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## An Analysis of the Episodic Writing Process

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An Analysis of the Episodic Writing Process

An Undergraduate Honors Thesis  
Submitted in Partial fulfillment of  
University Honors Program Requirements  
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

by  
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## Abstract

Writing for an episodic series vastly differs from writing for a short film. This essay explores the major differences between writing a short film in contrast to writing an episodic series and how these differences impact the writing process. The essay examines the topic by breaking down my own experience writing an episodic series and the key findings I uncovered throughout that process. I describe my series, *Scythe*, and the central themes and characters that encompass the series. With a central theme of death, I describe how I worked to establish an emotional tonal balance between drama and humor within my writing. The overall goal is to break down the episodic process in order to utilize it in my own writing. I start by stating the research I conducted on writers who have successfully written an episodic series and examining their method. I analyze produced episodic series and discuss how the process is successfully utilized. Comparing my experience writing short films with my experience writing an episodic series, I describe how writing for an episodic requires a different level of preparation than writing for short film. In addition, I elaborate on the three major formats of episodic series: procedural, serialized, or hybrid. The style of the series impacts the way the story is written and alters the progression of the story. Overall, the key differences between writing an episodic series and a short film are tied to the beginning approach, the format of the piece, and the method of developing the story arc through the written work.

**Keywords:** Episodic, Showrunner, Screenwriting, Script.

## **An Analysis of the Episodic Writing Process**

After writing in the short screenplay format throughout my college career, I decided the next step for me to grow as a writer was to write in the episodic format. In doing so, I would challenge myself with a bigger and more daunting project than anything I had attempted so far. It would require me to dive deep into every aspect of my story and characters and sustain a storyline over the course of multiple scripts. This required me to not only pull from my personal writing experiences, but also to explore historic and contemporary examples of this form as well as research advice from experienced screenwriters skilled in writing the episodic format. From this process, I learned new writing skills and developed a clear understanding of the similarities and differences between the process used for episodic series versus the short screenplay.

My episodic series entitled *Scythe* follows the death of the main protagonist Dalton as he works to cope and understand his new role in the afterlife as a grim reaper. Not only does he struggle to come to terms with his own unfortunate ending throughout the series, but he is tasked with the important role of helping others who have died to pass on into the next stage of their existence. Knowing that mortality is a darker central theme to have for a series and that the series I was creating was based so heavily on this topic, I worked to find a way to balance the series. I created an equal balance between humor and drama throughout the series so that the audience was not overwhelmed by such a heavy subject. Another method I employed to help with the heavy subject material was to create a world that was familiar to audiences, but was unique enough to stand on its own. The concept of death and the afterlife is the main subject of numerous shows and movies in pop culture. The familiarity of the concept aided in my endeavor to intrigue audiences, but also challenged me to distinguish my storyline from material already created.

Writing an episodic series is vastly different from writing in the short film format which I am accustomed to. For example, episodic series typically have one overarching plotline accompanied by subplot lines that form each episode. Each episode has its own story arch, with rising and falling action. The short film scripts I have written previously, have one major story arch and span from ten to fifteen pages in length. Short film scripts typically have to start *in media res*, literally “in the middle of”, because they are constrained by length.<sup>1</sup> They have a limited amount of time to tell the story, therefore they do not have time to give detailed exposition at the beginning of the film. Episodic series not only have the time to present the audience with exposition in the pilot episode, but they also have the liberty to reveal important information to the audience over the course of multiple episodes.

With all of the differences between short film scripts and episodic scripts, I did extensive research to understand common methods of storytelling and writing in the episodic style. My research included reviewing books written by episodic screenwriters, listening and reading interviews, and consuming media to analyze how different techniques and methods are employed in a produced script. One of the main sources of my findings came from American screenwriter Neil Landau. Landau is a skilled episodic screenwriter with years of experience in the industry.<sup>2</sup> In the book *The Tv Showrunner's Roadmap*, Landau breaks down the different styles of episodic series. A showrunner is similar to the director of a film. They are the head writer for the series as well as an executive producer for the show.<sup>3</sup> The book starts by explaining the difference between a procedural show and a serialized show. A procedural show is one where each episode is its own standalone plotline or case that does not necessarily build towards one overarching

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<sup>1</sup> Dan Gurskis, *The Short Screenplay: Your Short Film from Concept to Production* (Boston, MA: Thomson Course Technology, 2007), 6.

<sup>2</sup> Neil Landau, *TV Showrunner's Roadmap: 21 Navigational Tips for Screenwriters to Create and Sustain a Hit TV Series* (Burlington, MA: Focal Press, 2015), xii.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, xvi.

storyline for the season<sup>4</sup>. Examples of this style of writing are usually cop shows or medical dramas where each episode tracks a crime or medical emergency that needs to be solved. Often, this style of writing uses “case specifics” presented in the episode to build the characters and relationship storylines within the show.<sup>5</sup> Procedural shows use this method instead of having one big case of conflict to solve in their work throughout the entire series.

On the opposite side of the spectrum, are serialized shows that have one main conflict that the characters are working towards solving as their character growth and subplot lines are interwoven throughout the series<sup>6</sup>. Examples of this style of writing would be shows like *Lost*<sup>7</sup> and *Stranger Things*.<sup>8</sup> This approach gives a different tone to the series as the story arch must span over the course of the entire season. As a result, serialized shows have a different pacing than procedural shows. Both styles have their own merits, and whichever style you chose directly shapes the story you are telling.

Finally, there are hybrid shows that have both a main storyline as well as closed storylines throughout the episodes. Shows like *Once Upon a Time*<sup>9</sup>, *Grey's Anatomy*<sup>10</sup>, and *Supernatural*<sup>11</sup> utilize this style. Shows that utilize the hybrid style effectively blend the procedural and serialized styles together. This allows for unique pacing throughout the series. After some deliberation, I decided to make use of the serialized style of writing for my episodic series because it best fit the storyline I was writing. My story has one main conflict with a protagonist working to solve that conflict as they face difficult challenges. As a writer familiar

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<sup>4</sup> Landau, 8.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> *Lost* (American Broadcasting Company, 2004).

<sup>8</sup> *Stranger Things* (Netflix, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> *Once Upon a Time* (American Broadcasting Company, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> *Grey's Anatomy* (American Broadcasting Company, 2005).

<sup>11</sup> *Supernatural* (The CW Television Network, 2005).

with the short film style, writing in the serialized style is similar. The two styles translate better than transitioning from short film to writing in either procedural or hybrid style.

Landau also talks about determining whether your series is a premise or non-premise pilot episode. This is especially important to consider when beginning an episodic series because the pilot episode is crucial. It is the first introduction to the world and character that you have created for your audience and it sets the tone for the entire series. Landau explains, a premise pilot is a pilot in which the story starts at the beginning of the journey for both the character and the audience.<sup>12</sup> He gives the example of a series like *Lost* in which the pilot episode starts with the plane crash.<sup>13</sup> The audience and the character get pulled into the main conflict at the same time, which sets a different tone for the story.

On the other hand, a non-premise pilot drops the audience into the middle of the action.<sup>14</sup> As Landau explains, “It’s the first episode for the audience, but not day one for the character.”<sup>15</sup> I am familiar with this approach from my short screenwriting class, though we referred to it instead as *en media res*, in the middle of. This works well for short screenplays because by starting in the middle of the action, you are able to cover the entire story in a limited number of pages. When I contemplated which style I wanted to utilize for my pilot episode, I determined it was best to go with a premise pilot even though I have more experience using an *en media res* technique similar to non-premise pilots. This all came down to my story arch goals and the themes I was exploring throughout the series. A major theme of my series is accepting mortality and finding a new purpose. By starting off the series as a premise pilot, it allowed the audience to experience the death and the emotions of the character along with them as a way for them to

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<sup>12</sup> Landau, 9.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

empathize with my main character and later relate to my supporting characters. It also allowed me to slowly introduce the mythical world in which the grim reapers live to the audience instead of dropping them into an unfamiliar world all at once.

Once I determined which style of episodic series I wanted to use, I worked on building the world that my story takes place in. This required a lot of planning and deliberation. Having my main character be a grim reaper meant that I needed to know all of the answers to how the process works and what this would look like for my characters. This took up a vast majority of my time in the planning phase. I was first introduced to the process of worldbuilding through a course I had taken in my earlier years of college. This course was a good introduction to worldbuilding, but I still had a lot to learn. Never before had I taken on this size of project. As a result, I found a lot of my research came from consuming other episodic series and learning from them. I reflected upon past shows I had watched as well as studied shows that were new to me. When reflecting on these series, I noted how the story world was introduced to the audience, and how some aspects of the world were revealed as needed, over the course of the series. Then I began to ask questions about my own world and worked to answer them. I asked questions like: How do people become reapers? Can reapers interact with the living world? Can reapers die? What happens when reapers die? Is there any person or force acting as a power of authority in the reaper world? This was the beginning process of creating my world and setting up how my pilot episode and subsequent episodes would play out.

