

THE TOWER OF THE ALMIGHTY

A screenplay by Christian Locantore

**CONTACT:**

**Christian Locantore**  
**christian.locantore@gmail.com**

OPEN ON:

A MEDIEVAL STONE TOWER STRETCHING UP INTO A DARK SKY.

Outside the tower's entrance, male STUDENTS stand shoulder to shoulder on each side of the door, holding candles that give light to the aisle between them.

They are in formal attire, sports jackets with a red embroidered symbol of the tower. The students in the line stand much broader and more confidently than younger ones who start to walk between them in a line.

The younger students wear khakis and polos, others in denim jeans and t-shirts, some in bright colored windbreakers.

PRESIDENT THOMSON, 60s, in a suit with the same embroidery of the tower, walks out from the darkness inside the tower into the candle light.

PRESIDENT THOMSON

Welcome, incoming class of 1983, to the UoA's Orientation Weekend. As you proceed into the tower, please form a circle for prayer.

He looks into to the crowd of older students whom hold candles, searching side to side, front and back. He mindlessly shakes a few of the freshmen's hands as they walk by and greet him as he continues searching, then points out in the crowd at two older students.

PRESIDENT THOMSON (CONT'D)

Ah. Mike, Damien!

The two boys look up and walk toward the entrance as President Thomson waves them over.

MIKE

Yes, President Thomson?

President Thomson reaches for his back pocket and pulls out a ring full of keys.

PRESIDENT THOMSON

Will you boys do me a favor and make sure the trapdoor to the tower's attic is locked?

Damien glares over to Mike. He nods no with his pupils.

Mike pauses, staring back, but doesn't mind Damien and still steps forward.

MIKE

Of course, but sir, do you really think anyone will be going up there?

PRESIDENT THOMSON

They are naïve boys still. We can't take the risk of someone wandering about.

Damien looks down at the ground around him, his hands sway behind his back.

DAMIEN

It's just so many stairs.  
(muttering as President Thomson starts to speak)  
And cold. Dark too.

PRESIDENT THOMSON

Yes, which is why I am asking two young men who are in perfectly fine shape and have had no operations on their knees to go on up there.

MIKE

Yes, President Thomson. That is a great point. Let's go then, Damien.

Mike grabs Damien's arm and smiles up at President Thomson as he hurries toward the tower's entrance.

PRESIDENT THOMSON

One more thing! Do not, under any circumstances, open that trapdoor. If it is not locked, lock it, and come back to me right away. Do you understand?

The boys freeze and stand tautly.

MIKE

Understood, President Thomson.

Damien nods his head in agreement. They walk away and Mike pulls Damien in close.

MIKE (CONT'D)

The one time President Thomson gives up his keys and you're gonna complain about stairs? What's wrong with you?

Damien shrugs quietly as Mike puts an arm behind his back and shoves him forward through the crowd of students, and toward the tower's entrance.

INT. TOP HALF OF TOWER - LATER

A stone staircase hugs the walls of the tower, ascending alongside it.

Votive candles attached to the metal railing illuminate the path up to the ceiling where the trapdoor lies. The trapdoor has already been slid open.

MUFFLED CHATTER from the orientation can be heard from the level below.

Damien sits in a window ledge cut out from the tower's stone with a foot dangling out of the window. Mike is no where around.

MUFFLED CHATTER from the orientation can be heard from the ground level far below through the floor.

Damien turns around, pulling his leg back from out the window, and looks up at the trapdoor.

DAMIEN

Come on, Mike. President Thomson is probably waiting for us.

MIKE

(Shouting from the attic) We'll tell him our legs got tired.

HOWLING WIND blows through the window and Damien leans into the corner where the window meets the wall.

There is a THUD from above.

DAMIEN

Mike!

RUMBLINGS and CREAKING above.

MIKE (O.S.)

(shouting)

Woah, you feel that wind?!

Damien lifts himself up and jumps down from the windowsill onto the staircase. He walks a few steps up toward the trapdoor.

DAMIEN

Come on man, let's go. It's fucking  
creepy up here.

The creaking above stops, the tower suddenly becomes silent  
around Damien.

Soft FOOTSTEPS above from the attic break the silence. They  
become quiet as the steps trail away to the other end of the  
tower.

