

ARCADIA

Written by

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Based on the Greek myth of Atalanta

Address
Phone Number

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

In a dark, still house, an OLD WOMAN (76, Black) reclines in an rust-colored armchair with a BABY (7 months) in her arms. The baby burbles and squirms.

The woman adjusts the baby, pressing her nose against its cooing brown face.

MONIFA (30s, Black) and DARREN (late 30s, Black) shuffle into the entry way dressed to go out. Monifa adjusts her tights, checking for runs. Darren stares at the old woman. Her dark eyes shine in the half-light.

MONIFA

Mom, we're leaving. We'll pick up your prescription on the way home?

DARREN

(hushed) Are you sure about leaving her here?

Monifa adjusts her earring in the hall mirror.

MONIFA

My mother?

DARREN

With the baby.

MONIFA

She's been so much better.

DARREN

I know.

MONIFA

My mother would never hurt Addy. She isn't out to get anybody but herself.

DARREN

She hasn't been on the new medicine that long.

MONIFA

Darren, enough. Mom, we'll be back.

Monifa throws open the door, stepping briskly through. Darren casts one last grave look towards the old woman, who smiles warmly.

The door slams, and the baby laughs in surprise.

The baby stares up at the old woman, straining against her soft green swaddling. The old woman closes her eyes, lulled by the baby's warm presence.

Something scuffles against the tan carpet. The old woman's eyes flick open.

A brown shape moves in the dark, its sleek beetle-like coat slinking forward in segments, like a string of glass beads.

The old woman holds her breath, hoisting the baby higher on her shoulder. The baby responds with a calming coo.

OLD WOMAN

Sh-sh-sh... it's alright.

A patch of moonlight identifies the slinking creature as a BLOOD RED SCORPION, its venomous tail curled forward like a beckoning hand.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)

(gentle, but defiant) That's alright, baby. That's alright.

The shadows stir with movement. Unseen insects chirp from the blackened corners of the living room. The walls reverberate with soft skittering noises.

The room fills with overlapping metronomic chitters, getting louder and louder until it seems as though the walls might burst...

And THEY DO.

Ants erupt from the wall corners, running across the wallpaper like a fracture. Spiders scramble over the tan carpet, edging towards the old woman's feet. The scorpion creeps forward with anticipation.

The old woman quakes gently. Her eyes are filled with tears.

The baby twists in her grandmother's arms. For her, the room is blissfully empty. The stillness of the house presses in like a great, warm blanket.

The old woman begins to sob, quietly at first. The insects creep up her legs, climbing her shins. The swarm creates a writhing lace.

The old woman sobs harder. From beneath the blanket of squirming insects, she shakes. They fill her dress, and weave between her fingers.

She stifles a scream. The old woman will endure being eaten alive, so long as she doesn't frighten the baby.

The baby, for her part, is ecstatic. She babbles jubilantly as the creatures dance along the seam where old skin meets new. Something about the baby repels the insects, or so it seems to the old woman.

Her black eyes shine, and the baby reaches for the shimmering object.

The insects have buried the old woman up to her neck. A millipede skitters across her lips. Her eyes blow wide.

Without making a sound, the old woman weeps.

INT. LIVING ROOM - HOURS LATER

The door clicks gently. Monifa and Darren step softly into the hallway.

MONIFA
(whispered) Mom? We're back.

A muffled whimper sounds from the living room. Darren breaks away from Monifa, finding the old woman in the chair, crying.

DARREN
Frida?

The old woman looks up meekly.

OLD WOMAN
Please don't take her from me. I
tried so badly. You didn't see how
badly I tried.

The baby makes a soft, noise of sleep.

DARREN
(frightened) Monifa.

Monifa hurries into the room.

MONIFA
Oh, Mom.

She kneels at the arm of the old chair, taking her mother's hand.

MONIFA (CONT'D)
(gentle) Tell me what happened.

Darren takes the baby in his arms. At the loss of her grandmother, the baby makes a squeak of protest.

DARREN
This isn't working.

MONIFA
I know.

OLD WOMAN
You should get the walls checked.
It's not good for the house.

MONIFA
The house is fine, Mom.

She looks at Darren helplessly.

MONIFA (CONT'D)
Move the crib into our room.

As Monifa talks down her mother, Darren takes the baby into the hall. As they move further from the living room, the old woman's sobs mix with a distant scuttling sound.

The scuttling gets slowly faster. The baby stirs with discomfort.

The baby's face twists as it struggles to make sense of the noise. It squirms against her father's grip, and Darren secures his grip. The baby fights to get free, tries to twist towards the wails of her grandmother.

At last, with nowhere to go, the baby begins to cry.

EXT. SACRED OATH RACE TRACK - ARCADIA - AFTERNOON

Seventeen years later, in a green California suburb, a high school track team runs laps. The track is brick-red with an overgrown football field in the center. ADDY (17, Black) easily outpaces the others, listening to pump-up music through wireless headphones.

In the stands, CARL (12) and JACOB (14) throw pistachio shells in Addy's way. Their Catholic school uniforms are boyishly disassembled. Their dark shoes perched on the bleachers in pairs. The collars on their white polos are intentionally popped.

Addy shoots them both a dirty look, but keeps her lead.

CARL
 (yelling) They're power-ups! Like
 in Mario Kart!

Addy finishes strong. When she crosses the line, she slows to a walk and wipes her face on her shirt.

She takes a moment to catch her breath, then takes a swig from her water bottle. One by one, her teammates finish, joining her on the field.

HANA (17, Filipina) kicks Addy in the butt. Addy coughs up a mouthful of water.

ADDY
 (gasping) Hana... why...

HANA
 (panting) You... smug... bitch.

Addy smiles wickedly, wiping the water from her face.