A major inspiration for my worldbuilding process was the series *The Haunting of Hill House* created by Mike Flanagan.<sup>16</sup> The story follows a family of five siblings that are suffering the consequences of living in a haunted house growing up.<sup>17</sup> I took inspiration from this show

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<sup>16</sup> *The Haunting of Hill House* (Netflix, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.



and its worldbuilding because it successfully accomplished what I am attempting to do with my worldbuilding. It blended aspects of the regular world which we are accustomed to with the supernatural world of the afterlife or what the show depicts the afterlife to be. In the show, the deceased can only interact with the living in certain ways, predominantly in their dreams and with the subconscious. There are also rules for what happens when and where you die. For the people that died within the walls of Hill House, they became forever connected with the estate and bonded to the other spirits residing there.<sup>18</sup>

I took inspiration from this style of worldbuilding and used the previously mentioned techniques to establish the rules of the afterlife in my series. For example, reapers can only help the souls that died in a similar manner pass on to the afterlife. The main protagonist, Dalton, dies in an unfortunate car accident. When he becomes a reaper he can only interact with the souls that died in a motor vehicle accident. In addition, reapers are created when the previous reaper passes down their responsibility to the next soul. These are only a few of the questions I asked when worldbuilding, but they demonstrate the techniques and the results that I employed after studying series with similar themes and concepts.

The next step in my process was to establish the main character of my series. I already had a main character in mind for my world, but in order to establish the series storyline I needed to delve into every aspect of my main character. Best put by Syd Field in his book *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*, "Before you can put one word down on paper, you must know your character."<sup>19</sup> This means I needed to get into the mind of the character and learn about their wants, needs, desires, and fears. While I have previously developed characters for my short screenplays, I knew for this script I would need to delve further into the main character to

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<sup>18</sup> *The Haunting of Hill House* (Netflix, 2018).

<sup>19</sup> Syd Field, *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting* (New York, NY: Delta Trade Paperbacks, 2005).

establish an intriguing and active character who could sustain an entire series for multiple episodes. I began this process by researching advice from other screenwriters. In Field's writing, he defines character as the actions the character takes throughout the story. In other words, "a person is what he does, not what he says."<sup>20</sup> Using this definition, I created scenarios my main character might face throughout the story and theorized how they would respond. Dalton is unhappy about his death, as most people would be, and has a hard time accepting his new role as a grim reaper and the circumstances of his afterlife existence. He responds by neglecting his duties and instead focusing on the mysterious circumstances of his death. At this stage I was deciding how my character would react to certain situations, but I still needed to deal with the important question of why they responded and acted the way they did.

Answering this question required me to delve into what Field calls the "interior" and "exterior life" of your character.<sup>21</sup> The interior life is everything that occurs to your character leading up to the beginning of the story; whereas the exterior life is everything that takes from the beginning of the story until the end.<sup>22</sup> The interior life forms your character, and the exterior life reveals the inner life to the audience.<sup>23</sup> In this case, Dalton was raised by his father from a young age after his mother died. He was old enough to remember his mother before she passed away, but young enough that he romanticizes the thought of her instead of seeing all aspects of the truth. His father then remarried when Dalton was an adolescent, and he has two half-siblings. Throughout his life Dalton has struggled to cope with his mother leaving and never knowing why or what happened to her. That has made it hard to connect with his new half-siblings as well as bond with his older brother, who only sees their mother in a negative light. All of this makes

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<sup>20</sup> Field, 47.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 48

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

up Dalton's interior life and is also the answer to why he acts the way that he does. It is through Dalton's response and actions following becoming a grim reaper, his exterior life, that I was able to present his reason for being distraught is because he feels he abandoned his family just as he felt abandoned by his mother dying in the car accident. He chooses to focus on finding an answer to his death instead of helping others pass on as a way to cope. By breaking down Dalton's interior and exterior life, I was able to establish his character and his wants and needs.

While Field advocates for establishing the background and the motivations of the main character before you begin writing the script, he does not necessarily talk about when to establish your supporting characters.<sup>24</sup> However, I knew going into this process that my supporting cast would be vital to my series. They would help shape the storyline and provide different relationships for the main character. So many characters make up Dalton's interior life that I started with breaking down his different family members and what kind of relationship he had with each. For example, Dalton has a rocky relationship with his older brother because of their different perspectives about their mother and childhood. Dalton cares very much for his younger half-siblings but has a hard time showing it as he is dealing with so much on his own. As a result, he has a distant relationship with his father and step-mother. Even though the audience does not interact much with these characters throughout the course of the series, it was important to establish them because of their impact on Dalton. In addition, they play a vital role in explaining Dalton's emotional state at the beginning of the series.

After I established Dalton's family, I moved on to the main reapers that interact with Dalton in the reaper world. These characters were important to establish before writing the pilot episode because they play a major role in the storyline. In addition to using the interior and exterior technique for these characters, I also studied how Neil Gaiman wrote his supporting

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<sup>24</sup> Field, 48.

characters in the series *The Sandman*.<sup>25</sup> I drew inspiration from the series because it has a diverse cast of supporting characters that all have different goals in the series. After reflecting on the series and how the supporting characters impact the storyline, I determined that one of the key elements to a successful episodic series is developing a cast of characters that are also active and continuously working on their own agenda. I feel like an easy trap to fall into with developing any script is putting all your effort into the main character and forgetting just how important the supporting characters are to the story. In *The Sandman*, the main character Morbius is constantly interacting with the three prime antagonists throughout the series: Corinthian, Rodrick Burgess, and John Dee.<sup>26</sup> However, even the characters that seem to support Morbius are also acting in their own self-interest. The character Lucienne is actively trying to make Morbius a better ruler of the dream realm and opposes him a few times when she deems his judgment to be wrong. If characters like Lucienne were merely passive characters throughout the series, Morbius would have no character growth and the audience would get bored with scenes that did not include the antagonists because there would be no conflict.<sup>27</sup> Having this understanding and knowledge helped me to develop supporting characters that would remain active throughout the series because I understood what their goals and motivations were. This was equally as important as establishing the goals and motivations of the main protagonist.

Having established the characters and world, it was time to outline the overarching story of the series. I approached this by determining what I wanted the beginning and end of the series to be as well as establishing the goal of the series. The beginning starts with establishing the character with the inciting moment being the crash that causes Dalton's death. Dalton's conflict is adjusting to his new role. However, his conflict is also his struggle to let go of events that

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<sup>25</sup> *The Sandman* (Netflix, 2022).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

happened to him and learning to create his own path. This is mirrored in the beginning by his mother leaving him and that turning to family upside down with the car crash that caused his death. Throughout the series Dalton is angry that they never caught the person responsible for the drunk driving accident that killed him. I knew the end would have to address this anger and find a way for Dalton to either develop or devolve as a character. Looking back at *The Sandman*, Morbius faces a similar anger fueled by revenge which motivates his actions for the first half of the series.<sup>28</sup> He overcomes it by defeating the main antagonist and finding a renewed sense of purpose for his role in the universe.<sup>29</sup> While I was inspired by this series, I chose a different way to resolve the conflicts of my series. Dalton eventually does confront the person who was responsible for his death, but when he does, he chooses to forgive and create his own destiny by passing along the role of grim reaper to the soul of the person who killed him.

An episodic series requires not only the overarching story of the series, but also the story arcs that make up each episode. After determining the beginning and end of my series, I was able to work on the rising and falling action throughout the series and establish how the character would grow each episode. I started by breaking down and writing out the series timeline. Each episode had an episodic goal and was created to contribute these singular goals toward the series main story arc. While doing this, I kept in mind that all good stories and protagonists experience setbacks in which they make the wrong decision or falter from their path. This is what keeps the story interesting. It was also a process that was relatively new to me since I have never written a story with multiple scripts that each have their own story arc. I came up with the approach I used by drawing on the knowledge I had from short screenplays. While short screenplays do not have multiple episodes and usually have one main story that resolves at the end, the process for

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<sup>28</sup> *The Sandman* (Netflix, 2022).

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

writing the individual scenes is similar to establishing multiple episode arcs. Each scene needs some sort of conflict and story arc. In addition, each scene contributes to the main story arc. So while I have never written an episodic series, I was able to use what I learned writing short screenplays and expand it to a larger level. It was a daunting task, but by pulling from my prior experiences I was able to put the process into perspective and approach it in a more manageable way.

The last challenge I faced when approaching this project was developing an awareness of the themes the series would examine. While I am drawn to darker and more melancholy and emotional stories, I feared that I would go too dark with my writing and that audiences would be turned away from it. I needed to find a way to write with the darker and emotional themes in mind, but also include a way to break up the despondent tones so they were not so heavy. This was where I drew from my impressions of *The Haunting of Hill House* and examined how similar topics were broken up to create a dark but investing series. In the show, they used fear and sarcasm intertwined with the dark topics to create a compelling story.<sup>30</sup> There are moments where the characters have the chance to express the dark relatives of their lives such as suicide, addiction, and self-denial followed by scenes meant to frighten the audience or lines from characters using sarcasm to break the tension.<sup>31</sup> The goal of my series was not to be a horror series, but I took that tactic and applied it to my storyline. I used a different form of sarcasm in my characters to break tension and I employed the genre of mystery to add another component to my story. These added elements do not detract from the main themes, but add more depth and multiple complementary tones to my main tones. While my series is still in the early stages and I

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<sup>30</sup> *The Haunting of Hill House* (Netflix, 2018).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

am still experimenting with the balance between all these elements, this method helped prevent the writing from becoming dark to the point that it would almost be cliché.

After a long and grueling process, I am now underway with the process of creating script outlines and beginning writing initial drafts. Even once that process is complete, my work is far from over. Half of writing is editing, this I already knew from writing short screenplays. From here I will continue to rigorously edit my pilot script, breaking down each scene and even rearranging them if that best suits the story. I will dig into the fine details and question each scene, each character, and each line of dialogue to see if they are supporting and adding to the story. This process is just as important as the preparation work and the writing of the script itself. From here, I can refine the story by examining it more closely and trying different arrangements of the script.

