out of Max's ears. The force of the pull causes Max's music player to slip out of his pocket and fall onto the pavement.

END MUSIC.

Craig and Nick laugh, but Max does nothing.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Aren't you going to pick it up?

Max says nothing.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Aren't you going to pick it up?

In the distance, the school bell RINGS.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Well, it's time to go. Next time,
speak when you're spoken to,
Franco. I'll see you later.

Danny turns and swaggers casually through the gates, followed eagerly by Craig and Nick. After waiting for a few moments, Max crouches down and picks up his music player.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Max walks hurriedly across the now deserted yard.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

The door of the classroom opens and Max walks inside. A science lesson is underway, posters of planets and star constellations adorning the walls. The nervous-looking teacher, MR. DURDEN, 45, looks up from his desk.

MR. DURDEN
How come you're so late, Max?

Max shrugs, saying nothing. Sitting in a back corner, Danny openly but quietly laughs at Max's tardiness. Mr. Durden sighs and pinches the bridge of his nose. Max stares at him blankly until Mr. Durden is forced to look away awkwardly.

MR. DURDEN (CONT'D)
Fine, just sit down and get on
with the textbook questions.

Max slowly walks to his desk in the middle of the room. Each desk sits two, and all of them are full - all except for Max's. He takes a seat at the empty desk and begins sluggishly pulling books out of his bag.

MAX (V.O.)
Monday, November 15th.

MONTAGE

MUSIC UP: "The World at Large" - Modest Mouse

Cut: Schoolyard. While most students are laughing and playing with footballs and tennis balls, Max sits slumped against a wall around the corner from the main yard, scribbling in a diary and eating a sandwich.

MAX (V.O.)
I've been thinking a lot about
irony lately. It's a word that
gets misused a lot, but I think
my life has given me a pretty
good idea of what it means. For
example...

Cut: Classroom. Another class is in session. Max appears to be bored out of his mind, his head propped up my an arm resting on the table.

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)
If I were to say that it's ironic
that somebody of average to above-
average intelligence like me has
no interest in learning about the
geography, culture or physics of
this world, I wouldn't be wrong.
Intelligence doesn't always lead
to a desire to learn, and vice
versa.

A rolled up ball of paper hits Max in the back of the head. He spins around to identify the culprit, seeing Danny feign a look of mock innocence. Max slowly turns back to his notebook. He adds the finishing touches to a drawing in his diary - it is of Danny, but drawn to make him look far more ogreish and uglier than real life.

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

If I were to say that it's ironic that Danny Moore would probably leave me alone if I stood up to him - well, forget irony, that's just factually wrong. Life wouldn't be worth living if I tried to reason with these people, or stand up to them. Then again, would that be so different to now?

The school bell rings. Max quickly scoops his belongings into his bag and gets up.

Cut: Street. Max stands outside an electronics store, gazing at the television image. On the television is SIMON MOORE, 52. He is shown speaking to a large crowd of supporters outside City Hall.

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

If I were to say that it's ironic that Danny Moore, the cause of a great deal of despair and depression in my life, is the son of Simon Moore, our Mayor who was elected on the basis of a campaign that focused on cracking down on bullying - then yeah, that would be ironic.

Max begins to walk away down the street.

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

At least, I think it would be. I'm not saying I have a perfect knowledge of how to use the word, but after giving it a lot of thought, I think I can safely say that this is an area of my life that *is* ironic.

Cut: Sunset. Max walks through a park alone. While walking, he picks up a small rock. He THROWS the rock at a tree, causing the rock to break in half.

Cut: Night. Max slowly and contemplatively walks down the street.

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I think a lot about how alone I feel when I realize that only one person in the world really cares about me. And sometimes I feel like they only care because they're obliged to.

INT. MAX'S HOME - ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

FADE OUT MUSIC.

The front door opens, and Max steps into the entrance hall of the house.

EMMA (O.S.)

Hi Max!

MAX

(mumbling)

Hey.

He wanders into the living room.

INT. MAX'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Max's sister EMMA, 26, works at a small desk. She looks up and smiles as Max enters the room and sits down on the sofa.

EMMA

How was your day?

Max shrugs. Emma is disappointed, but unsurprised, and she returns to her work. Max picks up the TV remote and switches the television on. Immediately, an image of the rally outside City Hall appears on the screen, the camera providing a tight close-up of Simon Moore.

EMMA (CONT'D)

It's getting dark so early now.
It's not too cold tonight though;
wanna go for a walk?

Max turns the TV off.

MAX

I'm going to my room.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT

Max enters the bedroom and sits down at his desk, laying his diary out on it and beginning to write in it again.

MAX (V.O.)

Emma has no business treating me like something that's broken and needs to be fixed. Maybe I don't let her know that as diplomatically as I should, but she understands.

(MORE)

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

It's a time of year where people who aren't touchy and dispirited are in the minority. This time every year, I feel like I fit in. But I never forget that it's for all the wrong reasons.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - LATER

Max downs a pill and takes a large sip from a glass of water.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - LATER

As Max climbs into bed, we see that he has sketched a picture of Emma in his diary, which lies open on the desk. The drawing is more or less accurate and realistic.

DREAM SEQUENCE:

INT. PARK - NIGHT

Max races across the deserted park at night, as if he is running away from something. He spots a large opening in the woods and bolts towards it.

INT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Max runs desperately through the dark woods, bright white lights shining between the trees. He screams out in terror as the lights get progressively brighter and closer to him.

END DREAM SEQUENCE.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - MORNING

Max wakes up startled, looking quickly around him until he is sure he's in a familiar place.

EXT. MAX'S STREET - DAY

Max walks down the street, shivering slightly in the harsh morning cold.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Max walks along the path against the pedestrian stream once again, until he notices a crowd around a large tent in the distance. He walks towards it.

MAX (V.O.)
Tuesday, November 16th.

The tent is surrounded by a ring of tape, suspended from posts stuck into the earth. Police officers guard this perimeter. A podium with a microphone is set up in front of the tent, and the crowd is made up of print and television journalists and people brandishing signs reading 'GIVE US THE TRUTH' and 'THEY'RE HERE'.

Max watches from the path in the distance as Simon Moore steps out of the tent and approaches the podium, gesturing with his hands to quieten the explosion of noise and questions from the crowd.

SIMON MOORE
Please! Ladies and gentlemen, I'm able to tell you that the meteorite that crashed in this park last night doesn't carry harmful levels of radiation, and will not damage the local environment or any of its inhabitants.

JOURNALIST
Where's the meteorite now?

SIMON MOORE
It's still here, but it'll be picked up shortly and taken to a laboratory for further testing.

A BESPECTACLED MAN wearing thick rimmed glasses throws his fist in the air. He is wearing a suit, shirt and tie, all in black, with a long black overcoat buttoned up over it, almost cloak-like. His thinning hair is slicked back. Judging by the wide berth the other protesters give him, he appears to be their leader.

BESPECTACLED MAN
Let us see it!

His outburst is met with shouts and cheers of agreement from his fellow protesters.

SIMON MOORE
It's government policy not to allow the public access to objects of scientific interest until the test results are ready to be published. Please rest assured that the team studying the meteorite will do so in a timely manner. Thank you for your patience.

He retreats back inside the tent, to much jeering from the protesters.

BESPECTACLED MAN

You're a liar, Moore, and we all
know it! We know the truth!

Max's gaze moves to the left of the Bespectacled Man, where he sees a GIRL cheering next to him. She is pretty, if unconventionally so, and is dressed eccentrically. She turns around, momentarily making eye contact with Max before turning back to the tent. Max continues to stare at her, until he notices that the Bespectacled Man is now staring back at him. Max quickly continues walking onwards, stealing another look over his shoulder.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Max sits slowly making notes, when suddenly an open ink cartridge hits him in the back, soaking his shirt in black ink. He whips around to see Danny laughing and high-fiving Craig. Max turns back to his work, his teeth gritting in anger. He begins scribbling violently on his notepad, ending up with an annotated drawing of him killing Danny. It is more comical than it is disturbing, but it could obviously be misconstrued. Max scrunches up his face; clearly even he realizes how inappropriate the drawing is. He quickly slides it into a folder as Mr. Durden approaches him.

MR. DURDEN

Do you have your homework, Max?

Max nods and puts his hand back into the folder, reaching for a particular piece of paper. As he pulls the homework out, all the other papers in the folder fall out onto the floor. The sudden movement causes the shaky teacher to jump in shock slightly, and the class begin laughing. Max reaches down to pick up the sheets of paper.

MR. DURDEN (CONT'D)

No, it's okay, I'll do it.

The class begin laughing again. Max is visibly nervous as Mr. Durden crouches down to scoop up the papers. As he stands up and places them on the desk, he looks at the one on top - the drawing of Max killing Danny. Mr. Durden's eyes widen as his face turns pale.

MR. DURDEN (CONT'D)

Oh my...

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Max sits on a chair outside a door labeled 'Principal'.

INT. PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

The PRINCIPAL, 50, sits at his desk opposite from Emma. The drawings lies on the desk.

PRINCIPAL

Obviously, this is something we have to take very seriously.

EMMA

I understand.

PRINCIPAL

It might just start with a violent drawing or two, but if we let this continue it won't be long before he's carrying out real acts of violence.

EMMA

Max would never do that.

PRINCIPAL

How can you be so sure?

EMMA

I just am.

The Principal rolls his eyes slightly, obviously incredulous.

PRINCIPAL

The boy your son drew himself-

EMMA

Brother.

PRINCIPAL

I'm sorry?

EMMA

He's not my son, he's my brother. Our father died before he was born and our mother died when I was eighteen. We don't have any other family, so I look after him.

PRINCIPAL

I see. The boy your brother drew himself murdering is the son of Simon Moore. Taken the wrong way, this incident could be seen as a threat against the security of Mr. Moore's family.

EMMA

Well, from what I understand, Danny Moore has been picking on Max for quite some time now.

PRINCIPAL

Boys will be boys.

EMMA

Is that how you explain the times he's come home bruised and bleeding?

The Principal sighs.

PRINCIPAL

Are you sure this is the best living arrangement for Max?

EMMA

What are you trying to say?

PRINCIPAL

You're obviously still very young. Do you not think he might be better off living with more... mature caregivers? Maybe he wouldn't display this abnormal behavior if he had a more... stable home environment.

EMMA

If Max's behavior is abnormal, it's because of how he's treated, not because he isn't living with strangers. I might be young, but I'm old enough to know that the best place for Max is with his family.

The Principal frowns.

INT. EMMA'S CAR - DAY

Emma drives as Max gazes out of the window. Max is sullen while Emma is animated, albeit in an exasperated manner.

EMMA

I mean, what were you thinking? Did you think you could leave that kind of drawing lying and nobody would say anything?

MAX

It fell out of my folder.

EMMA

And Danny Moore! Were you honestly expecting nothing to happen if you drew a picture like that of a politician's son?

MAX

I don't know.

EMMA

Well I don't know either, Max. I don't know what to do with you sometimes.

(beat)

Is he still bullying you?

MAX

Yes.

EMMA

Sooner or later, I think you're going to have to stand up to him.

MAX

How can I do that? You're taking me to see my therapist for drawing him, let alone punching him.

EMMA

Well, somebody has to do something about him one of these days.

(beat)

Max, you... you don't ever feel like... like trying again, do you?

Max does not reply.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

DR. NICHOLSON, 40, reclines in a leather arm chair across from Max and Emma, who sit on a leather sofa. He is holding the picture, and wincing at it. He looks up to find that he is being closely observed and quickly forces a smile.

DR. NICHOLSON

Well well, you're quite the little artist, aren't you Max?

MAX

I'm 15.

DR. NICHOLSON

Ah... yes. I have to ask, why did you draw this picture, Max?

MAX

I don't know.

DR. NICHOLSON

Okay. But why do you think you drew it, Max?

MAX

Why do you call me Max but her Miss Franco?

DR. CONNELLY

I like to be on first name terms with my patients.

MAX

What's your first name then?

EMMA

Max.