COACH (O.S.)
 Bring it in -- let's go!

The team runs to the center of the field, with Addy leading the pack.

EXT. ADDY'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Carl and Jacob run up to the one-story house and beat against the door. It's a Spanish style, blindingly white with blue shutters. Addy trails behind them with the keys.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

At dinner, Monifa and Darren sit at opposite ends of the table. Carl and Jacob pick at their food as Addy ruthlessly attacks a bowl of spaghetti.

MONIFA
 How was practice?

CARL
 Running is a boring sport. Someone
 should do a flip or something.

Addy pauses her eating, not bothering to set down her fork.

ADDY
 Practice was good. I have a meet on
 Thursday. I think I need new shoes.

CARL
I want new shoes.

ADDY
Running shoes, Carl.

CARL
(doubling down) I want new running shoes.

DARREN
Will anyone important be there Thursday?

JACOB
Father Patrick.

CARL
Father Patrick said God is everywhere, so He'll probably be there too.

DARREN
I mean scouts. College coaches. Sha'carri Richardson.

ADDY
Definitely not the last one.

She smothers her hint of a smile with a mouthful of pasta.

JACOB
Addy got sauce on me.

MONIFA
Baby. Eat like a person.

DARREN
That's how a winner eats, Monifa.

MONIFA
(warily) Is that so?

Addy dives back into her plate.

INT. ADDY'S ROOM - LATER

The hiss of shower water from behind the bathroom door. Addy's room is covered in trophies, medals, and Duke University paraphernalia.

A photo of ADDY'S GRANDMOTHER in the rust-colored chair sits on her desk in a little silver frame.

EXT. ADDY'S HOUSE - DAWN

Addy runs out the door wearing her Catholic school sweatshirt -- maroon and white -- and her running headphones.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET

Addy turns the block, where she CRASHES into MELVIN (17, Black, nerdy but handsome), knocking him -- and her headphones -- to the ground. Addy takes a few steps back.

ADDY

Shit. Sorry.

Melvin looks around wildly for a moment, like he's dropped something. When he realizes he hasn't, he hands Addy the headphones and picks himself up.

MELVIN

(breathless) All good.

ADDY

This hedge is a huge blind spot. It basically pushed me off the sidewalk.

Addy hops from foot to foot. From the moment she bumped Melvin into him, she hasn't stopped moving. Melvin tries to hide his amusement.

MELVIN

I'll let my mom know.

ADDY

This is your house?

MELVIN

Yep.

ADDY

It's huge.

MELVIN

My mom's in sales. Do you go to Sacred?

ADDY

Do you?

Melvin points at the logo on his polo.

MELVIN

I do.

ADDY
Since when?

MELVIN
Since the beginning of the
semester.

Addy stares at him.

MELVIN (CONT'D)
I'm on the debate team. See?

He flashes his phone at Addy.

His thumb scrolls through pages of densely packed notes.

MELVIN (CONT'D)
I like to talk and walk. It helps
me memorize.

ADDY
They make you memorize?

MELVIN
Nope. I'm just that good.

He extends his hand.

MELVIN (CONT'D)
I'm Melvin.

ADDY
Melvin -

MELVIN
I know it's dorky.

ADDY
You've got -

Addy steps back. A centipede winds itself around Melvin's
finger. Melvin doesn't seem to notice.

MELVIN
I've got...?

Addy snaps her headphones on.

ADDY
I've gotta go. I'll see you.

She runs off. Melvin stands there dumbstruck, watching her
get smaller in the distance. After a few moments, Melvin sees
the centipede. He jumps, and shakes off the insect.

INT. DEBATE ROOM - AFTERNOON

The debate team scrimmages in pairs. CORINNE (17, ginger, Melvin's partner) rattles off at lightning speed while Melvin scrawls fast notes on an iPad.

CORINNE

Second, we affirm that private prisons stand to profit from the wrongful imprisonment of Black, brown, and indigenous people --

MELVIN

Shrill, Corinne. The judges always say that we're way too shrill. And by "we", I mean you.

CORINNE

Please ignore my enthusiastic teammate.

MELVIN

It's just a scrimmage.

CORINNE

Right. As in a simulation of the real thing.

Melvin sighs. He underlines the word "shrill" on his notes and turns his attention to the window where:

EXT - RACE TRACK - CONTINUOUS

Addy wins another race, with DELIA (17, witchy, sunflower yellow hair) as a far second.

Hana dumps her water over Addy's head, then clasps her hands together, begging for a sip from Addy's bottle. Delia stares on with malice.

INT. DEBATE ROOM - AN HOUR LATER

Melvin and the rest of the debate team pack up laptops and notes.

MELVIN

Hey, Corinne?

CORINNE

Yes?

MELVIN

Do we have a good track team?

Corinne pauses to consider.

CORINNE

You know how Red Oaks kicked our ass at the last invitational? And Hunter cried and Gina threw up and Mari had diarrhea for the entire weekend because Red Oaks found a way to spin her anti-student loans argument into white supremacist rhetoric?

MELVIN

Yeah. They're legit.

CORINNE

Okay. Well, our track team is "legit". Why do you ask?

MELVIN

I guess I just -

The fire alarm rings. Melvin's hands dive instinctively into his hoodie pocket.

CORINNE

Of course there's a fire drill. I keep trying to tell the admin that -

A TEACHER strides past the open doorway, and Corinne shakes her fist at him -

CORINNE (CONT'D)

(directed at teacher) - RANDOM FIRE DRILLS ARE SUPER ABLEIST!

The teacher scampers off.

CORINNE (CONT'D)

That's our queue. Melvin? Are you good?

Melvin is frozen.

MELVIN

You're sure it's a drill.

