

EXT SOUTHERN ILLINOIS CORNFIELD - MORNING

It is early fall, two men work their hunting dogs along a hedgerow.

A nearby fort has been constructed from leftover cornstalks.

INT. SMALL FORT

JOSH and DAVID HENNING (12) 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 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 (32) is like a sentinel with his broad shoulders and handsome face.

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 wrestles with the 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, hears another whistle, waves at  
it and runs off. Patrick and Josh are met by two English  
Setter bird dogs. Patrick picks up a shotgun and hands a  
covey of slain quail to Josh. They walk down the hill.

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 outside. SARAH HENNING, a pleasant woman, (36) is against the basement door crying. Wearing a nightgown and 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 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 where a shotgun has been violently clamped in a vise. It points at his head.

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, looks at the end of the gun.

INT VESTIBULE

SARAH

Josh, Josh.

She pulls a confused Josh towards her while wiping away tears.

SARAH

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

Heavy breathing and deep pangs of pain are heard. Josh looks at the door and shakes his head in disagreement.

INT BUNGALOW BASEMENT

Patrick has his mouth around the end of the gun. He breathes heavily as his hand reaches for the trigger - 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 is 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, Patrick's breathing is louder and quicker. The door's small lock finally breaks; Josh falls halfway down the stairs. As he rights himself a loud gun blast is heard. The view Josh has taken in throws him back. 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 the back door, across the yard and hurtles a fence. He runs down an alley while crying. Big raindrops join the tears. A winded Josh stops running. He looks at the few stars that can be seen beyond the turbulent clouds.

EXT FACE OF MARS - NIGHT

Josh (now 34) stands looking at stars through a glass dome on the red planet's surface. He has a pleasant face and is dressed like a typical doctor.

The room is a great emperor's study: ornate chair, desk and a large map chest. A male PATIENT (40s) sits at the desk feverishly working. He wears a finely embroidered body suit and cape. The confused patient is working with hand-drawn maps and aerial photographs of Mars.

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's only  
a few miles off.

PATIENT

(emotional)  
Doesn't matter! Josh, this is  
probably why I've been losing so  
many pilots!

The Patient goes to the chest and pulls out a large records book. He 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  
in with me, Doctor.

JOSH

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

DISSOLVE TO:

INT TYPICAL INTERVIEW ROOM IN A MENTAL INSTITUTION - DAY

The Martian room becomes a typical hospital interview room. Only the hand drawn maps and photos remain the same; the patient is in a typical hospital gown.

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 typical audio/video cart.

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.

(he points to the screen  
as he laughs)

My patient has realized the fantasy is over, but I'm still stuck on Mars, amazing.

Many of the FIFTY STUDENTS laugh. They sit in terraced seats in a Gothic lecture hall totally absorbed by the discussion.

JOSH

(to the students)

Its incredible how our minds will believe in imagined things when we concentrate hard enough.

(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 the fantasy was false.

JOSH

Yes, I became a participant in his fantasy. It was difficult at first, but after role-playing for more than 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...

Laughs from several students.

JOSH

(continuing)

No, hear me out.

(MORE)

JOSH (cont'd)

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. On another level, our minds will ignore body language that normally would tell us to not trust the person. It is our wanting to believe. Cool huh.

More laughter.

JOSH

(continuing)

And there is evidence here....

The door opens and DEAN MANSON (late 60s) enters.

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 professor is the latest recipient of the T.R. Mellows Fellowship in Psychiatry.

Applause fills the room, Josh is visibly embarrassed.

INT OLDTOWN CHICAGO APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Keys are heard at the front door of a well appointed living room. Josh enters in a tuxedo followed by AMANDA HENNING (35) in a stylish evening gown and JESSIE HENNING (13) in a hip outfit. They 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 turns on a table lamp and sets down a large plaque.

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 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. Amanda sits on the arm of the chair 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. 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. She puts the plaque back and 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 2018

INT SMALL OFFICE - NIGHT

The plaque moves away as Josh places it on a desk in an overstuffed office. Large windows overlook a balcony with a courtyard below.