DR. CONNELLY

(chuckling)

You don't need to know it. Now, if we could get back to the topic at hand; why do you think you drew the picture of you and Danny?

MAX

I don't know. He never gives me peace. I drew myself getting peace.

DR. NICHOLSON

Six feet of dirt's worth of peace.

MAX

As it were.

DR. NICHOLSON

Do you think, if given the chance, you'd commit real violence against this boy?

MAX

No.

DR. NICHOLSON

How can you be sure?

MAX

I'm not stupid. He gets away with what he does because he was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. But all the money in the world doesn't change the fact that he's thick as shit.

EMMA

Max.

MAX

He can do what he wants, but I don't think he'll be laughing it up in a few years when he's making sure my pizza gets to my house on time. I'm not going to sink to his level.

DR. NICHOLSON

You seem to have a high opinion of yourself.

MAX

Compared to Danny Moore? Yeah.

DR. CONNELLY

And what about your social life? Have you made any new friends? A girlfriend, perhaps?

MAX

No. People just disappoint you.

DR. NICHOLSON

Hmmm. Please allow me to be frank.

EMMA

Yes?

DR. NICHOLSON

In fact, I think I'll have to ask Max to step outside for just one moment.

Beat.

MAX

Okay, so ask me.

EMMA

Don't be rude. Wait outside.

Max gets up and walks towards the door. He opens it, turns back to look at Dr. Nicholson, and then steps outside, closing the door behind him.

DR. NICHOLSON

I'm going to be quite honest. Combined with Max's manner and demeanor, this kind of behavior is extremely rare, and it worries me greatly. I believe his condition has developed into something much more serious.

EMMA

What do you mean?

Dr. Nicholson begins opening files to show her reports and pictures.

DR. NICHOLSON

I mean Violent Depressive Disorder. His depression is manifesting itself through violent fantasies, and if left untreated, he'll eventually begin exhibiting violent behaviors. He might deny this possibility, but the truth is, it's a genuine danger.

INT. DOCTOR'S WAITING ROOM - DAY

Max sits on a sofa in the waiting room, writing in his diary. Though the door to the office is closed, Emma and Dr. Nicholson's conversation is audible through the wall.

MAX (V.O.)

Tuesday, November 16th. They're in there right now, putting names to me and deciding what pills I'll need to take so I can stop being one of society's undesirables.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Tears well up in Emma's eyes.

DR. NICHOLSON

Please don't be upset, this isn't your fault. He hasn't shown any signs of attempting suicide again, has he?

EMMA

No, of course not. I'd have called you sooner if he had.

DR. NICHOLSON

And you've been doing everything I told you? Engaging him? Getting him fresh air?

EMMA

I try to get him to go for walks, but he never wants to. He just spends all his time cooped up in his room.

DR. NICHOLSON

Yes, that's quite common. The problem is, V.D.D. is a relatively new disorder, and as such the medication for it is somewhat... experimental.

EMMA
Experimental?

DR. NICHOLSON
It would improve his condition over time, of course, but he could experience certain side effects after a few days.

EMMA
Such as?

DR. NICHOLSON
Well, it can all depend on his genetic makeup. Some patients who've used this medicine have begun sweating profusely during their sleep. Some suffer from occasional migraines. I know of one patient in Atlanta who developed severe rashes on his arms.

EMMA
That's it?

DR. NICHOLSON
As far as I know.

INT. DOCTOR'S WAITING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

MAX (V.O.)
I'm not a sociopath. I'm not a psychopath. I'm not any kind of path, and I'm nothing they want to label me as. I know I'm not exactly normal, but I'm not insane either.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

EMMA
Do you think it's worth the risk?

DR. NICHOLSON
In my medical opinion? Yes. Prozomethomol has been known to work wonders, and I think that to not start Max using it would be to deny him a chance for a normal life.

EMMA
And if the side effects get too bad, he can just stop?

DR. NICHOLSON
Of course.

EMMA

(beat)

Okay. Write him a prescription.

INT. EMMA'S CAR - DAY

Max and Emma sit in silence.

MAX (V.O.)

Surprisingly, none of what happened today pissed me off too much. On any other day, I'd probably sit sobbing in my room, thinking about how cruel the world is. But I've got other things to worry about right now.

INT. MAX'S HOME, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Max opens a bottle labeled 'Prozomethomol - To be prescribed only for Violent Depressive Disorder', takes out a pill and pops it into his mouth, washing it down with a glass of water.

MAX (V.O.)

Side effects I can handle, but I've got a new problem - one I can't stop thinking about.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT

Max lays on his bed, writing in his diary and drawing.

INSERT CUT: The girl from the park looks over her shoulder at Max.

Max smiles modestly at his drawing and sets the diary down on the floor. We see that he has drawn the Girl, but embellished her features and beauty greatly.

FADE TO BLACK.

MAX (V.O.)

Monday, 22nd November.

FADE IN:

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Max walks slowly past dozens of students laughing, talking and playing, and around the corner to his lunchtime spot. However, Max stops dead in his tracks as he turns around the corner - he is not alone. The Girl sits on the ground, back to the wall. She is dressed in somewhat eccentric attire once again. Max is clearly taken aback, but also nervous.

GIRL

Hi.

MAX

I, uh... hi.

GIRL

I know you. You were at the park last week.

MAX

Yeah, I was. I didn't know you came to this school.

GIRL

I just started yesterday. I'm Helena.

She stretches out her hand. Max stares at it for a moment before slowly gripping and shaking it. He is wary and suspicious.

MAX

I'm Max. So, uh, did you just move into the area or something?

HELENA

No, we've been here for as long as I remember. I used to go to school on the other side of town, but I got kicked out. My dad moved me here. It's just us, me and my dad. My mother died just after I was born.

Max's face slackens slightly with sympathy; he has found somebody he relates to.

MAX

Is that the guy you were with the other day? With the glasses?

HELENA

Yes.

MAX

What does he do?

HELENA

You know, you're asking a lot of questions. Can I ask one?

MAX

Okay.

HELENA

Do you come here every lunchtime?

Max slowly sits down, back to the wall opposite Helena, his guard still up.

MAX

Yeah. It means I don't have to be... out there.

HELENA

I know what you mean. People like them will never give people like us peace.

MAX

Right.

HELENA

And if people like us stood up to people like them... well, life wouldn't be worth living, would it?

MAX

Yeah, exactly. So what were you and your dad doing in the park the other day?

HELENA

Oh, you'll just laugh.

MAX

I won't.

HELENA

You will!

The school bell rings.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Tell you what. I'll meet you here this time tomorrow. If you still want to know, I'll tell you then.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES - LATER

Mr. Durden walks out of the school surrounded by the first few students out of the gate and walks to his car - a bright yellow Mini. A MALE STUDENT and his FRIEND notice this and begin pointing and laughing.

MALE STUDENT

Love the car, sir!

FRIEND

Where'd you get that huck of junk? Thirty cent store?

MR. DURDEN

I'm a teacher, not a lottery
winner.

Max walks out of the school gates amongst crowds of other students. Danny appears behind him and shoves him to the ground, Craig and Nick watching and goading him on.

DANNY

Going somewhere, Franco? We need to
have a chat. Max tries getting to
his feet.

MAX

If this is about the drawing-

Danny punches him in the face, knocking him over.

DANNY

You're not as stupid as you look,
psycho. You know, it was a very
hurtful thing you did.

He kicks Max in the gut while still lying on the floor.

DANNY (CONT'D)

I never knew how you felt. Luckily,
I'm a nice guy. I'm giving you your
chance to let me know how you
really feel.

Max slowly and painfully climbs to his feet.

DANNY (CONT'D)

You've got something to say? Want
to lay a punch on me? Be my guest.
You're happy to skulk around with
your little sketchbook, but let's
see how brave you really are.

Danny widens the gap between his feet slightly, moving into a fighting stance. Max is humiliated and angry, his hands tightening into fists, but he can't bring himself to hit Danny.

DANNY (CONT'D)

That's what I thought.

Danny punches Max in the face again and walks away, Nick and Craig following. Max slowly rubs his face, tears forming in his eyes.

INT. MAX'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Emma sits on the sofa watching TV. The sound of the door opening comes from the entrance hall.

EMMA

Max?

No reply comes. Max's bedroom door is heard quickly opening and slamming shut.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT

Max flicks open the bottle lid and shakes a pill out, putting it in his mouth. He sighs deeply as he sits at his desk. His face is bruised.

DREAM SEQUENCE:

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Max races across the deserted park at night, as if he is running away from something. He spots a large opening in the woods and bolts towards it.

INT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

Max runs desperately through the dark woods, bright white lights shining between the trees. Eventually he comes to a clearing, finding Helena standing in the middle of it.

HELENA

Hello Max.

Max screams out in terror as the lights get progressively brighter and closer to him.

END DREAM.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - MORNING

Max's eyes jerk open.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Max sits at his desk, staring at the clock in a frustrated manner. He watches as the hands move painfully slowly towards twelve o'clock. The bell rings as soon as they do, and Max quickly scoops his belongings into his bag and hurries out of the classroom.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Max runs across the yard as it slowly fills with students, coming to a halt before rounding the corner to his usual lunch spot. He takes a moment to compose himself and catch his breath, and walks around the corner to find Helena already sitting there.

HELENA
Well hello there.

Max smiles.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - LATER

Max and Helena sit chatting.

HELENA
And he just hit you?

MAX
Yeah, well I mean, it's not like that's anything new. It's been this way since I started at this school.

HELENA
And nobody does anything?

MAX
What can they do? Everybody knows the situation with him. It's impossible. Like being in a prison I can't escape.

HELENA
And how does that make you feel?

MAX
Like I want to cry. And I do. When it gets too much, I just sit in my room and I... I...

Max realizes he has opened up too far and quickly composes himself.

MAX (CONT'D)
I, uh, I'm not sure why I said that. It doesn't matter, anyway.

HELENA
It sounds like he deserves to die. Like how you drew.

MAX
No. The thing is, I don't want him to die. I honestly don't. He's a bastard, and if he were out of my life I'd be a lot happier for it, but I don't actually want to murder him. It's just... I hate him so much, I needed a...

HELENA
An outlet?

MAX

Yeah, an outlet. I'm not this crazy psycho kid like they all say, but if I didn't let off some steam I probably would end up stabbing him in the face or something.

HELENA

What does your sister think of the whole thing?

MAX

I guess it's just another incident for the scrapbook for her. To her, I'm broken and I need to be fixed. I think everyone feels that way, but it hurts the most coming from her.

HELENA

I don't think you need to be fixed.

MAX

Maybe not, but you don't know me.

Beat.

MAX (CONT'D)

So, you never did tell me what you and your dad were doing in the park that day.

HELENA

Sure you won't laugh?

MAX

I won't, honestly.

HELENA

Everybody laughs when I tell them. Like it's weird or something.

MAX

Come on.

HELENA

We were demanding that the government make the discovery of extraterrestrial artifacts public.

Max begins laughing, but Helena does not - she is serious. Max realizes this and stops.

MAX

Well, uh, that's not so weird.

HELENA

You know what? I don't even care if you laugh. I know what I believe.

MAX

I'm sorry, it's just... are you being serious?

HELENA

What's so hard to believe? Don't you think that life exists outside of earth?

MAX

Well, maybe, but that doesn't mean that every meteorite that lands on the planet is a Martian spacejet.

HELENA

You should come to one of our meetings, see the evidence for yourself.

MAX

What meetings?

HELENA

My dad is the chairman of our ufology group.

Max blinks, confused.

MAX (V.O.)

Ufology.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT

Max sits at his computer, looking at various websites to do with UFOs.

MAX (V.O.)

I'd never heard of it before, and after doing some research, I could see why. Nobody in their right mind would pay attention to this crap.

He looks up at the clock.

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

But as is so frequently pointed out, I'm not in my right mind.

INT. MAX'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Emma is watching TV. Max steps into the room wearing a winter coat.

MAX
I'm going out.

EMMA
What?

MAX
I'm going out.

EMMA
Where?

MAX
Out.

