

BLACK SCREEN

Text reads:

"To be in this world but not of it."—I Peter 2:11

Ext. Rural Amish farmland Afternoon

The sound of feet pounding on pavement, as well as rapid breathing. Ezekiel appears, wearing traditional Amish garb and with fresh blood on his shirt. He is a tall, gangly teenager. He sports a cut above his left eye and bruises on his face.

EZEKIEL (V.O.):

Zed and I were finished. Vette had ruined us for each other. He had said my life was wasted and he wasn't going to watch anymore. We were finished, he had walked away. All for Vette. I was running to stop Vette from walking out on my life. I was covered in blood and smelled of cigarettes and alcohol. I knew from the angle of a certain tree that the road would prove solid and the horse would fall. I was not meant to be surprised by anything. Something about the shade of blue in the sky, the clinched fists inside me, told me that I would make it in time to stop her. I didn't care. I wanted to go all the way.

Screen blazes into white. Credits roll.

Int. EZEKIEL'S home Morning

EZEKIEL lays in bed, slowly waking up. There is low talking in the room outside his door. EZEKIEL shares the room with two younger brothers, but their beds are already empty.

Int. Family room of EZEKIEL'S home Same morning

EZEKIEL'S father, LEVI, confers with four of the settlement's other ministers: MINISTERS 1 and 2, JEDEDIAH, and HANS.

MINISTER 1:

It is payment of a pittance. There is no dishonor in-

HANS:

The Ordnung is not specific to-

LEVI:

The Ordnung codifies scripture, but scripture needs no clarification in such a case. We are being asked too much and afforded too little consideration.

HANS:

But if we accommodate in small ways-

JEDEDIAH:

They are wrong to ask.

HANS:

We have an agreement with the English world. Our community exists because of their good will.

JEDEDIAH:

A community does not exist if we give in to their picklocks. It is not our place to change tradition. We do not adapt for this world.

MINISTER 2:

Why is this the sorest issue facing us? Have we not always woven the fabric back together when holes are found?

JEDEDIAH:

We have held our tongue on too many occasions already. What has this government done aside from try to change us?

MINISTER 2:

They have allowed us to live peacefully in a violent world. They have respected our freedom and-

LEVI:

They have taken our freedom. They give money to other farmers to strain our settlements. It is called subsidizing and they do it in secret. They build concrete roads through our homesteads so that horses throw a shoe. And, now, to label ourselves for the outside world. It is disgraceful. Does not the scripture expressly forbid ornamentation in presentation?

HANS:

You truly feel ill intent in their actions?

LEVI:

I feel our community slipping away by the day. They intrude, purposely and without apology. They consider us beholden to them. We live at no one's mercy but the Lord. Small intrusions over time. Have you not built a dam to protect crops by the river? Do the big holes just appear or do the small holes gain until the dam is no more? The most important moment in a wall's life is when it admits a crack.

EZEKIEL appears from his room.

LEVI:

Ezekiel, you should take interest in your community.

EZEKIEL:

I'll just milk the-

LEVI:

The milk was gathered and stored hours ago. Your mother called for you. She worries you sleep the day away. As do I.

EZEKIEL:

I have arranged a meeting with Zed.

EZEKIEL begins walking towards the door.

LEVI:

This affects all of us, Ezekiel. You think us gravely separate from the world but that separation must be- Look when I speak to you!

EZEKIEL turns back at the door.

LEVI:

Our settlement will only survive through careful adherence to the scripture. And yet you are out the night, out the day. I see you with Zedediah, throwing rocks at each other and fighting with sticks. Why do young boys always play at killing each other?

EZEKIEL:

I am not a young boy anymore. We have not taken to the sticks since I was a child.

LEVI:

Yes, you are almost a man now. But you still play at killing. Killing each other, killing yourself. You think I don't smell alcohol on your breath, even the following morning? You play at killing, but play is not what men do. Killing is not what we do.

(Beat.)

Sleeping through your chores does not deny them. Return early for I will see your mother has new chores for you this night.

EZEKIEL turns and walks out the door.

Ext. EZEKIEL's house Seconds later

EZEKIEL spots his mother hanging wash on the clothesline and he avoids attracting her attention, sneaking away.

Ext. Dirt Road    Afternoon

EZEKIEL walks down concrete road through fields of tall grass.

Ext. Field    Shot of an Amish man on modern plow being pulled by horses.

EZEKIEL:  
(v.o.)

If I had to explain my story, I would start it there, that day that Ezekiel Raber was shot. I would have to first explain that I am Amish, and Old Order Amish at that, as Spike told me. Our ways are not your ways nor are yours ours. And what you think you know about us is all wrong. I am not a member of the Amish faith yet because I do not believe in the Amish life. We do not baptize our children. As teenagers, like me, we get to enjoy the English world so that we may truly choose to live this way. It is called rumspringa and I had been in mine for three months. Girls start younger than boys and end earlier. Some boys, like Spike, do not come back. Most of the teenagers enter the church after their rumspringa. They are baptized and welcomed to take part in life in this community. I never asked to live this life and I had chosen to leave.

Ext. Afternoon    Shot of a dairy truck driving around EZEKIEL on this lonely road

EZEKIEL  
(v.o. cont.)

This is a story that you may not understand. All that mattered at that time was Zed, who I was losing touch with, and Vette, who I was growing closer with. I had started my rumspringa with gladness in my heart for the new experience and for the freedom I would have. It was like quenching a thirst I did not even know I'd hungered for my whole life. Freedom was life to me and this was my first taste. What I never could have guessed was that I could lose myself when looking for answers. And that I could find myself only by losing

the things most important to me. This is the story of my rumspringa and no one can tell it for me.

Ext. Outside ZEDEDIAH'S home      Afternoon

ZEDEDIAH is shucking corn as EZEKIEL approaches.

EZEKIEL:

I think we should go into town. I could enjoy a milkshake, I could.

ZEDEDIAH:

That plan sounds awfully simple, quite unlike you. Also unlike you, that plan might work.

EZEKIEL:

I could beat you at this shucking, I could. Your hands are too small.

ZEDEDIAH:

The day my small hands lose out to your unspoiled fingers would be the day to walk away from all work for I surely will have learned nothing.

EZEKIEL:

Is that a challenge? Would you wager five dollars on it?

ZEDEDIAH:

Wager? We'd like to be Mennonites to engage in challenges for money. Put your back into something, Ezekiel, because it is right to work. Show you know more than the English way.

EZEKIEL:

I envy the English, I do. They certainly do not do as we. You would not find one of them here shucking corn.

ZEDEDIAH:

You'd do well to end your imaginings of the happy English world. So gifted are they at happiness that they kill each other and wall themselves away from their neighbor.

EZEKIEL:

I've come for no lecture.

ZEDEDIAH:

You've come to lose this contest and shame yourself, it would seem. Help me to move this to the back of the house and I can continue it free of your complaints.

EZEKIEL:

I complain only for fear that your ears become accustomed to the proud talk of this community. There is much talk about me. I'm dumb, Zed. I've made mistakes in their eyes and there are things I can never take back.

ZEDEDIAH:

You could never be called dumb, Ezekiel. Worldly, more like. But near everything can be taken back. Put your faith in the judgment of this community. Wise are they who listen to their neighbor, for their neighbor is themselves.

EZEKIEL:

Is that why you stick by me? Is that the way of it?

ZEDEDIAH:

No. I stick by you because you are my friend.

(Beat)

You've always led me into trouble, I consider it my duty to walk you out of it.

ZEDEDIAH picks up the wooden basket of corn and begins walking around the house.

Int. Ice cream shop in town      Afternoon

VETTE and CHRYSTENA, dressed in typical Amish garb, sit at a table by the window, each eating a dish of ice cream. VETTE catches sight of EZEKIEL talking to another Amish teen across the street. He sees her and casually waves to her. She waves back. CHRYSTENA looks to see who she is waving at.

CHRYSTENA:

There's that Ezekiel. He looks not to have shaved, doesn't he?

VETTE:

I doubt his father would allow that.

CHRYSTENA:

Does Zedediah speak of him?

VETTE:

His father?

CHRYSTENA:

No, that Ezekiel. I could favor him if you've heard good.

(Beat)

He's so handsome. He's got a walk about him, so confident. Don't you think he's handsome? What does Zed say?

VETTE:

It would be much easier if he were not around Zed.

EZEKIEL and EZEKIEL RABER are arranging a drug deal out the window. CHRYSTENA is appraising the situation while VETTE focuses on her ice cream.

CHRYSTENA:

They can't be up to good.

VETTE:

Don't even look. You are like to be doing it yourself if you look. I'm sure they have some kind of law about it and your father would pay.

A car stops in front of the EZEKIEL'S, blocking CHRYSTENA'S view. EZEKIEL RABER approaches the car and leans into the window. A gunshot rings out and everyone in the ice cream shop turns to look. There is a rush out the door, led by VETTE.

Ext. A street in town Moments later

EZEKIEL is struggling to lift RABER up. VETTE and CHRYSTENA help him and they are soon joined by ANNA and ZACH, also Amish youths. The townspeople do nothing but stare at the unfolding situation.

ZACH:

What happened?

EZEKIEL:

What does it look like? They shot him.

TOWNSMAN:

We should call the police.

EZEKIEL RABER:

No, don't call the police.

ANNA:

Where is his hat?

EZEKIEL:

They took it.

ZACH:

Is he going to die?

EZEKIEL:

No, he's still awake.

EZEKIEL RABER:

I can feel it right here. Right up against the muscle.

CHRYSTENA:

Someone should call the police.

EZEKIEL RABER:

No, don't call the police. Please.

ZACH:

This is out of control.

VETTE:

What should we do, Ezekiel?

EZEKIEL:

We have to take him back to the community.

TOWNSMAN:

I really think we should call the police. We need an ambulance, we need-

Throughout the rest, EZEKIEL is dragging RABER into the buggy.

EZEKIEL:

Send them to our community. I am taking him back.

TOWNSMAN:

But this is a crime scene. You shouldn't move-

EZEKIEL:

It is your people that did this.

TOWNSMAN:  
(Calling after them)

Damn Amish! Think you know better than us! You shouldn't even come here! We don't want you here! Could have been one of ours that got shot because of you!

CHRYSTENA:

They hate us, Ezekiel!

Someone in the crowd is calling the police on their cell phone. This makes EZEKIEL irate.

EZEKIEL:

Stop calling! Stop it! Put that thing away!

The person continues dialing and then talking.

EZEKIEL:

Just let us leave! Let us go back to our community!

CHRYSTENA:

Maybe we should wait.

VETTE:

No, Ezekiel is in the right.

Townsmen:

Let them go. Police always know where to find the trouble in this town. It's always their kids.

Ext. Paved road Afternoon

EZEKIEL and VETTE ride in buggy with EZEKIEL RABER sprawled on the bench between them. ANNA and ZACH and CHRYSTENA follow in their own buggy. It is an unusual sight as they

drive slowly, with grim determination, almost as though this is how they always handle this situation.

EZEKIEL:  
(v.o.)

We call our community ort des friedens. It means "place of peace."

VETTE:

His hands are very cold, Ezekiel.

EZEKIEL:

Is he awake?

EZEKIEL RABER coughs, sputtering blood. EZEKIEL hands the reins to VETTE and begins searching RABER'S pockets.

VETTE:

What do you look for?

EZEKIEL:

Just watch the road; it is known for twisting when you take your eyes off it.