DAMIEN (CONT'D)

Mike?

Damien takes a few more steps up toward the trapdoor.

DAMIEN (CONT'D)

Are you there, man? What are you  
doing?

The wind picks up in the tower again, blowing past Damien's  
hair and clothes. It picks up quickly, then SLAM, the  
trapdoor closes hard enough for chips of wood to fall off.

Damien runs into the trapdoor well and pushes up on the  
wooden plate.

Wind HOWLS as Damien pushes against it. The wind's pressure  
keeps the trapdoor closed until Damien raises his back  
against the wooden plate, opening it slightly. He grips the  
attic floor with his hands and pulls himself up more.

Damien's eyes peer into the attic space, toward a bright  
moonlight that shines brightly in the attic, reflecting  
against the stained glass windows, blocking his eyesight. He  
covers the light with a hand and looks out, then the wind  
HOWLS harder, pushing the trapdoor down on his back.

SLAM.

Damien YELLS in agony as his fingers are caught between the  
trapdoor and the attic floor.

MIKE (O.S.)

Damien!

Blood runs down Damien's hands as they become pale. He pushes  
against the door with his back again.

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

Lift it!

The door budes open and Damien pulls back his hands. He holds his hands to his chest. The bones in his knuckles protrude from the torn skin. A few fingernails hang off.

Mike lifts up the trapdoor and jumps down on the staircase landing. He looks back to the trapdoor but loses his balance at another gush of wind, and the door shuts on its own.

Damien is hunched over behind leaning against the wall, tears streaming down his face as he holds his fingers close to come.

Mike quickly rips off his tie and pulls his shirt over his head, wrapping them around Damien's fingers.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
It's going to be alright Damien.  
Come on, we have to get up and go.

He tries to lift Damien up but he stumbles, dizziness apparent on his face and in his eyes.

Mike squats down and lifts him up into his arms.

Damien tries to point up at the trapdoor. The wind HOWLS louder, and Damien almost stumbles again.

DAMIEN  
You still have to lock that damn door.

Mike curses under the howls of the wind, then leans Damien against the wall and turns around.

Damien keeps his back against the wall and slowly slides down it as the wind picks up more. He loses his balance and his foot slips, falling over and down a few steps.

Mike stops and hurries down to Damien.

MIKE  
Screw it!

Damien tumbles more, falling close to the edge, but stops as his back bangs against the metal poles that hold up the railing. He shouts in agony.

Mike stumbles a bit, then gets low as the wind continues to pick up. He descends carefully but fastens as Damien tries to lift himself.

Mike leans a shoulder against the tower's wall and slides down the cobblestone, lowering himself on the stairs.

He reaches closer to Damien who is on the opposite side, struggling to stand.

Damien reaches out toward the cobblestone wall, trying to throw himself into it but the wind pushes harshly against him, toward the railing. His back leans over the edge.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
Damien, come over here.

Mike reaches extends a hand as he holds onto a piece of stone protruding from the wall, but he is too far from Damien who leans against the railing, swaying. He tries to grab the railing but can not grip them. He stops and looks down at his hands, inspecting them.

DAMIEN  
I can't—I can't feel my fingers,  
Mike.

Mike gets further down the staircase, still against the stone wall, but is now directly across from Damien. He extends one arm again while the other holds onto the wall.

MIKE  
Forget about that now, Damien! Your  
fingers will be fine! Just try to  
grab my hand...  
(The wind blows upon them  
more, both buckling their  
knees)  
Almighty be damned, throw yourself  
into me if you must! Now, Damien

Damien pushes his body off the railing, letting go of it. He leans forward, reaching out an arm to grab Mike's hand, almost connecting with his skin. As their fingers are about to touch, a tempest blows between their hands pushing them both back.

As Mike crashes into the wall, Damien stumbles backward again, but faster this time, right over the railing.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
Damien!

Mike let's go of the stone wall and goes with the wind, lunging into the railing.

Damien is right below him, dangling under the staircase with his fingers gripped around the railing balusters.

He SCREAMS and CRIES in pain, overcoming all the noise except for the echoes of howling wind.

Mike shifts down and falls onto the staircase. He extends an arm to grab ahold of one of Damien's wrists. He tries to pull up.

MIKE (CONT'D)  
You have to let go of your left  
hand and pull up with your right!

