

WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Written by

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Address
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FADE IN:

EXT. CORPORATE BUILDING - DAY

Tall skyline. A city hum runs through the streets. Busy figures glide past the windows of buildings.

A man looks at himself in one such window. This is BYRON, early 40s. Dry cleaned suit, sleepless eyes and a look of wavering assurance. A king of his world, dethroned.

He checks his watch. It's a statement watch, an expression of class. It's nearly 9 A.M.

He takes his eyes off the window and marches towards a corporate building. From the street, he looks up the building. It stretches into the grey sky.

At the entrance, three men in suits lay eyes on him and whisper among themselves.

Behind Byron, a woman weighs him up. This is RACHEL, 30s, brows still red from their morning plucking.

RACHEL

A ghost from the past. Who'd have thought?

Byron's eye line is unfazed. This visibly dents Rachel's ego.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Byron.

BYRON

What do you want?

RACHEL

How about those gentlemanly manners of yours.

BYRON

All the gentleman are dead.

RACHEL

How about a date then? To make up for my disappointment.

BYRON

Fool yourself once-

RACHEL

Come on, I won't tell.

Byron scoffs, he knows better.

RACHEL (CONT'D)

You know you're actually quite a lot of fun when I get you out of that suit.

BYRON

Maybe that's why I'm wearing it now.

RACHEL

Aw, wife got you by the balls?

Silence. Rachel scrutinizes his face. She turns dramatic-

RACHEL (CONT'D)

Oo, pray tell-

BYRON

A second ago you were all for not telling.

RACHEL

You know me, darling, malleable as the world we live in.

BYRON

Well, I guess people don't always turn out like you expect.

RACHEL

At least she got interesting.

BYRON

I gotta go.

He looks towards the building, the three men still watching and gossiping. He heads towards it.

RACHEL

Maybe I'll see you out. Suit off, preferably.

BYRON

Not likely.

INT. CORPORATE BUILDING - DAY

Byron holds a cardboard box as he travels down in an elevator. Behind him, smirking men eyeball Byron.

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - DAY

Byron opens the door to his bachelor pad. Scarcely decorated.

He's enters holding a cardboard box. He sets it aside.

He shuffles into the bedroom. Double bed, one side untouched. Suitcase open on the floor. He opens a bedside cabinet and pulls out a photograph.

It's of Byron and a young woman. A happy couple.

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - LATER

The suitcase is zipped up comfortably.

A wad of legal documents are flicked through and signed.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

Byron squeezes through the aisle of an economy class train. Nose upturned.

There's an empty table. Four seats. Byron puts his suitcase across two. Lounges into a seat opposite and tucks in a briefcase in the seat next to him.

INT. TRAIN - DAY

The signal bars on his phone deplete.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - DAY

The station is a gust of wind away from being rubble. Rolling hills in the background.

Byron grumbles on the platform with his luggage. Tries to make a call, no luck.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Byron drags his suitcase along a road in the hills. A strong wind pulls him down the hill.

In the distance, a small town in the middle of a valley.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Byron takes in the country village. Smiling faces. Buildings of old stone, family-owned businesses.

The village is surrounded by tall hills. On one hill nearby, a cluster of large houses. Byron looks at them in longing.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

A map on a phone.

PHONE VOICE

In fifty yards, you have arrived at
your location.

Byron looks up from his phone. His eyes look at a house on the corner of a street. The front of it is shielded by high hedges.

He walks towards the house, through a tunnel, old train tracks above. Out of the tunnel, he trudges past a building. Tucked away from the street, surrounded by barbed gates.

Byron heads towards the gates and inspects the strange building. There is a sign outside, stained by mould and moss.

A suited figure creeps behind Byron.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - DAY

Byron is showed in by an estate agent. The house is quaint, a far cry from the apartment he came from.

The estate agent shows him each room, already fit with old fashioned furnishings. Byron looks disinterested.

The estate agent hands him a set of keys with a big smile.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - LATER

Suitcase unzipped. An expensive looking bottle of whiskey is taken out.

Byron cracks it open, glugs straight from the bottle and crashes into a sofa.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - LATER

Byron spins a ring on the dining table. Whiskey bottle is half empty. The rings carousels and falls.

Byron's eyes fixate on the photograph of the happy couple, set up on the table.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - LATER

Byron stares at himself in the bathroom mirror. He's out of it. He can't look anymore. Eyes dart down. His hand. Ringless.

Fist clenches. He smashes the mirror with his fist.

EXT. BYRON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Byron smokes a cigarette, singed to the butt. His hand crusty and scarlet. The end of the cigarette burns his mouth. He shakes it out of his hand.

BYRON

Shit.

He reaches down for the bottle of whiskey. He knocks it onto the floor.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Shit!

He voices consumes the silence. He picks up the bottle and lets the last few drops trickle into his gaping mouth.

The quiet is punctured by the rumble of a car engine. The car settles near his house, the lights turn off.

Another rumble. And another. More and more cars come to a stop near his house.

There is the scraping of a metal gate close by. The blow of a quiet whistle.

Byron tries to pick himself up and towards the gate in his front garden.

Hooded figures glide between the gap in his hedges.

Byron opens his gate and stumbles into the road.

The hooded figure gather through the barbed gates and into the strange building.

Byron peers at them from afar but slips. His bottle smashes onto the pavement and him with it.

A couple hooded figures swing round and close in on Byron.

But he's already blacking out-

Vision fading-

Snippets of white masks-

Darkness.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - DAY

The ring of the doorbell echoes throughout the house.

Byron's eyes struggle to open. He is sprawled on his sofa.

The door bell keeps ringing.

Byron opens to door to a beaming woman, MRS MOORS. She holds out an open white box with a decadent cake inside, the icing reading 'WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD'.

MRS MOORS

Welcome to the neighborhood!

Byron just looks at her, half-dead.

In her other hand, she holds the same expensive whisky that he was drinking last night. She holds it up to his eyes.

MRS MOORS (CONT'D)

On behalf of the whole village.

He takes the whisky.

BYRON

How did you afford this?

MRS MOORS

Don't you worry about that, dear.

Byron looks at the bottle suspiciously.

MRS MOORS (CONT'D)

Now, on behalf of the village, I would like to invite you to a little welcoming party.

BYRON

I'm not one for parties.

MRS MOORS

Oh, I very much doubt that.

She takes out an invitation, Byron doesn't take it. She leaves it on top of the cake.

MRS MOORS (CONT'D)

Well - welcome to the neighborhood!

With a big smile, Mrs Moors trots out of the garden.

Byron massages his head, puts down the whisky and follows her onto the street.

Nowhere to be seen.

His eyes line up to the strange building. He heads towards it, still in his clothes from the night before.

He scouts the building. One set of doors. No windows. A big padlock on the gate, which is probably climbable if you don't mind ripping your pants.

His phone rings.

He picks it up.

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Byron?

BYRON

Who is this?

MALE VOICE (O.S.)

Your new boss. You're late.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

An office that looks more like a utility room. Damp and lit by industrial lights with no cover.

Byron's boss, TONY, 50s, devours a sandwich in a high-vis. Tin foil and a tupperware box sit atop forgotten paperwork.

Byron watches him with disgust in a suit.

A clock above them says its 10:30 AM.

TONY

Honestly, fuck knows what you did to end up here.

(MORE)

TONY (CONT'D)

But now you're on my ship and it's damned tight which means you turn up on time or you're thrown overboard. Capeesh?

BYRON

Look, about last night, I-

Tony scrunches up his tin foil as loud as possible. Message received.

TONY

Capeesh?

BYRON

Aye, captain.

TONY

Now get that suit off or you won't last one minute.

Tony throws Byron a high-vis.

INT. FACTORY - DAY

A worker, DAVID, 20s, escorts Byron through the lofty factory towards a conveyor belt. Byron has his high-vis on and his shirt sleeves rolled up.

Other workers sit along the conveyor belt, going about their business on auto-pilot.

They come to an empty workbench along the conveyor belt.

DAVID

You sit 'ere, right. Insulation comes along the conveyor belt.

He points to one end of the conveyor belt.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Gets cut with 'ot wires down there, don't mess with them or you'll lose your finger.

He holds up his hand with four and a half fingers. He demonstrates the rest of the process as he talks.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Once it all comes down your way, grab the excess off the belt and throw it in the 'ogger.

He throws some excess insulation into a vacuum-style chute behind the work benches.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Then you grab six bits o' cut insulation, stick it on yer work bench, put the plastic wrapping on it then grab yer tape gun n wrap em together.

He picks up his now wrapped up insulation. Heads away from the workbench towards a slacker truck.

DAVID (CONT'D)

Then pop it on 'ere, label on the outside, always and make 'em four high. Then you go again, got it?

David shows Byron back to his work bench.

BYRON

This is slave labour.

Another worker along the conveyor belt, ROB, 40s, can't help but chime in-

ROB

This ain't slave labour, this is a real job. So stop worrying about ruining your manicure and work.

