

EXT SOUTHERN ILLINOIS CORNFIELD - MORNING

It is early fall during quail season. In the distance, through the morning mist, two men work their hunting dogs along a hedgerow next to a creek.

Nearby, a small fort has been constructed along a hillside fence from the leftover cornstalks of the harvested field. The voices of two boys, age 12, are heard coming from inside the fort.

INT. SMALL FORT

JOSH and DAVID HENNING are two typical Midwestern boys at play. David is stocky, Josh has big caring eyes.

JOSH

It's a Jedi outpost on Hoth, David.

David is busy crafting a tripod out of cornstalks and twine.

DAVID

Yeah Josh, and I'm in charge of heavy artillery.

Josh moves to a nicely constructed rectangular opening in the fort's wall and simulates talking into an imaginary walkie-talkie.

JOSH

Base One to unit commander, we're under surveillance and receiving heavy fire, respond.

(pause)

I'll have to engage the walkers alone, over.

David responds by muffling his voice so it sounds as if he is the person at the other end of the walkie-talkie.

DAVID

Base One hold positions, sending in snow speeders, over.

Josh smiles at his cousin's response.

DAVID

(cont. muffling voice)

Base One, how will you do anything when you can't get the courage to kiss Beth Wolf, over?

Josh yells and pounces on David. The two boys wrestle for a beat before the wall of the fort bursts open and the head of PATRICK HENNING comes inside. Patrick, age 32, is like a sentinel with his broad shoulders and swath of black hair. The morning sun radiates into the fort around his head.

JOSH AND DAVID

Aaaaaaah!

PATRICK

Aaaaaaah! Big wounds. Many stormtroopers. Lost unit.

Josh and David move to cradle the fallen Patrick.

JOSH

You're a brave Jedi - Commander Twobooties.

PATRICK

Yes sir, I will.. Twobooties?
Aaaaaaah!

Patrick attacks and wrestles with the two boys and all three laugh wildly. They stop when the sound of a distant whistle is heard.

PATRICK

Let's go guys, you can come back tomorrow.

EXT SMALL FORT

David emerges from the fort first, and upon hearing the whistle again, waves at something and runs down the hill. Patrick and Josh emerge from the fort and are met by two English Setter bird dogs. Josh pets the dogs as Patrick picks up a shotgun and a covey of slain quail. He hands the quail to Josh and the two start walking down the hill. Josh struggles to keep the quail away from the excited dogs.

PATRICK

Joshua, did I ever tell you about the first time I got to kiss a girl?

Josh looks up eagerly.

JOSH

No.

PATRICK

I was your age and it was at the
bus stop middle of winter. I got
to kiss Mary Wiseman. I was so
happy I pulled out my trombone to
play her a tune and my lips froze
to the mouthpiece.

Patrick and his son laugh as he describes the scene by
pulling on his bottom lip as he talks.

PATRICK

I wwass standing thair with tthis
big trombone hanging froom my llip!
And Mary Wiseman looks like she
made the bbbiggest mistake of her
life!

The two continue laughing as they walk through the field to a
distant station wagon and FRIENDS.

INT SOUTH CHICAGO BUNGALOW - NIGHT

Distant thunder is heard from outside. SARAH HENNING, a
pleasant white woman of 36, is against the basement door
crying. Wearing a nightgown and a robe, she pleads through
the door.

SARAH

Patrick dear, please come up.
(sobbing)
I love you, what are you doing?

A bewildered Josh, two years older, is seen standing above
his mother on the steps that lead to the kitchen.

INT BUNGALOW BASEMENT

Patrick, disheveled and worn, sits at the end of a long
workbench. At the end of this bench is a shotgun clamped
violently in a vise and pointed directly at his head. The
wood of the gun's butt is splintered from the force of the
vise.

SARAH (O.S.)

Dear when you didn't come home I
started to worry again. Honey what
are you doing? Please talk to me.

Patrick, lost and numb, sits looking at the end of the gun.
Stress is evident in his face and body language.

INT VESTIBULE

SARAH
Josh, Josh.

Sarah pulls the confused Josh down the steps while wiping her tear covered face.

SARAH
(continuing)
Darling, Daddy isn't feeling well
and we need to get him help. I need
you to kick the door in.

The sounds of heavy breathing and deep pangs of pain are heard through the basement door. Josh looks at the door and shakes his head in disagreement.

INT BUNGALOW BASEMENT

Patrick has his mouth fully around the end of the gun. He breathes heavily as his hand reaches for the trigger. Finally he pulls back.

INT VESTIBULE

SARAH
(more composed, looking
deep into Josh's eyes)
I need you to open the door.

Josh stares at his mother.

SARAH
(continuing)
I need you to help your father.

Josh begins kicking the door. His efforts increase with each blow as he realizes the severity of the situation.

