

ONWARD

Written by

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Over black.

DAD (V.O.)
Long ago, the world was full of
wonder!

EXT. FANTASY LANDSCAPE - DAY

We race over rolling green hills. A unicorn soars into view,
whinnies, and banks off into the sky.

DAD (V.O.)
It was adventurous...

The land below is alive with FANTASY CREATURES. We pass
through a field of racing CENTAURS.

DAD (V.O.)
Exciting...

Mermaids leap through shimmering water and FAIRIES fly through
the air, spiraling up into the sky.

DAD (V.O.)
And best of all... there was MAGIC!

We stop on an ELF WIZARD holding a gnarled wooden staff. He
turns and thrusts his staff toward the sky, casting a spell.

ELF WIZARD
Boombastia!

Fireworks shoot magically into the air. Fantasy creatures
across the land watch in awe.

EXT. CLIFF - DAY

A small group of creatures huddle and shiver in the cold.

DAD (V.O.)
And that magic helped all in need.

A SATYR WIZARD approaches.

SATYR WIZARD
Flame Infernar!

A fire appears and they happily warm themselves by it.

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS - NIGHT

A warrior, rogue, and wizard try to reach a glowing chalice. A dragon breathes FIRE at them. The warrior holds up a shield, protecting them from the flame.

The BRAVE WIZARD leaps out and casts a spell.

BRAVE WIZARD
Voltar Thundasir!

A lighting bolt zaps the ceiling, crashing rocks down in front of the dragon, clearing their path to the chalice.

EXT. MUSHROOM VILLAGE - DUSK

A wizard teaches a young apprentice to conjure a glowing orb. She floats the orb into a mushroom house, filling it with light. The gnome resident of the house emerges, delighted.

The apprentice attempts the spell, but only manages to catch his robe on FIRE. The wizard quickly puts out the flames and encourages the apprentice to try again.

DAD (V.O.)
But it wasn't easy to master. And
so the world found a simpler way to
get by...

The wizard and apprentice see a satyr INVENTOR in a barn surrounded by fantasy creatures.

INVENTOR
I call it: the light bulb!

The inventor flips a switch and the lightbulb turns on, illuminating the room. The crowd is amazed.

The apprentice hands the wizard the magical staff, walks toward the crowd, and gives the light bulb a try.

APPRENTICE
'Tis so easy!

The wizard looks on, disappointed.

MASTER WIZARD
Huh.

An elf on a sales floor lights up a gas stove with a click, click. Everyone reacts in amazement.

Goblins sit in a cozy living room. One of them turns on a gas fireplace using a remote.

DAD (V.O.)
Over time, magic faded away...

A centaur plays "Prance Prance Revolution" in an arcade.
A mermaid lounges in a kiddie pool, scrolling on her phone.
A sprite, suitcase in hand, approaches an awaiting airplane.
A factory assembly line rolls by.
Traffic crawls along a congested highway.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - MORNING

A troll on a bicycle tosses papers onto doorsteps of mushroom houses with satellite dishes, garages, basketball hoops, etc.
A feral unicorn roots around in a trash can. Another unicorn approaches and hisses. The first unicorn chases it off.
We push into the upstairs window of a mushroom house.

INT. LIGHTFOOT HOUSE - IAN'S ROOM - MORNING

DAD (V.O.)
But I hope there's a little magic left...

A phone alarm beeps. A boy's hand quickly silences it. Puts on his watch with style. His shoes with flair.

DAD (V.O.)
...in you.

He pulls on his sweatshirt and gets stuck. He pulls harder until his big nose, wild hair, and giant ears pop out of the sweatshirt, revealing a lanky teenage elf: IAN LIGHTFOOT.

Ian smiles and dusts off the "Willowdale College" sweatshirt. He grabs his backpack and pauses to look at his desk calendar. Today is circled and reads: 16TH BDAY.

Ian looks into the mirror, smiles, and walks out of the room.

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EXT. MUSHROOM NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Ian walks downstairs to the beat of loud, pulsing music.

LAUREL LIGHTFOOT, a female elf in her 40s, works out in front of the TV. An onscreen FITNESS INSTRUCTOR barks commands.

FITNESS INSTRUCTOR
We're gonna get Warrior Z90 fit!
Let me hear you say I'm a mighty warrior!

FITNESS MODELS
I'm a mighty warrior!

LAUREL
I'm a mighty warrior!

IAN
Morning, Mom!

A scaly Labrador-sized dragon, BLAZEY, races into the room and tackles Ian to the ground.

IAN
Aahh!

Ian is trapped as the dragon happily licks his face.

IAN
Shh! Down girl! Please!

LAUREL
(noticing)
Oh--! Blaze, down!

Laurel races over, squirting the dragon with a spray bottle.

IAN
Ah! Stop, girl, stop!

LAUREL
Bad dragon! Back to your lair!

Blazey blows a small puff of fire at Laurel and runs off. Ian stands and is attacked with Mom kisses.

LAUREL
Happy Birthday, mister adult man!

IAN
(struggling/laughing)
Ugh, no, Mom! Ah! gross.

LAUREL
Hey, buddy, don't wipe off my
kisses!

Laurel looks at Ian, touched.

IAN
What?

LAUREL
You're wearing your Dad's
sweatshirt.

IAN
Oh, you know. Finally fits.

LAUREL
Oh, my little chubby cheeks is all
grown up!

IAN
Okay, okay, Mom! I gotta eat
something before school.

INT. LIGHTFOOT KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Ian looks in the fridge for breakfast.

LAUREL
Ugh, we don't have much food. I
still have to go to the grocery
store--

Laurel smacks Ian's hand as he reaches for something.

LAUREL
Hands off, Mister! Those are for
your party tonight.

Ian takes the milk from the fridge and closes the door.

IAN
It's not a party Mom, it just us.

Ian empties the last of a box of cereal into a bowl.

LAUREL
Well, you could invite those kids
from your science class. You said
they seemed pretty "rockin'."

IAN

I'm pretty sure I didn't say it like that. And besides, I don't even know them.

LAUREL

Well, your birthday is a day to try new things, be the "new you"!

Laurel makes herself a smoothie, yelling over the blender.

LAUREL

SPEAKING OF TRYING NEW THINGS, DID YOU SIGN UP FOR DRIVING PRACTICE?!

The blender stops, but Ian is still shouting.

IAN

NO!
(quieter)
No.

Laurel pours her shake into a glass.

LAUREL

I know you're a little scared to drive sweetie-pie, but--

IAN

I'm not scared, Mom.
(pointing offscreen)
I'm gonna move Barley's game.

LAUREL

Okay, but you know how he gets when someone touches that board.

Ian walks to the kitchen table, stumbling over a plastic flail on the floor. The table is covered with a game: pewter figures, dice, and miniatures. Ian and begins to move them--

IAN

Well, he's gotta learn how to clean up his toys--

--when suddenly a huge, thick arm wraps around his neck.

BARLEY (O.S.)

HALT!

IAN

AHH!

Ian is pulled into the hulking barrel chest of twenty-year-old BARLEY LIGHTFOOT.

BARLEY

Doth my brother dare disrupt an active campaign?!

Ian's cereal bowl is knocked to the floor in the scuffle.

IAN

Oh, come on!

BARLEY

You know, Ian, in the days of old, a boy of sixteen would have his strength tested in the Swamps of Despair.

IAN

I'm not testing anything, just let me go!

LAUREL

Let him go.

Barley releases Ian.

BARLEY

Okay, but I know you're stronger than that. There's a mighty warrior inside you. You just have to let him out. Riiight, Mom?

Barley puts Laurel in the same chokehold as she laughs.

BARLEY

Oh! That's good! Keepin' your head down.

LAUREL

(laughing)

Barley, you stink! When was the last time you showered?

Blazey roars and leaps around. Amidst the chaos, Ian picks up his bowl from the floor and retreats to the kitchen counter.

BARLEY

If you tried a little harder, you actually could probably wiggle out of this--

Suddenly, Laurel flips Barley onto his back with a CRASH.

BARLEY

See? Mom knows how to let out her
inner warrior.

Barley reaches up to high-five Laurel.

LAUREL

Thank you. Now take out the trash.

EXT. LIGHTFOOT HOME - CONTINUOUS

As Barley opens the back door, trash in hand, we hear a
police radio.

OFFICER GORE (O.S.)

(fuzzy, over radio)

--stay on the lookout for a runaway
Griffin.

BARLEY

(groan)

Officer Bronco.

OFFICER COLT BRONCO, a mustachioed, cocky cop with mirrored
aviator sunglasses, speaks over the clop of horse hooves.

COLT

Barley, Barley, Barley. Every time
the city tries to tear down an old
piece of rubble, I gotta drag my
rear end out here and deal with
you.

As he steps closer, we see he's not a mounted police officer
after all. He's a centaur cop.

BARLEY

I don't know what you're talking
about.

Laurel appears in the doorway behind Barley, irritated.

COLT

Oh, really?

Colt pulls out his phone. A video shows Barley chained to an
ancient fountain in front of a laughing crowd of people.

BARLEY

I will not let you tear this down
this fountain! Ancient warriors on
grand quests drank from it's
flowing waters!

As construction workers pull him away, Barley falls into the water with a SPLASH.

LAUREL

Barley.

BARLEY

They're destroying the town's past!

COLT

And last night, someone destroyed their bulldozer.

LAUREL

Ugh, well come on in, rest your haunches for a minute.

COLT

Thank you, hon.

Laurel and Colt kiss. Ian and Barley shudder in disgust.

INT. LIGHTFOOT HOME - KITCHEN - DAY

Colt approaches Ian in the kitchen.

COLT

Hey there, Birthday Boy... So ya workin' hard or hardly workin'?
(horse laugh)

Colt punches Ian on the shoulder just a little too hard.

IAN

I'm just, you know... making a toast.

LAUREL

I'm serious, Barley, you need to start thinking less about the past and more about your future.

COLT

She's right.

As Colt turns, his tail knocks Ian's toast off the counter. It falls to the floor and is promptly snatched up by Blazey.

COLT

You can't spend all day playing your board game.

Colt awkwardly plops his hindquarters into a chair at the table, toppling Quests of Yore pieces. Barley hustles over to set the pieces straight.

BARLEY

Uh, Quests of Yore isn't just a board game, it's an historically-based role playing scenario. Did you know in the old days centaurs could run seventy miles an hour?

COLT

I own a vehicle, don't need to run.

BARLEY

Well, Ian, you could definitely learn a lot from Quests of Yore. You want to play?

IAN

I don't.

Ian folds the last piece of toast and starts to take a bite--

BARLEY

You could be a crafty rogue, or...
ooh, I know! You can be a wizard.

Barley puts the pewter wizard figure on Ian's shoulder.

BARLEY

(wizard voice)

I shall cast a spell on thee!!

IAN

Hey, careful of Dad's sweatshirt.

BARLEY

I don't even remember Dad wearing that sweatshirt.

IAN

Well, you do only have, like, two memories of him.

BARLEY

No! I've got three. I remember his beard was scratchy, he had a goofy laugh, and I used to play--

BARLEY

--drums on his feet.

IAN

--drums on his feet. Right.

BARLEY

I used to go...

Barley hums "Shave and a Haircut" with raspberries for the last two beat, but clumsily knocks Ian's toast off the counter. Ian lunges for it, but Barley gets it first.

BARLEY

Whoops! Five second rule.

As Barley puts the toast back on the plate, his wrist cuff snags on Ian's sweatshirt, ripping it. Ian GASPS.

BARLEY

It's okay! You just gotta pull it!

Barley yanks his arm to snap the snagged thread, but only rips the seam even more.

IAN

NO!

LAUREL

Barley!

Laurel cuts the thread. Ian walks away, trying to stay calm.

IAN

You know what, I'm just gonna get some food on the way to school.

LAUREL

I'll sew that later tonight, okay?

Barley jumps up, puts on a helmet, and grabs a sword.

BARLEY

Wait, wait, wait, wait! By the Laws of Yore, I must dub thee a man today! Kneel before me.

IAN

Oh, that's okay... I gotta get going!

BARLEY

Alright, well I'll pick you up later and we'll perform the ceremony at school!

IAN

NO! No, no, no, no, no. Don't do that. Okay, bye!

Ian closes the door behind him and lets out a massive SIGH.

EXT. BURGERSHIRE RESTAURANT - DAY

People come and go from a typical fast food restaurant.

INT. BURGERSHIRE RESTAURANT - DAY

A cash register runs up an order.

Ian takes his receipt and sits. An elf dad in his forties, GAXTON, and his preteen son sit on the bench next to Ian.

GAXTON
Hey! Go Griffins!

IAN
What?

Gaxton points to Ian's hoodie.

GAXTON
You go to Willowdale College?

Gaxton's son goes to the counter to wait for their food.

IAN
Oh, no. This was my Dad's.

Ian points to the name LIGHTFOOT on the hoodie.

GAXTON
"Lightfoot?" Wilden Lightfoot?

Ian lights up.

IAN
Yeah!

GAXTON
You're kidding! I went to college
with him!

IAN
Really?

GAXTON
Yeah!
(beat)
Boy, I was so sorry to hear that he
passed away.

Ian nods and smiles.

IAN
Yeah... thanks.

GAXTON
You know, your dad was a great guy!
So confident. When he came into a
room, people noticed.
(laughing at the memory)
The man wore the ugliest purple
socks, every single day.

IAN
(laugh)
What? Why?

GAXTON
Hey, that's exactly what we asked.
But he was just bold. I always
wished I had a little bit of that
in me.

IAN
Yeah. Wow.
(beat)
I've never heard any of this about
him before. Do you remember--?

GAXTON'S SON calls out, waving a bag of food.

GAXTON'S SON
Dad!

GAXTON
Oh! Sorry. Gotta get this guy off
to school.

Gaxton holds out his hand to shake Ian's.

GAXTON
Hey, it was nice meeting you!

IAN
Yeah, you too.

Ian thinks to himself for a beat.

IAN
Huh. Bold.

EXT. NEW MUSHROOMTON HIGH SCHOOL - MORNING

Ian sits outside the school, making a list called "NEW ME."

SPEAK UP MORE
LEARN TO DRIVE
INVITE PEOPLE TO PARTY

He thinks to himself for a moment and then adds a final item:

BE LIKE DAD

The bell rings and he heads into the imposing building.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Ian walks into his classroom.

TEACHER
Okay, class, sit down. We're
starting roll.

GORGAMON, a slobby, flip-flop-wearing troll, has his feet on Ian's chair.

IAN
Hey, uh, Gorgamon... um, would you
mind not putting your feet on my
chair today?

GORGAMON
Sorry dude, gotta keep 'em
elevated. Gets the blood flowing to
my brain.

IAN
It just makes it a little hard for
me to fit in there--

GORGAMON
Well if I don't have good blood
flow, I can't concentrate on my
school work. You don't want me to
do bad school, do you?

IAN
Uh... no.

GORGAMON
Thanks, bro.

Ian sits, scooting up to make room for the gross feet.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL PARKING LOT - LATER

A GOBLIN TEACHER stands next to a student driver car.

DRIVING INSTRUCTOR
First road test, any volunteers?

A single hand raises from the back of a group of students.
The crowd parts to reveal a nervous Ian.

INT. DRIVER'S ED CAR - DAY

Ian drives. The Driving Instructor sits in the passenger seat. Two other kids are in the backseat.

DRIVING INSTRUCTOR
A left here.

Ian signals and turns.

DRIVING INSTRUCTOR
Now take this on-ramp to the freeway.

IAN
(lacking confidence)
Okay, yeah. I'm super ready for that.

Ian's smile fades as he nears the ZOOMING freeway traffic.

IAN
(unconvincing)
It's nice and fast.

DRIVING INSTRUCTOR
Just merge into traffic.

IAN
Yup, just any minute...

He grows more nervous.

DRIVING INSTRUCTOR
Merge into traffic!

IAN
Uh...

DRIVING INSTRUCTOR
MERGE INTO TRAFFIC!

