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Momim

Title

A teleplay written and produced and presented to the faculty of
the Writing for the Screen MFA Program in the School of Film &
Television at Loyola Marymount University of
Los Angeles, California

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Master of Fine Arts

Writing for the Screen

By

Christopher M. Halligan

Student Name



Christopher M. Halligan (May 2, 2023 00:18:01 DT)

Student Signature

APPROVAL TO ADVANCE TO CANDIDACY

The following student has met all the criteria to advance to candidacy for an M.F.A. in Fine Arts with an emphasis in Writing for the Screen:

Christopher M. Halligan

Student Name

May 2, 2023

Date



SCWR 690 Instructor Signature



Mary Kuflya (May 2, 2023 11:40 PDT)
SCWR 691 Instructor Signature



Graduate Director Signature

FINAL THESIS
FEATURE SCREENPLAY PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Student Name: Christopher M. Halligan

Thesis Logline: Feature, LGBTQ+ Drama - Alex, an intersex Native man whose gender was incorrectly chosen at birth, wants penis resection surgery to complete him as a man. But when the only job available is a summer gig on the river, he must overcome his aquaphobia and learn to accept the flow of his true nature.

MOMIM

Written by

Christopher M Halligan

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657-203-3104

EXT. KANAKA HEAD - NORTH FORK - DOLORES RIVER - DAY

The sun sets in the west, casting red-orange streaks across the dark blue sky.

Inside a deeply wooded canyon a river rages through patches of melting snow and ice.

Adjacent to the river, high granite cliffs rise high, carved by billions of gallons of raging waters.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

From around a choppy river bend, a Native man of Maidu origin, NAAKI (43), dark, muscular, wearing only pair of board shorts and an array of leather jewelry hanging off various limbs, runs a small raft solo down the rapids.

He steers the raft expertly down the rapids, getting soaked and invigorated. Clearly, this man is in his element.

He hits a wide point in the river and relaxes.

He steers the raft toward a spit of sand jutting out from the back of a tall granite cliff.

He beaches the raft and jumps off.

INT. CAVE - DAY

Naaki clambers up into a cave. He pulls a doob tube and a lighter out of his shorts pocket and lights up a joint.

The cave quickly fills with smoke.

He flicks his lighter and examines the walls on the cave.

The light reveals several ancient-looking drawings on the wall -

FIRST is a non-gendered individual with two energies coming from them.

NEXT are five different individuals drawn indicating five separate genders.

THEN a heart with all five inside holding hands, suggesting a universal linkage.

Naaki nods knowingly, puts the joint back in the tube, turns and walks out of the cave.

EXT. CAVE - DAY

As Naaki walks out, a bald eagle flies overhead. Naaki salutes the eagle.

He begins to sing.

NAAKI (SINGING)

He tried to climb the mountain, but
the mountain was too high. So he
stuck his hand in an eagle's nest,
to hear the little one's cry.

He clambers down to his raft, continuing his Native song.

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOWN - DAY

Naaki drives into the mountain town with snow still lying in patches next to the road, the raft latched to the top of his old station wagon bombed in stickers going back to the 1970's.

The town consists of several motels, a cafe, gas station, and a Maidu tribal center all peppered in the trees next to the main road as Naaki drives by.

EXT. HOUSE -DAY

Naaki drives by a small weekend-cabin-style A-frame house sits amongst a patch of spruce trees covered in melting snow, a large black Toyota truck and an older Honda Civic are parked in the muddy driveway.

The front of the house is decorated in cool native art - many distinctive and ornate black-and-brown-patterned weaving - furniture, baskets, and window dressings.

A small sign next to the door reads, "Maidu Weaving Studio."

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

The curtains are drawn, darkening the room where a young Maidu man, ALEX MUNIZ (19), handsome, unshaven, with long jet-black hair and an extremely-fit frame, sleeps in a single bed.

On the bed table next to him stands a large picture of a handsome Native man and a boy, presumably Alex when he was younger. They are standing next to the river and looking very happy holding up a large trout together.

His room is decorated in climbing photos - a mixture of new climbers and old-school dirt baggers. A *Valley Uprising* movie poster hangs above his bed.

There is climbing paraphernalia everywhere.

Hidden deep atop a cluttered dresser top lies a dusty and fallen framed picture of him as a little boy standing uneasily next to another Native MAN (33) who holds a beer bottle. Behind them a river rages past.

An alarm goes off. Alex rolls out of bed in his boxers.

He lays on the floor and executes a gymnast exercise routine. He stands on his hands and does upside down push-ups.

As he crushes through them, an anger builds in his eyes, as if he is trying to purge something from his body.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Sweaty, Alex walks into the bathroom.

He looks at himself for a moment, then slowly pulls down his boxers, revealing a jockstrap and a large protective cup.

He pulls off the jock slowly, releasing the cup and revealing that Alex has nothing to protect except a vagina and a pronounced scar through his pubic hairs where clearly gender-assignment surgery was performed.

He stares in disgust for a moment, then pulls the jock and cup back on.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Alex, now dressed, sits at a computer and shakes his mouse.

He opens his browser and goes directly to a page.

It's a sexual reassignment surgery company. He signs in.

A page comes up with his name and information and a picture of him.

It shows the type of surgery he is electing - a basic penis re-section.

Cost - \$25,000 - Down payment - \$2500

He opens another page. It's his bank page. He checks his accounts.

Savings - \$700.00

He turns off the computer.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Alex walks into the kitchen with a work apron around his waist.

He pours himself a cup of coffee.

His mother, MOON (48), earthy, dark, and beautiful, counts baskets. She looks up.

MOON

Oh, honey, I wish you'd braid up that beautiful hair like your grandfather used to.

ALEX

Not on your life.

Alex sits.

MOON

How was your run?

ALEX

Shitty. I can't reach my four minute mile.

MOON

Better than my 40 minute mile.

ALEX

Yeah, well you're a woman.

MOON

What's that supposed to mean?

ALEX

Oh God, never mind.

MOON

Who is this person in my kitchen? Who put these thoughts in your head?

ALEX

Society did.

MOON

Well, we aren't like everybody in society.

ALEX

Yeah, tell me about it.

Moon lets that one go.

MOON

How long are you working today?

ALEX

Only breakfast. Then climbing.

MOON

Have you thought about the tribal job?

ALEX

No.

Alex stands and walks to the sink.

MOON

There aren't that many young people left. Pretty soon we all will be gone, finally dispersed with the wind and water.

ALEX

Just like everything I guess.

MOON

You sound like your father.

ALEX

Hopefully I won't end up like him.

He checks his watch. Gives his mom a cursory kiss.

ALEX (CONT'D)

I got to go.

He stands, puts his mug in the sink, and exits.

INT. CAFE - DAY

Several patrons eat breakfast while Alex, with apron tied around his waist, pours coffee into a CUSTOMER'S coffee cup.

He heads back to the kitchen.

ALEX

Three Frenchies and a Flap Jack,
Don.

He hits a bell.

A woman, ROXY (48), dressed in a tight waitress uniform,
comes around the window.

ROXY

Very handsome.

She tussles his black hair with her ring-spangled hand.

ROXY (CONT'D)

Great for business.

He laughs, slightly embarrassed.

ALEX

Thanks, Rox.

She heads to the back.

ROXY

Hon, can you come back tonight for
inventory? I'm sorry to lay it on
you late like this but there's some
big boxes need moving.

Alex rolls his eyes.

ALEX

Yeah. That's fine.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

Alex smokes a joint behind the cafe when a large green
sticker-bombed truck pulls up, the driver, CHI (24), another
mountaineering type, rolls down the window.

Alex smiles and walks up, handing the joint to Chi.

Chi takes it and inhales.

ALEX

I'm hitting the Leap today. Wanna
come?

CHI

Nah, we're floating down the North
Fork. You should come with us.

ALEX
Nah, fuck that shit.

CHI
Dude, OK.

ALEX
I gotta help Roxy with inventory
tonight.

Chi takes one more hit.

CHI
Why don't you just fuck her and put
her out of her misery?

ALEX
That's disgusting. She's like
fifty, man.

Chi hands the joint back to Alex, looking back at the
restaurant.

CHI
Yeah, but a hot fifty. Don't turn
down that power pussy. It can take
you places.

Chi laughs and puts his truck in gear.

CHI (CONT'D)
Anyways, don't be too late tonight.
I roll out early in the morning.

He hits the gas and waves.

CHI (CONT'D)
Peace.

Chi drives out, creating a lot of noise and dust in his wake.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Alex hikes along a wooded trail lined with various rock
formations. He is festooned with mountain gear.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

Alex hikes along the riverbed.

A large splash of rapids lands squarely onto his boot and he
jumps up, annoyed.

ALEX

Fuck.

He shakes the water off.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - DAY

Alex climbs high up on a majestic blue granite cliff.

It is quiet save the muffled river below as Alex slowly and methodically uses his fingers and legs to foist himself up the virtually vertical plane using muscles most people don't have.

He checks his watch.

ALEX

Faster, Alex.

He picks up his pace, and comes to a steep overhang that juts out slightly at a negative angle.

EXT. OVERHANG - DAY

Alex again methodically climbs the overhang.

Sweat and exhaustion pour from his grimacing face.

He barely lifts his body over the ledge and flops painfully onto the jagged stoop.

He checks his watch.

ALEX

Fuck.

As he stands, the same EAGLE we saw near Naaki, flies right at him with an enormous trout in her claws.

Alex panics and looks behind him on the ledge. There in the rock crevice is a nest.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Shit.

Suddenly the eagle is upon him like a jumbo jet, her wingspan easily outstretched six feet.

She drops the fish on Alex, making him jump and lose his footing.

Flapping her wings, she grabs at Alex's scalp with her claws and screeches.

Alex tumbles back beyond the stoop in terror.

Unable to stop himself, he falls over.