BYRON

How much you getting paid for this 'real job' then?

ROB

Same as you, dip shit.

BYRON

Yeah, not for long.

ROB

I been here twenty years, pal. You ain't getting a pay rise before me.

BYRON

Perhaps I might actually bring some value to the company.

ROB

Tony said you were a stockbroker or summit, right? You've got your head in the clouds, kid. This is as good as you're gettin.

Huge piece of insulation trawls along a conveyer belt. The worker takes out hot wires and cut it into shape. Throw the excess into a machine (the hogger) to be reused.

Six pieces of insulation on a workbench. Cover it in plastic wrap. Stick a label on it, outwards facing at all times.

Pick it up, throw it on a stacker truck, four high for forklift to come pick it up.

... find actual method. Sound like I know what I'm on about

... have B make derogatory comment, slave labour etc

... have another work tune in vs Byron

... have B ask about pay. He presumes that it goes up very quickly. Guy says he's been on the same wage 20 years. Look of disgust on B's face.

TONY

You know, Byron, since you were a big time stockbroker or whatever you probably think you're overqualified for a shitty factory job. You're not. And quite frankly, the only reason I hired you was well, because I was pretty interested in your fall from grace. But now, you're on my ship. Which means you turn up on time or I throw you overboard, you got that?

BYRON

When do I get a pay rise?

TONY

When you turn up on time.

BYRON

And how much is that?

TONY

That's when you get paid.

BYRON

Look, last night was a one off. I think someone drugged me, I don't remember a thing.

Tony scrunches up his tin foil as loud as possible.

TONY

Why'd you get sacked?

BYRON

INT. CARE HOME - DAY

Byron perches on a rocking chair in a modest room with old furnishings.

An older lady hands him a mug. This is Byron's mother, WINNIE, 80s. She eases onto her bed.

WINNIE

How's the new job?

BYRON

Good.

WINNIE

You could never fool me, Byron, this old lady still has her wits.

BYRON

That she does.

WINNIE

Why have you come back, darling?

BYRON

To look after you, you know, I realise I've not been the most attentive son.

WINNIE

Pfft, I don't need looking after.

BYRON

Why don't you just come and live with me? This place's a dump.

WINNIE

You'd be sick of me within a day.

BYRON

I wouldn't.

WINNIE

You would and you know it. Besides,
us ladies here look after each
other, I'm okay.

BYRON

It's like a prison here.

WINNIE

Your mind is the only prison you
need be afraid of.

Byron is about to jump to his defense, but there's a knock at
the door.

WINNIE (CONT'D)

Come in.

Another elderly lady walks in, BEE, 80s, fragile and warm.

BEE

Wondered if you were ready for
games, Winnie? Mrs Hunter smuggled
us in some sherry.

Bee notices Byron.

BEE (CONT'D)

Oh hello, dear, you must be Byron.

BYRON

Lovely to meet you.

WINNIE

I'll be down in a minute, Bee.

Bee nods and shuffles out of the room.

WINNIE (CONT'D)

Now, you should take tips from your
mother and go out for a drink.

BYRON

I can't. I have to check on
something tonight.

WINNIE

And you call me imprisoned. Go out.
And when you're drunk, maybe you
can finally tell me what happened
with you and Claire.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Byron sits alone at the bar of a quiet establishment. He swirls a half-drunk glass of whisky.

He looks around the bar. Groups of people chatting.

Someone from behind the bar fills up his glass.

Byron turns to see a well-dressed man, MR. SUTCLIFFE, 40s. Plastic face that hides his emotions, slit of a grin.

MR SUTCLIFFE

On the house for new residents.

BYRON

How do you know I'm new?

MR SUTCLIFFE

I've got a knack for remembering faces. Enjoy your drink, sir.

Byron raises his glass half-heartedly.

Mr Sutcliffe turns his attention to his bar staff, whispering orders.

A woman at the bar eyes Byron up. This is NELLY, 30s, the face of someone who doesn't have the time to look after herself, early signs of grey.

Upon inspecting Byron she sees his creased shirt, expensive watch, scabbing cuts on his hand. She takes a deep breath before speaking-

NELLY

That's one classy watch for someone who doesn't live on the hill.

BYRON

(unimpressed)

You're one of them, are you?

NELLY

On the hill? God no. None of them would drink here.

BYRON

No, I - what's wrong with here?

NELLY

It's not the hill. You need to disinfect that hand. I'm a nurse.

BYRON
I can look after it myself.

NELLY
Well, not everyone can. That's why
I do what I do.

BYRON
That's no way to live.

NELLY
So since you have a fancy watch you
can lecture people on how to live?

BYRON
Money looks after people as well as
any nurse.

NELLY
And yet the people who need looking
after the most are the ones without
money.

BYRON
So the best you can do is tell them
it's going to be okay even if it's
out of your hands.

NELLY
You are horrifically ignorant.

BYRON
The best way to be.

NELLY
The family who were reassured their
little girl was going to be okay
might disagree. In fact, they
disagreed so much, that they blamed
me for their daughter's death.

Byron downs his drink.

BYRON
Look, I'm sorry. All I was saying
is that you should live your life a
little. Especially when you have to
go through that.

NELLY
And all I'm saying is that you're
in the exact same place as me.

BYRON

That I can't argue with.

Byron looks around again. Merry groups all around them. Byron and Nelly are the only two people alone.

Mr Sutcliffe is watching them from the end of the bar.

Byron holds out his hand to Nelly.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Shall we start fresh? I'm Byron.

She places her empty glass in his hand.

NELLY

Nelly.

A glimmer of recollection from Byron.

BYRON

Nelly? Wait, you're not Jess Blyth's little sister?

NELLY

Took you long enough.

BYRON

Well, let's hope the service is quicker than me.

He motions towards a member of the bar staff. The barman shuffles towards Byron but Mr Sutcliffe slides in front of him and takes the glasses off Byron.

BYRON (CONT'D)

(to Mr Sutcliffe)

Same again for me and for the lady, let's go with a martini.

NELLY

Actually, I'll have a larger. Thanks.

Mr Sutcliffe turns around to make the drinks.

BYRON

So how is Jess?

Nelly waits to answer. Mr Sutcliffe hands them their drinks. Byron gives thanks and throws some money on the bar.

Nelly motions to a table.

NELLY

Shall we?

They get up and sit down at the table.

BYRON

So? How is she?

NELLY

She, um - I know you two were like childhood sweethearts or whatever so this might be a little hard to hear but Jess has been missing.

Byron's face is shock-riddled, twinged with sadness.

NELLY (CONT'D)

About a year now. And yeah, we really have no clue. Kind of accepted the worst now, you know.

BYRON

I'm so sorry.

NELLY

So, yeah. Even if you worded it like a dick, I agree with you, I do need to live my life a bit.

BYRON

Well in the city, most good things start with a drink.

He raises his glass.

BYRON (CONT'D)

To Jess.

NELLY

To Jess.

They both guzzle their drinks. Byron's impressed.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

MONTAGE:

Drinks downed... Money flashed... Mr Sutcliffe watches on...

Laughs exchanged... drinks poured... vision blurred...

Numbers on napkins... Stories told... liquid dropped...

Byron coughs and splutters... Mr Sutcliffe pours some more...

Byron slips... the door to the bar swings open...

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Muffled arguing.

A glass is smashed. The fragments of glass sparkle like star dust.

A woman, early 40s, sobs angrily. This is CLAIRE, Byron's ex-wife.

Her face distorts, turns monstrous, demon-like.

INT. CORPORATE BUILDING - DAY - FLASHBACK

A dark void is littered with desks, chairs, telephones and computers. Everything unoccupied, the darkness infinite.

Mischievous laughter.

A pale shadow skips through the darkness towards a door.

CLOSE IN on the door. A plaque on the door reads 'BYRON GLUTMAN'.

The door slams shut. The plaque melts away.

Mischievous laughter. Darkness.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - DAY

The ring of an alarm reverberates throughout the house.

Sunlight streams through the living room blinds. Bars of light stretch across Byron's face.

He's asleep. Flat out on the itchy looking sofa in the clothes he wore last night.

The light creeps over his eyes. He stirs awake with a groan.

His body rolls onto the floor with a thud, barely missing the coffee table in the middle of the room.

His hand holds his head and lets out a groan. The alarm can still be heard.

He checks his wrist. His watch isn't there. There's black ink smudged onto the side of his hand.

He checks the coffee table. No watch. But there's a note. A phone number, signed 'NELLY'. It's in red ink.

He scrambles to his feet and into the kitchen. He goes to the sink, turns on the tap and shoves his head underneath it.

He rubs the water into his face. Drops of red ink trickle down the drain of the sink.

He turns the tap off.

The infernal noise of the alarm.

A clock behind Byron reads 10.00 A.M.

His phone buzzes in his pocket. 'TONY: 10 MISSED CALLS'.

INT. CAR - DAY

Byron sits in the back of a taxi, he makes a call. Someone picks up.

