

## *Treatment*

The young man James is in his mid twenties, handsome. He is already awake, tangled in his sheets and lingering in bed. He gets up and takes a freezing cold shower, gasping but powering through.

He commutes to work, first walking the streets with a slow, deliberate purpose in the mild cold. He quietly and detachedly observes as things happen around him. He notices other people, their everyday interactions, their conflicts. He hurries into the subway, narrowly missing a train but remains unphased. He steps onto the train: it's busy. A woman is subtly groped in the subway by a creep. "Back off" she says, she and James' eyes meet briefly, understanding flowing between them.

James exits the subway, returns to street level and continues to walk down the street. He picks up his phone and makes a call. It's his Mom. She does most of the talking, he listens and reacts. She asks about his siblings, he gives her some news. She talks about mundane everyday things, as if they had just spoken the day before.

At work, James works at a desk in a clean, modern, spacious office. He is not into the work. Clackety clack goes the keyboard; complex code is on the screen; headphones are on with ocean splashing white noise playing loudly. People interrupt him a few times to ask for perspective, or get some sort of approval on their ideas. Everyone in the office is either bustling about with purpose or engaged in their work at their desks.

James sits in a meeting, appearing distracted, as if he is not even listening, but suddenly interrupts to disagree with a point being made. His comment is met with nods and approving looks.

James goes home, looks into the fridge. James enters his bedroom and immediately lies down, face up. He does not move for some time. Soon he receives messages on his phone.

“Where you at?” “You coming”. He ignores it. Hours pass until he responds. “Sorry, got caught up at work”. He picks up a guitar from the corner of the room and starts strumming a few chords, doing some finger work.

“I lost, I lost my tears” he sings softly. He stops, makes a few notes on a piece of paper. He does it a second time. He stops again and remains motionless as he stares at the wall. His stare starts out blank, but as his gaze remains on the wall, his eye begins to wander along the cracks and texture of the wall. He takes a pill and starts to undress.

Later, he is startled awake, it’s still dark. He looks at the time. He gets up and takes another cold shower. He heads out and while it is still dark out. He enters the subway and there are only a few people at this time. While on the train, he locks eyes for a moment with a stranger. An attractive man with a grey beard and piercing blue eyes. James glances back again at the man briefly while he exits at his station.

He enters the office. He is alone in the space, the motion-sensing lights turn on as he walks down the aisle. He puts on his headphones and gets to work. Clackety clack.

At lunch time, James is with coworkers, he is quiet, they crack jokes, talk about nerdy things. At one point someone says “James, the Kleiner Perkins mixer is today, 7 tonight! You have to go.”

He sighs, but nods reluctantly. At the end of the workday, one of his coworkers locks his computer and drags him from his seat. “We’re going, there will be investors, we need you.”

It’s a somewhat busy crowd. They have name tags, obnoxious people claiming to speak Esperanto fluently, people who say “I work for this little company called Apple, have you heard of it?” with a childish grin, and finally when another person says in a classic salesperson voice: “How many times have you heard about a growing startup hitting the cloud microservices logging wall and then are unable to recover from an outage, sometimes for days? Our company solves that. I can walk you through how...” James cuts them off, “I’m not an investor”. And they

move on.

James takes a deep breath, smiles, and turns on the engagement. With rapid fire, he gets through to a number of people, he is charming. After engaging with a few people, he finally looks down at the time, sighs, and discreetly walks out.

It's night out. James goes to a bus stop, there's a homeless woman ranting on the bench, people are standing around away from her. He just sits next to her as she continues to rant. He looks across the street, there are people entering a building. Some are in intense makeup and elaborate costumes. As the bus pulls in, he gets up and darts across the street, entering the nightclub. "\$10, free in drag" he hears. He pays the fee and walks in. He takes two shots and walks around the venue. There are all sorts of people. Guys, drag queens, girls, all in various states. Some hit on him.

"The show's starting".

He watches intently along with a sea of people as a seasoned drag queen performs a captivating number (such as Fauxnique in her paparazzi inspired changing newspaper dress number. Someone nearby says "you know she's not a 'real' drag queen?", "You can't fucking say that!" "Whatever, fucking bioqueens ruining everything". The drag host comes out on stage and cracks a few jokes. When the next number starts, James looks around the room while heading towards the bar. A young man, slightly inebriated approaches him. At that exact moment, James notices a handsome black middle-aged man, Patrick, busy transporting some props and costumes towards the backstage, their eyes meet very briefly but James is interrupted by the younger inebriated man. The young man is masculine but wearing some eye makeup. He is well dressed and well groomed. James looks back at where Patrick was a moment before but he is gone. James and the young guy go back to the man's place, they have

very awkward sex. We see glimpses of skin, but mostly their faces and awkward embraces. The other man finishes but James does not. "It's ok, I just need a short break." he says, and shortly thereafter, leaves.