The eagle picks up her fish and hops in the nest.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - DAY

Alex tumbles down the outcrop, banging his legs against the jagged granite slabs and causing him to descend rapidly.

He becomes airborne.

He looks down and realizes he is headed straight for the river and it's large outcropping boulders.

He gets closer and closer --

He screams in terror --

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Alex reaches the end of his rope but not before being dunked into the river then violently jerked back.

Terrified, then angry, he gets his bearings.

He cuts the rope and lands in the water.

He struggles in the cold and current.

He loses his bearings and falls under.

His head pops up, sheer shock on his face.

He drags himself out of the river, drenched to the bone.

He clammers up a rock and sits on it, coughing and puking.

FLASHBACK --

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Young ALEX (8) and his dad, RANDY (33), stand next to the river playing tag.

Suddenly, Alex falls in.

INT. UNDERWATER -

Alex is lost in the miasma of bubbles.

Suddenly, a large HAND grabs his shirt and he is yanked up.

EXT. ON LAND -

Alex is yanked up by his dad and set on the rock. Alex shakes it off.

ALEX

Thanks.

RANDY

On of these days, we're going to need to teach you how to swim, son.

ALEX

I know, Dad.

END FLASHBACK --

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Shivering in his wetness, he starts to cry, angry at his tears.

EXT. CORN FIELD - DAY

The sun is barely rising as acres of knee-high corn rustle in the wind.

Beyond, a farm house is dark save one light in the attic.

INT. ATTIC BEDROOM - DAY

A young woman, PENI (19), with curly red hair and a corn-and-beef-fed Amazon body, packs an ancient green army backpack. She ties it closed. A purring kitty cat comes and lays on top of the pack. Peni laughs sadly and pets the kitty.

PENI

You know it's for the best.

The cat stands, meows, and walks onto Peni. Peni pats her back.

PENI (CONT'D)

Bye, Poo.

She stands and foists the pack onto her shoulders.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The house is silent and dark.

Through out the house is evidence of a MAGA household - horrific anti-abortion signs propped in the corner next to the front door - a large portrait of Donald Trump hangs in the living room - a gun rack full of assault weapons in the dining - a large crucifix hangs above the doorway.

Peni tip-toes down the stairs with her pack and an envelope.

She goes through the back to the kitchen.

She opens the fridge and pulls out a water. She closes it and looks at the items hanging from it - a Let's Go, Brandon bumper sticker; a Trump sticker; a pamphlet from church.

She sighs and walks over to the kitchen table, propping her envelope on the table.

She quietly exits the house through the kitchen door.

EXT. CORN FIELD - DAY

Peni waits at the end of the road. The sun rises is brilliant purple and orange patches across the mile of rolling corn.

She looks back at the house. Lights go on.

PENI

Come on.

She looks down the road. Nothing.

She looks back at the house. The kitchen light goes on.

Finally, some headlights appear in the distance.

She watches as a young MAN (22), in underwear, yanks curtains back and peers out the window - then opening the kitchen door and standing out on the stoop.

MAN

What the fuck?

The bus pulls up. Peni exhales and jumps on.

INT. BUS - DAY

Peni sits and looks out the window.

Outside, the man, now with jeans on, runs to his truck.

As the bus pulls off, Peni opens her back and pulls out a distributor cap. She deposits it into the garbage.

EXT. MOUNTAIN CABIN - DAWN

There are still patches of snow around a small 1920's vacation cabin that sits on a wooded slope.

Tall redwood trees dot the property.

A couple of snowmobiles are parked next to a small wood shed covered in old snowboards.

An ancient rusty Subaru with Colorado plates covered in pine needles sits next to the shed.

INT. CABIN - DAWN

Cabin is full of seasonal mountain items.

A big red sofa sits in front of a stone fireplace.

The windows are covered in tie-dye t-shirts and flags, creating a weird shadowy cauldron effect.

INT. CABIN BEDROOM - DAWN

Condensation covers the large ancient windows encircling the bedroom. Various swatches of fabric cover the eastern bank of glass.

In front of the bed stands a couple of tripods with cameras and a ring light.

In the bed, a man, COLE (23), handsome with long dishwater blonde hair and a beard, sleeps.

Like clockwork, his eyes pop open.

EXT. CABIN - DAY

Cole fires up the Subaru and lets it warm up. A large back pack sits strapped to the chairs in the back.

He rolls his window down and lights up a joint. A squirrel scampers up to the car and chatters. Cole blows out smoke.

COLE

Bye, Alice. Hope you have a bunch
of healthy babies when I get back.

Alice chatters something to Cole then scampers off. Cole extinguished the joint in an ashtray and puts the car in gear.

INT. CAFE - BACKROOM - NIGHT

Alex, bruised, stands on a step ladder while reaching up a tower of metro shelving to pull out boxes of restaurant supplies.

Roxy, with too much make-up and her shirt unbuttoned and overstuffed, stands below him with a clipboard in her hand, admiring his buttocks.

ALEX

Four tins of Crisco.

She absently scribbles something on her clipboard.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Two tins of olive oil.

She puts her clipboard down.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Two tins of pig lard.

Suddenly, she pushes herself into his legs.

Alex turns and is stunned. She grabs him.

ROXY

Alex. I need you.

Alex tumbles down the step ladder backward.

ALEX

What?

She tries to get him to touch her chest.

ROXY

Touch me, Alex. Fill me up.
Anything you want, it's yours.
Just give it to me.

She makes a grab for his privates. Alex moves over just in time.

ROXY (CONT'D)
I want you inside me.

ALEX
Roxy. Come on now.

She pushes herself into him, grabbing his hands.

ROXY
Everything I have is yours.

Suddenly, Alex is afraid.

ALEX
Please stop.

She lets go of one of his hands and digs deep under his arm.

ROXY
Tickle, tickle, tickle!

Alex squirms and Roxy goes in for the kill.

Alex is stunned. She fishes around. She finds the cup and digs underneath. She is surprised at what she finds.

ROXY (CONT'D)
What the hell?

Alex shoves her away from him.

But it's too late. She looks at her hand in disgust.

ROXY (CONT'D)
You're a.

She pulls her hand back quickly and moves away, buttoning up her shirt.

ROXY (CONT'D)
No wonder you didn't want me.
You're a woman.

She looks at him with complete disgust.

ROXY (CONT'D)
Go. You're fired.

ALEX
Roxy, you can't just fire me.

ROXY

Yeah I can. You, uh, lied on your application.

She shivers, now crying, holding herself.

ROXY (CONT'D)

Go!

He shakes his head and walks to the exit.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Alex and Chi are polishing off a second pitcher of beer, Alex slightly drunk.

ALEX

Fucking old cougar.

Alex guzzles beer.

CHI

Have mercy on her, bro. She's got her needs just like all of us. Besides, I saw that cougar coming a mile away. You sure you want to turn down that pussy?

Alex gives Chi a look like, "Not gonna happen."

ALEX

But, now what am I gonna do? There's no work anywhere. Unless I want to go work at the tribal center. Honestly I'd rather starve.

CHI

Well, I know you hate water because you're a freak, but I may just have something for you.

Alex guzzles his beer.

ALEX

Oh yeah?

CHI

My boss is looking to take advantage of some of the climbing opportunities up and down the river to incorporate into the trips.

ALEX

Well, I can definitely help him with that. Do I have to do anything in the water?

CHI

Not if your climbing. You'll be in charge of the climbing side. And you said all those spot your dad showed you are all accessible by truck. So there you go.

ALEX

So what kind of money are we talking?

CHI

If you hit it off with Naaki, you could make a percentage off each trip. Truth be told, he's looking for somebody to take over the business.

ALEX

So. What kind of money are we talking?

CHI

With a percentage of tips? Twenty five, thirty grand a season. Easy.

Alex drinks and thinks. He gets a convicted look in his face. He turns to Chi in all seriousness.

ALEX

You ain't bullshitting me on the \$30,000 grand, are you?

Chi smiles and winks.

CHI

And then some. And the best part is, if he hires you, you get a \$2500 bonus for signing on.

ALEX

\$2500. Right off the bat.

CHI

If he hires you. You have to perform though, dude. I know you and water.

ALEX

Fuck it. I'll make it work.
Besides, my thing will be the
climbing end anyways. Maybe I
won't have to be in a raft at all
this summer.

Chi laughs.

CHI

Fat chance, bro.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alex looks at his procedure page on the computer -- \$2500
down payment - highlighted in red - then - *Surgery
appointments set once deposit is received.*

Alex takes a deep breath, then exhales.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Moon sits at the kitchen table labeling various Maidu woven
crafts.

Alex walks out and sits next to his mom.

MOON

Good morning.

ALEX

I got fired last night. Roxy made
a move on me. She knows now.

MOON

Oh dear. The problem is that she,
like the rest of us, got old.

He stands and walks over to the coffee pot.

ALEX

I'm getting out of town for a
while. Chi says I might be able to
turn my climbing skills into some
serious money. Enough to finally
get my surgery.

MOON

Doesn't it involve being on the
river, too? Honey, you're
terrified of water. How is that
going to work?

ALEX

Chi says no.

Moon looks at Alex doubtfully.

MOON

When do you leave?

ALEX

Tomorrow.

MOON

Well what about the tribal center job. That's good money and could lead to bigger things.

ALEX

Mom. I don't think you realize how desperate I am to be normal. To have a normal relationship with a woman. My God, to have sex period. All my friends talk about is the power they feel through sex. Through the strength of being wanted.

MOON

Well, I don't know if Chi is greatest example of manhood, honey.

ALEX

I can't wait any longer. If there is a chance I can be in a surgical gown by October, I'm taking it. I can handle a little water in my face.

Moon looks at him in all seriousness.

MOON

Don't bank on it.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD - DAY

Chi turns down a dirt driveway that descends into a rafting camp inside the elbow of the river.