BYRON
Hi, Nelly, listen-

NELLY (O.S.)
You're alive.

BYRON
Did I give you my number?

NELLY (O.S.)
No, hence why you're the one calling me.

BYRON
Okay, so what actually happened last night?

NELLY (O.S.)
You couldn't hack it, that's what. Thought I was going to have to take you to hospital.

BYRON
But you took me home instead?

NELLY (O.S.)
No your friend did. You don't remember anything?

INT. FACTORY - DAY

Byron rushes through the shutter door of the factory past workers on forklifts and towards the conveyor belt where David, Rob and others sit working.

BYRON
Did anyone see me last night?

ROB
Lemme guess, doing lines off
hookers arses?

BYRON
No, I was at a bar in the village.

ROB
Lines at the bar then.

BYRON
Shut up and take this seriously.

A few of the workers snicker.

ROB
Take your job seriously.

BYRON
A bar in the village. Did anyone
see me?

David looks taken aback by how flustered Byron is.

DAVID
I didn't go out last night.

BYRON
One person answering a simple
question, thank you.

ROB
Why would any of us go to the
village anyway?

BYRON
What do you mean?

ROB
That place is a black hole.

BYRON
Why?

At one end of the production line there are a set of stairs leading up to Tony's office. He watches from the stairs.

TONY
Byron. My office.

Byron skulks away. Rob imitates swishing a magic wand.

INT. FACTORY - DAY

Tony sticks a nicotine patch onto his forearm. Byron sits across from him looking indifferent.

TONY
Not making many friends here, are you?

BYRON
Tony, you don't get it, last night-

TONY
Why are you here?

BYRON
To work.

TONY
Yeah, but why here?

BYRON
There was no jobs going in the village.

TONY
And why the fuck do you want to be in the village?

BYRON
What's wrong with the village? I grew up here. My mum's here.

TONY
Why are you really here?

BYRON
What is this, therapy?

TONY
If you want, yeah, it can be. But you have to work hard and turn up on time.

BYRON
It's degrading.

TONY
For you, yeah. You knew that and you applied anyway. So I'll ask you one more time, why are you really here?

BYRON
I don't know, a fresh start.

TONY
Yeah well, round here, you've gotta earn that, okay? Now, I can help you but this is your last chance. Turn up on time tomorrow or I'm afraid you're out.

Byron takes it on the chin.

EXT. BYRON'S HOUSE - DAY

Byron trudges to his front door. He clocks a letter stuck to the front door.

He rips it off.

It's an invitation. The same invitation given to him by Mrs. Moors.

A party. Tonight. The address reads 'The Hill'.

EXT. BYRON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Byron leaves his front door, looking sharp in a suit.

Nelly stands awkwardly in his garden, soothing the goose bumps on her arms. She wears a dress but nothing gaudy or designer, ill-fit for the occasion.

NELLY
You going to hospitalize yourself again, tonight?

BYRON
No, not somewhere like this.

NELLY
I feel underdressed.

BYRON

You look fine. Thanks for coming,
by the way, events like these you
come with a date or you leave a
bum.

Charming.

EXT. THE HILL - NIGHT

An upper-middle class haven. Three story detached houses with
a view of the village below and the valley around them.

Byron takes in the view as he escorts Nelly towards the
biggest house of them all. A wry smile on his lips.

They head to the front door of the big house and ring the
bell.

A woman, 50s, opens the door with a welcoming smile. This is
MRS HUNTER, she appears to be the lady that every woman in a
mid-life crisis dreams of becoming.

She takes Byron by the hand and guides him into her home,
where a scattered crowd of well-dressed men and women turn
and smile at him.

Mrs Hunter then does the same with Nelly.

MRS HUNTER

(to Nelly)

And who is this dashing surprise,
may I ask?

Nelly chuckles nervously.

NELLY

Nelly.

Mrs Hunter's eyes pierce for more.

NELLY (CONT'D)

Nelly Rose.

MRS HUNTER

A name befitting of your beauty.
You must tell me where you got that
dress when you get the time.

Mrs Hunter stands besides Byron and Nelly and addresses her
guests.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
 Everyone, this is Byron, the man we
 have been so eager to meet and his
 stunning partner, Nelly.

BYRON
 Oh no-

NELLY
 Erm, we're not-

Mrs Hunter takes their hands and introduces them to the other
 guests.

MRS HUNTER
 This is Doctor Shipman, biggest
 brain in the village.

DOCTOR SHIPMAN, 60s, quirky tie, big smile, shakes Byron and
 Nelly's hands.

DOCTOR SHIPMAN
 Drink your fill tonight, my
 remedies are magic.

Next is Mrs Moors.

MRS HUNTER
 Mrs Moors, I believe you have met
 already, Byron. Headmistress of our
 esteemed school.

MRS MOORS
 So glad you accepted my invitation.

Mr Sutcliffe steps up next, laughing.

MRS HUNTER
 Mr Sutcliffe, he has quite some
 claims about you, Byron.

MR SUTCLIFFE
 More like secrets I shall take to
 the grave. I'm glad you had a good
 night.

BYRON
 You know good whisky.

MR SUTCLIFFE
 And you know good watches.

Mr Sutcliffe pulls out Byron's watch from his suit pocket. He
 hands it to Byron.

MR SUTCLIFFE (CONT'D)
Perhaps next time we can drink
together.

MRS HUNTER
(to Byron and Nelly)
And now I shall stop mothering you.
Enjoy yourselves and we shall chat
later.

She kisses them both on the cheek, almost flirtatiously, and sashays into a crowd of guests.

INT. MRS HUNTERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Nelly stands in the corner, cautiously sipping a drink. Byron finishes chatting with some men and joins her.

NELLY
You're in your element.

BYRON
Well, this is the living your life
thing I was on about. Jess would
have liked this.

NELLY
You didn't know her.

BYRON
Never forgot her spirit though.

Nelly focuses her vision on a man on the opposite side of the room. This is CHIEF TIDE, 50s, imposing but twitchy amongst a gossiping rabble.

BYRON (CONT'D)
I expected you to shut me down by
now.

Nelly gets close to Byron's ear, eyes still on Tide.

NELLY
That's your friend.

Byron gets a look at him.

BYRON
From last night? Never seen him
before.

NELLY
I figured.

Chief Tide disperses from the crowd of people into another room. Byron and Nelly follow him in.

From the hallway - Mrs Hunter watches them.

In an empty kitchen - Chief Tide throws his alcohol down the sink and turns around, met by Nelly and Byron.

CHIEF TIDE

(to Byron)

Nice to see you woke up in one piece. Byron, isn't it?

NELLY

You should know, you're his friend.

Chief Tide extends a hand to Byron.

CHIEF TIDE

Chief Inspector Tide. It's my job to be everyone's friend in the village. I'm glad I could help last night.

Byron accepts the handshake.

BYRON

How'd you know where I live?

CHIEF TIDE

You told me. It took a couple of attempts for me to understand you, I admit.

Byron notices at Tide's empty glass.

BYRON

You don't drink?

CHIEF TIDE

Drunk police officers don't quite give off the right message.

Tide glimpses at Nelly.

CHIEF TIDE (CONT'D)

Nelly, if I am allowed to call you Nelly?

NELLY

You make the rules.

CHIEF TIDE

I never reached out personally to apologize about Jessica, I still haven't given up.

BYRON

Why would you have to apologize?

CHIEF TIDE

Because, so far, I have failed to find her. Anyway, if it isn't too rude of me, is it okay if I speak to Byron privately?

Nelly takes a minute to move but eventually nods and drifts away silently.

INT. MRS HUNTERS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Nelly shuffles between people towards the back of the house, she finds a quiet spot and drinks by herself.

She watches as Chief Tide leads Byron through people and up a grand stair case. Nobody watches her, she may as well be a ghost.

She slinks around the back of the house, all the rooms are open, inviting, no doors. No doors but one, next to the entrance into the garden.

She approaches the locked room. Tries to door knob. Locked.

MRS HUNTER (O.S.)

Are you okay, dear?

This shocks Nelly, half to death.

NELLY

Sorry, I- I feel quite out of place.

MRS HUNTER

Let me apologize for my - 'friends' - they can be quite a cliquey bunch. Truth be told, they're out of touch.

Mrs Hunter smiles and puts her arms around Nelly's shoulders.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

And that is why I keep the best alcohol from them. How do you like the champagne?

Nelly has almost finished her glass.

NELLY

It's nice.

MRS HUNTER

Cat piss compared to what we're going to have now.

Mrs Hunter leads Nelly towards some cabinets, she opens them, revealing a large array of alcohol. She pulls bottles out and reaches into the back of the cabinet. She takes out a large sparkling bottle of champagne.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Dom Pérignon, nineteen-ninety-eight. Our little secret, okay?

NELLY

I think it's a little wasted on me.

Mrs Hunter pops the cork and looks to the door, waiting for the hyenas.

MRS HUNTER

And I think you don't know what's good for you.