When James gets home, he picks up his guitar and strums gently: "I lost, my tears, but with 'em none of my fears. Ask me why I stare so blankly". He tries that line a couple of times and then heads to bed.

In a doctor's office. James asks "Could we run some tests? My energy's been so low and I'm sure something's off." The doctor asks some questions (standard depression questions). When the doctor reaches "have you thought about harming yourself", James hesitates and puffs his cheeks and doesn't answer. "We can do the bloodwork, but I'm not sure anything is going to turn up".

James is lying on his back in bed dozing off while still wearing his clothes, a moment later there's a snake slithering in his room heading into the bed. He snaps wakes up and screams while getting up and backing away [akin to, but not as intense, as Alex Wolff in Hereditary]. He hits the wall with his back, and quickly turns all the lights on.

In a therapist's office. "My childhood? It was different for sure, but it was great. Flashback to young James jumping on a trampoline with a bunch of kids. They are in an orphanage. "I remember when my parents got the money so all the orphans could have a trampoline, we were so excited" The flashback continues as a man watches creepily while raking leaves as the children jump on the trampoline. James's younger brother is also jumping with him. The younger

brother jumps off. James says "Hey, mom said not to go far until she comes back". The creepy man follows the younger brother with his eyes. James says to the therapist: "Even though we didn't have much, my parents did their best to do good, and to keep us feeling connected, and they kept things light."

A new guy, Antonio, shows up at work, clearly gay. He befriends James instantly, they get along pretty well though Antonio demonstrates a bit of a bossy streak from the start and uses slightly uncomfortably inappropriate humor even at work. A few scenes show the development of a slightly one-sided friendship between them.

They go to the Folsom Street Fair together in matching brown leather harnesses. James is a bit uplifted, laughing a bit, not too committed in his enjoyment. The leather fair is raw, and they see some surprising things, but there are also some ridiculous and amusing things to look at, like a woman riding a man like a horse. They enter the same night club as he had entered some time before. James sees Patrick again. This time Patrick has a bar rag over his shoulder and is purposefully walking towards the bar. Antonio notices how James is looking at Patrick: "HEY YOU, my friend thinks you're hot!" Patrick turns towards them, laughing. He approaches James "You're not so bad yourself." They have a very brief, sweet and humorous encounter. Their immediate connection is apparent, and James's eyes widen as Patrick puts his hands on his shoulders while saying something, but just as quickly Patrick must return back to work.

Antonio laughs at James and grabs James's crotch while saying "you've got a fucking boner!" "Cut it out" James slaps his wrist away. "alright let's get out of here" Antonio pulls James away while James watches Patrick work. As they continue through the fair for a little while longer, Antonio is very touchy feely, while James tries to create a bit of distance between them.

At work, Antonio comes up to James and say: "We're going to the beach after work. It's a beautiful day and I know you've never been to Marshall beach." "I'm too tired to go to the beach." "We're going, and I'll even drive you home." James doesn't protest further.

It's a nude beach. Everyone is just frolicking in the sun. Antonio and James sit together. "You've never watched the Conjuring? How about the Vuh-Vitch?" he rattles off a few even more classic horror movies. "We're going to fix that"

As an after work off-site several coworkers go to some local musical theater. The show is ok, not great, but suddenly Patrick appears on stage. He is a caliber above the rest. His charisma and singing talent captivate James. Afterwards, James convinces his coworkers to head to the stage doors. They see a few performers head out. When Patrick comes out, James hops over to him. They have another charming exchange. Patrick and James's entourages both pull them apart, but this time they've exchanged names.

In the therapist's office, James says: "I don't know why I continue to dream of snakes. But it's happening less now. I fucking hate snakes, especially when I can't see them."

Flashback. James's younger brother is being led away by the creepy man near the trampoline. Young James gets off the trampoline and runs to them. He intercepts them and tells his brother "Mom's looking for you". And then turns to head back but the man takes him by the hand, tugging firmly "come with me, I want to show you something".

Back in the therapist's office: "I sometimes feel like my body doesn't belong to me, I wonder what I could do to feel more grounded."

The therapist offers some mild suggestions.

In the evening, James goes to a nightclub with purpose, he walks up to the DJ booth and points at the go-go dancers saying: "I'd like to do that, who should I talk to?" The DJ says: "lift up your shirt for me". He nods in approval. "A kid just cancelled, you can go on 3 30 minute sets, 75 dollars plus tip. And it's that box over there. Oh, and don't show your junk or your butthole."