EZEKIEL removes a cellophane wrapper filled with a powdery substance. He quickly pockets this and then takes the reins back.

Ext. Paved road Late Afternoon

Camera follows a police car driving through the farmland, an ambulance trails it.

Ext. KNUTZEN farm Early Evening

Large group of the Amish, of all ages, are gathered watching what transpires. An ambulance crewman zips a body-bag shut over EZEKIEL RABER. EZEKIEL and VETTE, each talking to a parent, are separate from the commotion. ZEDEDIAH is conferring with his father, out of sight of VETTE and EZEKIEL.

LEVI:

Ezekiel, the hour grows late.

EZEKIEL:

Time has expired for some.

LEVI:

Your chores do not expire. This excitement has surely fueled some speculation but the excitement is best saved for those who have earned it.

(Beat.)

I am pleased with you today. Returning to the community with this problem was the right thing to do. You have acted as a man does.

EZEKIEL:

I did as I thought you would. Because that makes you happy.

LEVI:

You think I disapprove your need for mischief.

EZEKIEL:

You show me such daily.

LEVI:

I disapprove of greater things than that. It would not please me to merely see you attend to your chores each day. I want to see you happy with your relationship with the Lord and what he's given you.

EZEKIEL:

How will you know when that happens?

LEVI:

Because one day you will rise before me and tend to the

milking, you'll tend to the farming. Because I will wake to find you smiling about your place in life, not even a word of apology or thanks asked. I do not demand it, but it is what will happen when the time is right, and I will be grateful that you have become a man.

EZEKIEL:

And you think you can teach me to be in such a way?

LEVI:

I did not teach you to breathe, yet you do it. Three of the calves are of age for milking. Would you tend to these cows?

EZEKIEL:

The cows would be mine?

LEVI:

The responsibility will be yours.

EZEKIEL:

And I could sell the milk? Or even the cows, if I wanted?

LEVI:

Of course. Though, I can't imagine you would want to sell your livelihood so soon.

EZEKIEL:

And I could do with the money what I please?

LEVI:

You labor the money. I think you'll see when you have your own family: The money doesn't mean anything. The money is not important and even when it goes, it will find its way back to your hands. I am giving you what I believe you earned today and it will be your responsibility to prove yourself to the Lord. He has

blessed us this day.

(Beat.)

Take the night to think it over. You would do well to live here on the ground instead of up above. You are a part of this community, Ezekiel, I hope you understand that. And you should feel honored to share this land with your family and friends.

LEVI walks away.

REBECCA:  
(To VETTE)

You will because it is right. Now wipe those eyes and let me hear no more of the English world, for once. I could have lost you this day.

REBECCA walks away. VETTE watches her leave. EZEKIEL slides up beside her.

VETTE:

What chance do I have with a mother like this?

EZEKIEL:

I think my father and your mother should have married. They suit each other. Can I walk you home?

VETTE:

I think my mother would prefer it were Zed. As would he.

EZEKIEL:

Zed is busy saving the community, as always.

ZEDEDIAH is consorting with the elders of the community, as well as younger children. He seems very in control of the situation, apparently explaining the events to men twice his age. VETTE looks to the ambulance.

VETTE:

I would love the company.

Ext. Rural farmland Early evening

EZEKIEL:

I would like to be in your favor. I know I would wrong Zed, but-

VETTE:

You become entirely too familiar, Ezekiel.

EZEKIEL:

They have not taught us the words to say what I feel, familiar or not. If I would be in your heart, it would make all right with the world.

VETTE:

But I am meant for Zed. My mother reminds me such often.

EZEKIEL:

Zed has not the ability to understand what we could have between us. Did you see them? Visiting over a dead boy not for his death but for the change it brings to their routine. My father had words for me over this. But not the right words.

VETTE:

And what of us? What are the right words?

EZEKIEL:

I am content not to be one of those that must name everything. I suspect there are no words for what I feel.

VETTE:

Oh, but you do know the words. You know every word I could ever think of and more. I do not favor him, Ezekiel, I think you know. You could tell me the right thing to say to him. I'll write it on my hand and

recite it to him.

EZEKIEL:

And then you would make a fist and be no better off.  
They have cheated us, Vette.

VETTE:

That's horrible to think of your parents and community.

EZEKIEL:

It's horrible to raise us as they have. Do you not wonder why my brother left the community? It was not for fear of being plain. It was fear of being father. He has given me cows to tend and this will give me money. I plan to leave and I would ask that you come with me. But I must know I am in your favor, for I fear I am not.

VETTE:

And what if you were?

(Beat)

Where do you think my favor lies?

EZEKIEL:

Your favor and devotion runs with the train, out of this town and into a city. You do not tutor the English girls for money, you feed on their gossip. You want to leave after your rumspringa, I know this.

VETTE:

That's a stupid thing to say. My rumspringa is just begun and you are intent on speaking familiar.

EZEKIEL:

I am trying to say what I feel for you and my confession is like to be my alibi.

VETTE:

Alibi for what?

EZEKIEL:

(Grabs her hand and pulls her close)

For feeling the skin so soft that I must cleanse with milk after touching it. For enjoying your smile that is meant for my friend. For making me realize the loss of my words to explain myself on this score.

VETTE breaks contact and steps back.

EZEKIEL:

I'm sorry. I'll apologize a hundred times for that. But you must know that a wall doesn't fall at once. Its most important moment is when it first admits a crack. You were the crack in my heart from the moment I saw you and I almost hate my friend for asking of you first.

VETTE:

Would you have me as Zed would?

EZEKIEL:

Never. It would be a crime of the worst kind to imprison you here for always. I would have you, but not the smallest bit as he would. I do not want a bride in name, I want a lifetime with you in freedom.

EZEKIEL attempts to draw her to him again, but VETTE demurs.

VETTE:

The worst part is that I do care for Zed. I do. He is a great person and my mother would love that match. But you are something I could never imagine. And I think you try to switch one for the other. I feel a bit rushed by it, something I've never felt with Zed.

EZEKIEL:

I would speak to you familiar but we should not speak of Zed in such a way. I feel as though we plot.

VETTE:

Aye, plotting is all we do on this walk.  
They have come within sight of VETTE'S home.

EZEKIEL:

Do not depart without telling me I am in your favor.  
At least give me that much, so that I may relive during  
supper and charm you within my heart until the singing.

VETTE:

But you know I must attend the singing with Zed. You  
know I am with your friend and it is you that thinks of  
trading one for the other. And don't carry your  
wounded look throughout, that face will give us away.

EZEKIEL:

Now it very much feels like plotting.

VETTE:

You are the one that plots. I have declared nothing to  
you and you ask me to run away with you. I am trying  
to do right, Ezekiel. I must depart. I will see you  
at the singing and I hope you will join us in our song.

EZEKIEL:

Every song I join tonight will be to share with you.  
Every song I sing will be with the hidden message of a  
boy that favors a girl.

VETTE walks toward her home. EZEKIEL stares after her.

Ext. Farm road Just after dark

ZEDEDIAH carefully brushes his hair and picks bits of dust  
off his suit jacket. EZEKIEL is seen sampling the powder  
retrieved from EZEKIEL RABER. ZEDEDIAH scrubs down the  
buggy with a rag. He sets off in the buggy as the sun goes  
down. VETTE waits at the intersection of a dirt road and

the concrete lane in the moonlight. Voiceover by EZEKIEL over these shots:

EZEKIEL:  
(v.o.)

There is a sort of a secret in relationships in the Amish world. Parents usually do not acknowledge that their child is with another, they play dumb in this instance. There is a beautiful tradition of playing dumb in this community. I wanted to take Vette to the singing, that night and every night after. But it was Zed that took her. They had even done the ritual of sharing a bed, in clothes, and not touching. Just being near each other and sharing their moment together. I would it were me in his place and I hoped that soon it would be.

ZEDEDIAH:

One of the cows is blind and takes to wandering. I go searching for him the field over. He reminds me of Ezekiel in that way, aye.

VETTE:

Chrystena asked after Ezekiel today. She said she could favor him.

ZEDEDIAH:

That would make me most happy. She could be one to straighten him. He's schwaddy, near be. I wouldn't say a word against him, but I think you know too. He's the cut-up, the joker.

VETTE:

Aye, he's a handful. My mother says his father near worries to death over him.

ZEDEDIAH:

His father worries only for the community, Ezekiel tells me. I must ask Ezekiel if he has talked of movement. Can't abide the thought of plowing land that my grandfather did not plow, dangerous as it seems here

after this afternoon. But we must stand against evil.

(Beat)

Will you call me your kal?

VETTE:

That is awfully sudden of you, Zedediah.

ZEDEDIAH:

Is it? I don't know. I walk you to the singing and I have shared my bed with you, as my parents and theirs before them.

VETTE:

Not exactly as your parents.

ZEDEDIAH:

Aye, that is true, surely. I would not presume to share my love in such a way before marriage.

VETTE:

I would not presume for the other that it is love.

ZEDEDIAH is silent, clearly upset.

VETTE:

Do not take it personal, Zed. I just want more time to figure out what it is that I feel. Can you just give me time before declaring us?

ZEDEDIAH:

Aye, patience is the farmer's virtue. I am sorry if I have insulted in any way. I just...I know what I feel, Vette. I am not one to pressure but right is right and I think you feel this too. I see it in your eyes at times, you do have a love inside you.

VETTE:

I love...singing. I love to...dance in the rain after the

chores are done. I love to teach the English our German and hear their gossip about television and boys.

ZEDEDIAH chuckles.

VETTE:

I love the Lord and what he's given us. I love my mother for all she has done. I do not go wanting for love, I do not suffer from a lack of it. But to love you after only a few weeks of this time between us..

ZEDEDIAH:

I will not force it. Right is right and it is meant to happen as it does. Even were I not your kal, I trust the Lord to have made the choices for us for good cause.

VETTE smiles to herself.

ZEDEDIAH:

You find that funny?

VETTE:

I had never considered thanking the Lord in times we do not get what we want.

ZEDEDIAH:

That is when you must thank him the most.

VETTE:

And why is that?

ZEDEDIAH:

For love. Because he guides us and never gives worse than we can handle. Even when he presents the rod, he also gives the fruit. The Lord's love is a wonderful thing, Vette.

VETTE:

Better than love from me?

ZEDEDIAH:

I think so. Yeah. Sure. I would lose your love to keep his, always.

They are silent for a few steps.

ZEDEDIAH:

Ezekiel will be at the singing tonight. He is coming alone, as you'd expect once you learn what to expect from him. Perhaps Chrystena could sit beside you?

VETTE:

Yes, I think she would appreciate that very much. Her kal on the other hand...

ZEDEDIAH seems perplexed.

ZEDEDIAH:

You mean she already-

VETTE:

I think you will find that some girls want many beaux at once. It is a woman's way, I think. You would expect it if you came to learn what to expect.

ZEDEDIAH chuckles and then grabs her hand as they walk.

VETTE will not look at him.

Int. Rural home

The Singing commences with standard hymnal vocalizations. Seating order is boys on one side of table, girls on other. EZEKIEL sits beside ZEDEDIAH. VETTE sits opposite ZEDEDIAH, CHRYSTENA beside VETTE. Eventually the singing stops.

ZEDEDIAH:

Has your father talked of movement? Is there fear after this day's events?

EZEKIEL:

He labors the triangles.

ZEDEDIAH:

But does he want to relocate? And would we stay here?