Damien let's go as Mike securely wraps his hand around his left wrist. Mike pulls, and pulls, and Damien tries, but he doesn't move an inch.

DAMIEN  
I ca—I can't, it hurts. My hands,  
Mike. I can't hold anymore.

The fingers on his right hand loosen and his left wrist slides through Mike's grip.

MIKE  
Damien, don't!

Damien mumbles and his head hangs down, staring straight below.

Mike stretches his arms between the metal bars in the railing, reaching out toward Damien's other wrist.

Damien looks back up at Mike.

DAMIEN  
I'm sorry.

Damien's right hand lets go and he pulls his left hand out of Mike's grip. The wind stops suddenly and silence overcomes the tower as he freefalls. His arms and legs stretch out freely in the air, and a smile of relief comes across Damien's face as the pain is seemingly gone.

SLAM.

Mike WAILS and it echoes in the tower. A door hinge below swings open below and a THUD echoes up.

FADE IN:

INT. KITCHEN - 32 YEARS LATER

A blank, unaddressed, white envelope lays in the middle of an empty wooden table. Only a stamp occupies the space.

ANGLE ON: The stamp. An image of a stone tower stretching into a clear blue sky.



The sound of BOILING WATER. Low at first. Louder by the second until FIZZLING.

MELISSA, mid 40s, runs into the kitchen wearing a crimson pantsuit.

MELISSA  
Motherfucker!

She palms the handle of a lid covering a boiling-over pot of pasta sauce, then YELLS, and tosses it into the kitchen sink.

Her right hand rests under the tap while her left hand stirs the crusted pot with a wooden spoon.

The door lock CLICKS. She whips her head to a walnut door in an adjacent room, toward the front of the house. Through a small gated window on the door, the top of a head comes into view.

The door opens and MICHAEL, 20, wearing a warm blue cardigan over a white t-shirt, looks up to meet his mother's eye. He quickly scurries toward a staircase in front of the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

From the kitchen, Melissa peaks her head in the living room.

MELISSA  
Michael! You better not go up those stairs.

Michael pauses on the staircase after making it a few steps up.

MELISSA (CONT'D)  
Why the hell are you home this early? I barely started the pasta sau-gravy.

Michael takes a step down and leans around the railing.

MICHAEL  
Nice save, Dad would be proud.

His mother lets out a soft chuckle, turns off the tap, and turns around to face Michael. She walks under an archway that opens up the kitchen walls to the living room. She continues until she is a few feet in front of the staircase.

MELISSA  
So? And don't tell me you skipped class again.

MICHAEL  
I skipped class again.

MELISSA  
What the fuck, Michael. It's the  
second week and you already skipped  
how many times now?

Melissa quickly snaps her head toward the stove.

MELISSA (CONT'D)  
Hold on.

She runs out of the living room back into the kitchen.

Michael comes down the stairs and swings his body around the  
opposite side of the railing. He peeks into the kitchen.

MELISSA (CONT'D)  
(From the kitchen)  
I'm not watching you do this for  
another year.

She turns back around and takes a few steps toward Michael  
and leans against the archway between the two rooms.

MICHAEL  
The classes are ass, mom. A  
complete waste of time. I can just  
watch the lectures later and be  
more productive now.

MELISSA  
Maybe if you pick a major, *that you*  
*are interested in*, then the classes  
would be better.  
(She throws her hands up)  
And how is playing video games,  
waiting around for the lecture,  
anymore productive?

MICHAEL  
I mean-

MELISSA  
What if you took a class about  
making games? Or better yet, a  
coding class.

MICHAEL  
Yeah, no thanks. I don't want to  
make games, that sounds horrible.  
(MORE)

MICHAEL (CONT'D)  
(He turns back toward the  
staircase)  
And no to coding too, super boring.

Melissa lets out a grunt and looks down at the floor.

MELISSA  
I just don't know what to do with  
you anymore.

Michael laughs as he turns back to the staircase and goes up  
a few steps.

MICHAEL  
Mom, it's gonna be fine. Relax.

Behind Melissa, the sound of pasta sauce starting to bubble.

Melissa looks up at him, saddened, her face becoming red.

Michael goes down the steps and walks toward her again, but  
stops as she starts to speak.