Panicked, Ian tries to merge. A car lays on its horn and Ian retreats back into his lane.

IAN
I'm not ready!

DRIVING INSTRUCTOR
Pull over.

Ian pulls the car off the freeway.

EXT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Students are hanging out in front of the school, including four friendly TEENS: SADALIA, GURGE, PARTHENOPE, and ALTHEA.

SADALIA
Alright, so what should we do this weekend?

GURGE
Move to a cooler town?

We see Ian nearby, alone, rehearsing some lines to himself.

IAN
Oh, hey! What's up, dudes? I'm, uh, having a party tonight, and was wondering if you wanted to come over and get down on some cake...

Ian's smile drops. Ian checks the writing on his hand.

IAN
That's not something anyone says. Okay, don't say dudes. ...Gang? "What's up, gang?"

He crosses out "dudes" and changes it to "gang."

IAN
What's up, gang?!

Ian nods, then nervously heads over to the TEENS.

IAN
Hey, what's up, gang?

The teens turn to Ian.

SADALIA
Oh, hey... Ian, right?

IAN
(surprised)
Oh, I didn't know you knew my...

Ian looks at his hand. The writing is smeared and sweaty.

IAN
Uhhh, anyway... if you like parties, then I was gonna do a party.

SADALIA
What?

IAN
What I was trying to say, is if you're not doing anything tonight-- but I'm sure you probably are doing something tonight--and you like cake like I like cake, I've got a cake... at my house.

The teens look at each other.

SADALIA
Are you inviting us to a party?

IAN
That's the one.

SADALIA
Oh, yeah! We don't have any plans.

The others all agree. Ian looks up, surprised.

IAN
Really? I guess we can just take the bus over to my house--

Ian is suddenly distracted by metal music in the near distance, a hard-working engine, a backfire. The teens look over as a disaster of a van pulls up, its side painted with a rearing Pegasus surrounded by lightning bolts.

IAN
Oh, no, no, no, no, no.

It's Barley. He spots Ian and sticks his head out the window.

BARLEY
Ha-ha! Is that the birthday boy I see?!

Ian cringes. The van swerves into the school pickup area, and comes to a stop halfway up onto the curb. Barley steps out, in full fantasy garb, and gestures grandly.

BARLEY

Behold! Your chariot awaits!

The group looks at Ian. Ian keeps his back turned to the van.

ALTHEA

Do you know that guy?

IAN

Uh...

BARLEY

Sir Iandore of Lightfoot!

ALTHEA

Seems like he's talking to you.

BARLEY

HEY, IAN!

Barley honks the horn. Ian turns around sheepishly.

IAN

Hey, Barley... Yeah, we're actually gonna take the bus...

BARLEY

The bus?! Nay! I will give you and your companions transport upon Guinevere!

PARTHENOPE

Um, who's Guinevere?

BARLEY

My mighty steed!

Barley slaps the hood of the van. The bumper falls off.

BARLEY

Oops, that's embarrassing! That's okay, girl. We'll patch you back up.

Barley bends to reattach the bumper with duct tape, revealing his butt crack. Ian puts his hand to his face, embarrassed.

IAN

Ugh...

(to teens)

He's just joking around.

Ian removes his hand to reveal the ink from his palm is now on his face.

SADALIA

You've got something on your face.

Ian wipes his cheek, smearing ink there.

SADALIA

Oh no, you just--oh! Right.

Ian wipes the other side spreading more ink around.

SADALIA

No, it's--nope.

Ian looks at his hand, then panics.

IAN

Oh! Uh... You know what? I just remembered that my birthday is, uh... cancelled.

ALTHEA

What?

IAN

I mean, the party. It was never actually happening. It was just this huge misunderstanding, so I gotta go. Okay, Bye!

Ian races into Barley's van.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

A pile of parking tickets clutter the passenger seat.

BARLEY

Ooh, whoops! Sorry! Let me just file those.

Barley shoves the parking tickets into the glovebox, then notices the smeared letters on Ian's forehead.

BARLEY

Hey! Did those kids write on your face?

Barley licks his thumb and starts to rub Ian's forehead.

BARLEY
Here, I'll get it.

Ian pushes Barley's hand away.

IAN
Can we please just go home?

BARLEY
Okay, we'll perform your birthday ceremony later. Then you'll be ready for adulthood and it's gauntlet of challenges! You know in ancient times, you celebrated your day of birth with a solemn quest.

Ian looks at the cartoon dragon on the side of the gym, giving an exaggerated thumbs up. Ian slumps in his seat.

INT. LIGHTFOOT HOUSE - DAY

Ian enters the house, defeated.

IAN
Mom?

No answer.

INT. IAN'S ROOM - EVENING

Ian sits at his desk, looks at his "NEW ME" list, and crosses off SPEAK UP MORE, LEARN TO DRIVE, INVITE PEOPLE TO PARTY. He pauses, then crosses off the last item: BE LIKE DAD.

Ian crumples the list and throws it in his waste basket.

He leans back in his chair and looks at the photos on his bulletin board.

A photo of WILDEN LIGHTFOOT, Ian's Dad, with three-year-old Barley and pregnant Laurel.

A photo of Laurel, toddler Barley, and baby Ian. No Dad.

Ian opens his drawer and pulls out a tape labeled: DAD. He puts it into a stereo on his desk and presses play. We hear timeworn audio of a man and woman in conversation.

LAUREL
Will, you're not gonna get that
thing working.

DAD
I think I've got it.

LAUREL
I'm gonna watch from over here when
it blows up.

Laurel moves out of range of the microphone. We only hear
Dad, then pauses for Laurel's distant, indecipherable words.

DAD
(into mic)
Hello? Hello?

LAUREL
I'll bet good money you can't get
it to work.

DAD
Oh, is that right?

LAUREL
Yup. But you're doing a good job of
making it look like you know what
you're doing.

DAD
Well, I'm trying to.
(laugh)

LAUREL
Did you check if it had batteries?

DAD
(laugh)

LAUREL
No, I'm serious.

DAD
I know.

LAUREL
So, is it really working?

DAD
Well, let's find out.
(beat)
Okay. Bye.

Ian smiles, rewinds the tape, and plays it again.

LAUREL

Will, you're not gonna get that thing working.

DAD

I think I've got it.

LAUREL

I'm gonna watch from over here when it blows up.

IAN

Hi, Dad.

We see close-ups of the pictures on the bulletin board as Ian begins to talk over the tape, forming a conversation.

DAD

Hello? Hello?

IAN

It's me, Ian.

DAD

Oh, is that right?

IAN

Yeah. Did you have a good day?

DAD

Well, I'm trying to.

IAN

Yeah, me too. Although, I could clearly use some help.

DAD

(laugh)

IAN

I sure do wish I could spend a day with you sometime.

DAD

I know.

IAN

Yeah, there's so many things we could do, I bet it'd be really fun!

DAD

Well, let's find out.

IAN
Yeah, I mean, I'd love to! We
could, uh--

DAD
Okay. Bye.

IAN
Yeah... Bye.

The tape stops. Ian sits back, deflated.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Laurel steps on a pewter warrior figure on the ground.

LAUREL
AH! MY--!

She opens the basement door and calls to Barley over the din
of his music.

LAUREL
Barley, keep your soldiers off my
land or our kingdoms will go to
war!

BARLEY (O.S.)
Sorry, Mom!

LAUREL
Ugh, this is the world's longest
gap year.

Laurel sees Ian on the couch, sewing his sweater.

LAUREL
Honey, I was gonna do that.

IAN
That's okay.

Laurel watches him.

LAUREL
Wow, you must have been taught by
some kind of sewing master.

IAN
Yeah, a very humble sewing master.

Ian finishes sewing. He holds out the thread and Laurel cuts
it with the scissors. They've clearly done this a lot.

Ian rubs his fingers over the word stitched on the breast of the hoodie: "LIGHTFOOT."

IAN

What was Dad like when he was my age? Was he always super confident?

LAUREL

Oh, no. It took him a while to find out who he was.

IAN

I wish I'd met him.

LAUREL

Oh, me too. But hey, you know, when your dad got sick, he fought so hard... because he wanted to meet you more than anything.

Laurel watches Ian, heartbroken.

LAUREL

You know what, I have something for you. I was going to wait until after cake but... I think you've waited long enough.

IAN

What is it?

LAUREL

It's a gift... from your dad.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Laurel pulls down the attic ladder and climbs into the darkness. Ian comes up the stairs with Barley.

BARLEY

What do you mean it's from Dad?

IAN

I don't know! Mom said it was for both of us.

BARLEY

What is it?!

Laurel descends the ladder with a long, canvas-wrapped item.

LAUREL

He just said to give you this when you were both over sixteen. I have no idea what it is.

INT. IAN'S ROOM - DAY

Ian and Barley set the gift on Ian's bed. Ian pulls back the cloth to reveal a long, skinny, gnarled piece of wood.

BARLEY

NO WAY!

Barley picks it up in amazement.

BARLEY

It's a wizard staff! DAD WAS A WIZARD!

IAN

What?

LAUREL

Hold on, your Dad was an accountant. I mean, he got interested in a lot of strange things when he got sick but--

Laurel and Ian are confused. Ian looks back under the cloth and sees a rolled up piece of parchment.

IAN

There's a letter.

(reading)

"Dear Ian and Barley: Long ago, the world was full of wonder! It was adventurous, exciting, and best of all... there was magic. And that magic helped all in need. But it wasn't easy to master. And so the world found a simpler way to get by. Over time, magic faded away, but I hope there's a little magic left... in you. And so I wrote this spell so I could see for myself, who my boys grew up to be."

Ian looks at the second page of the letter.

IAN

Visitation Spell?

Barley takes the page from Ian and examines it. It reads VISITATION SPELL and has a diagram of a wizard staff with a beam of light shooting from it, forming a person.

BARLEY

I don't believe this.

(excited)

This spell brings him back. For one whole day, Dad will be back!

LAUREL

What?

IAN

Back?! Like back to life? That's not possible.

BARLEY

(holding up staff)

It is with this.

IAN

I'm gonna meet Dad?

Laurel grabs the letter from the boys. She's beside herself.

LAUREL

Oh, Will, you wonderful nut, what is this?!

Barley digs through the cloth.

BARLEY

Now, a spell this powerful needs an assist element. For this to work Dad would've had to find a...

(finding gem)

Phoenix Gem!

Barley pulls out an orange gem and exams it.

BARLEY

Wow. There's only a few of these left.

LAUREL

Hold on, is this dangerous?

BARLEY

We're about to find out.

Barley puts the gem in the staff, holds out the staff, and gets suddenly serious. Everyone waits in suspense.

BARLEY
Ah!

LAUREL
What?!

BARLEY
Splinter.

Barley grabs the staff, strikes a pose in the center of the room, and begins to read the spell.

BARLEY
"Only once is all we get, grant me
this rebirth. 'Til tomorrow's sun
has set, one day to walk the
earth!"

But nothing happens.

BARLEY
Hold on, I was just gripping it
wrong.

Barley adjusts his hands.

BARLEY
Only once is all we get, grant me
this rebirth, 'til tomorrow's sun
has set, one day to walk THE EARTH!

Still nothing.

In quick cuts, Barley tries again and again, with no success.

BARLEY
Only once is all we get, grant me
this rebirth.

He tries again.

BARLEY
'Til tomorrow's sun has set...

And again.

BARLEY
...one day to walk THE EARTH!

And again, exhausted.

BARLEY
One day to walk the earth!

Losing his patience.

BARLEY
'Til tomorrow's sun has set...

Again, frustrated.

BARLEY
One day to walk the earth!

With everything he has left.

BARLEY
...One day... to walk... the earth!

One more big attempt.

BARLEY
'Til tomorrow's sun has set...

Laurel and Ian have already given up.

BARLEY
One day to walk the earth!

LAUREL
(gentle)
Barley.

He looks back to her, then puts the staff down and sits on the bed. Laurel puts her hand on Barley's shoulder. All three of them are heartbroken.

LAUREL
I'm sorry you guys don't have your Dad here, but this shows just how much he wanted to see you both. So much that he'd try anything. That's still a pretty special gift.

IAN
Yeah.

Barley leaves.

LAUREL
(to Ian)
Hey, want to come with me to pick up your cake?

IAN
That's okay. Thanks, Mom.

As Laurel gets to the door, she looks back at Ian with a sad smile, then leaves. Ian sits on his bed, crestfallen.

INT. IAN'S BEDROOM - EVENING

Ian at his desk, looking at all the pictures of Dad on his bulletin board. He examines Dad's spell, reading it aloud.

IAN
Only once is all we get, grant me
this rebirth...

Suddenly, an orange light glows on Ian's face. He turns to see the Phoenix Gem is glowing. He looks back at the spell.

IAN
'Til tomorrow's sun has set...

The gem glows brighter. Objects in the room raise from the ground. The staff shakes and starts to fall.

As Ian catches it, the staff lights up. He tightens his grip and reads louder.

IAN
One day to walk the earth!

A beam of light shoots from the staff. Ian holds on with all his might as objects in the room swirl around him.

Barley opens the door.

BARLEY
Hey man, what are you doing in
here?
(startled)
Holy Tooth of Zadar! How did you--?

IAN
I don't know, it just started!

Blazey pokes her head in the door but quickly runs away.

Ian strains to hold the staff. The light from the staff conjures a pair of shoes.

BARLEY
Whoa, feet!

Above the shoes, bright purple socks appear. Then pant cuffs, pant legs, a belt, a shirt, one button at a time...

The gem slowly lifts out of the staff and spins. An ominous red light swells from the gem, overpowering Ian.

Dad's body recedes to the waist. Ian braces with all he has.

BARLEY
Hang on, I can help!

Barley reaches for the staff. Ian pulls away from Barley.

IAN
BARLEY, NO!

The red swell explodes. The gem BURSTS into pieces.

EXT. LIGHTFOOT HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The window of Ian's room blasts out.

INT. LIGHTFOOT BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Barley helps Ian up. Ian looks around, desperate. There's no sign of dad in the empty, disheveled room.

Suddenly there's a rustling in the closet. The boys perk up. A pair of legs in khaki pants and dress shoes clumsily begin to kick their way out from behind the clothes.

IAN
Dad?

The legs stand to reveal... they have no torso.

IAN
AH!

BARLEY
AH! He's just legs!

Ian and Barley cautiously approach the living pants as Dad's feet begin to feel their way around the space.

BARLEY
There's no top part. I definitely remember Dad having a top part!

IAN
Oh, what did I do? This is horrible!

The pants start to make their way toward Ian and Barley. Ian calms himself, then approaches Dad's pants. He reaches out, waving his hand through Dad's missing torso.

IAN

Hello?

Dad begins to feel around with his foot and walk blindly.

BARLEY

It's really him.

(beat)

DAD! You are in your house!

Dad bumps into a dresser and falls. The boys race over to help him up.

IAN

Whoa, whoa!

BARLEY

Oh boy!

IAN

Ah, he can't hear us.

Barley thinks, then walks over and taps on Dad's foot: Shave and a Haircut.

IAN

What are you doing?

Dad's legs suddenly leap back with emotion - as much emotion as legs can have. He stomps the final two beats of the song.

Dad touches Barley's feet with his foot, patting gently.

BARLEY

That's right Dad. It's me, Barley.

Dad feels around, finds Ian's foot, and does the same.

BARLEY

Yeah, that's Ian.

IAN

Hi... Dad.

This lands on Ian, and he puts his hand delicately on Dad's foot. It's the closest they can get to a hug.

IAN

Oh... I messed this whole thing up
and now he's gonna be legs forever!

BARLEY

Well, not... forever. The spell only lasts one day. At sunset tomorrow, he'll disappear and we'll never be able to bring him back again.

Barley points to the spell, illustrations of the sun setting and the man vanishing.

IAN

Okay, okay, okay. Twenty-Four hours...that doesn't give us much time, but--

Ian looks at his phone, broken in the chaos. He chucks it on his bed and sets his watch. Twenty-four hours counting down.