EZEKIEL and VETTE are exchanging covert glances. CHRYSTENA is looking at EZEKIEL with open infatuation.

ZEDEDIAH:

You are thinking of Spike's, aren't you?

EZEKIEL:

What has Spike to do with movement?

ZEDEDIAH:

I know it was he that got that Raber shot today. You do wrong in going there.

EZEKIEL:

Father approves, why do not you?

ZEDEDIAH:

Your father does not know what goes on there. I worry for you, Ezekiel, that is all.

EZEKIEL:

You worry that I would be shot as well?

ZEDEDIAH:

Or to prison. It is unlawful what you do there.

EZEKIEL:

(Loudly, to the group)

Nearer My God to Thee!

The singing resumes. There is a sudden disruption as ZACH

races into the room and shouts:

FIRE! There is a fire at the Yancy's!

The room clears and the teens run down the road in the direction of the fire. Soon it is only EZEKIEL and VETTE that remain.

Ext. Farm house Night

EZEKIEL and VETTE stand on opposite sides of a wooden fence.

VETTE:

We are taking a risk meeting at a time like this. People will talk if we are seen.

EZEKIEL:

Let them talk, I have no fear.

VETTE:

You talk casually of fear while you stand there shaking. Is it the cold? Because there is a fire down the lane that you could warm yourself at.

EZEKIEL:

It is closeness.

VETTE:

To me?

EZEKIEL:

To you and to my dreams. The whole community may burn if it likes, I walk without fear for I am in your favor, I am sure of it. I will leave and I ask again for you to join me.

VETTE:

Leave with you? Call Zed my kal? What does it profit a girl to make a choice in this community? I'll surely be wrong in any decision. I can't help thinking of

your brother.

EZEKIEL:

His mistakes are not ours. He did not leave, he was driven out. He could accept the hard labor, but not dealing with father.

(Beat)

Do you know what became of Michael? I last saw him in a courtroom. He cheated people out of money. He lied and took their money so they brought him in and let him go and then he lied and took more money so they put him in prison.

VETTE:

I had not heard of this.

EZEKIEL:

It's not something father wants known. He told me he will regret it but once, and that will be always.

VETTE:

What became of Michael?

EZEKIEL:

He used to send money. Father would not spend it. It is in a cabinet, in a jar, preserved. I think he's in California. Why are you so far from me? I can not touch you from this side of the fence.

VETTE:

Then the fence must stay. If we are seen to be close there would be no secret to keep.

(Beat)

Why are we to accept that this is any sort of party? Boys and girls sitting on opposite sides of a table, singing. I want excitement. I want to feel what you feel, Ezekiel.

EZEKIEL:

You want to see a real party?

Int. Spike's Trailer    Nighttime

Rock music blares as there are shots of teenagers drinking from a beer bong, smoking marijuana in a bong, playing a Playstation. All the teens are male and most of them Amish. There are unusual artifacts like knives in the walls of the trailer. The whole trailer is enveloped with smoke. SPIKE is, inexplicably, wearing a pirate outfit.

VETTE appears frightened by the mayhem she sees. She pulls close to EZEKIEL and will not leave his reach.

EZEKIEL:

(Over the music)

Spike is a legend! His rumspringa was like seven years ago and he never came back! He bought this little trailer right off the community and lets all the guys come over here!

VETTE:

Why have I not heard of this?

EZEKIEL:

Vette. Girls are meant to have a different rumspringa than us.

\*\*Montage\*\*

VETTE is shown taking a hit off a joint and then washing it down with a drink of beer. EZEKIEL grabs her and lifts her to spin her in circles. She laughs, looks very free. Slam dancing has ensued, nearly amounting in a brawl. EZEKIEL exits the mob and looks at VETTE. She smiles at him, there is a tender moment between them. He waves to her and she waves back.

Int. Spike's bedroom    Same night

Vette is leafing through papers on SPIKE'S dresser. She moves to a CD tower and begins to finger the selections.

Eventually she slides the closet door open a bit. Two eyes look out at her. She jumps, startled, and immediately closes the door again. She slowly opens it.

VETTE:

Who are you?

QUINN:

I'm Quinn.

VETTE:

Who put you in there?

QUINN:

It's my room.

VETTE:  
(Hesitant)

You live in there?

QUINN:

I sleep in here. And I have to stay here when people come over.

VETTE:

Well come out of there. You scared me near to death.  
The girl remains sitting.

VETTE:

You don't want to come out?

QUINN:

Daddy says I'm not allowed.

VETTE:  
(Reaching into the small bag she carries)

Would you like chocolate?

SPIKE stands at the door, unknown to VETTE.

SPIKE:

She can't have any.

VETTE jumps, startled yet again.

VETTE:

I'm sorry, I did not know she was in there.

SPIKE:

Just like a dog. The chocolate I mean, not being in the closet.

VETTE:

Why can't she have any? Does it make her sick?

SPIKE:

She's got the same problem dogs do. Chocolate has theobromine and her body can't metabolize it quickly. If she has too much of it, she'll die.

VETTE:

Why does she sleep in the closet?

SPIKE:

Because I can't afford another bedroom.

VETTE:

Where is the mother?

SPIKE:

It's not like in fairytale books.

VETTE:

What is a fairytale?

SPIKE:

The bullshit they feed the English kids so they don't give up before they start. Do you always interrogate someone you've just met?

VETTE:

Does it bother you?

SPIKE:

How many questions are left?

VETTE:

Do you always have these parties here?

SPIKE:

We're saying goodbye to a friend. Come have a beer, I'll be happy to answer all your questions in the order they are received.

SPIKE exits.

Int. Spike's trailer Moments later

SPIKE runs into EZEKIEL on his way to find VETTE

SPIKE:

Ezekiel, I have been meaning to discuss The Catcher in the Rye with you. Have you read it?

EZEKIEL:

Is it about farming?

SPIKE laughs, mildly.

SPIKE:

It follows the exploits of errant anti-hero Holden Caulfield. He has built himself a protective wall that

allows him to condescend to everyone he encounters, at least in his ongoing mental narrative. The purpose of this, incidentally, is to safeguard his own fragile ego. You see, he can not truthfully face himself, so it is easier to hate everyone he meets. But I do not broach this subject with you for that reason, errant anti-hero though you may likewise be. I also see the novel as a story about paralysis, perhaps the great contemporary theme thanks to this book and the work of Chekhov and Beckett. I feel you too are paralyzed, despite your great dreams. I believe you are sincere in your opposition to the Anabaptist life, just as I was. And I also feel you think of leaving, casting off on your own, pure Horatio Alger. You've swallowed all you can here, that is for certain.

(Beat)

But I fear you will not take this to heart. Much like Holden, you would rather fight blindfolded because you can't stand the face you will see as you swing. That face is you, Ezekiel, always. I hope you forgive me speaking so bluntly, I feel that honesty is about the best policy in this world.

EZEKIEL chuckles nervously and says

EZEKIEL:

Don't worry about it. I only understood every third word anyway.

They share a laugh together and Spike sticks his hands in his pockets and walks away.

Int. SPIKE'S bedroom Moments later

VETTE is looking out the window. EZEKIEL stands at the bedroom door.

EZEKIEL:

Vette?

VETTE:

People enjoy sneaking up on you in this home.

EZEKIEL:

I did not mean to-

VETTE:

Please come outside with me. I need air.

EZEKIEL:

I wanted to show you-

VETTE:

Fresh air is not what I need, merely the air breathed only by us.

EZEKIEL leads VETTE outside.

Ext. Night A hill that is some distance from SPIKE'S trailer. EZEKIEL and VETTE lay together beneath a tree. EZEKIEL is smoking a cigarette.

EZEKIEL:

Had I known you would prefer staring at the stars to the party, I would have gotten us some wine to share.

VETTE:

I kindly ask you to hold my hand while I make sense of this night. Nothing more is required and no more asked.

(Beat)

Except a kiss.

EZEKIEL tosses the cigarette and rolls to face her.

VETTE:

Do you notice we fit so perfectly? I would enjoy your kiss right now. Now more than ever.

EZEKIEL kisses her softly. He is clearly somewhat panicked at what he is doing. He is very agitated.

VETTE:

There is no need to be frightened. I decided that tonight I would kiss you proper while at the singing. Each moment until now has just been waiting.

EZEKIEL:

I'm not frightened of kissing you. I'm worried that I will have to stop kissing you eventually.

VETTE:

You shake as though it is cold. Yet you sweat.

EZEKIEL:

I've never had one of my longings come true before. I can't stop the shaking. I can't. I'm telling my body not to tremble and yet it does.

VETTE:

Calm, Ezekiel. Just be calm. Should we return to the party instead?

EZEKIEL:

It appears you would be very bored at that. No, I enjoy this. I want to share this moment with you.

EZEKIEL reaches between her legs and she instantly pushes him away.

VETTE:

I'm sorry. I do not mean to be forceful. This is new to me also.

EZEKIEL:

In my daydreams, this never happens in such a way.

VETTE:

I'm sorry, I'm doing this all wrong.

EZEKIEL:

No, I mean to say that there is an order in my fantasy. First we kiss and then I feel your breast and you feel my manhood. Then I touch between your legs while we kiss.

VETTE grasps EZEKIEL'S hand and places it on her breast.

EZEKIEL:

This does not frighten you?

VETTE:

I would not be here if it did.

(Considers.)

No, this feels good. It feels right, in the strangest way possible.

EZEKIEL is trembling very hard.

VETTE:

You seem more frightened than I.

EZEKIEL:

Perhaps we should rush and just finish it. So we may approach it another day when it is not new to us.

VETTE begins fumbling with his pants, trying to unbutton them.

EZEKIEL:

Let me.

EZEKIEL quickly unbuttons his pants and pulls his shirt over his head.

VETTE:

I'll do the same, I fear you would have worse success with my garments.

EZEKIEL stops and laughs.

VETTE:

What? What is it?

EZEKIEL:

Never have I dreamed it would be this...fumbling. I never considered that I am ill prepared for my own fantasies when they come true. I feel lied to by my own imaginings.

VETTE:

Do you want to-

EZEKIEL:

No. I love you, Vette. I love you as the creek loves the bed. You guide me home in all ways. I love you like-

VETTE holds a finger up to his lips, indicating him to stop.

VETTE:

You only have to say it once for me to know it is true this night. I never thought it would be anything like this. But now, I know it can be and that's okay.

A long, quiet moment where they stare at each other and consider.

EZEKIEL:

This...is better than I thought it would be, despite it all.

VETTE removes her head covering. EZEKIEL runs his hand through her hair.

VETTE:

Say it once more and we will share ourselves.

EZEKIEL kisses her tenderly. He leans back and says

EZEKIEL:

I do love you.

They begin to kiss again and the shot fades out.

Ext. Under the same tree Later in the night

EZEKIEL and VETTE hold each other in the darkness, only half dressed. EZEKIEL is lovingly pulling grass from VETTE'S hair.

VETTE:

I feel so foolish living in fear of what we have done. Do the English feel the fool when they do such?

EZEKIEL:

I've been told so as to believe it that love makes the fools.

VETTE:

I'm not sure what we've done here this night. The path we've chosen.

EZEKIEL:

We can never tell, can we?

VETTE:

Your father and my mother and Zedediah and... We've made fools of them all, for no reason other than passion. We must swear to secrecy on the bond of our love.

EZEKIEL:

I would shout my love from the rooftops.