The camp consists of a small sticker-bombed cabin lined with rafting oars and paddles.

Next to it a purple school bus with the letters Dolores River Adventures hand-painted on the side.

A stack of six rafts sit underneath an adjacent shelter.

Cole's Subaru with Colorado plates is parked haphazardly next to an old Chevy truck.

Naaki, in board shorts and flip flops, walks up to Chi's truck as he parks it.

Chi jumps out and he and Naaki bro-embrace.

CHI

What's up, Nack?

NAAKI

Just trying to get these trips on the river, bro. So this the Native climber you were talking about?

Naaki looks over Alex with familiarity.

CHI

Yeah, man. This is my brother from another mother, Alex. He's the ultimate dirtbag. Can definitely add some adventure to your outfit.

NAAKI

Alex Muniz. I knew your dad.

ALEX

What? Wow. When? I never remember him mentioning a Naaki.

NAAKI

That's because we had history going all the way back to birth. It's a long story.

He pats Alex hard on his shoulder.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

But I was very sad when I heard he died. I'm sorry.

He thrusts out his hand.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

Welcome to the family. Get ready to get wet!

Alex gets a look of shock.

ALEX

Wait, what? Chi here told me I'd probably not have to get wet. That I'd only be running the climbs.

NAAKI

Are you afraid of the water, Alex? If you are then you are definitely with the wrong outfit. I mean I don't know if you'll be actually running any rafting trips, but you definitely need to pass our training trip.

ALEX

Oh, no. I'll be fine. I just have issues with being wet. It, fucks up my sack, causes me to rash up.

Naaki and Chi look at each other smiling.

NAAKI

Well, get yourself a tube of ointment because that ball sack is gonna be wet all the time.

He elbows Alex.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

If you know what I mean.

Alex is too pre-occupied with wetness to get it.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

Besides, you have competition.

He points over to the river.

They watch as COLE, muscles rippling, kayaks effortlessly down a rough break water, masterfully navigating his boat through the raging rapids.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

I guess he can climb OK too.

ALEX

We'll see.

He smiles and pats Alex on the shoulder.

NAAKI

I want you two working together to plan me some new hybrid trips.

Alex watches apprehensively as Cole maneuvers the kayak expertly through the rapids.

ALEX
Should be fun.

Cole paddles up to shore and beaches his kayak.

He jumps out.

NAAKI
Cole, this is Alex. I want you two talking on this trip.

Cole thrusts his hand out to Alex. They shake.

COLE
How many seasons?

ALEX
Well, none, actually.

COLE
Oh shit, a river virgin.

He laughs and pats Alex on the shoulder.

COLE (CONT'D)
Don't worry, I'll help you out.
Just as long as you're a strong swimmer you're aces.

Cole looks over Alex and squeezes his shoulder.

COLE (CONT'D)
You're a beast, bro.

Alex flexes for Cole, who's impressed.

Then Cole flexes. Also impressive.

Then Naaki. Truly impressive.

Only Chi refrains from the flexing bro-show, laughing at them as they try to outdo each other.

INT. SUBARU - DAY

Cole and Alex smoke weed in Cole's beater Subaru, passing the pipe between them.

ALEX
So you got a girlfriend?

Alex holds in a hit.

COLE

Nah. It's too much of a hassle.
Rather get my love on the run, you
know what I mean?

ALEX

But on the run, the on the none.

COLE

What about you? What are you into?

ALEX

I'm a romantic. I'm not like Chi
or the rest of you guys.

This seems to interest Cole.

COLE

I think you'd be surprise at what
people are into or not.

Alex hits the jay again. Boy is getting high.

ALEX

So tell me about the craziest river
run you ever made.

Cole takes the joint, getting animated.

COLE

Oh, shit, dude. Two years ago.
Maidu Narrows flood. Was with
friends.

His friendship bracelets fly in illustration.

COLE (CONT'D)

Like a twenty foot wall of water
suddenly came up behind us.
Somehow managed to get everyone
back so that the nose rose. The
wave crashed down upon us when it
hit, completely submerging us, and
I thought we might not pop back up.
But I just kept that nose up. Just
a couple feet saved us. I don't
know how those kids managed to hold
on. But they did. Thank God.

Alex is freaked at the thought.

ALEX

Fuck dude. You don't think something like that would happen this season?

Cole hands the joint back to Alex.

COLE

Well, lots of snow this winter. It is a canyon run. Nowhere to go except up and out. Fast.

Alex looks at the joint, then hands it back.

ALEX

I'm gonna fucking die this summer.

Cole takes the joint and pats Alex on the shoulder.

COLE

Nah, I got your back.

Suddenly, through the smoke, they see a car pulls up and turns in front of the sticker-bombed cabin.

Peni gets out with army back pack.

Alex is mesmerized.

ALEX

Holy shit. Check out the fucking Amazon.

Cole looks over.

Alex opens the door.

Alex jumps out of the car.

Peni looks around to get her bearings.

Alex approaches her, thrusting his hand out.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Hello.

Peni looks up slightly taken aback. She examines his hand for a beat, then shakes it.

PENI

Are you Naaki?

ALEX

Alex.

She pulls her hand back.

PENI

Oh.

Cole approaches and thrusts out his hand.

COLE

Cole Ferguson.

Peni shakes his hand.

PENI

Nice to meet you.

She repositions the pack, making a boob pop out and Alex make a noise.

PENI (CONT'D)

You know where Naaki is.

Cole extends his arm.

COLE

After you.

EXT. RIVER SHACK - DAY

Alex, Peni, Cole, Chi, and Naaki stand next to the shack while Naaki and Chi inspect the crew.

Naaki flips closed his clipboard.

NAAKI

OK, so I need to be totally clear about something. Only two of you is going to get the job. You will need to demonstrate that you have not only the skill to navigate the river, but skill in climbing, and most importantly, skill in being able to deal with a crisis situation with quickness and calm.

He points to the river.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

We come to the river because it feeds us, not just the fluid we need to survive every day, but our souls, too. She is a power that we cannot control. She flows through us and through out us.

Alex looks toward the river.

FLASHBACK --

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Alex as a little boy sits at the river location that the picture was taken years before. He is crying. He has an eagle feather in his hand. He drops it in the water.

Suddenly, from behind, three white KIDS emerge - the leader - TOAD (11), pushes Alex, making him fall over near the water.

TOAD

What. Is the little Tonto crying over his drunk driver dad?

The other boys pretend to cry.

BOY 1

Aw. Poor baby.

BOY 2

Daddy isn't here to protect you.

TOAD

Isn't here to protect the little freak. Grab him boys.

The boys grab him. They begin yanking on his pants. Alex fights them off viciously, attempting to climb up the rocks.

The boys follow him. He seems like he might get away but Toad gets a hold of his pant cuff and yanks. Alex comes tumbling down onto the boys. They grab his pants and yank them off, revealing Alex's secret.

Toad points to the river.

TOAD (CONT'D)

Drown the freak.

They drag small Alex over to the river and start dunking his head.

UNDERNEATH THE WATER - Alex loses consciousness.

END FLASHBACK --

Alex is hyperventilating. Naaki notices.

NAAKI

Are you OK, Alex?

Alex, eyes bulging, sits down next to the raft. He waves them off.

ALEX
Just allergies. I'll go grab my inhaler.

Naaki looks concerned.

NAAKI
Hopefully this won't happen all the time.

Naaki motions them toward the river.

NAAKI (CONT'D)
Next is the swimming test.

Cole, Chi, and Naaki head toward the river. Peni stays back.

PENI
I know a panic attack when I see one. Are you sure you're up to this?

Alex puts on his macho mask.

ALEX
Fuck yeah.

PENI
OK.

She follows the others. Alex repositions his cup, and begins walking over, muttering to himself.

ALEX
Eye on the prize. Eye on the prize.
Eye on the prize.

EXT. WATERING HOLE - RIVER - DAY

They are all now standing around a slower, deeper elbow of the river adjacent to the river shack.

NAAKI
Alright. So this is the swimming and safety test. You three have seen the video. Number one rule - life vests on at all times - no exceptions.

Naaki demonstrates how one of their life vests work.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

We use type-three neoprene life vests which fit snug but are vented for coolness. The passengers will always use the type-five.

He holds up a big bulky jacket.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

It makes them like corks in the water.

Cole and Peni immediately grab one of the neoprene vests. Alex grabs one of the passenger vests. They look at him.

ALEX

I think it's best if we know what the passengers are feeling safety-wise.

Naaki pats him on the back.

NAAKI

Forward thinking, Alex. But you can't steer with that one on.

Alex tosses it and grabs the smaller one.

Naaki hands a rubber-covered 10 pound diving brick.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

OK. Now the treading test. You all must be able to hold up this brick and tread water for two minutes. Alex, you go first.

Alex gulps and picks up a brick. It's heavier than it looks. He heads to the shore.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

Um. Without the life vest.

Peni giggles. Alex looks at the water and puts down the brick.

He reluctantly unfastens the vest and tosses it ashore.

COLE

Moment of truth.

PENI

Don't drown.

Cole and Peni rib each other, laughing. Alex takes a deep breath.

He walks into the water with the brick, his face turned away from them and betraying a sort of terror-trance.

Suddenly, he is submerged.

INT. RIVER - UNDERWATER - DAY

Alex flails underwater and fumbles with the brick.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

The group waits for Alex to surface.

PENI

Think he dropped the brick?

INT. RIVER - UNDERWATER - DAY

Alex is flailing, drowning.

The current has it's way with him, yet with his muscular fingers manages to hold on to the brick.

Suddenly, the current rolls something underneath his feet.

A small boulder tumbles lazily down and stops.

He get his footing and stands on it.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

First the brick, then Alex's head pop out of the water.

He coughs and chokes but still manages to keep the brick above the water.

NAAKI

There you are. OK. You're being
timed.

Naaki hits his stopwatch.