MELISSA  
Ever since your fath-  
(she takes a deep breath)  
You just spend most of the day in  
your room. You don't go out, you  
don't spend time on campus, you  
don't show interest in anything. Is  
this what you want for your life,  
Michael?

Melissa pauses and reaches her hands out to grab Michael's.

MELISSA (CONT'D)  
I just don't know what to do  
anymore, Michael, I really don't.

Michael lets go of her hands and gives her a hug.

MICHAEL  
Mom, you don't need to worry about  
me, I'll be fine.  
(He breaks from the hug)  
I'll pick a major, worst comes to  
worst I'll do finance or something.  
Its all gonna be okay, don't cry.

MELISSA  
No, Michael.

Melissa wipes her eyes and steps back from him.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

You have been saying that for too long now. When everything happened with your dad, I gave you your space throughout high-school, but I can't just keep hoping it will all be okay anymore.

She walks over to the table and picks up the white envelope, waving it in the air like a winning lottery ticket.

Michael slouches and rolls his eyes.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

They sent another envelope, Michael. The University of the Almighty is a good school, you will make great connections there. I know it's weird for you since he went there, but I also know he would hate himself if he somehow knew you turned down this incredible opportunity.

Melissa extends her hand with the envelope toward Michael.

Michael waves it away.

MICHAEL

I have a meeting with my advisor this week, mom. Maybe I'll think about this after—

MELISSA

Please, just open it. See what they have to say, there's no harm in that.

Michael walks up to her, then continues going right by her, into the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

MICHAEL

We know what they have to say, mom. Full-ride, any dorm of my choosing, any major I want to study, more and more ass kissing. They are so desperate for me to attend, it's not even about Dad. They just sound like religious freaks wanting to indoctrinate me.

The sound of the pasta sauce bubbling grows louder. A few sparse POPS.

MELISSA

Oh my god, Michael, please with the drama. Their religion focuses on education, they are a well respected and high ranking school. And yes, of course it being a full ride is a big deal for us. You know how I wish I could afford more than just community college for you-

MICHAEL

I could take a loan and go somewhere better, mom. I got into UMich, remember?

MELISSA

And get in crippling debt from out-of-state tuition? When you don't even know or care about what you want to study?

MICHAEL

Mom! Really?

MELISSA

What, Michael!? You do not apply yourself whatsoever now, how could you expect me to think otherwise?

A loud POP and more bubbling.

Michael lets out of a huff in disbelief, looking his mom in the eyes. He snatches the envelope and turns to the stairs, quickly ascending.

Melissa tends to the bubbling pasta sauce behind her as it splashes out of the pot onto the cupboards. She quickly hurries to grab paper towels and wooden spoon, wiping off the sauce as she stirs the pot. She rests her temple into her palm and cries.

INT. MICHAEL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Navy blue curtains that match the paint of the walls cover large windows opposite of the doorway. The walls are bare. The bedsheets are gray. A dark wooden end table near the window has large graphing paper sprawling across it.

Sketches of buildings faintly show from the pages.

The brightest colors in the room come from Michael's desk. LED lights shine from the desktop tower that sits on the right side of his desk. A monitor screen shines brightly in Michael's face as he sits close to the desk, hunched over his keyboard. He clicks his mouse and slams on his keys aggressive and a game flashes on the screen.

The white envelope remains unopened to the left of his keyboard.

CLICKING from the keyboard fills the rooms as Michael leans closely into his monitor.

MICHAEL

Fuck!

The colors on his screen turn into a gray wash and he pushes away from his desk, leaning back in the chair. He looks down at the envelope.

He takes off the headset and slowly picks up the envelope—then quickly rips it open.

On the top left of the letter is a logo for UoA and paragraphs follow below. The letter is signed off with:

"It is our good fortune for you to attend UoA and we hope to finally see you this upcoming fall semester... Sincerely, Headmaster Nicolson.

Michael slams the letter down and rolls his chair back up to the desk. He searches 'What is the University of the Almighty.'

A soft KNOCK at the door.

MELISSA

Dinner is ready, Michael. Come on.

Melissa's FOOTSTEPS trail off as she walks down the stairs.

MICHAEL

Alright, I'll be down soon.

Michael scrolls through searches, opening university pages and article headlines in many separate tabs.