Mrs Hunter drinks straight from the bottle then hands the bottle to Nelly, who after a moment's thought, obliges.

INT. MRS HUNTERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Chief Tide leads Byron to a dark office. Byron stops at the doorway, takes a moment to consider, then walks in.

CHIEF TIDE

This place has changed since you were last here.

BYRON

Excuse me?

CHIEF TIDE

And my guess is that you have too.

BYRON

What do you mean 'since I was last here'?

Chief Tide switches on a light. Byron squints.

CHIEF TIDE

I grew up here. Same as you. And that is why we have a responsibility for the village.

BYRON

I moved here yesterday, responsibility is a strong word.

CHIEF TIDE

Do you like your house?

BYRON

What?

CHIEF TIDE

Your new house - do you like it?

BYRON

Are you interrogating me?

CHIEF TIDE

Just asking. Such is my responsibility. To look after everyone who lives here.

BYRON

How did you know where I was last night?

CHIEF TIDE

Your house is nice. But there are people here who would help you relocate if that's what you would want.

BYRON

Relocate?

CHIEF TIDE

Here. The hill.

BYRON

What people?

CHIEF TIDE

You were invited here tonight by a caring society. A society born of love for our community and our land. We look after the village from this hill and we would like you to join us.

BYRON

And you would get me a house here,
on the hill?

CHIEF TIDE

Among other benefits.

BYRON

And what would you want me to do?

CHIEF TIDE

Whatever is required for the sake
of the village. For peace.
Prosperity.

BYRON

Such as?

CHIEF TIDE

Tomorrow, you will go visit a
woman, Mrs Hive. She lives at the
care home.

BYRON

To do what?

CHIEF TIDE

Make sure she is okay. Sooth any
fears of her. I told you, we care,
protect. And in turn, we take care
of one another.

BYRON

Sounds like a deal.

CHIEF TIDE

I'm glad we see eye to eye. Say Mrs
Hunter sent you, they love her over
there and oh, you've been asked to
go in the morning, our Bee is
apparently a bit of late riser so
call round at ten o'clock.

BYRON

But I have work tomorrow.

CHIEF TIDE

Or, you could have everything.

INT. MRS HUNTERS' HOUSE - NIGHT

Nelly and Mrs Hunter sit in a quiet corner. Mrs Hunter fills
up Nelly's glass with Dom Pérignon.

MRS HUNTER
So how did you meet Byron?

NELLY
Oh just in a bar the other night.

MRS HUNTER
(teasing)
And?

NELLY
No, I think he just wanted a date
for tonight. Appearances and all
that.

MRS HUNTER
You know, girl to girl, I've seen
his type. Type you should stay away
from.

NELLY
So how come you invited him?

MRS HUNTER
Courtesy. But seriously, I've heard
things, whispers on the grapevine-

Nelly raises her glass.

NELLY
Funny.

Mrs Hunter conjures a laugh and smile.

MRS HUNTER
Anyway, apparently he's of the, er,
promiscuous sort. According to his
mother he was married recently.

Nelly doesn't say anything.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
I'm sorry, I probably shouldn't
have said anything, I just don't
like to see people taken advantage
of.

NELLY
No, no, it's okay.

MRS HUNTER
Tell you what, how about, you do a
runner before he tries to on you?
(MORE)

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Then soon, you and I have a proper
get together away from this rabble.
That sound good?

Nelly nods, drinks the rest of her champagne in one. Mrs
Hunter takes her hand and they stand up.

Mrs Hunter hands Nelly the bottle of champagne and ushers her
out of the back room, towards the hallway and front door.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

You take this. Champagne in your
pajamas is better than any night a
man can provide.

NELLY

No, it's yours.

MRS HUNTER

You're too polite for your own
good.

They reach the front door.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Would you like me to drive you?

NELLY

I'll get a taxi, thank you.

Mrs Hunter opens the front door.

MRS HUNTER

Well get home safe and if you ever
need anything, you just let me
know, okay?

Nelly nods. Mrs Hunter kisses her on the cheek. Nelly
shuffles out of the door, white knuckles gripped around the
neck of the champagne bottle.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

See you soon, Nelly.

Nelly smiles and wanders into the night.

Mrs Hunter slams the front door shut.

Behind her, Chief Tide escorts Byron down the stair case.
Tide and Mrs Hunter exchange a look.

INT. CARE HOME - DAY

Byron scribbles his name on a log book. Next to it, his phone rings: 'TONY'. Byron rejects the call.

He finishes writing his name in a reception area. Behind a desk is a care home worker.

CARE HOME WORKER
Here to see Winnie?

BYRON
Yes.

INT. CARE HOME - DAY

Byron sits down on a rocking chair. A mug is handed to him.

BYRON
Mrs Hunter sent me.

BEE
She's been very kind in recent years.

Bee picks up a picture from her mantel piece and hands it to Byron. It is a picture of the members of the care home, including Bee and Winnie, with Mrs Hunter at the front.

BEE (CONT'D)
She's been very kind in recent years. Always bringing food, even a new television. Not many people have a care for their elders nowadays.

Bee sits down across from Byron and shakes a pack of biscuits in front of him. He takes one.

BYRON
Well that's why I'm here. To make sure you're all okay.

BEE
Nobody is ever just 'okay', dear.

BYRON
So are you? Okay?

BEE
To be quite honest, I haven't been okay since my husband left but I stick to myself, I get by.

BYRON

What happened to your husband, if you don't mind me asking?

Bee fights her emotions.

BEE

I don't really know, to tell you the truth. He, erm, was just gone one day. Left late one night, fetched to the shops for milk and never came back.

BYRON

The police couldn't find him?

BEE

The police couldn't do anything according to that chief. It was just poof, gone. He was - er - he wouldn't have just left me. Not after fifty years and before you say it, he was happy, he had a mouth on him that he could never shut-

She stops herself before she gets too emotional.

BYRON

I'm so sorry.

BEE

What on earth have you got to be sorry for, dear? Don't use that word emptily, please.

BYRON

Have you managed to, you know, move on?

BEE

None of us really move on. We're fixed. And I am fixed to my husband.

INT. CHIEF TIDE'S HOUSE - DAY

Byron sinks into a chair and looks around his surrounding. An open plan kitchen: high ceilings, high brow furnishings, all curated with a woman's touch.

Chief Tide stands with his back to Byron at the sink. He turns on the tap. Fills two glasses of water.

BYRON

We should look for her husband.

CHIEF TIDE

It was years ago. There's nothing we can do.

Chief Tide takes two pills out of his pocket and puts them into one of the glasses of water.

BYRON

Come on, how big's this village? Someone has to know something. Same goes for Jess.

CHIEF TIDE

I didn't take you as the savior type.

Tide stares at his reflection in the window above the sink.

BYRON

I'm not. I mean we could at least lie, tell the woman he's dead. Give her some sort of closure.

Tide turns around, walks towards Byron and hands him a glass.

CHIEF TIDE

We do nothing. We care for the village. We look after it. But we are not magicians, nor should we be expected to be. We are not asking you to summon a dead body and tell Mrs. Hive it's her husband. We are asking you to keep her content. Quiet.

BYRON

Alright.

Byron doesn't touch his water. Chief Tide drinks his, hard to swallow.

BYRON (CONT'D)

So any idea when I get my own bachelor pad? Considering I don't have a job anymore.

All of a sudden, the front door opens. In steps, MARY TIDE, 50s, unassuming and warm. She smiles when she sees Byron.

MARY TIDE

Oh, hello. Sam, who's your new friend?

CHIEF TIDE

This is, um, Byron, he's a, he's our new officer. Just giving him a briefing.

MARY TIDE

Well it's lovely to meet you, Byron. I'm glad Sam has some more hands on deck, always overstaffed, aren't you, darling?

CHIEF TIDE

Honey, do you mind? Police business.

MARY TIDE

Of course, sorry. Are you home tonight, there's a movie I'd like to watch.

CHIEF TIDE

On a late. All night, probably. Tomorrow, though, I promise.

Mary's smiles fails to hide her disappointment.

MARY TIDE

It's okay. I'll leave you to it.

Chief Tide watches her as she heads into another room.

BYRON

So, domestic bliss. When do I start?

CHIEF TIDE

Soon enough. But first I have something else to give you.

INT. CHIEF TIDE'S HOUSE - DAY

Chief Tide and Byron stand over a bed in an immaculate master bedroom.

CHIEF TIDE

There's a meeting tonight. I believe you know where it is. It's not very far.

On the bed, is a black hooded robe and sat atop of the robe, a grotesque white mask and a carved wooden ring.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - DAY

Staring into his broken bathroom mirror is Byron, cloaked in his robe and mask.

He looks down at his hands, peeking underneath his robes. His wedding finger rests upon his right hand. He slips on the wooden ring next to it. It's prickled like thorns.

The door knocks. Panic.