Alex holds the brick up, and pretends to tread water by bending his knees up and down.

INT. RIVER - UNDERWATER - DAY

Alex works to keep his feet secured to the unsteady boulder.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Naaki and Chi stand in front of a raft sitting adjacent to the cabin next to the river, with Alex, Peni, and Cole gathered around it.

The raft is loaded down with equipment, packs, etc. with a stern mount and two long oars.

The entire thing is quite large and overwhelming.

Alex and Peni look at each other like, "Oh my God."

Naaki steps up with his clipboard.

NAAKI

Safety first. Safety last.
Everyone is responsible for safety.

Naaki looks out onto the water wistfully.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

Right now, you embark on the real
journey. The journey not just onto
the water, but into your soul.

Naaki focuses on the newbies in all seriousness.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

We are riding Mother Nature
herself, and rest assured, she will
most certainly have her way with
you, and teach you a thing or two.
Just be ready.

Alex gulps. He looks toward the truck. Then out to the river.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

At this moment, there is no turning
back.

Alex closes his eyes and takes a deep breath.

He pulls open his board shorts and looks down onto his jock-n-cup prop. He sticks his hand in to reposition.

Suddenly, Peni pulls on his life vest from behind and Alex snaps back the trunks, tying them up tightly as he turns toward her.

PENI

You OK?

Alex reacquires his macho mask and gives her a nonchalant look.

ALEX

Fuck yeah.

He walks to the river while Peni surveys him, not buying the act.

Naaki pats Chi on the shoulder.

NAAKI

Hold down the fort. We'll be back
in three days.

CHI

Will do.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

The sun shines brightly as Alex, Cole, Peni, and Naaki ride the wide river down through the open forest with Naaki steering from the back with his paddle.

Gorgeous dark/light shadows flicker through the emerging growth on the trees that dip over the river.

Alex, relaxed, closes his eyes as he pallidly paddles.

NAAKI

Maidu lived in small villages near
the river. There a ceremonial
cave, where the headman - or two-
spirit - often lived.

PENI

Two spirit?

NAAKI

Yes. Individuals in possession of
the spirit of both the man and the
woman, and very often both body
parts.

Alex ears prick up.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

The Two-Spirit's job was to advise the people and speak for them with other groups. And to protect the sacred places from intruders. Guards posted to ensure people from other communities did not hunt or fish there. Of course, when the intruders came with guns, the Maidu didn't stand a chance.

Alex's eyes remain closed.

ALEX

A lot of the places we are going to climb were considered sacred places.

PENI

Maybe you shouldn't show them to us.

NAAKI

They've already been desecrated.

ALEX

All men do whatever it takes to achieve their wants.

COLE

Even if they go against nature?

Alex laughs.

ALEX

Wake up. Everything goes against nature.

Cole is about to make a remark but is distracted by something.

Alex looks over.

SUDDENLY - they are on RAPIDS.

Cole and Peni begins to dig into the water with their paddles. Alex is frozen.

NAAKI

Start digging!

Peni follows suit.

Alex finally digs but the raft gets caught on a rock.

Naaki tries to free them.

Alex freezes again.

Cole jumps over to Alex's spot, and expertly maneuvers paddling to get the raft righted.

The raft is righted, and Cole re-assumes his position.

Cole smiles at Alex genuinely.

COLE

It's cool. You'll learn.

They continue on down the river which widens but still flows at a rapid clip.

The river turns into a deep canyon lined with granite cliffs.

The raft gains momentum.

It dips into the canyon and suddenly their are encased in granite.

NAAKI

OK, folks. Baptism by fire.

Naaki yanks the oars but the raft takes a hard left.

Alex grips onto the side ropes for dear life.

As Peni and Cole attempt to right the raft properly with their paddles, Alex SCRAMBLES in the raft, trying not to get wet.

He pushes Peni hard.

PENI

Ouch!

A wave engulfs them and, overreacting, Alex kicks Cole square in the jaw.

Alex, oblivious, repositions himself, gripping the rope.

They bounce through the rapids,

Alex, now re-centered and paddling, pretends like nothing happened.

Naaki looks at him, then Peni and Cole, concerned.

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

The raft is up on the sandy spit. Cole makes bologna sandwiches to trippy psychedelic revival rock through a blue tooth speaker. Peni dances.

Naaki and Alex rang by the raft. Alex looks at the ground, silent, while Naaki talks.

NAAKI

Listen. Are you sure you want to be doing this? You don't look like you're having much fun.

Alex paints on his dickhead smile.

ALEX

Just first-time jitters, that's all. I mean, what, we've been on the river for only a few hours.

NAAKI

That's all it takes, man.

ALEX

Don't worry about me. I just never experienced rapids before. I got spooked. I'll figure it out.

Naaki nods.

NAAKI

So we are getting close to our first climbing spot.

Alex looks down the river.

ALEX

OK, I'm ready.

Naaki pats Alex on the shoulder.

NAAKI

OK, man.

He walks over to where sandwiches are being made.

Alex turns his back and stares at the river, pissed.

Cole walks up to Alex with a sandwich.

COLE

Bologna?

Alex takes the sandwich.

ALEX
Right now, I'll eat anything.

COLE
How are you feeling?

ALEX
About what?

COLE
About your first experience.

ALEX
Good.

COLE
Listen, what happened today. It's all good. You can talk to me, man. I'm a good listener.

ALEX
Nothing to say. Just first-time jitters is all.

Cole shakes his head.

COLE
Nah, there's something else going on.

He takes a bite of his sandwich.

COLE (CONT'D)
I've watched you today. You're clinched up so tight I thought you were going to shoot a diamond out your ass whenever we hit rapids.

He points at the river.

COLE (CONT'D)
You can't control this, man. You have to relax. Let go. Just be.

ALEX
Easy for you to say. Fucking Navy seal.

COLE
Not always.

ALEX

Nah, but seriously. Life has been pretty fucking good for you. You'll play this scene for a few more years, find some hippy chick, pop out a few mini-me's, and move off to the suburbs.

Cole laughs quietly.

COLE

Not likely.

He looks up at Alex.

COLE (CONT'D)

All I'm saying is that there's something about you. Something that the river will expose.

Cole looks him over.

COLE (CONT'D)

It's bigger than you.

ALEX

I'm just a dude trying to make some cash. That's all.

Cole thinks a beat.

COLE

OK.

Cole pops the last bite in his mouth.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Back on the river - Cole has taken the stern.

They float languidly down a mellow part of the river, which is lined with large Redwood forests, casting shadows on the rippling current.

Naaki sits behind Alex.

NAAKI

Your father and I used to come down here to fish. Your dad always used to say.

ALEX

Where there are trees there are fish.

NAAKI

That's right. Boy, that man could pull 'em out, one after the other.

ALEX

Yeah, he was sort of a fish-whisperer, wasn't he? Too bad he became the bottle whisperer.

NAAKI

Yeah, that was too bad. But that had nothing to do with you.

Alex looks at Naaki.

ALEX

Didn't it, though?

Naaki looks away.

NAAKI

Your dad had a problem long before you were born. He was a spiritual man. That just got washed out by his demons. Demons that go back generations, Alex.

PENI

What happened here? To your people?

NAAKI

The Winchester rifle. That's what. Gold rush. Late 1800's. White man came through and mowed us down. End of story.

ALEX

People need to let go of the past and embrace the world they live in.

PENI

Fuck that shit. My world two days ago was MAGA hell. Now it's going down a Maidu river on a raft. Full reversal. As simple as that.

COLE

Amen, sister.

ALEX

I think it's dangerous to get emotionally attached to things you can't control.

NAAKI

I think it's dangerous not to.

COLE

Amen.

ALEX

Would you stop saying, "Amen."

Cole looks ahead of them.

COLE

OK, how about "Holy Shit" then?

Suddenly, the raft is flying and headed into rapids.

NAAKI

Show 'em how it's done, Cole!

COLE

Roger that.

He start steering the boat.

COLE (CONT'D)

OK, we got some eddy lines coming on the right. They can be some of the most dangerous parts of the river. Its all about the set up. See that curve over on the left? That green current running through there is where we want the raft. Over to the right is Sun Gulch. We want to stay out of there. Just key up the hole and dig for it.

They emerge into class four rapids. The raft bounces violently through the rocks.

COLE (CONT'D)

Dig right. Dig right.

Alex digs and digs.

He misses a couple digs and splashes Naaki behind him.

COLE (CONT'D)

Dig right!

But they don't make it.

They bounce into Sun Gulch emerging around the bend - full of boulders and jagged log jams.

The raft belly drops into the boulders, jarring everyone out of their seats.

Alex nearly flips into the water. He clings to the raft ropes as the right side of the raft dunks under a wall of water.

INT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

Alex's head is bobbing like a ball. His head hits a rock, making his eyes cross.

He is just about knocked out when --

EXT. RAFT - DAY

Naaki yanks Alex back onto the raft. He shakes his head.

The others are still battling rapids.

COLE

Dig left!

Naaki grabs his paddle and digs.

Alex just sits there. STUNNED. Frozen.

All SOUND begins to drown out and Alex's vision blurs --

He snaps out of it and refocuses. He grabs his paddle and starts to paddle, almost in a panic.

The others manage to flip the raft out of the narrow waterway and back into the main river way.

They all cheer except Alex. Peni notices.

Alex notices that Peni notices and puts up his macho front.

ALEX

Fuck yeah.

Peni rolls her eyes and starts to paddle.

Naaki watches Alex intently, sadly, it would seem.

NAAKI

We're coming up on our first cliff,
Alex.

ALEX

Finally.

EXT. GRANITE CLIFFS - DAY

River water is muted in the background as exquisite blue granite cliffs tower perhaps 150 feet into the sky, peppered with clusters of brush and small pine trees.

At the base, the remnants of a river that once flowed makes the ground smooth with only small animal tracks corrupting the otherwise undisturbed sand.