He clicks through the tabs where words and paragraphs mesh together, but one stark image appears on each site: the image of a stone medieval tower from a worm's-eye view, stretching up into a clear sky. He lands on an article with the image front and center, and the headline:

"Learn more about one of oldest standing structures built during the 13 Colonies."

And another article reads:

"Sealed off in the 80s, followers of the Almighty Church demand the tower's doors be reopened"

MELISSA  
(Shouting from downstairs) Michael,  
let's go! I said dinner was ready.

Michael closes out of the tabs and rolls his chair out from under the desk.

INT. ACADEMIC ADVISOR OFFICE - DAY

Michael sits uncomfortably in a small office chair with narrow armrests. He wears a white shirt buttoned all the way up to the top, untucked over a pair of jeans, looking somewhat put together.

His knees are pushed against the front of a desk as the furniture is tightly managed in a the small room. Papers lay scattered on the desk and the chair behind it is pushed back, empty.

He looks at his watch, 3:43pm. He leans back in the chair.

WOOSH.

The door behind Michael swings open and he twitches forward as it brushes past the hairs on the back of his head.

MS. PARK, early 30s, quickly swings around Michael and lands in her desk chair. She lets off a huff, rolls up to her desk, and SLAMS both palms down. Michael slightly jumps out of his seat.

MS. PARK  
So, so, sorry I'm late, Michael.  
Just such a busy Tuesday, you know?

MICHAEL  
No worries, Ms. Park, I just want-

MS. PARK  
So, you finally decided to pick your major, huh? Congratulations. Let me pull up the form right now while you tell me what you decided on picking.

Ms. Park starts typing on her keyboard

MICHAEL

Well, I am still not sure. I wanted to talk to you about that again first.

Her hands freeze and she lays them flat on the desk, then turns to Michael.

MS. PARK

Oh, I thought you had decided already from the email. Go on.

Michael sits up and hides his hands behind the front of the desk, picking at his nails.

MICHAEL

I want to do architecture, and I know-

MS. PARK

NCC doesn't have architecture, Michael, as we talked about before. If you-

MICHAEL

I know, I know, can I finish?

Ms. Park stops looking at her computer and turns away from it, then backs away from the computer.

MS. PARK

Okay, sorry, go ahead.

MICHAEL

I know there isn't architecture but I was wondering if I could somehow customize my degree to get as close as possible. A combination of say civil engineering with some of the art programs.

Ms. Park looks over at a wall full of uninspiring inspiring posters with cliché college one-liners. She then look back at Michael and leans into her desk, staring deeply into his eyes.

MS. PARK

Michael, if your heart is in architecture, then you need to go to a school that offers the program.

(MORE)



MS. PARK (CONT'D)

Sure, you could customize your studies, but unless you are a literal prodigy, no architecture firm will hire someone with a civil engineer-mixed with art studies-degree.

Michael slouches back into the small office chair, lifting it partially off it's front feet, until he quickly rebalances his weight.

MICHAEL

Thanks for the brutal honesty, Ms. Park.

Michael stands up from his chair and picks up his backpack, swinging it over his shoulder, nearly knocking down a picture frame on Ms. Park's desk. He takes a step toward the door.

Ms. Park reaches out to grab his arm.

MS. PARK

Is that UoA offer still sitting around, perhaps?

Michael stops and turns back toward Ms. Park as she lets go of her grip.

MICHAEL

They actually just sent me a new offer letter.

MS. PARK

They have a very good architecture program, Michael. I know we discussed this before, but seriously, Michael, it could be a life changing decision. You should at least consider it.

Michael raises his hand behind his head, waving her off with the back of his palm as he walks out of the door and it SLAMS closed.

An eyebrow raises from Ms. Park in his direction, then she turns back to face her computer.

EXT. COLLEGE CAMPUS - CONTINUOUS

A CROWDED, BUSTLING college campus. Brick pavers connect scattered mid-century modern buildings. Patches of grass and trees interspersed between the walkways.

MICHAEL walks down a long narrow pathway, passing dozens and dozens of students. No one looks at Michael, no hello is said to him, no smile is shone his way. His pace increases and he begins to sweat as he unbuttons the top of his shirt.

He approaches nearby bench along the path and sits. He digs his elbows into his knees, holding up his slouched body.