Throughout this process I learned more about writing and storytelling than I had from previous projects that I had worked on. I approached the project from a learning mindset and embraced trying out a new process of writing. While I still have a long way to go before this series is ready to be pitched or completed, I have a better understanding of how to write an episodic series. I developed methods and skills to approach a project of this size, one that was daunting to me when I undertook it. By breaking it down into its components of style, worldbuilding, character development, and story arcs, I was better prepared when it came time to sit down and write the script than I would have been without putting in all of the preparation work. Establishing that writing episodic series differs from writing short films in the approach, the format of the piece, and the layout of the story arc allowed me to grow in my skills as a writer. Writing an episodic series is a challenge, but it is attainable by putting in the ground work and not rushing into the writing before you understand the story you are telling. Ninety percent

of the writing process is not writing at all, but putting in all of the preparation and taking the time to do multiple edits.



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## Character Breakdowns

### **Dalton:**

Dalton is a twenty-four year old man with no aspirations for life. After losing his mother in a car accident when he was a child, he feels cheated by life and feels he deserved better. His negative outlook on his circumstance has caused a rift between his father and older brother. Dalton works the graveyard shift at a gas station and wastes away his time. The only thing he is devoted to is his two younger siblings, and even at that he struggles with his responsibilities. Despite his glum personality, Dalton has a strong sense of what is right and what is wrong. He cares a lot for others, but does his best to come across as emotionless.

### **Sampson:**

Sampson is a kindhearted and gentle soul. He became a reaper after dying in an automobile accident in the 1930s when he was in his mid-twenties. He is tall and lanky in appearance and looks young for his age. In his life, he wanted to become a mechanic and still has a strong passion for motors. He is a leader figure for the reapers and is very skilled at defending against the wayward spirits. He feels very connected to the souls he reaps and takes any failures personally. His biggest regret is what happened with Dalton's mother. Sampson is enthusiastic, thoughtful, and resolved.

**Emery:**

Emery is young and fiery. She is the right-hand woman to Sampson and is viewed as a prominent leader in the reaper community. She is guarded, and does not express a lot of her own emotions to those close to her. She feels abandoned by Sampson when he switches places with Dalton and has a hard time accepting Dalton into the community. However, she has a very caring heart and cannot stand by and watch Dalton struggle. She is quick to offer help to others and slow to ask for help in return.

**Christopher:**

Christopher is the good son. He has a strong sense of responsibility and took it upon himself to take care of the family after his mother passed away. He is a banker and he is the voice of reason for the family. Despite being the older brother, Christopher is more protective towards their father than he is towards Dalton. He feels slighted by Dalton and believes Dalton caused more harm to their family with his selfish actions. However, Christopher is deeply hurt by Dalton's death and feels as if he missed his chance to have a relationship with his brother. He is rational, intelligent, and quick witted.

**Hazel:**

Hazel is eighty-five and died of natural causes. She reaps the souls of people who die of old age and natural causes. She acts as counsel for the rest of the reapers and provides structure. Hazel is more optimistic and upbeat than the other reapers because she had the privilege of living a full

life, something that she recognizes and does not take for granted. Because of this, she is protective of the other reapers and takes it upon herself to be their caretaker. She is grandmotherly, but can be stern when she feels the need. While she is eighty-five in appearance, she sees Sampson as an older man and has a soft spot for him, often being flirtatious. She is witty, and boisterous.

**Jeannette:**

Jeannette is Dalton's mother who has since passed away. She is overwhelmed with guilt for leaving her children, through no fault of her own. In the afterlife, she is a recluse and avoids the other wayward spirits. She is deeply devoted to her family and cannot bear the thought of her family suffering. She would do anything for her children.

**Isaiah:**

Isaiah is a happy-go-lucky reaper who does his best to keep a positive atmosphere amongst the reaper community. He uses humor as a way to connect with the souls that he reaps. Unlike the other reapers, Isaiah immediately accepts Dalton into the community and tries to support Dalton throughout his struggles. He often plays the part of mediator between Emery and Dalton.

**Sebastian:**

Sebastian is a vindictive and cunning wayward spirit who works to destroy everything in Sampson's world. Having been rivals in their lives, Sebastian continues that rivalry in the afterlife and was the first soul Sampson was unable to reap. He portrays to the other wayward spirits and reapers that he enjoys being in the position that he is in, but inside he is livid that

Sampson failed to help him move on. He does not want to be stuck between the two worlds. Instead of working to find another way out, he uses his frustration about his predicament as fuel to take his aggression out of Sampson and the living world. He is angry when Sampson chooses to move on and takes that anger out on Dalton.

**Liam:**

Liam is the first soul that Dalton is unable to reap and is also the person who caused Dalton's car accident. He is a hurt and confused soul who is coaxed into joining Sebastian and tormenting Dalton. In his life, he was a college dropout who was never able to live up to his family's expectations. Liam carries his low self esteem with him into the afterlife and regrets not doing more with his life. As a result, he is eager to please Sebastian to find any sense of accomplishment and pride. He has a passion for art and continues that in the afterlife.

## **Episode Breakdowns**

### **Episode One:**

The episode opens with Sampson and Emery fending off wayward spirits from disturbing the living world. Sampson gets the feeling that a soul is about to die and he leaves to reap the soul. In the living world, we meet Dalton. Having never recovered from his mother's death, Dalton struggles to move on with his life. He is at odds with his family and rejects his step-mother.

His world is turned upside down when he dies in a freak car accident after a fight with his family. He meets a grim reaper, Sampson, who informs him he is there to reap Dalton's soul and help him move on. Confused and shocked by the turn of events, Dalton rejects Sampson's offer. Patient but concerned, Sampson gives Dalton some time to contemplate his offer. He tells Dalton that he has twenty-four hours to move on before he becomes a wayward spirit and will never be able to find peace. Sampson is called away to deal with a situation in the reaper world and leaves Dalton to cope on his own.

Alone in his apartment, Dalton hears a noise at the window. He is intrigued by the figure standing outside, and he goes to investigate. He meets Sebastian, who tries to lure Dalton into becoming a wayward spirit to spite Sampson. Sampson fights back and shows Dalton what it means to be a wayward spirit. He informs Dalton that he was the one to reap Dalton's mother's soul and that she is waiting for him to find peace with her. Dalton agrees to move on. Before Sampson is able to reap his soul, Sebastian tells Dalton that Sampson has lied to him and that his

mother did not find peace. She is still a wayward spirit and if Dalton moves on, he will never see her again.

Angry and confused, Dalton rejects Sampson and vows to find his mom. In a desperate attempt to save Dalton's soul, Sampson offers Dalton the chance to take his place as a grim reaper so that he can find his mother. Dalton agrees and he is bestowed with Sampson's role as a reaper. As a result, Sampson moves on to find peace and is gone from the reaper world.

### **Episode Two:**

Dalton is thrust into the world of the grim reapers as he learns to adapt to their society. Filling Sampson's shoes will be harder than he expected and he is not given a warm welcome from the other reapers. As Dalton tries to learn the responsibilities of his new role, he is treated as an outsider.

The reapers aren't the only ones who have taken an interest in Dalton. Sebastian is equally as upset that Sampson has left and he decides to try and kill Dalton in retaliation. After an argument with Emery, Dalton goes to visit his mother's grave where he is confronted by Sebastian. The two fight, Dalton with the clear disadvantage. Emery and Isaiah come to Dalton's rescue and together the three of them are able to defend against Sebastian. Sebastian retreats and the reapers go back to inform the community about what happened.

Dalton learns more about the threat of wayward spirits and the reapers are a little more accepting of his presence after he helped in the fight against Sebastian. At the end of the episode, Sebastian causes a tree to fall in the road and a car crashes into it.

### **Episode Three:**

Dalton's role as reaper is put to the test when he is tasked with reaping his first soul. The car crash, caused by Sebastian, results in a person dying. The episode opens with the scene of the crash and the soul, Liam, waking up from the accident. Dalton is there. Dalton explains that he is a reaper and that Liam is dead. Liam is afraid of Dalton and blames him for his death. He runs off and Dalton decides to give him space just as Sampson gave him some space. Emery chastises Dalton for this, but he tells her to trust him.

Dalton then goes off to meet with Sebastian, who is uncharacteristically friendly with Dalton. He hands Dalton his mother's necklace and says he has a lead on where she is hiding. Dalton asks if there is a catch to Sebastian's generosity. Sebastian smirks and says no. Sebastian claims she is currently in the town over, and that she has been seen in the community garden. However, Sebastian states that she won't be there for long and that if Dalton doesn't go soon, she will be gone and they will have to wait for another lead. Sebastian leaves and Dalton gets ready to leave. Emery and Isaiah show up and ask what is going on. Dalton tells them about the lead. Upset, Emery reminds him that he only has a day to reap Liam's soul.



Dalton goes to find Liam and pleads with him to move on so that he can go find his mother's soul. Liam is still apprehensive around Dalton and Dalton asks why. Liam asks if he recognizes him and Dalton says no. It is revealed that Liam was the other driver in the accident that caused Dalton's death. Dalton is infuriated and he abandons Liam to find his mother.

Dalton arrives at the garden late at night, but his mother is not there. He comes across another wayward spirit and asks about his mother. The spirit says they know his mother and saw her here earlier but she left. Distraught, Dalton returns home. When he arrives Emery is livid. Dalton shirked his responsibility and Liam is now a wayward spirit. The episode ends with Sebastian introducing himself to Liam.

#### **Episode Four:**

After failing to reap a soul, Dalton turns to Hazel for guidance. Hazel tells him more about Sampson and what kind of reaper he was. We see flashbacks of when Hazel first met Sampson and get background on Sampson and Sebastian's rocky relationship. Told from the point of view of Hazel, we see an earlier Sampson struggle with being a reaper and being a leader in the community.