IAN

Well, we'll just have to do the spell again.

BARLEY

You mean you have to.

(beat)

A person can only do magic if they have the gift. And my little brother has the magic gift!

Barley pulls Ian into a playful headlock. Ian pushes away.

IAN

But I couldn't even finish the spell.

BARLEY

Well, you're gonna have plenty of time to practice. Because we have to find another Phoenix Gem.

Barley gets an idea. He flips through his Quests of Yore cards then holds one up to Ian. It shows an old pub: THE MANTICORE'S TAVERN.

BARLEY

Ah-ha! We'll start at the place where all quests begin. The Manticore's Tavern!

Then another card: THE MANTICORE, a fearsome winged beast.

BARLEY

It's run by a fearless adventurer.
She knows where to find any kind of
gem, talisman, totem...

IAN

Barley, this is for a game.

BARLEY

Based on real life!

IAN

But, how do we know this tavern is
still there?

BARLEY

It's there. Look, my years of
training have prepared me for this
very moment. And I'm telling you...
this is the only way to find a
Phoenix Gem.

Barley holds up a card featuring THE PHOENIX GEM.

BARLEY

Trust me.

Ian looks longingly at Dad.

IAN

Whatever it takes, I am gonna meet
my dad.

BARLEY

You hear that, Dad? We're going on
a quest!

EXT. BARLEY'S VAN - SUNSET

Ian slams his door. Barley slams his door.

INT. BARLEY'S VAN - CONTINUOUS

Seatbelt on, keys in the ignition, the gears grind.

BARLEY

(straining)
Come on, Guinevere...

IAN

Uh... Maybe we should just take the
bus.

BARLEY

She's fine.

The van starts. Barley grabs a cassette tape labeled "QUEST MIX" and pops it in the stereo. Sweeping fantasy music plays.

BARLEY

H'YAH!

The van backfires and spits black smoke as it heads away from the cookie cutter suburban homes, toward the fantastical purple mountains in the distance.

EXT. SUBURBAN FANTASY TOWN - NIGHT - MONTAGE

The van travels past a road sign: "Leaving New Mushroomton." The van passes through a TROLL BOOTH.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Ian sits in the back, talking to Dad's legs, working on something we can't quite see.

IAN

Anyway, it's like this award for math, it's no big deal. But I'll show you when we get back home.

Barley looks in the rearview mirror.

BARLEY

Hey, what are you two Chatty Charlies up to back there?

IAN

You know, I felt weird talking to Dad without a top half, so...

Ian picks something up and puts it on Dad, he steps aside to reveal it's a top half made out of stuffed clothes.

IAN

...Ta-da!

BARLEY

Oh! That's great! Dad, you look just like I remember.

Dad starts to wander toward the front seat.

BARLEY

Hey, don't worry, we'll have the rest of you here before you know it. And then, first thing I'm gonna do: introduce you to Guinevere. Rebuilt this old girl myself, from the lug nuts to the air conditioning.

Barley flips on the air conditioning. It BLASTS like a leaf blower. Ian fights against the wind to turn it off.

IAN

Showing Dad your van? That's your whole list?

BARLEY

What list?

IAN

Oh...

BARLEY

What's that?

IAN

(a little embarrassed)
I'm just working on a list of things I wanted to do with Dad. You know, play catch, take a walk, driving lesson, share my whole life story with him.

Barley nods, appreciative.

BARLEY

That's cool.

(beat)

Oh, but before you cast Dad's spell again, you're gonna have to practice your magic.

Barley tosses Ian the Quests of Yore book.

IAN

This book is for a game.

BARLEY

I told you, everything in Quests of Yore is historically accurate! Even the spells. So start practicing, young sorcerer!

Barley hands Ian the staff. Ian opens the book.

IAN
Okay, Dad. Let's try some magic.

INT. LIGHTFOOT HOME - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Laurel sees a note taped to Ian's door: "Back soon with MIND-BLOWING surprise!" along with a crude drawing of Laurel with a mushroom cloud blowing from the top of her head.

She opens the door.

INT. IAN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Laurel GASPS. Ian's bedroom looks like a bomb went off.

She notices Ian's broken phone on the bed. Then walks over to the Quests of Yore cards Barley laid out earlier: The Phoenix Gem and the Manticore's Tavern.

INT. LIGHTFOOT HOME - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

Laurel grabs her car keys off of the hook.

EXT. LIGHTFOOT HOME - NIGHT

She pulls out of the garage in her car.

INT. LIGHTFOOT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Headlights shine on a pewter figurine on Barley's game board: part lion, part bat, part scorpion: THE MANTICORE.

EXT. BACK ROAD - NIGHT

Barley's van drives through a muddy back road.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Ian points the staff at an empty soda can.

IAN
Aloft Elevar.

Nothing happens.

IAN
Aloft Elevar.

Still nothing. Ian turns to Barley, picks up the Quests of Yore book gestures to a levitation spell in it.

IAN

I can't get this levitation spell to work. Maybe I should try something else, like...
(flipping pages)
Arcane Lightning?

BARLEY

Pfft, yeah, like a level one mage could bust out the hardest spell in the Enchanter's Guide Book.
(nerdy laugh)
Maybe we'll stick with the easy ones.

IAN

Yeah, well, it's not working. Am I saying it wrong?

BARLEY

You said it right, it's just for any spell to work you have to speak from your heart's fire.

IAN

My what?

BARLEY

Your heart's fire, you must speak with passion, don't hold back.

Ian seems doubtful about this advice.

IAN

(trying harder)
Aloft Elevar!

Nothing.

BARLEY

No, like - Aloft Elevar!

IAN

(angry, louder)
Aloft Elevar!

BARLEY

No, from your heart's fire!

IAN

ALOFT ELEVAR!

BARLEY
DON'T HOLD BACK!

IAN
ALOFT ELEVAR!

BARLEY
HEART'S FIRE!

Ian tosses the staff in frustration.

IAN
STOP SAYING HEARTS FIRE! This just
clearly isn't working!

Ian sits defeated next to Dad.

BARLEY
Hey, it was a good start.

Ian stares at the Visitation spell, then looks to Dad,
disappointed in himself.

BARLEY
Oh! Gather your courage, we've
arrived. The Manticore's Tavern.

Ian looks out the window to see an old tavern, just like the
one on the Quests of Yore card.

IAN
Wow, it is still here.

BARLEY
Yeah! I told you.

EXT. TAVERN - NIGHT

Ian and Barley approach the tavern. Ian has to tug on Dad's
leash to keep him moving in the right direction.

IAN
Come on, Dad! That's good.

They approach the ominous entrance, with a carving of the
Manticore's fearsome face above the door.

BARLEY
Alright, listen, first: let me do
the talking.
(MORE)

BARLEY (CONT'D)

Secondly, it's crucial we show the fearless Manticore the respect she deserves or she will thirdly, not give us a map to a Phoenix Gem.

IAN

Whoa, whoa, wait, the map?! I thought she had a Phoenix Gem?

BARLEY

(nerd laugh)

You're so cute.

(to Dad)

Hear that, Dad? He's a smart kid, he just doesn't know how quests work.

IAN

Well, is there anything else you're forgetting to tell me?

BARLEY

Nope.

Barley pushes open the door.

INT. MANTICORE'S TAVERN - NIGHT

The place is a ridiculous family restaurant, just full frontal Fuddruckers. A large table of revelers sing along with the waitstaff, around a birthday cake.

WAITERS

(singing)

Happy happy birthday,
Come join us on our quest,
To make your birthday party,
The very, very best! HEY!

Ian looks at Barley, losing faith in his brother.

BARLEY

Okay, okay, so the tavern changed a little over the years, but the Manticore is still the real deal.

Ian and Barley walk through the restaurant, taking it all in.

A TAVERN WAITRESS takes an order at a nearby table.

TAVERN PATRON

I'll have the soup of the day.

TAVERN WAITRESS
Would m'lord like a Cup or
Cauldron?

An elf kid plays a claw drop game with a gauntlet hand
picking up treasure. He loses.

Barley marches up a Hostess.

BARLEY
Madame, I request an audience...
(bowing)
...with the Manticore!

HOSTESS
But of course, m'lord.

The Hostess blows into a fake horn.

HOSTESS
Oh, Manticore!

A plush COSTUMED MANTICORE leaps into frame. Adorable and
silly, it lets out a CHUCKLE and hugs Ian. Barley pushes the
Costumed Manticore away from Ian, irritated.

BARLEY
No, no, no, no no! The real
Manticore! The fearless adventurer!

The costumed Manticore rubs its eyes like it's crying.

HOSTESS
Oh, you mean Corey? She's over
there.

The hostess gestures toward the kitchen.

INT. MANTICORE'S TAVERN - NIGHT

The kitchen doors burst open as a frantic Manticore struggles
to balance plates. No longer a fearless adventurer, she wears
a restaurant uniform, glasses, and a wrist brace.

MANTICORE
QUICK, SOMEBODY HELP ME! These
griffin nuggets were supposed to go
out minutes ago!

Waiters rushes in and she scrambles to offload the plates.

IAN
That's the Manticore?

Barley leaps forward and takes a knee.

BARLEY
Oh, great and powerful Manticore!

MANTICORE
Whoah, sir! You're right in the hot zone.

A GOBLIN COOK passes by her.

MANTICORE
You're late, Adolphus.

ADOLPHUS
(goblin language)

MANTICORE
I understand there's traffic, you need to plan for that!

The goblin heads onto the floor for his shift.

ADOLPHUS
(goblin language)

MANTICORE
Well maybe your mother should get her own car!

BARLEY
Your fearlessness?

The Manticore turns toward the boys, startled.

MANTICORE
AHH!

BARLEY
My brother and I seek a map... to a Phoenix Gem.

MANTICORE
Oh, uh, well you've come to the right tavern.
(aside to waiter, handing off plate)
Table 12.

She quickly races to a host podium and digs around.

MANTICORE
I have the parchment you desire right here! BEHOLD!

She presents them with a children's menu that says "FIND THE PHOENIX GEM!" above a variety of puzzles.

IAN

Oh... that's a children's menu.

MANTICORE

Isn't that fun? They're all based on my old maps.

(quick, formal)

Oh, uh, "The great Manticore sends you on your adventure with a hero's blessing." And here's some crayons.

She hurries off, but Barley follows reverently.

BARLEY

That's very amusing your dominance, but might you have the real map?

The Manticore points to a wall of swords, shields, scrolls.

MANTICORE

Uh... yeah, it's over there.

Ian points to a map on the wall with the title: PHOENIX GEM.

IAN

That's it!

BARLEY

This is perfect!

Barley reaches for the scroll, but the Manticore grabs it.

MANTICORE

Whoa, whoa, whoa! What are you doing? You can't take this.

BARLEY

We have to.

Barley removes Dad's torso to reveal he's just legs. The Manticore looks aghast, unsure what she's seeing.

MANTICORE

What is that?

The Manticore Mascot walks past and sees the legs. Stunned, the mascot bumps into a serving tray and FALLS to the ground.

IAN

It's our dad, and we have a chance to meet him, but--

Barley steps in front of Ian, taking over.

BARLEY

Buuuut... we can't do that without
a Phoenix Gem.

The Manticore considers this.

MANTICORE

No! My days of sending people on
dangerous quests are over.

BARLEY

What? Why?

MANTICORE

Uh, cause they're dangerous!

The HOSTESS pops around the corner.

HOSTESS

Corey, the karaoke machine is
broken again.

The Manticore sees a group of female fantasy creatures in
matching shirts surrounding a cyclops in a veil.

MANTICORE

(to the boys)

I'm sorry, but you are not getting
this map.

INT. KARAOKE AREA - NIGHT

The Manticore grovels to the bachelorette party.

MANTICORE

(worried, stressed)

Don't worry, ladies, your adventure
will continue momentarily!

BARLEY

(to Ian)

Okay, I can handle this.

Ian pushes past Barley to approach the Manticore.

BARLEY

No, Ian!

BRIDESMAID #1

You're ruining Althea's special
day!

IAN
Miss... Mighty Manticore, ma'am--?

BARLEY
What are you doing?

MANTICORE
Kid, this is not a good time.

The karaoke machine lets out a squall of feedback.

BRIDESMAID #1
I'm giving this place a one-star review!

IAN
It's just, I've never met my Dad and--

MANTICORE
Look, I'm sorry about that, but if you get hurt on one of my quests guess who gets sued and loses her tavern? I can't take that kind of risk! Now if you'll just excuse me I have important things to do!
(into mic)
Testing.
(singing)
You haunt my dreams, my in-between...

Ian looks at Dad's purple socks. He steps up.

IAN
Please, we need that map!

MANTICORE
No, I am not giving you the map! That's it! I'm done talking!

Ian stands up straight and looks determined.

IAN
Well... well, I'm not!

BARLEY
Whoa, whoa, whoa!

The Manticore looks up, surprised. Barley looks at Ian, equally surprised.

IAN

You say you can't "risk" losing
this place? Look at that Manticore!

Ian points to a heroic painting of the warrior Manticore.

IAN

She looks like she lived to take
risks!

MANTICORE

That Manticore didn't have
investors to look out for. She
didn't have payroll to cover!

The Manticore stands up, gesturing wildly.

MANTICORE

She could just fly out the door
whenever she wanted and slay a
magma beast.

BRIDESMAID #2

Are you gonna fix the machine or
not?

MANTICORE

Yeah, in a minute!

The startled bridesmaid backs off.

MANTICORE

Okay, maybe this place isn't as
adventurous as it used to be, so it
isn't filled with a motley horde
willing to risk life and limb for
the mere taste of excitement...

A pathetic patron blows on his soup.

MANTICORE

...but so what?! Whoever said you
have to take risks in life to have
an adventure?!

Ian nervously points behind the Manticore.

IAN

Apparently, you did.

The Manticore looks at her portrait, Above it is a plaque:

YOU HAVE TO TAKE RISKS IN LIFE TO HAVE AN
ADVENTURE. - THE MANTICORE

The Manticore is speechless.

A ROGUE WAITER walks up with a plate of mozzarella sticks.

ROGUE WAITER

Table 32 said their mozzarella sticks are cold.

The Manticore breathes fire on the mozzarella sticks. Terrified, the waiter scuttles away.

MANTICORE

What have I done?

IAN

Well, it's not too late. I mean, you could just give us the map--

MANTICORE

This place used to be dangerous--

The Chuck E. Cheese-style Manticore mascot stands behind the real Manticore and begins to imitate her movements.

COSTUMED MANTICORE

Dangerous!

MANTICORE

--and wild.

COSTUMED MANTICORE

Wild!

MANTICORE

I used to be dangerous and wild!

COSTUMED MANTICORE

Dangerous and wild!

The Manticore stares daggers at the mascot moving behind her. She tackles it, rips off its foam head, and holds it up proudly with a mighty roar.

MANTICORE

I'm living a lie -- WHAT HAVE I BECOME?!

She torches the mascot head. Parents cover a child's eyes.

BARLEY

Oh no...

The Manticore throws the smoldering, melting mascot head and it lands on a table between two customers.

MANTICORE

Everybody out! This tavern is
closed for remodeling!

The mascot head ignites a banner that burns into the rafters.

INT. MANTICORE'S TAVERN - NIGHT

Patrons watch in terror as the fire spreads. Kids are grabbed and hurried out the doors by their terrified parents. One kid is torn away from coloring her children's menu.

EXT. MANTICORE'S TAVERN FRONT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Terrified patrons stream from the blazing building.

INT. MANTICORE'S TAVERN - NIGHT

The Manticore has completely lost it.

MANTICORE

Sorry, the karaoke machine is
broken!

Manticore throws the karaoke machine against the wall knocking away the dry wall and revealing the stone beneath.

The Manticore picks up a cardboard standee of herself and throws it to the ground with a yell. She throws the Phoenix Gem map with it.

Ian watches in horror as the map catches fire. He races to the map, but it's too late. All that's left is ashes.

