

TOBY ALONE

Written by

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Adapted from *La Vie Suspendue* by Timothée de Fombelle

EXT. THE GREAT OAK TREE. NIGHT

A pair of small, dirty feet pound against the toughened bark, sprinting wildly.

ELISHA LEE (V.O.)
Joe Mitch.

Mature voices call incoherently through the dark. The feet are revealed to belong to a young TOBY LOLNESS (16), who whips around behind him to check for his pursuers as he continues to run for his life.

ELISHA LEE (V.O.)
The Friendly Neighbour.

Toby stumbles, almost falling as lights swarm behind him, held aloft by men with large, pointy sticks.

ELISHA LEE (V.O.)
For years he has tormented the poor and abused the weak. There has been little done to stop him, nor anyone brave enough to stand up against his might.

Toby slides into a gap between the bark, burrowing into the rough crack like a worm escaping the threat of a bird.

ELISHA LEE (V.O.)
And perhaps it's about time someone did.

INT. BRANCH. THE GREAT OAK TREE. CONTINUOUS

Toby's face is barely visible in the dark, covered in mud, blood and sweat. His eyes are wide with fear as he breathes heavily.

EXT. THE GREAT OAK TREE. CONTINUOUS

Further along the branch the darkened silhouettes of Toby's pursuers move closer to his hiding spot. There are four of them: three adults (JOE MITCH'S MEN) and a young boy. The light of the fire in one of the men's hands illuminates the hard face of the young boy, revealing LEO BLUE (17). One of the men notices Leo's expression.

MAN #1
We'll get him, you'll see.

Leo's eyes are cold and as blue as his name. He strides forward before bending down, running his hand across the ground as he looks for something.

MAN #2
He can't be far?

MAN #1
Scrawny runt like that, with any
luck the birds will do all the work
for us.

Leo turns up nothing and moves further down the branch. The men follow, beginning to tap the bark with their wooden spears and poking them into the cracks and hollows.

INT. BRANCH. THE GREAT OAK TREE. CONTINUOUS

Toby has squeezed his eyes shut and is breathing heavily as the sounds of approach slowly grow louder and louder. The warm light of the fire is also beginning to illuminate the shadows between the cracks in the bark where Toby has hidden.

MAN #3 (O.S.)
Bark. Bark. It's all just bark.

LEO BLUE (O.S.)
Just keep looking. He must be
found. He must pay for his crimes.

MAN #1 (O.S.)
(mocking)
What'd he do to you kid?

MAN #2 (O.S.)
(mocking)
Did he steal your toy and not give
it back?

All three men can be heard as they burst into laughter. There is nothing but a heavy silence from Leo. In his hiding place, Toby looks terrified.

Over the raucous laughter from Joe Mitch's men, footsteps can be heard approaching the edge of the crack in which Toby has squeezed himself. A shadow falls across Toby, who gulps at the air, holding his breath and refusing to move a muscle. The shadow seems to grow and grow as the person approaches until suddenly it disappears and the night is plunged into darkness.

MAN #1 (O.S.)
Hey, what the-

EXT. THE GREAT OAK TREE. CONTINUOUS

Leo Blue, who is stood on the edge of the crack in the bark, turns sharply around, trying to make out the three men fumbling in the dark.

MAN #3
(panicked)
It fell. I'm sorry, the...it...

MAN #1
You idiot!

LEO BLUE
We're not giving up.

MAN #2
But, with no light...

Leo Blue clenches his fists.

MAN #1
We'll catch him tomorrow. He's
probably already half way to the
Low Branches by now.

The three men turn around and start walking the way they've come. Leo Blue lingers, staring angrily off into the dark.

INT. BRANCH. THE GREAT OAK TREE. CONTINUOUS

Toby, eyes still open, has pressed himself as far up against the bark as he can. Up above him is silence. Until:

LEO BLUE (O.S.)
(whispered)
We'll get you. We'll get you, Toby.

Finally, the preceding footsteps of Leo can be heard.

For some time, Toby waits until there is no longer any noise but that which is natural to the night, before releasing a long, shuddering breath.

Without the threat of Leo and Joe Mitch's men, Toby relaxes, watching the sky and stars. A gentle breeze rocks the larger than life oak leaves up above. Slowly, very slowly, Toby's eyes begin to close, until his head falls to his chest and he is fast asleep.

BEGIN TITLES

EXT. THE GREAT OAK TREE. MORNING

The sun is shining. The birds are singing. The leaves are golden and orange and brown.

And someone is running.

It is Toby, but he looks different. This is the happy, carefree YOUNG TOBY (7). He swiftly clammers up a steep branch and stops, turning to face those behind him with a large grin.

At the bottom of the slope stand SIM and MAYA LOLNESS. Toby's parents, and they are accompanied by a small escort of two grumpy-looking PORTERS. Young Toby waves to his parents, who smile and return the gesture, before he runs off once more.

EXT. THE GREAT OAK TREE. NIGHT

Night has fallen as Young Toby, his parents and the two porters huddle around a small fire. Sim is waving his arms energetically about as he entertains Young Toby and his wife.

EXT. THE GREAT OAK TREE. DAWN

Everyone is asleep around the smouldering remains of the fire, Sim and Maya curled up close to one another. The porters look like the great backpacks they carry, mounds covered by worn, patchwork blankets.

Young Toby is the first to stir, awoken by the sunlight. As he pushes himself up, by the edge of their campsite the sun illuminates the silhouette of a slight, female-looking figure...*Snap!*

INT. BRANCH. THE GREAT OAK TREE. MORNING

Back in the present, Toby open's his eyes, blinking in the sun. He sighs.

MONTAGE

Toby, bruised all over and with a slight limp on his left side, continues his escape down the length of The Great Oak.

HUNTERS (V.O.)

J'ai vu le loup, le renard, le lièvre
J'ai vu le loup, le renard cheuler
C'est moi-même qui les ai rebeuillés
J'ai vu le loup, le renard, le lièvre
C'est moi-même qui les ai rebeuillés
J'ai vu le loup, le renard, le lièvre

At night, Toby is free to move as fast as his injuries will allow, keeping an eye out for the glowing campfires of Joe Mitch's men. He traverses slippery slopes, chasms, worn paths and nimble branches. There is even the odd caterpillar as big as a crocodile. During the day Toby sleeps or eats or tends to his wounds with strips of fresh leaf.

EXT. THE GREAT OAK TREE. NIGHT

Ten HUNTERS are slumped around a dying fire. A charred cricket leg is roasting on a spit and empty bottles are scattered across the ground. To the side, a large, makeshift pen has been roughly set up to hold three monstrous soldier ants.

A couple of them are singing an old, haunting hunting song with their deep, rough voices, unaware that a boy is lying upon a leaf just above their camp, listening.

HUNTERS

J'ai ouï le loup, le renard, le lièvre
J'ai ouï le loup, le renard chanter
C'est moi-même qui les ai rechignés
J'ai ouï le loup, le renard, le lièvre
C'est moi-même qui les ai rechignés
J'ai ouï le loup, le renard chanter

Toby doesn't wipe the silent tears from his cheeks.

EXT. THE MAIN TRUNK. AFTERNOON

HUNTERS (V.O.)
*J'ai vu le loup, le renard, le
 lièvre
 J'ai vu le loup, le renard danser
 C'est moi-même qui les ai revirés
 J'ai ouï le loup, le renard, le
 lièvre
 C'est moi-même qui les ai revirés
 J'ai vu le loup, le renard danser*

The main trunk of The Great Oak is traitorous and gnarled. Lichen forests three times Toby's height, cover the branches and the bark itself is more mountainous and less inhabited, with gorges and deep canyons. On occasion there is the odd hamlet of trapper and woodcutter huts.

As Toby descends even further, he passes by a large looking wood cutter plantation.

END TITLES

EXT. AMEN WOODS. CONTINUOUS

Toby enters the quiet plantation. There are large woodpiles and tool sheds scattered about, but no workers. One large cabin dominates the agricultural estate. Toby approaches the door, pausing, before knocking hesitantly.

No response. Toby's stomach grumbles. He knocks again.

Nothing. Quietly, Toby nudges the door ajar.

INT. THE AMEN FAMILY CABIN. CONTINUOUS

Inside is dark, only the remains of a fire in the large fireplace bathing the room in a gentle red glow. Slowly, Toby walks further into the cabin and starts to explore.

What sounds like the hushed whispers of children can be heard behind a nearby door. Toby approaches it carefully, leaning up against the wood. Curious, Toby gives in and pushes the door open.

TOBY LOLNESS
 Nils...

Inside is clearly a bedroom belonging to someone young, but there is nothing, but the memories of a summer long ago.

The indecipherable whispers and childish giggles fade away. Toby leaves the room as it darkens behind him.

Back in the main room, Toby spies a cloth bag hanging from a chair. Inside, he discovers a big chunk of bread, some pieces of cured meat and a couple of biscuits. Toby pauses for the briefest of seconds before shouldering the bag.

EXT. THE MAIN TRUNK. DUSK

Toby, now with the cloth bag in tow, pauses at the top of a branch to look back upon the quiet Amen Woods spread below. After a moment, he hurries out of sight.

INT. THE AMEN FAMILY CABIN. CONTINUOUS

The fire is nearly dead. However, visible on the kitchen table is a scrap piece of paper. Written on it are three words:

*Thank you.
Toby.*

LATER

The sun has set and it is dark within the cabin. Suddenly, after the swishing sound of a door being pushed open, a stretch of moonlight illuminates the floor, including the kitchen table and Toby's note.

NILS AMEN (O.S.)
I just want to get something to
eat.

NORZ AMEN (O.S.)
Well hurry up then, Nils, you clot
head.

A short, boyish shadow passes through the moonlight. The sounds of someone rummaging around the room can be heard. After a while, the noises stop.

NILS AMEN (O.S.)
(disbelieving)
It's not here.

NORZ AMEN (O.S.)
Are you sure?

NILS AMEN (O.S.)
I'm sure! I left it on the chair!

NORZ AMEN (O.S.)
 Forget it, I've got enough. Now
 hurry up, they're waiting for us.

The rummaging picks up once again, a little more frantic sounding now.

NILS AMEN (O.S.)
 But...I know I left it here.

NORZ AMEN (O.S.)
 (annoyed)
 Just drop it, Nils. The rest of the party's going to catch that Lolness boy before we're even out the door, and I plan on receiving my fair share of the bounty.

The shadow returns, somewhat dejectedly, to the moonlight, growing shorter as it moves away.

NILS AMEN (O.S.)
 (mumbled)
 We don't know he did it.

NORZ AMEN (O.S.)
 What was that?

NILS AMEN (O.S.)
 (hurried)
 Nothing.

Suddenly, the shadow pauses, it's head turned. Toby's note is still there, still clearly visible upon the table.

NILS AMEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 What's that?

NORZ AMEN (O.S.)
 What's what?

A big, bulky shadow joins the smaller one, blocking out most of the moonlight, except a slither that falls perfectly across the scrap of paper.

The big shadow stomps forward, revealing the tall, intimidating figure of the woodcutter NORZ AMEN. He swipes the paper from the table and stomps back the way he came. As he does, the owner of the smaller shadow is revealed. A young, scared looking NILS AMEN (14). Norz ruffles his son's head firmly as he passes him by.

NORZ AMEN (CONT'D)
 Well done, Nils. He can't of got
 far, we'll get him.

Nils looks towards his father.

NORZ AMEN (CONT'D)
 But next time, hows about saying
 something a little sooner, you big
 girl's blouse.

Norz pushes past Nils and leaves the hut. Through the open doorway a group of men with torches are visible as they stand on the edge of the plantation, awaiting Norz.

In the hut, Nils slowly sinks to the ground, crying silently until it spills over into sobbing.

NILS AMEN
 I'm sorry...I'm sorry...I'm so
 sorry...Oh, no...Oh, Toby.

EXT. THE MAIN TRUNK. EVENING

Toby is once again running for his life. Indecipherable but notably eager and aggressive shouting can be heard in the near distance. Toby checks over his shoulder as he sprints across an open stretch of branch, heading for a nearby lichen forest. Suddenly, his foot catches on something and Toby sprawls to the ground, hitting his head. The tree begins to darken as Toby slips into unconsciousness.

WOODCUTTER #1 (O.S.)
 Tell them the hunt's over!

WOODCUTTER #2 (O.S.)
 What?

WOODCUTTER #3 (O.S.)
 We've got him! We've got him!

EXT. AMEN WOODS. NIGHT

A big gathering of woodcutters and main trunk folk are assembled in the middle of the plantation, a platform set up before them alight with flaming torches. Standing on this platform is an aggressive looking man named RAZOR. He is Joe Mitch's right-hand man.

ELDERLY WOODCUTTER
 And what's he done, this Toby?

RAZOR
(blunt)
Crime against the Tree.

The crowd murmurs, curious, concerned and some unconvinced. Amidst the gathering, the big burly figure of Norz Amen pushes his way to the front, a large axe in his hands. He is not alone, most of the those gathered hold axes and hunting spears.

NORZ AMEN
What's all this?

A nearby woodcutter shrugs without committing to a verbal answer. Norz looks annoyed at the lack of response and begins to look around, scanning the crowd for...something.

TORN (O.S.)
Make way! Make way!

The crowd, Norz, and Razor all turn at the sudden announcement from Joe Mitch's left-hand man, a weaselly looking man who goes by the name of TORN. He is leading a procession of hunters and woodcutters, including two giant ants. The crowd parts as the men approach the stage, hushed conversations sprouting in their wake.

MAIN TRUNK LADY
How did they find him?

YOUNG WOODCUTTER
The men from the Treetop, they've caught him.

MAIN TRUNK MAN
Looks like he gave them a right run for their money. I'll say this, I wouldn't like to have been in their shoes.

Up on the stage Razor looks annoyed by Torn's triumphant attitude.

RAZOR
Enough with the theatrics. So, you found him?

Torn and the men stop once they reach the stage. Nearby, Norz watches the group with a scowl on his face. Visible on the back of one of the ants is a small, stained burlap sack.

TORN
Oh we found him alright.

RAZOR

The instructions were to capture
him alive.

TORN

But not necessarily kicking!

Those in the crowd near enough to hear Torn's response look upset and repulsed by his evident glee. Norz turns to the ELDERLY WOODCUTTER who spoke earlier.

NORZ AMEN

Sounds like they've made mincemeat
of that Lolness boy.

ELDERLY WOODCUTTER

Poor kid.

NORZ AMEN

(gruff)

He had it coming.

ELDERLY WOODCUTTER

Did he?

Norz doesn't respond, but he looks a little less sure now as he studies the limp looking burlap sack before him.

Just beyond the crowd, past the men and the ants, Norz's attention falls across his darkened cabin but for a single soft light in the window. Norz's face softens slightly.

NORZ AMEN

I've got to...

Norz makes to step out of the crowd towards his home, but suddenly the crowd surges forward and he is stuck. Turning to find the cause, Norz discovers all heads are turned towards the stage, now occupied by both Torn and Razor, the human-shaped bag at their feet and the successful hunters gathered to one side. A couple of them attempt to flatten their hair and fix their coats as the great, round silhouette of a man steps up from behind the stage and into the spotlight.

This is the Friendly Neighbour. This is JOE MITCH. His face is like that of a hideous toad, grinning menacingly as it alights upon the bag.

EXT. THE MAIN TRUNK. CONTINUOUS

Suddenly, Toby jolts awake in a panic. Around him night has fallen and his bag of food has torn, spilling its contents on the path before him. But he is alone.

EXT. AMEN WOODS. CONTINUOUS

Torn steps forward as Joe Mitch takes centre stage.

TORN

Friendly Neighbour. The prey we've been, that you've been, chasing is finally ours, I mean yours.