James dances on the box and really embraces it, gets caught up in the moment. A lot of men and women come up to him to interact. Afterwards, he gets dressed and steps out into the night. In the alleyway, he and Patrick run into each other. "Oh, hi I just got off work, where are you coming from". "Oh, nothing really." "Want to get coffee?"

They have a little adventure looking for coffee and nothing is open at this hour so they end up at a straight sports bar, with a bossy female bartender and a drunk patron who refuses to eat despite the bartender shoving mozzarella sticks in his mouth.

When they first make love, it is as if they are really making love, looking into each other's eyes, tenderly kissing. Slow deliberate movements. We see skin, and glimpses of their bodies looking beautiful together. Patrick has a large birthmark on his ribs. James asks about it. Patrick explains that he was born with it, and that in fact when he was born his mother decided to call him Patrick instead of Mark. They fall asleep together. At about 2am, James sneaks out and leaves. When Patrick calls he asks him why he left. James says he was just having trouble sleeping in a new environment.

A romance starts to unfold, and moves fast emotionally. They do everyday activities together

like grocery shopping, and test driving cars for James. At one point the car salesman looks to Patrick and says: "And what does Dad think? Like how smoothly it goes?" James can barely contain himself.

At work one day, Antonio says "Ok, you've got a netflix account, I've got the popcorn. I'm coming over, we're doing a double feature. We have to catch you up on those horror movies" James agrees reluctantly. They watch the conjuring and hereditary. During the evening, Antonio cozies up and tries to kiss him, he shrugs it off. Finally he pushes him and says "I don't want this right now". "Ok, ok I misread the moment. I just feel so close to you, you're my best friend."

Patrick has a special family dinner on the weekend in Sacramento and invites James to join. James reluctantly agrees. On the way in the rental car, Patrick talks about his siblings and some of their children in vague terms. James says: "They don't know about us right?" When James walks in, he is first introduced to Patrick's brother, who is very fair-skinned slightly mixed race. Before they meet anyone else James whispers "not to be like that girl in mean girls but--", "you'll see". James's Dad (step-father) is white, and his mother is mixed but very fair-skinned. James is nervous but they are having a lovely time. At one point Patrick's twelve year-old nephew turns to them and asks when they will get married. Patrick's mother says: you have to let them tell us when they're ready. James stays put for a bit, staring blankly. But soon, he excuses himself and exits the house. He calls an uber and goes home. He texts Patrick an apology. Patrick makes an excuse to his family about some medical issue.

At James's house, they talk about why James freaked out. That he's not out to his family.



Patrick says he knew his family would figure it out. Patrick was hurt, but is forgiving. The conversation turns into a makeout session.

Patrick and James are making love, and Patrick is on top this time. Suddenly he pulls out and says "oops". James says "what?" and instinctively brings his hand down and between his legs and goes, "uh oh". He looks down and says: "Oh no, there's fucking shit on the condom". "Oh my God, i'm so sorry". James is horrified and apologetic. Patrick takes a second to gather himself and throw out the condom and wipe his hands. And he just bursts out laughing. "James, it's ok. SHIT HAPPENS." And laughs even more. Patrick makes a comment at how he can't help it that his dick makes it past the second wall. James loosens up and goes to shower. They lie in bed together. "I love you."

In the morning, James and Patrick are lying in bed. James is just looking up blankly. "Are you feeling ok?" "I've had depression for a while, it sort of comes and goes. Sometimes my surroundings can help, but sometimes they can freak me out, it almost feels physical. It was nice to meet your parents, honest. I was overwhelmed." says James. Patrick adds "I hope I can meet your family sometime too."

James and Patrick are just having a coffee. James says: "You know what I want to do this afternoon? I want to go find the moon tree in Palo Alto. I've heard about it for years. They took these seeds all the way to the moon and back and planted a tree. Can you imagine? It's like 40 years old now, it's older than me?" They head to Palo Alto and start searching the park where it is supposed to be. After some time, they finally find a stump where it would have been. "It died... I didn't know." James is so disappointed and heartbroken while Patrick is laughing

uncontrollably.

For James's birthday, he and Patrick have a lovely dinner the night before and they laugh about their experience with the moon tree stump. Patrick is off to work out of town for the weekend.

On his birthday, James has a party in his apartment. He drinks some, loses his shirt without getting too sloppy, and finally goes to his room to get some air. He continues his song on the guitar. "I crawl, to safety, alarm bells go off in my head. I run, to danger. Will you come to my rescue". Antonio barges in and shuts the door, locking it. He is completely wasted. James sets the guitar aside, Antonio grabs James and pulls him to the bed, climbing on top of him alternating between saying I love you, kissing him, and saying please fuck me. James says "No, get off". "Get off me" but Antonio continues. James's eyes grow bigger as things escalate. We hear the slithering of snakes and see a flashback to the creepy man near the trampoline raking some leaves.