CORINNE

I'm sure we're gonna get in trouble if we don't evacuate.

She pulls him into the hallway by the arm.

EXT. RACE TRACK - AFTERNOON

The after school crowd swarms the track, interrupting practice. Addy and Hana sit at the top of the bleachers, watching Delia pick dandelions from the field and stuff them into a plastic bag.

HANA
You think she did this?

ADDY
Delia?

HANA
Yeah.

ADDY
Like, do I think she pulled the
fire alarm?

HANA
Or like. Cast a spell.

Addy look at Hana sideways.

ADDY
Hana.

HANA
What? She's very prominent on Witch
Twitter. She's like a thought
leader! And she hates you.

ADDY
She's just competitive.

HANA
Right. And you always win.

Addy grins.

ADDY
I do, don't I?

Hana dumps her water on Addy. Again. From underneath the bleachers, somebody shouts.

MELVIN
Yo what!

EXT. RACE TRACK - UNDERNEATH THE BLEACHERS - CONTINUOUS

Melvin shakes water off himself. He starts to pull something out of his hoodie - a SLICK BLACK BOX - but he quickly stows it away as Addy jumps down from the bleachers. She lands in front of him.

ADDY

Melvin?

Hana peeks over the edge of the top bleacher.

HANA

Melvin? What kind of name...

ADDY

Your brother's legal name is Macaroni.

HANA

It's a Filipino thing. Don't be racist. Also it shortens to Mac or Ronnie. It's a great name. Extremely versatile.

Addy steps under the bleachers.

ADDY

So, Melvin. You look... shy.

MELVIN

Just hot. Needed some shade. You know debate kids, we're like vampires.

He laughs weakly.

ADDY

You could take your hoodie off. That might help.

MELVIN

I'm not wearing anything underneath.

HANA

Oh shit. Commando.

ADDY

Hana? Take a lap.

HANA

I don't answer to you.

ADDY

Please?

HANA

Okay, you've convinced me.

The sound of Hana climbing down the bleachers. Addy and Melvin are alone.

ADDY

Be honest. Were you doing something pervy?

MELVIN

No!

ADDY

It's okay if you were.

MELVIN

What?

ADDY

Just kidding. That would not be okay. That would be gross.

Melvin laughs weakly.

MELVIN

I swear I wasn't.

ADDY

Are you really commando under there?

MELVIN

No. Um, this sweatshirt is kind of sentimental. Special, you know.

ADDY

Sure, I understand.

Melvin narrows his eyes.

MELVIN

What do you understand?

ADDY

Superstition. All athletes are superstitious. When I first started running, I thought wearing stripes made me faster.

MELVIN
How old were you...?

ADDY
And when I set the school's record
for the 800 meter, I wore those
socks to every single meet until
they disintegrated.

Melvin grins.

MELVIN
That's disgusting.

ADDY
Quiet, pervert. Some things are so
sentimental, you feel like having
them on, or around, is the
difference between life and death.
So, I understand.

MELVIN
Yeah. Right.

Melvin is touched. He shakes the water off his glasses.

ADDY
Sorry about the water.

She takes off his glasses and wipes them on the hem of her
shirt.

ADDY (CONT'D)
And about the sweat.

MELVIN
That's okay. I think I'm gonna go
home.

ADDY
Okay. Bye Melvin.

MELVIN
Bye...

ADDY
Addy.

He grabs his backpack and walks off. Through the slats in the
bleachers, Addy notices Delia staring at her, muttering
darkly under her breath.

INT. MELVIN'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The living room is large and filled with antiques. Dark wooded accents give the house an old, traditional look. The lock clicks from outside, and Melvin rushes in, a phone wedged between his ear and his shoulder.

MELVIN

Don't worry, mom. It was nothing.

LAHARA (V.O.)

You're sure? I can skip out on the first part of the summit. I don't have any meetings today.

MELVIN

Yeah, I'm sure.

LAHARA

Do you want me to come home?

Melvin kicks off his shoes by the door.

MELVIN

And have you miss your chance to rub elbows with the biggest names in medical supply sales? It's fine, mom.

Melvin walks into the kitchen.

LAHARA

Were you scared?

MELVIN

Um... yeah. A little.

LAHARA

Oh, Melvin.

A faint jangling sound comes through the phone.

MELVIN

Put the car keys down.

Melvin hangs his backpack on a chair.

LAHARA

I'm sorry, babe. I wish this wasn't the way things were. It's really not fair. I wish -

Melvin's face hardens.

MELVIN

Mom, when you mourn my life, it makes me feel really shitty.

LAHARA

You're right. I'm sorry. I'm so sorry.

Melvin takes a breath.

MELVIN

It's okay. I love you.

LAHARA

I love you. Be safe.

MELVIN

I am literally nothing but. Enjoy the conference.

LAHARA

Ha ha. Love you again.

MELVIN

Love you.

He hangs up.

INT. MELVIN'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Melvin's bedroom is grand and red, more ornate and mature than any boy his age could want. Melvin sits on his bed in a t-shirt and jeans. His sweatshirt hangs on the bedpost. The BLACK BOX sits on the bed.

Melvin runs his hand over the box. He plays with the lid, almost like he's afraid to look. Finally, he lifts the lid.

Staring at the contents of the box, Melvin sighs heavily.

Inside the box is a MEDIUM-SIZED CHARRED STICK.

EXT. ADDY'S HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

As Addy pulls into her driveway, she spies Delia in the front yard, kneeling in the flower beds. Addy opens the car door.

ADDY

Delia?

Delia turns around, startled. She scrambles to her feet.

ADDY (CONT'D)
Delia, what the fuck!

Delia runs.

JACOB
Oh shit, Addy swore!

Delia tactlessly mounts a bicycle on the other side of the street, making a shaky escape.