Byron rips the mask off and throws his robe onto the floor and leaves the bathroom, slamming the door behind him.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Byron opens the door. It's Nelly. She's dressed up. Examines the look of shock on Byron's face.

Awkward pause.

NELLY

Can I come in? It's freezing.

BYRON

Er, yeah. Yeah, sure.

She steps in, takes a second to muster up some courage. Suddenly, she coughs, quite violently. She tries to stifle it.

BYRON (CONT'D)

You okay?

She nods her head, collects herself.

NELLY

I thought that we could go out maybe. Considering I left early the other night.

BYRON

You don't really sound well enough to go out.

She coughs again.

NELLY

It's just a cough, part of my job.
I'll be fine.

BYRON

Well, I can't tonight,
unfortunately. Another time.

NELLY

Why? You got plans?

BYRON

Yeah, someone from the party
invited me out. Dinner or
something.

NELLY

I could be your date again.

BYRON

It's not that sort of occasion.

NELLY

Fair enough, well, do you mind if I
use your toilet?

BYRON

(quickly)
It's blocked.

She laughs, studies him, not joining in with the laughter.

NELLY

You seeing Mrs Hunter?

BYRON

No, why? Look, why do you care?

NELLY

I don't, I was just asking. She
spoke about you, said she heard
some rumours about you and your
wife, sorry, ex-wife. She said they
were probably nothing-

BYRON

Is that why you care so much?

NELLY

What?

BYRON

You see my watch, imagine my wallet
and think, 'oh, my guardian angel
has appeared, now I should say
hello'!

NELLY

Of course not.

BYRON

Well, guess what? It's pretty
fucking empty now, she took
everything, so get your fancies out
of your head.

NELLY

I spoke to you because of Jessica.
Because nobody even remembers her
anymore, so yes, you were a sort of
a guardian angel, I'm sorry that I
didn't just leave you at the bar
sulking into whiskey.

BYRON

And I'm sorry too. I'm no angel,
not for you. You want to do
something with your life, do it
yourself, don't rely on me.

She looks hurt but her bottom lips stays strong. Byron
struggles to look at her.

NELLY

Thank god you left when you did.
She wanted to leave with you, you
know.

BYRON

Yeah, well, now she's gone.

NELLY

So is the boy she fell in love
with.

Byron paces, scratches his head. The wooden ring is still on
his finger. Nelly notices.

NELLY (CONT'D)

I'll let myself out.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Nelly storms away from Byron's house. She heads past the strange building, next to high railings where overgrown weeds sprawl through the gaps and towards the tunnel.

She stops, gives out of little cry of shock and looks at her hand. A small cut. She looks at the railings. Thorns.

She stops and collects herself. Looks around. Notices the strange building.

She creeps towards it. Tries the gates. Locked.

Winces at the sign next to the door. Too faded.

Tries to shake the gate open. Nothing. She looks at the lock. There is a small engraving on the gate. A twisted, sharp vine. It looks like the wooden rings.

EXT. STREETS - NIGHT

Clouds claw across the moon. A crow caws. Metal scrapes and clinks. Tires crunch. A low whistle blows.

A shoal of hooded figures file through the gate towards.

Two more figures stand at the gate. Each hooded figure hangs their head to them as they pass and raise their ring finger, which is kissed by one of the two standing guard.

As each figure passes, one of the guards clicks a digit click counter.

Figure by figure wades inside the meeting building, the inside remains dark and it seems impossible for so many people to fit inside such a small building.

The guard that counted shows the number on the digit click counter to the other guard. Content, they drag the gate closed.

Around the corner, hidden from sight, Nelly stands still, silent, listening.

Her eyes turn troubled. Her body heaves slightly. Hand over her mouth, she can't hold it anymore, she lets out a cough.

At the gate, one guard stops the other from closing the gate. His head turn, mask pointing towards where Nelly is hiding.

The guard heads round the corner where Nelly is hiding but she's gone.

The guard takes off his mask, revealing Chief Tide's face. He looks around but no one is to be seen.

He puts on his mask and returns to the gate, he and the other guard close it, walk into the meeting building and close the doors behind them.

EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

Hidden behind the bushes of a random house, Nelly lets out a flurry of coughs.

INT. MEETING BUILDING - NIGHT

The building is a single long room, lit by candles. The walls are decked in mirrors. At the far end of the room is an elevated platform with a table, or is it an altar? Ornaments lie on it.

All the members stand in uniform rows. Byron stands at the end of one row, next to a mirror. He glances at his reflection, unrecognizable.

One member who seems to appear from out of nowhere, steps onto the platform and next to the altar. They address the crowd-

HEAD MEMBER

Welcome, friends. I am happy to say
that we are flourishing. Growing.
And the earth, our mistress, is
happy for it. Let us give praise.
Make ourselves naked as nature.

The member on stage takes off her mask, revealing it to be Mrs Hunter.

All the other members take off their masks. Byron is the last to do so, he watches and follows everyone else's lead.

MRS HUNTER

Kiss our mother's hand.

Mrs Hunter kisses the wooden ring on her finger. Everyone else follows suit.

Mrs Hunter takes a bowl off the altar and raises it aloft.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Drink her blood.

At one end of each line, a member holds a bowl and drinks the liquid from it. After taking a sip, they pass the bowl to the next person.

Byron watches the process and then Mrs Hunter, who is yet to take a sip.

The bowl comes to Byron, inside a muddy mixture. He doesn't drink. Neither does Mrs Hunter.

The member next to him whispers in his ear.

MEMBER
Drink or she'll know.

Byron takes a sip, struggles to swallow it.

MRS HUNTER
And extinguish her enemies.

There's a candle next to every member. Everyone blows their candles out. Darkness.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
So we can come into the light.

Lights whizz on, illuminating the entire room.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
Today, we officially welcome our newest member. Byron, stand next to me please.

Eyes turn to him. He strides towards the platform, passing Doctor Shipman, Mrs Moors and Mr Sutcliffe, among others of smiling, sedative faces.

He steps up onto the platform and next to Mrs Hunter.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
Praise her.

He puts his hands together, unsure.

BYRON
Praise her.

Satisfied, Mrs Hunter's eyes turn back to the congregation.

MRS HUNTER
Byron, here, has roots within our home. He is part of the soil and he will help fertilize us with his charm and vigour.
(MORE)

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

The natural order will be maintained and we, her protectors, shall bloom in the process.

Byron looks into the crowd. Are they wearing their masks again? They sway, mould into one, their faces brighten and twist. Byron takes a step back, off balance.

Mrs Hunter grabs his arm, stabilizes him. He looks at her. She's taller now, yet her face remains unchanged, almost angel-like.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Byron's ceremony will be held in a few days, after he continues to prove his worth. Until then, we continue to protect and preserve. That is all. Ceremony adjourned.

The members stay where they are. Byron looks at their faces, but they all have the same face - his face.

Mrs Hunter whispers in his ear.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

I have someone I'd like you to meet.

She escorts him off the stage, to the corner of the building. On the floor there's a hatch. Mrs Hunter bends down and opens it.

A dark hole. Stairs heading down into an unknown abyss.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Don't be afraid.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Mrs Hunter lights a gas lantern, hanging from the side of the tunnel. She takes the lantern and leads the way through the indefinitely stretching tunnel, Byron stumbling close behind.

BYRON

What is this place?

MRS HUNTER

It's been here for years. Centuries, I would wager. Same goes for our society.

BYRON

And who knows about them?

MRS HUNTER
Only those who need to. And only
The Connected One knows all the
tunnels' secrets.

BYRON
'The Connected One'?

MRS HUNTER
What is it that you want, Byron?

BYRON
To- to feel normal again.

MRS HUNTER
On the contrary, how you usually
feel isn't normal. It's warped. We
are tainted by anxiety and
arrogance.

Byron's POV: the tunnel twists, closes in and expands. He
passes more pathways of tunnels.

BYRON
What was in that drink?

MRS HUNTER
The earth.

BYRON
What did you say to Nelly?

Mrs Hunter slows down, processes this new information.

MRS HUNTER
You were wealthy, weren't you,
Byron?

BYRON
How did you know?

MRS HUNTER
You know I visit your mother and
her friends. As I understand it,
and as is usually the case, you
accumulated your wealth and respect
because you possess a certain
drive, leadership. I simply wanted
to make sure Nelly, however lovely
she may be, couldn't quash those
qualities before you were able to
rediscover them.

BYRON

Perhaps, I don't want to rediscover them.

MRS HUNTER

If that was the case, you wouldn't be here now. Do you want the life back that you once had?

BYRON

That's not why I came back here.

MRS HUNTER

No, you came back for a fresh start. A reset. And you have found more than that.

Byron stops, sticks his fingers in his mouth. Mrs Hunter turns and shine the lantern on him.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

It will do you good. Trust me.

He stops, looks at her. She shines, incandescent. She offers her hand.

BYRON

What do you do here?

MRS HUNTER

I didn't take you as one to ask questions. Besides, there's always a light at one end of the tunnel.