INT BUNGALOW BASEMENT

Patrick sits in front of the gun crying. As the sounds of Josh's blows start, he turns towards them and nervously hums. He again places his mouth over the gun and starts breathing violently.

INT BASEMENT STAIR

The basement door rattles with Josh's blows. In the background the sound of Patrick's breathing becomes louder and quicker. The door's small lock finally gives way. The door swings in and Josh comes stumbling halfway down the steps. As he rights himself and looks up, a loud gun blast is heard. The view Josh has taking in throws him back against the steps. Sarah comes down the steps screaming. She looks at Josh and back at the scene screaming. Josh turns and runs up the stairs.

EXT SOUTH CHICAGO BUNGALOW BACKYARD AND ALLEY

Josh explodes out of the back door and across the small yard. He hurtles a fence and runs down a long dimly lit alley. Tears start to stream down his face. Soon the heavy drops of a late summer thunderstorm join the tears. Josh finally stops running; he is winded. He looks up into the night sky as buckets of rain cascade down on him. A few stars can be seen beyond the turbulent clouds.

EXT FACE OF MARS - NIGHT

Josh, now 34, stands looking at the distant stars through a glass domed chamber on the red planet's surface. He wears the outfit of typical young doctor - overworn sport coat, loose tie and khakis. His medium length loose hair frames his genteel and whisker studded face. The room has the furnishings of a great emperor's office - sculpted chair, ornate desk and a large map chest. At the desk working feverishly sits a PATIENT; man age 49. He wears a red and gold cape over finely embroidered body suit. On the desk are various hand-drawn maps and aerial photographs of Mars. The Patient looks extremely confused as he ponders the items.

JOSH

(looking to the stars)

Maybe the coordinates are off
because they were made before
interstellar flights began.

(pause)

It really doesn't matter, it is
only few miles off.

PATIENT

(emotional)

Doesn't matter! Josh, this is
probably why I've been losing so
many of my pilots!

The Patient goes to the map chest and pulls out a large records book. He feverishly searches the pages for information.

PATIENT
(dejected)
The dates are more recent. The maps are correct, all is lost.

He goes to the chair and sits holding his head in his hands.

PATIENT
It's all a fantasy and I pulled you into it with me, Doctor.

JOSH
So we've lost a few pilots it is no reason to despair.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT TYPICAL INTERVIEW ROOM IN A MENTAL INSTITUTION - DAY

The surroundings change as the Marian room disappears and is replaced by a simple interview room. The elaborate desk and chairs are replaced by their less desirable counterparts in the interview room. The patient is now wearing a simple hospital gown. The only things that remain unchanged are the elaborately drawn maps and photos of the Marian surface. Both Josh and the Patient remain in their respective positions; Josh standing behind the Patient at the desk.

PATIENT
No! I have been feeling this way for sometime, but today I'm sure. I've created this fantasy and you have been fooled too.

The view expands and moves through a layer of glass that is the screen of a standard television. The television is part of a typical audio/video cart with a VCR.

INT UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO LECTURE HALL - DAY

Josh, in coat and tie, comes to the television screen as he speaks.

JOSH
You can see here on my face I don't believe the fantasy is over yet.
(MORE)

JOSH (cont'd)
(he points to the screen
as he laughs)
My patient has realized the fantasy
is over, but I'm still stuck on
Mars, amazing.

Throughout the lecture hall laughter is heard as Josh turns to the students. The lecture hall is in a stately Gothic building with large stain glass windows. The FIFTY STUDENTS sit on the terraced seats totally absorbed by the discussion.

JOSH
(to the students)
The ability of the human mind to believe in things imagined when we concentrate hard enough is incredible.
(back to the screen)
Here, the patient created a whole life on Mars to escape a horrible reality.

STUDENT ONE
So, by using participation therapy you allowed the patient to come to their own conclusions that their fantasy was false.

JOSH
Yes, I became a participant in his fantasy. It was difficult at first, but after role-playing for over a year, it became very easy for me to slip into his world. The mind is funny. I believe we all can relate to a time when we fell madly in love, or lust, with someone...

There is a number of laughs in the room.

JOSH
(continuing)
No, hear me out. We're extremely infatuated with someone, and our mind sees what it wants to see. We subconsciously highlight the physical features we find appealing and push the ones we dislike to the background.

(MORE)

JOSH (cont'd)
And on another level, our minds
will ignore body language that
normally would tell us to not trust
this person. It is our wanting to
believe. Cool huh.

There is a number of laughs in the room.

JOSH
(continuing)
And there is evidence here....

The door to the lecture hall opens and DEAN MANSON, age 63,
enters the room.

DEAN MANSON
Doctor Henning, students.

JOSH
Dean Manson, what a surprise.