Sitting at a window, Josh picks up a photo of the hunting trip with the cornstalk fort. In the photo are Josh, Patrick and David Henning. He touches 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!

He holds up a twelve pack of beer.

JOSH

Sssssh! Amanda and Jessie have gone to bed.

DAVID

Well get out here.

David disappears into the darkness as Josh gets up. He chooses the photo over the plaque before quietly exiting out the back door.

EXT BALCONY - NIGHT

Josh and David sit among many empty beer cans on a large balcony that connects all of the apartments. David is in construction garb. Josh holds up the photo.

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 are 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 than 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 a bathrobe, comes to the back door. 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 becomes 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, dressed for work, sits on 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. We talked about you seeing someone.

JOSH

Okay okay.

AMANDA

You will see someone, right? Talk with them about this obsession you have with your father...his death?

JOSH

Okay.

AMANDA

I could go with you?

JOSH

(frustrated)  
Okay!

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

INT OFFICE - MORNING

Josh enters, finds the TV remote and the sound of a talk show starts. He studies his father's autopsy file, high school yearbook, psychiatry papers on his desk. He picks up one of the files and an embarrassed expression comes to his face. He begins throwing the files in to the nearest container, this makes him happy, he speeds up while listening to the TV.

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 CAROL WHEATERS (30s) and the distinguish DR. CHARLES HAFER (56).

CAROL

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

Josh, with his attention diverted, drops his father's 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 finding 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 that are lingering troubles.  
Yet these troubles, as the smallest  
of scars, are many times completely  
hidden from our view...our  
conscious.

AMANDA

Okay?

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 busy talk show has a warm, professional set being watched  
by Five hundred people. They smile and clap as PRODUCERS roam  
with microphones.

Dr. Hafer sits with Mrs. Wheaters whom consistently engages  
with her audience. Hafer is very fit for his age, with a face  
that will draw you in. JILL SCHROEDER and JIM RAYMOND are  
two middle age guests on the stage.

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

(agrees)

"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 more.

DR. HAFER

Well, I have been blessed with the ability to peacefully communicate with participants. Through hypnosis people are able to speak honestly, not edit themselves. And the success of these interviews is unmatched.

CAROL WHEATERS

And once you know the problem you can address it directly.

DR. HAFER

Finding the trouble is the key, they affect each individual differently. People need to remember that the human mind is a complex and mysterious organ. You should never feel embarrassed about the hidden troubles you are dealing with.

CAROL WHEATERS

And you have brought some of your, uh, participants with you for the audience. (looking to card)  
Each has conquered their troubles and shown the remarkable breakthroughs this process can have.

Hafer grabs Jill Schroeder's hand to reassure her.

DR. HAFER

Yes I have. Mrs. Schroeder here is a recovering alcoholic from San Antonio. And people might recognize Mr. Jim Raymond as the CEO of Micro-Kinectic.

CAROL WHEATERS

Yes one of Forbes "Richest Americans".  
(to the camera)  
More after this.

FADE OUT:

INT AWAKENING CENTER LOBBY - DAY

TWENTY PEOPLE wait in a sleek lobby overlooking Chicago. "The Awakening Centers" is on a feature wall. Josh talks with gorgeous but frustrated receptionist HEIDI.

JOSH

I'm aware Dr. Hafer does not see every patient, but I'm specifically here to see him.

The lobby doors open and MARC BRYANT and REBECCA FEHRE enter. Marc (27) is a walking Brooks Brothers Ad, Rebecca (30) is equally beautiful without the need for makeup. She stands in Marc's shadow with a peaceful expression.

HEIDI

(motioning to Marc)  
Oh, here is your analyst now. Dr. Marc Bryant, Dr. Josh Henning.

MARC

Good morning.

They shake hands.

JOSH

Hello, nice to meet you. I was just explaining to Heidi that my situation is slightly different - I had really hoped to speak with Dr. Hafer...