Suddenly, a boot squashes an animal print and we see Naaki leading the crew to the site. Alex is behind him with ropes around his torso, then the rest of the crew behind him.

NAAKI

Just where I remembered.

They all look up at a towering sheer cliff.

COLE

Shit, bro.

ALEX

Alright, so I'll climb up and get
our rope secure.

He jumps up onto one of the granite ledges.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Let me show you how it's done.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - DAY

Alex free-styles up the face of the cliff.

He is quick, and precise, using the very smallest muscles of his feet and hands to pull himself up the brutal wall.

He ascends about two-thirds of the way up - his mind in a sort of yoga trance.

Suddenly, he SLIPS and, hanging on only from his fingertips, his body SLAMS against the granite, causing him to GRUNT.

Peni GASPS below, holding her mouth.

Alex rights himself and pulls himself back up to where he was.

From there, it's easy climbing, and in no time, Alex is on the top.

He jumps up and flexes his muscles.

ALEX

I am superman!

He pulls off his rope and starts to chisel an anchor post into the granite.

He pulls on it to make sure it's tight.

He attaches the rope and throws it over the ledge.

He grabs the rope and jumps over the ledge.

EXT. CLIFF - DAY

Alex repels down the cliff rapidly.

He lands on the ground almost as if on a cloud.

ALEX

Ta-da.

They are stunned.

He looks at Cole.

ALEX (CONT'D)

You want to go?

COLE

Hell yeah.

Alex smiles.

ALEX

Alright.

Alex reaches around Cole with the rope. They are nearly chest-to-chest as Alex works the rope around Cole, fluidly, seamlessly. Cole closes his eyes for a second.

He takes off his gloves and hands the Cole.

ALEX (CONT'D)

These will help.

Cole smiles at Alex.

COLE

Thanks.

Cole begins his ascent.

He is a natural, using the rope to leverage his lean body fluidly up the cliff.

Get's to the top. Flexes his muscles.

Then repels down even faster than Alex.

THEN -

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - DAY

Now it's Peni's turn.

Alex is just as gentle with Peni - making sure she is properly tethered and ready.

ALEX

Make sure you are good and safe.

Peni is impressed with his carefulness.

PENI

You really know this stuff.

Alex looks up at her in all seriousness.

ALEX

Climbing is my refuge. It's my self-expression.

Naaki walks up behind.

NAAKI

It's your fluidity. Your nurturer side.

ALEX

I don't know about that.

Alex helps Peni onto the first stoop of the cliff.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Remember, use that rope.

Peni starts ascending. She's good, too.

Naaki pats Alex on the back.

NAAKI

I think there's a lot of potential here. You work well with others. Too bad you are terrified of water.

Alex shoots Naaki a look.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

I see you do your thing here, and then I see you on the water. What happened, Alex?

Alex looks away.

ALEX

It was a long time ago.

NAAKI

After your dad died?

ALEX

Yes. Just some kids at school.

NAAKI

When they found out?

ALEX

Found out what?

NAAKI

What you are.

ALEX

And what's that?

Naaki gives him a look.

NAAKI

Come on. I can sense it off you, man. You're a two-spirit.

ALEX

A what?

NAAKI

Two-spirit. A magical person. People with both the spirit of the man and the woman.

Alex is stunned.

ALEX

How do you know?

Naaki looks at the river.

NAAKI

Because I am one, too.

He looks at Alex.

ALEX

And so was your father.

The information hits Alex like a ton of bricks. He looks at Naaki.

ALEX (CONT'D)

I thought I was the only one in the world.

Naaki smiles and pats him on the shoulder.

NAAKI

Nope.

Peni repels down, breathing heavily and exhilarated. She lands in Alex's arms.

PENI

Whew! That was fantastic. Better than sex.

Alex laughs uncomfortably, still stunned by the news he just received.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

The sun reflects off the flowing water as the crew float down a wider part of the river, relaxing.

Peni is steering them down the river.

NAAKI

They almost dammed this river back in the 1930's.

COLE

That would have been a shame. Already killed so many on the eastern ridge.

NAAKI

All those lawns to water with the Momim.

PENI

Momim?

ALEX

It's Maidu for water.

PENI

Sounds like Mom. As in Momma Nature.

NAAKI

Exactly.

PENI

Do people still speak Maidu.

ALEX

Nah. It's a dead language.

PENI

Seems like a language worth keeping.

Alex focuses on the river.

ALEX

From the ashes rose the Phoenix.

COLE

Nah, just greedy white men soaked in native blood - their pockets stuffed with gold.

Alex shoots him a look and Cole shrugs.

COLE (CONT'D)

It's true.

A bank of rapids comes up.

Peni starts maneuvering the raft down the river.

NAAKI

OK. Good. Good. Keep it in the channel.

She steers the raft toward the channel, but then a piece of something coming down the river hits the raft and knocks toward a cluster of rocks.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

Dig right. Dig right.

Everyone digs right while Peni struggles to steer.

The raft hits a big rock and knocks everyone off balance, including Peni.

SUDDENLY, Alex unconsciously abandons his post and lurches toward Peni.

COLE

Stay at your station.

But it's too late.

They hit another rock and Alex falls onto Peni, making them both tumble into the river.

INT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Both of them are being churned in the water.

Peni's head hits a rock, causing it to bleed.

Alex, who churns uncontrollably, drowning.

But he looks over and sees PENI knocked out -

FLASHBACK --

HE FLASHES TO HIS VISION of the bullies holding his head underwater -

END FLASHBACK --

Suddenly, Alex starts kicking and pulling to get to Peni.

He is in a zone - a flow - and somehow manages to free her from the underwater whirlwind and they bob to the surface.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Peni refocus and looks at Alex.

PENI

You've got me.

Alex treads furiously and spits water out of his mouth.

Peni is foisted out of the water and onto the raft.

NAAKI

You OK?

She touches her forehead.

PENI

Yeah, I'm cool.

Alex is still in the water, barely holding onto the side rope of the raft.

ALEX

Hey, what about me?

Naaki looks at him.

NAAKI

You can pull yourself in.

Alex clumsily pulls his large frame out of the water and flops onto the raft.

Cole leans into Alex.

COLE

See? Now stay at your post next time.

Alex tries to get himself up but slips on the floor of the raft, looking dumb.

Peni gives Alex a knowing look and smiles.

PENI

Thank you.

EXT. FIRESIDE - NIGHT

Naaki, Alex, and Peni sit around the fire roasting weenies. Cole walks over and sits next to Alex.

COLE

Bun for your weenie?

Alex laughs.

ALEX

No thanks.

Peni pulls her hot dog off the fire.

PENI

I'll take one.

Cole hands Peni a bun.

PENI (CONT'D)

So tell us about the Maidu, Naaki.
You alluded to altercations with
the gold miners. What happened,
really?

Naaki thinks for a moment.

NAAKI

They came out of nowhere.

FLASHBACK --

EXT. RIVER - DAY

MAIDU NATIVES fish off the river near a clearing in the woods. They are dressed in traditional clothing, fishing in traditional ways.

NAAKI (O.S.)

There was the occasional pioneer
family that came through on their
way through the California
territory.

They look over as a white pioneer FAMILY ride by in a covered wagon.

NAAKI (CONT'D)

But when the Gold Rush hit, it was
a like a wave of crimson savagery.

EXT. MAIDU CLIFFS - DAY

MAIDU INDIANS fight a group of WHITE MINERS who are trying to take over one of the sacred caves.

MINER

They should have taken our offer.

The Maidu fight gallantly but the miners just start firing their guns.

NAAKI (O.S.)

They mowed down anyone they thought
was native, like exterminating
cockroaches in a kitchen.

Blood squirts everywhere, all over the cliffs, and inside the cave.

Bodies drop. Women run. Mothers shot in their tracks, their babies flying out of their arms and into the air, dropping - suddenly silent - on the rocky ground.

NAAKI (CONT'D)
They even murdered children,
drowning them in the river.

UNDERWATER -

CHILDREN are held under the river current by MINERS. Their screams are muffled by the flow.

WOODS -

Maidu NATIVES flee into the woods with whatever they can carry, their village burning in the distance behind them.

NAAKI (CONT'D)
Some escaped to the higher
elevations.

IN THE VILLAGE -

It's a bloodbath of Maidu dead on the ground as the MINERS set up the mining camp, tossing BODIES onto a pile to be burned.

NAAKI (CONT'D)
In some cases, 70% of a community
populations were wiped out in a
day. Atrocities that, to this day,
are unacknowledged by our
government.

END FLASHBACK --

EXT. CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

Peni is in tears. Cole picks at the fire. Alex's mind is going a million miles an hour.

ALEX
Serves them right for not gunning
up.

COLE
So, is that the answer? Violence?

ALEX
That's the reality, man. Society
is vicious.

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

If you don't conform, it will chew you up and spit you out.

NAAKI

Or drown you?

Alex shoots a look at Naaki, the comment digging deep.

ALEX

Yeah, that's when you man up and deal. Do whatever it takes.

PENI

To fit in? Fuck that shit. Maybe a hundred years ago people didn't have choices, but they do now.

ALEX

Not for long.

COLE

So you think things are going to go back to the way they were?

ALEX

I don't think they ever changed in the first place. Look around. People suck, man. They're cruel. They're brutal. They fight and fight until they can't fight anymore and then someone throws them in a bone yard to be juiced up and killed.

PENI

I think you're wrong. I think that people are inherently good. I think that bad things happen to good people that make them go bad, but I believe we are all born inherently good.

NAAKI

I agree. I think that life is a test. And we are judged based on the decisions we make. Almost everybody fails, but in the long run, there's still time to change the road you're on. And it's true, as long as you have breath in your body.

Naaki looks at Alex.

ALEX
I'm fine with my road. You do what
it takes.

COLE
Even if it can hurt others?