Dalton returns to the community and meets up with Emery. He apologizes for not reaping the soul and for being a lackluster replacement for Sampson. Emery accepts his apology and the two become friends as Hazel watches from a distance and smiles. Speaking to an imaginary Sampson, Hazel tells Sampson that he always knew what to do. The episode ends with Dalton

getting the feeling that a person is about to die and he will need to reap their soul. He gets a vision of the death, the faces are distorted. He is apprehensive, but Emery assures him that he can do it this time.

### **Episode Five:**

Dalton's second chance comes in the form of a familiar face. When the young boy from the convenience store dies in a street race gone wrong, it is up to Dalton to lead this boy into a peaceful afterlife. With Emery back on his side, Dalton navigates this new second chance with more compassion than he did the first time. It is not without its complications. The confused soul refuses to accept their fate and trust enough in Dalton to listen to him.

Things are complicated further when Sebastian and Liam decide to make an appearance to lure the soul to their side. Liam takes the boy and Sebastian confronts Dalton with news of his mother. Sebastian claims to know where she is and promises to take Dalton to her, but she won't be in the same place for long so they have to leave now. Dalton rejects the offer and goes to look for the boy.

Meanwhile, Liam tempts the boy by telling him what happened between Dalton and himself. Liam states it is the best thing that has happened to him and tries to scare the boy by saying peace is just eternal darkness. The boy starts to sway towards the side of the wayward spirits, but Dalton shows up just in time. He takes the boy and brings him to the boy's high school. He helps the boy come to terms that he is dead and will never be able to experience the living world again.

The boy accepts his fate and agrees to move on. Dalton is able to reap his soul and give him peace. Sebastian is infuriated by this and the episode ends with an image of Sebastian and Liam standing over a dead reaper's body with Liam holding the bloody scythe.

### **Episode Six:**

A reaper is dead. The community is in disarray as they discover the body of a fellow reaper, who has been murdered by a wayward spirit. They suspect Sebastian and Liam are to blame. With no clear leader, Emery steps up to take charge of the situation. As the other reapers strategize what to do next, Dalton decides to confront Sebastian himself. He feels responsible for the reaper's death as he knows Sebastian did this in retaliation against him. Dalton finds Liam instead.

Liam threatens to hurt Dalton's living family and disappears. Dalton goes chasing after him and searches for his family to protect them. Liam and Dalton play a game of cat and mouse as Liam taunts each member of Dalton's family. Dalton is able to prevent Liam from causing harm, but Liam escapes every time to target another family member. They finally come upon Carmen, who is driving home from work. Dalton tries to stop Liam from popping her tires while she is speeding down the road, but he is a few seconds too late. Dalton watches helplessly as the car begins to spin out, unable to interact with the living world. Carmen's car is about to go off of a bridge when Jeannette, Dalton's mother, appears and pushes the car away from the edge. Carmen is injured, but alive. Liam sees Jeannette and disappears. Dalton and Jeannette are left standing there together.

## **Episode Seven:**

Dalton and his mother sit outside of his childhood home. His mom recounts her death and we see flashbacks of when she met Sampson. The episode bounces between the flashbacks told from the point of view of Jeannette and the reaper world in the present.

In the reaper world, Emery and Isaiah are concerned that Dalton has not returned. They try to look for him, but Sebastian confronts them and informs them that Dalton has abandoned them. At the same time, we see younger Jeannette meet Sebastian as she watches her children mourn her death. Sebastian guilts Jeannette into thinking her death was her own fault and that she does not deserve peace after abandoning her children. Jeannette rejects Sampson and becomes a wayward spirit.

Dalton and his mother reconcile, and he vows to find a way to save her so that she can find peace. Another reaper appears with urgent news telling Dalton that Sebastian and Liam have rallied wayward spirits and they are attacking the reapers. Dalton leaves his mother, promising to return, and rushes to their aid. He joins the fight against the wayward spirits, along with Emery, Isaiah, and Hazel who have been fighting.

During the fight, Dalton is injured. Sebastian is about to kill Dalton when Jeannette appears and sacrifices herself to save her son. Sebastian informs the grieving Dalton that he will return to finish him off and the wayward spirits retreat. Sebastian and Liam discuss their next steps and he

reveals to Liam he is glad he caused Liam's death as he has become a good ally for Sebastian. Liam is shocked and angered by this revelation and the episode ends.

### **Episode Eight:**

Dalton is out for blood after the loss, for the second time, of his mother. Emery and Isaiah try to reason with him, but Dalton will not listen. He goes looking for Sebastian and finds Liam first. The two of them fight. Dalton gains the upper hand and, before he delivers the fatal blow, Liam tells Dalton it is his fault he became a wayward soul. All he wants is peace and the only peace he will get is by killing Dalton. It dawns on Dalton the pain he has caused Liam. He makes a deal with Liam that he will give him that peace by sacrificing himself if he will help him defeat Sebastian first. Liam, equally angry with Sebastian for causing his death, agrees to this deal and the two go and confront Sebastian.

Elsewhere, the reapers deal with an onslaught of attacking wayward spirits. Rallied by Sebastian, the wayward spirits bombard the reapers and wreak havoc for the living world. Emery and Isaiah fight to put a stop to these attacks, unable to assist Dalton in his fight against Sebastian. In a final battle, Liam and Dalton attack Sebastian. In the heat of the battle, Liam is injured. Dalton and Sebastian go head to head and Dalton comes out of the fight victorious after killing Sebastian. With Sebastian dead, the other wayward souls retreat and stop their attacks. Dalton rushes over to a dying Liam. Determined to right his mistake, Dalton passes on his reaper role to Liam in an attempt to give him peace.

Dalton moves on to find peace, and he is greeted by Sampson. Sampson offers him another deal. He offers Dalton a chance to be reborn, again, as a reaper whose sole purpose is to reap wayward souls and create new reapers. He would be the first of his kind, due to the fact that he was the first reaper to bestow his role upon a wayward spirit. Dalton accepts.

## Episode One Step Outline

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Opens in a city park at night. A young woman is walking home. She walks quickly and nervously. A rustling sound comes from behind her and she turns around, but sees nothing. A tree branch falls in the path, startling her and causing her to jump back around. Again, there is no one there and she quickly walks off.

The camera pans over to reveal two grim reapers, Sampson and Emery. They are holding back a wayward spirit, who is laughing and looking at the broken tree branch. Sampson tells the spirit that he knows not to interfere with the living world. The spirit says that it is fun and Sampson kills the spirit with his scythe. Emery tells Sampson that the wayward spirits are growing in number and that they are becoming bolder. Sampson says he suspects a spirit named Sebastian. Sampson gets the sense that a soul is about to die and he leaves to go check it out.

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

DALTON, 24, groggily stocks cigarettes behind the counter at a gas station. His friend Erik, 24, is standing on the opposite side of the counter talking to Dalton. They talk about Dalton working the graveyard shift and Dalton mentions that it keeps him out of trouble and that he has nothing better to do. Erik voices that Dalton could always come work for him at the publishing house and Dalton says that would be too much responsibility for him.

A group of teenagers enter the store, catching the attention of Dalton and Erik. They are loud and boisterous, clearly intoxicated except for one. They grab snacks and drinks and walk up to the counter to check out. Seeing that they are holding alcohol, Dalton asks for their IDs. They produce fake IDs and Dalton makes a joke about their fake names. Dalton calls out the only sober one from the group saying that he recognizes him as

the younger brother of a former classmate. He takes the fake IDs away and tells them to get lost without selling them alcohol. He grabs their car keys and gives it to the sober teenager, telling him to drive everyone home and call it a night. The teenagers mention that the other cashier sells the alcohol all the time and that Dalton is being unreasonable. They leave and Erik states that the sober boy deserves a drink for what he goes through with his parents. Dalton agrees and asks Erik if he is going to finally buy the cigarettes or not. Erik says yes, purchases the cigarettes, and leaves.

Dalton looks out of the window and sees a dark shadowy figure standing by the gas pumps. He takes a second look and the figure is gone. Tired, Dalton rubs his eyes and looks over to the clock. It reads 2:30am. He closes his eyes.

INT. DALTON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Dalton jolts awake to the sound of his phone ringing. He is on the couch. Around the apartment are empty alcohol bottles and left over take out boxes. His apartment is in disarray, but isn't completely filthy. The phone indicates that it is 5:30 and that the person calling is his dad. He quickly answers the phone and begins to gather his things. He apologizes to his dad and promises that he will be at dinner soon. Dalton stands over a poorly wrapped gift sitting on the counter. He apologizes for being late before hanging up the phone. He grabs the present and walks out the door.

INT. CAR - DAY

Dalton speeds down the highway in his car. He gets a call from his brother Chris and they argue about Dalton being late. Dalton assures him that he didn't intend to be late and that he wants to be there to celebrate their sister's birthday. As they argue a cop car appears behind Dalton. He hangs up the phone and pulls over. The cop walks up to his window and writes him a ticket for speeding. They talk about why Dalton was speeding and the cop tells him to drive slower on the way home. The cop informs him they pull a lot of cars over on this road for reckless driving before leaving.