IAN

No, no, no, no! No! ...No.

A beam falls behind them.

BARLEY

We gotta go!

They race through the restaurant, arm-in-arm with Dad, his torso detaches. His legs runs in the wrong direction, bump into a wall, and fall to the ground.

Ian realizes they've lost Dad. He turns and sees Dad struggling to stand. The roof above suddenly buckles. The wooden beams CRASH down, headed right for Dad.

Without a thought, Ian lifts the staff and calls out.

IAN
ALOFT ELEVAR!

A blast of light from the staff freezes the wooden beam in mid-air, mere inches from Dad. Ian strains to hold the spell.

Barley rushes in and grabs Dad, pulling him to safety. Ian releases the spell and the beam CRASHES to the ground. Barley, Ian, and Dad flee from the burning tavern.

EXT. MANTICORE'S TAVERN - NIGHT

The van pulls away, past approaching fire trucks.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

BARLEY
Ha-ha! That was unbelievable. You were just like...
(magic sounds)
And the beam was just floatin' there! My brother is a wizard!

IAN
I can't believe that worked.

BARLEY
Oh, you're gonna nail Dad's spell now.

IAN
Except we don't have a map.

BARLEY
But we've got this! BEHOLD!

Barley reveals a kids' menu he grabbed. Ian sighs.

BARLEY
Look, on a quest, you have to use what you've got. And this is what we've got!

Barley points to a crayon signature that reads: "KAYLA"

BARLEY
Best part is, little Kayla already solved the puzzle.

Ian takes the menu. The puzzle has been solved in crayon.

IAN

Well, according to Kayla, we just have to look for "Raven's Point."

Something dawns on him. Ian reaches down and takes out a map.

IAN

Raven's Point... Raven's Point...

He slams a roadmap down on the dash and points to a mountain labeled: RAVEN'S POINT.

IAN

Raven's Point!

BARLEY

Yes! The gem must be in the mountain. We can be there by tomorrow morning.

IAN

Tomorrow morning?

BARLEY

That still gives us plenty of time with Dad.

Ian looks at Dad, disappointed.

IAN

Yeah.

The van comes to a stop at a red light.

Ian traces a route with his finger, right to Raven's Point.

IAN

Well, it looks like the expressway should take us right there.

BARLEY

Eh, expressway is a little too obvious. On a quest, the clear path is never the right one--

IAN

What?

BARLEY

During one Quests of Yore campaign, Shrub Rosehammer and I took the easy route... led him straight into the belly of a gelatinous cube.

(MORE)

BARLEY (CONT'D)

Only reason I didn't suffer the
same fate?

(slaps gut)

I followed my gut.

Barley highlights barely-perceptible road on the map.

BARLEY

And it's telling me we take an
ancient trail called the Path of
Peril.

IAN

But the expressway is faster.

BARLEY

Maybe not in the long run.

IAN

I know you want this to be like one
of your adventure games, but all
that matters is that we get to
spend as much time as possible with
Dad.

Dad breaks free from his seatbelt in back and wanders toward
the front of the van, leaving his top half behind. He taps
his foot against Barley's. Barley pats Dad's foot and sighs.

IAN

So, we should just take the
expressway. Right?

BARLEY

Yeah. You're right.

(beat)

But if you end up inside a
gelatinous cube, you are on your
own.

Barley steers the van onto an onramp.

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

Just then, Laurel's car drives under the onramp just under
the van, heading in the opposite direction from the boys.

INT. LAUREL'S CAR - NIGHT

A GPS screen navigates toward the Manticore's tavern.

GPS VOICE
Manticore's Tavern, ahead on your
right.

A phone call interrupts the GPS. It's Colt. Laurel answers.

LAUREL
Hey.

EXT. FRY FORTRESS - NIGHT

Colt talks on the phone, carrying a bag of takeout.

COLT
I'm just checking in. Did you catch
up to the boys yet?

LAUREL
No, not yet. But I'm a little
worried because we had a weird
family issue come up and, well,
this just isn't like Ian to run
off.

(beat)
I mean, Barley, yes, but not Ian.

COLT
You know, it's late, you shouldn't
have to be out looking for them.

INT. LAUREL'S CAR - NIGHT

LAUREL
I know, it's silly, I'm sure
they're both probably on fire...

Laurel sees the Manticore's Tavern burning to the ground.

COLT
Fire?!

LAUREL
FIRE! The place is on fire! My
boys, oh no, I gotta go!

COLT
Laurel!

EXT. MANTICORE'S TAVERN - NIGHT

Laurel gets out of the car and sees people from the tavern:

The headless Manticore mascot, patting her smoking costume.

COSTUMED MANTICORE

Get it off, get it off, get it off!

The bachelorette party, disheveled and crying.

LAUREL

Excuse me? Hello! Please, I'm looking for two teenage elves?!

MANTICORE

Okay, okay, I told you already, there were two teenage elves...

LAUREL

Oh! Those are my sons! Where did they go?

The Manticore sits on the side of the curb, wrapped in a silver emergency blanket, holding a mug.

MANTICORE

Oh, they went on a quest to find a Phoenix Gem. But don't worry, don't worry. I told them about the map, and about the gem, and about the curse.

(standing/dawning)

I forgot to tell them about the curse!

LAUREL

The what?

OFFICER AVEL

Hoo boy...

A police officer, OFFICER AVEL, leans in to talk to Laurel.

OFFICER AVEL

Listen, this one's gone a little (whistle)

MANTICORE

Your boys are in grave danger! But I can help--

The Manticore starts to move toward Laurel. Officer Avel pulls the Manticore toward the police car.

OFFICER AVEL

Whoa, heyyy. You're not going anywhere. We got questions for you.

MANTICORE
(calling to Laurel)
I know where they're going! We can
still save them!

Laurel looks around, concerned. She's sees a first aid kit in
the back of an ambulance and gets an idea.

EXT. TAVERN - MOMENTS LATER

The Manticore talks with Officer Avel by a police car.

MANTICORE
Last name "Manticore." First name,
"The."

Laurel walks up to Officer Avel and the Manticore.

LAUREL
Hold on! You're right, she has gone
a little--
(whistle)
It's no wonder with a wound like
that.

Laurel points dramatically to a slight scrape on the
Manticore's leg.

OFFICER AVEL
That's just a scratch.

Laurel pulls out the Quests of Yore card about the Manticore
and waves it around like it's an official document.

LAUREL
Oh, I'm sorry, are you an expert on
minotaurs?

MANTICORE
(correcting)
Manticores.

LAUREL
--Manticores?

OFFICER AVEL
Well, no.

LAUREL
Well then you wouldn't know that
when their blood is exposed to air,
it makes them go bonkers.

MANTICORE

I don't think that's true.

LAUREL

See! She's already losing her grip on reality. So why don't you let me save her life before it costs you yours?

Officer Avel throws his hands in the air.

OFFICER AVEL

Okay!

LAUREL

Thank you! Could we have a little privacy here, please?

Officer Avel steps away.

LAUREL (O.S.)

Just lie back. That's good.

OFFICER AVEL

Just don't take too long back there, okay?

(beat)

Hey, you hear me?

Officer Avel turns and looks at the Manticore's silhouette, then carefully walks back toward the police car.

OFFICER AVEL

I said, don't take too long back there, because I--

As he gets closer, he sees the source of Manticore's silhouette: The melted mascot head, propped up as a decoy.

OFFICER AVEL

Ahh!

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Laurel's car drives away, the back dragging sparks.

INT. LAUREL'S CAR - NIGHT

The Manticore is hunkered down in the backseat of the car.

LAUREL

Alright, how do we help my boys?

The Manticore smiles.

MANTICORE
Ooooooh, I'm gonna like you!

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

The van passes through a city.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Barley drives as Ian and Dad sit on bean bags in the back.
Ian stares at the list he's made.

BARLEY
Radio... headlights... brakes,
tires, rims... I mean it's hard to
tell now, Dad, before I replaced
her parts, Guinevere was actually
kind of a piece of junk.

Ian looks over at Dad and crosses things off his list.

IAN
Looks like we're not gonna get to
do everything today, Dad. But,
that's okay, I just wanna meet you.

Dad rubs his foot against Ian's. Ian smiles.

IAN
But don't worry, we'll have you
fixed up and back home to see...
(dawning)
Oh man, Mom! Barley, we're not
going to be able to get Dad back in
time to see Mom.

BARLEY
Oh...
(beat)
Well, Dad... at least you won't
have to meet the new guy.

Barley puts his finger up to his face to create a mustache.

BARLEY
(Colt impression)
So you, uh, workin' hard or hardly
workin'?
(horse chuckle)

IAN

Yeah!

(bad Colt impression)

Barley, Barley, Barley. Every time there's trouble, I gotta deal with you.

BARLEY

Is that your Colt?!

IAN

Yeah?

BARLEY

You're gonna wanna work on that.

Suddenly the van begins to SPUTTER.

BARLEY

No, no, no, NO! Come on, old girl!

Barley pulls the van off the expressway and lurches it to a stop on the side of the road.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

IAN

I thought you said you fixed the van.

BARLEY

Relax, Guinevere is fine. Her stomach is just a little empty.

Ian looks over at the gas gauge. The needle is on "F."

IAN

But it says we have a full tank.

BARLEY

Oh, that doesn't work.

EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT

Barley gets out, goes to the back of the van, pulls out a gas can, and shakes it next to his ear.

BARLEY

Only a few drops left.

Ian gets out. Barley climbs on top of Guinevere.

BARLEY

Maybe there's a gas station...

There's nothing within sight. Ian looks at the staff.

IAN

Is there a magic way to get gas?

BARLEY

Oh! I like your thinking young mage.

Barley scrambles down from the van and shows Ian a page in the spell book: an illustration of a wizard growing an apple to five times its size.

BARLEY

Growth Spell! We grow the can and then the gas inside will grow with it.

IAN

Uhh... that's kind of a weird idea...

BARLEY

I know! I like it too!

Ian mutters to himself as he holds the spell and the staff.

IAN

Okay, loosen up, heart's fire. Here we go.

BARLEY

Whoa, it's not that simple.

(to Dad)

This one learns a little magic and thinks he's Shamblefoot the Wondrous, am I right, Dad?

(to Ian)

A growth spell is a bit more advanced. Not only do you have to speak from your heart's fire, but now you also have to follow a magic decree.

IAN

A magic what?

Barley shows Ian the book.

BARLEY

It's a special rule that keeps the spell working right. This one states: "To magnify an object, you have to magnify your attention upon it."

(beat)

While you cast the spell, you can't let anything distract you.

Barley puts the gas can on the ground. Ian points the staff.

IAN

Okay...

(exhale)

Ow!

BARLEY

What?

IAN

Splinter! Can we sand this thing down?

BARLEY

No! It's an ancient staff with magic in every glorious fiber, you can't "sand it down."

IAN

Alright, alright. Here we go.

(sotto)

Focus...

Ian holds out the staff and tries to focus.

BARLEY

Uh...

IAN

Something wrong?

BARLEY

Sorry, it's just, your stance is uh... Here.

Barley poses Ian awkwardly, all over his personal space.

BARLEY

Chin up, elbows out, feet apart, back slightly arched... Okay, how's that feel?

IAN
(strained)
Great.

BARLEY
Oh! One more thing.

IAN
Barley!

BARLEY
Okay! Okay.

Barley tries to adjust Ian's elbow one more time. Ian shoots him a look. Barley throws up his hands and steps back.

Ian focuses hard and recites the spell.

IAN
Magnora Gantuan!

The staff throws off violent, flashing sparks. Ian winces, but does his best to stay focused. The can begins to grow.

BARLEY
Don't let the magic spook you.

IAN
Okay.

BARLEY
Elbows!

IAN
What?!

BARLEY
Elbows up!

Ian lifts his elbows as high as possible.

BARLEY
No, no, no, too high. That's too high.

IAN
I'm trying to focus here!

BARLEY
Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah! Focus on the can!

Barley encourages Ian -- slowly, almost to himself -- but so, deeply annoying.

As the boys argue, Dad taps Ian's foot then searches for Barley. Dad taps Barley's head, nearly stepping on him.

BARLEY
Whoa, ow! Dad, it's me!

Barley does "Shave and a Haircut" on Dad's foot. Dad freaks out, recognizing him and reacting to his shrunken size.

IAN
Whoah, Dad, it's okay, don't worry,
I'm going fix this!

Ian grabs Dad's leash and picks up the gas can.

BARLEY
Well, where are you going?

IAN
To find a gas station.

BARLEY
Well, I'm going too.

IAN
Fine.

Ian tries to pick up Barley, but Barley refuses.

BARLEY
Hey, I don't need your help!

IAN
Fine with me.

Ian struggles to carry everything as Barley runs after Ian.

EXT. INDUSTRIAL NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Ian with Dad. A tiny, shrunken Barley tries to keep up.

BARLEY
(panting)
I just need a little break. My baby
legs can't go that fast.

Ian walks back and awkwardly picks up Barley by the shirt.

BARLEY
Look, a gas station!

Ian turns to see a glowing gas station in the distance.

IAN

Oh, good.

BARLEY

Oh wait, I forgot.
(struggling to turn away)
You don't need my help.

Ian drops Barley into his pocket and charges ahead.

BARLEY

Hey! I don't need you to carry me!
I'm a grown man!

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Ian approaches the gas station, Barley and Dad in tow. He walks past a gas pump. Dad searches the ground with his foot.

IAN

Dad, come on, it's okay, Barley is with me.

Barley looks at his reflection in the gas pump.

BARLEY

Yeah, I'm fine, Dad. The side effects are supposed to wear off eventually. Do I look any bigger yet?

A group of loudly revving, seemingly unmanned motorcycles park in front of the gas station. Suddenly, a sprite in a leather jacket, DEWDROP, pops out from behind the bike. Other sprites appear. They were all collectively driving the bikes.

They hop off and swagger into the gas station.

An elf walks out of the gas station drinking a slushie. He unknowingly hits Dewdrop with the door on his way out.

DEWDROP

Hey! Did you just bump into me?

GAS STATION VICTIM

Oh, I'm terribly sorry, I didn't see you there--

DEWDROP

Do it again, and you'll see me in your nightmares!

He drops his slushie and runs away.

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Ian slinks into the station, Dad in tow, Barley in pocket.

Sprites climb the shelves, throw things to their cohorts, drink from the soda fountain. A sprite on the counter scratches a lotto ticket. Another throws money at the clerk.

COBWEB

Gimme a bag of Extra Sours.

The clerk hands over a bag.

COBWEB

Keep the change.

The sprites pass Ian, carrying a box of candy-filled straws.

COBWEB

Outta the way, beanstalk.

Ian tries to keep a low profile as he talks to the CLERK.

IAN

Uh, ten on pump two, please.

Barley leans out of Ian's pocket, reaching for a bag of snacks, but knocks over the entire rack.

IAN

What are you doing?!

BARLEY

I'm getting us food.

Ian pushes a few bags of cheese puffs forward.

IAN

Alright, I got it. And a couple of these, thank you.

BARLEY

Pssst! I have to go to the bathroom!

IAN

Can it wait?

BARLEY

It's your pocket.

Ian turns back to the clerk.

IAN

Can we have the bathroom key,
please?

The clerk hands them a bathroom key attached to a license plate. Ian takes Barley out of his pocket and gives him the key. Tiny Barley has to carry the key over his head.

IAN

Okay, be quick. I want to get out
of here.

BARLEY

Okay, I'm going.

Barley runs to the bathroom. Dad searches around with his foot for little Barley and just misses him.

GAS STATION CLERK

That'll be twelve ninety-nine.

Ian hands money to the cashier. Dad continues to search for little Barley, and taps the head of one of the sprites.

MUSTARDSEED

Hey! Watch it!

Dewdrop leaps over to Dad and puffs out her chest.

DEWDROP

You got a problem, Shades?!

Dad stares at her.

DEWDROP

Answer me when I'm talking to you!