Dozens more students walk by in front of him as he watches. People walk in groups talking to one another, laughing and smiling with each other. Some students stop and exchange hellos as they notice one another. A WOMAN IN ATHLETIC GEAR runs up to another woman wearing a similar team jacket. They give one another a hug and walk over toward the bench.

Michael glances over as they are laughing and smiling, then he looks straight ahead again.

He smiles and waves

MICHAEL

Hey.

The woman in athletic gear looks down at him, slightly raising her hand to quickly wave.

WOMAN IN ATHLETIC GEAR

Um, hi.

She turns back to her friend who covers her mouth as she giggles.

MICHAEL

You both on the swim team? I was considering joining.

The woman in athletic gear looks over again.

WOMAN IN ATHLETIC GEAR

Yeah, we are.

Her friend taps her on the side of her arm.

FRIEND

(Mumbling)

You know him?

The woman in athletic gear raises an eye and shrugs slightly.

Michael shifts his body over at them.

MICHAEL  
You know if they're still running  
tryouts?

WOMAN IN ATHLETIC GEAR  
Um, I'm not sure. The swim coach is  
usually at the gym at this time  
though if you wanted more infor-

Her friend shifts by her, standing in front facing Michael.

FRIEND  
Sorry, buddy, but we're not  
interested?

Michael laughs.

MICHAEL  
I was just making conversation.

FRIEND  
Well, we're busy, so.

The friend pulls at the other girl's arm, turning toward the  
pathway.

MICHAEL  
(mumbling to himself)  
Fuck this.

Michael picks up his backpack and walks off to a path leading  
to the city street. The two girls shrug at each other behind  
him and sit down on the bench.

INT. MICHAEL'S HOME, LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Michael and his mom sit on the couch, his feet up on the  
coffee table. They both are in sweatpants, Michael wears a t-  
shirt and slippers, while Melissa is wrapped in a blanket.

An old black and white westerner movie plays in the  
background and a soft lamp in the corner shines the only  
light in the room.

A plastic bowl with popcorn sits between the two of them.

MELISSA  
I'm sorry you couldn't get better  
news from your advisor, but this is  
going to be good for you, Michael.

MICHAEL

Mom, I really don't want to talk about it anymore today.

Melissa pauses the movie and sits up, looking over at Michael.

MELISSA

This is exciting, Michael. My baby is going to be an architect! And the UoA is a great school, you'll enjoy Massachusetts too. Their campus is beautiful.

She sits back and grabs popcorn. Michael looks over at the opposite side of the room, away from his mom, then looks back again and smiles at his mom.

MICHAEL

Yea, I am excited to finally study real architecture. I mean, civil engineering is important-

MELISSA

But its not you, you are a creative. Just like your mother.

MICHAEL

Yeah, yeah, I know just like you. Did you tell everybody already?

MELISSA

You bet I did! Grandma and grandpa too. They're all coming over Saturday to celebrate.

MICHAEL

Saturday? Mom!

MELISSA

What? It's exciting! In a few weeks, you'll be in Massachusetts!

Michael sinks into the couch without saying a word, then grabs the remote from his mom to resume the movie.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

What? It'll all be alright, Michael.

She rubs his arm. He looks over again.

MICHAEL

So you didn't see anyone drop it off? The envelope?

MELISSA

Michael, you really aren't on this are you? No, I didn't see anyone. It was already at the door when I got home on Monday.

Michael leans forward.

MICHAEL

And you don't find that odd? Like, who is dropping it off? How do they know where we live.

MELISSA

I'm sure the university has connections out here, especially for recruiting.

Michael slouches back in the couch, looking off at the ceiling.

Melissa rubs the back of his head, putting her hands through his hair.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

Why are you worrying? The hard part is done. All the paperwork has been done, Headmaster Nicolson called me this morning. Don't stress yourself.

The two reach in the bowl for popcorn and focus on the movie as GUNFIRE sounds off in the background.

INT. KITCHEN - MICHAEL'S HOUSE - EVENING

The oven door is open and Michael is leaning down, taking out casserole dish with foil covering the top. His mom is pacing to his left over the stove, managing a steaming pot on one side and cooking in another pot with the other.

MELISSA

Grams and Gramps will be here any minute.