A cigarette butt dangles from Joe Mitch's lips and bored with Torn's simpering, he begins to chew on it like a piece of gum.

RAZOR

What would you have us do, Friendly Neighbour?

Joe Mitch glares at Razor, and then at the sack near his feet.

RAZOR (CONT'D)

Open the bag.

Everyone in the crowd appears to be holding their breath, no more whispers or hushed conversations can be heard.

On the stage, Torn indicates the hunters bring the bag closer to Joe Mitch. They slowly begin to undo all the knots.

TORN

Like I said, he's gone a bit off, but he's still breathing...

The hunters untie the last knot, serving up a tiny, rumpled body to Joe Mitch. The crowd gasps and Norz Amen's face drains white as he stares at the captured child. It is Nils.

Up above, the sky begins to fill with thick, heavy raindrops as Joe Mitch's men do their best to distance themselves from their boss, who's face has turned red as he crunches up the last of the cigarette butt.

EXT. THE MAIN TRUNK. CONTINUOUS

Toby, limping slightly and holding his head in one hand, dodges the occasional raindrop. Just ahead of him is a large, curled leaf.

INT. LEAF CAVE. CONTINUOUS

Toby crawls into the safe, cave-like structure of the leaf as the rain begins to fall harder and heavier.

Getting comfortable by propping up Nils' food bag like a pillow, Toby falls asleep.

OVER BLACK

SIM LOLNESS (V.O.)
Toby...Toby...

EXT. LAND OF ONESSA. DAY

Young Toby blinks his eyes open. He is being gently shaken awake by his father, upon who's back he has fallen asleep. Looking around, Young Toby takes in his new surroundings. It is raining and they are standing on the end of a branch with two enormous flame-coloured leaves hanging from it.

SIM LOLNESS
(whispered)
Here we are.

Sim gently lowers Young Toby to the ground. Just behind them, Maya is watching as the porters abandon them and begin the climb back up the tree. She is trying to hold in her tears, wiping often at her face with her shawl. Sim joins his wife, Young Toby squelching across the damp branch after his father. Sim wraps his arms around his family as they stare at the empty spot of the branch that is now their home.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)
(defeated)
Here we are.

MONTAGE

...Sim works hard to hollow out a space in the tough exterior of the Great Oak, prying bark back from the tree.

...Maya and Toby help carry armfuls of wood shavings out of the interior of a small higgledy-piggledy home-like hole while Sim carefully carves away at the walls. Empty spaces for windows and doors allow the wind to blow through.

...Maya carves an intricate leaf design into a large piece of bark.

...Toby is hollowing out the top of the chimney while sat on the roof. In the rooms below, Sim does the same.

...Maya knits together scraps of cloth while moulds of resin window squares dry nearby.

...The Lolness family huddle together around a tiny fire in the hollowed out space of their new home. It is largely empty, the beginnings of a rug on the floor and tools tidied away against the wall, but it is clean and it is warm. A pot boils over the flames and a thin bowl of soup is held in each of their hands. For the first time, they all share a smile. Sim wraps his arms around Maya and his son.

EXT. THE LOLNESS HOME (LOWER BRANCHES). DAY

One morning, Maya walks out of the house, which is still not finished but definitely much, much closer now. Outside, in the muddy front garden, Sim is attempting to construct a dining table.

MAYA LOLNESS
Where's Toby?

Sim puts down his tools, turning to his wife.

SIM LOLNESS
Toby?

Maya rolls her eyes kindly and walks further out into the front garden, cupping her mouth with her hands as she calls out.

MAYA LOLNESS
Toby!

EXT. LAND OF ONESSA. CONTINUOUS

MAYA LOLNESS (V.O.)
(an echo)
Toby!

A Young Toby is exploring, running between creeper mazes, up bark mountains and through grey moss forests. He looks a little older now (10), a little weathered by his new home, but also confident. He does not slip or seem at all afraid by the threat of a steep fall.

Finally, sweating and out of breath, Young Toby stops to take in his surroundings. Sitting down, Young Toby removes his shoes and socks, and starts wringing them out, casting his eyes to the sky where bird song can be heard.

The water from Young Toby's socks drips into a crack in the bark, first dribbling before steadily running along and joining a much larger stream. A tiny tuft of grey moss joins the water, floating like a boat.

Intrigued, Young Toby turns his attention to the stream, keeping a firm grasp on his socks and shoes.

Quite quickly the piece of moss picks up pace and Toby is forced to run after it, laughing his joy like the child he truly is. Faster, faster, faster...until Young Toby drops head first over the edge of the bark slope.

His eyes screwed tight, Young Toby is hanging by just one foot from a sticky spring bud. His socks and shoes have long fallen into the unknown below. Overhead, the cheery birdcall picks up again. Hesitantly, Young Toby opens one eye and then the other.

He is suspended in mid air above a strange dark mass. A blueish, boy-shaped smudge can be seen in the surface below. Young Toby wiggles, the smudge wiggles. Young Toby waves his arms about, so does the smudge.

YOUNG TOBY

Oh.

It is a reflection. A reflection in a vast lake. A lake that is hanging in the middle of the Tree. There are tall moss thickets close by the shore and even beaches of white bark and secret hidden coves. Twisting around, Young Toby discovers the stream he was following has turned into a bubbling waterfall.

YOUNG TOBY (CONT'D)

Oh!

Without wasting one more minute, Young Toby is able to reach up and grab hold of a piece of coarse bark with which to pull himself free. Once upright, Young Toby surveys the valley briefly before beginning his controlled descent.

INT. LAKE VALLEY. CONTINUOUS

Young Toby exits a steep passage, stepping out into the valley and towards the lake. From this view, everything looks greater and much grander. Young Toby rushes to the edge of the lake, pulls off his clothes and dives in. He whoops and laughs to express his glee as he splashes about, clumsily practicing his breast-stroke. Overhead, a ray of sunlight manages to penetrate the late winter clouds, illuminating the deep blue water.

YOUNG ELISHA (O.S.)

It's beautiful.

Young Toby, with his back to the shore, nods his head in eager agreeance.

YOUNG TOBY
Yes. It is beautiful.

YOUNG ELISHA (O.S.)
Mmm...beautiful...

Young Toby stops nodding. Very slowly, he turns around. He is being watched by a girl with brown plaits. The YOUNG ELISHA (8) is sat next to Young Toby's clothes, a shawl wrapped around her shoulders. She looks undeterred by Young Toby's appearance, her large dark eyes taking him in. On the other hand, Young Toby makes a point to sink a little lower into the water. For a while, the two young children just stare at each other, until:

YOUNG ELISHA (CONT'D)
There's only one other place as
beautiful as this.

Young Toby is immediately intrigued, swimming a touch closer.

YOUNG TOBY
Is it far?

Young Elisha remains quiet as Toby begins to shiver slightly in the water. Toby tilts his head in thought.

YOUNG TOBY (CONT'D)
Are you the little Lee girl?

Young Elisha's reactions is instant, her face spreading into a wide, knowing smile.

YOUNG ELISHA
I'm Elisha.

YOUNG TOBY
I'm looking for the little Lee
girl.

Young Elisha keeps on smiling.

YOUNG ELISHA
Who told you about her?

YOUNG TOBY
Old Tornett. He's our neighbour. He
brought us biscuits last week and
said there was a little Lee girl
who lived by the Border.

Young Elisha's smile softens.

YOUNG ELISHA
You'll catch a cold in there.

YOUNG TOBY
Yes.

As if commanded by her words, Young Toby starts to shiver harder.

YOUNG ELISHA
You should get out.

YOUNG TOBY
Yes.

YOUNG ELISHA
You'll catch a cold.

YOUNG TOBY
Yes.

Young Elisha begins to laugh, big and loud.

YOUNG ELISHA
So get out!

Young Toby turns red, carefully swimming towards the shore. Once his torso is above water, Young Elisha stops laughing and pretends to be distracted by a nearby water flea as Toby clumsily but quickly scrambles out of the water to pull his clothes on.

Clothed, Young Toby joins Young Elisha, the two standing side-by-side and admiring the lake before them. Overhead, the sky darkens and Young Toby looks behind him, back towards the way he came.

YOUNG TOBY
I-I don't know how to get back home.

YOUNG ELISHA
I'll show you the way tomorrow.

YOUNG TOBY
Tomorrow?

YOUNG ELISHA
We'll set out early.

YOUNG TOBY
You know where I live?

YOUNG ELISHA
Of course.

Young Toby pauses. Torn.

YOUNG TOBY
I have to get back.

YOUNG ELISHA
You mustn't walk at night. It's
getting dark. Come.

Young Elisha starts off around the edge of the lake. Young Toby obediently follows.

YOUNG TOBY
Where are we going?

YOUNG ELISHA
To my house.

Young Elisha guides Young Toby across the beach and into the wood, the two of them barefoot. Interestingly, the soles of Young Elisha's feet appear blue, faded by undeniably blue.

EXT. THE LEE HOME. NIGHT

Together, Young Elisha and Young Toby force their way through the edge of the forest into a clearing leading to a small, round opening in the bark that's emitting a warm yellow glow. Young Elisha grins before running ahead and through the round door. Unsure, Young Toby stands outside until Young Elisha reappears in the doorway.

YOUNG ELISHA
Well? Are you coming in?

Young Toby approaches.

INT. THE LEE HOME. CONTINUOUS

The Lee Home is very small and very round. There is even no chimney, just a small fire in the middle of the room and big coloured squares of material hanging down in places.

Sat around this fire is Young Toby, Young Elisha, and her mother, ISHA LEE, a surprisingly young woman with a warm smile and long plaits twisted atop her head. Young Elisha and Isha watch in amusement as Young Toby downs a stack of thick pancakes dripping with butter and honey. When he finishes the final one, he notices his audience and reddens in embarrassment.

YOUNG TOBY
I'm Toby, by the way.

Isha chuckles and offers Young Toby more pancakes.

ISHA LEE
A pleasure to meet you, Toby.

YOUNG TOBY
I was looking for the little Lee
girl.

This time, both Isha and her daughter laugh.

ISHA LEE
Well you did a good job finding
her.

Young Toby looks a little confused until he notices the funny expression on young Elisha's face.

YOUNG TOBY
You're the little Lee girl!

Isha and Young Elisha laugh once again, except this time Young Toby joins them.

EXT. THE LEE HOME. CONTINUOUS

As the night turns black, the warm glow of the Lee home carries on, accompanied by the bright laughter of new friends.

EXT. THE LOLNESS HOME (LOWER BRANCHES). DAWN

Young Toby and Young Elisha stand just beyond the boundary of Young Toby's home. His mother is in the front yard, looking a little harried.

MAYA LOLNESS
Toby! Toby!

She hasn't noticed them yet. Young Toby goes to pull Young Elisha forward with him, but she pulls back, shaking her head.

YOUNG TOBY
C'mon!

MAYA LOLNESS
Toby, is that you?

Caught, Young Toby turns at his mother's voice, and in that brief second, Young Elisha slips away. When Young Toby turns back around he realises his friend's disappearance, staring off back along the way they'd come.

EXT. THE LOWER COLONIES. DAY

Present day Toby stands on the edge of the Lower Colonies looking down upon the landscape before him. It looks damp and grey and disease-stricken. It is incredibly bleak. He looks grim but determined.

Deep within the Lower Colonies, a procession is making its way along a well-worn path. The procession is made up of men in hats and long coats with the letters JMA printed on the backs who are guiding a humongous weevil, as big as an elephant, with ropes. Crouched to one side, just off the path and hidden by a strip of bark, Toby watches the men and the weevil pass him by.

JMA MAN #1
Don't let him go!

JMA MAN #2
Ah, what's the point. Every night a few get away...

JMA MAN #3
If they decide to count, they'll realise one's missing.

JMA MAN #2
The boss has got so many, counting'd make no difference.

Toby continues to watch the procession as it approaches a vast set of gates set in a tall fence. He notices that a couple of smaller weevils are bringing up the rear. As the men and their weevils begin to slowly enter the enclosure, a JOE MITCH MAN comes running up from behind, forcing Toby to shrink back further into his hiding spot.

JOE MITCH MAN
Hey! Hey, hold it! There are a hundred hunters on their way.

A JMA man (PINHEAD), who has his hat pulled down low over his face, stops the procession to approach the Joe Mitch Man.

PINHEAD
(snaps)
What?

JOE MITCH MAN

(out of breath)

There are a hundred hunters on
their way... They've come down from
the Treetop... They're looking for
the kid.

In his hiding spot, Toby looks panicked. He is trapped. Thinking hard, he notices that one of the smaller weevils is snuffling around near his hiding spot.

PINHEAD (O.S.)

Keep going, you bunch of dimwits!

Toby abandons Nils' bag and begins crawling through the soggy, rotten bark towards the nearest weevil. The bark is as thick as mud, quickly covering him from head to toe. In the distance, Pinhead and the rest of the JMA men are struggling to move the biggest weevil, all of them getting bogged down in the same gloop of decomposed wood. Using this to his advantage, Toby slips between the small weevil's legs, pulling himself up and grabbing a hold of the rope around the beast's belly. He then tucks his feet into another rope so that he is flush with the weevil's undercarriage.

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

Hurry up! What the boss doesn't
know won't kill him, and I for one
would like to keep my head.

The weevil is unaware of it's stowaway as it brings up the rear of the procession and enters the enclosure.

INT. THE CRATER. CONTINUOUS

Past the gates, a monstrous hole is revealed. It is a vast crater in the branch, teeming with an army of weevils. Branded along their carapaces are the words: *Joe Mitch Arbor*.

As the last weevil makes it clear of the gates, they are slammed shut with a loud, resolute thud.

PINHEAD

Halt!

Pinhead, with the help of the JMA men, begins pulling the ropes off the weevils. One by one the weevils, once freed, wade off down the soggy slope while the JMA men climb in the opposite direction until there is no one left.

No one, except Toby, buried deep and still in the churned up mud. And from his position, Toby can just see over the lip into the crater below, and he looks horrified.

SIM LOLNESS (V.O.)
Things don't change without a
reason.

Disturbed by what he's seen, Toby goes to slither away, but he can't. Confused, while still on his front Toby run's his hands along his legs to massage them and check for injury. Except, all he finds is something hard, smooth, rounded...

Turning his head a fraction, Toby discovers a boot squashing him into the mud. Frantic now, he tries to shove the boot off, to pull himself forward, to do anything. All the while, a nasty sniggering can be heard. Only when Toby stops wriggling, does a the boot-wearer speak up.

PINHEAD (O.S.)
So, brat. Paying a little visit,
are we?

EXT. THE LOLNESS HOME (LOWER BRANCHES). DAY

It is Christmas Eve, and Young Toby is now roughly 14 years old. He is standing next to his mother, the two of them watching on as Sim carries a beautiful welcome mat to the front door and lays it across the front steps. The final touch. The house is now finished.

Outside, the front garden is a little wonky, but the moss is well tended and a path is visible from the gate to the door.

INT. THE LOLNESS HOME (LOWER BRANCHES). CONTINUOUS

Inside, the floor is a bit slanted, the walls are a touch uneven and the windows are crooked. The fire place looks like a triangular kennel, and Young Toby's bed is right up against it accompanied by a little curtain. But it looks homely, and warm and loved. Someone has painted the walls and there is even a tiny Christmas tree with handmade decorations.

EXT. THE LOLNESS HOME (LOWER BRANCHES). CONTINUOUS

Still standing by the front gate, Sim joins Maya and Young Toby as they survey the results of their hard work. Slowly, very slowly, Maya begins to smile. Noticing, Young Toby and Sim begin to smile too, Maya starts to cry as well.

SIM LOLNESS
Well, make your minds up. Are we
happy here, or not?

Maya laughs and cries, hugging Young Toby, now also crying, and Sim to her.