Ian turns to see that Dewdrop staring down Dad from high on a shelf. Ian grabs Dad and pulls him away.

IAN

Sorry, I don't really know where
his head is at right now.

Ian pulls Dad to the door and EXITS.

IAN

(sotto)

How could this night get any worse?

EXT. LAUREL'S CAR - NIGHT

Laurel's car speeds down the highway, the passenger side drags along the ground, sparks shooting out.

INT. LAUREL'S CAR - NIGHT

Laurel drives. The Manticore is tight in the passenger seat.

MANTICORE

You know, I would fly us to help your boys, but... the old wings aren't what they used to be.

LAUREL

Oh, that's fine. So, about this curse--

The Manticore wiggles her wings a little.

MANTICORE

It's my own fault. I should be doing my wing exercises every morning, but you know how that goes...

LAUREL

Please, the curse. What does it do?

MANTICORE

Right! Sorry. It's a Guardian Curse.

The Manticore rips off her sleeve to reveal an arm full of tattoos. She points to an image of a red cloud.

MANTICORE

If your boys take the gem, the curse will rise up...

She points to the red mist holding rocks together to make a beast attacking someone.

MANTICORE

...and assume the form of a mighty beast... and battle your sons to the...

(catching herself)

Well... how do your boys do in a crisis?

LAUREL

Not great! One of them is afraid of everything and the other isn't afraid of anything.

MANTICORE

Yeah, that skinny kid of yours is pretty fearless.

LAUREL

No, no. You mean the big one. Barley.

MANTICORE

No, the little guy. Woo, he really let me have it.

LAUREL

What? No, look... You said you could help them. Right?

The Manticore points to a glowing circle in the "heart" of one of the beasts.

MANTICORE

Every curse has a core, the center of its power. And only one weapon forged of the rarest metals can destroy it: my enchanted sword...

The Manticore rips off her other sleeve to reveal a tattoo of a glowing yellow sword that reads: THE CURSE CRUSHER.

MANTICORE

...the Curse Crusher!

LAUREL

Okay, but you don't seem to have that on you.

The Manticore looks at Laurel, embarrassed.

MANTICORE

I sold it. Got in a little tax trouble a few years back. But don't worry, I know just where to find it.

Laurel nods, determined.

LAUREL

(sotto)

I am on my way boys, just try to stay out of trouble.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Ian finishes pumping gas. He looks at his watch.

IAN
(to self)
Ugh, what is taking you so long?

Then he hears something off in the distance.

DEWDROP (O.S.)
Who you calling whimsical?

Ian looks over to see Barley in talking to two sprites.

IAN
Oh no.

BARLEY
Whoa, whoa, whoa!

DEWDROP
You got a lotta nerve.

Ian makes his way toward Barley while struggling with Dad.

BARLEY
I'm just saying sprites used to fly
around spreading delight. That's a
good thing.

DEWDROP
Sprites can't fly!

BARLEY
Well, your wings don't work 'cause
you stopped using them.

DEWDROP
You calling me lazy?

She throws down her candy straw on the ground and stomps it.

BARLEY
No, no, no. Not you. Your
ancestors.

DEWDROP
What did you say about my
ancestors?!

BARLEY
I didn't mean lazy, I--

But Ian swoops in and GRABS Barley while also holding the full gas can and a wandering Dad.

IAN

I'm sorry! Very sorry! He's sorry, too. You don't need to fly, who needs to fly? I mean you've got those great bikes!

BARLEY

What are you doing? I was just discussing history!

IAN

Barley, I'm trying to take care of you and Dad, and you are not making it any easier!

(struggling with Dad)

Dad, come on!

Dad has wandered to the other side of the line of motorcycles and Ian unwittingly pulls him into the bikes. They CRASH like dominoes, blocking the gas station door.

IAN

Oh no.

The Sprites inside the gas station SLAM into the door and windows of the station. They are SEETHING caged animals.

DEWDROP

HEY! YOU'RE DEAD!

Ian RACES Dad and Barley out of there as fast as he can.

EXT. ROADSIDE - NIGHT

Ian runs, terrified.

IAN

We're dead! We're dead! We're dead!
We're dead! We're dead!

Ian frantically fills the van with gasoline.

BARLEY

Relax, they won't be able to lift those bikes--

One motorcycle ROARS to life in the distance.

BARLEY

Oh, they are strong...

IAN
We're gonna die, we're gonna die,
we're gonna die!

Barley jumps up and down on the door handle.

BARLEY
It's locked!

IAN
What?! Where are the keys?

They see the keys still in the ignition.

BARLEY
I got this!

Barley slides his tiny body through the cracked window. He struggles to try to lift the lock.

IAN
C'mon, Barley!

The lock pops up, sending Barley flying backwards.

BARLEY
Whoa!

Ian climbs in the passenger side and slams the door.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

Ian points out the windshield.

IAN
Okay, Go! Go! Go!

Ian looks at Barley, tiny and useless on the drivers seat.

IAN
Oh, no. No, no, no, no. No way...

BARLEY
You're gonna have to!

Ian slides over into the drivers seat. He carefully buckles his seatbelt, but then sees the motorcycles coming. Ian turns the key. The engine whines, but nothing happens.

IAN
Come on, why won't it start?!

BARLEY

There's a sweet spot... not in the middle, but not quite at the end!

Ian wiggles the ignition, leaning into it.

IAN

Comeoncomeoncomeoncomeon! Come. On. Guinevere!

The van sputters to life.

BARLEY

Put it in "O" for "onward!"

Ian pulls the screwdriver gear shift down to the handwritten letter "O". The van lurches forward just as a sprite SMASHES out Ian's window with a flail.

IAN

AHH!

BARLEY

DRIVE!!!

Ian's unintentionally cuts off the sprites. Their bikes get tangled up as the van speeds away.

EXT. EXPRESSWAY/INT. VAN - NIGHT

The van races up the on-ramp onto the expressway.

BARLEY

Okay, you're gonna have to merge!

Cars ROAR past the van as Ian cautiously picks up speed. A huge truck barrels up beside him. Ian tentatively steers the van closer to the freeway. The truck lays on its horn.

BARLEY

Speed up!

IAN

I can't do this!

BARLEY

Yes you can!

IAN

I'm not ready!

BARLEY

You'll never be ready! MERGE!!

IAN

AHHH!!!

Ian floors it and cuts in front of the giant truck.

BARLEY

Ha-ha! Nice job!

In the rearview mirror, Ian sees the motorcycles gaining on them. They pull up on both sides of the van, surrounding him.

A biker pulls out a flail and hits the van. Barley leaps up to the window, yelling out at the sprites.

BARLEY

Hey, don't hit Gwinny!

IAN

Barley!

Ian quickly comes up behind a slow moving car.

IAN

Oh, no!

BARLEY

Get around 'em!

IAN

They're not letting me in!

BARLEY

SIGNAL!

IAN

You don't have a signal-er!

BARLEY

Stick your arm straight out the window to signal left!

Ian holds his arm straight out the window. A sprite immediately wraps a chain around it.

IAN

AH!!

Ian turns the wheel one-handed and merges into the next lane. Barley climbs out on Ian's arm to untangle the chain.

IAN

Get back here!

BARLEY
Just keep driving!

The sprites cheer as they gain on the van.

IAN
Barley!

Barley successfully untangles the chain. It recoils and almost knocks a number of sprites off their motorcycle.

Ian looks ahead and sees the freeway splitting EAST and NORTH. Barley crawls back onto Ian's shoulder.

BARLEY
The mountains are north. You need
to get all the way over!

Dad stumbles to the front of the car and face plants into the steering wheel, blaring Guinevere's horn.

EXT. EXPRESSWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dewdrop sees Dad's body flapping out the window, his stuffed arm waving as if he's shaking a fist.

DEWDROP
What the-- Oh it is on, Shades!
(to sprites)
Get 'em!

A motorcycle races up to Ian's window. A group of sprites LEAP from their bike and into the van, attacking Ian.

INT. VAN - CONTINUOUS

A sprite tackles Barley. Barley pulls the sword from the hand of a nearby bobblehead warrior and brandishes it at the sprite. Ian, covered in sprites, causes the van to swerve.

Barley and his sprite are thrown onto the passenger seat. The sprite pins Barley down with the seatbelt buckle.

BARLEY
Ian! Stay focused!

IAN
I can't!

BARLEY
You HAVE to focus or we're all
dead!

Ian sees the NORTH sign out the window rapidly approaching.

BARLEY
Just stay cool!

Ian gets an idea.

He frantically reaches and turns on the AC. Strong air blasts from the vents, blowing the sprites out the windows.

The sprite that was fighting Barley is blown into the windshield of the car behind Guinevere.

Barley clings to the seatbelt, flapping in the wind.

BARLEY
Way to go, Guinevere!

He loses his grip and is suddenly blown out the window. But Ian manages to grab him at the last minute.

The sprites rev their bike for another attack.

DEWDROP
Hit it!

Ian sees his exit ahead, across several lanes.

BARLEY
We're not gonna make it!

With determination, Ian crosses several lanes of traffic, just barely making it onto the NORTH fork of the freeway.

The sprites don't have time to correct their course. They crash their bike and hurtle toward the ground. But their wings flap until suddenly... they're flying.

DEWDROP
Huh.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Tiny Barley perches on Ian's shoulder, celebrating their success. Ian pants heavily, still riding the adrenaline.

IAN
Dad, are you okay?!

BARLEY
He's fine, thanks to the skillful driving of Sir Ian Lightfoot! High Five!

Barley raises his hand to high five, but it bulges to full size and smacks Ian in the face.

IAN
Ow! What is happening?

BARLEY
I think the spell is wearing off.

Barley's torso expands to full size on Ian's shoulder. Ian can't even see out the window to know where he's going.

IAN
Get off my face!

Barley's right leg grows, slamming onto the gas pedal.

EXT. ROADWAY - NIGHT

The van lunges forward, swerving past a hidden police car. Its lights come on and it gives chase.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

Barley, now fully-grown, climbs into the passenger seat.

IAN
Oh, Chantar's Talon! Cops!

BARLEY
Pull over!

IAN
I don't have a license.

Barley pulls a small piece of folded leather from his pocket.

BARLEY
Ah! My wallet's still tiny!

EXT. FREEWAY SHOULDER - NIGHT

The van pulls over.

There are two cops in the car behind them. An imposing cyclops, OFFICER SPECTER, and a boorish satyr: OFFICER GORE. Officer Specter speaks into the P.A.

OFFICER SPECTER
Step out of the vehicle.

INT. VAN - NIGHT

The boys struggle to remain calm.

IAN
What are we gonna do?

BARLEY
I don't know!

In the background, Dad's dizzy legs stumble around, then lean against the open back doors of the van and begin to step out.

IAN
How are we gonna explain--
(seeing Dad)
Oh no. DAD!

EXT. FREEWAY SHOULDER - CONTINUOUS

The cops watch Dad slowly stumble from the van, then share a knowing look. They step out of the car and walk over to Dad.

OFFICER GORE
You have a long night there, buddy?

OFFICER SPECTER
Sir, I'm gonna ask you to walk this
straight line.

Meanwhile, Ian and Barley confer in front of the van.

IAN
They're gonna take Dad!

Barley thinks for a moment.

BARLEY
Oh! I got it! The disguise spell!
You can disguise yourself to be
anyone you want.

Barley draws the spell in the dirt.

IAN
What if I mess up again?

BARLEY
According to the spell, "Disguising
yourself is a lie, so you must tell
the truth to get by." As long as
you don't tell a lie, the spell
will be fine.

IAN

Okay... who are we gonna be?

The cops watch a wandering, meandering Dad.

OFFICER GORE

Okay, we're taking you down to the station.

There's a flash followed by the sound of hooves. The cops turn to see Officer Colt Bronco walk out from behind the van.

COLT

(nervous/uncertain)

What seems to be the problem here fellow... police folk?

Colt's back legs walk out of sync, nervous and awkward.

OFFICER GORE

Officer Bronco?

OFFICER SPECTER

Were you in that van?

To the side of Colt we see a new point of view: The boys are masked by a ghost-like shell of Colt, Ian in the front, Barley in the back. We hear Colt's voice turn into Ian's.

COLT/IAN

Affirmative! And we will, I mean, I will take full responsibility for that fella right there, so you can just release him over to me.

BARLEY

(whispered to Ian)

Hey, I wanted to be the front.

IAN

(whispered to Barley)

No way, I'll do the talking.

OFFICER GORE

Bronco, I thought you were working on the other side of town.

COLT

I, uh, changed my mind.

Suddenly Colt's right ear vanishes. Ian quickly turns, blocking the missing ear from view.

OFFICER SPECTER
Something wrong?

COLT
(panicking)
Just a little... neck... cramp!

And with that, Colt's left hand goes away. Ian quickly and awkwardly bends his arm behind his body.

BARLEY
(whispered, to Ian)
You have to stop lying. Answer every question with a question!

OFFICER SPECTER
What exactly are you doing out here?

COLT
Uh... What am I doing out here?
What are any of us doing out here?

OFFICER GORE
Whoa... I never thought about it like that.

BARLEY
(whispered, to Ian)
Nice!

OFFICER SPECTER
With all due respect, you didn't answer my question.

COLT
Well, we were just exercising some driver's education drills for... Ian.

OFFICER SPECTER
Who is Ian?

OFFICER GORE
(pointing back to Dad)
Oh, is that Laurel's kid?

COLT
Ian is Laurel's kid.

OFFICER SPECTER
Your stepson was swerving all over the road.

COLT/IAN

Yeah, well... that guy's not all there today.

They all look to see Dad slump on the hood of the police car.

OFFICER SPECTER

Yeah, he does seem a little off.
(suspicious)
You seem a little off yourself.

Behind the illusion, Ian is nervous and sweating.

IAN/COLT

Uh, actually, if I'm being completely honest... I'm not super great in this kinda situation... and I'm starting to freak out a little bit. I'm all sweaty and weird and I don't know what to say and I just feel like I can't do anything right and I'm a total weirdo--

Specter and Gore share a look. Specter takes Colt aside.

OFFICER SPECTER

Whoa, whoa, hold on, okay hold on, hold on. I think I know what's going on here.

IAN

Uh... You do?

OFFICER SPECTER

Yeah, it's not easy being a new parent. My girlfriend's daughter got me pulling my hair out, okay?

IAN

(relieved)
Oh... uh, yeah.

OFFICER SPECTER

(to Gore)
Alright, we can let him go.

COLT

Oh, okay... I'm just gonna take him to the van.

OFFICER SPECTER

Hey, it gets better, alright? Good luck, Bronco.

COLT
You too, Officer. Keep workin'
hard... or hardly workin'...
(horse laugh)

The boys, still disguised as Colt, put Dad back in the van.

BARLEY
(whispering)
Now that was a good Colt!

Ian grins at Barley.

OFFICER GORE
I don't envy you, Bronco. That
Lightfoot kid is a handful.

COLT
I'm gonna have to disagree with you
there, I think Ian's a pretty stand
up citizen.

OFFICER GORE
Not him, the older one.

IAN
What?

OFFICER GORE
I mean, the guy's a screw up. You
can't say you don't agree?

IAN
Um... I don't.

Colt's right leg instantly vanishes. Right in front of
Barley's face.

BARLEY
(hurt, stunned)
What?

IAN/COLT
I mean, um, uh, okay, well, um, I
have to get going, gotta get Ian
home.

Colt's other arm vanishes. Ian quickly shuffles back to the
van. The cops watch, baffled by Colt's behavior.

COLT
Ah, I mean, I'm late for work.

Colt's back legs vanish.

COLT/IAN

Sorry, I mean I'm feeling a little sick. I mean, tired. Sick and tired. I gotta go! See you Monday!

With each lie, Colt loses an arm, leg, ear. Ian and Barley just barely slink into the van before Colt's head disappears.

OFFICER GORE

(laughing)

Oh man, Bronco is losing it. See, that's why I never got married. Yup, Old Gore can't be tied down.