CARL
Isn't that girl on your team, Addy?

JACOB
Yeah, isn't she that white girl
with gazelle legs?

Addy tears her eyes away from Delia's retreating bike.

ADDY
What the hell are gazelle legs?

Jacob gets out of the car to demonstrate. He HALF-RUNS and HALF-TROTS to the front door.

CARL
No, it's more like -

He does a RUNNING FUNKY-CHICKEN and catches up with Jacob. Addy laughs.

ADDY
You guys are mean.

JACOB
Nah, we're observant.

Addy locks the car and tosses Jacob the keys. The boys disappear inside the house.

As Addy crosses the front yard, a strange object GLIMMERS from the flower beds.

ADDY
Delia?

No answer. Addy squats by the front steps and stares at the dirt. Again, the object GLIMMERS up at her.

Addy reaches into the dirt, unearthing a MILKY WHITE CRYSTAL.

INT. ADDY'S ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Addy stares at a cluster of crystals drying on a towel on top of her comforter. Hana's voice erupts from Addy's cell phone.

HANA (O.S.)
Quartz crystal?

ADDY
Is that what it is?

HANA
I don't know, I'm Googling.

ADDY
You really think Delia would try to curse me with rocks?

HANA
Hell yeah, I do. I bet if I went to her Twitter, her most recent post would be like, "Just did a quartz curse. Hashtag 'quarse'."

ADDY
I can't find anything about a curse.

HANA
Me neither, but the internet says you should clean your quartz with salt to get rid of any negative energy.

ADDY
Or I could throw them away.

HANA
That sounds like a major spiritual biohazard.

ADDY
Do you hear yourself?

HANA
I'm serious! What if you wake up for Thursday's meet with your legs on backwards all because you're too good to wash your quartz with salt.

ADDY
That would be nasty.

HANA

Addy, I once saw Delia eat the butt of her cigarette. Do you really want to take your chances with this *quarse*?

Addy sighs.

ADDY

Fine.

INT. MELVIN'S BATHROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Melvin sits in a clawfoot tub with a plastic bag filled with various chemicals. He's stripped to his boxers wearing SWIMMING GOGGLES and a SILK BONNET. With GLOVED HANDS, he SPRAYS THE STICK THOROUGHLY, placing each bottle on the bathroom floor before moving onto the next one.

INT. ADDY'S BATHROOM - SAME TIME

Addy pours table salt straight from the shaker into a sink full of water. On either side of Addy, Jacob and Carl brush their teeth.

INT. MELVIN'S BATHROOM

Melvin stands at the sink in his boxers, washing his hands.

INT. ADDY'S BATHROOM

Addy slides the quartz into the sink.

CARL

Addy, I hath to sthpit.

ADDY

Toilet.

JACOB

Wath are you doing?

Addy shakes her head. Jacob shrugs and spits out the window.

INT. MELVIN'S BEDROOM

With the precision of a surgeon, Melvin places the stick back in the box. He CLAPS the lid shut, then TUCKS THE BOX UNDER HIS PILLOW.

INT. ADDY'S BEDROOM

Addy yanks open a dresser drawer and buries the crystals under her socks. She closes the drawer and begins to walk away. Addy glances back at the dresser uneasily.

INT. MELVIN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Melvin scrolls on his laptop. He's pulled up Addy's track statistics and is zooming in on pictures of her.

EXT. ADDY'S HOUSE - SAME TIME

Addy lifts the lid of the outdoor garbage bin. In her other hand, the quartz rattles around inside a LOOSE GYM SOCK.

Addy opens the blue recycling bin only to find it INFESTED WITH BROWN SPIDERS. Some spiders creep up towards Addy's fingers and she drops the lid, stifling a scream. She DROPS the quartz sock, and its contents SPILL ONTO THE YARD.

Addy runs inside, leaving the crystals scattered on the grass.

INT. ADDY'S BATHROOM - SECOND LATER

Addy dry heaves over the toilet, flinching. She remembers - in HAZY FLASHES:

Her grandmother's shining eyes.

The millipede on Melvin's hand.

The brown spiders stirring at the bottom of the bin.

Addy's ears fill with a scuffling sound, like a swarm of insects moving inside the walls.

With effort, Addy takes a deep, athlete's breath. Slowly, the sound subsides.

INT. MELVIN'S ROOM

Melvin zooms in on a photo of Addy. He mouses over her eyes, her nose, her mouth. Suddenly, he SHUTS THE LAPTOP.

MELVIN

Ugh, creepy. Too creepy. Cut that out.

Melvin stows his laptop on his bedside table. He feels for the box under his pillow before turning off the light.

EXT. SACRED OATH - MORNING

Yellow buses line up at the school's entrance. Hana pushes through a crowd of yammering high schoolers, with Addy trailing behind her.

HANA

There. She's blending in with the fucking bus.

Delia leans against one of the school buses, flanked by two WITCHY FRIENDS with jewel-toned hair.

HANA (CONT'D)

Delia, what the hell? We in polite society do not put *quarses* on our teammates.

DELIA

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

ADDY

Why did you put rocks in my yard?

DELIA

Crystals.

ADDY

Why did you put *crystals* in my yard.

DELIA

You are so self-focused. Not everything has to be about you.

ADDY

It's my yard.

DELIA

It was the Earth's body way before
it was your yard.

ADDY

Delia, c'mon. If you've got a
problem with me we can just talk. I
don't want to play weird magic
games with you.

Delia sighs heavily.

DELIA

I put those all around the
neighborhood. You're not special.

ADDY

Can you not?

DELIA

(coolly) Fine.

A beat, while Addy appraises Delia's bored expression.

ADDY

Okay. Thanks. Good luck tomorrow.