Michael places the casserole dish on the wooden table laid out with a few other pans. He closes the oven door.

MICHAEL  
What else can I help with?

MELISSA  
Can you just check the bathrooms to  
make sure they're clean before  
everyone gets here.

There is a BANG at the door.

MILISSA  
Shit, that's them. Can you let them  
in?

Michael walks through the archway, out of the kitchen.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Michael walks walks up to the door and GRUNTS. He pats out  
any wrinkles in his shirt before opening it.

GRAMS and GRAMPS, mid 80s, dressed formally. Gramps ashes out  
a cigarette on the brick wall.

GRAMS  
Mikey! Congratulations, my  
grandson.

Gramps walks up to pinch his cheeks and give him a kiss.

His gramps shakes his hand.

GRAMPS  
Congratulations, you're finally  
going to college.

MICHAEL  
I've been in college, Gramps, up at  
the community one in Wilmington.

GRAMS  
Oh, ignore him, sweetheart. He  
doesn't remember what we ate for  
dinner last night.

Gramps lets out a holler and they enter inside. Michael goes  
to close the front door and lights from a car appear from  
down the road. He closes the door and lets out a deep breath  
before turning around.

MELISSA

(Shouting)

Ma, Pa, come in here. I'm in the kitchen.

Gramps and Grams slowly scurry into the kitchen as Michael sits on the couch. He sits back and watches them shuffle past the archway and greet his mom. As his head and shoulders sink into the cushions, there is another BANG at the door.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A crowd of people fill the living room, cramming up on the couch, a few children sitting on the floor and staircase, and others sitting on fold ups chairs laid around the space.

Michael stands by the archway into the kitchen, talking to an older woman in her 70s. His arms are stiff by his side as he smiles and forces a laugh.

The front door swings open and ANTHONY, 50s, thin balding hair, stands in the frame.

Many of the older adults yell ANT as he bursts in.

ANTHONY

What's up, what's up! Where's the college boy at?

Michael doesn't look up or partake in the welcoming cheer and continues talking to the woman.

Ant spots him and points.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

There he is!

Michael glares over the woman's shoulder as Anthony moves the woman out of the way and gives Michael a hug, then slips a white envelope in his hand.

The older woman stands by awkwardly smiling at the two as they embrace.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Take this, for college.  
Congratulations.

MICHAEL

Thank you, Uncle Ant. But I've been in college, you don't have to—

ANTHONY

Sorry, sorry. You know what I mean—since you're going to your father's school now and moving all the way up to Mass. Take it, you'll need it up there.

Michael takes the envelope and steps out of the hug. He tucks it in the back of his jeans.

MICHAEL

I know, I know.  
(looks away quickly then  
back again)  
Well, thank you.

He motions to leave the conversation. Anthony nudges the side of his arm.

ANTHONY

Hey, you finally gonna get a girlfriend up there?

Michael stops and faces him again. He lets out a short CHUCKLE.

MICHAEL

I don't know, I'll have to see when I'm there.

ANTHONY

What do you mean you'll have to see? What, are you picky?

Anthony lets out a laugh and Michael forces another chuckle, following Anthony's lead.

Melissa walks in from the kitchen and stands under the archway.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Melissa, long time!

He walks over toward Melissa gives her a kiss on the cheek before they hug.

Michael steps back and mouths thanks toward his mother as she embraces Anthony.

MELISSA

How are you, Anthony? How's Nonna?  
Oh, and your kids.



ANTHONY  
I'm good, you know, same old.  
Nonna's here, actually.

Melissa's eyes pop and she snaps toward the door, starting to walk over.

MELISSA  
Really? She came? Oh, let me go  
get—

Anthony puts out his hand against her.

ANTHONY  
She said she needed to get some air  
before coming inside—you know.

Anthony pauses and turns to Michael.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)  
Maybe you should go out to get her,  
Mike. It'll help her.

MICHAEL  
Yeah, of course, sure. I'll go get  
her.

He quickly walks off in the living room, smiling towards an aunt and two younger cousins playing as he passes by, heading straight for the front door.

EXT. PORCH - CONTINUOUS

Michael steps out onto the wooden paneled porch with a veranda. He turns to his left to see his NONNA, late 70s, sitting in a rocking chair adjacent to a stone bench. She stares off in the distance.