MAYA LOLNESS
We're crying because we're happy.

Finally, Sim joins in. His laughter rings the loudest.

MONTAGE

The Lolness Family celebrate Christmas and their freedom:

...Young Toby and his parents have a snowball fight, Sim a surprising master of headshots.

...Young Toby unwraps his presents by the fire while Sim and Maya watch on.

...Young Toby and his father gather firewood.

...Maya sits knitting in her armchair while Sim reads from one of his big scientific files for Young Toby, hand drawn diagrams of ladybirds covering the pages.

EXT. THE LOLNESS HOME (LOWER BRANCHES). DAY

Young Toby is playing in the garden, nearby buds showing winter is well and truly on its way out. His mother is visible through the kitchen window as she bakes. A nearby table is set for a picnic lunch.

Young Toby is making a carved toy bird swoop and fly around, but abruptly stops when he notices a stranger. It is a man with a small head and wearing a large coat with an armband, the acronym JM stitched on the side (unbeknownst to Young Toby, this is PINHEAD). He has a mean smile as he approaches Young Toby.

MAN IN COAT (PINHEAD)
Where's your father, boy?

Before Young Toby can answer, his father steps out of the house, cautious of their visitor.

SIM LOLNESS
Can I help you?

Widening his unpleasant smile, the man produces a letter from his coat pocket and hands it over.

MAN IN COAT
 I'll wait there for your answer,
 Grandaddy-o.

Pinhead leaves Sim frowning at the letter, grabs a bottle off the table nearby and sits off to the side, drinking.

YOUNG TOBY
 That's your bottle, Dad.

SIM LOLNESS
 Let him be, my son. It doesn't matter. He's walked a long way...

Sim doesn't look sincere as he says this. His eyes are still on the letter, which he gently tears open with a butter knife from the nearby table. Behind him, Maya appears in the doorway.

MAYA LOLNESS
 Come on, Toby.

Young Toby rises, but Sim stops him.

SIM LOLNESS
 No, you can both stay.

Young Toby joins his mother as the two stand side by side, watching Sim. Sim clears his throat and begins to read:

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)
 Your Excellence, Professor,
 In the spirit of a scientific
 revival, we would be most honoured
 to reinstate you at our Council.
 Time has passed on your former
 mistakes; the moment has come for
 science in the Tree to find its
 inspiration again. Your home at The
 Tufts awaits you, as does our
 worthy Council.

Sim pauses. Maya and Young Toby looked excited and proud, but Sim is expressionless.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)
 To consolidate this fresh start,
 you will consent, for one year
 only, to be observed by the
 Neighbourhood Committees, under the
 supreme direction of the Friendly
 Neighbour, Joe Mitch.

Slowly, Sim's face changes. He is furious. Maya holds onto Toby as Sim, shaking, crumples the letter in his fists. He then stomps over to Pinhead, who is a little unsteady on his feet, empty bottle in hand.

MAN IN COAT (PINHEAD)
Well, Grandaddy-o, are we heading
on up, as in 'hitting the branch'
with yer old lady and the brat?

Pinhead's mouth falls wide open as he sniggers at himself. However, before he can close it, Sim pulls back his arm and then, as if in slow motion, launches the crumpled letter at Pinhead. Who catches it in his mouth.

Maya looks shocked, Young Toby is visibly in awe of his father, and Sim looks hard at Pinhead, who begins to choke with his eyes bulging. Finally, with a large gulping sound, Pinhead swallows the letter. Pinhead looks daggers at Sim, but Sim is taller than him and so he stays where he is, clutching his throat.

SIM LOLNESS
A long time ago, there used to be a primitive practice. People would open up the stomachs of animals to find the answers to their questions. They called them omens. Tell that to your boss.

Still panting, Pinhead gives the Lolness family one last greasy look before hurrying away. Once he's out of sight, Sim sinks down onto the nearby bench and Maya approaches him, hugging him and kissing him on the cheek. Young Toby stays standing where he is, watching his parents.

MAYA LOLNESS
Sim, darling. I told you not to get into fights with your classmates.

Sim, weary, leans into his wife.

SIM LOLNESS
(a touch childish)
He started it.

As his parents embrace one another, Young Toby slips away. On the edge of the front garden, he discovers the empty bottle that Pinhead dropped.

PINHEAD (V.O.)
What your father did to me...

INT. THE CRATER. DAY

Back in the present, Pinhead finally pushes the brim of his hat up, revealing the all too familiar pasty face.

PINHEAD

Well, you could say I found it a bit hard to swallow.

Toby is unable to reply, Pinhead's boot still pushing him firmly face-first into the mud.

PINHEAD (CONT'D)

Not nice having something foreign in your mouth. In your belly.

Pinhead grins meanly and removes his foot from Toby's back. Toby gasps as he pulls his face out of the gunk and takes in a large breath of air.

TOBY LOLNESS

You worm.

Pinhead laughs and before Toby can run off, grabs him and drags him over to one side of the crater. Then he swiftly ties up Toby's hands and feet.

PINHEAD

Just you wait and see, brat.

Pinhead brings something out of his pocket. Two small, white capsules. Toby's eyes widen as all nearby weevils instantly turn their heads in Pinhead's direction.

PINHEAD (CONT'D)

Sap concentrate. Weevils'll go mad for the stuff. Bury it, imbed it in a knot of hardened wood, they'll smash that wood to a pulp.

Pinhead throws one of the capsules off to the side and a dozen weevils rush in, crushing one another in the process. Pinhead just watches and laughs as Toby's expression hardens. Perhaps hoping for a bigger response, Pinhead frowns at Toby.

PINHEAD (CONT'D)

I've got one left. What shall I do with it?

Toby refuses to answer.

PINHEAD (CONT'D)

Of course, I still plan on handing you over to the Friendly Neighbour and pocketing my million. But that's not to say we can't have a little fun first.

Toby scowls at Pinhead, which elicits a nasty smile from Pinhead.

PINHEAD (CONT'D)

Ah, now that's more like it. So, how about it, brat? Ready to become a human sausage roll?

Just as Toby goes to respond, Pinhead grabs his jaw and starts forcing Toby's mouth open. Toby wriggles and fights back, cutting his arm on a piece of sharp bark sticking out. And as the nearby weevils begin to wander over, Pinhead slides the capsule between Toby's teeth. Pinhead then, quick as a whip, clamps his hand across Toby's mouth so he can't open it.

For a short while, Pinhead holds Toby to the ground like this, grinning and watching Toby try to wriggle his way free. However, the weevils are getting closer and closer, and Pinhead is starting to get a little nervous by their proximity. Removing his hand, he steps back from Toby. Pulling his whip from his belt, Pinhead cracks it towards the nearest weevils, clearing a path.

PINHEAD (CONT'D)

Well, enjoy your meal.

Toby, panting and lying in the mud watches Pinhead with an interesting expression.

TOBY LOLNESS

(mumbled)

Thanks, but your capsule is disgusting.

Pinhead stops and turns back to Toby.

PINHEAD

No, no, I was talking to the animals.

Pinhead starts laughing, loudly and widely.

PINHEAD (CONT'D)

And you, and you thought I was talking to you!

Pinhead keeps laughing, his mouth wide open. And now it's Toby's turn to grin. Screwing up his face, Toby projectile spits the still whole capsule, which enters Pinhead's mouth at top speed. The reaction is instant. Pinhead falls to the ground, screaming and clawing at his throat and stomach. All around him the weevils turn their attention from Toby to Pinhead.

As Pinhead writhes on the ground, Toby cuts his bonds on the nearby piece of sharp bark and quickly runs to Pinhead's side, retrieving his whip and using it to keep the weevils at bay.

TOBY LOLNESS
I think its my turn now.

A SHORT WHILE LATER

Pinhead is lying on the ground, half-clothed and his hands bound with his own whip. He looks dazed as he looks around him, fist noticing a pair of familiar boots. Raising his head, Pinhead finds himself confronted by his doppelgänger. A short man in a large coat and with his hat pushed low down. Except, when this man pushes up his hat he has warm, twinkling eyes.

PINHEAD
No please, noooooooo.

TOBY LOLNESS
I'm leaving you the whip. The knot isn't very tight so you should be able to escape before the weevils get you.

Pinhead whimpers and Toby frowns, a touch disgusted.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
Although I don't know what is worse. The weevil's pincers or your men's sniggers when you have to explain to them what happened.

Toby pulls his hat back down over his face.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
Farewell, Pinhead. And good luck.
Seems you might need it.

And with that, Toby turns his back as the weevils begin to close in on the struggling, screaming Pinhead. While Toby walks away, he begins to imitate Pinhead so that he is indistinguishable from the real deal.

LATER

Toby has reached the edge of the other side of the crater, the wooden fence still tall and seemingly without an exit. Four snoring CRATER WORKERS, spread out on their coats on the ground, are slumped against the fence. As Toby tries to find an escape route he passes by the workers, and his shadow falls across the face of one of the men. In an instant they all wake and jump to their feet.

CRATER WORKER #1

Boss, sorry, we were just having a quick break...

CRATER WORKER #2

A five-minute break, really,
Boss...

CRATER WORKER #3

Boss...sorry...

Toby, unable to speak or give up the game, stands in silence, his hands buried in his pockets. This seems to frighten the workers even more who move in closer to Toby.

CRATER WORKER #4

We meant nothing by it, promise...

CRATER WORKER #2

A two-minute break, a two-minute
beak!

Toby is forced to step back, and to cover up his reaction, fumbles in his coat pocket, suddenly producing a small notebook and pencil. All four men stop in their tracks. Toby pauses before flicking the book open and scribbling in it, making a point to look at each man. The men quiver, and once finished, Toby is able to move past them.

As Toby walks away, he looks down at what he wrote. Four times in a row are the words: *Be brave, Toby*. Toby continues to leaf through the book, discovering on the first page that Pinhead has written: *Thas Noteboock beelongs to W.C. Rolok*.

Other pages include the following:

- *Petur Salag has eated two sandwitzchez instead of wun, he will be hangd 4 too hourz by the left fut.*

- *Geralt Binoo didunt hit the weeval propa, he will be hitted himsilk.*

Before Toby can discover further entries, he stops abruptly and looks over his shoulder.

The four men from before are following him. They're still snivelling and scared, clutching their hats in their hands.

CRATER WORKER #1
Boss, we were just having our
break. We want to apologise.

CRATER WORKER #3
We didn't mean to.

Toby stands tall and quiet. Once again this deeply unnerves the workers.

CRATER WORKER #4
We know of others...

CRATER WORKER #2
Yes others!

CRATER WORKER #1
Thing lost his whip in the crater!

CRATER WORKER #3
And he's meant to be guarding big
Rosebond, who knocked out one of
the weevil's eyes!

Toby turns and starts to walk away, upping his speed. But it doesn't work. The four men follow.

CRATER WORKER #4
We can tell you more serious stuff,
Boss! Like, like, Flannel and
Magnus play football with Thing.
They make him curl into a ball.

CRATER WORKER #1
But Big Marlon's the worst.
Tonight, he's going to give the
local farmers a fright. He's made a
hole in the fence, behind the oil
barrels.

Toby stops instantly. As do the men, who, distracted, start bickering among themselves.

CRATER WORKER #2
Oil barrels? What barrels?

CRATER WORKER #1
What oil barrels? Do you work here
or not?

CRATER WORKER #2
I didn't--

CRATER WORKER #4
You know what oil barrels, you
idiot.

The men stop, turning to find Toby bearing down on them. They gulp, nervous.

CRATER WORKER #4 (CONT'D)
I, uh, I can show you, Boss. If you
want. Just, uh, just don't tell big
Marlon it was I--

CRATER WORKER #3
Us!

CRATER WORKER #4
Us, that told you.

Toby makes a gesture to indicate the men lead the way. Eager to escape punishment, the four men guide Toby to one side of the towering boundary wall around the crater where a dozen full barrels are piled up. They are all labelled '*crude sap*'. Two of the men step forward, and pull back some of the barrels to reveal Big Marlon's hole in the wall. All four men look to their 'boss', hopeful. Holding his silence, the only indication of Toby's joy is the sly smile just visible under the brim of his large hat.

EXT. THE CRATER. DAY

Later that same day, a large crowd has assembled around the hole in the wall on the outer side of the wall. Pinhead, in nothing but a dressing gown is standing, shivering and pale to one side. Inspecting the hole up close is Joe Mitch's man, Torn. Joe Mitch himself is also present, standing in the centre and looking like a furious fat rhino. From behind the crowd, Razor appears, carrying something.

RAZOR
Oh, Friendly Neighbour!

Everyone turns to watch as Razor approaches. He hands over a dirty looking coat to Joe Mitch.

RAZOR (CONT'D)
Found this. The Lolness boy must
have used it to make his getaway.

Joe Mitch flips the coat collar over to reveal, handstitched, the name: *W.C.Rolok*.

Joe Mitch snaps his head to the side to stare down Pinhead. Everyone's gaze follows, both Torn and Razor grinning meanly. Torn approaches Pinhead.

TORN
Rolok. Rolok. Now why does that sound so familiar?

PINHEAD
I...I...

TORN
Well?

PINHEAD
Uh, well, that's...

TORN
Yes?

Pinhead tries to shrink into his dressing gown.

PINHEAD
(whispered)
That's my name...I think...

JOE MITCH
(softly)
No.

Everyone turns to look at Joe Mitch, who is shaking.

JOE MITCH (CONT'D)
No!

Pinhead cowers, falling to the ground and forcing Torn to jump back in disgust.

PINHEAD
It is, it is! It's my fault. It's my name.

JOE MITCH
No.

PINHEAD
Friendly Neighbour...I...I...it's me. W.C. Rolok. Your head of weevil farming.

JOE MITCH
No.

Turning his back, Joe Mitch begins to walk away. On the ground, Pinhead looks distraught and slightly confused.

PINHEAD
But, I...well who am I then? Who am I!

Joe Mitch stops, turning with a nasty grin.

JOE MITCH
Nobody.

EXT. THE LOLNESS HOME (LOWER BRANCHES). DAY

It is a beautiful sunny day. Tucked away on its branch, the Lolness home looks warm and inviting.

SIM LOLNESS (V.O.)
(angry)
Nobody, and I mean nobody is going anywhere near those accursed High Branches.

INT. THE LOLNESS HOME (LOWER BRANCHES). CONTINUOUS

Sim and Maya are standing in the middle of the living room, an opened black envelope on the coffee table in-between them. Maya has tear tracks on her cheeks and is wearing a thick coat. A small suitcase has been put by the front door.

SIM LOLNESS
I'm telling you, it's completely out of the question.

Maya doesn't say anything, but her eyes are hard as she stares at her husband.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)
Please, think about this. What are you going to do? Cross this entire Tree by yourself? No, no and no again.

Maya, at the end of her tether, snaps and with the back of her hand swipes a teacup off the table. It smashes into a million little pieces.

MAYA LOLNESS
Since when did you decide for your wife, Sim Lolness? I'll do exactly as I please.

The front door creaks open, interrupting Sim and Maya. Toby (now 16-years-old and therefor just 'Toby') is standing there. Sim looks guilty and tries to disguise the scene.

SIM LOLNESS

I...it was my fault. Caught the edge of it with my leg.

MAYA LOLNESS

No, I broke it because you were treading on my toes, Sim, dear.

Toby can't help but grin a little at his mother's fire, that is until he discovers the suitcase. Maya notices her son's concern.

MAYA LOLNESS (CONT'D)

No, I'm not leaving your father, though his present attitude no doubt deserves it.

Sim looks guilty and starts to pick up the pieces of broken china.

MAYA LOLNESS (CONT'D)

But, Toby dear, your grandmother has died. I need to spend some time getting her affairs in order, so I will be gone for two weeks but then I'm coming right back. To look after your father.