ALEX
Not my problem.

PENI
Wow. OK.

Peni stands.

PENI (CONT'D)
With that said, I'm going to bed.

Alex backpedals.

ALEX
I don't mean to be a dick. I just
see what I see.

Cole stands.

COLE
Well, you got blinders on, bro.
Good night, all.

Cole wanders off. Alex looks at Naaki.

NAAKI
You will see soon enough.

Naaki stands.

NAAKI (CONT'D)
Come with me.

Alex reluctantly stands.

ALEX
Where are we going?

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Naaki leads Alex through the brush of untrammelled Sierra forest and comes upon a wall of granite towers through the tall redwoods and Douglas firs - all illuminated by the moon.

ALEX
Wow.

NAAKI

This way.

Naaki scurries up to a rope and begins scaling the cliff.

Alex follows.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Alex and Naaki clamber up into the cave. It's the same cave we saw with Naaki at the beginning.

The cave is lit by the moonlight, illuminating Native drawings of all kinds that cover the walls and ceilings.

The various depictions - visions - drawn to the ones of man - woman - and variations of such - depicted in the simple yet incredibly vivid and insightful art.

ALEX

How old are these?

NAAKI

Our people have lived here since about 1000 AD. Those there are about five hundred years old.

Alex notices the figures with different genders. He looks at Naaki.

ALEX

Do you still have your?

NAAKI

Oh yeah. My mom didn't take well with the western medicine.

ALEX

I wasn't so lucky.

NAAKI

Our people have been tricked and fooled.

ALEX

Fuck it. It's getting fixed.

NAAKI

Fixed, or further destroyed?

ALEX

Hey, all I want is to be a man. Maidu witchery aside.

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

I have to live in this world. Not some fairy land.

NAAKI

I want to teach you more about the two-spirit.

ALEX

That's OK. I'm fine.

NAAKI

Tell me about what it was like, when you realized that you held your two-spirits.

ALEX

You mean when I realized I was a freak? Before I could remember.

NAAKI

Have you ever felt a connection to your female spirit side?

ALEX

Not at all.

NAAKI

Why not?

ALEX

I was ashamed of it.

NAAKI

Your femininity. Did you ever feel like it overpowered you.

ALEX

No. I repressed it. I refused to let it surface. I'm a man, God damn it.

NAAKI

That's too bad because your power lies in your feminine side, and it comes out in ways you don't even realize. You exhibit it in your climbing - the nurturing way in which you worked with the others. You think you are in control, but really the rock is controlling you. It's the same with the river. But you won't give the river a chance like you do the rock. You fight your flow on many fronts.

Alex's eyes roll in frustration.

ALEX

What are you saying? That I'm not in touch with my feminine side? That's where you are wrong. I get in touch with it every time I look in the mirror. It forces itself on me. Just like those kids forced my head into the river. It is something I cannot control.

NAAKI

There is nothing you can control.

ALEX

Bullshit.

NAAKI

Only maneuver.

ALEX

Bullshit.

NAAKI

You are special, Alex. You are more than simply body parts. You are magic.

ALEX

Bullshit. I'm a freak.

NAAKI

You are gift from God, brought down to earth to teach, to reach, and to heal.

ALEX

Bullshit, man. Stop with this bullshit. Let me tell you what I am. I'm a not-too-bright Indian boy with a useless pussy and no dick. I'm a 19-year old virgin who has only been able to dream about what it's like to blow a load. I am a terrified little cliff rodent who can scurry to hard places every time I feel threatened.

NAAKI

One of those hard places is your mind. But your flow will find you, even there.

Alex stands and starts to the cave rope.

ALEX

I got go to bed.

Naaki watches as Alex descends out of sight.

INT. TENT - DAY

Alex, still dressed in his clothes, opens his eyes. He listens to the sounds outside for a moment.

He opens his tent and looks outside.

The sun is barely rising to the east, casting golden hues onto the green brush and river. I

n the distance, a DEER hops along the river.

He focuses on the river.

He reaches down into his shorts and starts to explore his femininity.

He closes his eyes.

Suddenly, he is OVERCOME with a sensation he clearly has never felt before.

His eyes roll back into his head.

He refocuses, opening his eyes and pulling his hand out.

He breaths heavily for a moment, and finally calms down.

ALEX

What the hell?

EXT. CAMPSITE - DAY

The sun rises in the sky as the crew huddles around the fire. Empty camping dishes lie next to everyone.

Naaki walks around with a box of granola bars.

NAAKI

Breakfast of champions.

He walks up to Alex.

He takes a granola bar and stuffs it into his pocket.

Peni walks up.

PENI
How you doing?

ALEX
Fine, I guess. A little nervous.

Peni pats him on the shoulder.

PENI
Well at least your being honest.
That's a start.

She smiles at him and coaxes a smile out of Alex too.

He offers her his arm and she accepts.

They start walking toward the raft.

ALEX
You know. I know really nothing
about you. Tell me about Peni from
Nebraska.

PENI
Family always struggled but managed
to hold on to the farm. Guess
something snapped about ten years
back. The last recession did a lot
of people in. That's when it
became all about guns and God and
killing woke liberals. It was more
like a poison came in and killed
all the hope.

ALEX
You miss them? I mean the people
they were before?

PENI
Yeah. I do. I miss the innocence.

She snuggles in to Alex.

PENI (CONT'D)
What about you?

ALEX
Not much to tell. I grew up in a
town near here. Pretty normal
childhood, considering.

PENI
Considering what?

ALEX
Considering the fact that I was
different.

PENI
Well, difference should be
celebrated. I got so sick of
people hating anyone different.
It's like scything down your roses
right after you plant them.

ALEX
I've never been compared to a rose
before.

She stops them and turns to Alex, scanning him.

PENI
There's something very bright and
beautiful about you. But you
repress it because you think you
need to be this sort of alpha male.
You're better than that.

Alex pauses, looking at her.

ALEX
I think the reason why I'm a little
guarded is because I wasn't like
the other boys.

PENI
Little boys are all different. It's
when they all decide to be the same
is when it gets really boring.

ALEX
Yeah, they grow up and make a
choice.

PENI
And what's that?

ALEX
Whether or not to fit in I guess.

PENI
I never cared if I fit in or not.

ALEX
That's because you always have.

Peni thinks on that one a moment.

PENI

Why are you doing this, if you hate water? You must be desperate for something.

ALEX

You could say that.

PENI

Desperation usually means you aren't giving it room.

ALEX

The only thing I care about is the cash.

She touches his arm.

PENI

Good luck today. Now, nature calls.

She smiles and wanders off to her tent.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Alex wanders up the river a bit, thinking, preparing, while the others finish breakfast in far distance.

Cole walks up behind Alex, startling him.

COLE

So, what's up with you? Why are you here?

ALEX

Um, the same reason you are. For a job.

COLE

No, but why not get a job somewhere where you don't have to be wet? It's obvious you can't swim worth shit. Sure, you can keep your head above water, but how did a fit guy like you never get into water?

ALEX

A lot of reasons.

COLE

So, you realize there are lives at stake, right? Flipping rafts ain't flipping burgers.

ALEX

Listen, dude, if you're gonna give me a lesson on my dedication to this job, you can go fuck yourself, OK? We're both here because we want to make some money, right? You're here because the money you make in one season lets you do whatever the fuck you want to for the rest of the year. I know guys like you. They pass through my hometown every summer. Nature jocks with no future in sight except getting high and fucking granola bitches.

Alex goes back to poking his fire.

ALEX (CONT'D)

So you can spare me all the sanctimonious bullshit. You're partying right now. I'm actually trying to achieve something.

Cole shakes his head, astonished.

COLE

Boy, you are pretty clueless.

Cole leans over and kisses Alex. Alex is stunned.

ALEX

What the? Do you think I'm?

Cole touches his face. Alex is frozen.

COLE

I don't know what you are. But it's beautiful.

Cole disengages and smiles.

COLE (CONT'D)

I can tell you I'm not what you think I am.

Cole walks back to camp.

Alex just stands there, slightly stunned.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Everyone is dressed down to the bare essentials - the GUYS in board shorts and tennis shoes, PENI in a sport bikini.

They all jump on the raft. Alex assumes the stern.

The water is moving fast but Alex manages well, quickly steering the raft into the lane.

ALEX
Got some boils coming up. Get
ready to dig left.

Alex is in tune with his paddle and his raft. He focuses on the river.

ALEX (CONT'D)
OK, dig.

Alex steers hard. He realizes that he must steer even harder.

COLE
Good, man.

Cole digs ahead of him.

Together they become a force, while Naaki and Peni work together to give the raft some thrust.

They bounce out and into clear waters.

NAAKI
Alright!

Cole and Alex high-five with each other.

NAAKI (CONT'D)
That's the team work I like to see.

EXT. MAIDU NARROWS CLIFFS - DAY

From the EAGLE's eye -

The raft comes around a bend and emerges into the **Maidu Narrows** - a long curving encirclement of staggered granite cliffs - pools of glistening blue river water below - small bits of shoreline with sandy beaches with an occasional fir popping out.

EXT. RAFT - DAY

Alex gazes up from the at the beautiful towering cliffs of many colors, but mostly grey and blue.

ALEX
The blue is iron pyrite.

PENI
It's gorgeous.

Alex scouts the narrows.

He points to a cluster of trees and sandy beach adjacent to a cliff face.

ALEX
Over there.

Alex steers as they paddle toward the beach.

EXT. CLIFF BASE - DAY

Alex stands in front of a medium-height cliff face.

He has ropes on his torso and climbing gear, but no rope on himself.

ALEX
OK, so what I am about to do you should never allow your passengers to do. Free-style climbing requires years of safety practice and training. It is very much like the river - the water - in that you are at the mercy of something much stronger than yourself.

He and Naaki exchange a smile.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Even with ropes, one wrong step, one wrong movement of your body, a gust of wind, can hurt or kill you.