EXT. THE FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

Dalton pulls up to his family home and gets out of the car. He is greeted by his younger brother ANDREW, age 12, who brings him a neatly wrapped present. Andrew tells him that he got it for Dalton to give to their sister for her birthday in case he forgot. Andrew informs him that it is a stuffed animal of a frog, since that is her favorite animal. Dalton gives a half-hearted smile and accepts the gift, thanking Andrew. As they both walk towards the house, Dalton looks back at his car where the gift he brought is sitting in the front seat.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Dalton and his family sit around the table as they sing happy birthday to AMELIA, age 8. Dalton's step-mother, CARMEN, hugs Amelia after everyone is done signing and exits to grab presents for her. She returns and the family gives her gifts one-by-one. When it comes time for Dalton to give her his present, he hands her the one Andrew gave him. Christopher calls him out on not getting his own gift for Amelia and not putting in enough effort to be a part of the family. Carmen and their dad try to quell the argument, but it does not work. It's not until the brothers see they are upsetting Amelia that they stop fighting. Dalton gives the excuse that he has work in the morning and has to get back to his apartment. He walks over and hugs Amelia and rustles Andrew's hair before heading out. Carmen tells him to drive safe and he says a quiet thank you without acknowledging his brother or dad.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Dalton speeds down the highway, upset. He glances down at the present. When his eyes return to the road, the shadow figure is on the road right in front of Dalton. He hits the brakes and swerves to the side. In his stopped car, Dalton looks around but the figure is gone. He pulls back onto the road and carefully drives away. He looks down at his speedometer and he is going 50 miles per hour, fifteen under the speed limit. Dalton rounds a corner and a pair of headlights appear suddenly. A car going

well over the speed limit swerves into Dalton's lane and hits him at an angle, sending Dalton's car into a tree. Dalton blacks out.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Dalton groggily regains consciousness. He is on the ground on the side of the road, his wrecked car off in the distance behind him. SAMPSON, 25, is kneeling down next to him. He is tall, scrawny and he wears a long black coat and a tweed hat. Dalton is confused and Sampson introduces himself and explains he is here to help Dalton get home. Dalton slowly starts to remember the car accident and then notices his wrecked car behind him. He runs over to it. Sampson explains that Dalton is dead and tries to comfort Dalton, but Dalton brushes him off. Sampson attempts to get Dalton to come with him, telling him it is his time to pass on into the afterlife. Dalton warns Sampson to stay away from him and then takes off running, back in the direction of his family home. Sampson appears now in front of him and Dalton jolts to a stop. Sampson again tries to calm him down, but Dalton recognizes him now as the figure that was in the road. Dalton accuses him of causing the accident and rushes up to Sampson, grabbing him by the collar.

CUT TO:

INT. DALTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dalton and Sampson appear in Dalton's apartment. Dalton is startled by the sudden new surroundings. Sampson is calm and patient with Dalton. He begins asking about his life and looking around Dalton's apartment. Dalton reluctantly shares a few details about his life. He talks about his job and gives a brief description of his family. Sampson asks about Dalton's mother. Dalton asks if his mother would have gone through this same process and before Sampson is able to answer, he is startled by an unseen reaper. Sampson seems concerned and said he would "be right there" to the unseen reaper. He tells Dalton that he has to go deal with something very urgent and that he will be back soon. He asks Dalton to think about his mother and what it would be like to see her again when he finds peace. Sampson disappears, leaving Dalton confused.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Sampson and Emery appear in a city park. Off in the distance there is a large gathering of wayward spirits. The two discuss how unusual this is and Sampson mentions that it has to be the work of Sebastian. He is concerned.

INT. DALTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dalton sits in his apartment waiting for Sampson's return. He hears a strange sound coming from outside of his window. He goes over to inspect it and sees Sebastian standing outside. Sebastian beckons him and Dalton leaves his apartment to investigate.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Dalton walks down the street at night. He looks around and sees the shadowy figure walk into an alley and he follows, thinking it is Sampson. When he confronts the figure, he recognizes that it is not Sampson. The figure introduces itself as Sebastian, a wayward spirit. Sebastian explains that being a wayward spirit is way better than finding peace. He claims Sampson is leading him astray. Dalton is enticed. Sampson appears and tells Dalton not to trust Sebastian. Sebastian and Sampson have a brief scuffle and Sebastian retreats. Dalton claims that he doesn't trust Sampson and that being a wayward spirit might not be so bad. Sampson asks Dalton to come with him so he can show him something and they both leave.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Dalton and Sampson arrive in the city park at night. Dalton asks what they are doing there and Sampson points towards a group of shadowy figures off a little ways. They are wayward spirits. They moan and groan and saunter around the park. Sampson asks if they look like they are happy. Dalton says no. Sampson tells Dalton that those particular spirits have been like that for roughly fifty years and they will continue to remain that way for infinitely more. There is no way for reapers to help them

find peace or ease their pain. Sampson asks if Dalton thinks he deserves that kind of pain and suffering. Dalton doesn't answer. Sampson tells Dalton to go home and think about it. He will meet Dalton in a few hours to ask again.

INT. DALTON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Morning light shines through the windows of the apartment. Dalton is still sitting on the couch with the box of photos in front of him. Sampson appears behind him. Dalton shares that he feels guilty having never made up with his family. While he understands that being a wayward spirit is bad, he doesn't feel worthy of peace with his mother. Sampson asks if he can show Dalton something and Dalton agrees. Sampson puts his hand on Dalton's shoulder.

INT. MORGUE - DAY

Dalton and Sampson appear at the morgue. Dalton's dad and brother are there with the corner. A body covered by a sheet lays on a slab in the middle of the room. The corner uncovers the sheet and it is Dalton's corpse. Dalton's family is silent before the dad meekly nods his head yes to identify the body. The coroner covers up the sheet. He then walks over and pulls out the poorly wrapped present that was in the car with Dalton. It is worse for wear now, but you can still make out "Amelia" written on it. The coroner hands it to Christopher and explains that he wanted to make sure Amelia received the gift from her brother. Christopher recognizes that he was wrong about the situation last night and falls to the breaks down. Dalton asks why Sampson wanted him to witness this, distraught seeing his brother like this. Sampson explains that his family knows that he loved them. He hopes this will be enough to give Dalton peace. Dalton asks if they can leave and Sampson puts his hand on Dalton's shoulder.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Dalton and Sampson appear at the scene of the crash. He once again explains that Dalton is running out of time. Dalton inquires about what moving on looks like and Sampson admits he doesn't entirely know. Grim reapers are stuck in the in between

until they finish their duties as a reaper. Dalton asks why he can't stay in this state of limbo like Sampson and Sampson explains that Dalton would become a wandering spirit, incapable of ever reaching peace and would be in eternal torment. Dalton is silent. He looks at the destroyed tree where his car crashed the night before. He agrees to move on, but asks to go somewhere one more time before he passes over. Sampson agrees.

EXT. MOTHER'S GRAVESTONE - NIGHT

Dalton and Sampson stand in front of his mother's gravestone in a cemetery. Dalton talks to the headstone as Sampson watches from a distance. Dalton says that he is ready to see his mom again and Sampson walks forward to reap his soul. Sebastian walks out of the shadows and taunts them. He chastises Dalton for deciding to move on and comments that he will never see his mother again. Dalton inquires about this comment and Sampson tries to intervene. Sebastian claims that Sampson is lying to Dalton and that his mother did not move on peacefully. She became a wayward spirit after Sampson failed to reap her soul. Dalton turns to Sampson for reassurance that Sebastian is lying and Sampson confirms that Sebastian is telling the truth. Furious, Dalton lashes out at Sampson. Sampson apologizes for lying, but states that his mother would want him to move on. Sampson claims he is trying to protect Dalton. Sebastian says he can help Dalton find his mother and then leaves. Sampson pleads with Dalton to move on, like he was about to and Dalton refuses. In a final effort, Sampson offers Dalton another option. He offers Dalton his role as a grim reaper so that he can stay to search for his mother without becoming a wayward spirit. He warns Dalton that this comes with a lot of responsibility and that even when he finds his mother, he will not be able to reverse her fate. Dalton blindly agrees and becomes a reaper

FADE TO:

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Dalton appears in an old cemetery. Sampson is gone. A woman steps forward and introduces herself as EMERY, 23, and asks Dalton what happened. He is still confused and asks what is going on. Emery is hostile towards Dalton. She explains that Sampson passed the role of grim reaper to Dalton and has moved on to find peace. Sampson gave up his role to give Dalton a

second-chance and Sampson can never return to the rest of the reapers. It is now Dalton's responsibility to reap souls.

FADE TO BLACK

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

Scythe Episode: One

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**(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)**

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

A WOMAN, mid-twenties and dressed in business attire, briskly walks in a city park late at night.

The sound of footsteps through the foliage comes from behind her and she spins around to find the source, startled. A few moments go by and there is no one to be seen. For a moment, her breathing relaxes.

A tree branch falls behind her, nearly missing her as it crashes with a loud thud. She screams and faces it. The tree branches above her shake and creak in the wind.

The woman runs away, turning around once to see if there is anyone behind her until she fades away, out of sight.

Next to the tree with the broken branch appears one menacing figure standing next to two grim reapers.

SAMPSON, a tall and stalking figure with a calm face, stands next to WAYWARD SPIRIT. Sampson grips the Wayward Spirit by the arm, holding him against the tree trunk. In his other hand, Sampson holds a long, rusty scythe.

EMERY, a young spirited reaper, stands next to Sampson. She has a taunted look on her face as they all gaze up at the broken tree branch.

The Wayward Spirit laughs hysterically.

SAMPSON  
You could have killed her.

WAYWARD SPIRIT  
That was the goal.

SAMPSON  
You know the rules.

WAYWARD SPIRIT  
And what are you going to do?

The Wayward Spirit gives a painful laugh.

SAMPSON  
Did Sebastian send you?

The Wayward Spirit's smile fades into a dazed look as he stares directly into Sampson's eyes.



WAYWARD SPIRIT  
He didn't have to. I wanted to do  
this. I wanted to force you hand.

Emery steps in.