Maya directs that last line at Sim, who is crouched on the ground.

SIM LOLNESS

(muttering)

I'd look after your own backside, if I were you.

Sim stands, the broken teacup pieces in his hand. He frowns at Maya, who frowns right back until the two of them slowly begin to smile. Toby's face splits into a grin too as he approaches his mother, who pulls him into a hug.

MAYA LOLNESS

Well, now that that's settled. Toby, dear, do do your best to keep you and your father out of trouble.

TOBY LOLNESS

Aye, aye captain!

SIM LOLNESS

Yes, and Toby, look after the house
too please. I'm leaving with your
mother.

EXT. THE LOLNESS HOME (LOWER BRANCHES). AFTERNOON

Toby is standing on the front step, waving goodbye to his parents, who are standing at the top of a high branch a little ways off. Toby stays standing and waits until they're out of sight. The second the top of Sim's beret disappears, Toby turns and runs off

INT. LAKE VALLEY. CONTINUOUS

Elisha (now around 14 years old and therefor just 'Elisha') is swimming and playing in the lake when Toby runs out towards the shore.

ELISHA LEE

Toby!

Elisha trills like a cicada with her joy. Toby doesn't reply, huffing and puffing and catching his breath. He has a serious look on his face. Elisha stops.

ELISHA LEE (CONT'D)

What are you doing? Aren't you
coming in?

TOBY LOLNESS

No.

Elisha shrugs and dives back under. After a while she resurfaces.

ELISHA LEE

Come and swim!

Toby stays silent, causing Elisha to frown and eventually swim back to shore. Toby waits as she gets dressed before she joins him.

ELISHA LEE (CONT'D)

Is something the matter? Are you in
a sulk?

TOBY LOLNESS

No.

ELISHA LEE

Are you sad?

Toby stays silent and Elisha rests her head on his shoulder.

ELISHA LEE (CONT'D)
I understand.

Together, Toby and Elisha watch as a water beetle skims across the far side of the lake.

TOBY LOLNESS
I've never told you the story of
why we came to the Low Branches.

There's a pause before Elisha' replies.

ELISHA LEE
No one said you had to.

There's another pause.

TOBY LOLNESS
I have to go away.

ELISHA LEE
What?

TOBY LOLNESS
But I'm coming back.

ELISHA LEE
You say that...

TOBY LOLNESS
I mean it. My grandmother died.

ELISHA LEE
I'm sorry.

Toby seems indifferent to this, still staring off into the distance.

TOBY LOLNESS
I want to tell you. About
everything. Before I go.

ELISHA LEE
Okay. Here.

Elisha holds out a corner of her shawl for Toby to nestle into. He takes a big breath before he begins.

TOBY LOLNESS
You've never met my parents. I know
you'd get on well with them, if you
gave them a chance.

(MORE)

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)

My mother, she tells the most amazing stories, you'd think she was a book crammed full with illustrations.

Elisha smiles at this.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)

And my father. He's a very great scientist. And I'm not just saying that because he's my father. I'm saying it because it's true. He has discovered things that nobody could have ever dreamed of before. Like paper, and that the Tree sweats, and the secrets of the buds and the flies and the sky, rain and stars. He even gave me a star called Altair.

ELISHA LEE

He gave you a star?

TOBY LOLNESS

Yes. He showed it to me one night and told me it was mine.

Elisha looks like she'd like to ask more questions, but Toby barrels on.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)

My father has researched everything. Has discovered everything.

Elisha makes a disbelieving face, but keeps her lips clamped shut.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)

People used to admire him for it. Until Balina.

Toby pauses, sighing heavily.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)

It was for my birthday. I thought he'd forgotten it, he'd been locked up in his workshop all day, until he came out with that big smile on his face, followed by Balina. He'd invented something that made my toy walk on its own legs.

Elisha's eyes are wide as she listens to Toby.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
She was a miniature woodlouse I'd made. A piece of wood with several legs. That's all. It made my mother faint.

Toby stops for a breather as Elisha watches him.

ELISHA LEE
You don't have to tell me.

Toby shakes his head.

TOBY LOLNESS
At the time I didn't understand what all the fuss was, and everything happened very quickly. I mostly remember that I wasn't pleased when he wouldn't let me play with it.

Toby laughs softly and sadly at his childish memory.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
But Balina was a lot bigger than just a birthday present. As the news travelled around the Tree, my father's excitement about presenting his new findings to the Tree Council began to falter.

Toby turns so that he's looking directly into Elisha's curious face.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
You see, he had promised to reveal her secret.

Elisha looks sad for Toby, leaning in and pulling him closer to her.

INT. TREETOP TOWN HALL. DAY

The chamber of the town hall is bursting with chattering TREETOP FOLK and the solemn looking TREE COUNCIL lined up at the front. Young Toby (7) is standing with his mother in the top gallery, both of them looking immensely proud and dressed up for the occasion.

Down below, Sim walks onto the floor and the crowd hushes. Maya grabs Young Toby's hand. Sim clears his throat before he begins.

SIM LOLNESS

Whenever I come here, dear friends, I always talk to you about the Tree. I talk about how strong our Tree is. If I describe a bug, it's because it sucks our Tree's sap. If I talk about rainwater, it's because it gives our Tree life. And so today, I'd like to introduce you all to Balina for our Tree lies firmly at the heart of this discovery...

Sim pauses to look upwards at the natural spotlight illuminating him through the hole in the roof above. It is a perfect looking day, blue sky, fluffy clouds, warm yellow sunlight. Sim catches sight of Young Toby and Maya near the top of the room and shares with them the smallest, almost invisible, smile. Maya suddenly looks a little apprehensive. She tightens her grip on Young Toby's hand.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)

But we'll get to that. You all know about sap. It is at the heart of you daily lives. You make cups and plates and furniture out of it. You extract sugar from it for sweets, you make glue out of it, tiles, toys, cement for your houses...perhaps at times you can even hear it bubbling away under your feet. It is the lifeblood of the Tree and it is always there, just behind the bark. So what happens when you are the one who gets in behind the bark?

The room is deathly silent, people leaning forwards over the railings. The only sound is the gentle snoring of none other than Joe Mitch accompanied by his men Torn and Razor. Sim pauses to procure a cup of water from a nearby table and takes a long drink before setting it down.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)

Curious, as I am prone to be, I made a small hole in the bark and took a look. What I saw was something that had never caught my interest before. That is, until now. The sap was travelling down. It has been travelling down for a hundred years and next year, touch wood, it will travel down as well.

(MORE)

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)

But what I'd never thought to ask
 is where does it come from? It
 can't be created from something up
 in the Summit, so where does the
 falling sap come from?

Sim pauses, studying the room. The crowd looks confused, a couple whispering groups break out but no one has an answer. Sim smiles politely and continues.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)

Like you, I couldn't find the
 answer straightaway. While I had
 concluded it was not falling out of
 the sky, that only left the
 possibility that the sap must be
 rising from somewhere in order to
 travel back down again below the
 bark. So I set out to discover what
 was happening.

Sim's eyes flick across to the sleeping Joe Mitch and his men before he clears his throat to keep talking.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)

You all know that I've been opposed
 to the great tunnel that is
 currently being hollowed out of the
 Main Trunk. The so-called Eco-
 Tunnel of Progress. It is, in my
 view, a project that is both
 ridiculous and irresponsible. But
 since the tunnel exists, I went to
 see it. And it was a mess. The work
 had been interrupted due to
 flooding and the weevils that had
 been specially reared for the
 project were left starving in their
 cages. I've rarely seen such a
 horrific spectacle.

Having become quite agitated, Sim takes a moment to breath and to nod politely towards the now very much awake Joe Mitch. All three of them, Joe, Razor and Torn are staring at Sim with nasty expressions on their faces.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)

Allow me to end my digression by
 repeating my view that our world is
 walking on its head. All the same,
 I needed answers so I went inside,
 and when I reached the area that
 had been flooded, I saw exactly
 what I was expecting.

(MORE)

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)

The liquid was gushing up from the ground in great spurts. It wasn't water, but nor was it sap as we know it. It was, if you will, a kind of crude sap. So, I put some of it in a bottle and went back home...

(beat)

...and washed my hands.

Outcry and loud, eager whispers follow Sim's slow reveal.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)

I kissed my wife and my son, Toby.

More annoyance from the crowd and the Tree Council too now.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)

Listen, it's very important to kiss your wife and your son. That's not irrelevant, it's at the heart of everything.

The crowd isn't having any of it.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)

Alright, alright. So, I went home and I set to work. Now remember, my only goal is to prove that the Tree is alive. That the sap is it's blood. That we are nothing but passengers in this living world. This has always been the objective of my research, as you well know. So, holding that objective in my mind, I created a small mechanism that can produce energy from crude sap. Very small, very simple. It is with this that I was able to make Balina walk.

Sim sounds triumphant but the looks from the crowd are those of confusion and disappointment. Young Toby looks happy, but unsure why everyone else isn't. He turns to Maya, who looks pale.

YOUNG TOBY

Mum?

MAYA LOLNESS

Not know, darling.

Sim finds Maya and Young Toby in the crowd again. He now speaks only with his eyes on theirs.

SIM LOLNESS

All week, you and your friends and your families have been waiting. Waiting for the Balina Method that you have claimed is going to change our lives.

The crowd applauds, getting excited once more. This is it!

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)

The only problem is that I like this life of ours. All I want to do is prove that the Tree is a living organism and is it really up to me to give everyone access to crude sap so that they can build machines that fold newspapers or machines that think on their behalf?

The excitement fizzles out instantly. Sim looks a little pale now, just like his wife.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)

And so....I have decided not to reveal how my little mechanism works.

The reaction is instant. Gasps, exclamations, disbelief. A member of the Council starts crying while others start shouting. Young Toby looks confused by those around him as Maya holds him close to her side. Sim is forced to shout over the crowd to be heard.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)

I believe crude sap belongs to our Tree. I believe the Tree lives thanks to that sap. To use its blood would be to put our world in peril. Everybody is free to look for what I found. I won't stop anybody trying to discover Balina's secret, but I'd rather say no more so that one day my son's children will still be able to marvel at the beauty of a flower or a--

SPLAT!

The room is stunned into silence, only Maya's gasp is heard as Sim is cut off in his speech by a honey fritter hitting him square in the face. There is a brief moment of calm and then the room explodes.

As if seized by a type of madness, the crowd begins to throw more things towards Sim, including insults. Up in the top stands, Maya and Young Toby are trying to escape as they are pushed around and shouted at. Down below, Sim rushes from the floor, scaling the stands to rescue Maya and Young Toby. When Maya is hit rather hard, Sim takes his glasses off, rolls up his beret and starts flailing about in all directions, his face red with his fury. The crowd backs away from him, a sea of nasty faces watching on as Sim keeps Maya and a shocked Young Toby behind him.

The crowd only parts when the Grand Council approaches, closing back in once they're through so that Sim, Maya and Young Toby are surrounded.

GRAND COUNCIL SPOKESPERSON

Professor Lolness. You, and by extension your family, have disgraced both yourselves and the Tree this day. And so, for dissimulation of capital information, Professor, your shoes.

Sim turns white, the fight dying out of him. Maya has silent tears running down her cheeks and even Young Toby seems to understand the gravity of the situation.

INT. LAKE VALLEY. DAY

Toby looks deeply sad.

TOBY LOLNESS

It was the most serious rebuke my father could have received, I doubt even he expected things to come to such a head. He was no criminal.

ELISHA LEE

(softly)

I believe you.

Toby sighs.

TOBY LOLNESS

I suppose that was the last time that anyone in the Treetops smiled at my father, at our family. They seized our home not long after that.

Elisha tries to comfort Toby.

ELISHA LEE

If you want to sleep at our's
tonight, my mother's got an
enormous cricket drumstick that the
Olmechs gave us. We're going to
grill it. In honey sauce.

Toby abruptly stands as Elisha speaks.

TOBY LOLNESS

I can't. I have to go.

Elisha remains sitting, watching Toby.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)

Elisha?

Elisha keeps her eyes on the water.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)

I'm coming back, I promise.

ELISHA LEE

We'll see...

TOBY LOLNESS

I mean it. Wait for me.

Elisha turns her head further away as Toby tries to get her attention.

ELISHA LEE

Life doesn't just stop.

EXT. SELDOR FARM. DAY

Sim and Maya enter the farmstead as people in the distance drop what work they were doing, wave and run forwards to meet them.

INT. ASSELDOR FAMILY HOME. NIGHT

Sim and Maya are sat side-by-side by the fireplace, the remnants of dinner upon the dining room table. They are kept company by MR. ASSELDOR (50s) and MRS. ASSELDOR (50s).

MAYA LOLNESS

Thank-you, again, for putting us up
for the night and for such a
wonderful dinner.

MRS. ASSELDOR
Oh, it's our pleasure.

MR. ASSELDOR
Indeed, you're one of us now. We
look after our own down here.

Sim is staring deep into the fire, clearly in deep thought, ignoring Mrs. Asseldor's attempts to engage with him.

MRS. ASSELDOR
Of course, one does wonder about
the Treetop. Did I tell you we
received another letter from Mano
today?

Maya gives Sim an exasperated look for letting the conversation drop before turning to Mrs. Asseldor.

MAYA LOLNESS
Oh yes, how is he enjoying it? I
must say I'm quite impressed by his
success.

Mrs. Asseldor beams, but notices the unhappy face of Mr. Asseldor. Mr. Asseldor looks ready to provide a retort when a sudden and loud trumpeting noise cuts him short.

Turning, the adults find the eldest Asseldor daughter, LOLA ASSELDOR (early 20s), is standing in the doorway with a trumpet. All the adults, excepting Sim (still deep in thought) clap and she lowers the trumpet.

LOLA ASSELDOR
For our guests.

Lola brings the trumpet to her lips once more and starts to march into the room. Music from a variety of instruments can be heard through the doorway behind her as one by one the Asseldor children march into the room. Following Lola is her young sister LILA ASSELDOR (late teens) playing a clarinet.

Maya, Mr. Asseldor and Mrs. Asseldor clap the procession through the room as the two older brothers follow their sisters, one on the accordion and another with a fiddle held high upon his shoulder. Then, just as it seems the concert is at an end, who brings up the rear of the marching band but Toby playing the marbles.

MAYA LOLNESS
Sim!

Sim looks up in shock as his son marches into the room to stand with the rest of the Asseldor children.

Sim and Maya watch as the band finish their song. There is silence as the final note rings out. Toby steps forward.

TOBY LOLNESS
I'm coming with you.

Maya looks like she might cry, but she is smiling widely while Sim looks like he's about to open his mouth in protest.

LILA ASSELDOR
One, two, three!

The Asseldor children and Toby once again take to their instruments, cutting Sim off. Sim gives in with a smile and Maya laughs. As the band plays into the night, everyone claps and dances along.

EXT. LAND OF ONESSA. DAY

Present day, as the sounds of laughter and music die out, and Toby has finally reached the Land of Onessa. He walks with open arms, taking big gulping breaths of air. He isn't running anymore, taking his time to enjoy the green bark hills and watery caves he passes by.

Toby pauses when he reaches the top of a hill that overlooks his home valley in the Lower Branches. Raising his head to look up towards the Tree Tops Toby closes his eyes.

TOBY LOLNESS
(whispered)
I'm well. And I'm waiting for you.

EXT. THE LOLNESS HOME (LOWER BRANCHES). AFTERNOON

Toby walks, cautiously, through the front garden of his home. It is a touch overgrown but still beautiful. Approaching the front door, Toby nudges it open. Inside, everything is covered in a thin layer of dust and has been left exactly as it last was. One of Maya's knitting projects still sits on the couch, including a spare pair of Sim's glasses on the coffee table.

Toby is unable to bring himself to enter.