EMMA
You're going out?

MAX
Yeah.

EMMA
With who?

MAX
A friend.

EMMA
Really?

MAX
Yes.

EMMA
Boy or girl?

MAX
Does it matter?

EMMA
If it doesn't matter, then you can
tell me.

MAX
Girl.

EMMA
Max, this is fantastic! Really?

MAX
Yes, really.

EMMA
This is just what you need! Some
fresh air, some company.

(beat)
Really? A girl?

EXT. HELENA'S STREET - NIGHT

Max walks down the street, stopping at a pleasant looking house. He pulls out a piece of paper with an address on it, checks it, and then walks up the garden path to the front door. He knocks on it before stepping back from the door slightly.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Helena opens the door. Max smiles shyly.

MAX

Hi.

HELENA

I was wondering if you'd show up.
Come in.

Max steps inside, and Helena closes the door after him.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

The spacious living room has been converted into a makeshift lecture hall of sorts. Twenty to thirty people sit on chairs and sofas, waiting for somebody to speak from the podium. Max and Helena take their seats at the back. The lights suddenly shut off, with only the podium illuminated in a pool of light. Max is alarmed, but as he looks around it becomes clear to him that this is the norm - nobody else even seems to notice a difference. The Bespectacled Man steps to the front of the podium, still wearing the black overcoat.

BESPECTACLED MAN

Good evening.

The congregation speaks with one, clear voice. They are reverent of him, awe-stricken by the man's presence. Whoever he looks at averts their eyes, as if it is blasphemy to make eye contact with him.

CONGREGATION

Good evening, Doctor.

MAX

(whispering)

You didn't say your dad was a doctor.

Helena raises her index finger to her lips - "shhhh".

BESPECTACLED MAN

Thank you for coming tonight.
Another week has passed. The earth
has revolved around the sun a
further seven times.

(MORE)

BESPECTACLED MAN (CONT'D)

Night has turned to day and back again, but we're no closer to reaching our goal. No information concerning the recent so-called meteorite crash has been released to the public. If it had garnered no executive attention, this would be understandable. But it did. Simon Moore, our astute Mayor, personally appeared at the crash site to assure us all that there is nothing to worry about. But the very fact that he's involved means that he's lying. He's too important a public figure to be bothered with this sort of thing. In their eagerness to pull the wool over our eyes, the government were overzealous when applying damage control.

Max is stunned by what he is hearing, and continuously looks around the room to see if anybody else finds what is being said as ridiculous as he does.

BESPECTACLED MAN (CONT'D)

We don't know what the meteorite is, or what it signifies. We never have. But Moore's in on it, and as he's been so willing to be publicly linked to the incident, we need to focus our attentions on him. Write him letters every day. Call his office. He is part of a system of control designed to keep us in line. The government knows that if even one percent of their people got wind of the fact that there are things in this universe unthinkably larger and more important than their paltry meetings and scandals and wars, their power would be lost. They are corrupt, my friends, and it is up to us find the truth.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

As the Bespectacled Man says goodbye to the last of the attendees leaving the house, Helena and Max approach him.

HELENA

Daddy, this is the boy I was telling you about.

BESPECTACLED MAN

Ah yes, I remember you from the park. I'm Dr. Connelly.

He reaches out his hand. Max shakes it.

MAX

Max.

DR. CONNELLY

I understand you're a bit skeptical of our work?

MAX

You could say that.

DR. CONNELLY

Tonight must have been quite an experience. The first night for new members is always one to remember.

MAX

Well, I wouldn't say I'm a mem-

DR. CONNELLY

Let's go to my study. There's lots to discuss.

Max looks at Helena. She smiles and nods, before walking away back into the living room. Dr. Connelly leads Max up the staircase.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, UPPER LANDING - NIGHT

On the upper landing, pictures of Dr. Connelly with a woman adorn the walls. Max stops to look at one where the woman and another man are holding a baby. Dr. Connelly sees this.

DR. CONNELLY

That's Helena's birth father. He left when she was very young. Did she tell you how her mother died?

Max shakes his head.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)

Suicide. She drove a power drill through her right temple.

MAX

I'm sorry.

DR. CONNELLY

Before she died, she was haunted by nightmares. She'd have dreams of being chased by bright lights, and would wake up positioned as if she'd been moved and put back carelessly.

INSET CUT: Max runs through the woods as lights shine through the trees.

Max is taken aback.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)
Eventually, it got to be too much for her to cope with. It drove her insane.

MAX
What do dreams like that mean?

DR. CONNELLY
She wondered that too. We both did. Let me show you something.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, DR. CONNELLY'S STUDY - NIGHT

They move into Dr. Connelly's small, cramped study. Various charts and posters adorn the walls, along with shelves packed full of old, thick books.

DR. CONNELLY
I'm guessing you heard about the meteorite last week?

MAX
Yeah, I did.

DR. CONNELLY
You may not know it, but they're more common than you'd think. Far more common than the attention given to this crash would suggest.

MAX
Well, how common are they?

Dr. Connelly gestures to a large chart showing calendar months of the last twenty years. A length of transparent plastic is rolled up tightly at the top, fastened to the wall. The months are sporadically marked with red crosses, each one noted with a city or country.

DR. CONNELLY
Each cross shows an alleged meteorite crash. There's the one from last week. Two months before that, one just outside Paris. A couple there in the Nevada desert - not that you'd ever hear of anything happening there on the news. Then, if you go back further than that, Amsterdam, Florence, Mumbai, Antarctica, Kenya...
(MORE)

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)
and several more in and around New
York.

MAX
I don't see what this has to do
with your wife.

DR. CONNELLY
I'll show you what it has to do
with my wife.

He unfastens the plastic, which rolls down as an overlay over
the chart. It has blue crosses on it, perfectly matching up
with the crosses from in and around New York.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)
The blue crosses are her dreams.

Max is stunned, running his hands over the chart.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)
Every time a meteorite was reported
to land near us, she'd have a dream
about being taken away by lights,
and then wake up in a different
place to the one she went to sleep
in.

MAX
(unsure)
It could just be coincidence.

Dr. Connelly shoots Max a withering look, almost pitiful of
his apparent ignorance.

DR. CONNELLY
An intelligent human being should
never let themselves believe in
coincidence.

Max slowly turns to face Dr. Connelly.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)
You've had dreams like this,
haven't you?

MAX
I don't think this-

DR. CONNELLY
Answer the question.

MAX
(reluctantly)
Yes.

DR. CONNELLY
What do you think they mean?

MAX

I don't know.

DR. CONNELLY

I don't know either. But I know
it's got something to do with them.

He points out of the window at the night sky. Max is becoming
visibly more and more uncomfortable.

MAX

How could you know that? I mean, I
don't want to question your
credibility here, but with no
evidence you-

DR. CONNELLY

If I knocked those books off the
desk, what would happen?

MAX

What?

Dr. Connelly suddenly lunges forward at the desk, swiping at
a pile of books and knocking them onto the ground. Max is
rendered silent.

DR. CONNELLY

The books fell to the ground. How
did you know that would happen?

MAX

Well, uh, it's science. Gravity-

DR. CONNELLY

Right, right. But what if nobody
had told you about gravity? What
if, before tonight, all you had to
go on was what was in front of you.
How would you know the books would
fall?

(beat)

Because of what you've seen.
Because of what you've experienced.
I've stared into the face of
another world, Max.

MAX (V.O.)

Oh good, I thought, he's a crazy
person.

An awkward silence passes. Max quickly looks at his watch.

MAX (CONT'D)

(nervously)

Oh, would you look at the time. I'd
better be going.

DR. CONNELLY
Somewhere to be?

MAX
Home. I have school tomorrow, so
I'd, uh, better get some sleep.

He walks quickly towards the office door.

DR. CONNELLY
Max.

Max stops, standing uneasily in the doorway.

MAX
Yeah?

DR. CONNELLY
I'm not a stupid man. I know what
you think of me. But if you're
going to continue being friends
with my daughter, then I'd ask that
you respect her beliefs.

MAX
Okay.

DR. CONNELLY
Who knows? Maybe we'll make a
believer out of you yet.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, ENTRANCE HALL - LATER

Max walks down the stairs to the entrance hall, finding
Helena waiting for him.

HELENA
How are you getting home?

MAX
I'm walking.

HELENA
It's late. You should call for a
lift.

Max reaches into his pocket, but removes it, finding nothing.

MAX
I think I left my cell at home. Can
I use your phone?

HELENA
We don't have a phone.

MAX
You don't have a phone?

HELENA

Dad's too paranoid about the police bugging our phone to get one.

MAX

Why would the police be bugging your phone for?

HELENA

No idea. He just doesn't trust authority.

MAX

Well, I guess I'm walking then.

EXT. HELENA'S STREET - LATER

Max and Helena slowly walk out of the house.

HELENA

So what do you think, anyway?

MAX

I think it's... interesting. Anyway, I should probably get going now. Thanks for inviting me.

Max walks down the garden path.

HELENA

You know, if it's any comfort, I didn't believe any of it when dad first told me either.

Max stops walking and turns around.

MAX

You didn't?

HELENA

No. I know how it all sounds, ravings and ramblings with no evidence to back it up.

MAX

Well, I wasn't going to say anything.

HELENA

But when you start talking to some of the other people who come here about the things they've seen, the people they've met... you start thinking that maybe what my dad says isn't so crazy after all.

MAX
(unconvinced)
I see.

HELENA
Will you come again next week?

Max considers this, visibly torn.

MAX
I, uh... I guess.

EXT. MAX'S STREET - NIGHT

Max wanders down the street.

INT. MAX'S HOME, ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Max enters and closes the front door behind him. He begins walking to his bedroom.

EMMA (O.S.)
Hi! How was it?

MAX
It was okay.

EMMA (O.S.)
Hey, maybe you want to go for a-

Emma moves into the kitchen doorway just in time to see Max's bedroom door slamming shut.

EMMA (CONT'D)
-walk...

She sighs and turns back.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Max sits down on his chair, but is fidgety and restless. He gets up again.

EXT. MAX'S STREET - NIGHT

Max loiters around the street, pacing aimlessly. He looks up at the night sky as stars twinkle invitingly and the flashing light of a plane passes overhead.

MAX (V.O.)
Dear diary. I think I may have inadvertently joined a cult.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Max and Helena walk through the park, on their way to school.

MAX

But if he's not a real doctor, why does everybody call him one?

HELENA

It's a sign of respect, Max. He brought us all together, gave us a common purpose.

MAX

Well, that's the thing. What exactly are you... we hoping to achieve?

HELENA

We know they're watching; sensitives like you have dreams every time one of their artifacts crashes to earth. The government knows if they're a threat or not, and we think that's information that every person on this planet has a right to know.

MAX

Right.

HELENA

You're not convinced.

MAX

It's all a bit hard to swallow.

HELENA

If you'd seen some of the things my father has, you'd find it easier to believe.

MAX

Things like what?

Helena hesitates before answering.

HELENA

I think you'd have to ask him that.

MAX

I don't think he'll tell me if I ask him. He doesn't seem to trust me. He doesn't even seem to like me.

HELENA

That's not your fault. He just doesn't think much of anybody who doesn't side with him immediately.

MAX

What do you think?

HELENA

I like you.

MAX

That's not something I hear often.

HELENA

But you should.

MAX

Are you doing anything on the weekend?

HELENA

Camping.

MAX

Camping? Uh, why?

HELENA

It's a thing we do every winter. We go to this field where my dad says he found the inspiration to start the group, and we camp out. You should come.

MAX

I don't know.

HELENA

Why not? You're going to keep coming to the meetings, right?

MAX

Maybe, I guess.

HELENA

Well, this is a great way to get to know everyone. You know, become a part of the family.

Max is visibly perturbed by this last statement.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Max sits across from Dr. Nicholson.

DR. NICHOLSON

So, how is the prozomethomol treating you?

MAX

Not too badly, I suppose. I've got rashes on my arms.

He rolls up his shirt sleeves to show faint rashes on his forearms.