He goes to the granite wall.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Alright. I'll be right down.

NAAKI
Make sure and get those ropes in good and tight up there.

Alex nods and begins to climb.

He is like a spider man as he ascends the cliff.

He seems almost one with the face as he finds his fingering and footing - each step calculated and executed with the firing of muscles most people don't have.

There is something DIFFERENT about Alex's climbing style today - a fluidity, an almost anti-gravity.

He reaches the top and fastens the ropes to pre-existing metal hooks embedded in the granite.

EXT. NARROWS CLIFFS - DAY

The crew watch as Alex throws the ropes down to Naaki, who grabs them on the bottom.

He yanks on them to make sure they are secure.

Alex gives the thumbs-up sign and repels down the cliff face as fast as sanity will allow.

He is about to hit the bottom but slows himself rapidly and lands on his two feet as if on a cloud.

ALEX

Who's first?

EXT. CLIFFS - DAY

Peni and Alex are about half way up the climb. To their right, the plane falls in a direct descent into the river. Peni peeks over.

ALEX

Don't go that way unless you want to end up in the drink.

She shakes off the harrowing precipice and works very hard to pull herself onto a ledge. Alex follows behind her.

ALEX (CONT'D)

You need to feel as one with the rock. Let it pull you to it as you work your way up.

Peni finds another footing and foists herself up.

PENI
This is a lot more work than it
looks.

She continues working.

PENI (CONT'D)
So what. Drove. You to do this?

She grunts as she pulls herself up.

ALEX
I wanted to be on top. To be able
see. To conquer. To be the best
at something. Male pride I guess.

She stops and takes a breath.

PENI
Yeah, but then what? Once you've
conquered it?

Alex thinks.

ALEX
Take what you've learned and try to
teach others, I guess. To take
your knowledge and let it flow onto
others.

PENI
Doesn't sound very alpha-male to
me, Alex Muniz.

ALEX
Maybe I'm tripping.

She laughs and ascends to the top.

Alex looks below and motions to Cole.

EXT. CLIFFS - DAY

Cole looks up at the very small people standing on the top of
the ledge.

He examines the climb. Pretty intense. He looks at the
rope.

COLE
Fuck it.

Cole begins to free-style climb the cliff without the ropes.

Alex notices and shouts down to him.

ALEX

Hey, man, I wouldn't do it free-
style the first time.

But Cole continues, determined.

He makes the first third of the climb - the easiest - in very little time.

He takes a beat to study his moves, where his hands go, where his feet are.

Then comes the scary part - about a twenty feet ascent next to the river - with nothing below except rocks and river.

The rope flutters against the rocks in the light wind as Cole contemplates.

FROM ABOVE - Alex and Peni watch, anxious.

ON THE CLIFF -

Cole looks at the ropes - definitely out of reach. He looks at the cliff and goes for it.

Suddenly, Cole slips and his body bounces off the steep slope of granite.

He slides toward the precipice and flops over it.

As he tumbles, he grabs a piece of slab just in time and swings precariously above the river some fifty feet below.

Suddenly, he howls in pain as his arm DISLOCATES from his shoulder, making him lose his grip.

He tumbles down, bouncing off the granite ledge, and drops into the raging pool of boils below.

EXT. CLIFFSIDE - DAY

Alex watches the whole thing happen in slow motion.

Instinctively, he thrusts his body down and toward the technical cliff where Cole slipped.

In an instant, he is attached to the cliff and stopped.

He sees Cole in the water below.

He repels down as far as he can go and looks over - it's at least twenty feet below, with boulders peppering the deep pool.

Cole flails with one arm - his body being sucked toward the boils.

COLE

Help!

Alex closes his eyes, and makes an enormous leap.

SUDDENLY, a dead branch SNAGS his red shorts and they RIP OFF, flinging down the cliff and fluttering into the water.

Alex tries to reposition the cup but it flies out and tumbles down as well.

The jockstrap, ripped and askew, reveals Alex's secret for all to see.

Alex looks down at himself. Looks up at Peni and Naaki. He shrugs.

ALEX

Fuck it.

Alex leaps into the water, with nothing but his shoes on.

His descent seems almost in slow motion, his entire being revealed.

INT. RIVER - DAY

Cole watches Alex leap from the cliff totally naked.

Cole smiles in spite of himself.

COLE

I'll be damned.

Alex lands in the water beside him.

INT. RIVER - UNDERWATER - DAY

Underwater, Alex is dazed as the river has his way with him.

He is pulled upward and downward.

For an instant, he PANICS.

But then -- a CALM overcomes him.

NAAKI (V.O.)
Let it flow, bro. Let it flow.

He kicks his feet hard, freeing himself from the boil.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Alex's head juts out of the water.

ALEX
Surprise.

Cole puts his arm around Alex, holding onto him for dear life.

COLE
Dude, I think my arm is broken.

Alex struggles against the strong current.

He instinctively turns Cole over on his back and uses his forearm to support him.

He starts kicking side stroke to get them out of the whirlpool.

Water splashes over Cole's face, making him cough. Alex is just focused on swimming.

He frees them from the pool and he points Cole's legs down river, holding onto Cole and using his own legs as a rudder.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

Peni and Naaki push off in the raft.

They sweep into the current and scan the waters for Cole and Alex.

Peni spots them. She points.

PENI
Over there!

Naaki and Peni dig like hell.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Cole and Alex flow down the river.

Alex works desperately to steer them away from rocks and eddies.

He is breathing hard and using every muscle in his body to keep them afloat and forward.

Alex sees a beach spit and tries to steer them toward it.

They flow by a tree in the river and Cole grabs a branch with his good arm.

They stop and flow around and into the tree's eddy.

ALEX

We're OK. We're going to be OK.

Cole just squints in pain.

PENI (ECHOING)

Alex?

ALEX

Over here!

He waves and they see them.

They pull up in the raft.

ALEX (CONT'D)

His arm is broken.

Peni and Naaki work to gently pull Cole into the raft. Cole helps with his working arm, but still yells in pain as he flops into the middle of the raft.

Alex still in the water, thinks for a moment, remembering he's naked.

He pulls himself up onto the raft and once again is exposed.

He sits and looks at Naaki.

ALEX (CONT'D)

What do we do?

Naaki looks at him and begins work on Cole's arm.

Alex assumes the rudder duties. Peni paddles. Everyone is a little dazed.

EXT. MAIDU NARROWS CLIFFS - DAY

Everyone is sweating balls as they get Cole centered on the raft.

Alex digs into his stowed pack and pulls out a pair of shorts and pulls them on.

ALEX

Wow. Suddenly having shorts on feels weird.

They head toward the shore.

EXT. SAND SPIT - DAY

Cole is laying against a rock, eyes closed, his arm in a sling.

Alex walks up and sits next to him. Cole opens his eyes and looks at him.

COLE

Hi.

ALEX

Hows the arm?

COLE

Shitty.

ALEX

Listen. I shouldn't have let you free-style that cliff.

COLE

It's not your fault.

ALEX

When I saw you tumble over. More than just the fear of someone getting hurt.

He looks at Cole.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Something more than that.

He places his good hand on Alex's leg.

COLE

I'm yours if you want me.

ALEX
I'm afraid of these feelings.

COLE
Everybody's afraid of their
feelings.

EXT. SAND SPIT - DAY

Cole sleeps on a sleeping bag. Naaki, Alex, and Peni sitting
around a cold fire pit eating granola bars.

NAAKI
We'll give him a few more minutes
to sleep.

Peni stands.

PENI
I'm going to check the raft.
Hopefully it's still full of air.

Naaki and Alex watch as Peni walks toward the beached raft in
the distance.

NAAKI
Great girl. Too bad I'm going to
have to let her go.

Alex turns.

ALEX
Wait. What? It's not over yet.

NAAKI
It's simply a matter of who I think
can handle the river and the
cliffs.

ALEX
Well, Cole isn't going to be
handling anything for at least
three months.

NAAKI
This seems like an odd change of
heart. Last night you were hell
bent on getting your money.

ALEX
All of the sudden, I'm having
second thoughts. I'm beginning to
have, feelings. Naaki.

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

Down there. Something has been awakened in me. It's like a heroin suddenly started flowing through me. I'd never felt that kind of pleasure in my life. I fear I have unleashed a dam. I feel exposed. Naked. Yet, exhilarated. Freed. You were right. The river pulled it out of me.

NAAKI

You are evolving again. Into the human you're supposed to be.

ALEX

Peni needs this more than me.

NAAKI

Are you telling me you aren't taking the job.

ALEX

I think so.

EXT. RIVER BANK - DAY

The three help Cole into the raft.

NAAKI

Peni. You're steering.

Peni assumes position.

PENI

No problem.

Alex jumps on the raft and Naaki pushes off.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

They push off and start down the river. Penni steer them clear of some rapids and into a relatively smooth channel.

NAAKI

Good. Good. Keep it left.

Alex is fully focused on helping Peni keep the raft in the lane.

ALEX

God dang it's gotten hot.

NAAKI

Could be pushing a hundred today.

ALEX

How close is the nearest
civilization?

NAAKI

Where we're supposed to drop out.
About ten miles down the road.

Peni wedges hard to steer.

PENI

Current is changing. Slowing
down.

They look at the river. It is slowing. Almost as if it is
being suddenly pulled backward, like a tide.

The raft begins to shake violently - the current is
reversing!

NAAKI

Oh shit. We need to get off this
river. Peni, try to get us to
shore. Come on. Paddle.

But it's too late.

Peni looks behind them and sees a wall of water coming at
them.

She is frozen.

INT. CANYON - DAY

The towering granite cliffs surrounding the river seem almost
miniature as a TWENTY FOOT WALL OF WATER descends down it's
path.

HUGE BOULDERS tumble like stones in the white frothing
rapids.