EXT. LAKE VALLEY. EVENING

Toby steps out onto the high ridge that overlooks the lake and it's valley. A couple of large autumn leaves have fallen around the edge of the lake

EXT. THE LEE HOME. CONTINUOUS

Moving through the forest, Toby reaches the edge of the clearing by Elisha's house. The house looks dark. Staying in the safety of the forest he places his thumb to his teeth and Toby chirrups like a cicada. Nothing. Toby chirrups a second time before turning around and heading towards the lake.

EXT. LAKE VALLEY. CONTINUOUS

Toby sits down on the shore of the lake. Everything has been bathed in moonlight. Falling onto his back, Toby spreads his arms and legs wide, smiling. He allows his eyes to fall shut.

The moon glows brightly in the sky as Toby lies there. On the far shore two water beetles dance together. Somewhere nearby a cicada calls out to the night.

Toby's eyes snap open, but he doesn't move. A small shadow falls across his body.

ELISHA LEE (O.S.)
Are you dreaming?

TOBY LOLNESS
Yes, I'm dreaming.

ELISHA LEE (O.S.)
And does your dream end happily
ever after?

Toby allows his eyes to fall shut once more, smiling.

TOBY LOLNESS
That depends on you.

EXT. THE TREETOPS. DAY

Sim and Maya walk around a corner and find themselves confronted by Joe Mitch mania laid out in the valley before them. The main street/city centre has been filled with propaganda, covered in signs reading: JMA HOTEL, JO MITCH ARBOR THIS WAY, THE JO MITCH GALLERY, etc. There are even posters put up in shop windows that claim a threat known as the 'grass people' must be eradicated. There are men in JMA jackets walking around everywhere, including a couple leading red ants on leashes with big studded collars around their necks. The people in the streets look weary and unhappy, keeping to themselves and avoiding eye contact.

Maya looks aghast, while Sim looks grim and concerned. He turns to look at Toby, who suddenly appears as he steps up alongside his father.

INT. WINTER GREENHOUSE. THE TUFTS. DAY

Sim, Maya and Toby are huddled close together in the dark of a cavernous greenhouse. There are no longer any living plants and an intimidating long box fastened with chunky padlocks sits on the table before them. Maya is studiously avoiding eye contact with it, but Toby's eyes keep sliding over his Grandmother's coffin.

TOBY LOLNESS

Is that-

SIM LOLNESS

Shush.

The sound of approaching footsteps alerts the Lolness family to the profile of a short man approaching them out of the gloom. ZEF CLARAC (50s), a relatively ugly man in a pale suit, steps into the light. A brief pause is followed by Zef throwing his arms wide and giving Sim and Maya a large, warm smile.

ZEF CLARAC

I was expecting you!

Zef's ugliness melts away when he smiles. Sim and Maya gladly return the gesture, relaxing as Zef steps towards them and takes Maya's hand.

ZEF CLARAC (CONT'D)

It's a joy to meet you, Mrs.
Lolness. And you.

Zef turns to Sim and the two men embrace one another.

SIM LOLNESS

Hello old friend.

Sim and Zef break apart, turning to face the coffin before them.

ZEF CLARAC

Under better circumstances...

Sim plants a hand on Zef's shoulder in understanding.

ZEF CLARAC (CONT'D)
 Well, you can see why I felt it a
 good idea to write to you
 straightaway. Mrs. Alnorell died
 the day after the departure of her
 accountant, Jasper Perlush.

MAYA LOLNESS
 He left!?

ZEF CLARAC
 Temporarily.

Zef indicates some nearby seats. They all sit.

ZEF CLARAC (CONT'D)
 He spends a fortnight every
 September dealing with 'awkward
 customers'.

MAYA LOLNESS
 Awkward customers?

Zef sighs loudly.

ZEF CLARAC
 Big Mitch lends him two great
 beanpoles by the name of Venge and
 Losh. They accompany Perlush on his
 sordid trip to confiscate the
 property of your mother's debtors.
 It seems to give them immense
 pleasure.

Maya looks distraught as Sim frowns deeply. Zef notices and
 leans forward to take Maya's hand once more.

ZEF CLARAC (CONT'D)
 No, dear lady, please don't think
 your mother turned into a monster.
 Perlush manipulated her. She was
 just an unhappy old woman.

Maya dabs her yes for a moment before the conversation can
 continue. Zef lets go of her hands.

ZEF CLARAC (CONT'D)
 Now, Perlush is due back tomorrow,
 and he'll want to get his hands on
 the Alnorell fortune-

Sim suddenly jumps up, frightening everyone.

SIM LOLNESS

Great. Good for him. Thank-you,
Zef, but we'll be leaving you now.

Sim grabs Toby's arm and starts pulling him out of his chair towards the exit.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)

Thank-you for everything. Delighted
to-

Sim looks down to see Maya's hand clasped tightly upon his wrist.

MAYA LOLNESS

(sweetly)

Could you let Mr. Clarac finish,
Professor?

Zef coughs to fill the silence while Toby beams at his mother. Sim and Maya stare at one another.

ZEF CLARAC

Perhaps you will at least allow me
to explain how she died?

While Sim and Maya are still engaged in their staring contest, Toby watches as Zef reaches into his breast pocket and brings out a tiny round object. Toby steps forward, intrigued as Zef holds it out to Sim.

ZEF CLARAC (CONT'D)

She choked on this.

Sim finally turns to his friend.

SIM LOLNESS

(deadpan)

Poor woman. Well, why don't you
just give us that then, that'll be
enough of an inheritance...

Sim motions towards the door once more.

ZEF CLARAC

Yes. Your only inheritance.

Sim stops. Even Maya looks shocked as they turn to Zef, who looks apologetic. Toby is still mesmerised by the beautiful stone in Zef's palm. Sim swallows loudly.

SIM LOLNESS

Well...perfect, it's all worked out
perfectly.

(MORE)

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)
We'll take this, this object, and
we'll head back. Agreed, darling?

Sim turns to Maya, who is still sitting in her chair, her hand over her mouth.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)
Maya, love?

Sim looks back at his friend, squinting at the object in his hand. He takes off his glasses, wipes them, and then puts them back on. The minute he does, he stumbles backwards into his own chair, Toby and Maya rushing forward to catch him. Zef watches his friend's shocked face.

ZEF CLARAC
Yes. The Tree Stone.

INT. STUDY. GRANDMOTHER ALNORELL'S HOUSE. DAY

Grandmother Alnorell sits at her desk, her attorney JASPER PERLUSH standing before her and gesticulating grandly.

ZEF CLARAC (V.O.)
Our masterful accountant, Perlush convinced Mrs. Alnorell that her fortune was in danger, with bandits likely to strip her of it. She needed a way to be able to keep an eye on it, essentially to sit on top of it in order to keep it safe. So Perlush advised her to buy the Stone.

INT. WINTER GREENHOUSE. THE TUFTS. DAY

Maya, Sim and Toby sit before Zef as he explains. Sim is holding the Tree Stone tightly in his fist. Maya has her hands over her mouth in shock.

ZEF CLARAC
However, he didn't know she had her own reasons for going along with his plan.

INT. BEDROOM. GRANDMOTHER ALNORELL'S HOUSE. EVENING

ZEF CLARAC (V.O.)
The day after Perlush's departure, your mother heard a noise.

Grandmother Alnorell is sat in her armchair enjoying a cup of tea when the sound of something falling over in the hallway makes her stop.

ZEF CLARAC (V.O.)
 She thought it was the robbers that she was so afraid of, so she picked up her Stone, intending to swallow it.

INT. WINTER GREENHOUSE. THE TUFTS. DAY

Toby's eyes are as wide as saucers, he is even leaning forwards towards Zef, who takes note.

ZEF CLARAC
 Yes, that was her plan, young man.
 To carry her fortune to her grave.
 A fortune that could be swallowed.

INT. HALLWAY. GRANDMOTHER ALMORELL'S HOUSE. EVENING

ZEF CLARAC (V.O.)
 But the noise she heard was just my friend Doctor Pill, who dropped by every evening to give her her injections.

DOCTOR PILL is standing in the hallway, rubbing his knee and leaning upon the entry hall cabinet. A large address book is upon the floor at his feet.

INT. WINTER GREENHOUSE. THE TUFTS. DAY

ZEF CLARAC
 By the time he'd forced the door open it was too late.

Zef dab at the corners of his eyes as he concludes his story.

ZEF CLARAC (CONT'D)
 The doctor extracted the Stone and came to find me. It seemed preferable to settle the matter discreetly by informing you.

Sim slowly opens his palm to look at the stone. It is very beautiful, a button-sized ball of sap and perfectly transparent. Toby leans across his father to get a better look.

SIM LOLNESS
But...it is priceless.

Zef shakes his head sadly.

ZEF CLARAC
Dear friend, our friendship is priceless, and so is your son, but the Stone has a price, and a very specific one at that. Four billion, to be exact.

Toby looks confused by everyone's reaction.

TOBY LOLNESS
Why is it so much?

Sim and Maya and Zef all turn to Toby. Sim holds out the Stone so that Toby may take it.

ZEF CLARAC
The Tree Stone is so much because it is rare. It is-

SIM LOLNESS
It is the only stone in the whole tree. Whoever owns the Stone owns the whole tree.

Toby seems even more in awe than before now.

MAYA LOLNESS
But, my mother's fortune wasn't in danger.

ZEF CLARAC
No, it wasn't. At least, not in the way she had been told it was. No, you see, Perlush is under Mitch's thumb. I imagine he was banking on getting the Stone back when the old lady died and palming it off to his boss.

Sim stands up just as Zef finishes speaking, straightening his beret and glasses.

SIM LOLNESS
Then we must leave. Immediately. We were never here.

MAYA LOLNESS
Thank-you Zef, but my husband is right. We need to leave, now.

Zef sighs, looking sad.

ZEF CLARAC

I had thought as much. Although, you must allow me to give you something for your return. It was on my word that you all dragged yourselves up here in the first place. My house is just two twigs from here.

Sim chews his lip, unhappy.

SIM LOLNESS

We really mustn't linger.

ZEF CLARAC

And how many more years will it be before I see my oldest friend again?

Sim watches Toby, who is turning the Stone over and over in his hand as he holds it up to his eye, letting it catch the light.

SIM LOLNESS

I'll give you twenty minutes.

INT. TOBY'S CAVE. MORNING

Toby jolts awakes. A spotlight of sun is coming in through the opening of the cave he's in, temporarily blinding him. Toby shivers as he sits up. A light shawl has been pulled across his legs and he smiles as he looks upon it. Pulling the shawl up around his shoulders, Toby walks over to the cave entrance and pokes his head out.

EXT. TOBY'S CAVE. CONTINUOUS

Toby's cave is a hole in the bark cliff on the far side of the lake. Across the lake a small patrol of Joe Mitch's men are steadily making their way through the lake valley. Toby frowns before retreating back inside his cave. Up above, the sky is grey and cold looking.

EXT. LAKE VALLEY. CONTINUOUS

On the other side of the lake, Joe Mitch's men enter the forest that leads to Elisha's house.

EXT. ZEF'S HOUSE. DAY

Sim, Maya and Toby keep close together as they follow Zef through his garden and to his door. A shiny lawyer sign sits directly in the middle of the door.

ZEF CLARAC
Home sweet home.

With a smile to his wary companions, Zef begins looking around his front porch, under the welcome mat, behind pot plants.

ZEF CLARAC (CONT'D)
(muttered)
Now where is it...

Sim isn't paying attention to his friend, instead he's regularly checking his watch and his surroundings. Over by the door, Zef finally finds what he's looking for. His key.

ZEF CLARAC (CONT'D)
(muttered)
Strange...I don't normally put it
there.

Zef shrugs and unlocks his front door. Maya and Toby follow him as he enters his home, Sim lagging behind and staring off into the distance.

MAYA LOLNESS (O.S.)
Sim, dear.

Sim sighs and steps through Zef's front door.

Thud! Thud! Thud!

The sound of a heavy fist knocking upon a small wooden door.

EXT. THE LEE HOME. MORNING

The door to the Lee home is thrown open to reveal Elisha in nothing but her nightshirt, her hair all rumpled. The two JMA MEN (JMA MAN #1 and JMA MAN #2/CLOT) before her watch in shock as she provides the biggest yawn she possibly can. They eventually come to and the man in front steps forward.

JMA MAN #1
We've got to do a search.

Elisha seems unphased by this request. Instead, she smiles broadly.

ELISHA LEE

I once taught a bug how to say
hello, so I should be able to
manage with two
cockroaches...Hello.

Elisha's reply brings about another round of shocked
expressions.

JMA MAN #2/CLOT

He-hello.

JMA MAN #1

But, we're looking for the Lolness
boy. He's a dangerous criminal. He,
well, he and-

ELISHA LEE

Yes?

The struggling JMA Man #1 falls silent for a moment, studying
his toes before meeting Elisha's gaze.

JMA MAN #1

We've got to do a search?

Elisha continues to smile as she turns to the second JMA Man.

ELISHA LEE

Man-who-says-hello, you can come
in, but I'll have to ask you to
leave your animal outside.

Stepping aside, Elisha allows the blushing JMA Man #2/Clot to
step inside before slamming the door in the face of the dazed
first man.

INT. THE LEE HOME. CONTINUOUS

Elisha leaves JMA Man #2/Clot standing by the door, taking a
seat by the fire and ignoring him. After a brief moment in
which he takes in his meagre surroundings, the JMA Man begins
his search, which involves simply pushing aside the colourful
partitions and lifting a few mattresses. He joins Elisha by
the fire when he is done.

JMA MAN #2/CLOT

I...thank-you, Miss. I've done my
searching...

Elisha turns to her guest, smiling once more and once more
making JMA Man #2/Clot blush deeply. He hurriedly takes his
hat off.

JMA MAN #2/CLOT (CONT'D)
I have greatest...delightings in
thankings you...for your
receptional...if I can allow you to
express me like that.

Elisha's smile twitches as she tries to hold in her laughter.

ELISHA
Please feel free, dear...dear,
Clot.

Clot looks immediately flattered by Elisha's name for him,
nodding and bowing in gratitude.

CLOT
Forgivings for waking you, Miss. We
won't opportunity you again with
another pesty search...

Elisha's hands are fisted in her stomach as she tries to hold
in her laughter. She nods politely, unable to speak, as Clot
walks backwards towards the door.

CLOT (CONT'D)
I am your humble Clot...your
devoted Clot, Missee...

With one final bow, Clot pulls the door shut and Elisha
instantly collapses with laughter, covering her mouth with
her hands. However, she quickly pulls herself up and runs
towards the front window. Peeking through, she watches as
Clot returns to his fellow JMA Man.

EXT. THE LEE HOME. CONTINUOUS

CLOT
Well? Are you proud of yourself,
you badly-brought-up-good-for-
nothing? It's not as if you'll
never be called a Clot by a young
lady who's just risen from her bed!

JMA Man #1, who was kicking some rocks about in boredom looks
up as his companion approaches.

JMA MAN #1
What? But-

CLOT
No buts!

JMA MAN #1
Sorry?

CLOT
Sorry who? We say: sorry, Clot.

JMA Man #1 looks stunned for a moment before relenting under Clot's fearful look.

JMA MAN #1
Oh, ah, all right. I mean, all right, Clot. Sorry, Clot.

INT. THE LEE HOME. CONTINUOUS

Elisha sinks to the ground, breathing a shaky breath out. She starts to laugh again, quiet at first but then building with momentum and volume until she has tears in her eyes and is holding her stomach.

After a while, her laughter begins to change, starting to sound different...

OVER BLACK

Elisha's laughter has become deeper, meaner, manlier...

INT. SITTING ROOM. ZEF'S HOUSE. DAY

Zef, Maya, Toby and Sim stand, frozen by fear and shock, in the doorway to Zef's sitting room.