EMERY  
What do you mean?

WAYWARD SPIRIT  
Sampson knows. I promise I won't  
stop.

EMERY  
(To Sampson)  
What is he talking about?

Sampson grips the scythe tighter.

WAYWARD SPIRIT  
Look me in the eye when you do it. I  
deserve to see the pain it causes  
you.

Sampson swings the scythe causing Emery to jump back. He  
digs it deep into the Wayward Spirit's side. With a pained  
look, Sampson draws his face closer to the Wayward Spirit's

SAMPSON  
(softly)  
I hope this brings you some peace.

WAYWARD SPIRIT  
(dying)  
It won't.

The Wayward Spirit's body goes limp and Sampson yanks the  
scythe out of the body, causing it to collapse onto the  
ground. Sampson and Emery stand over the body.

EMERY  
Sampson. Tell me what's going on.

Beat.

SAMPSON  
They are in pain and they want us to  
pain for our mistakes.

EMERY  
Why now? The unreaped souls have been  
around for years. They have never  
been this active.

SAMPSON

I guess they have had enough.

EMERY

What are we going to do?

Sampson gives Emery a sad, but wholesome smile.

SAMPSON

Our jobs.

Sampson abruptly looks off into the distance and then back at Emery.

SAMPSON (cont'd)

Speaking of...

Sampson begins to walk off and Emery, reluctant at first, follows behind him. A murder of crows gradually collects at the body, pecking away as the two reaper leave.

INT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

DALTON, 24, stands behind the counter wearing a store clerk uniform as he stocks cigarettes. ERIK, his well dressed friend, leans on the other side of the counter. Erik rambles on as Dalton continues to work.

ERIK

Why do you volunteer for the graveyard shift? Doesn't it ruin any chances of hooking up or a night out with your friends?

DALTON

That;s kind of the point and what friends?

ERIK

Come on.

Dalton turns around and corrects himself.

DALTON

Other than you.

ERIK

Thank you. You know you can always come work with me at the publishing house. It's boring as shit but pays better than this job.

DALTON

But then there would be know one to stock your cigarettes for you.

ERIK

I'm sure they would manage.

A group of rowdy teenage boys walk into the store, clearly intoxicated. Dalton and Erik give them a glance before sharing a knowing look with each other.

The boys go throughout the store grabbing various snacks. They go to the drinks section and start grabbing beers and alcoholic mixers.

One TEENAGE BOY, arrogant and the leader of the group, collects money from the others and brings all of their items to the counter.

DALTON

I'll have to see some ID.

TEENAGE BOY

Of course of course.

The boy struggles to pull a fake ID out of his wallet and sets it on the counter for Dalton.

DALTON

Thank you so much sir.

The boys laugh, celebrating that they are going to get more alcohol.

Dalton take the alcohol from the counter and puts it behind the counter with him. He throws the ID away.

TEENAGE BOY

What the hell?

DALTON

Yeah, it's not going to happen. I think you have had enough.

ERIK

Maybe switch to sodas kiddos.

The boy glares at Erik for the joke.

DALTON

We have an understanding with the other clerk. It's cool.

DALTON (cont'd)  
Good for you. I'm not him.

Dalton scans all of the other items.

DALTON (cont'd)  
That will be \$14.24

TEENAGE BOY  
Screw you.

DALTON  
Do you want them or not?

The boy hands over the cash and Dalton gives him his change.  
The boys storm out of the store.

ERIK  
Come again.

Dalton singles out MICHAEL, a quiet kid in the back of the group. Michael is seemingly sober.

DALTON  
Hey, you're Charlie's brother.  
Michael right?

MICHAEL  
Yeah.

DALTON  
Maybe you should drive the rest of  
the night.

MICHAEL  
Yeah, okay.

Michael leaves. From the windows Dalton and Erik watch as he rejoins the group. He talks to the other teenage boy and is handed the keys.

ERIK  
That's too bad. Michael deserves a  
drink for what their old man puts  
them through.

DALTON  
Yeah probably.

They watch the car drive off.

DALTON (cont'd)  
Are you going to buy your cigarettes  
or not?

ERIK  
Fine.

Erik hands Dalton some money and they exchange the  
cigarettes.

ERIK (cont'd)  
Think about what I said.

DALTON  
Whatever you say.

Erik walks towards the door.

ERIK  
You could get out of this hell hole.

DALTON  
Have a goodnight, Erik.

Erik waves as he walks out the door.

Dalton begins to sort through other items around the  
counter. He briefly looks up and is startled when he sees a  
dark figure standing outside near one of the pumps.

Dalton reaches for the phone but knocks over some items on  
the counter. He looks away from the figure for a brief  
moment before looking back.

The figure is gone.

Dalton rubs his hands over his face and looks over to the  
clock. It reads "2:30am". He closes his eyes and puts his  
head in his hands.

INT. DALTON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Dalton lays on the couch of his apartment. Leftover take out  
boxes and alcohol bottles are scattered around the  
apartment.

His phones rings, causing him to jolt awake. His phone reads  
"Dad".

DALTON  
Shit.

Dalton answers the phone and quickly begins running around the apartment attempting to get ready.

DALTON (cont'd)  
(on the phone)  
Hey Dad.

His dad's voice is muffled on the other end of the phone.

DALTON (cont'd)  
Yeah, I know I know. I'm on my way  
now.

Dalton finishes putting on a jacket and rushes over to the counter of his kitchen. He pauses next to a poorly wrapped present resting on the counter.

DALTON (cont'd)  
No, I did not forget. I just  
overslept. I'll be there soon.

Dalton hangs up the phone. He carefully grabs the present and examines his worse for wear wrapping job, displeased. He then heads out the door.

INT. CAR - DAY

Dalton speeds down the road in his 2005 pontiac grand am. The present rests on the passenger seat.

Dalton's phone rings and the caller ID says "Chris".

DALTON  
Now what?

Dalton answers the phone and immediately gets into a argument with Chris.

DALTON (cont'd)  
Hey Chris I -

Chris scolds Dalton from the other end of the phone.

DALTON (cont'd)  
I didn't mean to be late. I work late  
hours.

Beat.

DALTON (cont'd)  
Not trying? This again? I am doing my  
best.

A cop car pulls behind Dalton's car with it's lights and  
sirens.

DALTON (cont'd)  
Shit. Look I'll see you at the house.  
I have to go.

Dalton hangs up the phone and pulls his car over. The COP  
gets out of his car and walks over to Dalton's driver side  
window. Dalton rolls down the window.

COP  
You were going pretty fast back  
there. Got anywhere to be in a  
particular hurry?

DALTON  
I am late for a birthday party.

The cop looks to the passenger side and sees the present.

COP  
Alright, well I will just let you off  
with a warning this time. But slow  
down. A lot of bad accidents happen  
on this road.

DALTON  
I will. Thanks officer.

The cop walks away and Dalton slowly drives off.

EXT. THE FAMILY HOUSE - DAY

Dalton pulls into the driveway of a small family home.  
ANDREW, age 12, stands by the door holding a present. He  
walks over and greets Dalton as he gets out of his car.

DALTON  
Hey buddy.

ANDREW  
(in a hushed voice)  
Here Dalton.

Andrew hands Dalton a neatly wrapped gift.

ANDREW (cont'd)  
It's a pink stuffed otter for Amelia.

DALTON  
Oh.

Dalton reluctantly takes the gift. He looks back and eyes the one he brought.

ANDREW  
I know you have a hard time buying gifts so I got one that I know she will like.

DALTON  
Thanks. I appreciate that. You really saved me there.

ANDREW  
Come on. There are waiting inside.

Andrew walks towards the door. Dalton waits a beat, looking back at his gift and comparing the wrapping on the two. He then walks inside, holding the present Andrew gave him.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

Dalton sits at the dining room table surrounded by the rest of his family. AMELIA, age 8, beams with joy her mom CARMEN walks in with a birthday cake.

CARMEN  
Make a wish!

Amelia excitedly blows out her candles. Everyone cheers and Carmen begins to cut and dish out the cake.

CHRISTOPHER, 27, stares over at Dalton with a begrudging look.

AMELIA  
Can we do gifts soon?

CARMEN  
Sure sweetie, but let's finish the cake first.

CHRIS  
Why don't we just go ahead and start gifts? Dalton, let's start with you. Where's your gift?



DAD

Chris, not at the dinner table. Let's not start anything.

DALTON

I have a gift for Amelia.

CHRIS

One that you bought yourself? Or one that Andrew bought to cover for you?

CARMEN

Boys, not at the dinner table.

The brothers look over and see both Andrew and Amelia are upset.

CHRIS

Sorry.

The table goes quiet.

DALTON

I should probably get going. I have work in a few hours.

DAD

No, Dalton. Stay.

DALTON

No, it's okay. Thank you for the invite. It's been fun.

Dalton gets up from the table and walks over to Amelia. He hugs her.

DALTON (cont'd)

Happy birthday.

He rustles Andrew's hair.

CARMEN

Drive safe, Dalton.

DALTON

I will. Thanks Carmen. The food was great.

Dalton walks out of the room without acknowledging his brother or dad.

INT. CAR - NIGHT,

Dalton drives angrily home in the dark. He keeps looking down at the present he bought of Amelia, upset.

Dalton rounds a blind corner and a shadowy human-like figure appears in the road. Dalton swerves to avoid it and almost collides with a car in the opposite lane.

The car honks at Dalton and Dalton swerves to the other side of the road to avoid hitting it.

Dalton breathes heavy.

DALTON

Dammit!

Dalton begins to yell and sob as he beats his fist against the dashboard.

After a moment, he starts to collect himself.