DEAN MANSON
Excuse the interruption, but I felt
your students would like to know
that their lecturer is the latest
recipient of the T.R. Mellows
Fellowship in Psychiatry.

The room fills with applause as Josh is visibly embarrassed.

INT OLDTOWN CHICAGO APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Across the living room appointed with various decorations
from distant cultures, the apartment's front door is seen.
The sound of keys are heard beyond the door. Josh unlocks
the door and enters in a rented tuxedo. Behind him is AMANDA
HENNING, age 35, white, with short curled brown hair. Her
athletic body is covered with a beautifully refined bronze
colored evening gown. She is followed by JESSIE HENNING, a
13 year-old African-American in a hip contemporary outfit.
The women continue a conversation started outside.

JESSIE
Mom, I didn't say it was a bad
opening joke. I just didn't
understand it. "I rather have a
bottle in front of me than a
frontal lobotomy", what is that?

Josh moves to the living room, turns on a table lamp and
places a large plaque on an ottoman.

AMANDA

It's a phonetic chiasmus.

JESSIE

Yeah like...

(with a head twitch and
small dance move)

I got my mind on my money and money
on my mind...but what is a frontal
lobotomy?

Josh sits in the chair and smiles while removing his bow tie.
Amanda removes her shawl and ear rings, which she hands to
Jessie.

AMANDA

Here Jessie. It's a procedure used
to treat sever mental patients.

JESSIE

(to Josh)

Yeah.

JOSH

(comically exaggerated
tone and movements)

They take a long metal rod and
place it through the patient's eye
socket to the frontal lobe and
swish...

JESSIE

Eeeeeuh, forget it, it was a bad
opening joke. Good night daddy!

Jessie kisses her father and runs down the hall. Josh goes
back to removing his tie and coat as Amanda comes to his
side. She sits on the chair's arm and picks up the plaque.
She puts her arm around Josh and kisses the top of his head.

AMANDA

I'm very proud of you, Josh. You
know that?

Josh leans into his wife.

JOSH

Thanks Amanda.

AMANDA

You coming to bed?

JOSH
In a little while.

Amanda leans down and kisses Josh before placing the plaque back on the ottoman. She moves down the hall.

Josh picks up the plaque and studies it. It fills the screen.

The University of Chicago Hospitals
Distinguishes
Doctor Joshua Patrick Henning
with the
T.R. Mellows Psychiatric Fellowship
For Distinguished Development in the Mental Sciences
This day the twelfth of May 2003

INT SMALL OFFICE - NIGHT

The plaque fills the screen. It moves away as Josh places it on a desk in this small office at the back of the apartment. Large windows overlook a balcony with a courtyard below. The space is stuffed with books and files; they appear ready to burst the office open.

Sitting at a window, Josh picks up a black and white photo of one of his childhood hunting trips. In the photo are Josh, Patrick and David Henning. One of the English Setters is active in the foreground next to the photographer. Behind the group is the cornstalk fort. Josh studies the photo, touching the part that includes the image of his father.

DAVID HENNING, now 34, ominously appears out of the darkness outside the window.

DAVID HENNING
Hey Josh!

JOSH
Aaaaaah!

Josh falls to the floor as David laughs.

JOSH
Bonehead!

DAVID
Hey, I brought something to
celebrate with!

David holds up a twelve pack of beer.

JOSH
Sssssh! Amanda and Jessie have
gone to bed.

DAVID
Well get out here.

Josh gets up while David disappears into the darkness. He turns to leave, but stops and looks at the plaque and photo on the desk. He picks up the photo and leaves.

EXT BALCONY - NIGHT

Josh and David sit on a large balcony that connects all of the apartments and surrounds a large courtyard. Many empty beer cans are seen around the two men. David is in construction garb. Josh holds the photo from the hunting trip.

JOSH
(slurring)
That is the best thing you ever
built right there. You can build
Chicago's largest skyscraper, but
nothing will beat that fort.

DAVID
Yeah.
(pause)
You're in the big time now.

JOSH
(dejected)
Yeah.

DAVID
What is it? No, it's my turn to be
the shrink. Are you having penis
envy, because I can leave?

Josh looks at David and shakes his head.

DAVID
Come on man. You're very talented,
why aren't you happy?

JOSH
Because.

Josh stands.

JOSH

(continuing)

So I have won an award.

(animated)

I know volumes on the complexities of the human mind, and my father's illness relates to none of it! I'm not any closer to understanding what happened to him now then when I was fourteen!

DAVID

Josh you're killing me here, it's always about your father. You're pursuing a ghost!

JOSH

You never respected this, or my profession.

DAVID

Stop! I respect you. My belief of therapy is a "swirly" or a walk in the woods, but I respect what you do. What I don't understand is this obsession with your father's death!