DR. NICHOLSON

Hmm. Well, that's unavoidable, I'm afraid. How do you feel in yourself?

MAX

Not much different.

DR. NICHOLSON

I suppose it's only been a week or so.

MAX

I need to talk to you about something. There's this girl I like-

DR. NICHOLSON

Oh, this really isn't my area of expertise-

MAX

I need help. She seems perfectly normal... in her own way... but her dad's got her in deep with something.

DR. NICHOLSON

She's religious?

MAX

No, it's not- well, uh, yeah, she's religious. Staunchly religious. And it's something I don't believe in at all. Do you see why I think that might cause problems later on?

DR. NICHOLSON

I do. But I don't see what I can do to help.

MAX

Well, I think her dad is obsessive. I don't think it's good for her to be living alone with him. It would probably be for the best if she stopped living there, and I want to help her do that.

DR. NICHOLSON

You have to be careful. If she truly believes in her religion, then trying to convince her to forget it could be very dangerous. Not to mention unethical.

MAX

How is it unethical?

DR. NICHOLSON

Well, what right do you have to tell her what is and isn't the correct way of seeing things?

MAX

But it's insane.

DR. NICHOLSON

To you, maybe. But to her, it's perfectly normal. It's her life. It's part of her. Do you really want to take that away from her?

Max tries to answer, but cannot.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

A fire burns in the middle of the campsite, and the ufologists huddle around it. Max sits talking uneasily to a MALE UFOLOGIST.

MALE UFOLOGIST

-and Dr. Connelly told me that the dreams meant I was a sensitive, and that I was picking up whenever extraterrestrials were close.

Max notices Dr. Connelly in the distance, surrounded by loving devotees. He frowns.

MAX

Right. Yeah. Yeah.

MALE UFOLOGIST

I heard you were a sensitive as well.

Max's attention returns to Male Ufologist.

MAX

What? Oh, uh, I don't know about that.

MALE UFOLOGIST

Dr. Connelly told us. He said we should accept you even though your mind has been polluted by the government.

MAX

Is that a fact?

EXT. CAMPSITE - LATER

Everyone has retired to their tents. Only Max and Dr. Connelly remain, slowly walking around the campfire.

DR. CONNELLY

A sensitive like yourself is a valuable asset to our family. I'm glad you're staying with us.

MAX

I guess I'm still curious.

DR. CONNELLY

That's good. It shows that you're not completely lost to the system.

MAX

Look, I have to ask. You seem so sure of all of this. Why? You must have more to go on than books and charts.

DR. CONNELLY

I do. When we first met, I talked to you about witnessing events. Experiencing them. I'm proud to say that I've had personal contact with a creature from another world.

Max does not laugh, but instead looks on at Dr. Connelly with a look bordering on pity.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)

When Helena's mother died, I almost lost myself to grief. I didn't feel worthy of life, or maybe I didn't feel life was worthy of me. You know the feeling, I'm sure, given your past.

MAX

Excuse me?

DR. CONNELLY

You know what I mean. Show me.

Max shakily rolls up his jacket sleeve and holds up his forearm, revealing a long, thin scar across the inside of his wrist. Dr. Connelly does the same, revealing a similar scar.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)

We each of us have our problems. As I laid in this very field, slowly bleeding out and waiting for death to whisk me away, I saw something.

(MORE)

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)

Something otherworldly, something inhuman. It was hidden in the long grass, but I could see it's eyes - like black pits. It was like staring into my own soul. But as we both stayed still, and looked at each other, there was... a kind of understanding between us. And then, like that, it was gone. And I realized that my life doesn't matter. It makes no difference if I live or die. We're grains of sand in a desert. And suddenly, I felt rage. I felt rage at the governments, who knowingly prevent us from ever becoming anything more than specks of dust floating in the wind with no real effect or consequence. I felt rage at the people of the world for swallowing the lies that they were spoon-fed. And most of all, I felt rage at myself for allowing myself to become one of them.

Dr. Connelly gazes into the fire, lost in his own story. He is animated and engaging; it is easy to see how he has amassed such a large following.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)

I knew that there was more, that we can be more. So I've dedicated my life to helping our species reach its full potential, with or without the government's help.

EXT. CAMPSITE - LATER

Max walks aimlessly between tents. Helena pops up from behind one.

HELENA

He's a bit full-on, isn't he?

MAX

You were listening to that?

HELENA

I always listen when he tells that story. I love his spiel. It might be melodramatic, but it's all true.

MAX

Yeah, well.

HELENA

You know, he only tells that story to people he trusts. You're growing on him. He likes you.

MAX

Really?

HELENA

Yeah.

MAX

And what do you think?

HELENA

I like you too.

Max leans in and kisses her. The moment is broken almost as quickly as it began when Helena opens her eyes and points up towards the sky.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Look! Look up there!

Max looks up and sees a flashing white light high above in the sky.

MAX

What? What am I looking at?

HELENA

Can't you see that light?

MAX

I can see it, but so what? It's just a plane.

Helena runs off down the rows of tents.

HELENA

Wake up! Everybody, wake up and see!

People start emerging from tents and follow Helena's pointing to the light in the sky. They immediately begin gasping and cheering. Dr. Connelly appears, gazing up proudly.

DR. CONNELLY

You see? They can try and keep us ignorant, but they can't stop us from seeing with our own two eyes!

The scene would be comical if it weren't so disturbing; grown men and women abandoning all common sense to worship a common object. Max observes sadly, left standing alone.

MAX (V.O.)

It's called an epiphany. A sudden realization about the true nature of something.

Helena looks over at Max and waves at him to come over, laughing.

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I thought I could let this be. I thought it was fun and games, even if I didn't understand it. But I do understand it now. I understand that this isn't a social group, or a band of friends. This is a cult. They rally around their leader, brainwashed by charisma and eloquence. He got to Helena when she was just a child. It's perverse, and I think I have to do something about it.

EXT. HELENA'S STREET - DAY

Dr. Connelly, Max and Helena climb out of the car with their backpacks. Dr. Connelly retreats inside the house. Helena pecks Max on the cheek and begins to follow her father.

HELENA

Bye, Max.

MAX

Wait.

Max looks carefully at the door to make sure Dr. Connelly is out of earshot before talking in an urgent, hushed whisper.

MAX (CONT'D)

Listen to me. You can't do this anymore.

HELENA

What?

MAX

This group. This family. Whatever you want to call it. It's no place to grow up in.

HELENA

This is a joke.

MAX

No, it's not. But you know what is? The scene you lot made over that aeroplane last night.

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

Grown men and women fawning over a light in the sky... and you're growing up around these people.

HELENA

It was a-

MAX

You saw what you wanted to see.

HELENA

Stop it.

MAX

I know you. I know that deep down, you're too clever to really believe in all of this. Your father's forced this on you since you could walk, and you haven't had a say in the matter. It's not right.

HELENA

Don't talk about my father like-

MAX

He's not well.

HELENA

Who are you to judge?

MAX

At least I don't sit around in the house all day trying to get everyone else to release the problems with their lives!

HELENA

Even if I wanted to leave, my father would never let me.

MAX

He doesn't have to know. You just run away when he's not looking, and he'll never know where you've gone. You'll be able to live normally. You could even stay at my house.

HELENA

Max, this is-

MAX

No, listen to me. Come and live at my house, even if it's just until you can live on your own. You can have my room or something, I don't care. I just want you to be safe. Healthy.

Helena is tearful and speechless.

DR. CONNELLY (O.S.)
Helena? Are you coming inside?

HELENA
I have to go.

MAX
Look, meet me at the park after
school tomorrow. Five o'clock. We
can talk more then.

Helena walks into the house without replying. Max begins walking away down the street, scratching at his arms.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

The bell rings, signalling the end of the day. Max quickly paces towards the gate. Danny, Nick and Craig walk up behind him, pulling chewed pieces of gum out of their mouths and slapping Max's head in different places with their open palms. They run away quickly before Max has time to react to them, instead crying out in frustration as he raises his hands to his head.

INT. MAX'S HOME, BATHROOM - DAY

MUSIC UP: "Rome" - Phoenix

Max stands at the sink with the tap running, trying to speedily cut the gum out of his hair. He glances at the clock, which displays a time of quarter past four.

MAX
Come on, come on!

He continues cutting his hair.

EXT. MAX'S STREET - DAY

Max races out of the front door and down the street, his hair now as short as when we first saw him.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Max sits under a tree, waiting. He stares at the entrance intently, desperately waiting for Helena to arrive.

MAX (V.O.)
I waited. I waited. And then I
waited some more. Helena never
showed up.

His eyes glaze over with a thin film of tears.

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And without exaggerating, that was earth-shattering. World-destroying. I've only known her for a fraction of my life, but looking at her was like looking in a mirror sometimes. She was the only person who understood who I really am. She didn't see me as a problem child, or a patient to be studied. She looked past my problems and saw me. And she liked me for what I am. I thought I could save her, but she doesn't want anything more to do with me.

Max gets up, his face now steely with determination.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - DAY

Max scribbles into his diary at his desk.

MAX (V.O.)

And if nobody around you understands you, you're alone. I'm tired of being alone.

INT. STAIRWELL - DAY

A grimy concrete stairwell. A door opens, and out steps Max, who stands apprehensively and looks up at the stairs, a lump in his throat.

MAX (V.O.)

If you're reading this, then you know what I've done. I don't expect you to understand why I did it, but I hope that you do... whoever you are.

He begins ascending the stairs, slowly at first but picking up pace, leaping up two or three stairs at a time.

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I hope you understand why I didn't learn from the last time.

Reaching the top after several flights, he bursts through the door.

EXT. CARPARK ROOF - DAY

Max paces across the rooftop, which is deserted sans the cars left there. His expression is hard to read; equal parts fear, pain and determination.

MAX (V.O.)

The truth is, some people just aren't born to cope with the hand life deals them. It's sad, but true. I'm one of them.

Max reaches the end of the carpark and climbs up onto the crest of the roof, looking down over the ledge. He is three stories up.

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I've been standing on a precipice my whole life...

Max looks up at the sky as birds fly overhead, squinting in the harsh sunlight. His feet slowly shuffle.

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

And maybe it's about time I had the balls to drop off it.

Max takes a deep breath, and takes a step off the ledge, his foot moving forwards and downwards into thin air.

HELENA (O.S.)

Max! Don't!

Max cries out in surprise and quickly steps backwards, falling off the ledge and landing on his back on the concrete ground.

END MUSIC.

Helena runs over and crouches over him.

HELENA (CONT'D)

What were you thinking?

MAX (V.O.)

Ignore that last bit.

Max doesn't reply, inhaling and exhaling quickly. He is still in shock.

HELENA

Oh God, you were about to jump...

Max nods and sits up, launching into a coughing fit.

HELENA (CONT'D)

What's wrong?

MAX

You, uh... you surprised me.

HELENA

...I surprised you?

Beat.

Max gives a single, short laugh at the absurdity of what he has just said. It is infectious; Helena begins laughing after a moment, and Max resumes.

HELENA (CONT'D)

I don't understand how anyone can surprise you when you were about to about to... to...

The darkly comic atmosphere quickly deflates.

MAX

Why didn't you come to the park?

HELENA

Is that what this is about?

MAX

Of course that's what this is about! I didn't mean what I said lightly, Helena, I meant every word. I thought I... I thought I could save you.

HELENA

And that was enough to-

MAX

You're the only thing I care about anymore.

Beat.

HELENA

Then you won't make me betray my father. It's like you said, Max. I'm not stupid. I know what I'm doing, and what it means. And I believe in it. I don't need saving.

MAX

So I'm not as important as your conspiracy theories?

HELENA

That's not what I'm saying. I can't deal with you treating me like some cult devotee who needs to be deprogrammed. If this is going to work, you have to accept who I am, just like I've accepted who you are. It's not easy to be close to somebody like you.

Max sighs, resigning himself to the fact that she has a point.

MAX

Fine.

HELENA

Really?

MAX

Fine. I'm not happy about it... but I don't want to put you in a position where you have to choose between me and your dad. It's not fair on you.