LOGS SNAP LIKE TWIGS in the waves - alternately sucked down
into the miasma of the river then shot back up as if from a
canon.

The spit where they had just been resting - WASHES AWAY like
an ocean wave crashing over a sand castle and filling every
crevasse of rock with water and debris.

INT. RAFT - DAY

They all look at the water coming at them. Naaki springs into action.

NAAKI

Everyone to the back of the raft.
Duck down. Grab a rope. Hold your
breath. Don't lose your paddle!

He and Alex grab Cole and pull him back in between the three of them.

PENI

Here it comes!

COLE

Lean back and duck!

The WATER HITS -

The raft lifts violently. The wave curls over their heads, but the weight of the rear makes the raft actually CATCH THE WAVE.

THEY ARE SURFING THE SURGE!

It is a moment of complete serenity and slow-motion - then the raft SHOOTs the curl.

The raft SHOOTs out the wave and up into the sky, tossing all the passengers.

Alex gets dunked underwater and disappears.

Peni is tossed but somehow grabs one of the raft ties.

Cole grasps onto the inside with his one arm, landing underneath the raft in the raging waters.

INT. UNDERWATER - DAY

Alex can see nothing but debris. A log hits hits leg, knocking and spinning him.

He LETS GO and RELAXES.

The current continues to spin him.

It is almost another dimension of reality as Alex is tossed like a rag in the raging underwater torrent.

Suddenly he is SHORT forward and up.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Alex shoots out of the water. He opens his eyes and looks around.

Peni and Cole grasp onto the raft ahead.

PENI

Alex! Over here.

Alex tries to swim but his leg is damaged. Peni stretches out her arm.

PENI (CONT'D)

Stretch!

She grasps his arm and pulls him to the raft.

ALEX

Where's Naaki?

PENI

I can't find him.

Alex clambers onto the upside down raft with Cole, who is just holding on for dear life.

He tries to see around him but the river has engulfed all monuments with swirling grey water and dangerous logs jamming up all of their escape routes.

Suddenly, he SEES NAAKI'S HEAD - Alex LEAPS in the water.

He is like a seal swimming underwater, trying to get to Naaki in the crazy current.

He finally gets a hold of one of Naaki's bracelets, but it snaps, sucking Naaki further down a a boil.

Alex follows.

INT. UNDERWATER BOIL - DAY

The INSIDE OF THE BOIL is like the inside of a tornado -

Alex grabs on to Naaki's arm and just kicks and kicks and kicks, his injured leg making him grunt in pain.

He finally frees them from the boil.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Alex desperately drags Naaki to a high spit next to boulders on the river - sucking them into the back wash like a vacuum.

Alex grabs onto a large overhanging tree branch and pulls himself and Naaki to a ledge above the river.

It takes all of Alex's might to drag Naaki up onto the ledge.

He slaps Naaki.

ALEX
Naaki. Naaki.

Alex begins CPR on Naaki, but it is clear that Naaki is dead.

Alex continues, tears streaming out his eyes.

Finally, he realizes it's a lost cause.

He slumps down next to Naaki's body and stares out at the raging river.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

The river's water is receding, and Peni drags the raft and Cole toward the back wash and they too get sucked in.

She pulls the raft up to the overhanging tree and ties it to the branch.

She pulls herself up. She sees Alex and Naaki. She can tell by Alex's tears that Naaki is gone.

Cole notices and starts to cry as well. Peni slumps down and just stares at the receding river.

EXT. RIVER FRONT - DAY

Emergency vehicles are parked above the river outlet, which is completely covered in mud.

One PARAMEDIC (22) works on Cole's arm while ANOTHER (30) wraps up Naaki's body and rolls it up to the ambulance.

Down at the tattered raft, a SHERIFF (55) asks Alex and Peni questions.

SHERIFF
Well, I commend you son on at least
trying to save the man's life.
(MORE)

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

Naaki. Boy, we're losing a legend
around here.

He pats Alex on the shoulder and gives Peni a smile.

SHERIFF (CONT'D)

You two want a lift into town.
Maybe a shower.

Peni sighs tears.

PENI

That would be fantastic.

INT. SHERIFF'S CAR - DAY

Alex and Peni sit in the backseat.

Alex looks out the window as the sheriff bounces the car up
onto the road.

As the car drives along, Alex examines the river, which
flickers between tall pine trees reflecting light into Alex's
eyes - like diamond lasers, each point of light itself
refracting a rainbow.

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

Alex sleeps in his bed, his gear thrown in the corner and
seemingly untouched for days.

He opens his eyes and drags himself out of bed.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Moon boxes baskets for shipment on the long dining table. She
looks up and smiles.

MOON

My God. The dead has arisen.

Alex pours himself a cup of coffee.

MOON (CONT'D)

Have you heard from your friend?

ALEX

Yeah. Surgery went OK. Never be
the same, though.

MOON
Well, things happen in life.

ALEX
They certainly do.

MOON
They are having a memorial for
Naaki at the tribal center
tomorrow.

ALEX
I know.

He takes his mom's arm.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Listen, Mom. I just want to tell
you how sorry I am for being such a
bad son.

MOON
Oh, honey. You are my magic child.
My gift.

ALEX
I blamed you for a lot of things
that weren't your fault.

MOON
Most kids do, honey. I think
you've done your best.

ALEX
I've decided not to get the
surgery.

She smiles - she lays her hand on his arm.

MOON
I know.

INT. TRIBAL CENTER - DAY

The interior of the tribal center is incredible -

Huge tapestries of Maidu weaving and arts hang from walls and
ceilings -

A replicated village is constructed in an adjacent room with
the sounds of river flow being piped in from the speakers.

INT. VILLAGE ROOM - DAY

Alex examines the village - the replicated cliffs - he touches them.

He looks inside the tee-pees. So simple yet so elegant.

He turns and walks into another room.

INT. SACRED ANTIQUITIES ROOM - DAY

Alex roams into the sacred antiquities room - it is glass-covered display cases showing various pottery, medicines, and herbs -

In one display case there is a presentation on the Two Spirits of Native culture - he examines the items and artestry, thinking.

NAAKI (IN ALEX'S MIND)

I think that life is a test. And we are judged based on the decisions we make. Almost everybody fails, but in the long run, there's still time to change the road you're on. And it's true. As long as there is breath in your body.

Alex turns and exits the room.

INT. TRIBAL LONG HOUSE - DAY

A large group of PEOPLE are gathered in a traditional Native long house. Naaki is wrapped in native garments for burial.

A Native priest sings a prayer. Alex, sitting next to Moon, Cole, and Peni, listens.

The priest finishes the song and Alex walks up to the sacred podium.

He clears his throat.

ALEX

Things happen in life. One of the beautiful things about nature, is her ability to keep us on our toes, place secrets in our path that we figure out, insights, inspirations, obstacles that sometimes destroy us physically, but always teach us. Always.

Alex looks down on Naaki.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Naaki taught me that it is absurd to try and control the ways of nature. He learned that on the river. That is where I learned it too. It was through Naaki that I learned that we are all so much more. So much more than our body parts. That we all are more than just a man, or a woman. We are all magic. And if we would just give that magic a chance, this world would be a better place. Naaki loved the river because it was the only place where his nature could flow freely. Imagine if we could all find that place in ourselves.

Alex walks down and sits next to his mother again.

Then, several NATIVE MEN in dazzling Maidu costumes begin a dance around Naaki - the smoke of incense and burning herbs surround his flower-draped body as they dance around him.

EXT. TRIBAL CENTER - DAY

Cole waits in his car while Peni and Alex talk.

PENI

Well, I'm off.

ALEX

Where to?

PENI

I don't know. Frisco maybe.

ALEX

Frisco? I don't think anybody's called it Frisco since 1979.

She laughs.

PENI
 Maybe I'll bring it back. That and
 Rice A Roni.

ALEX
 I wish you didn't have to go. I
 don't like the idea of you roaming
 San Francisco alone.

PENI
 Oh, I'm staying with an old high
 school friend.

Alex and Peni hug.

ALEX
 Thank you for helping to show me.

PENI
 Show you what?

Alex thinks a minute.

ALEX
 Me.

EXT. CLIFF FACE - DAY

An Eagle circles above as Chi and Alex smoke a joint at the
 top of a cliff. The river rages below in the canyon.

ALEX
 So what happens with Naaki's
 rafting outfit.

CHI
 Family wants to sell, if they can
 get a buyer. But no Naaki. No
 season. They asked me to secure
 the place up for them.

ALEX
 I suppose I could go beg for my job
 back from Roxie.

CHI
 Could be worse. I'm not sure what
 the hell I'm going to do. I may
 have to actually move back home.

He laughs.

CHI (CONT'D)

I'll camp on the river before that.

ALEX

Things could be a lot worse.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

Alex arrives home to find Cole's Subaru parked out front.
Alex jumps out of his truck and walks into the house.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Cole helps Moon with a tall stack of hats.

Moon notices Alex.

MOON

Hi honey. This gentlemen stopped
by to help me with the hats.

ALEX

That gentleman shouldn't be
doing anything with that arm.

Alex takes over for Cole. Alex smiles at Cole.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Glad to see you. So, to what do we
owe this pleasure?

Cole smiles.

COLE

I came to offer you a job.

EXT. RAFTING CAMP - DAY

Peni, Chi, and Alex examine their new sign in front of what
was Naaki's raft shack.

It reads - "MAIDU NATIVE RIVER LEGACY AND EXPLORATION - No
photography. No Social Media Posting Allowed. Phones
Banned."

Cole walks out of the raft shack and up to Alex.

He puts his good arm around Alex - they KISS.

Chi puts his arm around Peni and she turns, wagging her
finger.

PENI

Hey buster. Watch it.

They all laugh together.

The river sparkles her magic rainbow beams behind them and above them

- Embracing them
- Holding them
- With her current.

THE END