VETTE:

Leave the rooftops be. You know we are not meant for each other in this life. But what we have done can never be spoken of.

EZEKIEL:

You talk as though this is the end.

VETTE:

An ending it may need to be. Maybe it was a mistake if we-

EZEKIEL:

(Suddenly much more alive)

Mistake? You call our act of love a mistake?

VETTE:

I call it a mistake because it has closed the doors. Before, it was possible to relate it as youthful playing. We've always played at love among each other. But now, we are stuck here. We will always have to deceive to continue in the community. If anyone learned the truth...

EZEKIEL:

I worry not what others think. I worry what you think, and did not even do that before you called it a mistake. Now I worry it very much.

VETTE:

(Visibly upset)

You do worry it, just as I. We are still of the community. We've not left yet.

EZEKIEL is silent, clearly displeased but unsure how to respond.

VETTE:

I'm sorry, Ezekiel. I seek only to speak the truth

with you. If I have to live a lie in front of the community, at least allow me the truth in your presence.

EZEKIEL:

But the truth is there was no mistake here. You are beholden to their lies. They train you to be of the community, they do it from birth.

VETTE:

I am spoken for, Ezekiel. I am sorry I've ruined what we just shared but I must leave. I am past curfew and probably smell of cigarettes.

EZEKIEL:

You're just going to leave me here?

VETTE:

I think you can find your own way home. It will not be as simple for me.

VETTE walks away, placing her bonnet on her head. EZEKIEL lights another cigarette and watches SPIKE'S trailer from afar.

Ext. Afternoon EZEKIEL and ZEDEDIAH toss horseshoes in ZEDEDIAH'S backyard.

ZEDEDIAH:

You hook your hand, you do. It throws off the balance.

VETTE and CHRYSTENA approach.

EZEKIEL:

Vette comes to visit.

ZEDEDIAH:

Do not mention I said it, but she has been odd these last days.

EZEKIEL:

It could be womanly troubles. I've heard talk of such.

ZEDEDIAH laughs.

ZEDEDIAH:

Womanly troubles would not explain her distance of late. But she brings that Chrystena with her. I think she could fancy you.

VETTE shouts out to them. The four wave to each other.

CHRYSTENA:

We've been in town where there is a man dressed as a chicken handing out slips of paper!

ZEDEDIAH:

They are paid to do such. I have heard talk of it.

CHRYSTENA:

I find it foolish. Are we meant to think he is actually a chicken?

ZEDEDIAH:

Mayhap someone will take a shot at him and we will see.

He instantly regrets this.

ZEDEDIAH:

I'm sorry, Ezekiel. I forgot you were there with Raber. My mouth runs faster than my brain at times.

EZEKIEL:

That shooting had naught to do with me.

CHRYSTENA:

We saw you talking to him that day. Didn't we, Vette?

VETTE:

I find it best to hear and see little when in town.

ZEDEDIAH tosses a horseshoe that lands right on its mark.

CHRYSTENA:

You're gifted at that, you are.

VETTE and EZEKIEL are trying to avoid unusual eye contact but are not very successful.

ZEDEDIAH:

What little did you see that day, Vette?

VETTE is uncomfortable.

VETTE:

It was more what I heard that my mind returns to.

EZEKIEL:

What did you hear?

VETTE:

Gossip about boys that could be fancied.

EZEKIEL:

I'm done to death with fancying anyone.

VETTE:

I'm sad to hear that because I know a girl that fancies you very much.

ZEDEDIAH:

I hope you will tell her that he could fancy her back. You could use a partner, Ezekiel.

VETTE:

Do you fancy her back?

EZEKIEL looks to ZEDEDIAH and then to CHRYSTENA before looking back at VETTE.

EZEKIEL:

I can not say it with a certain someone watching over my shoulder. I'd rather be free to say it just to your ear.

VETTE begins walking away. ZEDEDIAH makes a move to go after her but EZEKIEL outdistances him in just a few paces. EZEKIEL catches up to VETTE and they walk together.

EZEKIEL:

Do you run from me now?

VETTE:

I run from carelessness. You would declare love in front of Zedediah.

EZEKIEL:

No, I said-

VETTE:

I heard what you said. And I also heard words you did not say but were ready to. And I thought it best to leave.

EZEKIEL:

Just tell me you favor me as I you.

VETTE:

I have been scared for so long, Ezekiel. I have been terrified, near to be. Over you. And you have not made it easy for me.

EZEKIEL:

I never meant to cause harm.

VETTE turns and begins walking back toward ZEDEDIAH'S.

EZEKIEL:

Hold up. Just stop and let me talk to you.

VETTE:

We must get back. They think we talk of Chrystena and I would rather they think such.

EZEKIEL:

But what should I say to her? What should I-

VETTE:

Now you know my position. It will make it more difficult, but this is the path we chose.

EZEKIEL:

I just want to be in your favor, Vette.

VETTE:

You always have been.

\*\*Montage\*\*

Scenes of these four spending time together. They throw horseshoes, walk around town, have ice cream together, and other leisure activities. EZEKIEL and ZEDEDIAH take a break from building a smokehouse with Amish adults. CHRYSTENA and VETTE are there to offer them water and sandwiches. They sit by a creek, nearly falling over with laughter.

\*\*End montage\*\*

EZEKIEL:

(v.o.)

And so we continued as that. Vette and I proclaiming our love in private, sneaking kisses, holding hands in secret. I wanted to make love with her again. I was sure this time I could control my shaking. But we never had the

opportunity again. I always remember those days as the four of us together, all the while wishing it was just me and Vette. I walked Chrystena to the singings and Zed walked Vette. There was sunshine and the air had not turned cold yet. The sky was pleasant, the ground reassuring. Reliving this time in words, I begin to wish I could relive it in fact. We were young and thought the good times would last forever.

Ext. Morning A car speeds down a road through rural farmland while rockabilly music plays. The car's exhaust system has clearly seen better days and a cloud of smoke follows the car.

Int. EZEKIEL'S room Morning

Ezekiel sleeps in bed. The sound of a car as it pulls into the yard of EZEKIEL'S home and screeches to a halt. EZEKIEL wakes and listens to rockabilly music drifting through the walls of his home. He stumbles from bed in his underwear and places his hat upon his head. He steps into the main room of the house and opens the front door.

Ext. EZEKIEL'S front yard Morning

Michael is stepping out of his beaten old car. He is in his mid twenties and dresses in blue jeans and a flannel shirt. His hair is greasy and unkempt. He is clean-shaven. His back is to EZEKIEL as he fidgets with some wires hanging beneath the steering wheel.

EZEKIEL:

Who are you?

MICHAEL jumps a bit, startled. He turns around.

MICHAEL:

Zeke? Do I look that different?

EZEKIEL considers him for a second.

MICHAEL:

And look at you, wearing your hat in your underwear.  
Put some clothes on, kid.

MICHAEL chuckles loudly at his own words, in a manner that does not indicate fellowship. EZEKIEL just stares at him.

MICHAEL:

Where's father?

LEVI walks into the scene from the fields.

LEVI:

I am here, Michael. Some noise has upset the cows.  
Upset cows do not produce milk.

MICHAEL:

(to EZEKIEL)

He means me. I upset the cows with my evil rock and  
roll music.

MICHAEL laughs again in that eerie way.

(to LEVI)

Do those cows still eyeball you, father?

(to EZEKIEL)

Did he ever tell you about the cow that charged him?  
I don't think I would have believed it if I hadn't seen  
it. He didn't tell you, did he? That cow just didn't  
like the look of him. So he's approaching with his  
stool and the cow-

LEVI:

Stories are best kept until supper. You'd have us  
spend the day visiting, Michael. There is work to be  
done.

MICHAEL:

Work! Yes, work! There is always work to be done on a

farm.

MICHAEL gives another of those upsetting chuckles.

LEVI:

Are you drunk, son?

MICHAEL:

No, sir, officer. Not drunk, no way. Just tired because I was up all night drinking.

LEVI:

(To EZEKIEL)

Would you give your brother your bed this day?

MICHAEL:

If child services knew you made the boy sleep in the same bed as his brother at his age-

LEVI:

Ezekiel, why are you dressed in such a way?

EZEKIEL:

He startled me, father. I did not realize I would be seen by-

LEVI:

I do not want you stepping out that door without that you are dressed properly. And shave your face, you are not married yet.

MICHAEL:

Oh, come on, father. Don't beat the kid up.

(to EZEKIEL)

If child services knew that-

LEVI:

I do not know this child service you speak of but I do not want to learn of it in your state. Sleep in Ezekiel's bed and when you wake it will be supper and you can tell us all about your travels.

MICHAEL laughs so hard over this that he falls on his ass in the front yard. LEVI looks completely un-amused and quickly advances to help MICHAEL up.

MICHAEL:

The ground is just as hard as I remember it, Zeke. You'd do well to throw yourself on the ground now and then, particularly with a pretty girl. Most of the fun you can have in life involves falling on the ground.

LEVI grabs MICHAEL by the arm and roughly drags him to his feet.

LEVI:

Ezekiel, come.

EZEKIEL removes his hat and holds it at his chest.

LEVI:

Forget the hat. Help me get him inside.

MICHAEL is giggling nonsensically throughout. He stops suddenly and says

MICHAEL:

You guys don't have those triangles on your buggies! I nearly ran some fool into the ditch last night. I couldn't find our house and I drove all over this place looking for it. Isn't it funny that I could forget? I'm asking you father, isn't it funny that I could forget where my home is?

LEVI:

(to EZEKIEL)

Grab his other arm, we'll carry him in.

MICHAEL:

(to EZEKIEL)

I guess you're still the favorite. Father always has to have a favorite. Meet the new boss, same as the old boss.

LEVI and EZEKIEL roughly drag MICHAEL toward the door.

Int. EZEKIEL'S home. Moments later.

EZEKIEL shuts the door of his bedroom and turns to face his father.

LEVI:

Ezekiel, hear me well this day. Your brother Michael is not to be trusted as you would me or your mother. He might do you wrong if there is an advantage in it for him.

EZEKIEL:

I would not worry that he would harm me. I would not worry at all that he would do me wrong.

LEVI:

He arrives drunk in an automobile and falls in the front yard. The whole community will know of this, much to our shame.

EZEKIEL:

But, father, you have put him up here this day. You have given him my bed to rest and invited him to join our supper. If you worry so-

LEVI:

A warm bed and a warm meal I would offer to any that wants. I do not reward his behavior, as I believe you are thinking. We are here to offer compassion,

Ezekiel, just as Jesus did. We do not, um, meidung, I do not know the English way of-

EZEKIEL:

Shun, father.

LEVI:

We do not shun in this family. I hope that we may bring him back to the faith. But I warn you: Michael is not one of us anymore. He can not be trusted should he have an advantage in betraying us. Do you understand?

EZEKIEL:

This is you all over, father. I trust in my brother for the goodness in his heart and you condemn him for the rejection of this faith. If I were to reject this faith, you would not even give me the charity of a home.

LEVI:

Ezekiel! You go off without thinking because you are young, I know this well. But you will show me respect.

EZEKIEL:

Why do you not show me respect? You are quick to punish and never a good word.

LEVI:

I would not see you go as Michael has and I warn you to treat him with the care you would a snake.

EZEKIEL:

Then let him sleep in your bed! Let him be a danger to you! Why am I always the one to be put upon? The hardest chores are always mine and you give me no freedom to-

LEVI:

I give you far more freedom than your brothers,  
Ezekiel. I give you the hardest chores because I  
believe you to be-

EZEKIEL:

Your slave! You would have me as a slave!