Specter watches the van drive away. Then she CLICKS on her flashlight and follows Colt's hoof prints in the dirt, only to find them eventually lead to regular shoe prints.

OFFICER SPECTER

(into her radio)

This is Specter. Can you put me through to Officer Colt Bronco?

INT. VAN - NIGHT

The boys drive down the highway, silent. Ian looks straight ahead, guilty. Barley stares at the road, stone-faced.

IAN

Barley... I don't know what happened back there, but I don't think you're a screwup.

Barley says nothing.

IAN

Maybe the magic just got it wrong... you know?

BARLEY

Yeah...

Barley BLASTS super loud fantasy metal. Ian winces.

IAN

I DON'T KNOW WHAT HAPPENED--

Barley turns up the music louder.

IAN

BARLEY! BARLEY!

Suddenly Barley whips off the road at a rest area. He gets out of the van through the side door.

EXT. REST STOP - NIGHT

The music blares as Barley marches away from the van. He angrily tears into a bag of Gorgon-Zola's Cheese Puffs.

IAN
Where are you going?

Ian follows after him, calling out.

IAN
Barley, come on, this is all just--

Barley stops and turns to Ian.

BARLEY
I'm not a screwup!

IAN
I didn't say you were.

BARLEY
The magic said it for you!

IAN
Well, the magic got it wrong!

BARLEY
Magic doesn't get it wrong! The cop asked a question, you answered, and magic revealed the truth. Right?!
(beat)
RIGHT?!

IAN
I don't know how any of this stuff works! All I know is that everything we've done tonight has gone wrong!

BARLEY
It's gone wrong because you won't listen to me!

Ian stops, stunned.

IAN
Are you kidding? Because everything we've done has been your idea--

BARLEY

But you didn't do it my way! You didn't let me handle the Manticore. You freaked out when I talked to the sprites. Because you don't think I have good ideas.

IAN

What! Of course I do!

BARLEY

Great, then I think we should take the Path of Peril!

IAN

And I also think that would be good... normally--

BARLEY

See!

IAN

But I told you, this isn't a game! All that matters today is Dad, and right now he's sitting in that van, and he's confused--

Barley looks over Ian's shoulder back toward the van.

IAN

What?!

Ian turns to see Dad standing in the back of the van, bending his knees to the music.

IAN

What is he doing?

BARLEY

I think he can feel the vibrations of the music and he's... dancing.

The boys watch as Dad slowly adds more dance moves. Then Dad really cuts loose and it's... not good.

IAN

Wow. He is terrible.

Dad flails so wildly that his top half falls off.

BARLEY

Yeah. He's really, really bad.

They watch in embarrassment. Dad shimmies over to the boys.

BARLEY

Oh no, here he comes.

Dad hooks his leg around Barley's, cajoling him to dance.

BARLEY

No no no, thanks Dad. Dad, thank
you! I'm good! Stop!

(laugh)

Okay, okay!

Ian watches Barley and Dad dance. Then Dad walks over to Ian.

IAN

Oh! No, no, no. No, no, no! I'm not
really a big dancer--

Ian tries to get away, but Dad won't have it. Ian is forced
to dance. The boys both dance with Dad.

IAN

Just imagine what the top half of
this dance looks like.

BARLEY

I bet it goes something like this!

Barley dances wildly behind Dad, mimicking Dad's upper half
for a moment. The boys laugh.

The music stops. Dad sits.

BARLEY

Oh, you danced your shoelaces loose
there, Pop.

Barley kneels to tie Dad's shoe. Then speaks to Ian without
looking at him.

BARLEY

You know, I want to see him, too.

IAN

Yeah... I know.

Barley stands.

BARLEY

It's not fair for you to call me a
screwup if you don't give me a
chance to get something right. Just
do one thing my way.

This hits Ian.

IAN

You really think this "Path of Peril" is the best way to go to the mountain?

Barley nods. Ian looks uncertain, then...

IAN

Okay.

Barley smiles.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

The van drives down the road, then veers onto a dusty, unpaved path. The roughness of the road causes Guinevere's back bumper to fall off, license plate and all.

The van drives away into the distance.

EXT. GRECKLIN'S PAWN SHOP - NIGHT

The Manticore and Laurel climb out of the car.

LAUREL

Uh, so where is your magic sword?

MANTICORE

It lies beyond those gates.

The MANTICORE looks toward a small building with a flashing sign that reads: PAWN SHOP.

MANTICORE

If we don't leave here with the sword, your boys are doomed.

INT. GRECKLIN'S PAWN SHOP - NIGHT

A dirty pawn shop filled with old junk, TV's, microwaves as well as antiques, fantasy armor, instruments, and books.

The pawnshop's owner, GRECKLIN, a grizzled, lanky goblin, lays a large garlic press in front of them.

GRECKLIN

There you are, one garlic crusher.

MANTICORE

No, Curse Crusher. It's a large magical sword.

Grecklin looks through junk behind the counter.

GRECKLIN
Sword, sword, sword...

She holds up a giant, glorious sword.

GRECKLIN
I mean, I got this thing.

MANTICORE
That's it!

LAUREL
How much?

GRECKLIN
Let's call it, uh... ten.

LAUREL
Great!

Laurel counts the money. The Manticore speaks to her sword.

MANTICORE
Forged of the rarest metals, the
only sword of its kind in all the
land. Hello, old friend. We shall
never part again.

Grecklin slams her hand on the sword.

GRECKLIN
Oops.
(to Laurel)
Turns out this sword is the only
sword of its kind in all the land.
So, let's call it ten... thousand.

LAUREL
You can't do that!

GRECKLIN
Well, I just did.

LAUREL
Well you had better--

Laurel's phone rings. She steps away to answer it.

LAUREL
Yeah.

COLT (O.S.)
Hey, I talked to some other
officers and they said the boys
were last seen going north.

LAUREL
Are they okay?

COLT (O.S.)
They're fine, but the officers
said, well... honey, this night
keeps getting stranger and
stranger.

Laurel looks over to see the Manticore and Grecklin arguing.

MANTICORE
Do you know who I am?

GRECKLIN
Some kind of winged bear-snake
lady?

MANTICORE
Winged lion-scorpion lady!

Back on Laurel.

LAUREL
It sure does.

Laurel walks over to Grecklin and the Manticore, putting down
her phone for a moment.

LAUREL
(angry)
Listen, I need that sword. My sons
have a once-in-a-lifetime chance to
see their father. Now, my oldest
son--

The Manticore's tail suddenly STRIKES Grecklin in the neck.
Grecklin's eyes POP open and she falls to the ground.

LAUREL
HOLY- SON OF- YOU KILLED HER!

MANTICORE
It's okay! She's only temporarily
paralyzed.

On the other side of the counter, Grecklin lies motionless.

GRECKLIN
HEY! You can't do this!

MANTICORE
Well, I just did.

Laurel considers this for a moment.

LAUREL
Grab the sword!

GRECKLIN
Don't you touch that!

The Manticore grabs the Curse Crusher from the counter.
Laurel delicately puts some cash on the counter.

LAUREL
(nervous/polite)
Here you go. And a little something
extra for your trouble.
(backing to the door)
I love your store! Oh, that's so
pretty.

Laurel flips the sign to "CLOSED" and exits.

GRECKLIN
Hey! HEY!

EXT. PAWN SHOP - NIGHT

Laurel and the Manticore run to the car with the sword.

MANTICORE
Ohhh yeah!

COLT (ON PHONE)
Laurel?! What's happening?!

Back on Colt, who looks panicked.

COLT (ON PHONE)
Hello? Are you alright?! Laurel!

LAUREL
(phone to ear)
Oh Colt, I can't talk! The boys
need me!

And she hangs up on Colt.

INT. COLT'S CAR - NIGHT

COLT
Wait! Dang those kids.

Just then, Colt sees a bumper at the head of a rough path. He shines his flashlight onto the plate reading "GWNIVER".

Colt's hoof HITS the gas.

EXT. COLT'S CAR - NIGHT

Colt's car speeds down the path into the distance.

EXT. ANCIENT TRAIL - DAY

Adventurous fantasy music swells in the sunrise as Guinevere traverses the uneven trail.

INT. VAN - DAY

BARLEY
(singing)
We're heading on our quest, our
father we must retrieve, the
Lightfoot Brothers can't be
stopped... something, something
that rhymes with retrieved!

A bump jostles Ian awake in back. Dad also wakes up in a panic. He taps Ian's foot.

IAN
Yeah, we're still here.

Dad goes to the front and taps his foot against Barley.

BARLEY
Well, good morning to thee, dear
Lightfoot men! Welcome to the Path
of Peril!

Ian looks out the window at a desolate field.

IAN
It's not much of a path.

BARLEY
Well, you know, they never really
developed around here. So heads up,
we could run into anything.
(MORE)

BARLEY (CONT'D)
A centicore, a wolf dragon,
gelatinous cube...

IAN
Okay, what is a gelatinous cube?

Barley turns to Ian, taking his eyes off the road.

BARLEY
Oh, it's a giant green cube that
instantly disintegrates all that it
touches!

IAN
We're not going to run into a--
(looking ahead)
WHOA, STOP!!

Barley SLAMS on the brakes. The van comes to a screeching
halt at the edge of a chasm.

EXT. BOTTOMLESS PIT - DAY

The boys step out of the van. Ian holds Dad's leash.

IAN
What is this?

BARLEY
Bottomless pit. Whatever falls in
there, falls forever.

Ian peers over. He doesn't notice Dad wander right to the
edge. Ian pulls him back at the last minute.

IAN
Whoa, Dad, come here.

Ian walks Dad back the van and places him in the front seat.

BARLEY
Ian, check it out. This is an
ancient drawbridge! We lower that
bad boy and we are on our way to
Raven's Point. Look around for a
lever.

Ian points.

IAN
Found it! But, it's on the other
side.

Ian gets an idea. He lifts the staff.

IAN

Okay, I got this. Aloft Elevar.

Magic shoots from the staff, but peters out halfway across.

BARLEY

You can't cast a levitation spell on something that far away! It only has like a 15-meter enchanting radius.

(nerdy laugh)

Dad, can you believe this guy?

(beat)

What we need is a Trust Bridge. It's a spell that creates a magical bridge you can walk on. Just say "Bridgrigar Invisia."

IAN

Okay...

Ian walks to the lip of the chasm and holds out his staff.

IAN

Bridgrigar Invisia.

The staff lights up, but no bridge. Ian looks at Barley.

IAN

It didn't work.

BARLEY

No, the spell's still going. You won't know if your bridge worked until you step on it.

IAN

Step on what?

BARLEY

If you believe the bridge is there, then it's there.

IAN

But it's not.

BARLEY

Well, not with that attitude.

Ian gestures to the empty air over the chasm.

IAN
I'm not going to step out onto
nothing!

Barley considers this, then gets an idea.

CUT TO:

Barley ties a rope to a large rock. The other end is tied
around Ian's waist. Barley holds the rope in the middle.

BARLEY
Now we've got a rope. But you're
not even going to need it because--

IAN
I WANT THE ROPE!

BARLEY
Okay, I'm just saying, you're not
gonna need the rope because I know
you can make that bridge.

Ian takes a deep breath and gathers himself. He takes a big
step and... FALLS over the edge.

IAN
Agh!

Barley pulls the rope and stops Ian's fall.

IAN
I'm dying, I'm dying! I'm dead! I'm
dead! I'm dead! Oh, my life is
over!

BARLEY
I've got you!

Barley pulls Ian up, scraping him along the rocks and roots
of the chasm. When he gets to the top, Barley dusts him off.

BARLEY
Okay, you fell. But was that so
bad?

IAN
YES!

BARLEY
Are you still alive?

IAN
(reluctant)
Yes.

BARLEY
Okay, so now you know the worst
that can happen. So there's nothing
to be scared of, right?

Ian thinks about this and looks across the chasm. He takes a
breath and repositions himself at the edge.

IAN
Bridgrigar Invisia!

The staff glows. Ian looks at the chasm, then back at Barley.

BARLEY
Hey. You can do this.

He STEPS off the edge. But this time his foot stops mid-air,
planted on a glowing platform of light.

BARLEY
Ha-ha!

IAN
Yeah!

BARLEY
THERE YOU GO!

Ian stands there for a moment, one-legged, then plants his
other foot. But this foot doesn't land on anything.

Barley gives a tug on the rope and pulls him back.

BARLEY
Believe with every step!

Ian closes his eyes, concentrates, then LANDS it on another
platform of light.

BARLEY
Oh yeah!

Ian takes another step. It lands, solid. He takes another few
steps and calls back to Barley.

IAN
You've got me, right?

BARLEY

I still got you! WOOHOO! Ian
Lightfoot is FEARLESS!

Ian takes one step after another to the center of the chasm.

But the knot in the rope loosens. Barley's eyes go wide.

IAN

This is amazing!

The rope loosens more and more, until it falls free, dropping
into the chasm.

BARLEY

(covering panic)
Yeah, but just keep going! Don't
look back! Just straight ahead!

IAN

(laughing)
You've still got the rope, right?

Barley looks at the useless rope in his hands.

BARLEY

YEAH! I GOT IT!

IAN

I AM NOT AFRAID!
(beat)
Oh man, I could stay out here all
day!

Ian playfully steps from side to side.

BARLEY

OKAY, BUT KEEP MOVING! WE'VE GOTTA
SEE DAD, REMEMBER?!

Ian approaches the other side of the chasm.

IAN

HEY DAD, THIS LAST STEP IS FOR YOU!

Ian turns to look at Barley and Dad. When he does, he sees
the rope isn't attached to him anymore.

As soon as he sees this, he FALLS.

But just catches himself on the lip of the chasm. He pulls
himself up, terrified, and leans against the bridge lever.
The bridge lowers, loud and creaky.

BARLEY
Ha-ha! He did it, Dad!

Barley drives across the bridge and gets out to hug Ian.

BARLEY
That was amazing!

IAN
How long... was the rope gone?

BARLEY
Oh, just like the second half of
it.

IAN
I needed that rope!

BARLEY
(smiling)
Oh, but did you?

EXT. DRAWBRIDGE - DAY

Ian thinks about this. He looks back at the chasm and smiles faintly at his success.

BARLEY (O.S.)
Ian! Look.

Barley points to the top of the drawbridge structure.

BARLEY
It's a raven.

Barley takes out the wrinkled children's menu.

BARLEY
The clue on the menu said Raven's
Point...

Ian points to the mountains in the distance.

IAN
Yeah. In the mountains.

BARLEY
But maybe the puzzle didn't mean
the mountain. Maybe it means
"follow where the raven is
pointing!"

Barley follows the line of the raven's beak to a stone structure in the distance: Another raven.

BARLEY

Ha-ha! It's another raven! That one could be pointing to another raven, all the way to the gem!

Ian looks at the mountains, horrified.

IAN

I had us going the wrong way.

BARLEY

Well, I told ya. My gut knows where to go.

(to his gut)

Don't ya, boy? Yes you do!

Barley pats his gut and laughs proudly.

Ian looks at Barley, impressed.

Barley grabs Dad and heads to the van.

BARLEY

(shaking his keys)

Come on, Dad! Guinevere will get us to that raven in no time.

Suddenly, a POLICE SIREN. A police car crosses the bridge and screeches to a halt in front of them. Colt gets out of his car, struggling to pull his rear end out the door.

COLT

You guys are in trouble, big time!

BARLEY

No, no, no, Colt, we found a spell. If we finish it before sunset, we'll get to see our father.

Barley removes Dad's torso. Colt looks confused.

COLT

Well, uh, your mom told me there was some kind of strange family issue going on and this is... definitely strange.

(resetting)

But no, dang it. I'm not letting you upset your mother anymore! Now, you get in the vehicle, I'm escorting you home.

BARLEY
No, no way!

COLT
I'm giving you to the count of
three.

Colt stops his hoof once... then twice... then...

IAN
Okay. We'll go.