HELENA

And you promise you won't... you know...

She glances at the ledge.

MAX

If you promise me something.

HELENA

What?

MAX

Don't leave me on my own again. You're all I've got.

EXT. STREET - SUNSET

MUSIC UP: "Vagabond" - Wolfmother

Max and Helena walk down the street away from the carpark holding hands.

HELENA

You can't value your life so cheaply. You're a great person, Max, and everyone who I've introduced you to thinks so.

MAX

They do?

HELENA

I told you before; we're a family. And we think of you as a member. Maybe you should do the same.

MONTAGE

Cut: Max sits in the lecture hall while Dr. Connelly speaks.

MAX (V.O.)

And so, I became a fully fledged member of Helena Connelly and her father's ufology group.

Cut: Max and Helena drag a wheeled suitcase to a postbox and open it. Inside are scores of letters, all addressed to Simon Moore's office. They begin pushing the letters through the slit in the postbox.

Cut: At a meeting, Max and Helena sit with a group of ufologists by the fireplace, laughing and chatting. He is coming out of his shell, and is visibly happier than before.

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Maybe I don't agree with their beliefs, but they're good people, and they all have something in common; they're outcasts. In a way, despite how different I am to them, I'm right at home.

Cut: Max and Helena kiss in their lunchtime sanctuary.

Cut: Max helps Dr. Connelly amend his charts in his study.

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

People who don't fit into society fit in perfectly with each other. Now that's ironic.

Cut: A large group of protesters, Max and Helena included, stand shouting outside an office block. We CLOSE on a plaque on the front wall reading 'Office of Simon Moore, Mayor'. The postman walks around the corner, exhausted from the weight of carrying a bulging bag of letters. He takes one out - it is one of the ones Max and Helena posted. He stares at the crowd in disbelief.

Cut: Max and Emma eat dinner in the kitchen. His newfound happiness evidently doesn't extend to his home, as he is clearly ignoring whatever she is saying.

Cut: Max walks to school through the park, beaming in the sunshine. He is still walking against the stream of pedestrians, but he couldn't care less.

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

For the first time in my life, I have friends. I'm not miserable. I think I might be happy. It's strange to have an actual frame of reference for what those things feel like after just hearing about them.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

FADE OUT MUSIC.

Max sits alone at his desk, content. He is the opposite of how he was before - where once sat a shrunken, silent boy, a newly confident Max has taken his place. Mr. Durden stands at the front.

MR. DURDEN
Does anybody know the answer?
Nobody? Really?

Max puts his hand up. Mr. Durden does a double take, stunned.

MR. DURDEN (CONT'D)
Max? Is something wrong?

MAX
I know the answer.

The room goes silent; this is clearly an unprecedented moment. Male Student leans in to his friend and whispers.

MALE STUDENT
It's been five years and that's the first time I've ever heard him talk.

MR. DURDEN
So, uh, what's the answer?

MAX
Newtons.

MR. DURDEN
(immediately)
No, that's - oh. That's correct.
Very... very good, Max.

Mr. Durden smiles nervously at Max, almost proudly. An apple core hits Max in the head.

MR. DURDEN (CONT'D)
Who threw that?

There is no answer. Danny snickers at the back of the room.

MR. DURDEN (CONT'D)
Who was that?

MAX

It's okay, sir. If I were a dipshit like Moore, I'd throw stuff around too.

Danny instantly rises out his chair.

DANNY

What did you say?

MAX

You heard me just fine.

MR. DURDEN

Sit down.

DANNY

What did you just say?

MR. DURDEN

Sit down, Danny.

Danny is like a wild animal, a throbbing vein almost visible on his forehead as he grits his teeth in anger. He slowly sits down, staring daggers at Max. Mr. Durden walks to Max's desk, looking as if even he is surprised by his sudden act of courage, and leans in so that only Max can hear him speak.

MR. DURDEN (CONT'D)

I need a word. Stay here when school ends.

As Mr. Durden walks away, Max smiles smugly to himself.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

The classroom now empty, Max remains at his desk. Mr. Durden sits down on top of the desk in front, facing the student. He is apprehensive, and even seems a little scared of Max.

MR. DURDEN

So, Max. How are you doing?

MAX

I'm okay.

MR. DURDEN

No more... uh, no more drawings?

Max laughs.

MAX

That was nothing. Seriously. I don't know why everybody is so hung up on it.

MR. DURDEN

(jokingly)

Well, I think that might be the problem.

MAX

What did you want to talk about?

MR. DURDEN

Well, I... I can see you're changing. You're not the same kid who took whatever he got without complaint.

MAX

Is that a problem?

MR. DURDEN

No, no, of course not. I wish I'd been brave enough to stand up to people when I was... well, that's not important. What's important is that you need to pick your fights carefully.

MAX

You're talking about Danny.

MR. DURDEN

You saw what happened when you scribbled a picture of him on a piece of paper.

MAX

I seem to remember you almost vomiting.

MR. DURDEN

Yes, well. I know what Danny's like. God knows I can't stand him either. But he's protected. You need to seriously think about whether or not it's a good idea to antagonize him. I won't be able to keep him off your back forever.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Max walks happily across the yard. As he walks, people become silent, looking either at him or behind him. Max notices this, stops and turns around to see Danny standing behind him, fuming. A pin dropping could be heard as the other students slowly form a circle around the pair, eager to observe.

DANNY

I never took you for a smart mouth,
Franco.

MAX

I never took you for somebody who
could tie his own shoes, and yet
here we are.

Several students inhale sharply. The atmosphere is palpable.

MUSIC UP: "Underdog" - Kasabian

DANNY

I don't know what's gotten into
you, you little creep, but you need
to learn your place.

MAX

No. I'm through being threatened by
you.

Danny laughs and swings at Max, smacking him in the face and knocking him to the ground. Max lies on his front, one side of his face pressed against the pavement. He opens his eyes to see Helena standing in the distance. She slowly nods.

HELENA

Get him.

DANNY

(muttering)
Absolutely.

Danny approaches Max swiftly. At the last minute, Max rolls onto his back and kicks Danny in the knee hard, creating a sickening crunch of shoe on bone. Danny growls in pain as Max jumps to his feet, quickly pegging Danny in the gut a couple of times and backhanding him across the face. With each blow, Max becomes more and more aggressive and violent - it is hard to watch him be so merciless and cruel.

MAX

How do you like it now?

A winded Danny tries feebly to swing at Max. Max grabs his fist and pulls on his arm, spinning him round and bringing him crashing into a bin. As Danny stands unbalanced, Max punches him hard in the stomach. Danny doubles over, and Max brings his knee upwards into Danny's face, knocking him backwards and onto the ground. Both boys have blood on them now. The scene is brutal and disgusting - while Danny was a wild animal in a cage earlier, Max is a wild animal set loose now.

END MUSIC.

He stands over Danny, his breath fast and heavy. Max takes out his phone and uses it to take a photo of Danny as he slowly moves to lean on his knees.

MAX (CONT'D)

Does anybody else have something they want to say?

Nobody replies.

MAX (CONT'D)

No?

Silence. Max walks to the edge of the circle of students, which quickly opens and gives him a wide berth to leave. Helena follows him.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES - CONTINUOUS

Max and Helena walk out of school, Helena excitable but Max quiet and nonchalant.

HELENA

That was incredible! God, I wish I had the guts to do that.

MAX

I'm sick of being the world's punching bag. Whatever frustrations or hang-ups people have, they're not taking them out on me anymore.

HELENA

That's the spirit.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY

Dr. Connelly, Max and Helena sit on comfy chairs. Dr. Connelly chuckles as Max finishes telling him the story of what happened.

DR. CONNELLY

Excellent, Max, excellent. Frankly, I'm not surprised you finally gave the Moore boy what for. You've become so much more confident these past few weeks - I'm proud of you.

MAX

Thanks.

DR. CONNELLY

You know, I went to school with his father.

MAX

What was he like?

DR. CONNELLY
He was a slimy bastard. And Danny?

MAX
He's a slimy bastard.

DR. CONNELLY
Well, then the apple hasn't fallen far from the tree. Generation after generation of two-faced liars and bullies. It's sad, in a way. What does he look like?

Max reaches into his pocket and pulls out his mobile phone, bringing up the photo of Danny.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)
You took a picture of him after you beat him?

MAX
Souvenir.

Dr. Connelly looks at the screen and laughs.

DR. CONNELLY
Looking like a thug, just like his father. I've been wondering what his son would look like for a while.

MAX
Well, now you know.

DR. CONNELLY
Yes. Yes, I do.

INT. MAX'S HOME, ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Keys turn in the lock, and Max enters into the entrance hall. Emma is standing there waiting for him, looking furious.

EMMA
School called.

MAX
And?

EMMA
You attacked Danny Moore. They've given you after school detentions every day until next semester.

MAX
Oh. Okay.

Max starts to walk to his room, but Emma steps in his way.

EMMA

That's it? Max, they said it was two hours before his nose stopped bleeding and he was able to leave. What did you do to him?

MAX

Nothing he's never done to me.

EMMA

So that makes it okay?

MAX

Doesn't it?

EMMA

No! You can't just go around doing things like this, Max. You're better than this. You know you are.

MAX

So what should I do? Just let him carry on ruining my life?

EMMA

I didn't say th-

MAX

No, but it's what would happen if I just kept to myself like you're saying. I mean, you're the one who said I needed to stand up to him in the first place!

EMMA

I didn't mean like this.

MAX

Then what did you mean?

EMMA

I don't know.

MAX

Nothing I do will ever be good enough for you. If I'm quiet, I'm too quiet. If I stand up for myself, I'm too violent. You need to cut me some slack and stop giving me a hard time because you resent me.

EMMA

(beat)

Of course I don't-

MAX

I'm not stupid. You couldn't go to university because of me. You're in a dead-end job and you're not qualified to do anything else because of me. That's not my fault. You chose to look after me, so it's about time you took some responsibility for what's happened since.

He shoves his way past Emma into his room, slamming the door thunderously behind him and leaving her in tears.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Max rips off his jacket and sits down at his desk, scratching subconsciously at rashes on his forearms. He appears unconcerned with the outcome of the argument. Emma shouts in from outside the room.

EMMA (O.S.)

I just want you to be happy!

Max does not acknowledge the sound of her voice, instead simply turning on his computer and flipping a book open.

EXT. HELENA'S STREET - DAY

Max walks up Helena's driveway and knocks on the front door, dressed for school. She answers.

MAX

Ready to go?

HELENA

Just a minute, I need to put something in my bag.

MAX

You mind if I use the bathroom while you do?

HELENA

Sure, come in.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, BATHROOM - LATER

Max washes his hands and dries them, when suddenly a faint scratching noise is heard from somewhere within the house. Max stops, concentrating until he hears the noise again. He looks up at the ceiling - it appears to be coming from above. He opens the bathroom door and walks through it, trying to follow the noise.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, UPPER LANDING - CONTINUOUS

Max walks across the landing slowly, the scratching getting clearer and clearer until he is standing underneath the attic hatch. He observes it for a moment, his head cocked slightly as he tries to determine the source of the noise. He slowly stretches out his hand to pull down the hatch, until -

DR. CONNELLY (O.S.)

Rats.

Max jumps in surprise and snaps his hand back, whipping around to find Dr. Connelly standing behind him.

MAX

What?

DR. CONNELLY

Rats. We've has an infestation for years now.

MAX

I've never heard that noise before.

DR. CONNELLY

They come every winter.

MAX

Haven't you tried getting rid of them?

DR. CONNELLY

There's too many.

MAX

I could try to-

DR. CONNELLY

No, Max. Don't go up there. We'll just wait until winter passes and they die. We wouldn't want you catching something now, would we?

MAX

No. No, I suppose not.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES - DAY

As Helena and Max walk towards the gates, Mr. Durden pulls into his parking space in his car, which now has a large dent in the bonnet. He gets out, pale and tired-looking. Male Student points and laughs.

MALE STUDENT

Christ, sir, look at that dent. What, did you drive into a cow or something?