LEVI reaches to grab his shoulder but EZEKIEL brushes his  
hand away and storms out of the room and into the yard, LEVI  
calling his name after him.

Ext. Ezekiel's front porch Moments later

A group of children are inspecting Michael's car intently.

EZEKIEL:

Away! Away, damn you, away!

The children scatter.

EZEKIEL:

(V.O.)

My heart was racing from my confrontation with father.  
Plain folk are raised never to argue but rather to  
calmly reason and debat. I had not done that this  
time. I was angry and tired. It felt good to yell at  
father like that. Normally I was worn out and felt  
guilty because I was doing something wrong. And,  
though I knew my words would probably come to haunt me  
at suppertime, I felt alive and free at this moment. I  
had to see Vette, to tell her of this great day's  
events. I knew now that I had the courage to leave.

Int. VETTE'S home Afternoon

VETTE and REBECCA wash the dishes.

VETTE:

Did father love me, mother?

REBECCA:

Love you? He adored his family, Vette. We were lucky to have that one. Loved me clear as day and all the night long. Many of our people are less a partnership than wed by circumstance.

VETTE:

And father was not in such a way?

REBECCA considers for a moment.

REBECCA:

Your father was the finest man this community ever produced. All the girls were taken with him, not just for his beauty but for the beauty of his deeds. You know the Yoder's barn?

VETTE:

Aye, mother.

REBECCA:

Your father chose to build that one summer for their loss. Even though they had defied the Ordnung and brought ruin on themselves, your father was the first voice of compassion that spoke up. He was only a teenager at that time, barely more than your age. But he was strong and his heart was always in the right place. He was a very good man, the best of men. It's a shame that the Lord called him so early.

(Suddenly sour)

You've been seeing that Ezekiel again, haven't you? Tell me, if our barn burned down, as the Yoders', would that Ezekiel build us a replacement?

VETTE:

There is more to love than building a barn.

They begin to laugh.

REBECCA:

Vette, we are paired for better or worse. If your father had not passed away so young, perhaps I would be content to let you make mistakes. You learn from mistakes, you see. But I already hire out the service of the farm. I rely on the labor of others that we may live. And I know times have always been tight, that is why I never objected to your teaching the English girls our language, though it pains me. I see you growing worldly, just as that Ezekiel.

VETTE:

But why can I not choose who I marry? It does not make me worldly to be in such a way. It should be my choice.

REBECCA:

We are women, Vette. Our choices are never easy. They do not understand that we must sacrifice, that we must do that which we do not want. And I know you will do so because you are my child and I love you.

VETTE sees EZEKIEL crouching behind a woodpile outside the window, out of REBECCA'S view. He motions VETTE to come outside.

VETTE:

I wanted to meet Chrystena and Zedediah. Can you finish alone or should I-

REBECCA:

Aye, take your leave.

VETTE puts the dishes down and walks towards the door.

Ext. VETTE'S front yard viewed from a distance Moments later

EZEKIEL grabs VETTE and pulls her close. He is talking rapidly and motioning with his arms, clearly very excited. VETTE smiles and hugs him. They embrace for a long period and then begin to kiss. The camera pulls back to reveal CHRYSTENA watching them from a hill.

Int. EZEKIEL'S home Early evening

MICHAEL walks through the house towards the front door. DANIEL sits whittling a block of wood and MICHAEL stops to kneel down with him.

MICHAEL:

I whittled much when I was your age. What are you making?

DANIEL:

I carve a minister.

MICHAEL:

Do you carve father?

DANIEL:

It could be father, suppose.

MICHAEL:

I carved soldiers with guns. Father did not like it.

DANIEL:

Is that why you had to leave?

MICHAEL:

No, that was not the reason.

(Beat)

Does mother look after you well? Or do you not need her to do such now?

DANIEL:

Mother and father are always fair.

MICHAEL:

No, no. You do that wrong. Swing the blade outward,

away from yourself. You may cut yourself pulling it to your body like that.

DANIEL:

Have you come to stay, Michael?

MICHAEL:

If father approves, I would like that.

JACOB comes up behind them. He taps MICHAEL on the shoulder and MICHAEL turns to face him.

JACOB:

I do not remember you.

MICHAEL:

Nor would you. What is that you have in your pocket?

JACOB:

Mother is teaching me to sew dolls for my sisters.

MICHAEL:

She is right to teach you. Sewing is a skill and all skills are worth having.

ANNA has exited the kitchen and is now standing at the edge of the room, listening to what her sons say.

MICHAEL:

Mother, do we wait for supper?

ANNA:

Aye.

(Beat)

It is good to have you here, Michael. I worry less when you are safe with your family.

Ext. EZEKIEL'S front porch Early evening

LEVI sits copying passages from a Bible into a ledger.  
MICHAEL exits the house and steps onto the porch.

MICHAEL:

Mother says we wait for supper.

LEVI:

We wait for your brother to return. Then we shall have supper.

(Beat.)

Have you stories to tell me, son? Stories you would not share before your mother?

MICHAEL:

If you mean drugs, I've been clean for several years now.

LEVI:

I do not know this word clean as you use it. Clean is free of dirt and you clearly are not that.

MICHAEL:

You never gave me a chance, did you? If I made a single mistake, you were ready to tear my head off.

LEVI:

You did make mistakes, Michael. You made mistakes that could have been corrected but were not for lack of care.

MICHAEL sits in a chair and they stare out at the sunset.

LEVI:

Why have you returned here, Michael?

MICHAEL:

Why do you think?

LEVI:

If it is for money-

MICHAEL:

The world doesn't revolve around money.

LEVI:

The plain world does not...you're English world... But why have you come? What do you need, if not money?

MICHAEL:

"But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you."

LEVI:

You seek redemption.

MICHAEL:

Father, I have lived in the English world for six years now. I have been taken in completely as one of them with no thought given to the idea that I am not one of them. Some people look at me oddly for my speech.

LEVI:

Your vulgarities.

MICHAEL:

No, father, no vulgarities. I mean the way you speak, the way I was taught. We may be able to speak the same language as they, but we talk differently. It is the way of the plain people. Many ask me if I was raised on a farm and I oblige them that I was, but I do not go into details. And do you know why?

LEVI:

Because you are ashamed of your community?

MICHAEL:

Because they do not understand us. Because they think one thing about us, several one things, but none of them are true. How could I explain to them that you have a refrigeration system to store the milk? Yes, it is powered by gasoline, but they would think us hypocrites.

LEVI:

I do not know this word.

MICHAEL:

Those that profess belief in one thing and then do the opposite. Like how we may ride in cars, but not drive them.

LEVI:

Do they not realize how we have made accommodations to their world in our lives?

MICHAEL:

They do not see you as separate, father. They do not think the plain are divinely inspired. They think you fools. They think you wrong on every issue. And that you are foolish for not embracing the freedom this country provides.

LEVI:

Our people moved here for that freedom. And there is less of the freedom available now than there was that day.

MICHAEL:

I know the story well. And I'm trying to tell you something here, something that you will never understand isolated here in this community. Something that Ezekiel could probably tell you if he was just a little older and a little more free. They don't understand that the freedom to directly participate in

the fate of this country is also the freedom to not participate. Do you understand me?

LEVI:

Why are you giving me this lesson this day, son?

MICHAEL:

I am telling you their misunderstandings of you for a very simple reason. Because you also misunderstand them. They are not an evil people, they do not take drugs and kill each other for fun. Many of them also follow the word of the Lord, although they believe it different than what you believe. It's all just a misunderstanding between these two peoples. And I think if I can find redemption with them, who are less inclined to give it, I shall be able to find it here, with you.

Int. Ezekiel's dining room Early evening

LEVI sits at the head of the table, his wife ANNA sits to his right with EZEKIEL'S two sisters, MARY and KATIE, on her side of the table. The other side features EZEKIEL and his two younger brothers, DANIEL and JACOB. MICHAEL sits at the opposite end of the table. The family is engaged in a silent prayer. They finish this presently and begin to eat, silently, for a minute. Throughout the conversation, members of the family eat voraciously and belch openly and without shame.

MICHAEL:

How is the farm, father?

LEVI:

We could use an extra hand with four of these at school yet, but we manage. Ezekiel is tending to three cows and that helps. Hershberger spares his eldest to tend to the plowing while Ezekiel figures out his future. You remember Hershberger's son?

MICHAEL:

Amos, was it?

LEVI:

Yes, I thought you might. It was he that confessed your sin to his father.

EZEKIEL:

Where have you been off to, brother?

MICHAEL:

Well, it's actually very interesting. I've been working for a company that does work for the government. I can't give you the details on the job, but it's something I'm uniquely suited for with my background.

EZEKIEL:

Is it enjoyable work?

MICHAEL:

It can be tedious. I know well that it is important and I think it is less demanding than most jobs a man can have. I really wish I could tell you about it but I had to sign confidentiality agreements for my security clearance.

ANNA:

That is wonderful, Michael.

LEVI:

You find work with the hands too demanding?

MICHAEL:

I don't object to hard labor as such, no. I spent several years in construction, just like I might have here. But I got lucky, made the right friends. After three years I was able to work as a liaison for the union. But now I'm focused on using the potential of my mind to earn a living. It satisfies me more than lugging bricks.

ANNA:

I would like you girls to help me collect from the garden tomorrow.

The girls nod.

Anna:  
(to Michael)

Does it pay well, this job?

MICHAEL:

I am honestly so fulfilled by my occupation that I do not require much money to be happy. I am comfortable and worry not, if that is your answer.

LEVI:

And have you registered for the armed forces?

MICHAEL laughs.

MICHAEL:

Father, they have not drafted anyone since you were a boy. That is not the way of the world now.

LEVI:

I hear of the dangers from others, I hear very well from the English I sell milk to. They are worried for their children's safety, which makes me worry more for my own.

EZEKIEL:

Father, can I take Michael a walk around the community after supper?

LEVI:

We pray after supper. Will you be prepared for your chores tomorrow if you go for a walk around so late?

MICHAEL:

He might as well. I will be sleeping in our bedroom, yes?

LEVI:

Unless you know another suitable room in this house.

MICHAEL:

I planned to walk around anyway. I need to clear my head. So I would probably wake him coming back. He might as well walk with me, then I can at least hear a voice as I walk.

EZEKIEL:

Can I, father?

LEVI considers.

LEVI:

This is a dangerous time for us. You saw what they did to the Raber boy. It might not be safe to-

EZEKIEL:

I'll be with Michael, father. We'll be safe.

LEVI chews his food.

EZEKIEL:

If you will not give your permission to walk this night, I will sleep elsewhere. I can do my chores when the sun rises whether I've had a fresh sleep or not.

MICHAEL:

No, Ezekiel, you must do as father wishes.

EZEKIEL looks to LEVI impatiently.

LEVI:

Stay close to our home, don't wander the community all night. I think we are safe here so do not wander too far. And absolutely back and in bed by middle night or you will not attend the singing this Sunday.

Int. EZEKIEL'S living room Right after dinner

MARY and KATIE play with raggedy dolls while EZEKIEL'S younger brothers roll small wooden balls across the floor, obviously in some kind of competition. ANNA reads the Bible silently to herself. LEVI and MICHAEL, are knelt in prayer in the middle of the room. EZEKIEL watches them.