Zef's sitting room is full of people. Eight in total. The most noticeable, due to his size and central position on the couch, is a laughing Joe Mitch. Standing on either side of him are Razor and Tom. On an armchair to the right, his feet barely touching the ground, is Grandmother Alnorell's accountant Mr. Perlush. The final two players are VENGE and LOSH, standing next to a large green raincoat hanging from the coat rack in the corner. The raincoat stirs and DOCTOR PILL suddenly becomes visible, partially unconscious while still within the raincoat.

Joe Mitch finally stops laughing with a loud snort. He grins meanly at the group assembled before him.

RAZOR
We weren't expecting to find you in such good company, Mr. Clarac. What a surprise.

Joe Mitch cracks his knuckles and Sim pushes Toby behind him, scowling at the men before him, particularly Joe Mitch.

RAZOR (CONT'D)

To be frank, we were only expecting Mr. Clarac. The good doctor here has just told us of the sad passing of our mutual friend Mrs. Alnorell.

Over, on the coatrack, Doctor Pill moans. Venge and Losh grin meanly. Zef is trembling as he stares at his friend, clearly terrified. Joe Mitch grumbles something unintelligible to Razor, who has bent down to receive his master's commands.

RAZOR (CONT'D)

Mr. Perlush here will handle everything. So, Mr. Clarac-

SIM LOLNESS

My mother-in-law's body is in the winter greenhouse. It should be treated with respect. As for her affairs, they revert to my wife, who is her only daughter...

This time the entire room bursts into laughter, led by Joe Mitch. In response, Maya grabs onto Sim's arm and Toby covers his ears with his hands. However, it doesn't last long, Joe Mitch raising his hand and bringing about silence.

Sim takes another step forward, this time standing before both Maya and Toby. Watching Sim, Joe Mitch holds out both his arms, summoning Razor and Torn who rush forward to help Joe Mitch up from the sofa.

Once standing, Joe Mitch takes a moment to catch his breath, and then he walks forward until him and Sim are eye to eye. And then, very slowly, he picks Sim's glasses off from his face and crushes them in his fist. Behind Sim, Maya has her eyes squeezed shut.

TORN

The Friendly Neighbour has a great sense of humour. We all enjoy his little teasing games...

Torn sniggers to himself, but no one joins him and he eventually stops.

RAZOR

You've got five minutes to give us two things: the Stone and Balina's black box. Perlush.

Over on the armchair, Perlush raises his arm and starts silently counting down with his watch.

PERLUSH
One, two, three, four, five...

INT. LAKE VALLEY. NIGHT

Despite the breeze, Toby and Elisha sit by the edge of the lake, a shared blanket pulled around their shoulders. Toby is tracing lines in the sandy shore.

ELISHA LEE
(softly)
Did you know that Seldor farm has
been abandoned?

Toby frowns, but continues to draw.

ELISHA LEE (CONT'D)
Milo, he found the farmhouse empty
the other day. There was a letter
from his sisters saying they were
going to go stay with their aunt,
but his parents have disappeared.
People think they've been arrested
by Joe Mitch's men...

Toby's fingers clench into a fist, destroying the picture in the sand.

ELISHA LEE (CONT'D)
...and now he's gone looking for
them.

Elisha looks sad as she leans into Toby's shoulder.

ELISHA LEE (CONT'D)
Now there's no news of him either.

Toby continues to glare out across the water.

TOBY LOLNESS
Fear. Intimidation. Acts of
violence.

Elisha's eyes begin to drift shut, not really paying attention to Toby's rising anger.

ELISHA LEE
What is it Toby?

TOBY LOLNESS

Joe Mitch. He'll do whatever it takes to get control of the Tree. Steal, threaten, even blame the grass people. Although-

ELISHA LEE

Although what?

Elisha has sat up now, fully awake and a hard to read expression on her face.

TOBY LOLNESS

I, well, I don't know really. People talk. They say they're dangerous, a threat to the Tree.

ELISHA LEE

Have you ever seen one?

TOBY LOLNESS

Have you?

Elisha sighs and leans back into Toby.

ELISHA LEE

You've been away too long. Look, let me tell you something. The first time I came across a may bug, I screamed I was so scared. I thought I was going to die, because people said may bugs eat children.

Elisha pauses, and Toby starts aimlessly drawing in the sand once more.

ELISHA LEE (CONT'D)

Sure, may bugs make a lot of noise and they nibble away at our branches, but they wouldn't harm a fly. You shouldn't always believe what other people say. If someone had told you I was an ugly wild animal, we'd never have been friends, and you'd have told everyone you met about the ugly wild animal who lived near the lake.

Toby allows himself a small smile.

TOBY LOLNESS

Well, as far as may bugs go, I'm happy to believe they're not as bad as people make out. And maybe the grass people aren't either...but I wouldn't like to cross paths with an Elisha.

Elisha's reaction is instant. She shoves Toby so that he falls over, laughing, and then she jumps onto his chest, pinning his arms down and pretending to be furious. However, she soon comes over in laughter too.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)

Alright, alright...

Elisha grins and removes herself from Toby's chest, sliding into a lying position by his side as they stop laughing. Side-by-side, Toby and Elisha watch the sky in silence, the stars above them seeming to glow and become a little brighter in the dark night.

INT. SITTING ROOM. ZEF'S HOUSE. DAY

PERLUSH

Fifty-seven, fifty-eight, fifty-nine, sixty.

Perlush lowers his arm, looking concerned. Zef, Sim, Maya and Toby have not moved. Toby is watching only his father, who is still staring into the large, ugly face of Joe Mitch, which has become red and crumpled, creased into an intense frown. Joe Mitch grinds his teeth, letting out a low growl.

RAZOR

Okay then. Search them!

Venge and Losh step forward as Joe Mitch returns to the lounge, grabbing Zef by the arm and pulling him into the centre of the room. They roughly pat him down, but only find his house key and Zef is pushed to the side. Venge turns on the Lolness family, and before they can grab anyone, Maya steps forward.

MAYA LOLNESS

It's my turn.

Venge looks unsure about how to approach Maya, who holds out her arms. However, a growl from Joe Mitch spurs him to step forward and hesitantly pat her down. He checks her pockets, hems and linings but eventually shakes his head at Joe Mitch and Maya steps to the side, nudging Toby forward.

Toby steps into the centre of the room, gently shaking but with a determined expression on his face. The same pat down ritual is followed. Except, before Venge can finish, Razor sneers at Toby.

RAZOR
The worst is when scum breeds small scum.

Toby looks briefly furious, before putting on a face of fake innocence.

TOBY
Small scum? I wouldn't say you're that small.

In the second of silence that follows, Sim rushes forward and smacks Toby across the back of the head.

SIM LOLNESS
Don't insult the gentleman!

Maya's hands fly to her mouth, Zef's mouth falls open and even Venge and Losh look momentarily stunned. However, Joe Mitch, Razor and Torn are wearing matching evil smiles.

Distraught, Toby steps back to stand beside his mother, watching as Sim face crumples in, and then Sim himself, sinking to the floor until he's kneeling with his head in his hands.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)
I can't go on...I give up. I'll tell you everything. I'll give you everything.

Maya finally starts to cry as she watches her husband. Zef also has large, silent tears falling down his face. However, unknown to the other two, Toby's face has hardened with aversion to his father's action.

RAZOR
Take heart, Professor, you're a brave man.

Torn sniggers at Razor's remark. Sim takes a deep shuddering breath before finally looking up.

SIM LOLNESS
Before explaining where the Stone is, I'm going to lead you to Balina's box.

Razor frowns.

RAZOR
Just tell us where it is.

Sim shakes his head.

SIM LOLNESS
That's impossible, I'll have to
come with you. You'll never find it
without me.

Razor looks to Joe Mitch, unsure, but Joe Mitch shakes his head.

SIM LOLNESS (CONT'D)
In that case, my son will have to
take you there.

Maya turns to Toby in shock as Razor turns once again to his boss, leaning down so Joe Mitch can whisper in his ear. He straightens when Joe Mitch finishes.

RAZOR
The Friendly Neighbour consents.
Your son will go with Venge and
Losh.

Toby looks dumbstruck and confused as Venge and Losh advance on him with concerningly gleeful expressions. Between the two giants, he spies his father scratching at his cheek. They make eye contact and Sim looks at Toby as if trying to tell him something. A second later however, he does speak.

SIM LOLNESS
Don't go doing yourself another
injury.

Toby finds himself shepherded out of the room, his mother crying even harder than before and his father looking at him as if to say farewell. And slowly, a contained expression of realisation comes over Toby's face, upon which a small scar is visible, just above his cheek.

EXT. LAND OF ONESSA. AFTERNOON

The giant glass-like eye of a giant blue dragonfly reflects the dumbstruck face of Isha Lee. Isha, layered in thick clothes, has fallen over, staring at the creature in shock.

ELISHA LEE (O.S.)
Mother, is that you?

Isha's face hardens and she pushes herself up off the ground.

ELISHA LEE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'm back from my swim.

Isha turns as Elisha rounds the corner to find the giant dragonfly and her mother. Elisha stops, amazed. Then she sees her mother's face and lowers her eyes.

ISHA LEE
You went swimming?

Elisha's hair is dry and the nearby lake is clearly frozen over.

ELISHA LEE
Yes.

Isha puts her hands on her hips.

ISHA LEE
Not too cold?

ELISHA LEE
No...

Isha stares at her daughter. Overhead, clouds begin to close in.

ISHA LEE
Where is he?

ELISHA LEE
Who?

Isha raises a disbelieving eyebrow as a cold wind suddenly blows through the valley. She looks up to the sky, concerned.

ISHA LEE
Quickly! Where is he?

ELISHA LEE
I'm sorry--

ISHA LEE
No you're not. Now, where is he.

ELISHA LEE
He's up there.

Isha turns to follow her daughter's pointing hand.

ISHA LEE
Okay. Run back to the house, get as much food as you can and--

But Elisha runs off the minute she's given her first order. Isha stands for a moment by the giant dragonfly, closes her eyes, takes a deep breath, opens her eyes and then makes for the lake.

INT. TOBY'S CAVE. DAY

Toby is sitting before one of the cave walls, a stunning painting of a russet coloured orchid before him. He is adding the finishing touches using the small nearby patch of mildew when a shadow falls across the cave entrance.

TOBY LOLNESS
Elisha, look!

Toby turns, but it is not Elisha Lee he finds. Toby scrambles to his feet, looking caught out.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
Hello, Ms. Lee.

Elisha comes running in behind her mother soon after, out of breath and with a large canvas bag on her shoulder.

ISHA LEE
Right, this isn't a game anymore.

TOBY LOLNESS
You found out.

ISHA LEE
Yes, I found out! From day one!
From the night I heard a cicada
singing in autumn.

ELISHA LEE
You didn't say anything.

Isha sighs, watching Elisha and Toby as they stand close together.

ISHA LEE
The only thing I'd have said is
that you shouldn't take me for a
brainless louse. Apart from that
what was there to say?

Toby and Elisha are taken aback by Isha's outburst, struggling to meet her eye. Isha sighs loudly again.

ISHA LEE (CONT'D)

Okay. Elisha, put that bag down.
Toby, this cave could become
inaccessible any moment now. If it
snows, you will be cut off. From
us. From the rest of the Tree.
However, Elisha and I will prepare
the worm beetle shed for you to
come hide in. It will take some
time though.

Isha picks up the canvas bag and looks inside.

ISHA LEE (CONT'D)

It looks like there is enough in
here to hold out for two weeks
should the worst happen.

Isha passes the bag to Toby, who takes it, looking guilty.
For a moment, Isha once more takes in Toby and Elisha
standing side by side. Her eyes slowly travel over their
heads to notice the flower on the wall. Isha suddenly visibly
softens.

ISHA LEE (CONT'D)

What's that, my Toby?

TOBY LOLNESS

A flower.

Elisha turns to look at the painting as well.

ISHA LEE

It's beautiful...I'd forgotten they
were like that.

With Elisha's back to them, Toby and Isha look at one
another.

ISHA LEE (CONT'D)

(whispered)

Take care, my Toby.

Isha turns and leaves. Toby turns to face Elisha, who is
determinedly looking at the painting.

TOBY LOLNESS

Your mother's a very good person.

Elisha blinks hard, still not looking at Toby.

ELISHA LEE

Yeah, she's...she is. So, um, I'll
see you tomorrow.

Toby smiles and Elisha finally looks at him.

TOBY LOLNESS
Till tomorrow.

INT. TOBY'S CAVE.

Toby is wide awake and, in a rage, attacking the wall of snow that has formed over the cave entrance. He kicks it and claws at it, but he is unable to make so much as a dent in it. Exhausted, he falls to his knees.

TOBY LOLNESS
(whispered)
Come back, Toby. Come back...

Toby forces himself to calm down, sit up and take in his surroundings. His small fire is still going and his sack of food is sat right next to it. Toby crawls over, huddling by the fire and opening the sack. Slowly, he takes out each item (eggs, some biscuits, chunks of dried fat and some lichen leaves), laying them on the floor before him. Toby winces when he pulls out the last item. It'll be tight. Shivering, Toby digs away at the floor to retrieve a few more splinters to throw onto the fire. It flares briefly as he does illuminating the orchid on the wall.

Toby abandons the fire and food, approaching the wall. He places one hand upon the painting, before leaning his forehead against it. Turning to the side, he notices the large patch of mildew that has doubled over night. Toby walks over and crouches down next to it. Hesitant, he sticks his fingers into the mildew and then into his mouth. He makes a face but forces himself to swallow. He looks back at his food, he looks at the mildew, he looks at his painting.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
(whispered)
I'm back.

INT. TOBY'S CAVE. TIMELAPSE

We see Toby is tending to his fire, nibbling some of his rations, completing some stretching exercises, sleeping, etc. All the while, images begin to appear around the orchid, extending outwards in shades of mildew red and charcoal black. Toby is painting his world upon the walls of the cave.

There's the orchid in the centre of the Great Oak Tree, dual portraits of his parents, Seldor Farm and everyone playing music together, the Grand Council chamber like a teeming crater full of weevils in ties, Razor and Torn depicted as grubbers and rearing a suspiciously shaped fat grub, the old Lolness family...

One day, Toby is standing before a recently finished painting, tears in his eyes as he looks upon Zef's sitting room full of Joe Mitch and his men...

EXT. THE TUFTS. DAY

Toby is a couple of feet ahead of Venge and Losh, who are stomping and shoving one another in a stupid, playful sort of way. Unknown to the two goons, Toby has a look of intense concentration on his face as he leads them through the gardens, past the Greenhouse with Grandmother Alnorell's house in the distance atop the hill and towards the edge of the gardens, which is the edges of the branch itself.

As he approaches a particular twig with a small hole visible in the top, Toby dares to smile, raising a hand to the scar on his cheek.

SIM LOLNESS (V.O.)

You see that branch? It's old and dangerous so don't get too close to it. And don't tell your mother I caught you out here unless you want a matching scar on that other cheek of yours.

YOUNG TOBY (V.O.)

I won't, dad. I promise!

Toby stops walking just as he reaches the beginning of the hollow twig. Venge and Losh are forced to stop abruptly behind him.

VENGE

Well, kiddo?

TOBY LOLNESS

This is it.

VENGE

Issit?

LOSH

Issit? Issit?

VENGE
Issit? Issit? Issit?

Venge and Losh laugh at one another, hiccoughing and slapping one another on the back. However, when they finally stop, Toby is gone.

VENGE (CONT'D)
Wotchitkiddo?