He takes her hand and looks down the tunnels, that steadily appear to straighten and stay still.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Byron and Mrs Hunter reach a door in the wall of the tunnels.

MRS HUNTER

When you enter, bow and sit. Don't look at her until she allows you to. Understood?

BYRON

Understood.

Mrs Hunter opens the door and leads Byron into a room. Cave-like, wet and overgrown. Vials lie on the floor, mud and red colored contents.

At the far end of the room, a twisting growth of vines and thorns that sags in the middle to make a sort of seat.

And sat facing it, crossed legged, the shape of a hagged old woman.

Mrs Hunter bows down and sits on a mat, facing the old woman's back, head to the floor. Byron copies her.

MRS HUNTER

Glory to you and the mother, O
Connected One.

BYRON

Glory to you and the mother.

THE CONNECTED ONE

Trees. Dirt. Vines. Above. Below.
People. Vibrations ripple in the
earth and the sea. Vibrations need
to be managed, controlled. And it
is we who cause them. Describe to
me, Byron, what does a lawyer do?

BYRON

We argue cases. Defend the
innocent. Uphold justice.

THE CONNECTED ONE

Who's justice?

BYRON

The authority. The natural order.

THE CONNECTED ONE

We are one and the same, even
across the country, we were
together. Open your eyes.

He does so, she holds a bowl to his mouth. He sips cautiously.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)

Let's revisit your past.

BYRON

I don't want to.

THE CONNECTED ONE

It's all connected. You find it or
it will find you.

BYRON

I don't want to find it.

BYRON'S POV: The throne of vines behind The Connected One writhes, vines slither towards Byron.

THE CONNECTED ONE
You picked fruit from the tree
didn't you, Byron?

BYRON
What? I- I can't move.

THE CONNECTED ONE
And you did wrong by some to do
right by others.

The vines wrap around Byron's arms, body and neck. Mrs Hunter looks at him calm and indifferent.

BYRON
I didn't do anything.

THE CONNECTED ONE
To pick the fruit is a sin.

Vice lock. Eyes bulge. Byron's fixed in place.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)
A sin the Mother forgives you for.

The vines go limp and slide off his body.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)
You maintained the natural order,
like us and for that, we are
granted the first to fall to the
ground.

Byron moves his hand slowly, feels his neck.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)
The visions are over. And the
Mother welcomes you. You can leave
us.

Byron looks to Mrs Hunter who offers a slight smile and motions at the door.

Byron stands up, takes in the druid-like scene once more, then opens the door, where a masked member of the cult waits outside and guides him back down the tunnels.

Mrs Hunter closes the door.

MRS HUNTER
Can he be trusted?

THE CONNECTED ONE

The vines are yet to tell me. But I will feel their answer soon. Soon everyone will feel their answers.

MRS HUNTER

They cannot.

THE CONNECTED ONE

You argue about things out of your control.

MRS HUNTER

About something that I have built.

THE CONNECTED ONE

Something that you have done for the Mother. Are you forgetting that there is another thing you are to do for her?

MRS HUNTER

No.

THE CONNECTED ONE

Then why does thou fret? You will be at one with her.

MRS HUNTER

But to reveal our secrets to the village will only lead to the dilution and destruction of what we have achieved.

The Connected One caresses the throne of vines, rubs her cheek against it.

THE CONNECTED ONE

The veil is already being peeled away. Someone is bringing her into the light. But with your life, all will be well. All will be well.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - DAY

Byron looks at his broken reflection in the bathroom. He heaves the mirror off the wall.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - DAY

Byron stands over a pan. Oil sizzles. Byron inspects nervously.

Behind him, Winnie peeves around his house. She finds a photo frame, upside down. She picks it up and looks - it's the photo of Byron and his ex-wife.

WINNIE

I always loved this photo.

Byron turns around, panic. He approaches her, snatches the photo from out of her hand and stashes it out of sight.

Whilst he does this, she takes over the cooking.

WINNIE (CONT'D)

You should call her.

BYRON

Why would I do that, mum?

WINNIE

Same reason why you still have the photo. If you don't want it, I'll have it. Only way I get to see you smile.

BYRON

I'm happy.

WINNIE

It was nice of you to see Bee. She isn't herself at the moment.

BYRON

I meant to see you, it's just that Mrs Hunter asked me to go and I had work, so I couldn't be round long.

WINNIE

Oh I don't care about that, knowing that you're happy would be enough for me.

BYRON

I just told you, I am.

WINNIE

That job must be working wonders then.

BYRON

Yeah, yeah, it is. You know, if there's anything I can do to help at the home, on the weekends or something.

WINNIE

Not unless you have a few thousand pounds in your pocket.

BYRON

You should ask Claire.

WINNIE

I would if I could.

Byron sinks into a chair at the dining table. Winnie plates up the food and hands a plate to Byron.

WINNIE (CONT'D)

I salvaged it as best I could.

BYRON

Thanks.

Glimmer of a smile. She sits opposite him.

WINNIE

Look, I don't care what happened or what you did. Or what she did for that matter. I just want you to choose what makes you happy and do it, okay?

He looks like he has already stopped listening.

BYRON

Okay.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - DAY

Byron sits on his couch. He twiddles a note in his hand. It's the one Nelly wrote for him, with her name and number on.

Suddenly, Byron's letter box clangs.

He rises and goes to the front door. He opens it but there is no one outside.

He closes the door. A letter and a small parcel lie on the floor. He picks them up and rips open the parcel. Money.

He rips open the letter:

'GIVE MRS HIVE A VISIT. SHE WHISPERS TOO LOUD.'

INT. CARE HOME - DAY

Byron stands outside a door. He holds a plastic container. He knocks on the door.

Bee opens her door, her eyes red, her smile forced.

BYRON

Mum and I made something earlier,
thought you might want some.

INT. CARE HOME - DAY

Bee fumbles with tea bags, one falls onto the floor. Byron jumps up and picks the tea bag up for her.

BYRON

You can talk to me, Bee.

She wipes her eyes.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Sit down, I'll finish these off.

She creaks into a chair and takes out a hanker chief.

BEE

It's my son.

BYRON

What's he done?

BEE

He says that people murdered
Harold?

BYRON

Harold. Your husband?

She nods. Sniffles.

BEE

He's insistent. He won't talk to me
about anything else. He's- he's-

BYRON

It's okay. It's okay, grief
torments people. Don't let it
torment you. Your son will come
round, I promise.

BEE

You're just like Winnie said.
You're too kind to me.

INT. CHIEF TIDE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Tide downs some pills and water. Cracks a window, takes out a cigarette, offers one to Byron. Byron shakes his head.

CHIEF TIDE

He's mentally ill. A junkie. Be
homeless if it wasn't for Mrs
Hunter.

BYRON

What do we do?

Tide takes a moment.

CHIEF TIDE

I am told, that your house is
nearly ready. Here. On the hill.

BYRON

I'm ready to earn it.

CHIEF TIDE

Good. Good.

Chief Tide looks on edge but notices Byron scrutinizing him. He throws his cigarette out of the window, grabs a can of air freshener and sprays it liberally.

EXT. DEREK'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Chief Tide rings the doorbell. Byron stands next to him. Dead flowers decorate the side of the house - Byron stares at them, lost in thought when the door opens a creak-

DEREK

What do you want?

The eye peering behind the door belongs to DEREK HIVE, 40s. Chief Tide smiles widely at him, shows him his police badge.

CHIEF TIDE

I was told you have some
information regarding the
disappearance of your father. Can
we come inside?

DEREK
Who's the other one?

Byron tries to fit a hand in the door.

BYRON
Detective Lilly, I'm new.

Derek twitches, begins to shut the door but Byron weighs in and forces himself through.

INT. DEREK'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

BYRON
Thank you.

Derek scrambles away from the door, into a living room and hides behind a sofa.

Tide walks in and closes the door. Tide and Byron sit down in the living room.

CHIEF TIDE
Derek, we want to help. I apologize for what just happened but we are prepared to do anything to find your father. You want to find him, don't you?

Derek nods, still hiding behind another sofa.

CHIEF TIDE (CONT'D)
Why don't you sit down? In fact, could I have some water, I'm parched. Detective Lilly, would you like some water?

BYRON
I'd love some.

Derek scurries away into the kitchen, eyes on the intruders the whole way.

Chief Tide reaches into his pocket and takes out two pills. He clasps them in his fist.

Byron fidgets, tries to peer into the kitchen... *where is he?*

CHIEF TIDE
Hey, Derek, how about that water?
Derek?

Nothing. Silence.

Chief Tide rises out of his seat and approaches the kitchen. Slowly, slowly, a footstep from the door when-

Derek springs out of the kitchen with a knife in hand. He lunges onto Tide who grabs Derek's wrist. They struggle and fall.

Byron jumps up towards them but as he gets there, they're already still. He gazes wide-eyed upon them, as Tide quivers upwards and Derek lies still and bloody.

An ugly pause.

Byron rushes into the kitchen and gags into the sink.