Ext. EZEKIEL'S barn Late night

EZEKIEL retrieves a bottle of booze he has hidden in the barn.

Ext. A road running through farmland Late night

EZEKIEL and MICHAEL walk silently down the road, passing the bottle back and forth.

MICHAEL:

Why were you so eager to come out with me?

EZEKIEL:

I thought perhaps you could help me make sense.

MICHAEL:

Make sense? What do you have to make sense of?

EZEKIEL:

I want to know if it was worth leaving the community. Is the English world a good place to live?

MICHAEL:

What in the hell do I know about it? Do I like it there more than here? Sure. But I had no choice but to leave. They caught me in a sin and I would not make confession. I wasn't wanted here anymore.

EZEKIEL:

What was your sin?

MICHAEL:

You wouldn't understand. I thought I was in love.

EZEKIEL:

What was it like to love that girl?

MICHAEL:

I said I *thought* I was in love that time. It turned out I wasn't or she wasn't or...I don't know. But it wasn't love. Love is hard to make sense of. The heart likes to play tricks on you.

EZEKIEL:

Do you have to lose yourself in love?

MICHAEL:

I don't think it is love if you can find your way out again.

EZEKIEL:

I ask because I think...well, I'm not sure. I think I may be in love so I'm asking if I am.

MICHAEL:

You, in love? How could you be in love? You're just a kid.

EZEKIEL:

Well, I can't quite describe it. It's like every thought I have is about her in some way. She's the first thing I think of when I awake and the last thought I have before I sleep. And all through the day it is organizing what I'll say about each event so that she experiences them too. It feels like things haven't

really happened unless I can share them with her. And I try to make her laugh and I tickle her when we're alone because she laughs.

MICHAEL:

I assume she's from the community, yes?

EZEKIEL:

Yes, she is.

MICHAEL:

Then marry her. Marry her and raise a family here. You're never going to feel like this for anyone else on these stupid farms. Marry her and be done with it.

EZEKIEL:

That's the problem, Michael. She is wanted by my best friend.

MICHAEL stops suddenly and begins to bray laughter.

EZEKIEL:

This is not funny.

MICHAEL:

Zeke, sometimes we only want what we can't have. If your friend did not want her, neither would you.

EZEKIEL:

That's a lie!

MICHAEL:

No, it's the truth. You only want what you can't have and once you get it, you don't want that anymore. Tell your friend about your feelings and the whole thing will blow over. It's the only honorable thing to do.

EZEKIEL:

What do you know of it? You've only ever *thought* you were in love.

MICHAEL:

I said *that time* I only thought I was in love. I've been in love since. And those girls cleaned me out, took everything I owned and practically castrated me in the bargain. I loved them and they destroyed me.

EZEKIEL:

Why would you do that? Why would you love someone that can do that to you?

MICHAEL pauses and considers.

MICHAEL:

Because sometimes you're so desperate for love, you'll take whatever you can get. It's not the right thing to do, but it's hard to be unloved. It's not just the feeling unloved. It's feeling like you have so much love to give and there's no one to give it to. It eats at you, holding on to all that love like that. It's probably worse than being unloved because it makes you more aware of being unloved.

EZEKIEL:

What shall I do, then? We want to move away together.

At this point they are approaching the front of EZEKIEL'S house.

MICHAEL:

Zeke, you are not ready to begin living with the English. You wouldn't make the right friends and they would eat you alive. Who are your friends here? Zed? Do you run with Spike? Look how poor your choices are already. No, you must stay here. Stay here where it's safe.

They have arrived at the front porch of the home.

EZEKIEL:

(indicating the tree in the front yard)

You call it safe here?

Hanging from a rope around a tree branch is a figure in a suit with a broad-rimmed hat.

Int. EZEKIEL'S home Early morning

Much of the community's male population, as well as a few females, is gathered in the house, talking quietly amongst themselves. There is an air of fear in the room. Three of the ministers (LEVI, HANS, and JEDEDIAH) are assembled at the front of the room.

HANS:

We give our thanks that all are here to witness our words this day. As the scripture says, "All who humble themselves before the Lord shall be given every blessing and shall have wonderful peace."

LEVI:

We know you worry much this last night's events. Yet walk with no fear, for He walks with us.

AMISH MAN 1:

It is a threat on our very lives, elder Levi. I do walk with fear, I do.

AMISH MAN 2:

Aye, not fear of the Lord's will but fear of the English.

EZEKIEL:

Father, why did they do such a thing?

AMISH MAN 2:

The same reason they shot that Raber boy.

LEVI:

We have kept from our children much of what has happened. It is only natural that he should wonder so why we are hated enough to receive this threat.

(To EZEKIEL)

Listen well and tell your brothers and friends. The English are quite unhappy with us and may mean to do us harm.

EZEKIEL:

But why, father?

HANS:

They call it a consolidation.

LEVI:

They wanted to fold the school in town into a larger one the next town over. This was very unpopular with this town and they fought it.

HANS:

And it was endangering our community's ways. They were to enact new laws to require our children to attend these outside schools, and for far longer than is needed.

JEDEDIAH:

It is outrageous that we should be beholden to the government in such a way. We school our own children and we teach them what is needed for life in this community. We have no need of what they call "higher" education.

LEVI:

So we were asked to vote for this folding in of the school in exchange for our continued freedom on this score.

JEDEDIAH:

We had no other option. If we had not agreed to this deal, our very livelihood would have been taken. Our children made to adapt to the English world, our beliefs trampled upon; it was an insult to us and it threatened us.

AMISH MAN 1:

There are those here who believe they use the laws in this way to demand change of us.

AMISH MAN 2:

That's right.

AMISH MAN 3:

We are indebted only to God's law, and they demand we follow their own. It is an insult.

LEVI:

We voted for the consolidation, as they call it, so that they would leave us to our rights. And we would do it again on every instance because it is what is demanded. We must protect our children and our community above all else.

EZEKIEL:

But if you agreed to this deal, you have betrayed our townspeople on an issue we do not even care about.

HANS:

It was never about what we thought of the consolidation, young Ezekiel. It is about keeping our independence. They have no right to make us adapt to their rules. And they are not our community, they merely live near it.

LEVI:

All, hear these words well. We are in the right because we are following the Lord's wishes. We will

never turn away from that.

AMISH MAN 1:

Yes, we must protect the community to serve the Lord.  
But the English are a danger.

LEVI:

I want you all to take great care with your children.  
Do not allow them to enter town without your eye on  
them. They have shot one of ours already and now there  
is this hanging straw-man on our doorstep. They are  
sending us a message of hate and violence. We suspect  
that fire at the Yancy home. The Kneutzen's also had a  
buggy tipped over. My brother's house was thrown over  
with paint.

HANS:

We would that none of you go to town if you can avoid  
it. But particularly the children because their  
children are a violent sort. It needs to be made plain  
to the children that they are not safe there anymore.  
We must protect the community. Go to ground, if we  
can.

There are murmurs of agreement and EZEKIEL slips outside.

Ext. EZEKIEL'S yard and the road running past it Minutes  
later

EZEKIEL walks. He is passed at some point by MICHAEL'S  
speeding car, driven erratically.

EZEKIEL:

(v.o.)

I can not say if it was for the consolidation that they  
hung that strawman. I know that Raber was Spike's and  
he was shot for drugs, but I could never tell father  
that. Hearing that we were hated made me feel alone  
and unwanted. It wasn't a good feeling after the joy  
of Vette and my talk with Michael. For so long I had  
felt tired and guilty, I had felt like I was doing  
something wrong. Michael took me out of myself, he made  
me okay with how things were. And Vette, she made me

the person I wanted to be. But if father wanted to believe that this was all down to the consolidation, that was fine by me. I would rather he not forbid me from visiting Spike's because I did not want that guilty feeling when I did so.

Ext. EZEKIEL'S yard Moments later

EZEKIEL'S two younger brothers are painting the base of the tree with white paint. EZEKIEL walks past them and down the road. MICHAEL zooms past him in his car, on his way to the house. MICHAEL stops the car and exits. He is bleeding from a cut above the ear, his nose and lips swollen. He drops his keys while putting them in his pocket and reacts dramatically, screaming and slamming the car door over and over. His breakdown draws the ministers outside.

LEVI:

Michael, what has happened to you?

HANS:

Was it the townspeople? Did they hurt you?

MICHAEL begins sobbing while laughing.

LEVI:

Are you drunk again?

MICHAEL:

I need money, father. I need money or they're going to kill me.

Ext. VETTE'S front yard Afternoon

EZEKIEL:  
(V.O.)

While Michael was finally telling the truth to father, I was about to learn of my own frightening news.

VETTE hugs EZEKIEL, in tears. She is clearly very distraught. She begins talking, though we hear no words.

Her face suggests the seriousness of the situation.

EZEKIEL:  
(V.O. continued)

Vette was with child. We had created one that night, on the hill overlooking Spike's trailer. She was scared and so was I. There was now no way that we could stay in the community for we had committed a very grave sin: fornication. Our sin could never be hidden here, it could never be denied if we stayed. There was only one thing to do. I love Vette. I have no doubt of that in my mind. And had we left, perhaps together we could have grown old. I came so close but I lost us both.

Ext. EZEKIEL'S front yard Early evening

MICHAEL'S car is now absent, though EZEKIEL pays no mind to this. He resolutely marches across the yard to the stable and flings the door open.

Int. The stable Same time

The three berths where EZEKIEL'S cows reside are now empty. EZEKIEL is crushed. He falls to his knees and clutches his head with his hands. This only lasts a second before he jumps up and rushes out of the stable.

Int. EZEKIEL'S home Moments later

EZEKIEL rushes through the door, full of rage. LEVI stands at a window, staring at nothing.

ANNA:

Ezekiel, it is suppertime.

EZEKIEL:  
(To LEVI)

You did it, didn't you? You sold my cows!

LEVI:

Calm yourself, son.

EZEKIEL:

No, damn you, look at me!

LEVI turns suddenly and advances on EZEKIEL very quickly.

EZEKIEL:

He did it, mother! He knew that I was leaving so he sold the cows! He's got me trapped here! He doesn't want any of us to ever make it out of here!

LEVI:

Those cows you tended were only a responsibility that you earned, they were never your property.

EZEKIEL:

That's a lie! That's a lie!

ANNA:

Calm yourself, Ezekiel.

EZEKIEL:

(near tears)

He's trying to change his story now! He said they were my cows! He said it! They were my cows and I could sell them if I wanted to leave! That's just what he said!

LEVI:

They were this family's cows and I sold them to help the family. I did not want to and I thought it unfair to you, but it had to be done.

EZEKIEL:

All he does is lie! Says one thing and then does the other! He won't let me go unless he's chosen to run me off, just like he did Michael!

LEVI:

I did this for Michael, son.

EZEKIEL:

That's not true! Michael is doing great! He's free and he's made it on his own, no help from you! I'll go live with him if I have to! I'll stay with him and never come back! I won't look back, I'll never look back!

LEVI:

He was conning us, Ezekiel. He was using us to hide from bad people he owed money to. I put right that debt but it took this family's money. Didn't I warn you? Didn't I warn you that he was not to be trusted?

EZEKIEL:

You're the one that can't be trusted! You're the one that sold my cows to keep me here! You didn't even have the decency to tell me about it, you did it while my back was turned! What do I do with my life now? What can I do?!

LEVI:

You have a wonderful life here with a family that loves you and a community that will provide when you are wanting. This *is* your life, Ezekiel.