MICHAEL  
Hi, Nonna.

She turns around and a smiles overcomes her face when she sees her grandson.

NONNA  
Oh, my grandson. Look how much  
you've grown, come over here.

Michael walks over and leans down to give her a kiss on the cheek.

MICHAEL

Nonna, why don't you come inside?  
Mom would love to see you.

NONNA

I will, I will. Sit, stay with me  
for a bit.

She reaches out to grab his hands.

NONNA (CONT'D)

So I hear you're going back to  
Massachusetts. Back to the same  
school your father went to.

MICHAEL

Yeah, I guess I am. They have a  
great architecture program and they  
have always offered ever since dad-

NONNA

I know, I know, you have to do  
what's best for you.

She pauses and tightens her grip, raising their hands off the  
chair.

NONNA (CONT'D)

But please be careful, my grandson,  
please. You use that scholarship to  
study and that's it. Don't get all  
mixed up in their school like your  
father did.

She stands up and walks to the edge of the porch, looking out  
beyond. The fields of sparse tall grass fall into shadow as  
the setting sun vanishes behind the thicket of trees. The  
sound of CICADAS echo in the distance.

Michael laughs and stands up to join her by the edge of the  
porch.

MICHAEL

You don't have to worry about that,  
Nonna. You know I am not one to get  
mixed up in anything.

He wraps his left arm around his Nonna, giving her a side  
hug.

NONNA

Oh, I know, but my Michael was the  
same as you.

(MORE)

NONNA (CONT'D)

I struggled dragging him to church every Sunday when he was a child, but something changed when he was there. He had no problem following them.

MICHAEL

Why did he never talk about it, Nonna?

Michael pauses and looks out into the field.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Nonna, if it was such a big part of his life, why did he never talk about it?

NONNA

I'm not sure, Nonna. I think he regretted spending much of his life there. He stayed for a long time after he graduated. It wasn't until meeting your mother for him to finally leave.

There is a soft knock at the screen door and they turn to it as Melissa slowly opens the door.

MELISSA

Elena.

Melissa walks up to hug and kiss her.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

It has been far too long, and I apologize deeply for that. Please, come in.

NONNA

Ts-No, no, don't apologize. It was never you, just-you know.

Melissa grabs Nonna's hand as she wipes her eyes.

NONNA (CONT'D)

But you are right, it has been too long, lets go in.

Melissa opens the door and Michael grabs it, holding it open as they walk in.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Michael and Melissa sit on one side of the wooden table while Anthony and Nonna sit on the other.

They are laughing and talking. The RUMBLINGS of old holidays and plans to get together again for the upcoming ones.

Bottles of wine are near empty on the table, wrapped up food sits on the counter.

NONNA

It's getting late, Anthony, we should get going soon.

ANTHONY

Yeah, you're probably right.

He pushes his chair in as he leans forward onto it, looking at Michael.

ANTHONY (CONT'D)

Well, good luck, kid. I don't say it enough, but I know you're dad is looking down proudly. You'll do right by him at his school.

Anthony stands up and walks over to help his mother out from the table.

NONNA

"His school," please don't say such a thing.

ANTHONY

What? Come on, ma, it basically was. Everyone knew him

Melissa laughs as she and Michael stand and wait by the archway.

MELISSA

He was a popular one back then, maybe you'll follow right in his footsteps.

Melissa looks over at Michael who is slightly red, and he shakes his head back at her. Anthony walks up to Michael and grabs his shoulder, rubbing it.

ANTHONY

Nah, this kid will do better than his father.

Anthony raises an eyebrow at him and gives him a smiles, then a hug, and walks on.

Nonna walks behind Anthony and gives Michael a kiss on the cheeks. She grabs his hand.

NONNA

Just stay out of trouble up there,  
for me.

Anthony looks down at his Nonna, with a smile, and puts his other hand on top of hers.

ANTHONY

I will Nonna, I will.

Nonna smiles back.

Melissa opens the front door, and Nonna and Anthony are led on to the porch to talk amongst themselves.

Michael falls onto the couch and sinks into it, closing his eyes. They pop back open. He looks over to the side table and picks up a pamphlet of the UoA. He stares at the tower on the front page.

EXT. THE UNIVERSITY OF THE ALMIGHTY'S CAMPUS - DAY