Dalton looks around, but the figure is gone. He doesn't move for a second, recovering from the sudden shock. He takes one more look around and does not see anything.

Dalton goes to pull back onto the road. A car with no headlights comes speeding from behind. It crashes into Dalton right as he pulls onto the road.

FADE TO BLACK

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

Dalton groggily wakes up. He is on the ground outside of his car. He looks over just in time to see a blurry car drive away from the scene in a hurry.

Sampson walks over from the tree line and kneels next to Dalton. Dalton is startled by Sampson's presence.

SAMPSON

It's okay.

DALTON

What, what happened? What's going on?

SAMPSON

You were in a car accident.

Dalton starts to get up.

SAMPSON (cont'd)  
Careful.

DALTON  
The other car? Are they okay?

Dalton starts to walk towards his destroyed car a few feet away.

DALTON (cont'd)  
We need to call an ambulance or something.

SAMPSON  
Let's just take things slow okay Dalton.

Dalton nears the car

DALTON  
Hey, there's someone in there.

He rushes to the car and attempts to open the door. His hand passes through the door and he attempts several more times, confused.

DALTON (cont'd)  
What the hell?

SAMPSON  
Dalton.

DALTON  
I'll try the other side.

SAMPSON  
The other side will have the same problem.

DALTON  
We have to help them. Why are you just standing there? Help me.

SAMPSON  
That is what I am trying to do.

DALTON  
You haven't done anything.

Dalton goes back to attempting to open the door.

SAMPSON  
Dalton look at their face.

DALTON

What?

SAMPSON

Their face. I'm sure you recognize them.

Takes a closer look. The body in the driver seat is his. Dalton's dead stares at him with glazed eyes.

DALTON

Is that me?

Sampson catches up to where Dalton is.

SAMPSON

I'm afraid it is.

DALTON

That's me.

Dalton examines the body more before stepping away from the car.

DALTON (cont'd)

That's me.

SAMPSON

It's going to be okay Dalton.

DALTON

How is this okay? Who even are you?

SAMPSON

My name is Sampson. I am here to help you.

Dalton is taken aback and he steps away from Sampson.

DALTON

How?

SAMPSON

I am here to reap your soul.

Sampson puts his hands up as a gesture of peace.

SAMPSON (cont'd)

It sounds scarier than it is.

DALTON

What are you talking about?

SAMPSON

I know you must be very confused. I can explain it all to you.

DALTON

Wait, you look familiar?

Dalton takes another step back and examines Sampson's figure.

DALTON (cont'd)

You're the figure from the road.

Sampson takes a step closer to Dalton with curiosity.

SAMPSON

So you could see me? That's very unusual for a living soul, even one close to death.

DALTON

Did you cause the accident?

SAMPSON

Now, wait just a moment.

DALTON

Stay away from me.

Dalton walks backwards quickly. He turns around to run but Sampson appears in front of him, blocking the path.

DALTON (cont'd)

How did you get here? What do you want?

SAMPSON

Dalton, please allow me to explain.

An eerie collection of whispers comes from the trees on the side of the road. Dalton and Sampson looks towards the noise.

Standing nearby is a ghastly looking figure. It makes the sound they hear.

DALTON

What was that?

Sampson tightens his face.

SAMPSON  
Not someone you want to encounter  
tonight.

DALTON  
What?

SAMPSON  
I need you to come with me.

DALTON  
Not a chance.

SAMPSON  
Unless you want to talk with them  
instead -

Sampson motions toward the wayward spirit.

SAMPSON (cont'd)  
I need you to come with me.

DALTON  
Fine.

Sampson grabs Dalton by the shoulders.

CUT TO:

INT. DALTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sampson and Dalton appear in Dalton's apartment. It is dark with the only light coming from the street lights outside of his windows.

DALTON  
What just happened? How did we get  
here?

SAMPSON  
That part is not important. What is  
important is what happens next.

DALTON  
Why? Next?

Sampson guides Dalton over to the couch. Dalton is reluctant but follows Sampson's lead. Sampson sits down on the coffee table, facing Dalton.

SAMPSON

I am here to help you move on, but to do that I need you to trust me. Do you think you can do that?

DALTON

I don't even know.

SAMPSON

Right now, your soul is stuck between the living world and the afterlife. I am here to take you to the afterlife, but you have agree to it.

DALTON

What happens if I don't?

SAMPSON

Then you will be trapped in a miserable existence, incapable of ever achieving happiness or peace.

There is an uncomfortable silence. Sampson looks over to a old family picture with Dalton, Christopher, their dad, and their mother in it.

SAMPSON (cont'd)

Your mother's name was Jeannette. She was very kind and loved you and Chris very very much.

Dalton looks over to the picture, surprised.

SAMPSON (cont'd)

I met her Dalton. I was the one who reaped her soul.

DALTON

What? You knew my mom?

SAMPSON

Yes. I made her a promise all those years ago. That I would look after you and Christopher.

Sampson attempts to pick up the picture. His hand passes through.

SAMPSON (cont'd)

As a reaper, I cannot interact with the living world. I thought I could never fulfill that promise. Now I might be able to.

Sampson turns to Dalton.

SAMPSON (cont'd)  
Let me help you move on.

DALTON  
Will I see her again? If I move on  
will she be there?

Sampson pauses. Before he can answer Emery appears in the corner of the room. Dalton cannot see her.

EMERY  
Sampson, all of the wayward spirits  
are gathering in one place. I have  
never seen anything like it before.

SAMPSON  
I suspect it has something to do with  
him.

Dalton is confused and looks around the room to see who Sampson is talking to.

EMERY  
Him?

She motions to Dalton.

SAMPSON  
I'm afraid so. I'll be there soon.  
Just give me a moment with him.

Sampson moves his attention back to a confused Dalton.

DALTON  
Who are you talking to.

SAMPSON  
I have to go Dalton. Please consider  
what I have said. You only have  
twenty-four hours after your death to  
move on before you get stuck here,  
like this.

DALTON  
Where are you going?

SAMPSON  
I have to go buy us some time. Those  
spirits we saw earlier, they are  
looking for you.



DALTON

Why?

SAMPSON

It's hard to explain. For your sake, please stay in your apartment. I'll be back soon.

Sampson disappears and Dalton leans back on the couch.

DALTON

(to himself)

What the fuck?

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Sampson appears next to Emery in a city park. A big group of wayward spirits gather off in the distance.

EMERY

I am sorry for calling you away, but it was important. I have never seen this many of them gather in one spot before. Not like this.

Sampson examines the scene.

EMERY (cont'd)

What do you think?

SAMPSON

I think they were called here to provoke us.

EMERY

By Sebastian?

SAMPSON

Most likely.

EMERY

Why?

SAMPSON

Because of the soul I am trying to help. Sebastian has a history with this one.

Emery gives Sampson a concerned look.

INT. DALTON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Dalton sits on the couch holding the old family photo. He hears the eerie whispering coming from outside of his window and goes to examine it.

Outside stands SEBASTIAN, a tall and pale man. He flashes a woman's necklace at Dalton and beckons Dalton to join him outside by motioning with his hand.

Dalton recognizes the necklace and then leaves to join Sebastian.

EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Dalton exits his apartment building. Sebastian is gone and Dalton looks around. He sees Sebastian walking away from him down the road.

Dalton follows after and he follows Sebastian into a side alleyway. Sebastian stops and faces Dalton.

SEBASTIAN  
Hello Dalton.

DALTON  
Give me my mother's necklace.

Sebastian tosses him the necklace. Dalton examines it.

DALTON (cont'd)  
Who are you?

SEBASTIAN  
Sebastian.

DALTON  
Are you another reaper?

SEBASTIAN  
I'm insulted you think so.

Dalton takes a longer look at Sebastian.

DALTON  
Are you like me?

Sebastian smirks.

SEBASTIAN  
No, but you could be like me.

DALTON  
Why do you have my mother's necklace?

SEBASTIAN  
Because I knew it would get your  
attention.

Sebastian closes in on Dalton.

SEBASTIAN (cont'd)  
Dalton, I am here to save you.

DALTON  
From what? I'm already dead.

SEBASTIAN  
From Sampson's lies.

Beat.

SEBASTIAN (cont'd)  
I assume Sampson gave you the  
ultimatum to move on or suffer for  
all eternity.

Dalton gives a knowing glance. Sebastian continues  
confidently with the silent acknowledgment.

SEBASTIAN (cont'd)  
He is lying to you Dalton.

DALTON  
How can you be so sure?

SEBASTIAN  
Because Dalton, I was smart. I didn't  
buy into Sampson's lies and I have  
been perfectly content roaming the  
earth on this transitional plane for  
almost a century. Tell me Dalton, do  
I look miserable to you?

DALTON  
You don't look like you are having  
the time of your life.

Sebastian chuckles.

SEBASTIAN  
Fair point. I am what you call a  
wayward spirit. I am between the  
living world and the afterlife.

DALTON

That doesn't sound all that great.

SEBASTIAN

But it is. You have a family right?

DALTON

Why does it matter? I'm dead.

SEBASTIAN

Yes, but unlike reapers wayward spirits can interact with the physical world.

Sebastian walks over to an alley cat and picks it up. He hold it close to his face and it hisses at him.

DALTON

Can they see you? The living world?

SEBASTIAN

Animals can. People are hit or miss. Some can. Some only think they do.

Sebastian puts the cat down and it runs off. He walks over to Dalton.

SEBASTIAN (cont'd)

My point is, your life isn't over entirely. You can still be a part of your family. Make amends. Watch little Amelia and Andrew grow up.

DALTON

How do I know you are just full of it?