Delia scoffs.

DELIA

Yeah.

TEACHER (O.S.)

Mr. Sheridan's Chemistry class,
let's line up!

Addy and Hana break away to line up with their class.

HANA

(over her shoulder) Ecoterrorist!

INT. SCHOOL BUS - MORNING

Addy and Hana stand in line to exit the bus. MR. SHERIDAN
(50s, white) addresses the class holding a stapled packet of
paper.

MR. SHERIDAN

Remember, no swapping partners.
Each pair will consist of you and a
Physics student from Ms.
Scottsdale's class.

(MORE)

MR. SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Stay in your pre-assigned pair or
risk facing disciplinary action.

Hana turns to face Addy.

HANA

I hope my partner is okay with me
falling asleep in the planetarium
and waking me up when it's time to
leave.

MR. SHERIDAN

Sarah J. and Ana. Peter and Maria-
Rosa.

EXT. ARCADIA SCIENCE MUSEUM ENTRANCE - MORNING

Addy finds Melvin by the museum fountain. He's in his usual
uniform, sweatshirt and all.

MELVIN

Hey, partner.

ADDY

Hey.

MELVIN

Aren't we a too old for a
scavenger hunt?

ADDY

I'm not.

Addy looks over at the museum door, where Mr. Sheridan and
the OTHER CHAPERONES are standing.

MR. SHERIDAN

Before we enter the museum, keep in
mind the Sacred Oath code of
conduct...

MELVIN

Are you stretching?

ADDY

No.

MELVIN

You are. You're stretching your
legs.

MR. SHERIDAN

...and remember that trips like these are a privilege that is only made possible through our continued adherence to these rules...

ADDY

I want to win.

MELVIN

How can a field trip have winners?

ADDY

Get ready to run.

MELVIN

What?

MR. SHERIDAN

Remember to meet in the courtyard for lunch at noon. Alright -

Mr. Sheridan cracks open the door. Addy narrows her eyes.

MR. SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Feel free to begin your worksheets and explore the museum starting -

ADDY

(to Melvin) Now!

The STUDENTS rush the door. Mr. Sheridan dashes behind a stone pillar, and Addy shoots off towards the entrance, forcing Melvin to run after her. The BLACK BOX begins to SLIP OUT OF HIS SWEATSHIRT POCKET, but Melvin shoves it back in. He jams his hands in his sweatshirt.

Melvin scans for Addy in the crowd of overexcited teenagers.

ADDY (CONT'D)

Melvin! Follow my voice!

MELVIN

What the hell?

MR. SHERIDAN

Language.

Melvin looks at Mr. Sheridan helplessly.

ADDY

Melvin!

Melvin shoulders through the crowd. Across the lobby, Addy stands at the mouth of the ASTRONOMY WING. Kids funnel past her, and she jumps in exasperation.

INT. ASTRONOMY WING

Melvin and Addy stand next to a human-sized model of Jupiter, its lifelike texture generated by a series of light projectors. Melvin reads from an informational placard.

MELVIN

The average temperature on the surface of Jupiter is... -238 degrees.

He starts to scribble on his own paper.

ADDY

Write faster.

MELVIN

A first grader could do this.

ADDY

Then why are you making it look so hard?

MELVIN

Okay. Done.

Addy yanks Melvin to his feet and the BLACK BOX begins to slide out of his sweatshirt. Addy runs ahead of him, and Melvin adjusts his sweatshirt before running after her.

INT. EARLY LIFE WING - DAY

Melvin and Addy duck inside a giant egg decorated with informative plaques about DNA. Addy jots down the information, using Melvin's back as a flat surface. He jumps at the contact.

INT. PLANETARIUM - DAY

Melvin and Addy sit in reclining chairs while a droning MUSEUM DOCENT delivers a speech about seasonal constellations from a hidden podium. Above them, a projector casts a video of the changing night sky onto the ceiling. A few seats away, Hana and HER PARTNER are both fast asleep.

ADDY

Aw.

Melvin's eyes flutter shut, but he's quickly revived when Addy grabs his hand.

With quiet forcefulness, she pulls him to his feet, and they approach the docent's podium at the back.

MELVIN
(whispers) What are you doing!

The docent looks at them, but doesn't break the sleepy rhythm of their speech.

ADDY
Hi. This is SO interesting, but I'm actually more of a visual learner.

She grabs the docents script and rifles through the pages.

The docent covers the microphone.

DOCENT
What are you doing?

ADDY
We just need one...little...fact-
here. "Virgo". Melvin, write that
down. (to docent) Thanks. Sorry.

Addy slaps down the piece of paper and pulls Melvin towards the doors.

In the partial darkness, Addy trips on an untaped extension cord, sending them both crashing onto the arcade-style carpet.

Behind them, the docent begins the next segment of their talk, shooting Addy a vengeful look.

While Addy picks herself up, Melvin feels around for his box, finding it missing.

MELVIN
(quietly) Fuck.

The darkness makes it impossible to see more than two feet ahead of him. He feels around wildly.

ADDY
Drop something?

MELVIN
(stammers) Uh. Yeah. I think I
dropped my phone somewhere. Maybe
check outside?

Addy nods and slips into the hallway.

Melvin feels around some more. After a while, he spots something reflective underneath one of the planetarium seats.

He surges forward, finding his box face down on the carpet, its contents half-spilled.

He stuffs the stick back inside and clutches the container to his stomach.

INT. ECOLOGY WING - DAY

Melvin and Addy wade through rubber plants and projections of wildlife in a MULTILEVEL SIMULATED RAIN FOREST.

Melvin wears a hard, angry look.

Addy's noticed this. She gives him a puzzling glance.

ADDY

I'm glad you found your phone.

Melvin grunts.