At work, James gathers his things into a box. Someone comes over to him, "did you really punch Antonio in the face. I thought you guys were best buds? What the fuck happened?" "I really don't want to talk about it."

Patrick and James are together in body, close, and Patrick is trying to connect with James. James apologizes and tries to be present but continues to look somewhat blankly. "Sometimes I just want to take a bunch of Ambien and launch myself into the water at Ocean beach..."

Patrick falls asleep and James continues to stare at the ceiling. Breath shallow.

James is home alone later. He tries to sleep, takes just a few pills. He continues to toss and

turn. He is a bit unsteady. He takes a bath. During the bath he contemplates the blade of his safety razor and ultimately pushes the blade against his wrist, almost drawing blood.

After a long bath, the bubbles have run out and he gets out. Goes back to the guitar. "Really can't see, which I could see." He goes back into bed. Falls asleep with a little bit of drooling.

In bed at Patrick's house "No, don't go." "I have to work" "I need you". James is being needy and Patrick is a bit annoyed, "I can't get to work late everyday".

James goes home, upset and antsy. He spends time just sitting in his room holding the guitar and staring at the wall. After some time he starts playing and emotionally sings the chorus: "I find it hard to tell you, I can't see any colors, paintings of nature, oh, rainbows of men. It's all a blur to me know, when I look deep in your eyes. I remember you open them wide." He shakes his head in distress and hurries out of the apartment. He sends a message to Patrick "I love you, but I can't go on like this." He heads to the beach takes a bunch of pills and slowly enters the cold water wearing just his underwear. Once in the water he just lies there taking deep breaths in the shallow water. Suddenly, Patrick appears and pulls him from the water, wraps his coat around him. After asking some questions he realizes James is not in immediate danger and takes him home.

James: "I finished my song for you, I want you to have it". While in a daze. TODO: look for places to add stuff about the song.

James and Patrick are arguing, "I don't want to be your little secret anymore, do your parents even know I exist? You talk to your Mom almost everyday. We've gone through so much together, and I've put up with all the crazy, but this is just too much. I'm a grown man, I can't be

put back into the closet.” James is heading to visit his parents and doesn’t want to take Patrick. And even suggests bringing Patrick and pretending he’s a supportive co-worker or a friend visiting other family nearby.

In therapist’s office. James says: “I understand why he left me. The new meds are working wonders and I have a clear head now. I wouldn’t want him to be with me then either.” They continue talking about other more everyday things: “How did the job interview go?” “I think I got it, I’ll find out on Monday.” Then out of the blue he says: “I heard Patrick just landed a traveling gig with Justin Vivian Bond, he must be so happy, it’s exactly what he wanted.”

On stage Patrick is on the piano and we can see that he is distracted as he sings backup for JVB, but he delivers a beautiful performance, sometimes almost stealing the show. In the audience, James sneaks in the back and watches, smiling pensively. He closes his eyes.

The lights change, JVB disappears from the stage, and there is no longer an audience. James is transported onto the stage and starts singing the song:

I lost, my laughter.

Where'd it go, where'd it run off to.

I lost, my tears.

But with 'em none of my fears.

I crawl, to safety.

Alarm bells go off in my head.

I run, to danger.

Will you come to my rescue.

Ask me why I stare so blankly.

I can't focus, blinded completely.

You tell me colors are shining brightly.

All the shades are dull and cold to me.

I really can't see.

I wish I could see.

CHORUS [PATRICK JOINS IN]

I find it hard to tell you, I can't see any colors.

Paintings of nature, nor rainbows of men.

It's all a blur to me now

When I look deep in your eyes.

I remember you opened them wide.

[PATRICK TAKES OVER THE NEXT VERSES AND BRIDGE]

Don't know, I'll make it.

Is it me or is it just the night

I'll stand, my head high.

Instead of clenching my jaw so tight.

You say, just go slow.

So I take these mo-ments to grow.

This time, is all mine.

One step in a long and narrow line.

Tell me I should go and spread my wings.

When I'm down you try to fix things.

Lost up high round Saturn's rings.

Ground me to earth through my upswings.

Wish I could tell.

Almost can tell.

[TOGETHER]

I find it hard to tell you, I can't see any colors.

Paintings of nature, nor rainbows of men.

It's all a blur to me now

When I look deep in your eyes.

I remember you opened them wide.

I remember, I remember, I'll remember to open them wide.

ROLL CREDITS - Credit song could be "Meant" by Elizaveta a smaller singer songwriter. "I still

dream that we were meant to be.”