Ian grabs the van keys from Barley.

BARLEY
Ian--

IAN
He's a police officer.

Ian turns and heads toward the driver's side of the van.

INT. VAN - DAY

Barley climbs in and looks at Ian behind the wheel.

BARLEY
What are you doing?

IAN
I don't know.

Ian HITS the gas.

EXT. DRAWBRIDGE - DAY

The van takes off, Colt runs after it.

COLT
Son of a--

Colt runs after the van. Exhausted, he talks into his radio.

COLT
I need backup. Runaway van!

INT. VAN - DAY

Barley looks behind them, celebrating.

BARLEY

Ha-ha, YEAH! Iandore Lightfoot,
breaking the rules!

Ian keeps his eyes locked on the road, focused and frazzled.

IAN

I can't believe I'm running from
the cops!

BARLEY

You're not running from the cops,
you're running from our mom's
boyfriend.

Suddenly, a squadron of police cars come straight at them.

BARLEY

Okay, now you're running from the
cops.

The cops approach from both directions. Ian whips Guinevere into a fishtail, drops the hammer, and evades the cops.

Out the window, Ian spots the raven statue in the distance. He cranks the wheel toward it, down a narrow, unpaved road.

IAN

Hold on!

Guinevere skids around an unbelievably tight turn at the edge of a cliff. Ian pats Guinevere's dash board, encouragingly.

IAN

Yeah! Nice going, Guinevere!
Woohoo!

The road comes to a dead end. Ian turns the van around, but they see the cop cars coming up the narrow mountain pass.

Ian gets out of the van.

IAN

Oh, what did I do?! I shouldn't
have driven away--

BARLEY

No, it was great!

Barley points to boulders at the top of the narrow pass.

BARLEY

Hey! Block the road with those
boulders!

IAN
What?! How?!

BARLEY
Arcane Lightning.

IAN
You said that's the hardest spell.

BARLEY
You're ready.

Barley hands Ian the book and points to the spell.

BARLEY
"To make lightning strike with
ease, one must follow all decrees."
(beat)
You have to do everything. Speak
from your heart's fire, trust
yourself, focus, all of it!

Ian picks up the staff and points it at the boulders.

IAN
Voltar Thundasir.

A tiny bit of electricity glows in his staff, but quickly
peters out. He tries again.

IAN
Voltar Thundasir.

The staff glows again, but quickly fades. Ian points the
staff at the boulders again.

IAN
Voltar Thundasir.

The magic gives out.

IAN
I can't, I can't do it!

Ian sighs and turns to Barley and Dad.

IAN
We're not gonna see you, Dad. And
it's all my fault.

Barley sees how upset Ian is. He turns, starts up Guinevere,
and puts in a tape labelled RISE TO VALHALLA. Sad, heroic,
music blares.

IAN

What are you doing?

Barley aligns the steering wheel, puts a rock on the gas pedal, knocks the gear shift to "O."

Then watches her go.

Her turn signal pops out and falls to the ground.

The glove compartment pops open and parking violations fly out the windows.

Barley salutes her.

She rides up the edge of the narrow pass, SLAMS into the rocks, flips onto her back in the middle of the road, and is covered by boulders... completely blocking the road.

The police can't get through.

COLT

What the--

Barley picks up Guinevere's turn signal light, gives it a loving rub, and puts it in his pocket.

IAN

Barley...

BARLEY

She was just a beat up old van.
Come on, we gotta go.

Barley ducks under the guard rail and walks through the brush with Dad. Ian climbs the guard rail and follows.

We see the boys walk off toward the lowering sun.

EXT. FANTASY WILDERNESS - DAY

The boys and Dad walk through tall fields, steady and somber.

They reach the raven. It points to another distant raven.

They walk toward that raven, through the rain.

They reach the raven, follow its beak, and walk further on.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

The beak of the next raven points straight at a metal disk on the ground. Barley begins to pry it up.

IAN

Wait.

Ian wipes dirt from the disk. They see the reflection of the raven's beak pointing back at the chest of the raven statue.

Ian goes to the statue, examines the chest, and pulls out a loose tile with a distinctive shape.

BARLEY

You see that, Dad? The apprentice has become the master.

Barley takes a closer look at the tile. There's a hieroglyphic engraved in it: wavy lines that lead to an "X".

BARLEY

It looks like... water.

They look around and see a river flowing into a tunnel. They give each other an excited glance.

EXT. TUNNEL ENTRANCE - DAY

IAN

So what's the X mean?

BARLEY

On a quest, an X only means one thing. We go to the end of the water, we'll find that Phoenix Gem.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Ian creates a magic flame to light a torch.

The light reveals horrific, rat-like unicorns that HISS.

IAN

AH! Ugh!

BARLEY

Ugh!

They flap their horrible wings and flutter out of the tunnel.

IAN
Unicorns! Ugh!

The boys and Dad climb deeper into the tunnel, along the river. Barley snacks on cheese puffs. Ian looks up to see ancient paintings adorning the walls.

BARLEY
Cool...

Ian holds up the torch to try to see the end of the tunnel. It just disappears into endless darkness.

IAN
This water could go on for miles.
We don't have that kind of time.

BARLEY
If we had something to float on we
could cast a velocity spell on it.
Fly down the tunnel like a magic
jet ski.

Ian looks around.

IAN
There's not much to float on.

BARLEY
Remember, on a quest you have to
use what you've got.

Barley looks at the cheese puff he's about to eat.

CUT TO:

IAN
Magnora Gantuan!

A FLASH. Then Ian, Barley, and Dad float into frame riding on a GIANT cheese puff. Ian wields the staff.

IAN
Accelior!

The cheese puff races into the darkness of the tunnel.

IAN
This is actually kinda cool! So,
what other spells do you know?

BARLEY

Oh, brace yourself, young mage! I can show you all there is to know of magic!

INT. LAUREL'S CAR - DAY

The Manticore holds the Curse Crusher sword and downs an energy drink. Laurel drives and calls Colt.

LAUREL

Colt, we know where the boys are going, we just have to get to them before they unleash the curse!

COLT (ON PHONE)

The what?

MANTICORE

Let's CRUSH some curses!

She slams the energy drink and tosses it over her shoulder.

LAUREL

The curse! The curse that protects the gem by turning into a rock dragon or something--

COLT (ON PHONE)

A what dragon?!

LAUREL

I can't explain it I just know we have to get to the boys, fast!

The Manticore cracks open another energy drink.

MANTICORE

Oh, we'll get them FAST, we'll get to them SO FAST!

Laurel takes the energy drink from the Manticore, shakes her head, and pours the rest out the window.

COLT (ON PHONE)

Well, I almost had them, but Ian, he just... drove off.

LAUREL

Huh? Good for him.

COLT (ON PHONE)

What?

LAUREL

No, I just mean... he's scared to drive. Thinks something's gonna come at him out of the--

A flying SPRITE hits the windshield.

Ahhh!

LAUREL

Ahhh! MANTICORE

Ahhh! COLT (O.S.)

Ahhh! WINDSHIELD SPRITE

Laurel can't see. She turns on the windshield wipers in the chaos, then steers the car off the road, into a ditch.

She and the Manticore get out of the car, dazed. We can hear Colt's muffled voice inside.

COLT (ON PHONE)

Laurel, what happened?! What's going on?

The Sprite peels herself off of the windshield.

WINDSHIELD SPRITE
You almost killed me, lady!

LAUREL
Are you okay? Where did you come from?

Suddenly, a swarm of sprites flies in.

DEWDROP
You were in our flight path!

FLYING SPRITES
Yeah! Come on! / Watch where you're going! / Are you alright?

WINDSHIELD SPRITE
I'm fine.

The Manticore looks at the demolished car.

MANTICORE
Oh, no! Our transport! How are we going to get to your sons now?

Laurel looks around for any sign of hope.

DEWDROP

Come on Pixie Dusters, lets take to
the skies!

Laurel watches the sprites fly away and gets an idea.

LAUREL

How do you feel about exercising
those wings?

The Manticore gives her wings a nervous flutter.

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

Ian stands in the speeding cheese puff, holding the staff.

IAN

Boombastia!

Just a small spark. Barley adjust Ian's shoulder like he did
with the growth spell.

BARLEY

Remember...

IAN

Ah, right.
(trying again)
Boombastia!

Beautiful fireworks explode from the staff.

IAN

Whoa!

BARLEY

Yeah! You're a natural!

Barley grabs a chunk of cheese doodle and THROWS it at Ian.

BARLEY

Think fast!

IAN

Aloft Elevar!

Ian catches it with magic.

BARLEY

Ha-ha! Yeah!

He tosses it back to Barley who pops it in his mouth.

BARLEY

Nice!

Barley eats another fist-sized chunk of the cheese doodle.

IAN

Careful how much boat you're eating there, man, we still gotta make it to the end of the tunnel.

BARLEY

Good point.

IAN

I can't believe I'm this close to actually talking to Dad.

BARLEY

You know what I'm gonna ask him? If he ever gave himself a wizard name.

IAN

What?

BARLEY

Well, 'cause he was into magic. Lots of wizards have cool names: Alora the Majestic, Birdar the Fanciful.

(beat)

Anyway, it'll just be nice to have more than four memories of him.

IAN

(correcting)

Three.

BARLEY

Hmm?

IAN

You only have three memories.

BARLEY

Oh. Yeah.

IAN

Barley, do you have another memory of Dad you haven't told me?

Barley pauses, a little pained.

BARLEY

It's... it's just not my favorite.

IAN

What do you mean?

Barley gives Ian a side glance, hesitant to start.

BARLEY

When Dad was sick...

(beat)

I was supposed to go in and say
goodbye to him. But he was hooked
up to all these tubes and... he
just didn't look like himself. I
got scared.

(beat)

And I didn't go in.

(resolute)

But that's when I decided, I was
never gonna be scared ever again.

Ian smiles, bittersweet.

Barley looks ahead and points.

BARLEY

Ah, looks like we're coming up on
something.

The walls of the cavern grow ornate, wizard statues guard the
tunnel. The boat slows and stops at the edge of a landing.

The boys and Dad approach an ancient, ornate archway.

BARLEY

(in awe)

The final gauntlet. The Phoenix Gem
is just on the other side.

INT. GAUNTLET - DAY

Ian enters the tunnel. Dad walks just ahead of him on the
leash. Barley notices skeletons up ahead.

BARLEY

Careful, there could be booby
traps.

IAN

This place is, like, a thousand
years old. There's no way there
could be--

A blade swings from the wall, cutting off Dad's torso and
flinging it behind them. A gust blows out Barley's torch.

Behind them, a trap door in the ceiling slowly opens, casting a sickly green light into the tunnel.

BARLEY
Oh no, it can't be...

A giant GELATINOUS CUBE filled with skeletons drops from a hole in the ceiling, closing them off from the way they came.

BARLEY
A GELATINOUS CUBE!

The cube moves toward them. As it does, it runs over Dad's dismembered torso. The torso immediately dissolves.

They look to the other end of the tunnel and see a door slowly lowering from above, about to close them off inside the chamber with the gelatinous cube.

BARLEY
Run!

Ian sees there are shapes and symbols on the path stones.

IAN
Whoa, wait! It's some kind of puzzle. We gotta figure it out before--

BARLEY
No time. Grab a shield.

Barley and Ian grab shields from skeletons and RUN.

As they step on path stones, arrows release from the walls and strike the shields. At the other side, they STOP in front of a wide chasm with spikes at the bottom.

IAN
Jump!

BARLEY
What?

IAN
Trust me.

Barley jumps and begins to fall toward the spikes.

IAN
Aloft Elevar!

Ian catches Barley in mid-air with a levitation spell.

BARLEY

Ha-ha!

Ian and Dad leap off the edge, using Barley as a stepping stone to bound to the other side.

BARLEY

Ow! Hey!

Ian lands on the other side and looks back.

BARLEY

Ian...

The cube is closing in on Barley, who floats over the chasm. Ian uses magic to lift Barley to safety, just barely sliding him up between the gelatinous cube and the ledge.

Ian and Barley slide under the closing door, then notice Dad is still on the other side. Ian grabs his leash and tugs him under the door just as it closes.

Ian stands and starts to move forward, but Barley stops him.

BARLEY

Whoa whoa whoa!

Barley points at the floor. There's a star-shaped tile on the floor, similar to the ones in the gauntlet.

BARLEY

Don't step on that.

There's a clanging noise, slow and deep. Suddenly water RUSHES into the silo from holes at the bottom. It quickly lifts them off their feet, toward the ceiling.

IAN

I didn't touch it!

Barley holds onto Dad, trying to keep him above water with them. Ian aims the staff at a hole at the top of the silo.

IAN

Voltar Thundasir!

A lightning bolt shoots forth, bouncing off the door.

As they get closer to the top, they can see the hole the light is coming through is star-shaped. Ian sticks his head underwater and looks at star-shaped stone on the floor.

IAN

The tile down there has the same shape as the opening!

BARLEY

Maybe we were supposed to step on it?

IAN

What?!

BARLEY

I got it!

IAN

No, Barley!

Barley swims to the bottom of the silo. He STANDS on the stone and the door above them begins to open.

IAN

It's working!

But Barley can't hold his breath long enough. He swims back to the surface and the door quickly closes

BARLEY

It's impossible!

(gasping for air)

No one can hold their breath that long!

Ian and Barley look at each other, then at Dad. Ian lets go of Dad, letting him sink to the bottom. Ian guides Dad toward the stone with his leash, but Dad keeps missing.

The water fills to the top. The boys take a deep breath then are fully submerged. Ian finally guides Dad to the stone. The door above them opens as the stone finally LOCKS into place.

The boys GASP to the surface. They climb out of the water and reel in Dad with the leash.

BARLEY

Ha-ha! We made it!

Just above them is a circular portal.

BARLEY

The Phoenix Gem awaits beyond this door! Shall we?

IAN

We certainly shall!

They climb the ladder, laughing as they clumsily help Dad.

IAN

Dad, we have followed the quest and
it has led us to our victory!

Ian slides the portal aside and sunlight seeps in...

EXT. NEW MUSHROOMTON DOWNTOWN - DAY

Ian climbs out of the hole and squints into the sunlight. His smile fades as he recognizes landmarks of New Mushroomton.

They're right back where they started.

A bus HONKS at the boys and Dad, who are still standing in the middle of the street. Barley pulls Ian toward the park.

IAN

(in shock)
We're back home.

BARLEY

How did we--? No, that doesn't make sense! We took the Path of Peril. We followed the ravens, we went to the end of the water...

Barley looks more closely at the tile.

BARLEY

Unless the X meant stay away from the water.

He turns the tile so the X is on the bottom.

BARLEY

Or it could be, like, a campfire...
(beat)
It's okay. We can figure this out.

IAN

Figure out what? We're back where we started!

BARLEY

I mean, it has to be here, there was a gauntlet. I mean, unless, that gauntlet was for, coincidentally, some different quest.

(beat)

That's a possibility.

IAN

What?!

BARLEY

No, no, no, this has to be where
the Phoenix Gem is.

(beat)

I followed my gut.

IAN

(dawning)

Oh no...

BARLEY

What?

IAN

The gem is in the mountain. The
mountain we could have been to
hours ago if we'd just...

(catching himself)

If we'd just stayed on the
expressway.

BARLEY

No, the expressway is too obvious,
remember?! You can never take the--

IAN

If I hadn't listened to you! Okay?
I can't believe this. You act like
you know what you're doing, but you
don't have a clue... and that's
because you are a screw-up! And now
you have screwed up my chance to
have the one thing I never had!

Barley looks at Ian, hurt.

Ian takes Dad by the leash walks into the park.

BARLEY

Where are you going?

IAN

To spend what little time we have
left with Dad!

Ian looks at the staff in disgust. He hands it to Barley.

BARLEY

Ian, wait! We can still find the
Phoenix Gem! We just have to keep
looking!

But Ian just keeps walking with Dad further into the park.

BARLEY

Ian! IAN!