His Friend joins in.

FRIEND

Hey, I'll have you know his mum's a
classy lady.

MR. DURDEN

Shut up and get inside.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Mr. Durden leans on his desk, pinching the bridge of his nose. Max glances over at Danny's place, noticing he is missing. He smirks, and begins to work until there is a knock at the door.

MR. DURDEN

Come in.

Two POLICEMEN enter, looking grave. Immediately, the class begin whispering excitedly. Mr. Durden is taken aback by the intrusion.

MR. DURDEN (CONT'D)

Can I help you?

POLICEMAN

I'm P.C. Andrews. This is Danny
Moore's science class, correct?

MR. DURDEN

That's right. Is there a problem?

P.C. ANDREWS

Maybe. Can I address your class?

MR. DURDEN

Uh, okay.

Andrews turns to face the class as they fall silent.

P.C. ANDREWS

You all know who Danny Moore is,
right?

The students murmur in mutual confirmation.

P.C. ANDREWS (CONT'D)

Well, there's some worrying news
about him. It's happened too late
to go to print today, but you
might have heard about it on the
radio this morning. Danny didn't
return home last night, and his
family haven't heard from him.

Max, almost completely disinterested, returns to his walk.

P.C. ANDREWS (CONT'D)

The medical office has told me he left school yesterday at about five o'clock after a nosebleed, and nobody has heard from him since. That means he's been missing for around 20 hours. Normally, we wouldn't worry to much at this point, but given his father's status, we have to move quickly. Now, I'm going to need help from all of you. What we need to know is if anybody here knows of any reason why somebody may want to hurt Danny. Maybe he got into a fight, or he has enemies you know about. We need any information you may have.

Slowly, each and every student turns around in their seats to look at Max working obliviously at his desk. He looks up to see that all eyes are on him, including those of Mr. Durden, P.C. Andrews and his colleague. Max sighs defiantly.

INT. POLICE INTERVIEW ROOM

Inside the drab, windowless room, Max sits at a table and waits tensely. The door opens and Andrews walks in to take a seat.

P.C. ANDREWS

Good afternoon, Mr. Franco.

MAX

I already gave a statement to the other guy.

P.C. ANDREWS

I know, but we've been reviewing the information given to us by your peers, and we've hit upon something new. They singled you out as somebody with a grudge against Danny Moore, but what we didn't realize is that the fight in which you physically harmed him was an unprecedented incident, out of your character. Why did you attack him, Max?

MAX

I didn't.

P.C. ANDREWS

I understand there was an incident a couple of weeks ago in which you threatened his life.

MAX (V.O.)

Not that fucking drawing again. I didn't attack him. He started the fight.

P.C. ANDREWS

Well, you certainly ended it.

MAX

Maybe. But I went home after that.

P.C. ANDREWS

That's strange, because we called your sister and she says you didn't get back until around six o'clock.

MAX

She told you that?

P.C. ANDREWS

Yeah, before we told her why we needed the information. Then she got a lot less cooperative.

MAX

What does it matter if I went home at six anyway?

P.C. ANDREWS

The fight between you and Danny took place after school ended, just after three o'clock. By foot, you live about thirty minutes away from school. That leaves two and a half hours unaccounted for, and I'm wondering what you did during that time. Did you see Danny again?

MAX

No.

P.C. ANDREWS

Then where did you go?

MAX

To my girlfriend's house.

P.C. ANDREWS

We'll need to verify that. What's her home phone number?

MAX

She doesn't have one.

P.C. ANDREWS

What?

MAX

She doesn't have one. Her dad doesn't trust phones.

P.C. ANDREWS

(incredulous)

He doesn't trust phones. We'll need an address then.

MAX

I can't give it to you. He doesn't trust police either.

P.C. ANDREWS

He doesn't trust police... or you don't trust police?

MAX

Either way...

P.C. ANDREWS

If you really did go there, then just a short conversation will sort this mess out. You wouldn't have anything to worry about anymore.

MAX

I've got nothing to do with Danny disappearing, so I don't have anything to worry about anyway. Can I go now?

P.C. ANDREWS

(beat)

Yes. But I'll let you in on a little secret before you do. All the signs are pointing to the conclusion that Danny's been kidnapped. If you're hiding anything from us, then it's your head on a platter if Danny is wasting away in some godforsaken basement.

As Andrews gets up to leave, Max's eyes widen in shocked realization as this last sentence resonates.

MAX (V.O.)

Connelly was wrong. The police aren't stupid. Just inaccurate.

EXT. HELENA'S STREET - NIGHT

Max crouches in the shadows in an alleyway across from Helena's house, observing it intently.

MAX (V.O.)

I can't believe I'm even considering what I'm planning to do tonight. But if I don't, what Andrews said is going to scratch away at the back of my mind until Danny turns up.

His line of sight falls upon a tiny window above the second floor - an attic window. The front door opens, and Max presses him back flat against the wall, breathing quickly in fear. Dr. Connelly and Helena walk out of the house and climb into their car, which backs out of the driveway and drives off down the road. Max waits for a few moments before stealing across the street. He quickly scrambles over the fence to the side of the house.

EXT. HELENA'S GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Max lands in the back garden, which is overgrown and unkempt. Quickly and stealthily, Max creeps through the grass and shrubbery around the perimeter of the house until he finds a ground floor window. He tries sliding it upwards, and succeeds. Sighing in relief, Max climbs into the open window.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, UPPER LANDING - NIGHT

Max creeps up the stairs shining a torch around, wincing as they creak noisily. An outside streetlight casts a dim orange light through the window, but it is not enough to see completely detailed surroundings. Using the torch light to guide him, Max moves to under the attic hatch and tries to push it open with one hand. It does not budge. Shining the light around some more, he notices that a numerical padlock has been attached to the hatch, locking it shut.

MAX

That son of a bitch.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, DR. CONNELLY'S STUDY - NIGHT

Max enters the study and flicks the light on, scrambling around to look for clues as to the combination. He rifles through the bookshelves, making sure to replace everything he inspects, and looks through folders and papers on the desk. Max brings his hands up to his head in frustration, not knowing where else to look - but his eyes settle on the meteorite calender. He races over to it and pulls his diary out of his coat pocket, flicking backwards through the pages of writing and drawings.

MAX (V.O.)

And so, I became a fully fledged member of... if you're reading this, then you know what I've done. It's called an epiphany.

(MORE)

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)

A sudden realization about the true nature of something.

Max drags his finger from his handwriting in this entry to the printed date - 'Nov 27th'. He places his finger on the enormous calender and drags it back through the Novembers of every year, until he finds a November 27th marked with a solitary black dot - the day after a meteorite cross that has a black ribbon pinned to it. Max feels it gently, then turns to leave.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, UPPER LANDING - NIGHT

Max tries to hold the torch between his chin and neck and guide the light towards the padlock, but it proves too difficult. He switches on the landing light and stashes the torch inside his coat pocket before grabbing the padlock and setting it to the code '2711'. The lock clicks and comes apart in Max's hands. The hatch swings open on it's hinge, and a foldout ladder shoots downwards, clattering loudly on the floor. Max turns off the landing light and switches on his torch again before drawing a deep breath and beginning to ascend the ladder.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

The only light from the room comes from a thin shaft of light cast by the tiny circular window and the beam of Max's torch as he swings it around before climbing fully into the attic. It is full of stacked cardboard boxes, forming narrow corridors. Once again, the scratching noise starts, clear as day this time. Max tries to follow it, shining the torch around as he walks creakily through the cardboard corridors. He finds nothing. Sighing, Max casts his torch in one final corner and yells in shock, jumping back. The light illuminates Danny, gagged and bound to a wooden chair. He tries to tell at Max, but it comes out as nothing more than a muffled yelp due to his gag. His wrists are bleeding from the wire binding him tightly to the chair, which scrapes along the ground when he tries to move, creating the scratching noise. He blinks rapidly in the sudden bright white light.

MAX

Oh my God. Danny! What the hell has he done?

Max rushes to Danny, crouching down in front of him.

MAX (CONT'D)

It's me.

He shines the light under his own face to show himself. Danny is visibly shocked and scared when the light returns to his face.

MAX (CONT'D)

Don't worry, I'm not going to hurt you.

Max moves his hands to removed Danny's gag when suddenly, the sound of an engine stopping comes from outside. Max's eyes widen in fear, and he looks out of the circular window to see Dr. Connelly's car drawing to a halt in the driveway.

MAX (CONT'D)

Oh shit. There's no time...

He turns to Danny.

MAX (CONT'D)

I'm not leaving you here, okay? I'm coming back.

Max runs for the hatch and quickly lowers himself down.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, UPPER LANDING - CONTINUOUS

Max lands softly on the floor and pushes the ladder upwards into the attic before closing the hatch and hurriedly reattaching the padlock. The sound of car doors slamming come from outside. Max takes a deep breath, runs at the banisters and vaults over them. He turns his body round as he does so, catching onto the edge of the landing and dropping down again.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Max drops down and lands in a crouching position, his back to the front door. He turns around to see Dr. Connelly's silhouette appear in the frosted glass of the door as he turns his key in the lock. Max bolts for the kitchen, running straight through the tiny room and launching himself through the open window.

EXT. HELENA'S GARDEN - CONTINUOUS

Max flies through the air and lands in the overgrown bushes, out of sight. He waits for a few moments, hearing voices from inside the house.

DR. CONNELLY (O.S.)

Helena, did you leave this window open?

HELENA (O.S.)

No.

Dr. Connelly appears in the window, looking out into the garden and scanning it. For one terrible moment, he seems to make eye contact with Max, and his line of sight hangs there uncomfortably. However, he seems to notice nothing and retreats away from the window. Max exhales deeply and creeps towards the back gate.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Max walks down the street with his hands jammed into his pockets until a singular beep comes from within his coat. He pulls out his mobile phone and checks it to find a new text message from an unknown number - 'I KNOW YOU KNOW. CARPARK AT MIDNIGHT. WE BOTH KNOW WHICH ONE'. Max is visibly shaken by this message, staring around himself in disbelief.

EXT. CARPARK ROOF - NIGHT

Max emerges from the door onto the roof of the carpark that he tried to jump from weeks ago. A single car is parked at the opposite end of the roof - Dr. Connelly's. Max slowly makes his way to it. Nobody is inside.

DR. CONNELLY (O.S.)

Hello Max.

Max looks upwards from the car to see Dr. Connelly leaning against the short wall lining the roof, staring out into nothing. Max looks around to see if there is anybody else he did not notice at first.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)

Don't bother. It's just us here.

MAX

What's this about?

DR. CONNELLY

Don't waste my time by playing stupid. You know what this is about. You think you can skulk around my house playing detective without me knowing? I know every inch of my house, boy, every atom, and I can tell when it's been tampered with. You violated my trust and my privacy.

MAX

Your trust? Your privacy? What are you talking about! You're holding a teenage boy hostage in your attic!

DR. CONNELLY

Not just any teenage boy. Danny Moore.

MAX

What difference does that make? You're a-

DR. CONNELLY

Danny Moore, son of Simon Moore.

The penny drops for Max.

MAX

You can't be serious.

DR. CONNELLY

When am I not?

MAX

Oh God... you're...

DR. CONNELLY

Go on, say it.

MAX

You're holding Danny to ransom until Simon Moore gives you information about the meteorite.

DR. CONNELLY

Well, it's not really a meteorite, but yes, that's the gist of it. The government aren't budging, Max. They've forced my hand.

MAX

What can Moore do? He's just one man!

DR. CONNELLY

So was Deep Throat. Simon Moore allowed himself to become an instrument of the establishment, and now he's suffering the consequences. He only has himself to blame.

MAX

What are you going to do to Danny?

DR. CONNELLY

Tomorrow, we're sending a photo of Danny to the press. If Moore disseminates detailed information about the true nature of the object, his son will be set free. If he doesn't, we'll still let Danny go eventually... pieces of him, anyway.

MAX

Jesus. Does Helena know about this?

DR. CONNELLY

Everybody knows about this.

MAX

I'm going to be sick.

DR. CONNELLY

You know, I'm surprised at you. I'd have expected you of all people to be happy to see Danny locked up in a dark room.

MAX

No, not like this.

Max begins to stumble away.

DR. CONNELLY

Where do you think you're going?

MAX

To tell the police. I'm not letting this carry on any longer.

DR. CONNELLY

You won't be blowing the whistle, Max. You'll be turning yourself in.

MAX

(beat)

What?

DR. CONNELLY

You're an accomplice in this as well.

MAX

How?

DR. CONNELLY

Who was the one who brutally beat Danny before he was snatched? Who weakened him up?

MAX

No, that-

DR. CONNELLY

Who took a photograph of Danny so that he could be identified later?

Max is stunned.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)

Do you really want to inform the police of this kidnapping when you were instrumental in its planning and execution?

MAX

This isn't right.

Dr. Connelly grabs Max by his lapels, violently pushing him up against the wall.

DR. CONNELLY

Oh, grow up, Max. The universe is bigger than right and wrong. It's bigger than me. It's bigger than you. And it's certainly bigger than Danny Moore. The corridors of power are sucking us dry, Max, and I just can't live on without doing something to disrupt the status quo that's ingrained in us. It's a question of respect. Without the common man, who would provide meals for these men and women who think of themselves as Gods? Who would transport them? Who would sweep their floors? Cut their hair? Who would keep them safe at night? And yet, we're treated like children, too ignorant and innocent to know the truth about other life. As if it's beyond our comprehension, too extraordinary for our minds to cope with! Most other people have come to accept it as the natural order, the way of things. And if you want to stand slack-jawed staring up at the ivory tower like every other sheep on this planet, then that's your business. But I have to free these people from the shackles they're being kept in without even knowing.

A long silence passes, during which Max struggles to compute what he has just heard.

MAX

You're insane.

He pushes Dr. Connelly away, trying to leave.

DR. CONNELLY

I don't think you understand. When I say this is bigger than you, I mean it. Your actions affect everyone around you. Me, Helena, Danny... Emma.

MAX

...I never told you her name. Or Helena.

DR. CONNELLY

No, but isn't it amazing what you can learn from watching somebody for a few weeks? Incidentally, you might want to let her know that it's not a good idea to throw away your bank statements. Not without shredding them, at least. Anybody could learn a lot about her just by reading those. For example, did you know just how close to financial rock bottom you two are? I suppose she has to accept what she's given when she works such short hours. I mean, she's always home before you are. It's almost as if she needs to be home before you. And she never goes out after work or in the evenings to see friends or to meet new people. Maybe she doesn't want you to be left on your own.

(beat)

Now, why on earth could that be?

Max throws a punch at Dr. Connelly, but he catches it and twists his arm against his back, slamming him into the wall.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)

Tell anyone about my house guest, and Danny Moore isn't the only one whose fingers will be found in envelopes in newspaper post boxes.

He releases Max, who backs away, terrified. Dr. Connelly walks to his car and opens the door, beginning to climb inside.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)

Go home, Max. Sleep. Go to school. Have fun. Do whatever it is you do with my daughter. Live your life as normal.

MAX

What's your first name?

DR. CONNELLY

(laughing)

Of all the things you could ask, you're asking that?

MAX

I know why you don't tell it to anyone. You're a hypocrite.

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

You talk about people with power trying to make themselves Gods, but you're doing the same thing. You want mystique. You've gotten together this band of fanatics by appearing more than just a man. Well, I've figured you out. I know you're just a man. I've always known. So tell me your name.

DR. CONNELLY

Don't play games with me. I know what you're doing. You're trying to claim some moral high ground, or undermine me somehow. It won't work.

(beat)

You don't need to know my first name.

He shuts the door, and the car engine roars to life. It drives away, leaving Max in a confused state of agitation, scratching his arms desperately.

EXT. MAX'S STREET - NIGHT

Emma is sitting on the curb outside, waiting for Max. As he approaches, she gets up angrily.

EMMA

Where have you been? It's almost two o'clock in the morning on a school night!

Max doesn't respond. Emma sees his distraught face and softens.

EMMA (CONT'D)

What's going on, Max?

MAX

Nothing.

EMMA

You used to tell me things. We used to be friends. I know something's wrong.

Max opens his mouth as if to speak, then stops himself. A long silence passes, in which Max is clearly conflicted whether or not to tell Emma about the situation he is in.

MAX

I, uh... nothing. I just... nothing.

INT. MAX'S HOME, ENTRANCE HALL - NIGHT

Max and Emma take off their coats in the hall.

EMMA

Oh my god, Max! Your arms!

Max looks down at his forearms to see that the rashes have become so severe that they are a deep scarlet. He has scratched them to the point where they are oozing blood.

EMMA (CONT'D)

You're bleeding! Have you taken your tablet today yet?

MAX

No.

EMMA

Then don't. You need to stop taking those pills. I'll call Dr. Nicholson in the morning and book an appointment This medicine just isn't going to work.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT

Max lies wide awake on his bed, staring up at the ceiling.

MAX (V.O.)

All these years, Danny has tormented me incessantly. I didn't think I wanted anything other than him to be gone from my life. But now he is gone. And I don't feel anything other than guilt eating away at my insides like an animal.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - LATER

Max writes in his diary.

MAX (V.O.)

Forget what I said before. That's irony.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - LATER

Max continues lying and staring into space.

MATCH CUT:

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - MORNING

Suddenly it is morning, and Max is still awake. He looks extremely tired. His alarm clock rings, and he instantly slams his hand down on it to silence it.

MAX (V.O.)

One thing's for sure. If Helena knew about this, then we need to talk.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Max strides briskly and determinedly through the park.

EXT. SCHOOL GATES - DAY

Max walks through the school gates.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Max walks around the corner of the building to his usual spot.

MAX

Helena, did you-

But nobody is there. Max stands, puzzled, looking around to see if he has missed her anywhere.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Max sits staring at the clock, watching the hands turn painfully slowly. Beads of sweat form on his face. He is decidedly ill looking.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - DAY

Max returns to his sanctuary at break, but nobody is there. He runs his hands through his hair exasperated.

MAX

Where are you?

EXT. SCHOOL GATES - DAY

It is the end of the day, with students milling out of the gates. Max stands leaning against the gates in muted despair, his cell phone to his ear.

OPERATOR (O.S.)

The number you have dialed has not been recognized. Please hang up and try again.

Max hangs up and punches the number into his phone again.

OPERATOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)

The number you have dialed has not been recognized. Please hang up and try again.

Max grits his teeth, hangs up and begins entering the number again.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Max runs to the meteorite crash site. The ground is still slightly scorched. He closes his eyes, as if he can conjure Helena out of thin air to the place where he first saw her.

EXT. HELENA'S STREET - DAY

Rain buckets down as Max walks down the street, fighting the strong winds. He reaches Helena's house, but something about it is different; it looks older and dirtier. There is no car in the driveway. Max knocks heavily on the door, soaked wet by the downpour.

MAX

Helena?

He bangs heavily on the door.

MAX (CONT'D)

Helena?

Nobody answers. Max walks backwards for a few paces before running at the door and throwing his full weight against it. The hinges snap and the door falls inwards, Max's momentum causing him to follow suit.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, ENTRANCE HALL - DAY

Max lands with an uncomfortable thud on top of the collapsed door, the frosted glass cracking loudly. Looking up as he slowly lifts himself to his feet, Max's face falls as he takes in the sight before him.

The entrance hall is almost unrecognizable; it has been stripped of all furniture and decoration, and the once pristine wallpaper is now cracked, grubby and dirty in places. Areas of the wooden banisters on the stairs show signs of rot. Max leaves his bag in a corner and slowly walks towards the living room, dumbfounded by what he is seeing.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Inside the living room, a similar sight to the entrance hall greets Max as he steps inside. None of the modifications made to the room for the purposes of Dr. Connelley's speeches appear to be in place; the room resembles an ordinary, albeit large and dilapidated, living room. Clearly, nobody has lived in the house for years.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, UPPER LANDING - DAY

Max slowly walks across the upper landing, running his hand along the wall where the picture of Helena's mother used to hang.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, DR. CONNELLY'S STUDY - DAY

Nothing of the study remains, except for a couple of holey bookshelves and an old desk. Max approaches the blank space of wall where the meteorite chart once hung, reaching out to touch the wall. In sheer frustration, Max turns around and kicks the desk hard, breaking one of the legs. After a pause, he kicks it again, and then grabs a bookcase and throws it to the ground, where it breaks apart as easily as if it were made of glass. Max stands still, breathing heavily and looking around the room for some sign of something recognizable, until the faint scratching from above becomes audible once again. Max's head snaps up, and after a few seconds he hears the noise once more.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, UPPER LANDING - DAY

Max pulls down the attic hatch, the wooden ladder sliding down. It is damp, and swollen from absorbing water. Max quickly ascends it.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, ATTIC - CONTINUOUS

Max climbs into the attic. None of the boxes are there anymore... and neither is Danny. Rain drips down from the roof, soaking the wooden floorboards. It is deserted, until... a single rat scurries out of a dark corner, stopping in front of Max and looking up at him. Max stares at it in disbelief for a while, until it scampers away out of sight.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, UPPER LANDING - DAY

Max walks forlornly towards the stairs, until suddenly he hears a muffled cough. Pausing at the top of the stairs, he waits until he hears it again. The coughing is emanating from behind a closed door. Max creeps to outside the door and presses his ear to it. He hears the cough again. Max kicks the door open and steps inside.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Inside, Max spots a filthy male SQUATTER, 65, who shrieks and jumps backwards at the sudden presence of an intruder.

SQUATTER

Oh shit, not you again! Fuck off!

MAX

Who the hell are you?

SQUATTER

I live here, you-

MAX

What?

SQUATTER

I live here! Stop bothering me!

MAX

Stop bothering you?

SQUATTER

I'm sick of you coming here and playing mind games with me, making me think I'm seeing things!

MAX

What are you talking about? I'm looking for Helena Connelly and her father, they live here!

SQUATTER

Nobody's owned this house for years! I should know, I've been living here! And you think it's funny to break in and walk around talking to yourself. I'm not going mad! You won't make me think I am! Teenagers these days, the things you call jokes. It's disgraceful!

MUSIC UP: "1979" - The Smashing Pumpkins

But Max isn't listening. The color has drained from his face, and he stands shaking. Speechless, he quickly leaves the Squatter in the middle of his rant.

INT. HELENA'S HOUSE, ENTRANCE HALL - CONTINUOUS

Max races from the room down the stairs and runs out of the house.

EXT. HELENA'S STREET - DAY

Max runs out into the rain and slows down once he reaches the street.

MAX (V.O.)

I've never felt like this before.
It feels like there's a black void
inside me, sucking everything into
oblivion. I need something to take
the edge off.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT

Max bursts into his room and begins tearing it apart, clearly looking for something. He looks under the bed, rifles through his bookshelf and tips the contents of boxes out onto the floor. He then starts growing through the drawers of his desk, finding nothing until he comes to the last one - a tube of pills labelled 'Prozomethomol', as prescribed by Dr. Nicholson, lies in the drawer amongst pairs of socks.

INT. MAX'S HOME, KITCHEN - NIGHT

Max rushes into the kitchen and quickly puts a glass into the sink, turning the tap on to fill it with water. He then quickly rips the tube open so violently that pills spray out over the kitchen bench. He picks one up and puts it in his mouth. The glass is now overflowing with water. Max grabs it and takes a long sip, using it to down the pill. He slams the glass down, pressing against the bench with both hands. He starts shaking, and begins to cry. He turns around and slumps down to sit against the kitchen unit, head in his hands.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - NIGHT

Max lies on his bed, trying his phone once again.

MAX (V.O.)

I don't know which way is up
anymore. Everything that's happened
over the last five weeks has
vanished in an instant. Helena and
Dr. Connelly are gone, and they've
taken Danny with them. And they've
left that... that house in that
state.

OPERATOR (O.S.)