JOSH

(exasperated)

Don't you see, it is what has lead me to this point. I feel incomplete.

Amanda, in bathrobe, comes to the back door leading to the balcony. Josh notices her, but he is consumed with his venting. He directs his rant at both of them and becomes more emotional.

JOSH

(continuing)

I want, I need answers!
He defies all logical origins of psychoses. No family history of mental illness. No chemical imbalance.

Josh begins to lose his breath as he gets more and more animated.

AMANDA

Josh.

JOSH

(continuing)

No tragic episodes in his past!

(pants)

And on top of everything, his
decline is the fastest in medical
history!

Josh quivers and falls to the balcony floor. David and
Amanda try to catch him, but he falls through their grasps.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

INT BEDROOM - MORNING

Josh, laying in bed, slowly opens his eyes to the bright
morning sun. Amanda, professionally dressed for work, sits
at the edge of the bed.

AMANDA

You had another one.

Josh rubs the sleep out of his eyes.

JOSH

I did?

AMANDA

Yes you did. The alcohol probably
didn't help.

JOSH

David.

AMANDA

No, you. You promised me you would
see someone.

JOSH

Ok ok.

AMANDA

You will see someone, right? And
talk to them about this obsession
with your father's death?

JOSH

Ok.

AMANDA

I could go with you?

JOSH

Ok!

(laughs and grabs Amanda
with clenched teeth)

Amanda leaves and Josh sits up, rubs his neck and leaves the room.

INT OFFICE - MORNING

Josh enters the office and looks at the top of his desk. He finds the TV remote and hits the "on" switch. The sound of a talk show is heard. He studies the items on the desk. Everything relates to his father - autopsy files, high school yearbook, psychiatry papers. He picks up one of the files and an embarrassed expression comes to his face. He turns and grabs the nearest container and starts to place the files in it. As he does this, his face changes to a happy expression. His actions increase in speed. The talk show host is heard.

CAROL WHEATERS (V.O.)

We're back talking with a new
phenomenon. I shouldn't say new,
but he is new to the our "Changes"
program.

(laughs)

Josh looks at the TV as he continues to pack. On the screen is the plump African-American CAROL WHEATERS and the distinguish 56 year-old DR. CHARLES HAFER.

CAROL

The phenomenon that has helped
millions - Dr. Charles Hafer and
the Awakening Self Movement.
Dr. Hafer.

Josh, with his attention diverted, drops his father's high school yearbook. As he bends to pick up the book, he freezes looking at one of it's photos. He looks to the screen and then back at the book.

DR. HAFER (V.O.)

Thank you Carol.

CAROL WHEATERS (V.O.)
Now let's continue, you were
talking about what holds people
back.

Josh flips through the yearbook looking at various photos of a young Charles Hafer. He stops when he finds a photo with both his father and Charles together. Amanda walks in to the room eating toast.

AMANDA
You want breakfast before I leave?

Josh excitedly points to the TV and then to the yearbook.

JOSH
Dr. Charles Hafer was one of my
father's classmates.

DR. HAFER
(on TV)
Yes. What we know is that all
individuals have certain things
within them that are lingering
troubles. Yet these troubles, as
the smallest of scars, are many
times completely hidden from our
view...our conscious.

AMANDA
Ok?

JOSH
Don't you see Dr. Hafer can help me
with my father's case.

AMANDA
Aaaaaaah!

Amanda leaves the room disgusted. Josh studies Dr. Hafer on the screen.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT TELEVISION STUDIO - DAY

The large studio is the place for a busy talk show. The set is warm and professional with materials and lighting that convey a serious, mature show. PRODUCERS roam the large studio audience with microphones. Five hundred people sit clapping happily.

Carol Wheaters sits on the stage with Dr. Charles Hafer. Mrs. Wheaters is consistently relating with the regular audience members in the front rows. Dr. Hafer is very fit for his age and his deep eyes and a gentle face that will draw in any outsider. Along with the featured speaker are JILL SCHROEDER and JIM RAYMOND.

DR. HAFER

These hidden troubles flavor our everyday existence and actions.

CAROL

And finding these troubles is the purpose of "The Awakening Self".

DR. HAFER

"The Awakening Self"...going in and finding those troubles, with the help of a therapist, and freeing us to reach our full potential.

CAROL

Yes.
(to the audience)
How about that?

Carol and the audience start to applaud.

CAROL WHEATERS

You've developed a practice that has quite a success rate. Tell us about it.

DR. HAFER

Well, I have been blessed with the ability to peacefully communicate with my participants. Through hypnois people are able to speak in a stream of conscious and not edit themselves. And yes, we have had a lot of success finding the clues to a person's troubles during these interviews.

CAROL WHEATERS

And then once you know what is at the center of the problem you can address it directly.