EZEKIEL:

It's your life, you liar! It's your life and you force it on me! I don't want your life, I want my own life!

EZEKIEL storms out of the house.

Ext. SPIKE'S trailer Late night

EZEKIEL is walking within close proximity to the trailer. As he closes the distance, he notices MICHAEL'S car in parked outside. Advancing closer, he sees MICHAEL step out of the trailer, laughing loudly, and being patted on the back by SPIKE. MICHAEL sees EZEKIEL and they lock eyes. It is uncomfortable. MICHAEL smiles and shrugs. He flashes a peace sign and climbs into his car. EZEKIEL runs toward him

and then chases the car as it pulls away. He shouts MICHAEL'S name after the car but it accelerates quickly. He watches the car disappear into the distance. SPIKE walks out, this time in a ninja costume. He puts an arm around EZEKIEL'S shoulders and deftly slips a bottle of alcohol into EZEKIEL'S pocket with that hand.

SPIKE:

Screw it, man. Get wasted.

SPIKE walks back into the trailer and EZEKIEL begins to drink from the bottle.

Ext. VETTE'S home Daybreak

VETTE brushes her hair in her room. The sun is still coming up. A pebble hits her window but she does not react. Another hits and she is startled. She rises and crosses to look out the window. EZEKIEL stands there, his breath visible in the cold. VETTE cautiously sneaks out of the room.

Ext. VETTE'S home Moments later

VETTE:

Ezekiel, you must not be here.

EZEKIEL:

We are ruined, Vette.

VETTE:

Do not speak in such a way.

EZEKIEL:

We are ruined here.

VETTE:

Come, we must get away from the house. If my mother sees us together there will be trouble for me.

EZEKIEL produces the bottle of booze and takes a hit from it.

VETTE:

Drinking! At this hour!

EZEKIEL:

There's no shame in dying young, is there? If you just can't make it... If everything is against you and you have to give up...

VETTE:

I don't know what you speak of, but we must find a better place to speak.

EZEKIEL laughs loudly and VETTE puts a hand over his mouth. She begins to drag him away.

Ext. A patch of land by a small creek Minutes later

VETTE sits EZEKIEL down and holds his hand.

VETTE:

What has driven you thus? What is wrong?

EZEKIEL:

The cows. They're gone. Father sold them.

A painful realization begins to sink in on VETTE, clear in her face.

VETTE:

Why? Why did he-

EZEKIEL:

We are stuck here. And you, with child. Oh, Vette, I've let us down. I could not do what even I desire. And you are the one to pay.

VETTE:

We have to think about this. What can we do?

EZEKIEL:

There is only one thing to do. We will marry as soon as possible and hope no one does the math. We will stay here as married. It might even be nice, able to share your company for life.

VETTE folds EZEKIEL'S hand back over itself and grips the outside as she looks into his eyes.

VETTE:

I can never marry you, Ezekiel. It is forbidden by my mother.

EZEKIEL stares back at her, at a loss for words.

VETTE:

There is nothing to be done. We are finished, it is true.

EZEKIEL:

Why must we be finished?

EZEKIEL lifts her hand to his chest.

EZEKIEL:

It still beats. It runs through with love for you. It is only with the love of you that it will continue to beat.

VETTE:

Don't say that.

EZEKIEL:

I will die without you, Vette. You are my heart.

VETTE:

Someone put in you the idea that love is all that is needed. Love is great but duty is a true beast. Duty devours and re-carves the shape it inhabits. Would you ask me to throw away my life and responsibility to be with you? What a person you think I am.

EZEKIEL:

Then stay here and marry me. This is not the place I would choose to live, but I will go anywhere to be with you. You are my life now, Vette. You are my everything, my all.

VETTE:  
(crying)

I can not do it, Ezekiel. I can never be with you that way again. I must learn to love Zedediah. There is something we can do though that will save us from shame. Something that *I* can do. The girls I teach our German, they told me about ending the child.

EZEKIEL:

What mean you, 'end the child'?

VETTE:

There is something the English do where you are no longer with child.

EZEKIEL:

We could never. It would be the worst sin. If it was found out...

VETTE:

I have sinned enough for one life, to be with you. And I do not regret loving you the way I did but I am a woman. Men do not understand the pain of being a woman. More is asked of us. I have betrayed so much, do not make me betray more. I will do this because it is what must be done. And then I will come back and I will marry Zed. And you and I will see each other and walk right past.

VETTE pushes his hands back into his lap and lets go, a tear streaming down her face.

VETTE:

I will take the train to the city after lunchtime. I will say I'm going to town to buy a gift for Zed. And I will return this evening and spend it with him. We are finished, Ezekiel. We acted as children and now it is time to put our toys away. It says it in the scripture. "When I was a child, I spake as a child and I thought as a child and I reasoned as a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me." Do you not see that it speaks directly to you, Ezekiel?

EZEKIEL:

And how does that end? What for does it go on to say? "And now these three remain: Faith, hope and love. The greatest of these is love." Do you not see how that speaks to you?

EZEKIEL stares at her while she can not meet his eye.

EZEKIEL:

Kiss me, Vette. Just kiss me. I don't care if you don't mean it. I need your kiss again.

VETTE sobs.

EZEKIEL:

It started with a kiss, will you not at least end with one?

VETTE:

It is never one kiss with you, Ezekiel.

EZEKIEL:

Say that you don't love me.

VETTE:

I can not make it about love anymore. I do not make this choice for lack of love for you, I do it despite

loving you so much. Now, go. Go and do not look back. Do not speak to me in a common way again and do not ever carry me in your heart again. You owe me that, at least. You owe me the acceptance of what must be. God himself has created this path we must take, never mind the attempts we made to go elsewhere. Go now and don't look back sadly. Do not believe we can cheat God as we have cheated the ones we love.

(Beat.)

Surrender yourself to the Lord's will and be thankful we are on the right path now, Ezekiel. I beg of you to let the Lord's love into your heart.

EZEKIEL:

It was never the Lord's love that I longed for.

EZEKIEL storms off, clearly very upset.

Ext. ZEDEDIAH'S home Later that morning

ZEDEDIAH lays in the front yard, staring up at the sky.  
EZEKIEL walks toward him from the road that passes by.

ZEDEDIAH:

Ezekiel, do you ever not see the sky for what it is?  
Have you looked long and hard at the sky and seen...what?  
Blue blanket? And patchwork of clouds?

EZEKIEL:

I know not what you speak of.

ZEDEDIAH:

You've been drinking.

EZEKIEL:

You look as though you have also.

ZEDEDIAH:

No, I need no alcohol.

(Beat)

I am glad you are here. I was to seek you out today anyway, before... Well, I guess before I realized going to ground was the best for this morning. I see that sky up there and it puts me in mind of a lake. But lakes are never this color, so it can not be that. And it could not be my home as there are no sharp corners there. I think maybe it is freedom. The freedom that comes from living life devout and plain.

ZEDEDIAH rolls onto his side and looks up at EZEKIEL, suddenly taking great notice of him.

ZEDEDIAH:

They think it harder, the English. They think us terrible lovers of pain for refusing to have their electricity and a gun in the home and using our fists to solve things. They work for someone else to get money to buy what they need from someone else's labor. And that is where we are different, not the electricity and automobiles. And it is far easier for us to tend to the fields and the cows, to make what we need with our own hands, and it is right to do that. Do you understand me?

EZEKIEL:

I do. I do see your thinking and I find myself agreeing.

ZEDEDIAH:

Good. I'm glad you understand that you should earn what you get. And when I realized this, it was then that I had a laugh over what Chrystena told me. She said she had seen you kissing Vette.

EZEKIEL:

No, I-

ZEDEDIAH:

And now I ask but once, once is all I need. Will you swear before God that what I heard was mistaken?

EZEKIEL:

I would swear before any god.

ZEDEDIAH:

Get down on your knees before God and swear to me that you did not betray me in such a way.

EZEKIEL gets down on his knees and leans forward in prayer. Unexpectedly, ZEDEDIAH punches him. EZEKIEL is knocked a bit senseless and falls backwards onto his ass. Blood begins to stream from his nose. ZEDEDIAH leaps up and turns on EZEKIEL.

ZEDEDIAH:

You have profaned yourself before God! You lie to me in his name!

EZEKIEL:

Zed, I didn't!

ZEDEDIAH:  
(near tears)

Have you lain with her? Have you ruined the girl I love?

EZEKIEL:

She wants to be with you.

ZEDEDIAH:

She *has been* with me. She has been mine all along and you try to steal her. What did you do? What lies did you tell her?

EZEKIEL:

She will return to you this afternoon and forget about me. She said we were wrong and that you are her kal.

I've just come from hers and she will come back to you when she returns.

ZEDEDIAH:

Returns from where?

EZEKIEL instantly clams up. There is a silence between them. Suddenly, ZEDEDIAH attacks EZEKIEL, tackling him and raining blows upon him. EZEKIEL does not fight back but tries to deflect ZEDEDIAH'S punches. Eventually, the attack ends.

ZEDEDIAH:

Now I am in sin. Now it is I that goes wanting for the Lord's love. Leave here, Ezekiel. Do not come back and do not ask after me. We are finished. Your life is wasted and I will watch no more. I must... I must cleanse your blood from my hands so that I may pray forgiveness from what I've done.

Ext. Rural farmland Afternoon

EZEKIEL drives his buggy madly down the road that runs through this farmland.

The horse suddenly pitches forward, nearly rolling. The buggy is thrown violently, nearly off the road. EZEKIEL approaches the horse to ascertain the problem. The horse has thrown a shoe on the pavement and there is a lot of bleeding. EZEKIEL inspects the horse briefly and then begins to run.

EZEKIEL:

(v.o.)

I knew where this road would lead, as I had followed it to town all these years. I had told Vette her devotion lay with the train, out of this town. And that was proving true but I never knew that I would find in myself the desire to stop her. I had turned against all that I had told her because I loved her so. Nothing could stop me save myself and I wasn't to be trusted anymore.

Ext. Train station's platform Afternoon

VETTE sits reading a book, a train ticket in her hand. She is in repose, silent and withdrawn. Many of the townspeople look sideways at her, some whisper behind their hands while stealing glances at her. VETTE stands firm, brave. The porter calls for all aboard and VETTE puts her book away and begins to board the train. At this moment, EZEKIEL appears on the platform. He is disheveled, beaten up, and clearly out of breath. VETTE is startled to see him but makes no move to either board the train or approach him. She looks completely destroyed but brave despite it all. EZEKIEL is likewise at a loss for words. His emotions are overpowering him. She waits for him to give her direction and the moment holds. Finally, EZEKIEL lifts his hand in a gesture of goodbye. VETTE wipes her eye softly and gives him a return wave before boarding the train. EZEKIEL watches the train take her out of his life.

Ext. Rural farmland Late afternoon

EZEKIEL walks patiently back towards home.

EZEKIEL:  
(v.o.)

And so she left the community, our community, and I walked home, ready to change myself and win her again. I had much to fix in this community and I knew her love for me would break the hesitation of others. Seeing her go...I never knew she could look prettiest when walking out on me. Was this real? Did I not see her leave me behind so that she could be with my best friend? Did I not see myself race to merely say goodbye when everything in me was saying to stop her? What had become of me? Did I grow up, all at once? None of it seemed real to me. All I knew anymore was that I had to have her and would pay any price.