Tide barges him out of the way, sticks the tap on and frantically tries to wash the blood off his hands.

All over the kitchen, pictures of members are stuck to cupboards - Mrs Hunter, Dr Shepherd, Tide and others. Crazy strokes of pen between them.

Tide turns off the tap and takes notice of the evidence.

CHIEF TIDE (CONT'D)

Take it all, we'll put them in the carpet with him.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Both men remain silent and dread as the car motors up a hill through the dark. The faint lights of the village behind them shrink.

EXT. CLIFF FACE - NIGHT

The car boot cracks open. A thick log of carpet with feet hanging out.

The fuel cap of the car is popped open.

EXT. CLIFF FACE - NIGHT

Chief Tide lights a cigarette in the moonlight. He offers Byron one, who accepts.

They stand looking out to the sea, beneath them lies Derek's body rolled in the carpet.

CHIEF TIDE

It isn't meant to come to this.

BYRON
For the mother.

CHIEF TIDE
(unconvincing)
Yeah. For the mother.

BYRON
Is this between us?

CHIEF TIDE
There's no point lying. It's done.

Byron throws away his cigarette and walks back to the car.

Chief Tide stares at the body.

CHIEF TIDE (CONT'D)
No point at all.

He throws his cigarette onto the petrol soaked body and returns to the car.

The fire grows.

EXT. CLIFF FACE - DAY

The sun creeps onto the horizon. A heap of ash depletes. Speckles float towards the sea.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - DAY

Sunlight penetrates the blinds of Byron's bedroom. Byron rolls in his bed. Checks his phone. It's the morning.

He launches the duvet off of him.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - DAY

Byron's hands shake underneath a running tap. He cups his hands and throws water over his face and sleepless eyes.

He cranes his neck upwards towards where the mirror should be. All he can see is a blank wall.

A knock at the door.

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - DAY

Byron opens the door in his dressing gown to see Mrs Hunter standing before him.

BYRON
Oh, morning.

She looks up at the sun.

MRS HUNTER
Just about.

BYRON
Erm, yeah, come in. Gimme a second,
I'll go get changed.

MRS HUNTER
There's really no need.

She glides in past him.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
You should sleep after last night.

She takes a good look at Byron's expression. He doesn't give much away.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)
After all, it's your big night.

BYRON
How so?

MRS HUNTER
The Mother and I will initiate you
tonight.

BYRON
Good.

MRS HUNTER
I will speak to Bee when things
come to light. Melancholy drove him
to the cliffs. There is no lie
there.

BYRON
I'll keep her quiet until then.

She smiles, almost impressed.

MRS HUNTER

One more favor, if you could. Check up on Tide. Mrs Moors was worried when she delivered his invitation.

BYRON

I don't think he's anything to worry about.

MRS HUNTER

That's not what I said.

She reaches inside her handbag. Takes out a pot of pills.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Prescribed by Doctor Shepherd for me. Sleep. I'll see you tonight.

He takes them.

BYRON

Thank you.

Mrs Hunter eyeballs the kitchen before she leaves-

MRS HUNTER

At least you didn't unpack properly. That'll make moving a lot easier.

EXT. CHIEF TIDE'S HOUSE - DAY

Byron rubs his eyes as he approaches Tide's front door. He raises a fist to knock but loud voices can be heard inside.

He checks the coast is clear and puts an ear to the door-

MARY TIDE (O.S.)

None of what you say is making any sense!

CHIEF TIDE (O.S.)

Please, keep your voice down.

MARY TIDE (O.S.)

How can you say this is for the good of the village?

CHIEF TIDE (O.S.)

Because I believed it. I- I-

MARY TIDE (O.S.)

Have to do something, people look to you for security here. It's your responsibility. And this it's, it's lunacy.

CHIEF TIDE (O.S.)

It made sense once.

MARY TIDE (O.S.)

And I'm your wife, how can you keep this from me? How could-

A shrill of crying, a voice broken.

MARY TIDE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Get off of me! Get off!

CHIEF TIDE (O.S.)

Mary, please. Where are you going?

Footsteps. Byron bolts away from the door.

INT. CHIEF TIDE'S HOUSE - THE SAME TIME

Byron's bounding footsteps can be heard from inside. Mary freezes, gripped by terror. She sprints upstairs.

Chief Tide, who is on his knees, jumps up to the door. He swings it open-

EXT. CHIEF TIDE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Makes his way onto the pavement and looks up, down and up the street again. No one to be seen.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Nelly drinks by herself at the bar.

Mr Sutcliffe smiles at her as he walks past towards another customer.

- HOW WOULD SHE KNOW THAT TONIGHT IS THE NIGHT?

- B COULD MEND HIS WATCH (BROKEN ON THE NIGHT HE'S SPIKED) WITH THE MONEY THAT THE CULT GIVE HIM

INT. BYRON'S HOUSE - NIGHT

A feint blow of a whistle.

Byron's freshly mended watch.

A pack of open cigarettes.

The picture of Byron and Claire.

A light goes off and the objects consumed in shadow.

INT. MEETING BUILDING - NIGHT

Byron is at the head of a procession of masked members, they trickle towards the stage holding candles.

On the stage, The Connected One and Mrs Hunter lie in wait.

Byron is lead up towards the stage as the rest of the members take their regimented positions in the hall.

Mrs Hunter prizes Byron's mask off his face and whispers in his ear-

MRS HUNTER

Close your eyes and when you open
them you will have the sight of a
thousand eyes.

He closes his eyes and he is led onto the middle of the stage, where he is sat in a small ring of lit candles.

The Connected One is surrounded by vials and plants. She grabs some moss and squeezes it into a bowl. She continues to make a concoction from the muddy vials as she recites archaic words. She takes a bug from a jar, holds it over the fire and crushes it into her mixture once it stops squirming.

Finally, she takes Byron's hand, which is deadly still. Then she handles a knife and slices both their hands, squeezing their blood into the brown mixture in the bowl.

She places the knife upon the altar then sticks her thumb in the bowl and with the liquid marks a symbol on Byron's forehead.

The Connected One keeps reciting her incoherent ritual as she brings the bowl to Byron's lips. He drinks until it is all gone. Gags. The Connected One seals his mouth with her hands until he swallows it all.

She picks up the bowl and stands up, writhing a dance of savage ecstasy, she shoves her fingers into the bowl and flicks the remaining specks of liquid on Byron's face like crude holy water.

The rest of the members start humming in unison.

Byron's fists are clenched and bloody, his face twisted with convulsion.

THE CONNECTED ONE

Arise, son of the earth. Open your eyes to her glory and serve her until your last day.

Byron opens his eyes.

BYRON'S POV: Everything spins, distorted, the sea of grotesque masks returns.

The Connected One bends down and whispers in his ear. Mrs Hunter watching closely.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)

She's here.

BYRON'S POV: Flashing images of Claire's face, smiling then screaming and crying.

Mrs Hunter and The Connected One take Byron's hands and lift him to his feet.

MRS HUNTER

(to the congregation)

Extinguish her enemies and let her child see light.

The members blow out their candles and the large lights are turned on.

Mrs Hunter goes to address them again but The Connected One hobbles in front of her and steals their attention.

THE CONNECTED ONE

This is a glorious day. The Mother tells me how happy she is. And she has blessed us with boundless treasures. For that, we cannot let our festivities end there.

The members look as bemused as Byron, who looks dangerously high, but Mrs Hunter has a different look, concern; scorn.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)

To build anew, we must destroy the old. We must praise, sacrifice. Her vines have come to me and told me that it is time for our dear Mrs. Hunter's ceremony. It is her time to give herself to the earth. Tomorrow, we shall give thanks to her once more.

The members all bow to her. Mrs Hunter looks upon them in horror.

Silence falls upon the hall.

THE CONNECTED ONE (CONT'D)

(to Mrs Hunter)

Well? The ceremony is not over.

Mrs Hunter boils inside. The Connected One staggers towards the hatch in the corner of the hall.

MRS HUNTER

Sutcliffe, bring the wine.

There is silence but for the shuffle of The Connected One's footsteps. Mrs Hunter scans the crowd.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Mister Sutcliffe, come, we are thirsty. It is the mother's nectar, all must drink.

The Connected One cracks the hatch open and begins to descend-

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

(to The Connected One)

Where are you going?

THE CONNECTED ONE

The Mother needs me.

MRS HUNTER

Stop!

The Connected One ignores her and goes into the tunnels.

Silence among the members.

Mrs Hunter slides the knife from the altar into her hand.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Mister Sutcliffe!

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The men's toilet of a bar. Shards of glass on the floor.

Muffled screaming wanes to a whimper.

Inside a cubicle, Mr Sutcliffe is tied up. His head lulls back and forth, his eyes distant. His mouth gagged with a towel. He looks at the toilet bowl and grins goofily.

INT. MEETING BUILDING - NIGHT

Chief Tide whispers into Mrs Hunter's ear on stage. He holds the digit click counter. He shows her the number on it.