From a level above them, ANOTHER PAIR accidentally drops their scavenger hunt sheet and pencil from a vine-covered balcony.

Addy jogs towards the fallen paper.

MELVIN

Addy, don't.

ADDY

Don't what?

Addy collects the paper and pencil. She runs up the staircase, meeting the other team in the middle.

CLASSMATE

Thanks, Addy.

ADDY

Yup.

Addy glares at Melvin from the staircase.

ADDY (CONT'D)

You thought I was going to rip up their shit!

MELVIN

Addy, you interrupted the speaker at the planetarium. There are easier, less volatile ways to get answers.

ADDY

What, like Google? I don't cheat, Melvin.

MELVIN

That's not cheating?

Addy sighs. She jogs over to Melvin.

ADDY

When you race, you try your best to stay on the inside of the track. It's not cheating. It's running the shortest distance. That's tact.

MELVIN

You know other people are gonna Google the answers, right?

ADDY

So what? There's no prize for finishing first.

MELVIN

(rising anger) Then why are we running around like there is?

ADDY

Because it's fun. I thought we were having fun.

Melvin cracks an unwilling smile.

MELVIN

Yeah, sorry. I just get really nervous... about losing my phone. I only have one phone, so when I think I've lost it...

ADDY

I think everybody feels that way about their phone.

MELVIN

Yeah. I guess.

ADDY

So, what's left?

Melvin checks the sheet.

MELVIN

Uh. Just the Insect Corner and the special exhibit questions.

Addy frowns.

ADDY

Insect Corner?

Melvin points at a hanging sign adorned with a massive butterfly sculpture.

ADDY (CONT'D)

Do you want to split up? I can take the Special Exhibit, and you can do the Insect Corner?

MELVIN

I don't think the Insect Corner will take that long. It's just two questions.

ADDY

I'm gonna run to the bathroom. You can go, though. Don't let me slow you down.

She gives him a wavering half-smile.

MELVIN

Are you feeling okay?

ADDY

We're losing time, Melvin.

Addy jogs off, and Melvin sets off towards the Insect Corner alone.

EXT. SPECIAL EXHIBIT - TREE OF LIFE - EARLY AFTERNOON

A portion of the museum's back lawn had been converted into a plastic maze, evoking a larger, more educational McDonalds play pen.

A sign above the structure reads "THE TREE OF LIFE".

ADDY

This is it. Where single-celled organisms become men.

MELVIN

That's clever. For a jock.

ANOTHER TEAM barrels past Melvin and Addy, practically throwing themselves into the maze.

Without a word, Melvin and Addy bolt in after them.

INT. MAZE - MINUTES LATER

Addy and Melvin crawl through a green plastic tube. A thick dashed line traces the floor.

MELVIN

So this whole thing is a big evolution tree?

ADDY

Yuh-huh. We just have to find the organisms on this list and write down the fun facts. Hey. Algae.

Sure enough, the dashed line has led them to a cartoon portrait of algae, its scientific name and some fun facts printed directly underneath.

VOICE

(distant) Algae?

Melvin and Addy look to their right, where YET ANOTHER PAIR are making their way through a parallel branch in the maze. The other pair stare at Melvin and Addy through the translucent green plastic, before quickly changing course.

ADDY

We gotta move.

MINI MONTAGE:

Addy and Melvin speed-crawling through the maze.

Addy and Melvin climbing a rock wall meant to look like a tree covered in mushrooms. Addy almost loses her footing attempting to copy down a fun fact. Melvin reaches out to help, but Addy steadies herself.

Melvin hitting his head against the low ceiling. Addy laughing, then hitting hers too.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. TOP OF MAZE - AFTERNOON

Addy and Melvin stand at the top of the structure in a plastic crow's nest. On the wall is a drawing of a human man. He's a little caveman-looking, with a protruding brow and an unfortunate underbite.

ADDY (CONT'D)
That's what you look like.

MELVIN
That's a white dude.

Melvin kneels, using his knee to write the last fun fact.

ADDY
Do you think we're the first group
to finish?

MELVIN
Probably. I can't imagine anyone
cares as much as we do.

ADDY
I'm glad we BOTH care.

MELVIN
Yeah, yeah. I'm just in it for the
facts. Did you know that
"Scientists theorize that man
became bipedal in reaction to a
drier, hotter climate"?

There's movement at the entrance. Addy turns, finding Delia curled at the mouth of the tunnel. She lingers for a split second before disappearing down the dark tubing.

ADDY
How is she everywhere!

MELVIN
Delia? Isn't she on the track team
with you?

ADDY
She's a witch.

MELVIN
A bitch?

The word sounds strange in his mouth, and Addy smiles, endeared.

ADDY

You said it, not me. You know what?
She can win, just this once. Maybe
that will get her off my back.

MELVIN

That's big of you.

Addy shrugs before ducking into the exit.

EXT. MUSEUM COURTYARD - MINUTES LATER

Mr. Sheridan sits at a shaded wire table with wired
headphones in. He bops his head to the filthiest rap song
you've ever heard.

MR SHERIDAN -

(muttered) "Move bitch..."

Addy runs up to him.

ADDY

Mr. Sheridan, we finished.

He scrambles to stuff his headphones into his pocket, but the
music blasts relentlessly through the tiny speakers.

MR. SHERIDAN

(fumbling with his phone) Nice job.
First in.

ADDY

We won!

MR. SHERIDAN

I wouldn't say there are winners or
losers...

ADDY

Mr. Sheridan?

He manages to turn off the music.

MR. SHERIDAN

Yes.

ADDY

(grinning devilishly) You know
what.

A breathless Melvin appears at Addy's side.

ADDY (CONT'D)

Hey. We won.

MELVIN

(keeled over) Cool.

ADDY

I wonder what happened to Delia.

Hana bounds towards Addy. Slowly, the rest of the class funnels into the lobby.

ADDY (CONT'D)

You look well-rested.

HANA

I am. The planetarium lady sounds so much like the girl from my sleep hypnosis podcast. Do you think she's moonlighting? How's it going, Melvin?

MELVIN

It's hard to run in slacks. Also, I don't think this polo shirt is moisture wicking.

HANA

That's the Addy effect. One time me and Addy were paired together for a diorama project, and when it was over that I realized I had developed abs. No idea how.

MELVIN

That sounds plausible.

MR. SHERIDAN

Hey, Addy?

He jogs over.

MR. SHERIDAN (CONT'D)

Did you say you'd seen Delia?

ADDY

Yeah, I saw her in the maze a while ago.

MR. SHERIDAN

Great, thanks.

Mr. Sheridan strides off.

HANA
(whispered) What do you think she's
up to? I bet she's reanimating dead
bugs at the Insect Corner.

Addy makes a gagging face.

ADDY
It must be exhausting to live in
your brain.

HANA
It is. But so fun.

Melvin takes a seat with the Corinne and the rest of the
debate team.

CORINNE
You must be happy.

MELVIN
Why?

CORINNE
Your fortuitous coupling.

MELVIN
Has anybody ever told you that you
talk like a pilgrim.

CORINNE
Fine. You look hot and bothered.

Melvin glares at Corinne. He extracts a bagged lunch from his
backpack.

MELVIN
I'm not hot and bothered. I'm
tired. And sweaty.

CORINNE
Did Gwyneth Paltrow pack your
lunch?

MELVIN
Hm?

He's laid out his meal -- a yellow apple and a Ziploc bag of
Veggie Sticks.

MELVIN (CONT'D)
(defensively) I packed this.

CORINNE

You're missing a few food groups.

MELVIN

My mom's out of town and we're running out of groceries. I'm a busy guy!

CORINNE

With a blossoming social life.

HANA (V.O.)

(faraway, but loud) HOLY SHIT.

The students of Sacred Oath exchange eager looks. In a near-stampede of collared shirts and plaid, they rush inside, leaving their chaperones behind in a cloud of dust and trash.

EXT. SPECIAL EXHIBIT - TREE OF LIFE - SECONDS LATER

Delia and her scavenger hunt partner EUGENE (17, Chinese-American) are tangled in the rope bridge, obscenely close to one another.

They're in a clearly compromising position, with Eugene's hand in Delia's back pocket and Delia's hair stuck in Eugene's mouth.

Eugene spits, accidentally spraying Delia with saliva. She seems unfazed, glaring only at Hana and Addy.

HANA

(gleefully) I'm mortified.

ADDY

She's gonna think we did this one purpose.

A ways above them, a frazzled and fuming MR. SHERIDAN squeezes through a clear tube. His every movement elicits a squeak of friction from the clear acrylic. The structure creaks beneath his weight.

HANA

Do they still do corporal punishment? Spanking and stuff? Knowing these two, they'd probably like that stuff. Nudge, nudge.

ADDY

I hope nothing happens to them.

HANA
Eugene is nice. We're in drama
together. He's a really generous
scene partner.

Addy fights a smile.

ADDY
I'll bet.

A rumbling sound. All at once, the courtyard floods with students. At the sight of the illicit lunchtime spectacle, they are stunned to silence.

HANA
(leaning into Addy) Check your
shoes for frogs tonight.

A beat.

ADDY
Can I sleep over?

INT. HANA'S BEDROOM

Hana lays on one side of her bed with her eyes closed. On the nightstand, her phone blasts loud, grainy white noise.

By dim lamplight, Addy sits in the floor in a highly involved hip stretch.

Outside, crickets scratch a staccato rhythm into the night. Addy shivers and closes her eyes. She breathes in deeply.

Addy releases her breath, and stares ahead calmly.

EXT. TRACK MEET - SACRED OATH RACE TRACK - NEXT DAY

Addy bounces her against the track, turning her ankles in quick circles -- a nervous, almost undetectable ritual.

Melvin sits on the bleachers, part of a meager home team crowd. Darren, Carl, and Jacob sit a few tiers beneath him.

CARL
Let's go, Addy! Run like the wind!

Addy flashes a quick smile in their direction, quickly sinking back into a place of focus.

The first seed girls file into their lanes.

Addy hunches in a ready position, with one foot against her starting block. She tests the block against her heel.

A muffled announcer identifies the racers by school.

ANNOUNCER

That's Sacred Oath in 2... Arcadia
Charter in 3... Sacred Oath in 4...

From the forth lane, Delia looks over at Addy, her mouth twisted into knot. Addy stares ahead, oblivious.

At the sound of a blank, the girls surge into motion.

Addy leaps off the block and pushes into first.

JACOB

GO ADDY!

Melvin watches her round the first bend with the next girl three feet behind her.

MELVIN

Jesus.

VOICE (O.S.)

Excuse me?

Melvin looks over his shoulder, where FATHER PATRICK (47, fading red hair) is sitting in full church dress.

MELVIN

Sorry, Father Patrick.

He turns back towards the race. Addy is halfway around the track, and the next girl is ten feet behind her. Behind that girl, Delia fights for third.

EXT. RACE TRACK - MINUTES LATER

At the side of the track, Addy pours herself a cup of water from the team's jug.

She's shiny with sweat, and still slightly out of breath.

Jacob and Carl leans over the bleacher railing, trying to kick at Addy's head.

DARREN

That wasn't a P.R., was it?

Addy frowns.

ADDY

No. Close, though. Did you see anybody?

She scans the crowd for Duke blue.

DARREN

Nobody obvious. Maybe her?

He nods at a NUN in her sixties wearing a deep blue habit.

ADDY

Sister Katherine? You think she's here undercover from UT Austin?

DARREN

Huh. Should we start coming to parent nights?

ADDY

That's okay. I'm getting a high quality, free education.

DARREN

That's what I like to hear. Is that your last race?

ADDY

Just the relay. We won't win.

DARREN

Alright, I'm going to take the boys for dinner. Text me.

Addy nods. When Darren and the boys are gone, Melvin stands at the railing, grinning strangely.

MELVIN

You were great.

ADDY

Melvin! I didn't know you came to these.

MELVIN

You're really fast.

ADDY

That's my whole thing.

MELVIN

Congratulations.

ADDY

Thank you.

Melvin stares at her, still grinning.

ADDY (CONT'D)

Melvin...?

MELVIN

(rushed) Will you go out with me?

Addy takes a drink of water, swishing it around in her mouth. She spits it into the trash.

ADDY

Really?

MELVIN

Yes.

ADDY

I don't get asked out a lot.

MELVIN

Oh. That doesn't make sense.

Addy smiles.

ADDY

I'm kind of sweaty most of the time.

MELVIN

You're killing me.

Addy considers Melvin.

ADDY

Take off your glasses.

He does. Addy gasps theatrically.

ADDY (CONT'D)

You're stunning.

HANA

(distant) Addy! Relay!

At the center of the track, Hana jumps up and down on the grass, shaking a relay baton in the air.

ADDY

I... can't. I spend all my time on track. I can't get distracted.

She another cup of water and jets off towards the rest of her team. She twists back mid-jog.

ADDY (CONT'D)
(calling) I think you're great,
though. Let's be friends.

Melvin watches as she joins the pack of runners. He locks eyes briefly with Hana, who waves.

Hana wipes Addy's sweaty face with her dry jersey. Addy briefly lets her before ducking away.

HANA
What was that with Melvin.

Addy stretches her legs, stalling. She turns her back to Hana, reaching towards her foot.

ADDY
He asked me out.

HANA
You said no.

ADDY
How do you know?

HANA
Didn't you?

ADDY
Yeah, but how do you know?

HANA
You are not the enigma you think
you are. Melvin's cute.

ADDY
Yeah.

HANA
Really cute. And nice.

ADDY
What's your game here?

HANA
Just saying.

ADDY/HANA
I don't have time to date.

Addy stares at Hana. Hana looks back smugly.

ADDY
You don't think he's dorky?

HANA
The dorkiness is important. It's endearing.

ADDY
Yeah. It is.

COACH
(calling) Runners on the track!
Let's go!

Addy quickly turns back to the stands. She scans the crowd, but Melvin is already gone.

TO BE CONTINUED.

SECOND HALF SUMMARY:

SCHOOL

Melvin asks out Addy, who tells him she doesn't have time to date. Addy agrees to help Melvin train for a half marathon he makes up. He tells her he has a chronic illness and needs to start running to help his symptoms.

ADDY'S HOUSE/STREET/TRACK

Melvin and Addy train together and get to know each other. When Addy's brother almost catches Melvin on fire, he freaks out again, and Addy tells him that she had to start running to manage her stress.

ADDY'S HOUSE

One weekend, Melvin goes away for a debate tournament, and Addy is lonely. She calls up some track friends.

DELIA'S HOUSE

Addy hangs out with some friends from track, including Delia. They play drinking games, and in a game of Truth or Dare, Addy admits that she's afraid of bugs.

SCHOOL

Melvin returns from the tournament. Addy is about to ask him out when she finds out a coach is coming to her next meet. She pulls away from Melvin, and Delia offers to help him win her over.

ADDY'S HOUSE

Melvin challenges Addy to a race, which she agrees to in order to get him off her back.

STREET/SCHOOL

Throughout the week, Addy and Melvin each see the other training.

MELVIN'S HOUSE

Empowered by his time with Addy, Melvin decides to leave his box at home.

SCHOOL

Melvin accepts Delia's help, determined to win the race. She promises that when the time comes, she'll take care of the race.

SCHOOL

On the day of the race, Addy is positioned to have a clear victory over Melvin. At the last moment, Delia releases insects onto the race track, and Addy loses in an attempt to escape them.

TRACK MEET

The next day at Addy's meet, she is rattled by the loss and surrenders first place to Delia. None of the scouts present approach her, and she falls into a depression.

MELVIN'S HOUSE

Seeing what he did to Addy, Melvin attempts to singe the piece of wood tied to his life, but the pain becomes unbearable, and he has to stop.

SCHOOL

At school, Addy makes plans to go through with the date. Melvin can't bring himself to admit the hand he played in Addy's loss.

MINI GOLF

Addy and Melvin go mini golfing. In the middle of their date, Melvin admits what he's done and how we worked with Delia to beat Addy. He shows Addy the piece of wood, explaining that the wood is part of a family curse left over from centuries ago. When Addy doesn't believe him, Melvin burns the end and he catches fire. Addy pushes him into the water in a heroic act of catharsis. Addy explains her fear of insects, telling Melvin that she has fears of becoming like her grandmother, and losing herself to hallucinations. For Addy, running is a form of therapy.

SCHOOL

Melvin and Addy get Delia suspended for witchcraft. Addy gets an athletic scholarship from Duke.

MELVIN'S HOUSE

Melvin stays home sick, exhausted from all the damage done to the piece of wood. Addy visits him after school, and they bond over their respective curses. Addy kisses Melvin.

SCHOOL

Months later, Addy and Melvin goof off on the track, almost missing their graduation. They run together, with Addy dragging Melvin by the arm. Melvin's box almost falls out of his suit jacket pocket, but Addy catches it.