Int. EZEKIEL'S home Early evening

EZEKIEL enters quietly. LEVI is waiting for him, seated in a chair that he has turned to face the door.

EZEKIEL:

Father.

LEVI:

I have heard, Ezekiel. Zed was here to confess.

EZEKIEL:

I am filled with sin as you always claimed.

LEVI crosses to him and stands quite close. EZEKIEL begins to cry.

LEVI:

Son, I need your honesty before God now. Did you lay with Vette?

EZEKIEL looks down throughout, unable to meet LEVI'S gaze.

EZEKIEL:

I did, father. But it was for love.

LEVI:

Love?

EZEKIEL:

I have lied for her. My community will turn against me and my God refuses me for my sin. And all for her. I love her. But if this is love, I'll be damned if I ever love someone again.

LEVI:

Did you make a child? Answer me truthfully, for the sake of the Lord. There is hope to save you if you will at least be honest now.

EZEKIEL is tearful again.

EZEKIEL:

I betrayed my friend and created a child that she now ends. That is the true way of it, father.

LEVI:

Ends? She ends the child? You know what that means, Ezekiel? Do you understand how serious this is?

(Beat)

I can not say I am glad of your actions, Ezekiel. But I am glad to see you still seek the light.

He turns back to face EZEKIEL.

LEVI:

Will you confess your sins at service and ask for forgiveness?

EZEKIEL:

I will if it will please you, father.

LEVI:

You would confess to be right with the Lord. And you must confess it to Vette's mother. You must tell her the way of things so that she too can urge Vette to confess. It is your duty. It is what you owe the community.

EZEKIEL says nothing, nods. He crosses towards LEVI, crying openly.

EZEKIEL:

I'm sorry, father. I'm sorry that I've fouled our name in this community. I'm sorry that I let you down.

LEVI puts a comforting hand on EZEKIEL'S shoulder.

Ext. VETTE'S home Evening

VETTE quietly creeps through the door. Her mother is waiting for her; a bit of a jingling sound follows VETTE.

VETTE:

Good eve, mother.

REBECCA:

Vette, sit you down.

VETTE:

I was looking forward to my bed.

REBECCA:

Sit you yet. I must ask for what I've heard talk of.

VETTE does not seem surprised.

VETTE:

It is about my business with Ezekiel, isn't it?

REBECCA:

And what is that business?

VETTE sighs.

VETTE:

I wronged Zedediah. I was too friendly with Ezekiel and we hid our courtship. Hid it poorly, obviously, as you seem to know all about it. We shared embraces and kisses, but that is all of it.

REBECCA:

Answer me, Vette, and do not be dishonest.

LEVI walks out from a backroom.

LEVI:

We worry for what may have been done here, Vette.

REBECCA:

I would not be able to forgive if you were to be dishonest. So please tell us: Did you lay with Ezekiel?

VETTE looks to LEVI.

REBECCA:

Eyes on me, Vette. Did you lay with him?

VETTE:

What has Ezekiel said?

REBECCA:

I do not expect him to answer honest. That is why I ask you if you have lain with him.

VETTE considers.

REBECCA:

But you must be true now. Will I find that you have lain with him?

(A very long silence.)

VETTE:

No, mother.

REBECCA:

You have not?

VETTE:

I was not with him in such a way. I kept my virtue.

REBECCA looks to LEVI. He shrugs.

REBECCA:

And you would swear to this in the Lord's name?

VETTE:

I absolutely will.

REBECCA:

You are to leave this house. You will leave and not come back.

VETTE:

Mother, I-

EZEKIEL charges in from the backroom. LEVI restrains him.

VETTE:

Ezekiel, what-

EZEKIEL:

I have confessed all!

VETTE:

Oh, god.

REBECCA:

You have ruined yourself in this community. You have lied to me and you have killed a child.

VETTE:

Mother, I did it for you. I tried to-

REBECCA:

You are not welcome in this house or this community.

VETTE:

I am your daughter!

REBECCA:

You're worldly and a murderer. You have done the worst sin. Leave, right now. Out of my house!

VETTE:

(to EZEKIEL)

How could you? How could you?

EZEKIEL:

I did it for us.

VETTE makes a move towards her bedroom.

VETTE:

This is unfair!

REBECCA:

We will not hear your tears. You will leave and not return.

VETTE glares at EZEKIEL, in tears, and then slowly walks out the door.

EZEKIEL:

It is unfair!

LEVI:

Hold your tongue, son. It is not our place to govern her house.

EZEKIEL:

But-

LEVI:

I will not tell you again. She has made a choice and the community will respect it.

Int. shot of EZEKIEL watching VETTE from the window. She is conversing with a clearly uncomfortable ZEDEDIAH. She hands him a small box. She tenderly reaches out and draws him close, comforting him. She breaks the embrace and walks away. In the background, we hear soft conversation between REBECCA and LEVI. There is talk of: Maybe she can return someday, we can win her back with confession. The English world will not poison her, I'm sure. Did I do what was

right? She has sinned and it is on her to make amends.

Ext. Amish farmland Evening

EZEKIEL and LEVI walk towards their home.

LEVI:

Will you still ask forgiveness for your sins?

EZEKIEL:

I feel we have all wronged in sending Vette away. And I am sick over what we have done today. I am sick over all of it.

LEVI considers silently as they are passed by ZEDEDIAH'S buggy. ZEDEDIAH will not look at EZEKIEL.

LEVI:

I think she will be back. Son, do you understand why this must be?

EZEKIEL:

You have always taught me that love is the way. And I love Vette. Even now I love her. If love is a sin, you have taught me wrong all this time.

LEVI:

Your brother claimed love too, Ezekiel. His sins in love drove him from this community. I always thought you were too smart to fall under his direction, but even now you look up to him, don't you?

EZEKIEL:

Father, you and I disagree. We have words over near everything that comes. But it was never Michael I looked up to. He was never someone to follow as an example, not with you standing above him.

They walk without speaking further.

Ext. A road through rural farmland Morning

Camera follows a police car driving through the farmland. REBECCA comes out to see who has arrived. She is visibly upset when the car stops and the officer steps out. He talks to REBECCA but we do not hear his words. He presents her with VETTE'S bonnet, spots of blood evident on it.

EZEKIEL:  
(v.o.)

There is a part of you that ends when the person you love dies. I've never been so good at endings and this was the hardest to take. And the blame could not be laid on Vette's mother or my father and brother or Zedediah, it was mine alone. I owned that pain and it was the first thing that was ever just mine in this world.

Ext. VETTE'S home mid-afternoon

The yard contains very few black carriages and just a handful of Amish approaching the house. Camera follows EZEKIEL as he enters the home and then tracks him through the meager crowd to the bedroom where VETTE'S body lays in repose. She is dressed entirely in white with an organdy head covering. EZEKIEL reaches to touch her but stops short, tears in his eyes. Camera switches to the front room where LEVI speaks to the small crowd, saying words of encouragement about the life after death and the things VETTE was known for in the community before her death.

EZEKIEL:  
(v.o.)

Few people came to see Vette off. This was not in keeping with the tradition of the community, often the whole would turn out for a funeral. Even in death, Vette was still ruined by my confession. Her loss was not felt by the whole but I thought it would take me over.

Ext. Graveyard Sunset

EZEKIEL sits hard against VETTE'S gravestone, utterly defeated. ZEDEDIAH approaches him.

ZEDEDIAH:

I am sorry I did not come for the burial.

EZEKIEL remains silent.

ZEDEDIAH:

I dreamed of her last night. You and I stood beside a lake while she struggled in the water. And we visited while she called for help. Neither of us made a move to save her. What could this mean?

He considers for a second and then sits down next to EZEKIEL.

EZEKIEL:

I think of the luck of the crop each year. It surprises me that we do not speak of luck in this community.

ZEDEDIAH:

That's because we speak of fate.

EZEKIEL:

All the bad luck in the world seems to have fallen on us these days.

(Pause)

I will never know if I could have saved her. I wronged her so. It will follow me like to be her ghost.

ZEDEDIAH considers and then says:

You shouldn't do this to yourself, Ezekiel. We all lost something here but we can blame no one. It was difficult for me. It was difficult to think of Vette in your arms, saying the things my ears longed to hear. I should never have struck you. I would not put an end to our friendship over this, especially now.

EZEKIEL:

She was beautiful. She was beautiful and I loved her.

I killed her, Zed. I killed her with my love for her. It was not with my own hands, but sure as the day is long, I killed her.

ZEDEDIAH:

You didn't kill anyone, Zeke. She made her choices, sure as you made yours. She has brought us together again. It would be a disgrace if we let her funeral keep us apart.

EZEKIEL:

What did she say that day? I saw you talk to her out the window. You were the last of us to... What did she say?

ZEDEDIAH:

She was stronger than I. She apologized.

EZEKIEL:

And what did you say to her? Or is that a secret?

ZEDEDIAH considers and then says:

I lied to her. I tried to fool her. I said that I had lain with Chrystena because I hoped it would hurt her like I was hurt.

EZEKIEL:

Did it hurt her?

ZEDEDIAH:

She knew it was not true. She was so calm. She was so... She hugged me and said it did not matter that I lied. She said she loved me.

EZEKIEL:

And what was the gift she gave you?

ZEDEDIAH smiles wanly.

ZEDEDIAH:

She gave me a ring of bells to tie around a cow's tail.

EZEKIEL:

Why would she do such?

ZEDEDIAH:

Because I needed it at the time. It does not matter. She is gone and we are still here. The question is: What are you going to do tomorrow, Ezekiel?

EZEKIEL:

Tomorrow?

ZEDEDIAH:

It will get easier by the day. And tomorrow is the start of it. Do what is right that day and the next. And keep doing that. You can not harden against the English or this community because you will need them all now more than ever. I am here out of hope. There is hope for each of us, Ezekiel. Do not let that truth rest with her.

ZEDEDIAH stands and walks away.

Int. SPIKE'S trailer Night

The music is subdued and the night's party seems to be over with. EZEKIEL sits staring at the television, which is not on. He is drinking a bottle of liquor. SPIKE sits down next to him.

SPIKE:

"If what he's built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will be saved but only as one escaping through the flames." Corinthians. Wording's not quite right, I'm sure. You can't keep the whole Bible in your head.

(Beat)

You should have come to me, Ezekiel. When Raber got shot, I lost my best distributor. I can still take you on if you want. You'll get out of here, you'll have some money. It would be the best thing for you, just what I think you've always wanted.

EZEKIEL stares at the television.

SPIKE:

Do you like what you see in there?

EZEKIEL:

I'm stretched out and don't look like myself. What does it mean?

SPIKE laughs.

SPIKE:

No meaning. No meaning in anything except what we assign meaning to. Why did you come here tonight?

There is a long pause.

EZEKIEL:

I just ended up here.

SPIKE stands and says:

You don't end up here, Ezekiel. You choose to be here.

SPIKE walks away.

Int. EZEKIEL'S home Early morning

EZEKIEL'S voiceover throughout:

And that was my rumspringa. Three days after Vette's death, I chose to enter the church. I said goodbye to Vette one more time and then I joined the community, my community. And I knew I would meet her in the next life and we would once again laugh and sing and hold each other. We would look in each others eyes and say, "Does it not seem real? Is it not exactly how it once

was?"

LEVI dresses carefully, resolutely. He places a hand on ANNA'S cheek as she sleeps. He goes outside and walks around the house, towards the field. LEVI finds EZEKIEL quietly and determinedly plowing the field.

END