Venge and Losh look confused, looking around for the missing Toby. A gentle scuffling noise alerts them to the hole in the top of the nearby twig. Venge sticks his hand in it and waves it around, but brings out nothing. He looks frustrated, so Losh shoulders him aside and mounts the twig to begin hacking at it with the small axe from his belt. Venge looks pleased as chunks of wood go flying.

VENGE (CONT'D)
Yes. More, Losh, more.

Both Losh and Venge don't pay attention at the first cracking sound, caught up in the chase, until crrraaccckkkkkKKKK! Clinging on for dear life, Losh and the hollow twig fall into the unknown.

LOSH
(surprised)
Tooobbyyyy!

Venge stands in shock, staring at the place the twig and his friend just were.

VENGE
Gosh...Losh...

ELISHA LEE (V.O.)
Tooobbyyyy!

EXT. LAND OF ONESSA. DAY

ELISHA LEE
Tooobbyyyyyyyyy!

Elisha is out in a wild snowstorm as she tries desperately to reach the cave.

ELISHA LEE (CONT'D)
Tooobbyyyyyyyyy!

She can barely move or see, in frozen tears as she collapses.

INT. TOBY'S CAVE.

Toby lies weakly upon the floor, himself and his supplies visibly reduced in size (excepting the mildew clump). He admires his grand painting, even larger and prettier than before. Hallucinating, he watches the tiny painted figures of Losh and Venge trying to reach the little painted Toby curled up in a hollow branch.

EXT. THE TUFTS. AFTERNOON

A distraught Venge is still sat on the edge of the branch where the twig broke off.

VENGE
(mournful)
Loosshh...

A patrol of Joe Mitch's men appear and approach Venge.

VENGE (CONT'D)
Loosshh...

The LEADER walks forward carefully.

LEADER
Hello, what happened here?

VENGE
Loosshh...

The leader takes another step forward, stretching out a hand towards Venge...and Venge leaps into the void.

VENGE (CONT'D)
Tooobbyyyy!

The leader and his men rush to the edge, leaning over in shock and watching the small speck that was Venge disappear into the mist.

INT. ROTTEN BRANCH. CONTINUOUS

Toby, covered in scratches and cuts, and curled into a tight little ball, has actually crawled up the branch and is now just under the feet of the Joe Mitch patrol.

LEADE (O.S.)
Poor man.

EXT. ROTTEN BRANCH. NIGHT

A crowd has gathered around the broken branch, kept back from the edge by a safety rope. They are all swapping rumours while the Leader of the patrol attempts to keep them contained and lead them away from the scene of the crime.

WOMAN #1
Was it an accident?

WOMAN #2
I heard suicide.

MAN #1
I thought this garden was supposed to be abandoned?

MAN #2
What was that noise?

WOMAN #3
I heard it too, a cry and then...nothing.

Caught up in their gossip, the adults don't notice the small figure of a young boy darting through the crowds, past the patrol leader and under the far end of safety rope. Hidden in the dark, the figure creeps to the edge of the branch, sliding on his belly he hangs over so his head is looking back up into what's left of the hollow branch.

INT. ROTTEN BRANCH. CONTINUOUS

Toby looks tired and scared, still cramped into the tiny hollow space. He studies the dark face before him, squinting to try and make out it's features.

TOBY LOLNESS
Leo?

The snap and hiss of a flare being lit suddenly illuminates the tough expression of Leo Blue. The two boys stare at one another, waiting for something, and then suddenly Leo Blue smiles.

INT. TOBY'S CAVE.

LEO BLUE (V.O.)
Toby, you came back!

In his cave, Toby shivers in his sleep as a painting of Leo Blue with two faces, one smiling and one frowning but both with two cold blue eyes, watches over him.

TOBY LOLNESS (V.O.)
Help me, Leo.

INT. ROTTEN BRANCH. NIGHT

Leo looks confused as he takes in Toby's dishevelled bloody self.

LEO BLUE
Help you?

TOBY LOLNESS
Yes, Leo. I'm in danger. Don't ask me to explain, I just need to get out of here first.

Leo almost seems to hesitate ever so briefly, but then he smiles once more and extends a hand to Toby.

EXT. THE TUFTS. CONTINUOUS

Leo hauls Toby up onto the branch and then chuck's his flare over the edge. The two boys watch it briefly before darting after the crowd and blending into it. Toby keeps his head lowered as Leo tries to keep up with him.

LEO BLUE
You want to stay hidden? Why?

Toby suddenly stops as they reach the gates that lead to the Tufts. No one is paying them any attention. He turns to Leo.

TOBY LOLNESS
Goodbye, Leo.

Toby hugs a stunned looking Leo and then abruptly disappears into the crowd for good.

A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Leo is still standing by the gates, now the only one left. He looks confused, and hurt and a little scared. He is chewing hard on his lip. A trampled poster nearby warns of the threat of the grass people. Leo walks forward and picks it up, studying it as his face hardens. He looks up and sees the large number of posters stuck up all over the gates to the Tufts. They have all been 'proudly sponsored by JMA'.

LEADER

Hey, kid, what are you doing?

Leo jumps, turning to find the Leader of the Joe Mitch patrol walking towards him.

LEO BLUE

Sorry?

The Leader frowns before he sees the poster in Leo's hands, and suddenly he smiles warmly.

LEADER

Ah, don't worry, I ain't no
grassie.

The Leader slaps Leo on the shoulder.

LEADER (CONT'D)

Although, you can never be too
careful, hey. Trust nobody and
you'll do alright.

Leo looks back at the poster in his hands.

LEADER (CONT'D)

Trust in the Friendly Neighbour,
he'll keep us safe. Ain't ever been
no better friend to our Tree than
him. Now, you better hurry along
now.

LEO BLUE

Why?

LEADER

Why? Why because he's called
everyone to assemble in the city
centre.

EXT. TREETOP CITY CENTRE. NIGHT

A huge crowd has gathered, by choice and by force, some people being pushed into the throng by men in JMA marked coats. A podium has been set up in the middle of the city centre, standing upon it is Joe Mitch, Razor and Torn, who is keeping watch over the tearful trio of Sim, Maya and Zef.

Razor is grinning, almost glowing with delight, as he steps towards the microphone and coughs into it to quiet the crowd.

RAZOR

Fellow Tree-dwellers, the Friendly Neighbour has on this night important news to share with you all. Listen to his message. A crime has just been committed against the Tree.

The crowd murmurs amongst itself, all eyes trained on the podium and it's inhabitants.

RAZOR (CONT'D)

The Lolness family have sold our greatest secret, no, the Tree's greatest secret to foreign powers. Foreign powers that wish to hurt us. That wish to do us and the Tree great harm.

Sim looks absolutely furious as Razor continues to speak. Zef and Maya mostly still just shocked.

RAZOR (CONT'D)

From now on, the vermin known as the grass people will control Balina's Power!

There are screams of shock and outrage and disbelief from the crowd as Joe Mitch grins.

RAZOR (CONT'D)

Dear neighbours, consider the crime of the Lolness family. There is no doubt the grass people will use this against us. Do I need remind you that they killed one of our own. The great explorer El Blue.

At the back of the crowd, this very man's son stands in silence, a fixed look of hatred in his blue eyes, setting them ablaze. Leo Blue crushes the poster still in his hands as he watches Joe Mitch. Before him the crowd has become unruly, some trying to leave, others surging forward, trying to reach the podium and what is left of the Lolness family, but Razor's voice still carries over to Leo.

RAZOR (CONT'D)

The Lolness boy is dead...

Maya cries out and collapses, Sim and Zef both trying to catch her before she hits the ground.

RAZOR (CONT'D)
...but that does not change the
facts--

LEO BLUE (O.S.)
No he's not!

Razor stops talking, searching the crowd for the person who spoke.

RAZOR
Who said that? Reveal yourself! How
dare you interrupt the Friendly
Neighbour.

Sim looks up and is shocked when Leo Blue steps out of the crowd to approach the podium. Razor looks furious at being interrupted, but before he can speak, someone else does.

JOE MITCH
(slowly, softly)
What did you say, boy?

Everyone turns, shocked, to look at Joe Mitch, who has only eyes for Leo Blue. Leo matches Joe's gaze, unafraid and with a face of angered regret.

LEO BLUE
(through gritted teeth)
I saw him. Toby's alive.

EXT. TOBY'S CAVE. DAY

Elisha has set herself against the melting entrance to Toby's cave, digging furiously at the snow and sending it flying everywhere until she manages to create a person-sized tunnel.

INT. TOBY'S CAVE. CONTINUOUS

Dark within and only the embers of a low fire visible, Elisha blinks against the change in visibility.

ELISHA LEE
Toby?

Hands out, Elisha carefully makes her way towards the fire, finding a small pile of wood chips. She casts a few onto the weak flames, which flare and illuminate Toby's masterpiece. A huge painted fresco stretching across every surface within the cave. Elisha looks like she might cry, hands rising to her mouth in awe.

TOBY LOLNESS (O.C.)
(weak)
Do you like it?

Elisha turns and there is her poor, weak Toby, slumped against the far wall. Pale and thin and barely conscious.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
I've been waiting for you.

Elisha rushes over, fully crying now, and throws herself onto Toby.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
Now, now, what's there to be sad about? Look, I'm fine.

Elisha looks up from Toby's chest, and Toby reaches forward to trace his fingers across her face, brushing away her tears. Elisha holds Toby's fingers still against her cheek, calming down.

ELISHA LEE
Happy Birthday, Toby.

INT. THE LEE HOME. DAY

A few days later, Toby is being led around the small living space of the Lee home, clinging to Elisha's arm for support. Quiet, in the corner, Isha makes honey pancakes.

TOBY LOLNESS
I think I should probably try it by myself now.

Elisha steps away, arms crossed as she watches Toby stumble around by himself. He's upright, but he's still weak and quite quickly sits himself down by the fire, staring into the flames.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
They're not coming, are they.

Isha and Elisha look to one another. Toby doesn't notice.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
I thought about them, up there. And me, down here.

Elisha sits down next to Toby, shoulder to shoulder.

ELISHA LEE

Maybe not. Maybe, maybe, it's time
to...

TOBY LOLNESS

I never should have left them. I'm
the one who should have been
looking for them, helping them.

Elisha looks nervous now, eyeing the ground and blinking a lot.

ELISHA LEE

Looking for them where?

Toby turns to Elisha, watching her closely. Slowly, Elisha unfurls something from her pocket. It is a Joe Mitch flyer proclaiming:

ELISHA LEE (CONT'D)

I found this near Tumble prison. It
says they're...they're to be
executed.

Toby stands up abruptly. Elisha follows suit.

ELISHA LEE (CONT'D)

You can't, please. You need to look
after yourself, you need to stay
hidden.

TOBY LOLNESS

Would I ask the same of you!?

Isha freezes and looks up at her daughter. Elisha looks angry now.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)

I need to turn myself in. It's the
only way.

ELISHA LEE

It's not--

TOBY LOLNESS

Yes, it--

ELISHA LEE

Listen to me, Toby Lolness!

TOBY LOLNESS

If I turn myself in, I'll be taken
to Tumble. To them.

ELISHA LEE
And you'll be doing it in your
coffin!

Toby looks deeply into Elisha's eyes, he is steadfast.

EXT. TOBY'S CAVE. EARLY MORNING

Elisha sits in the sunlight by the entrance to Toby's cave, Toby's feet in her lap. With a feather strand dripping with blue ink she paints the soles of his feet, a barely visible mark from his toes all the way to his heel. She still looks angry. Toby watches her closely.

TOBY LOLNESS
(joking)
Is that my war paint?

Elisha refuses to look at him, head bent low over her task and plaits covering her face. Toby's smile turns serious.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
Is this a secret?

For some time Elisha doesn't acknowledge Toby's question. And then slowly she nods.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
I've got a secret too.

Toby runs his hand along the back of his head, where Sim hit him so long ago, and then reaching into the pocket of his trousers, Toby pulls out something clasped tightly in his fist. He extends his arm and Elisha can't help but watch him out of the corner of her eye. Toby slowly unfurls his fingers to reveal: the Tree Stone.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
Here's my secret.

Elisha stops painting to watch the stone in Toby's hand

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
My father entrusted this to me,
somewhat painfully.

Toby laughs sadly at the memory of his father before looking up into Elisha's eyes.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
And now I am entrusting it to you.

Carefully, Toby removes his legs from Elisha's lap and walks towards his mural, towards the portrait of Elisha. Using a small knife, he cuts away one of her painted eyes, inserting the Stone into the pupil.

Turning back around, Elisha is still watching him, haloed by the sun.

ELISHA LEE
Don't give yourself up to Joe
Mitch. Let me help you.

EXT. GUS' OFFICE. TUMBLE. DAY

GUS ALZAN (O.S.)
One can over look the battered prisoners, because they're probably asking for it. The strangled governess, well...maybe her teaching methods were to blame. But you understand, after a while a young girl can have a few too many undesirable habits when she comes from a respectable family.

There is an expensive looking wooden door with a golden name plate that reads GOVERNOR.

INT. GUS' OFFICE. TUMBLE. CONTINUOUS

GUS ALZAN, a well to do working man with thick hands who looks somewhat defeated with life, is sat at a large wooden desk in his plush office. There is a fireplace and oil paintings, a map of Tumble and prison paraphernalia hanging from the walls (truncheons, handcuffs, etc.).

Before Gus stands a tall, lanky man in a loose fitting cook's apron. ARSESENTNT has been hand stitched across the front. The wide, smiling face is that of Clot, nodding enthusiastically at every word.

GUS ALZAN
People have told me she'll mature into a proper young lady. And lucky tyke that she is, being the spitting image of her godfather.

On Gus' desk is a photo of the Friendly Neighbour alongside a very squishy, evil cabbage looking baby with a big pink bow on it's round head. The two look very similar.

GUS ALZAN (CONT'D)
And it's normal, I suppose, at that age. She's ten you know, and they've got all sorts going on inside them. But after a while, a father starts to worry. It's only natural. One day there will be suitors and marriage, and my sweet Bernie...

CLOT
Who is Bernie?

Gus appears to wake up from his musings.

GUS ALZAN
My daughter.

CLOT
Your daughter.

GUS ALZAN
Yes, I already said that.

CLOT
A great many pardoning upon you.

GUS ALZAN
Uh...

Clot returns to smiling foolishly. Gus looks like it's starting to get on his nerves.

GUS ALZAN (CONT'D)
So--

CLOT
And who are they?

Clot and Gus both turn to the far wall where a sad trio of guards are slumped in chairs. There are large lumps on their heads, black eyes all round and teeth missing.

GUS ALZAN
Not important.

CLOT
Who's important?

Gus grinds his teeth.

GUS ALZAN
My daughter. I want her to become a young lady. Your reputation--

CLOT
I don't have a reputation.

Gus is becoming increasingly irritable, clenching his hands into fists.

GUS ALZAN
Yes you do.

CLOT
(distressed)
But where would I keep it! I've
never seen it!

GUS ALZAN
It isn't something you keep, you
great clot...

Clot is beaming at Gus, mistaking his insult for praise. Gus runs a hand over his face, before regaining some strength.

GUS ALZAN
Down in the kitchens, they say you
are a gentleman. I wish to engage
your expertise.

Clot continues to smile.

GUS ALZAN (CONT'D)
Do you understand? I want you to
teach my daughter about manners and
flowery language.

CLOT
I can't be helping you, kindest
sirs. I would be no good.

Gus looks immediately distraught. He really is desperate.

GUS ALZAN
Please, you can have anything.

CLOT
A friend.

Gus is flummoxed.

GUS ALZAN
You want a friend?

Clot shakes his head, giggling.

CLOT
No, you silly.

Gus doesn't appreciate this.

CLOT (CONT'D)
Your daughter needs a friend.

Gus considers, staring off into the distance. He looks a little confused.

GUS ALZAN
But where can we buy one?