MRS HUNTER

Are you sure that's right?

He nods.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Keys. Now.

He hands them over, bows his head slightly.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Everyone unmask now.

The members hesitate.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

Now!

Sheep-like they begin peeling off their masks.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

(to Chief Tide)

Get the lights on.

Tide hurries away to turn the lights on. A faint buzz and the hall is illuminated, a reflection of anxious faces.

Mrs Hunter approaches each person, row upon row, with the knife gripped in her hand.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

If anyone knows where Mr Sutcliffe has gone, please speak now. Just because we have one new member does not mean we wish to lose another.

Shakes of heads, shrugs of shoulders.

Byron remains on stage. He caresses his head, squints his eyes closed. When he opens them we see-

INT. COURTROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

A full house, a frightful jury and weeping witnesses.

Byron stands beside an attractive woman in handcuffs with a glint of a smile on her face.

A JUDGE bangs his gavel.

The sound of crying.

INT. MEETING BUILDING - NIGHT - PRESENT DAY

Members in robes replace the jury.

Mrs Hunter is at the back of the hall. She makes sure the doors are locked then stashes the keys in her pockets.

MRS HUNTER

Children of the Mother, we have an imposter among us. Everyone down into the tunnels and bring them to me.

The rabble put their masks on again and drift towards the hatch and into the tunnels.

Mrs Hunter approaches Byron on the stage.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

How are you feeling?

He can barely speak a word.

MRS HUNTER (CONT'D)

It comes in waves, be strong. I need you to be. You're the only one I can trust, Byron. Find that imposter and you shall have everything you could want. That I promise you.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Byron bundles through the candle-lit tunnels in his mask and robe. He stumbles and touches the side of the tunnel for support - his hands touches a funghi, wet and mossy.

INT. BYRON'S OFFICE - DAY - FLASHBACK

Fingers on plump lips. We see Byron and the woman from the last flashback in a sensual embrace. The sound of hissing and insects.

Byron, his shirt half-undone, goes towards the door of the office and slams it shut.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT - PRESENT DAY

A door in the tunnel is closed by a masked member.

The sound startles Byron and they stare at each other, uncertain.

MEMBER

Glory to the Mother.

BYRON

Glory to the Mother.

Byron shows his ring and rushes away.

He delves further into the tunnels. He's alone. He stops and holds his head. The hissing and insects can be heard.

He looks up. A shadow is up ahead. *A member or something else?*

Byron turns away from the shadow but a feminine whisper calls after him.

WOMAN (O.S.)

What did you do, Byron?

INT. BAR - DAY - FLASHBACK

A hotspot for the upper echelons of society. Byron is in a booth with the Judge from a previous flashback.

They laugh and joke together. Byron slips him an envelope underneath the table.

WOMAN (O.S.)

Who are you, Byron?

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT - PRESENT DAY

Byron turns around to face the shadow once more.

He sees a blinding light at the end of the tunnel. The shadow figure walks towards it and disappears.

Byron chases after it, he is swallowed by the light-

INT. FANCY APARTMENT - DAY - FLASHBACK

Byron walks into his apartment, baffled. Empty and glowing with light. A wind blows towards a door.

Byron follows the wind, opens the door into his bedroom-

Claire and another man are in Byron's bed, naked. They turn to see Byron. A Mexican stand-off, each one of them wielding trauma, rage and horror on their faces.

The room begins to glow brighter and is lost in a fog of light. Byron stands in a vacuum of white. He sprint through it, grasping at nothing until-

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT - PRESENT DAY

He tumbles onto the damp floor, his momentum extinguishing a torch on the wall.

Byron scrambles to his feet and claws through the darkness hands first.

His hand hit something solid. Metal. He feels it. Grabs it. A ladder.

Byron ascends the ladder into-

INT. LIBRARY ROOM - NIGHT

Byron swings open a hatch and heaves himself into a room. He takes his mask off to inspect. Bookshelves on all sides. Antiques both grand and strange.

A painting: almost neolithic in design. A ritual of sorts. A crowd surrounding a bonfire and in the bonfire, a person.

There's a closed door leading somewhere. Byron tries it. Locked.

At the other end of the room is a desk with masses of paper organized on it.

Byron flicks through the papers. They're filed. Names. 'Moors', 'Shipman', 'Sutcliffe'.

Byron stops on one file, he opens it on the desk.

A last will and testament... 'all wealth and belongings will be given to Mrs Hunter and her charity...'. Signed in red ink.

A 'PROFILE' on Byron. Date of birth, place of birth, year of marriage, several addresses.

In his heightened state, particular words loom larger and his eyes obsess over them:

'ADULTERER'... 'DIVORCED'... 'LOST WEALTH'...

'ATHEIST'... 'CROOKED LAWYER'... 'MURDER'...

'WEAKNESSES'... 'MATERIALISTIC'... 'FONDNESS OF MOTHER'...

Claire's address.

A picture of Nelly and Byron at his front door, taken from afar.

He flicks through more paper. Pages on Winnie, extensive documentation, her will, her life history.

He roots in more files... no... no... 'CARE HOME'. Bingo.

Accounts. Funds directed to Mrs Hunter's 'charity'.

Byron begins stashing whatever documents he can in his pockets.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Byron, mask on, speeds through the tunnels. He comes to a junction but suddenly-

Another masked member appears from the bend. They nearly bump into each other.

They stop, the masked member stares at Byron intently.

BYRON
Glory to the Mother.

MEMBER
Glory to the Mother.

They leave in separate directions.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

Byron is another tunnel. Eerily quiet.

Another member appears from a bend and strides towards Byron. When the member is still at a distance away-

BYRON
Glory to the Mother.

The member continues their approach. Byron brandishes his wooden ring. The member isn't stopping.

Before he is able to do anything, the member whips a knife to Byron's neck and pushes him against the wall of the tunnel.

MEMBER
Where are they?

The voice is familiar.

MEMBER (CONT'D)
Quickly, before I use this, where is Jess Blyth and the others you-

BYRON
Nelly?

Slowly, Byron reaches for his mask and takes it off.

Nelly staggers backwards and takes her mask off to, if only to make sure she is seeing him with her own two eyes.

NELLY
No, no, you can't be-

BYRON
What do you mean, 'where's Jess'?

Nelly directs the knife towards him again.

NELLY
I won't have you play me. Where are you keeping my sister?

BYRON
Nelly, I'm not keeping her anywhere.

NELLY
You don't know how to care for someone else, do you?

BYRON

I'm not like them, I don't know what they do.

NELLY

Come on, you're a better liar than that.

BYRON

I'm not!

Byron gambles and moves away from the knife. His voice echoes faintly throughout the tunnels.

He burrows his hand inside his robe and takes out some of the documents and offers them to her.

BYRON (CONT'D)

This is why I'm here. To show everyone what they do. This is proof, this, read it.

She doesn't take them.

BYRON (CONT'D)

Now, I know nothing about them keeping anyone here. Least of all Jess. But whatever it is, that can wait, you need to get out of here.

NELLY

And why would I believe a word you say?

He's stumped.

BYRON

We show everyone this, we take them down from the inside out then if, if Jess is here we can save her.

NELLY

You have no interest in saving anyone but yourself.

BYRON

That's not-

He stops, notices something behind Nelly - another member, Doctor Shipman. Approaching quickly. Byron drops the documents and throws his mask on as quick as he can.

DOCTOR SHIPMAN

What do we have here?

Byron meets Shipman before he gets to Nelly.

BYRON
Glory to the Mother.

Shipman's eyes pierce the back of Nelly's head from behind his mask.

NELLY
Glory to the Mother.

DOCTOR SHIPMAN
I don't have to be a doctor to sense the rot here.

Shipman barges past Byron towards Nelly.

DOCTOR SHIPMAN (CONT'D)
Come with me dear, I'll get you out of here. Make you better.

Shipman's arm extends to Nelly when-

Byron grapples Shipman's head and drags him away from her. They tussle, Shipman begins to overcome Byron, pushing him against the wall of the tunnel.

Nelly looks at them and then the knife in her hand. Quivers.

Shipman begins to strangle Byron. Byron claws at Shipman's face, removes his mask.

Nelly tries to pull Shipman off Byron without using the knife, she's pushed onto the floor.

Byron's hands scratch against the wall. Something squelches. Fungi. Byron grabs it and smushes it into Shipman's face.

He reels back, spitting it out as much as he can.

Byron grabs more fungi, pushes Shipman to the floor and shoves it in his mouth. He lays into Shipman, disabling him for good.

Byron gets up, leaving Shipman wheezing and spluttering out wet fungi.

BYRON
We need to go now, get you out of here.

Nelly waves the documents in the air.

NELLY

By all means, go ahead. Run. But
I'm not leaving without Jess.

She turns her back on him and venture further into the tunnels. Byron scurries after her.

Doctor Shipman lies on the ground, eyes losing clarity and vision.

(CONT'D)