The number you have dialed has not
been recognized. Please hang up and
try again.

He throws it across the room, where it shatters against the wall.

MAX (V.O.)
Did they do that deliberately?
Disguise the house to give
themselves an alibi?

Max lies back and sighs deeply.

MAX (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Am I losing my mind? Or did
Connelly put someone there to make
me think I am? To teach me a
lesson... or so any claims I made
to the police would be ignored.

DREAM SEQUENCE:

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Mark races across the deserted park at night, as if he is running away from something. He spots a large opening in the woods and bolts towards it.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Max runs desperately through the dark woods, but this time there are no lights shining through the trees. Eventually he comes to a clearing, finding Helena standing in the middle of it.

HELENA
Hello Max.

END DREAM.

INT. MAX'S HOME, MAX'S ROOM - SUNRISE

Max sits up quickly in bed, wide awake. The dim light of morning seeps in through his window, bathing the room in an eerie glow.

EXT. MAX'S STREET - SUNRISE

Max quietly shuts the front door behind him and walks away down the street.

EXT. PARK - SUNRISE

Max walks through the park. He is completely alone. He shivers in the freezing cold and folds his arms, trying to preserve some semblance of warmth. He comes to the scorched grass and earth of the meteorite crash site, and looks around him. His eyes fall upon an opening in the woods - the same one from his dreams. Max's face falls and becomes full of fear and apprehension - clearly, he did not notice that this opening existed in real life.

EXT. WOODS - SUNRISE

Max walks slowly along the same path that he ran down in his dreams, sunlight cutting through the trees and casting shadows on the earth.

MAX

Where are you?

He comes to the clearing, the one in which he found Helena waiting for him in his dreams. She is nowhere to be seen. Max walks into the clearing and stands in the spot she stood in, looking around desperately for the sight of anything else familiar.

HELENA (O.S.)

Hello Max.

Max wheels around to see Helena standing where he was just a few seconds ago.

MAX

Helena! Where have you been?

HELENA

I've been right here. I always have been.

MAX

Don't! Don't start that now. Where have you been? What have you done with Danny?

HELENA

Why do you care about Danny so much, Max? Why do you care about him more than me?

MAX

You used me. You all did. You set me up to take the fall when Danny got kidnapped so you'd have enough time to hide him.

HELENA

I just do what I'm told.

MAX

I trusted you.

HELENA

I know. I... I am sorry, if that helps.

MAX

Of course it doesn't! I let you in completely, Helena! Completely.

(MORE)

MAX (CONT'D)

I've never been as honest with anyone as I have with you. I... I loved you.

DR. CONNELLY (O.S.)

But why?

Max's head snaps around to see Dr. Connelly standing there. He looks back to see that Helena has disappeared from view.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)

Why would you be so in love with somebody you've known for a few short weeks?

Max cannot answer.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)

She's a perfect fit, I suppose. She's angry at the world, just like you. She's been brought up by somebody who never planned to raise her, just like you. She doesn't fit into society's expectations of conformity, just like you.

He walks closer and closer to Max.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)

She's alone. Just like you.

MAX

What's your point?

DR. CONNELLY

My point is, it's so rare for somebody to find another person in this world who so perfectly mirrors their own tastes, their own personality... their own experiences. The odds of it happening are so small that they can hardly be said to exist at all, and yet, here you are, talking to the family of such a person. Cleverer men than you or I might claim that such a coupling could only happen through design.

Max recognizes this philosophy and murmurs Dr. Connelly's earlier words.

MAX

An intelligent human being should never let themselves believe in coincidence.

HELENA (O.S.)

Exactly.

Helena has returned. Max turns to face her.

HELENA (CONT'D)

Did you never wonder how it happened, Max? How can a person who shuts out all human contact meet anybody they can relate to, let alone somebody perfect for them?

MAX

I don't know.

HELENA

They can't. Not logically. But you needed somebody you could trust, somebody you could talk to. And sometimes, when you need something badly enough... it happens.

Dr. Connelly appears, walking to stand beside Helena.

DR. CONNELLY

You were tired. Tired of being alone. Tired of having nobody to talk to. Tired of being treated like you were worth less than everyone else. That's the why.

MAX

So what's the how?

DR. CONNELLY

I think you know.

MAX

No, I don't.

DR. CONNELLY

Think back. What's led to today?

INSERT CUT: Max turns round the corner and finds Helena sitting behind his building at lunch for the first time.

MAX (V.O.)

Monday, November 22nd.

HELENA

Hi.

The pieces are beginning to fall into place for Max.

INSERT CUT: Max sees Helena and Dr. Connelly for the first time at the protest at the meteorite crash site.

MAX (V.O.)
Tuesday, November 16th.

INSERT CUT: Max waits in the waiting room, Dr. Nicholson's voice audible through the walls.

DR. NICHOLSON
He could experience certain side effects after a few days.

MAX
No.

DR. CONNELLY
Yes.

MAX
How-

DR. CONNELLY
The mind is a beautiful thing, but it's restricted. It has rules to adhere to. Your mind couldn't give you the solace you needed, Max, or the companionship. But when a foreign agent entered your body and reacted with the chemical balances in your brain...

INSERT CUT: Max opens the tube of Prozomethomol.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)
It was the catalyst for your mind freeing itself.

INSERT CUT: Max puts a pill in his mouth and takes a sip of water.

DR. CONNELLY (CONT'D)
And suddenly, you had everything you wanted. You had people who would love you.

HELENA
People who would care for you.

DANNY (O.S.)
People who would help you take revenge.

Danny walks into the clearing, bruised and bloodied. His smile is smug and triumphant, as in Max's encounters with him prior to the fight.

MAX
Danny...

DR. CONNELLY

It's not the real Danny, Max. You know it's not.

DANNY

Hallucinating about the boy you helped kidnap. Sounds like a sign of guilt to me.

MAX

So none of the rest of you existed? None of you were real?

DR. CONNELLY

Oh no, we weren't real.

INSERT CUT: Max stands alone in the dilapidated office.

MAX

(nervously)

Oh, would you look at the time.

INSERT CUT: Max sits in the grotty, abandoned house, talking to himself and writing letter after letter, stuffing them into envelopes. The Squatter passes by the open door, fearful and careful not to disturb Max.

INSERT CUT: Max stands alone outside Simon Moore's office building, shouting and cheering loudly. The postman comes around the corner and stares in surprise at Max, stunned by the sight of a lone teenager making such a racket outside the Mayor's office.

HELENA

But we did exist.

Dr. Connelly and Danny nod.

MAX

But this is crazy. Why would my brain make up so much detail? The ufology, the kidnapping...

DR. CONNELLY

You were an outsider, Max. Your mind could create people and places for you, but it couldn't change who you were. Not directly. Ultimately, there was no way to integrate you into society at large. So, you created a family made up of people who are inherently in the minority, misfits you could relate to. Friends who made you feel important.

HELENA

You created somebody who looked just the way you wanted them to, who thought exactly like you wanted them to. Somebody exactly like you.

INSERT CUT: Behind the school building, Max outstretches his hand and moves it up and down as if shaking hands with somebody.

MAX

I'm Max.

DANNY

Which is a bit narcissistic when you think about it.

MAX

But if that's all true, why would I want it to go away? Why would I want you to turn on me?

DANNY

People just disappoint you.

Max is stunned to hear his own words relayed to him.

DR. CONNELLY

You have a deep-rooted conviction that nobody is trustworthy. You think that anybody who gets close to you will have an ulterior motive. Maybe they want to use you for something. Maybe they just want to hurt you.

DANNY

It was just too good to be true for you. You had friends, a girlfriend, even a father. They all accepted you for who you were, and you couldn't understand why.

HELENA

So, you dreamed up ways for us to stab you in the back. Ways for your lack of faith in people to be vindicated.

DR. CONNELLY

And maybe you were trying to send yourself a message. You used to be so against the sort of violence that thugs like Danny carried out.

INSERT CUT: Danny laughs and swings at Max, smacking him in the face and knocking him to the ground.

Max lies on his front, one side of his face pressed against the pavement. He opens his eyes to see Helena standing in the distance. She slowly nods.

HELENA

Get him.

DANNY

(muttering)

Absolutely.

INSERT CUT: Max lies on his front, one side of his face pressed against the pavement. He opens his eyes to see a horde of unfamiliar faces. However, his eyes denote recognition.

DANNY (CONT'D)

(muttering)

Absolutely.

DR. CONNELLY

Maybe you knew what you did went against your principles. Maybe it took him being kidnapped and you being involved to see that.

MAX

This is insane... this can't be-

DR. CONNELLY

But it is true, Max. And deep down, you know it's true. You made a collage of life out of bits and pieces of information, glimpses of stimuli, flashes of concepts... and you wrapped yourself up in it. Now that you've had it ripped away from you, what are you going to do?

MAX

I'll stop taking the pills. I'll stop taking the pills, and all of you will go away, and-

DR. CONNELLY

Why would you want to do that, Max? We understand you better than anyone. We love you more than anybody.

HELENA

This doesn't have to be it. We can still be together.

MAX

But none of this is real!

DANNY

So make it real.

HELENA

You can forget all about this if you really want to. You can go back to the way things were. Why wouldn't you? We're the only friends you have.

MAX

No. No, you're not. I've got a friend. I've always had a friend. A friend who wants to fix me... but she doesn't want to fix me so that her life can be easier. She wants to fix me so I can be happy. And that's the best kind of friend you can have. I never realized it until now. I never appreciated it. I guess I've got you to thank for that.

DR. CONNELLY

Don't fall victim to conformity, Max. There's nothing wrong with you.

MAX

Oh, there is. I'm under no illusions there. There is most definitely something wrong with me. If there wasn't, I wouldn't need any of you. And I don't anymore.

Max reaches into his pocket and draws out the tube of prozomethomol.

DR. CONNELLY

Don't-

MAX

I'm going to stop taking the pills, and I'm going to send you back to whatever corner of my brain you come from.

Suddenly, Danny is not there anymore.

DR. CONNELLY

You're making a mistake. If you do this now, there's no turning back. We won't be returning.

MAX

(beat)

I'm counting on it.

Max flicks the lid of the tube off. Dr. Connelly disappears. Helena steps closer to Max.

HELENA

Even me?

MAX

Even you.

Max's hand drops to his waist, the pills pouring out onto the ground. Helena kisses him.

HELENA

I love you.

The last of the pills hits the ground, and with that, she is gone.

MAX

(beat)

I know.

Max stands alone in the woods, contemplating the grave events that have just occurred.

INT. MAX'S HOME, KITCHEN - DAY

Emma sits at the kitchen table eating a piece of toast while a small TV on the corner of the bench shows a news bulletin.

TV ANNOUNCER

In other news, the body of Danny Moore, the son of Mayor Simon Moore, was found under a bridge by a jogger in his hometown last night. Police are currently reporting that Danny appears to have been the victim of a hit-and-run car accident that knocked him off the bridge and to the ground below. The President has expressed his condolences, and -

Max appears in the doorway, looking sheepish and apologetic. Emma continues watching the TV without looking at him.

MAX

Uh, do you want to go for a walk?

Emma almost laughs, clearly assuming Max is being facetious. She looks back to the TV, but does a double take and sees that Max's facial expression hasn't changed. Wide-eyed, she slowly puts down her spoon.

EMMA

Are... are you okay?

Max watches the TV, and while he is neither pleased nor saddened by the news, his eyes show a sense of relief at having finally learned the truth and thus become in sync with the real world.

MUSIC UP: "There's Something Wrong" - Brad Sucks

MAX

Yeah.

His eyes linger on the screen for a few moments more, drinking the image in, before turning to face his sister.

MAX (CONT'D)

Yeah, I think I'm okay.

Emma sits in stunned silence, until she lets out a single, relieved, almost incredulous laugh. Max smiles back. While it's still unclear as to what exactly what lies ahead for them, the shadow cast over their relationship by Max's nature seems to have lifted somewhat, even if not fully. The cold winter daylight shines in through the window - the start of a new day, and a new chapter in their lives.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.