Clot giggles again while Gus looks like he wants to hit him. Like father like daughter.

CLOT
She can borrow mine!

IN CLOT'S MEMORIES

CLOT (V.O.)
Her name is Bubble.

A female figure stands surrounded by warm light. She is glowing, like an angel. Slowly, the light begins to fade and the figure starts to become recognisable. There are two long plaits hanging down her back.

EXT. TUMBLE. MORNING

Elisha, known now as BUBBLE, is standing before the intimidating gates of Tumble Prison (which is a large mistletoe ball) while she is thoroughly searched, arms stretched out wide. She looks very serious, dressed all in black.

INT. BERNIE'S ROOM. CONTINUOUS

A little girl in a pink dress stands in the middle of a room that has been turned on its head. Bedside tables with large cracks, paintings hanging sideways on walls, an unconscious guard slumped in the corner. This is BERNIE (10), and she is holding a weighty looking stick behind her back. She has a very toothy grin.

Sheltered in the doorway, Clot (excited) and Gus (anxious) watch as Bubble enters the room.

She looks around for a moment, there are a lot of candles in this room, before finding the least beaten up chair and sitting down. Bernie watches her every move before she slowly brings her whacking stick forward, ready to pounce. Bubble turns to her sharply.

BUBBLE

If you can behave, Bernie, I will bring you a present.

Bernie freezes. She is unsure. Bubble begins to smile.

BUBBLE (CONT'D)

You know, you're very pretty. Just like an actress.

Bernie blushes, hard. The whacking stick is lowered. By the doorway, Clot is nodding his head and grinning. At his feet, Gus has fainted.

EXT. TUMBLE. EVENING

Bubble bids farewell to an eager Clot and Gus, all of them waving to one another as she walks steadily away from the prison.

Once out of sight Elisha starts to run.

INT. THE LEE HOME. NIGHT

Elisha sits at a small round table, carving away at a wax figurine the size of her thumb. Isha is stirring a large pot over the fireplace and Toby is pacing.

TOBY LOLNESS

It's too dangerous, we haven't thought it through. The risks...

Elisha ignores him.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)

You could get hurt. I refuse to let you go back and what were you thinking, on your own, it's not safe.

Elisha is frowning now. But Isha responds in her place, smiling. She is not being unkind.

ISHA LEE

She will be safe, enough. Trust in her.

(MORE)

ISHA LEE (CONT'D)

Trust that we are all different, my Toby, and that it is our differences that allow us to walk at our own pace through life. You will take risks, but only if the risk falls upon you. You like plans and methodical thinking and clever solutions.

Toby watches Isha, before lowering himself to the table beside Elisha. For a time they watch one another, until Isha returns to the pot and begins to ladle stew into bowls. As she passes them around, Toby speaks.

TOBY LOLNESS

My father used to say something like that. Every brain has it's key. Mine is my bed, he'd say, and yours, Toby, yours is your plate. Eat before you think or you'll think badly.

Isha laughs gently at Toby's words.

ISHA LEE

Hmm I think he might just have been right.

TOBY LOLNESS

And what about Elisha?

Both Isha and Toby turn to look at Elisha, as she finally looks at Toby, firm.

ELISHA LEE

I jump into the water without looking.

INT. BERNIE'S ROOM. DAY

Bubble stands besides Gus, taking in the scene before her.

GUS ALZAN

She tells me she has not hit anyone all night. It is a miracle.

Bernie, standing on her bed, is in clear distress. She is surrounded by a cloud of cotton, her mattress split down the middle and what appears to be a large bite mark taken out of the side. There are no unconscious guards though. It is something.

Bubble steps forward, presenting the small wax figurine she has made. It looks like a little girl. Bernie, becoming excited, snatches it from Bubble and raises her stick above Bubble's head.

BUBBLE

There will be another present if you do not hit me.

Bernie pauses, taking her eyes off the doll to stare at Bubble. Bubble looks serious. Bernie screws up her face, thinking hard. She opens her mouth, stumbling around the word:

BERNIE

O...o...okay.

Behind Bubble, Gus looks ecstatic while looking fondly upon his daughter, finally seeing a hope for the future.

MONTAGE

It is industrious inside the Lee home over the next week:

...Elisha and Isha carve wax figurines together, the floor and table covered in wax shavings.

...Toby does stretches, regaining his strength.

...Elisha returns home, caught out by the rain. Isha is instructing Toby on how to prepare honey pancakes. Toby beams at the sodden Elisha.

...Toby and Elisha sleeping side by side, holding hands.

...Isha, Elisha and Toby falling into fits of laughter at a story Elisha is telling them.

...Toby sitting in the doorway, his knees curled to his chest, the crumpled execution poster by his side.

...Isha carves away at the largest block of wax yet. It is the size of a small person. Beside her, Elisha measures Toby's wingspan.

INT. GUS'S OFFICE. TUMBLE. AFTERNOON

An excited Bernie, in a frilly white and pink dress and large straw hat, is waiting with two dull BODYGUARDS and her worried father.

GUS ALZAN
I'll find you a nice empty cell.
You'll be able to have your picnic
in the warm, won't that be nice.

BUBBLE
No. I'm taking Bernie outdoors.
Normal friends have picnics
outdoors.

GUS ALZAN
But....I....well...

BUBBLE
Besides. Bernie has been doing what
she's been told. She deserves a
reward.

Bernie's eyes widen and she squeezes her stick so hard it makes a cracking noise. She's very, very excited.

GUS ALZAN
Well....of course....she....

BUBBLE
And her present is too big for me to carry. We will have our picnic and then these two can carry it back for us.

GUS ALZAN
I suppose...

Gus studies the girl before him, noting her thin arms and then looks at the rippling muscles of Bernie's guards. He looks worried, until he sees his sweet frilly daughter standing in-between the guards, smiling at him, and he melts.

GUS ALZAN (CONT'D)
Back before dark.

BUBBLE
Back before dark.

Gus watches in absolute delight, as the two 'friends' leave his office hand in hand, the guards carrying a large picnic basket for them.

GUS ALZAN
Have fun, my butterfly.

He is actually crying now. Gus frantically finds a large handkerchief and blows his nose.

LATER

Gus is sitting in an armchair beside his fireplace, reading a book. He is interrupted when one of Bernie's bodyguards sticks his head around the doorway, looking sheepish. There is a large bump on his head.

BODYGUARD

There's been a bit of a problem.

Gus leaps up from his chair.

GUS ALZAN

Bernie!

BODYGUARD

No, it's the other one.

GUS ALZAN

Bernie!

Gus is a little shocked. The bodyguard shakes his head, then regrets it and cups a hand to his bump.

BODYGUARD

The girl with the plaits. She said
she's not coming back.

Gus falls back into his armchair.

BODYGUARD (CONT'D)

She said I was to tell you, thank
you for introducing her to the
lovely lady.

GUS ALZAN

What lovely lady?

BODYGUARD

But that her present was actually a
goodbye present.

GUS ALZAN

My poor little Bernie. My poor
beautiful perfect baby girl. What
will I do?

Unsure of what to do, the bodyguard hovers awkwardly by the door, massaging his bump. Gus is distraught as he stares into the fire.

GUS ALZAN (CONT'D)

She's still afraid of the dark you
know. My poor little Bernie.

INT. BERNIE'S ROOM. CONTINUOUS

Bernie is fast asleep in her bedroom, sniffling a little and with tears on her cheeks. She is surrounded by all of her candles, flickering in the dark room. Visible in their light, the room is a broken mess, except on a table where all of Bubble's dolls are lined up like matryoshkas, perfect and unharmed.

The largest one is on the floor, leaning up against the wall. Where it is near a candle, the wax begins to slowly soften, a thick droplet sliding slowly down the side. Someone, somewhere nearby, is humming...

INT. THE LEE HOME. CONTINUOUS

Isha tries to comfort Elisha, holding her close and humming to her softly as her daughter cries and cries. As Isha looks out through the open front door and into the night sky towards the stars, a single tear falls from her eyes.

ISHA LEE
(whispered)
Be safe, my Toby.

INT. BERNIE'S ROOM. CONTINUOUS

The large wax figurine is now looking very soft as something slowly begins to push against it...from inside. First, fingers break through, then a hand followed by an arm that pulls apart the wax in large chunks until right there in Bernie's room is Toby.

Toby unfurls himself, stretching and looking around. Quietly, he sneaks past the sleeping Bernie and slips out the door, but not before he takes the smallest wax figurine and tucks it into his pocket.

The other figurines, the ones closest to the candles, have half or fully begun to melt. One of the larger ones, with it's thick wax spreading across the table, slowly upends a candle. It falls to the floor and onto the carpet. It gutters out...but then...a small flame springs to life.

INT. CELL BLOCKS. TUMBLE. CONTINUOUS

Toby is running at full speed down the dark cell block corridor, peering into every cell he passes. The light of the moon guides his way, and the blue lines upon his feet glow in the dark.

PRISONER (O.S.)
You're the Lolness son.

Toby freezes and stops, turning towards a nearby door with a barred window fitted in it's centre. He approaches cautiously, looking in at the shadowy figure. Toby pauses, but a distant alarm bell can be heard.

TOBY LOLNESS
Yes. Do you know my parents?

PRISONER
I've heard of them...

TOBY LOLNESS
Do you know where they are?

PRISONER
In the event of a fire, they'll abandon all the prisoners. They'll leave Tumble to burn.

TOBY LOLNESS
I'm just looking for my parents.
Please. Can you help me?

PRISONER
If they cannot put out the fire,
they will cast us out.

Toby looks around him, anxious. The firealarm is only growing, the distant sounds of shouting and thumping boots audible. The other prisoners are beginning to wake and shout.

TOBY LOLNESS
Look, I'm sure they'll stop the fire, but there's nothing I can do for you, I'm sorry, I have to get going.

Toby turns to leave.

PRISONER (O.S.)
Wait! There's something I should tell you.

Toby freezes one more time.

PRISONER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
You're parents--

The prisoner's words are drowned out by all the sound. Toby is forced to return to the door.

TOBY LOLNESS

What?

PRISONER

Your parents are already dead.

Toby's momentum vanishes instantly, his arms dropping limply by his side.

PRISONER (CONT'D)

You parents were executed back in the winter. I heard Mitch and Alzan talking about it. They pretended they were at Tumble in order to draw you here, so they'd be able to capture you.

Toby begins to take deliberate steps away from the prison cell, shaking his head.

TOBY LOLNESS

(whispered)

Liar. You're lying. You're all liars.

PRISONER (O.S.)

Don't trust anybody. Get out! Right now!

Toby has already turned and is running.

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

They want you! And only you!

Toby is dripping with sweat and tears as he runs the length of the prison cell corridor, still shaking his head and still desperately looking, until finally he comes upon the final cell. Two figures are huddled inside. Toby, quick as can be, snatches the keys hanging from a nearby hook and opens the door.

INT. CELL 001. TUMBLE. CONTINUOUS

Two bony faces look up as Toby enters, ravaged by hunger and fear. Toby stops, sinking to his knees. It is Mr. and Mrs. Asseldor, and held in Mrs. Asseldor's arms is their son MANO, unconscious and breathing very slowly.

TOBY LOLNESS

(faint)

My parents? Where are my parents?

The Asseldors are close to tears.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)
 Sim and Maya Lolness. My parents.
 My father is fairly tall and when
 he laughs it's like sparks flying.
 My, my whole head fits in his
 hands. He gave me a star.

Mrs. Asseldor is shaking her head, crying now.

MR. ASSELDOR
 (gently)
 We know who they are, Toby.

TOBY LOLNESS
 My mother is smaller. She smells of
 leaf bread rolled in pollen and she
 only sings when she's alone. My
 mother sings...

Toby is crying now too.

MRS. ASSELDOR
 Oh Toby. I don't think, my little
 Toby...I don't think...I don't
 think you should look for your
 parents anymore.

INT. TUMBLE. CONTINUOUS

In despair, Toby leaves the cell blocks, walking without
 meaning.

SIM LOLNESS (V.O.)
 Come back, my son.

MAYA LOLNESS (V.O.)
 We're waiting for you, Toby.

Inconsolable, Toby wanders blindly down smoky corridors,
 sirens ringing throughout the prison. No one pays him any
 attention.

ISHA LEE (V.O.)
 My Toby.

LEO BLUE (V.O.)
 Still here, Toby?

Toby ascends a winding staircase. Up, up, up...

ELISHA LEE (V.O.)
 Toby, are you leaving?

EXT. TUMBLE. DAWN

Toby appears on a balcony that overlooks the prison. Down below, Gus is held back by a number of guards as firemen hose down his home. A sooty Bernie stands, dumbstruck, to the side, whacking stick no where to be seen. Her hands open and shut, open and shut around thin air.

Somewhere nearby, a sparrow calls out over the chaos.

Toby turns away from the scene before him, and mounts the branch running alongside the balcony. On it is a large translucent fruit, pink in the morning light

The sparrow calls out again, a shadow swooping over Toby as he makes his way towards the berry. It is as if he is walking the plank to his death.

The sparrow sounds really close now, the beating of wings audible. Pausing briefly in front of the ripe fruit, Toby suddenly takes a full-body dive through the soft white flesh, burrowing inside.

A moment later, without even stopping to land, the sparrow scoops up the misteltoe berry.

INT. LAKE VALLEY. DAY

As if in a very distant memory, the soft shine of a warm sun colours everything golden. Toby and Elisha are lying on moss near the top of the valley, looking down upon the lake together.

TOBY LOLNESS
I'll miss all this.

Elisha looks over sharply at Toby's words.

ELISHA LEE
When?

Toby clamps his mouth shut.

ELISHA LEE (CONT'D)
Toby, when will you miss all this?

Toby looks at Elisha, guilty.

TOBY LOLNESS
If, well, once I get my parents out, we probably will have to go very far away for a while.

ELISHA LEE

So that's what I've been getting up
for every morning!? Going to that
horrible prison. It's all to help
you leave!?

Elisha looks upset, sitting up and wrapping her arms around her knees. Toby follows suit, but he is annoyed.

TOBY LOLNESS

Elisha, come one. What did you
think was going to happen? Try to
see if from my point of view. We,
my parents and I, we can't stay
living in a cave for the rest of
our lives.

ELISHA LEE

So go away then! If you've got to
be so far away to start living, off
you go! Nobody's stopping you.

Elisha sinks lower into her arms, hiding her face from Toby.

TOBY LOLNESS

If I do have to leave, I'll be
back. You know I'll be back. I
swear to you, I'll be back and--

ELISHA LEE

And?

TOBY LOLNESS

And I'll find you again. I will
always find you again.

ELISHA LEE

(challenging)

Why?

Toby becomes silent almost immediately.

TOBY LOLNESS

Do you really want to know?

Elisha stands up, annoyed, and goes to walk away.

TOBY LOLNESS (CONT'D)

Me too.

Elisha stops turns back to Toby, furious. He won't look away, but neither will she. Finally, Elisha runs off.

EXT. THE GREAT OAK TREE. DAY

The sparrow has stopped its flight, perched high upon a branch and pecking eagerly at one side of the mistletoe berry. However, as another bird flies by, our sparrow becomes momentarily distracted and the berry, ever so slowly, rolls and then suddenly drops!

EXT. THE GRASSLANDS. CONTINUOUS

Somewhere in a forest of grass the berry tumbles and bounces and splats, finally coming to rest. Its presence attracts shadows that emerge from behind stones and plants, their shapes indistinguishable, but the way they peer curiously at this foreign body is non-threatening. As they move in, the remnants of the berry suddenly shift and the figures immediately shrink back into the grass.

Toby, covered in the remains of the mistletoe berry, half-awake and a little dazed, sits up and looks around. When he sees nothing his drowsiness overtakes him as he drifts back to sleep, curling into a ball.

Safe and sound...