EXT. OCEANSIDE CLIFF - PARK - DAY

Ian reaches a cliff. He looks sadly out at the sun starting to set into the ocean. Dad searches around with his foot.

IAN

No, Dad. He's not here.

Ian and Dad sit down on the ground, facing the setting sun.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - DAY

Meanwhile, Barley frantically searches the park.

BARLEY

Come on, where is it?

Barley looks at the fountain.

BARLEY

Follow the water!

Barley races to the fountain and sloshes in the dirty water looking for a clue. Two nearby construction workers notice.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER #2

Alright, come on, out of the fountain.

BARLEY

No! I'm looking for an ancient gem!

FENNWICK

Yeah, we know the old days.

BARLEY

Stop! Please! No!

The construction workers pull him away from the fountain.

BARLEY

Okay! Okay! Ow! Okay, I'm leaving!

Barley breaks free from them and races back to the fountain.

FENNWICK

Hey!

CONSTRUCTION WORKER #2
Hey! Oh, come on.

They try to grab him again, but he awkwardly shimmies to the top, arms wrapped around the spire, wet and pathetic.

CONSTRUCTION WORKER #2
Can someone call the cops?! We got
the history buff again!

Barley looks desperate and confused. The screwup everyone always believed him to be.

EXT. OCEANSIDE CLIFF - PARK - DAY

Ian pulls out the list of things to do with Dad. His heart breaks as he begins to cross off one item after another.

Ian is about to cross off DRIVING LESSON when he stops.

IN FLASHBACK:

EXT. FREEWAY - NIGHT

IAN
I can't do this!

BARLEY
Yes, you can!

IAN
I'm not ready!

BARLEY
You'll never be ready! MERGE!!

IAN
AHHH!!!

Ian floors it and drives onto the freeway.

BARLEY
Ha-ha! Nice job!

END FLASHBACK.

Ian thinks. Then places a check mark next to DRIVING LESSON.

He goes back to the top of the list: PLAY CATCH.

IN FLASHBACK:

INT. TUNNEL - DAY

Barley throws a cheese doodle chunk.

BARLEY
THINK FAST!

IAN
Aloft Elevar!

Ian catches it with magic.

END FLASHBACK.

Ian checks off PLAY CATCH.

The next item on the list: LAUGH TOGETHER.

IN FLASHBACK:

EXT. REST AREA - NIGHT

The boys dance with Dad at the rest area.

END FLASHBACK.

Ian checks off LAUGH TOGETHER.

The next item on the list: SHARE MY LIFE WITH HIM.

IN FLASHBACK:

EXT. SWIMMING POOL - DAY

Young Ian stands nervously at the edge of a diving board.
Young Barley pushes him in. Ian laughs and they both play.

CUT TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The boys pillow fight. Young Ian hits Young Barley. Barley falls over, pretending Ian hit him with a lot of strength.

CUT TO:

EXT. LIGHTFOOT HOUSE - DAY

Young Barley pushes young Ian on a bike then lets him go.

YOUNG BARLEY

Woohoo!

EXT. OCEANSIDE CLIFF - PARK - DAY

Barley's encouraging words swirl around in Ian's memory.

BARLEY

I know you're stronger than that!

CUT TO:

BARLEY

My little brother has the magic
gift!

CUT TO:

BARLEY

DON'T HOLD BACK!

CUT TO:

BARLEY

Hey, you can do this.

CUT TO:

Ian sees he's crossed off everything on the list. He puts the checklist back in his pocket, takes Dad's leash, and races into the park, toward Barley.

EXT. FOUNTAIN - DAY

Barley crouches on top of the fountain, evading the cops who call to him from below.

OFFICER SPECTER

Okay, come on. Get down right now.

Barley notices a shape on the fountain that matches the tile from the entrance to the tunnel. His eyes light up. He slowly pushes the tile into the matching shape in the fountain.

The tile slides in with a CLACK. It's a perfect fit.

An eye atop the fountain opens to reveal the PHOENIX GEM.

BARLEY

YEAH! YEAH!

He grabs the gem, but doesn't notice a red mist that pours from the fountain. Ian clears the woods and sees Barley on the fountain, holding the gem triumphantly.

IAN

BARLEY!

Barley looks at Ian.

BARLEY

Ian, look!

Ian smiles, impressed. But then sees the ominous red smoke.

IAN

Behind you!

Barley turns to see the red smoke go past the police officers. They slowly back into the crowd.

BARLEY

It's a curse!

The smoke pulls apart the high school with its red coils, forming the shape of a massive DRAGON. It turns to reveal it has the eerie, smiling face of the school's dragon mascot.

The dragon sees the gem in Barley's hand and ROARS a terrifying, garbled version of the school bell.

IAN

Barley, RUN!

Barley jumps down from the fountain, grabs the staff, and takes off running. He calls out to the dragon.

BARLEY

What do you want?! The gem?! Fine.
Take it!

He THROWS the gem as far as he can in the other direction. The dragon turns to chase the gem.

But when it lands, we see it isn't the gem at all. It's Guinevere's turn signal.

Barley and Ian race toward each other. Barley holds up his hand to reveal he still has the real gem.

The dragon turns, sees Barley with the gem, and breathes a wall of fire between the boys. Ian and Barley are thrown to the ground, they can't get to each other.

The dragon takes a flying leap toward the boys and Dad.

Suddenly, a dark shape sweeps down from the sky. The Manticore, holding the Curse Crusher sword, BASHES the dragon to the ground.

BARLEY
The Manticore!

Ian squints and sees someone riding atop the Manticore.

IAN
Mom?!

Laurel stands atop the Manticore heroically.

LAUREL
It's okay, boys! We'll take care of--
The Manticore tips to one side.

LAUREL
Whoa, you're tilting, you're
tilting!

The Manticore straightens.

IAN
Mom!

LAUREL
Go see your father!

BARLEY
(to Ian)
It's okay! If they stab the beast's
core with that sword, the curse
will be broken! Come on!

The Manticore flies toward the dragon, taunting it into a chase. As the dragon follows briefly distracted, the Manticore loops around and cuts off the dragon's wings.

The boys climb the hill to get around the fire: Ian up one side with Dad, Barley up the other with the staff and gem.

As they meet at the top, Barley hands Ian the staff.

IAN
Barley, what I said before-- I am
so sorry--

BARLEY
There's no time! The sun is about
to set!

Ian holds out the staff with the gem inside.

IAN

Only once is all we get,
Grant me this rebirth,
'Til tomorrow's sun has set,
One day to walk the earth!

A beam of light shoots from the staff. Ian holds on strong.

The Manticore flies back toward the dragon, fast and fierce.

MANTICORE

Time to crush a curse!

But the dragon swats the Manticore out of the sky with its tail. Laurel and the Manticore CRASH to the ground. Laurel gets up, but the Manticore cannot.

MANTICORE

Ooh, my back!

A shadow passes over them as the dragon makes its way toward the boys. Laurel lifts the heavy Curse Crusher and wields it.

LAUREL

I am a mighty warrior...

Laurel clambers up the tail of the dragon with the sword. The music from Laurel's warrior workout video plays. Laurel runs to the curse's core, glowing deep beneath its armor.

Laurel holds the sword above her head with both hands and STABS the sword into the core.

LAUREL

I AM A MIGHTY WARRIOR!

The dragon slows to a stop. The boys watch the red of the curse turn blue. Laurel holds the sword with great effort.

LAUREL

Hurry, I can't hold this for long!

The sword is up to the hilt in the armor, but just barely piercing the red core.

Meanwhile, the gem lifts out of the staff and spins. Red, ominous light grows around it, the staff begins to shake.

IAN

No, no, no, no, no--

The red magic swells and is about to explode...

IAN

Barley!

Barley runs and braces his back against Ian's.

There's an explosion. Then the gem floats over Dad and begins raining magic down upon him, slowly building the rest of him.

The boys watch with joy.

The dragon's armor begins to shift, slowly working the sword out of the core. Now freed, the dragon knocks Laurel off its back. The sword falls deep into a pile of lockers.

LAUREL

Boys! It's coming back!

The dragon's eyes turn immediately to the gem.

Ian and Barley turn to the dragon as Dad continues to generate. The sun is beginning to set.

BARLEY

I'll go distract it!

IAN

What? No! If you do that, you'll miss Dad.

BARLEY

It's okay. Say hi to Dad for me.

Ian takes this in and suddenly realizes what he has to do.

IAN

No. You go and say goodbye.

BARLEY

What?

IAN

I had someone who looked out for me, someone who pushed me to be more than I ever thought I could be. I never had a dad... but I always had you.

Barley opens his mouth to respond, but before he can say anything, Ian takes the staff and races off.

Ian leaps off the ledge, calling out the trust bridge spell.

IAN

Bridrigar Invisia!

He lands on the bridge midair and runs toward the dragon.

IAN
Boombastia!

Fireworks shoot from his staff, blinding the dragon.

The dragon whips its tail toward Ian. It misses the first time, but then the dragon lifts its tail to strike Ian again.

IAN
Aloft Elevar!

Ian stops the tail by levitation. He strains to hold it.

Meanwhile, Laurel tries desperately to reach the hilt of the Curse Crusher deep in the locker pile.

The dragon whips its tail, sending Ian and the staff soaring. Ian crashes to the ground, watching helplessly as the staff splashes into the ocean.

IAN
NO!

The dragon marches straight towards Barley and Dad.

IAN
No. No. No-- No!

Laurel gets her fingertips on the sword. It's precariously perched, slipping toward a deeper fall.

Ian searches for a way.

IAN
Use what I have. Uh, what do I have? I have nothing!

He looks at his empty hands.

IAN
Splinter...

Ian sees a splinter from the staff in his hand.

IAN
Magic in every fiber.

Ian bites out the splinter and holds it out in his hand.

IAN
Magnora Gantuan!

The splinter grows into a full-size staff.

Ian sees the beast closing in on Barley and Dad.

IAN

NO!

Ian points the staff and yells...

IAN

Voltar Thundasir!

A colossal bolt of lightning shoots from his staff and blasts most of the armor off the dragon. It keeps advancing, still dragon-shaped, but with its core clearly exposed.

The Curse Crusher begins to fall, but Laurel JUST grabs it by the tip of its blade. She stands and calls out to Ian.

LAUREL

Ian!

She hurls the sword toward Ian with all her might.

IAN

Accelior!

Ian rushes the sword mid-air with the velocity spell and plunges it straight into the core of the curse. It billows into the air as a red cloud, then dissipates into nothing.

Ian falls to the ground, spent. The staff clatters away from him and is blocked by the rubble that was once the dragon.

Ian gets up but is stopped by a sharp pain in his ankle.

LAUREL

Ian!?

Ian turns to see Laurel through a crack in the debris. Colt runs up alongside her.

Suddenly there's a warm burst of light from atop the peak. Laurel and Colt look toward the light, stunned.

Ian climbs the rubble to find a gap through which he can see.

Barley is face to face with a glowing figure. The glowing subsides to reveal Dad. All of him.

Barley and Dad look uncomfortable at first; two strangers getting to know each other. Ian can only see Dad's back.

Ian slips from his position and loses sight of Barley and Dad. He turns to see the sun is disappearing.

He climbs back up and continues to watch.

Dad and Barley talk and laugh together.

Dad reaches out and gives his big son a hug.

The sun sets.

And Dad vanishes in Barley's arms.

Barley collects himself, then climbs down the peak.

Tears fill Laurel's eyes, she leans on Colt.

Barley reaches down to help up Ian. The boys stand atop the rubble face to face.

IAN

What did he say?

BARLEY

He said he always thought his wizard name would be Wilden the Whimsical.

IAN

Wow, that's really terrible.

BARLEY

I know.

(beat)

He also said he's very proud of the person you grew up to be.

IAN

Well, I owe an awful lot of that to you.

BARLEY

He kinda said that too.

(beat)

Oh, and he told me to give you this.

Barley leans down and gives Ian a big, loving hug.

Ian smiles, and hugs him back.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. MODERN WORLD - MONTHS LATER

Over black.

IAN (V.O.)
Long ago, the world was full of
wonder!

Over the rolling hills, into suburban neighborhoods.

IAN (V.O.)
It was adventurous, exciting, and
best of all, there was magic.

A familiar building at the top of a hill - the Manticore's
Tavern with a sign that reads "GRAND RE-OPENING."

INT. MANTICORE'S TAVERN - DAY

The tavern looks like it did in it's glory days. A sprite
flies with a stein toward a group of sprites playing darts. A
sprite tosses bullseye. The sprites celebrate.

BULLSEYE SPRITE
Ha-ha! Bullseye!

The Manticore, her wings outstretched, tells a tale.

MANTICORE
And then with a slash of my mighty
sword, I severed the beast's wings
from its wretched body!

She blows a flame to light the candles on a birthday cake.
The kids' birthday hats get a little scorched.

MANTICORE
Okay, who wants cake?

She proudly lifts the glorious Curse Crusher to the skies,
then brings it down hard and slices the cake.

Frosting splatters on the kids faces. There's a beat, then...

BIRTHDAY KIDS
(joyful)
YEAH!!!

The parents watch uncomfortably. Cake on their faces as well.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Ian stands in front of a classroom giving a presentation. He holds the new staff he made from the splinter.

IAN
And I think with a little bit of magic in your life... you can do almost anything.

A student, YELDAEH, raises her hand.

YELDAEH
Is that how you put the school back together?

IAN
Uh, yes!

Another student, THEYUS, interrupts.

THEYUS
Is that also how you destroyed the school in the first place?

IAN
Uh... Also yes?

The bell RINGS. The students leave. Sadalia and her group of friends walk up to Ian.

SADALIA
Hey, that was great.

IAN
Thanks!

GURGE
You going to the park later?

IAN
Yeah! See you there!

They all wave goodbye to Ian as they leave.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ian walks in the front door, smiling.

IAN
Mom!

Blazey barrels around the corner and knocks Ian to the ground. But Ian stays there and wrestles playfully with her.

Laurel hustles around the corner with the spray bottle.

LAUREL
Blazey! Down!

IAN
Who's a good dragon? Who's a good dragon?

LAUREL
So, how was school?

IAN
It was... really good.

LAUREL
Well, alright.

Colt sidles up to Laurel.

COLT
Hey! There he is. You working hard?

IAN
Nope, hardly workin'.

Colt throws his head back and laughs. Laurel gets a text.

LAUREL
Oh, I gotta go. I'm meeting the Manticore for a night out.

Laurel picks up a battle axe.

OFFICER GORE (O.S.)
(on radio)
We have a 113 in progress. All units report.

Colt kisses Laurel, then he leaves.

COLT
Duty calls. Time to hit the trail!

LAUREL
You forgot your keys!

COLT
Don't need 'em! I was born to run. H'yah!

Colt runs full-speed down the road, his hair flowing.

INT. LIGHTFOOT HOME - DAY

Ian watches from the living room and smiles. Suddenly he's attacked from behind. Barley has him in a choke hold. But Ian gets out of it and slams Barley to the ground.

Barley smiles. Ian helps him up and they head out together.

IAN
So, how's the new van?

BARLEY
Oh, Guinevere the Second is great.
I've almost got enough saved up for
a sweet paint job.

IAN
No... please don't.

BARLEY
Why not?

IAN
Because I already took care of it.

The new van has a Pegasus with a warrior Barley on her back and a wizard Ian riding behind him.

BARLEY
YEAH!

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Barley drives the new van down the road. Her license plate reads: GWNIVER2.

BARLEY
Okay, best way to the park is to
take a little something called the
Road of Ruin.

IAN
Mmm... Too obvious.

BARLEY
Wait, what?

IAN
On a quest, the clear path is never
the right one.

The van lifts into the air and flies into the horizon.

BARLEY

YEAH!!

INT. IAN'S ROOM - DAY

On photos of Dad and the family in Ian's room. Pan past photos of Dad, then of him with Laurel and Barley, happy. Finally, we land on a photo of Ian leaning on Barley.

FADE OUT: