

WHERE YOU LEFT US

Written by

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EXT. FOREST - FORT. DAY.

1973, rural Colorado. The midst of an endless summer's day.

A haphazard FORT sits in a small clearing, made of branches, sheets, rope, and love.

ADULT ARCHIE (V.O.)
Death isn't something that's
supposed to cross your mind as a
kid.

Multiple cans of Coors lay discarded, half drunk.

ADULT ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But it was summer, '73. Things were
different then.

ARCHIE, 12, freckle faced with wild curls, tramples into the fort. He sips from a warm can of Coors, grimacing.

ARCHIE
When's this s'posed to not taste
like dog piss?

A grubby hand pulls the can away from him. SAMMY 'TWITCH' RIVERS, 12, with inch thick glasses and aptly nicknamed due to the twitch in his nose, takes a swig.

TWITCH
When you're old and spotty like
Murph's brother.

A twig hits Twitch in the side of the head. He scowls at MURPH KENT, 11, the only girl but the scruffiest of them all. Her wild black hair matches her tattered dungarees.

MURPH
Shut it, Twitch. Else I won't be
stealing no more from his fridge.

TWITCH
But I'm not wrong.

MURPH
Which part?

TWITCH
That it tastes like dog piss until
you're old.

Murph defiantly chugs down the rest of the can, crushing it in her hand.

MURPH

Tastes pretty good to me.

TWITCH

Yeah, well, girls are weird.

Twitch takes another swig and throws his head back, gargling it before shooting it out in a fountain.

It splashes over Murph who screams in annoyed amusement.

TWITCH (CONT'D)

How'd ya like that?

The three of them laugh as they collapse atop the tarp.

Crashing footsteps sound from within the forest, growing louder.

PATRICK 'PORKY' KIDMAN stumbles from the path into their small clearing, a chubby boy to match his teasing nickname.

He clutches a piece of paper in his greasy hand as he doubles over his knees, gasping for breath.

TWITCH

Look who decided to show up.

ARCHIE

What you got there, Porky?

Porky heaves for breath as his cheeks grow more red.

MURPH

Jesus flippin' christ, he's gonna puke!

PORKY

(between gasps)

I'm not -- gonna -- Archie, take this.

Archie takes the paper from Porky. A frown darkens his face.

ARCHIE

Where'd you find it?

PORKY

Miss Summers was printing them down at the library. Hasn't hit the streets yet - we're the first to know! We're gonna be rich!

Porky gives a small, enthusiastic jump.

Archie holds out the paper for the others to read:

MISSING: KIT GREYSON, 9. LAST SEEN MONDAY AUGUST 6. \$1000
REWARD FOR ANY INFORMATION LEADING TO DISCOVERY.

Murph scoffs.

MURPH

Rich? How we gonna find him if the
cops can't?

PORKY

'coz we know whodunnit!

TWITCH

We do?

PORKY

His creepy brother, Zak. We all
know he's nuts.

Twitch waves Porky away and starts pacing around, his nose
twitching excitedly as he looks into the thick woods.

TWITCH

Maybe it was something out there...

MURPH

(under her breath)

The Bobacot.

TWITCH

A-ha! Now you're onto something.
The infamous Bobacot - creepier
than Zak, with teeth as thick as
trees...

PORKY

(whispering)

...and eyes that glow in the dark.

Murph and Porky cower beneath Twitch as he imitates The
Bobacot monster above them.

TWITCH

Maybe he feasted on little Kit
Greyson for dinner, and picked his
teeth with his skinny little
bones...

ARCHIE

Shut it!

The others stop and turn to Archie. He stands away from the group, a calm and collected mediator.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
We don't know he's dead.

MURPH
We never said that Arch.

ARCHIE
But you're acting like it.

The four of them linger in an uncomfortable silence.

PORKY
(tentatively)
We could be the kings of summer.

They turn towards him.

PORKY (CONT'D)
We - we could find him. Before
anything gets him.

TWITCH
Save him from The Bobacot.

MURPH
(dreamily)
Heroes...

ARCHIE
Quit it, guys. He's lost.

Archie crumples up the flier and drops it to the ground.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
I bet his family's out there
looking for him right now. The
cops, even. Like you said Murph.

Twitch goes to make a snide comment, but the look in Archie's eyes stops him.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
Come on. Let's ditch.

Archie sets off through the forest. The others linger uncomfortably as they watch him go.

EXT. NEIGHBOURHOOD STREET. EARLY EVENING.

Archie, Twitch, Porky and Murph speed down the road on their bikes.

ADULT ARCHIE (V.O.)

The truth is, I'd lost something
that summer that couldn't be fixed
with a few fliers and a thousand
dollar reward.

Porky hops off his bike first, walking up his drive. The
others wave.

ADULT ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

A type of lost that could never be
found, despite how hard a group of
kids believed they could search.

Twitch veers off down a street to the left. Archie and Murph
ring their bells goodbye as they continue down the road.

ARCHIE

Want me to ride you back to yours?

MURPH

I'll survive five minutes.

Archie looks around at the deserted street as they cycle,
concern growing on his face.

Murph laughs and speeds ahead of him.

MURPH (CONT'D)

Like you could even keep up with
me!

A grin creeps onto Archie's lips as he watches her speed
round the corner.

But as he turns towards his house, the life fades out of him
a little.

ADULT ARCHIE (V.O.)

I'd given up hope that things lost
could ever be found.

EXT. NEIGHBOURHOOD STREET. EARLY EVENING.

Murph carries on cycling down the road.

As she does, a RED CAR follows slowly, silently, behind her.

EXT. ARCHIE'S DRIVE. EARLY EVENING.

Archie walks his bike up the drive, parking it against the
wall.

He stands opposite the window, watching inside with a certain look of longing on his face.

Three figures move inside. Archie continues watching as a fourth enters the room. It is himself.

INT. LIVING ROOM. EARLY EVENING.

The room is decorated for Christmas.

EVA, 7, sits playing in the middle of the floor. FRANK, their father, sits in an armchair, book in hand.

Archie creeps up behind Eva, tapping her shoulder. She throws down her toys and launches herself at him into a tight hug.

EVA
Missed you!

ARCHIE
After all of five hours?

Eva squeezes him tighter.

ROSE, their mother, pops her head round the door. Youthfully faced with the same curly hair as Archie's and an apron slung over her neck.

ROSE
Right on time. Lay the table for me
would you, Archie?

Archie pulls Eva off of him.

ARCHIE
Watcha made?

ROSE
Meatloaf.

Eva screams in joy.

EVA
MY FAVOURITE!

The other three of them laugh. Frank walks past Archie and ruffles his hair before leaving the room. Eva bounds out after him.

Inside, Archie turns his head towards the window. We faintly see Archie stood outside.

EXT. ARCHIE'S DRIVE. EARLY EVENING.

Archie swallows hard, before walking towards the front door.

INT. ARCHIE'S KITCHEN. EARLY EVENING.

Archie enters to Frank sat at the table, a weary expression painting his face. He acknowledges Archie with one quick glance.

They do not talk as Archie sits opposite him, lazily chewing on their takeaway pizza.

ADULT ARCHIE (V.O)

I'd never experienced death before
my mother and sister - Christ, I
was only 12. But I quickly came to
realise how those left behind are
mere shadows of themselves. Empty
shells... no control over the life
that speeds on around them.

Frank stares out the window. Archie stares at Frank, trying to gain his attention without words.

Archie kicks out his chair and walk out of the room.

CUE SONG: Home Sweet Home by Mötley Crüe.

INT. TWITCH'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

A small, cramped and cluttered room adorning two bunk-beds.

Twitch sits on the bottom bunk, his three younger siblings climbing bashfully around him.

He pulls the covers over himself in frustration and continues sketching out his image of The Bobacot.

INT. PORKY'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

Porky sits on the sofa, a bowl of popcorn placed snugly in his lap.

He fixates on the TV ahead of him as behind him, we see two adults arguing.

Porky increases the volume as they grow more violent.

INT. MURPH'S KITCHEN. NIGHT.

Beer cans, dirty dishes and cigarette butts litter the table and counters. Murph tediously tidies them away.

A boy in his early twenties staggers in, clearly drunk. It is Murph's brother, STEVE.

He inaudibly says something to Murph, who ignores him. He says it again, bringing his fist down on the counter.

She turns and they begin an argument. Steve reaches for an empty can. He throws it at Murph as she dives for the door.

EXT. MURPH'S PORCH. NIGHT.

Murph leaps onto her bike and sets off down the street.

As she does so, a CAR ENGINE starts up.

INT. ARCHIE'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Archie lays staring at the ceiling.

An array of posters and photos are tacked to the wall next to him - multiple of him with his family.

He props himself up and stares over them.

EXT. NEIGHBOURHOOD STREET. NIGHT.

Murph cycles faster and faster. Tears line her cheeks and wind blows her hair wild.

As she powers on down the road, two headlights emerge behind her in the dark.

They are coming from the same RED CAR from earlier.

INT. ARCHIE'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Archie runs his fingers over a photo of his family, before peeling off one of him, Twitch, Porky and Murph.

Murph has her arms slung over Archie's shoulders. He traces her outline and pulls the image to his chest as he lies back down.

EXT. NEIGHBOURHOOD STREET. NIGHT.

Murph struggles to move faster. She turns to look behind her - the headlights illuminate her face.

She pushes on, but the car pulls closer and closer.

INT. ARCHIE'S BEDROOM. NIGHT.

Archie slips the photo under his pillow and pulls the covers over himself.

CUT TO BLACK.

END SONG.

EXT. NEIGHBOURHOOD STREET. MORNING.

Porky and Twitch walk alongside their bikes. Twitch holds a WALKIE TALKIE to his ear.

TWITCH
(into walkie talkie)
Twitch to Archie, do you copy?
Over.

ARCHIE'S VOICE
(from walkie talkie)
Affirmative. Outside in five. Over.

TWITCH
(into walkie talkie)
Roger. Any word from Murph? Over.

PORKY
You gotta say over every time?

Twitch shoves Porky.

ARCHIE'S VOICE
(from walkie talkie)
Not yet. Whats her location? Over.

TWITCH
(into walkie talkie)
Her house, I'm guessing. MURPH, DO
YOU COPY? Over.

No answer.

PORKY
Wouldn't it be quicker just to go
to her house?

Twitch grabs Porky by the shoulders. His bike clatters to the ground as he puts the back of his hand to Porky's head, checking his temperature.

TWITCH
Porky - you're asking for more
exercise? You feeling alright?

ARCHIE'S VOICE
(from walkie talkie)
Maybe we should check out her house
before we get to the forest. Over.

Porky glares at Twitch. He rolls his eyes.

TWITCH
(into walkie talkie)
Good idea soldier. See you there.
Over.

Porky kicks Twitch's wheel.

EXT. MURPH'S DRIVE. MORNING.

The boys drop their bikes on the ground.

Archie bangs on the door. Steve opens it after a beat. A cigarette hangs from his lips.

He stares at the three of them expectantly, irritably. They linger, until Archie steps forwards.

ARCHIE
Where's Murph.

Steve shrugs.

STEVE
Who?

ARCHIE
Don't be a dick. Where is she.

Steve plucks out his cigarette and spits on the floor.

STEVE
Why should I know? Do I look like
her fuckin' guardian angel?

PORKY
Well, technically, you are her --

Twitch kicks him in the foot, shutting him up.

Steve lets out an offended laugh.

STEVE
Alright alright, smart-ass. I'll
try my best to let her know you
called.

Archie loses composure and attempts to shove past Steve into the house.

ARCHIE
Murph? MURPH?

Steve grabs his arm, harshly pulling him back. He stumbles into Porky.

STEVE
Quit it. She's not here.

ARCHIE
Prove it!

TWITCH
Guys.

Archie attempts to shove through the front door again. Steve pushes him back harder - this time him and Porky fall to the floor.

TWITCH (CONT'D)
GUYS!

They turn to him.

TWITCH (CONT'D)
Her bike's not here.

Steve begins to clap slowly.

He drops his cigarette to the ground, stamping on it before turning back towards the house.

ARCHIE
When'd she leave?

Steve dumbly scratches his head.

STEVE
This morning... last night... days ago - weeks, maybe months.

He waves the boys away.

STEVE (CONT'D)
She won't be far. Hasn't got the brains for it. But, if you find her, tell her I'm changing the locks.

He slams the door shut.

The three boys sit in the silence of his exit for a beat before starting to brush themselves off.

They're unsure what to say or do.

PORKY
(quiet, almost a whimper)
She'd never ditch like that.

Porky and Twitch instinctively turn to Archie.

He nods at them, sure of himself.

EXT. FOREST. DAY.

The trio drop their bikes down. Archie hurriedly leads them through the trees as they all shout, still puffed out from the cycle.

ARCHIE
MURPH?

PORKY
MURPH KENT!

TWITCH
I'm sorry I called you weird
yesterday!

Archie throws him a glare - *not helpful*.

PORKY
He won't say it again!

EXT. FOREST - FORT. DAY.

They burst into the clearing where their fort sits.

ARCHIE
You here Murph?

Their looks of determination drop. The clearing, and fort, are empty.

Archie scans the forest around him.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
Maybe she just left. Maybe she - is
any of her stuff here?

Twitch and Porky give half hearted glances around. It is clear the place is deserted.

TWITCH
It's exactly how we left it.

Archie doesn't hear him - or, if he did, he doesn't care to listen.

ARCHIE
(growing frantic)
Her bike - maybe she covered her
bike.

He starts tearing sheets of tarp away from the ground,
pushing aside bushes and kicking up leaves.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
You guys see anything? Maybe more
beer cans, or wrappers from that
taffy thing she likes.

He drops to his hands and knees, rifling through the ground.
Twitch and Porky glance at each other, concerned.

PORKY
Archie, I don't think -

ARCHIE
Think harder. Use your eyes!

He scrambles to his feet, shoving harshly past Twitch.

TWITCH
Quit it! She's not here. Never was.

The sharp tone brings Archie back into the present.

He stares at the two of them, as if they are dumb and
missing the obvious.

ARCHIE
Then we gotta find her. Us three.

PORKY
Maybe it'd be better if we told --

ARCHIE
Told who? Her brother? Our parents?

He gets off the floor.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
We tell them, we're useless!

TWITCH
(almost reluctantly)
Yeah, Porky. He's right. With Kit
as well... you really think they'll
let us leave the house?

PORKY

What if they're missing because
something got them both...
something bad?

TWITCH

Stop being a wuss!

PORKY

I'm not a wuss - think! I'm being
serious.

TWITCH

You were all for it with Kit and
the money.

ARCHIE

Quit it guys.

PORKY

Money? It wasn't about the money.
It was about us finding him. Being
heroes.

TWITCH

(scoffing)

Heroes? You wouldn't be able to
find your feet in the dark.

ARCHIE

Shut up! It's not about the money.
Or us.

The boys break away from their tiff.

Archie's voice breaks. He reigns in his emotions.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

I can't - we can't lose her.

They stand in silence as the gravity of the situation dawns
on them.

PORKY

You really think she's gone?

ARCHIE

Not gone. Just lost.

Archie spits into his hand. He holds it out.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

She wouldn't ditch us. We're not
ditching her either.

Twitch spits into his. So does Porky, after a beat.

They shake.

INT. PORKY'S BEDROOM. EVENING.

A tired knapsack lays open on Porky's bed. Multiple packs of food have been squashed into it. He consoles over a few bags of chips.

The boys talk through their walkie-talkies.

PORKY
(into walkie talkie)
Salted, BBQ, or vinegar?

No reply.

PORKY (CONT'D)
(into walkie talkie)
Over.

TWITCH'S VOICE
(from walkie-talkie)
We heard you. And we don't give a
shit. Over.

INT. TWITCH'S BEDROOM. EVENING.

Twitch is wrestling with the door. His younger siblings are trying to push through from outside.

TWITCH
GIVE ME FIVE MINUTES.

He grabs a chair and shoves it under the handle. It holds.

He slings his knapsack onto the floor and starts ramming it with torches, compasses, binoculars - a surplus of equipment.

TWITCH (CONT'D)
(into walkie talkie)
Anyone got any rope? Over.

PORKY'S VOICE
(from walkie-talkie)
Rope? Whatcha want rope for?

TWITCH
(into walkie talkie)
We're explorers. Survivors. The one
thing we need is rope. O-VER.

PORKY'S VOICE
(into walkie talkie)
I'd say fire's pretty useful.
(beat)
Over.

TWITCH
(into walkie talkie)
Why don't you try carry that one
down your pants. Over.

Twitch closes his bag, fit to burst.

TWITCH (CONT'D)
(into walkie talkie)
Arch? What you got? Over.

INT. ARCHIE'S BEDROOM. EVENING.

The walkie-talkie lays on Archie's bed. It crackles as the boys shout down it.

He stares out his bedroom window. The street is quiet, he is still.

His attention prickles when a car rolls into the driveway. Frank steps out.

Archie heads out his room.

INT. ARCHIE'S HALLWAY. EVENING.

Frank closes the front door, drops his bag down. Archie lingers at the top of the stairs.

ARCHIE
Hey dad.

Frank glances up the stairs, as if only just remembering he has a son who lives here too.

He holds a paper bag up, also as if he just recalled he was even holding it.

FRANK
I grabbed burgers.

INT. ARCHIE'S KITCHEN. EVENING.

Sauce dribbles down Frank's chin. He tries to make a joke of it as he wipes it off.

FRANK
Pretty darn good.

Archie sniffs with silent laughter.

He pokes at his mess of a burger, picking around the gherkins in the same way he dodges around what he wants to say.

ARCHIE

I'm staying at Twitch's tonight.
His mom said I can.

FRANK

Tonight?

ARCHIE

Mm-hmm.

FRANK

It's already getting dark.

ARCHIE

That's okay. I bought some new batteries for my flash light, and if I show you how to set up the spare walkie-talkie you can check if I'm okay, it's the new one so the signal can reach like *miles--*

FRANK

No.

ARCHIE

It's two minutes away. I can cycle fast.

FRANK

Fast or slow, I don't care Archie.
You stay in tonight.

Archie smushes round his burger with more force. Tension rising, he tests the waters.

ARCHIE

Drop me off then.

FRANK

What?

ARCHIE

Take me. If you don't want me out in the dark, drive me there.

Frank chews his food. Picking up his beer, he swallows hard.

FRANK

How about we have some beers. Watch some TV.

ARCHIE

I hate beer.

FRANK

Juice then, I don't know. Stay in with your old man.

Archie finally drops his cutlery.

ARCHIE

(muttering)

You never want me here.

FRANK

What?

ARCHIE

You never see me. Unless I wanna do something for myself.

FRANK

Archie--

ARCHIE

You act like I don't exist - but somehow think you know me. Like you know what's best.

He pushes his plate across the table.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

I don't even like burgers.

FRANK

I didn't...

ARCHIE

You didn't know. You don't know anything. You can't chain me to this house to keep me safe forever.

Archie grinds his teeth, chewing up his words.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

I'd rather die.

Archie seems taken aback at the words he just spat out, but makes no attempt to take them back.

Frank tries to keep his gaze steady, keeping his cool. He slowly moves into a nod.

FRANK

Alright then.

He stands, picking up his plate. He starts to shovel the remains into the bin.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Ok... ok. I'll be in the lounge if you change your mind.

He exits. Archie watches, balancing on the edge between apology and defiance.

INT. ARCHIE'S BEDROOM. DAWN.

The morning sun paints Archie's room golden.

His knapsack lays closed on his bed.

Archie faces his mirror, staring at himself. Nervous, unsure.

He holds the picture of him, Twitch, Porky and Murph. Looks at it. Looks back at himself. Determined, certain.

He folds it into his pocket and grabs his bag.

INT. ARCHIE'S HOUSE. DAWN.

Archie gently creeps down the stairs.

He pokes his head into the lounge. Frank is sat on the sofa, asleep. TV blaring, a few beer cans scattered around.

He lingers in the doorway, courage building.

Coast clear, he slips out the front door.

EXT. PORKY'S GARDEN. DAWN.

Archie and Twitch stand below a window, knapsacks on their backs. Archie holds a handful of small rocks, throwing them gently at the window - RAP. RAP. RAP.

Twitch paces in a circle.

TWITCH

One job. One job.

Archie turns and throws a rock at Twitch to shut him up.

Porky pokes his head out the window, grinning. He holds his knapsack up, fit to burst.

PORKY
(a hushed shout)
I fit every flavour.

Twitch groans.

ARCHIE
C'mon. We gotta move.

EXT. NEIGHBOURHOOD STREET. DAWN.

The boys walk down the street towards the rising sun, silhouettes against the golden light.

ADULT ARCHIE (V.O.)
And just like that, we left.

The boys shove each other playfully.

ADULT ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
What we were leaving behind, I
don't think any of us quite knew.
Or cared to know.

EXT. FOREST. DAWN.

They move along with the same giddiness and new found freedom - jumping over rocks, swinging from branches. Whooping, cheering, chanting.

ADULT ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But maybe deep down we had a grasp
of it. Perhaps we were leaving to
find not just Murph, but ourselves.
Versions that were bigger,
stronger.

Twitch and Porky bound ahead. Archie looks back over his shoulder.

ADULT ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Ones who could manage the world a
little better.

EXT. FOREST. DAY.

A few hours later.

The sun bears down intensely, the canopy of trees doing little to stop it despite its thickness.

The boys' energy has dipped a little in the heat, but they still walk with a certain spring in their step - or, at least, are trying to.

TWITCH
Whose got the water?

No one replies.

TWITCH (CONT'D)
Hello? Water anyone?

ARCHIE
Thought you had it.

TWITCH
Me? I was on survival supplies.

ARCHIE
And you didn't think that included water?

TWITCH
Porky was on food!

PORKY
Yeah, *food*. Stuff you eat.

TWITCH
And what are we gonna wash that down with?

Porky swipes his hand over his sweaty forehead.

PORKY
Try this, if you're not fussy.

He flicks the droplets at Twitch, who lets out a girlish scream.

Archie swats at them with a well-loved map he has pulled from his knapsack.

ARCHIE
One more hour. Then you'll thank me.

EXT. FOREST - RIVER BANK. EARLY EVENING.

Archie is stripped to his underwear, splashing in the shallows of the river, a little way from Twitch and Porky.

The two of them are bent over a small crop of suspicious looking MUSHROOMS.

TWITCH

Edible.

PORKY

Poisonous.

TWITCH

Edible.

PORKY

Poisonous.

TWITCH

Edible. Porky, since when have you turned the possibility of something being food.

PORKY

Since it looked like something outta your dog's backside.

Twitch goes to take a handful of the mushrooms. Porky slaps him away.

PORKY (CONT'D)

JESUS, you tryna kill yourself?

TWITCH

No. I've seen 'em before. My dad's forager book. Something about healing powers, survivors use them all the time.

Porky gives Twitch a doubtful look.

PORKY

And you know they're the same?

TWITCH

Sure. Green and brown blotches.

Porky's doubt turns to frustration. The spots are clearly red and yellow. He flicks the glasses on Twitch's head.

PORKY

You're colourblind! You can't see jack shit!

EXT. FOREST - RIVER. DAY.

The boys' bickering carries on faintly behind Archie.

He stares down at his own reflection. It's broken up as a fish leaps out the water.

He staggers back in surprise, his attention now drawn to Porky and Twitch, fighting atop of each other.

EXT. FOREST - RIVER BANK. EARLY EVENING.

Archie starts shaking water off his hair and pulling on his clothes.

ARCHIE
Jesus christ you guys. I left you
for five minutes.

PORKY
Twitch is trying to sentence us to
death!

TWITCH
Death? I just found us a whole new
food supply. We're already halfway
through your shit.

PORKY
A supply of *poison*!

ARCHIE
I'm lost.

Twitch throws some mushrooms towards Archie. Porky yells in fear.

TWITCH
Look pretty good to me.

Archie tentatively picks one up, turning it over.

ARCHIE
Don't they always say, anything
with colour --

PORKY
Should be avoided in the wild! But
he doesn't care, 'coz he's
colourblind as crap!

Archie tosses it to the ground.

ARCHIE
We'll worry about food once we're
fully out. Pick some berries,
something we recognise.

He nods his head to his right.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Found some rocks by the water.
Right in the sun. Lunch time?

Porky gets up and starts walking over.

PORKY

Finally, some sense.

Archie follows.

Twitch lingers behind, eyeing up the mushrooms. A smile starts to tease his lips.

EXT. ROCKY RIVER BANK. DAY.

Sandwich crusts and wrappers litter the rocks. The boys rub their bellies.

Porky lets out a loud belch.

TWITCH

(holding his nose,
wafting the scent away)

Eww.

Archie lets out a louder belch. Twitch and Porky roll away from him, laughing.

TWITCH

Tryna gas me!

PORKY

Belching is always a compliment to the chef.

ARCHIE

I don't think making sandwiches counts as being a chef.

TWITCH

'specially when you didn't even make the best part.

The other two look at him.

TWITCH (CONT'D)

Y'know, the secret ingredient.

They aren't catching on.

TWITCH (CONT'D)

Just a little extra something. A forest special.

Realisation melts onto Porky's face.

PORKY

You..

He pounces onto Twitch, rummaging in his pockets. He pulls out a handful of the mushrooms, torn into small pieces.

Porky looks at Twitch with disgust before fumbling over to the water, trying to make himself throw up.

PORKY

(between coughs)

YOU - MURDEROUS - DUMBASS.

Twitch grins at Porky's comical distress, but falters when he sees Archie looking at him with betrayal.

TWITCH

(sheepishly)

I swear, I've seen them before.

Archie doesn't look convinced.

ARCHIE

You better be right, Rivers.

EXT. FOREST - CLEARING. NIGHT.

The boys lay on their backs in grassy clearing.

The sky is clear above them, stars brightly visible.

They stare through squinted, dazed eyes - combined with their slurred words, it is clear the mushrooms have had an effect upon them.

PORKY

They look like they're blinking.

TWITCH

Who?

Porky points towards the sky.

TWITCH

Oh. Yeah. A million eyes. Creeeeepy.

Twitch shivers dramatically

PORKY

I read at the library--

TWITCH

-- dumbass library --

PORKY

-- Egyptians thought they were
Gods.

TWITCH

Pfft, yeah, stupid. And then they
all died.

A silence falls over the boys for a few beats.

ARCHIE

Maybe they were right.

The others roll to look at him.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Maybe - maybe they are watching
over us.

PORKY

Gods?

ARCHIE

Not Gods. Just people.

TWITCH

Astronauts?

ARCHIE

No... ones we know. Knew. It kinda
feels like somethings up there.
Keeping us safe.

Twitch and Porky don't quite catch Archie's serious tone.

PORKY

A load of floating dead people
protecting us?

They both burst out laughing.

TWITCH

Yeah, right.

PORKY

Maybe dead animals are up there
too. All the ants we've killed.

TWITCH

They'd rage war on us.

Archie forces himself to join in the laughter.

ARCHIE
Yeah, I'm being dumb.

TWITCH
Crazier than the Egyptians.

Porky and Twitch continue laughing and joking as Archie falls silent.

Porky and Twitch eventually fall silent for a few beats.

PORKY
I love you guys.

TWITCH
I love it *here*. Finally free.

PORKY
No nothing. Wish we could stay forever.

TWITCH
We could. Just us three. We don't need anyone else.

PORKY
Apart from Murph. She'd love this.

Archie sits upright at the mention of Murph.

ARCHIE
Shit.

TWITCH
I love that word.

ARCHIE
Fuck.

TWITCH
Even better.

ARCHIE
Murph.

TWITCH
Don't know that one. Murf.

ARCHIE
No, dumbass - *Murph*.

Porky bolts upright.

PORKY

We forgot about Murph - holy crap
we forgot about Murph!

Porky gets up and starts pacing, breathing rapidly.

PORKY (CONT'D)

(shouting)

MURPH? MUUUUURPH?

He runs around the edge of the clearing, shouting her name. As he does so, movement from deeper within the trees sends him stumbling back.

PORKY (CONT'D)

Please tell me you guys didn't hear
that too.

The other two nod. An additional howling of an animal turns them white as sheets.

As they look around at each other, their faces seem to be moving, morphing into weird shapes under the influence of the mushrooms.

TWITCH

The Bobacot. It's coming for us.

ARCHIE

It's not --

A deep black figure - imagined or real? In their states, it is unclear - speeds past them.

Archie swallows his words.

Porky starts hyperventilating harder.

PORKY

Holy shit holy shit holy shit.

Archie tries to come up behind him to calm him down - he reaches for his shoulder... but Porky spins round, shoving him harshly to the floor.

PORKY (CONT'D)

GET OFF ME!

He starts frantically swiping at the air.

PORKY (CONT'D)

It's everywhere. They're
everywhere. Jesus crap it's all
over me!

Suddenly, he turns to stare at the right of the clearing. He stands frozen solid.

ARCHIE
(uncertain)
See... it's nothing.

Porky slowly shakes his head, still staring at some fixed point. He raises one shaking hand, pointing.

PORKY
It's seen us.

Porky bee-lines for his bag. He grabs it before crashing into the trees, running from whatever he believes to have seen.

TWITCH
PORKY!

Twitch grabs Archie.

TWITCH
We can't stay here. We - we gotta
get away from --

Yells from Porky's direction cut Twitch off. Tears sting his dazed eyes.

He staggers around for a moment and scoops up his bag.

TWITCH
Porky. I gotta find Porky.

Twitch stumbles in the rough direction of Porky's yelling. Archie remains still.

The clearing becomes quiet.

Too quiet.

Archie's shallow breathing fills the air... as he looks round, the trees seem to shrink and expand in time with his breath. Colours swirl within the dimly moonlit area.

A small whisper filters through the air. He turns towards the sound.

MURPH'S VOICE
Archie.

ARCHIE
Murph?

MURPH'S VOICE
Archie, I'm this way.

The voice seems to be coming from everywhere and nowhere all at once.

ARCHIE
Shout - shout louder Murph.

MURPH'S VOICE
Please, Archie. Help me.

Her voice remains a confusing whisper but grows more worrisome.

ARCHIE
You gotta tell me which way.

MURPH'S VOICE
Please. I need you.

Spinning round, disorientated, Archie picks a random point in the trees. He grabs his bag and makes a run for it.

EXT. DEEP IN THE FOREST. NIGHT.

Archie tears through the thick trees, no clear direction in mind.

Branches whip at his face, tear at his clothes.

MURPH'S VOICE
Over here.

Archie stumbles over to the left.

A small patch of the forest floor is illuminated by the moon through a break in the canopy.

Murph is stood there.

She looks frightened and lost, pleading for help with her eyes as she makes eye contact with Archie.

ARCHIE
Murph?

Archie sprints over to her, throwing himself into a hug.

But as he pulls away, his relief turns into confusion...

His mother, Rose, stands where Murph was just seconds ago.

ARCHIE

Mom?

ROSE

I've got you, Archie.

ARCHIE

(confused disbelief)

You're here.

She strokes his cheek.

ROSE

Always.

ARCHIE

I miss you, Mom. I'm scared.

ROSE

I know. It's okay.

ARCHIE

I don't know what to do.

Rose seems distressed that she cannot help or fix the desperation on her son's face.

ROSE

Go home.

Archie seems taken aback at this answer.

ARCHIE

No, I - Murph --

Rose shakes her head.

ROSE

Go home. Where you're needed.

ARCHIE

Needed?

Distant yells, sounding much like Porky and Twitch, make Archie look behind him.

As he turns back round, Rose has disappeared.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)

Mom?

The forest is empty around him.

He scans around, eyes falling on a thick, tall tree. It seems to stretch above the rest. He runs for it.

EXT. TOP OF TREE. NIGHT.

Archie pulls himself to the top, slotting himself into a sturdy nook in the branches.

He looks around. The tree stretches high above the rest, and the vast expanse of trees around him seems like a dark, evil sea.

He can see nothing.

He pulls his walkie talkie out.

ARCHIE
(into walkie talkie)
Porky? Twitch..? C'mon, stupid thing.

He twists the dial. There is nothing but static.

Archie leans back, eyes closed - stupid, dumb idea.

But then...

FRANK'S VOICE
(from walkie talkie)
-chie? Archie?

ARCHIE
(with disbelief)
Dad?

FRANK'S VOICE
(from walkie talkie)
I don't even know if you can hear this. You never quite showed me how to set up the walkie talkie.

A muffled chuckle follows.

ARCHIE
(into walkie talkie)
Yes - Dad? I can hear you!

FRANK'S VOICE
(from walkie talkie)
But erm, I'm trying again.

Archie frowns. Wherever his dad's message is coming from, he isn't receiving anything from Archie's end.

FRANK'S VOICE (CONT'D)
(from walkie talkie)
Jesus, I don't know where to start.
Is there ever anywhere right to
start? I just need to know...
where've you gotten to, Arch?

INT. ARCHIE'S PORCH. NIGHT.

Frank stands on the edge of the porch, looking into the darkness. He holds a walkie-talkie to his mouth and a sheet of paper which he reads from.

FRANK
I hope to God wherever you are,
you're hearing this and you're
safe, because shit... I would never
forgive myself. I'm sorry. I'm so
sorry.

INT. ARCHIE'S LOUNGE. DAY.

Frank sits on the sofa, sheets of paper sprawled all around him. They're covered in messy handwriting, crossed out, scrunched up.

He writes upon a new sheet, ash from his cigarette littering the page.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I know I'm just your dad and you're
my son, and because of that
sometimes we feel we don't
understand each other... and I blame
myself for that. But we're not so
different.

He scribbles more out and leans back, defeated.

INT. ARCHIE'S HALLWAY. DAY.

Frank approaches the front door.

A cop stands in the doorway, looking serious.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
For so long, I've been lost to some
deep and dark sea, trying to stay
afloat when it feels like no one
taught me how to swim.

The cop mouths something and Frank gestures him inside, worry growing on his face.

The cop catches sight of Archie lingering in the kitchen doorway. His serious expression turns to sorrow.

INT. ARCHIE'S LOUNGE. DAY.

Frank paces the room, head in hands. Tears streak his face as he shakes with sobs.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Your mother, Eva... how does anyone
cope with something like that? I
thought without them there was
nothing... but how selfish, Jesus,
how selfish is that?

INT. ARCHIE'S HALLWAY. DAY.

Archie stands outside the door to the lounge, listening to his father crying inside, contemplating entering.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I forgot that you're in this, too.
You're hurting just as much as I
am, trying to swim the same sea.

He turns from the lounge door, heading towards the front door.

EXT. NEIGHBOURHOOD STREET. DAY.

Archie clambers onto his bike, speeding off down the street. Upset paints his face, but there is largely anger. Betrayal.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And I'm sorry I wasn't there to be
the lifeline you needed. I messed
up, I pushed you away, whatever. I
wasn't the dad you needed me to be.
I realise that now.

EXT. MURPH'S PORCH. DAY.

Archie throws his bike down. Murph emerges from the front door. She runs towards Archie as she sees him.

They embrace, and Archie breaks into tears as Murph comforts him.

FRANK (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I forgot that with someone by your
side, there's hope. With you next
to me there was always hope.

EXT. GRAVEYARD. DAY.

Two coffins, one smaller than the other, are lowered into the ground.

Frank and Archie stand watching. There seems to be a distance between them - they are together, but separate.

EXT. ARCHIE'S PORCH. NIGHT.

Frank still holds the walkie talkie close to him.

FRANK

(into walkie talkie)

You don't have to forgive me, but
please understand I'm sorry.
Wherever you've gone, whatever
you've gone to find... just know
it's here. It's always been here.
You don't have to fix this
yourself.

EXT. TOP OF TREE. NIGHT.

Archie stares stunned into the walkie talkie. Tears line his cheeks.

FRANK'S VOICE

(from walkie talkie)

Please come home. Even if just for
your old man and a couple of beers
- or a glass of juice. No burgers.

Archie tearfully laughs.

FRANK'S VOICE (CONT'D)

Whatever. There'll be something
waiting. Come home, Archie. I need
you. I love you. God, I love you so
much.

Archie stay silent, too stunned for words.

He looks out over the trees. In the distance, the sun is starting to rise above the horizon.

He rummages in his pocket, pulling out the picture of him, Twitch, Porky and Murph. He stares at it, face pained, torn.

EXT. FOREST. DAWN.

Archie jumps from a low branch in the tree. Knapsack slung tightly on his bag, he sets off.

EXT. RIVER BANK. DAWN.

Archie stands atop the rocks, scanning around.

He catches sight of movement in the trees.

Porky and Twitch emerge. Twitch is limping and being supported by Porky

Archie rushes to help.

They hold Twitch between the both of them.

EXT. FOREST. MORNING.

They struggle through the trees, silent, faces exasperated.

ADULT ARCHIE (V.O.)
We entered that forest as kids.
Kids who thought they could be
something greater.

EXT. FOREST EDGE. MORNING.

The two boys prop Twitch up against the barrier between the road and the forest's edge.

Porky looks back into the forest, as though they left something behind.

ADULT ARCHIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But leaving? I don't think we'd
ever felt quite so small.

He looks to Archie. He shakes his head - it's over.

EXT. NEIGHBOURHOOD STREET. MORNING.

CUE SONG: Heroes by Peter Gabriel.

The boys slowly stagger down the street, Twitch held up in the middle. The sun illuminates them from behind, casting long shadows.

A reverse image to when they set off on their journey.

EXT. TWITCH'S PORCH. DAY.

The three boys stand outside the front door.

It swings open - Twitch's siblings stand, confused.

They soon pull Twitch into an embrace that Twitch doesn't try and fight off.

EXT. NEIGHBOURHOOD STREET. DAY.

Porky and Archie stand at a fork in the road. They do not speak as they linger for a moment.

Porky gives a small, almost guilty, smile before turning off to the left.

Archie goes right.

INT. ARCHIE'S LOUNGE. DAY.

Frank sits on the sofa, reading.

The sound of the front door slamming shut catches his attention.

FRANK
Archie?

INT. ARCHIE'S HALLWAY. DAY.

Archie has started to head up the stairs. He turns around when he hears his father enter.

Frank seems taken aback at how dishevelled Archie looks.

For a moment they simply stand there, sharing a long gaze.

INT. PORKY'S HOUSE. DAY.

Porky closes the door quietly behind him. He treads lightly, peeking into one of the doors.

His parents stand, in the midst of an argument.

He attempts to sneak past but they catch sight of him.

Porky seems to cower, anticipating a scolding, but his parents rush towards him, fussing over him.

Porky stands in a state of confused relief.

EXT. NEIGHBOURHOOD STREET. DAY.

Two cops crouch at the side of the road, inspecting a bike that has been abandoned on the verge - Murph's.

Sniffer dogs stand ahead of them.

Something catches one of the dog's attention within the shrubs leading into the forest. He runs to it, barking.

The cops follow, their faces turning pale with grim expressions at what they see.

END SONG.

INT. ARCHIE'S HALLWAY. DAY.

The pair still stand in silence - until Frank begins to approach Archie.

Archie finally breaks down into sobs as Frank takes him into his arms.

ARCHIE
You got it to work.

Frank doesn't catch on.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
I heard every word.

Frank seems surprised, almost embarrassed - he expected his walkie talkie efforts to be in vain.

FRANK
I meant them.

Archie nods. He knows.

ARCHIE
I'm sorry.

FRANK
Sorry?

ARCHIE
For leaving you.

FRANK
No, you heard what I said. *I'm*
sorry --

ARCHIE
No. It wasn't just that.

Frank tries to read Archie's face.

ARCHIE (CONT'D)
It was Murph.

FRANK
Murph? She wasn't with you?

Archie's silence is answer enough.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Where is she? Porky, Twitch, Murph,
we thought you were together.

Archie shakes his head, a rising of emotion stopping any attempt at a full explanation.

ARCHIE

We tried, Dad. I swear, we tried.

Frank's confusion grows into worry as Archie seems to shrink with guilt and regret.

EXT. FRANK'S CAR. DAY.

Frank speeds through the neighbourhood towards Murph's house, Archie next to him. Nerves paint both their faces.

Ahead of them, an ambulance comes into view, alongside a police car.

An area between the road and forest has been taped off.

Police are trying to move along a small crowd that has gathered.

Steve is stood near the police car, being questioned by two cops. For once he appears frightened, vulnerable.

Frank skids to a stop.

EXT. NEIGHBOURHOOD STREET. DAY.

Archie leaps out of the car, running towards the small crowd. He pushes through, reaching the tape.

Now in clear view, he can better see details. People in protective equipment, numbered labels on the ground - a clear crime scene.

The colour drains from Archie's face, but before he can see anything in too clear detail Frank pulls him back.

Archie doesn't struggle. He allows himself to be protected by his father's embrace.

He looks up at Frank, scared and confused. Frank gives one firm reassuring nod. He is here.

This time, they have each other.

FADE TO BLACK.