SEBASTIAN

You don't. But I am not and unlike Sampson, I have no interest in whether you move on or not. Just wanted to help out a fellow soul.

Sampson appears behind Dalton.

SEBASTIAN (cont'd)

Look who decided to join us.

Dalton turns around.

SAMPSON

Spreading more lies, Sebastian?

SEBASTIAN

No more than you.

SAMPSON

Dalton, don't listen to him. He only wants more people to be miserable with him.

SEBASTIAN

Well that's just not true, Sampson. The only one I want to be miserable is you.

Sebastian walks over to Sampson.

SEBASTIAN (cont'd)

Did you like the friend's I sent you?

Sampson shoves Sebastian away. He pulls his scythe out from seemingly nowhere and directs it toward Sebastian.

SAMPSON

Leave.

SEBASTIAN

Whoa. See Dalton? Does that seem like a man you can trust?

Sampson grips his scythe tighter.

SEBASTIAN (cont'd)

I'm leaving. Think about what I said Dalton. I wasn't lying.

Sebastian walks off into the darkness. Dalton looks at the scythe in Sampson's hand with apprehension. Sampson notices and the scythe disappears from his hand.

SAMPSON

I'm sorry that you are in the middle of this, Dalton. He is only using you to get back at me.

DALTON

Why?

SAMPSON

Because I wasn't able to reap his soul. Even though he chose to stay, it's my fault for not convincing him in time. He is just pretending that staying is a good thing to convince you to be miserable with him.

It is quiet.

SAMPSON (cont'd)  
Not convinced? That's okay, but I  
have something that might help change  
your mind. Come with me.

Sampson begins to walk off and Dalton follows.

EXT. PARK - NIGHT

Sampson and Dalton arrive at the city park. Off in the  
distance, there is a few wayward spirits sauntering around  
like zombies.

Sampson and Dalton stop and Sampson points the group out to  
Dalton.

SAMPSON  
Do you see those souls over there  
Dalton? That's what you will become  
if you don't move on.

Dalton examines the group. The spirits continue to moan and  
shuffle around, aimless.

DALTON  
Why is Sebastian different from them?

SAMPSON  
He's not. He wanders around aimlessly  
just like they do and they can hold a  
conversation the same as Sebastian if  
they want to.

They stand there is silence for a moment, watching the  
spirits.

SAMPSON (cont'd)  
Do they look happy to you?

DALTON  
I don't know. No, I guess. I still  
don't understand what is going on.

SAMPSON  
I there has been a lot for you to  
deal with tonight. I'm sorry, but you  
need to trust me. We are running out  
of time.

DALTON  
I just need a little more time to  
figure it all out.

Sampson sighs.

SAMPSON  
I understand. I can give you until  
the morning.

Sampson leaves. Dalton stays for a moment, watching the  
spirits before following.

INT. DALTON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Morning light shines through the apartment windows. Dalton  
sits on the couch staring off into space.

Sampson appears behind him and walks around the couch to  
stand next to where Dalton sits.

SAMPSON  
Good morning Dalton.

Dalton continues to stare off into space with a distant  
gaze.

DALTON  
I don't think I can do it.

Sampson is patient and calm.

SAMPSON  
Tell me why.

DALTON  
I didn't leave things with my family  
in a great place.

SAMPSON  
There is nothing you can do to change  
that now. I wish it wasn't that way,  
but that's how it works.

DALTON  
Yeah, but if I stay like Sebastian  
said I can maybe still interact with  
them. Say goodbye.

SAMPSON

I doesn't work like that. Staying would only you and your family more harm. You have to move on. It's the only way you will be able to see your family again - to see your mom again.

Dalton drops his head into his hands and there is a pause.

SAMPSON (cont'd)

Dalton, is it okay if I show you something. I warn you, it might be unpleasant, but I think it will help.

DALTON

What is it?

SAMPSON

You will see when we get there.

DALTON

Okay...

Sampson gently places his hand on Dalton's shoulder.

CUT TO:

INT. MORGUE - DAY

Dalton and Sampson appear at the county morgue. Dalton sits in a chair outside of the office as Sampson stands next to him.

DALTON

Where are we?

Dalton's dad and Chris walks around the corner, crossing in front of Dalton.

DALTON (cont'd)

Chris? Dad?

A DOCTOR walks over to greet them. The doctor offers his hand to them and they shake it.

DOCTOR

I am so sorry for your loss.

DAD

Thank you.



DOCTOR  
This will only take a moment. Please,  
this way.

The doctor leads them around a corner into a smaller office room. Dalton follows with Sampson close behind.

They come up to a table with a body lying on it covered by a sheet.

DALTON  
What is this?

DOCTOR  
I just need you to identify the body  
for me please.

They are silent and Chris looks over to the Dad. His dad begins to tear up and Chris puts his hand on his dad's shoulder.

CHRIS  
Okay, doctor.

The doctor nods and lifts the sheet partially, revealing Dalton's head. The dad and Chris cry. Between sobs, Chris is able to answer softly.

CHRIS (cont'd)  
That's him.

The doctor places the sheet back over Dalton's body. Dalton's family continues to cry.

Dalton looking on as a soul becomes hysterical.

DALTON  
Why would you show me this? Why would  
you bring me here?

The doctor walks over to a counter and pulls the present Dalton had in the car with him out from a drawer. He hands it to Chris.

DOCTOR  
This was in the car with your  
brother. I wanted to make sure Amelia  
received it.

Chris examines the present and then realizes that he had been wrong about Dalton. He begins to sob uncontrollably.

CHRIS  
I'm so sorry Dalton.

The dad hugs Chris as they continue to cry. Sampson walks over to a distraught Dalton who watches the scene play out.

SAMPSON  
They know that you loved them Dalton.  
You didn't leave on bad terms.

Dalton cries watching this play out. Sampson places his hand on Dalton's shoulder once again.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Dalton and Sampson appear in the road at the scene of the crash.

SAMPSON  
You died Dalton. There is no changing that. I wish that wasn't the case, but it is. It's time to move on.

Dalton wipes his face and composes himself.

DALTON  
What does that look like? What will it be like wherever I am going?

SAMPSON  
Peaceful. As far as I have been told.

DALTON  
Told?

SAMPSON  
Unfortunately, reapers cannot move on without giving up their duties. I have yet to see the other side, but I will one day.

DALTON  
Can't I stay here with you?

SAMPSON  
No.

Dalton looks around, contemplating.

DALTON  
Okay. Okay I will move on, but I  
want to visit one last place before I  
do if that's okay.

Sampson places his hand once again on Dalton.

EXT. MOTHER'S GRAVESTONE - DAY

Dalton and Sampson stand in front Dalton's mother's  
gravestone in a cemetery.

DALTON  
How did you know this was where I  
wanted to go?

SAMPSON  
It wasn't too hard to guess.

Sampson steps back to give Dalton some space. Dalton turns  
to talk to the headstone.

DALTON  
I will be with you soon, mom. I have  
so much to tell you.

Sebastian appears and stands next to Dalton.

SEBASTIAN  
She would love to hear what you have  
to say, Dalton.

SAMPSON  
Leave Sebastian.

Sebastian wraps his arm around Dalton's neck.

SEBASTIAN  
But you won't be able to tell her if  
you move on. She's not there.

DALTON  
What?

SAMPSON  
Sebastian stop.

DALTON  
Wait what do you mean?

SEBASTIAN

Your mother never moved on. Sampson wasn't able to reap her soul.

Sebastian snickers.

SEBASTIAN (cont'd)

He's tricking you into abandoning her.

DALTON

Is that true?

Dalton looks to Sampson for an answer but Sampson falls silent.

SEBASTIAN

Looks like you two have some discussing to do. When you want to talk to your mother, come find me.

Sebastian leaves.

DALTON

You lied to me?

SAMPSON

Not entirely, but yes.

DALTON

What the hell does that mean? My mom is still here?

SAMPSON

Dalton, there is nothing that can be done to help her now.

DALTON

What do you mean? Of course there is, but not if I move on.

SAMPSON

Failing to reap your mother's soul is the biggest regret I have as a reaper. She made the same mistake that you are making and couldn't let go. Please Dalton. Please don't make that same mistake.

DALTON

I can't just leave her.

SAMPSON  
Staying won't help her.

DALTON  
I don't care what you say. Just leave  
me alone Sampson.

SAMPSON  
Dalton -

DALTON  
Go away!

Sampson is startled by Dalton's sudden outburst. Dalton  
continues in a quiet, but stern voice.

DALTON (cont'd)  
I mean it Sampson. You've done  
enough.

Sampson steps back. He begins to walk away, but turns back.

SAMPSON  
Dalton, just hear me out.

DALTON  
I am not moving on.

SAMPSON  
There might be another way for you to  
stay without becoming a wayward  
spirit.

Dalton looks over to Sampson.

DALTON  
Why didn't you tell me that to begin  
with?

SAMPSON  
Because it's not a conventional  
method and it comes with a lot of  
responsibility.

DALTON  
What is it?

SAMPSON  
Take my place as a grim reaper.

DALTON  
What?

SAMPSON

If you take my place as a reaper, you can stay and search for your mom.

DALTON

What will happen to you?

SAMPSON

I will move on.

DALTON

Why would you do that?

SAMPSON

I will not fail you the same way I failed her.

DALTON

So I can stay?

SAMPSON

Yes, and then one day when you are ready, you can pass the role to someone else and move on as well.

DALTON

I'll do it.

SAMPSON

Just wait Dalton. Accepting this offer comes with a lot of responsibilities. You will have reap new souls to help them move on as well.

DALTON

I can do that.

SAMPSON

Even if you find your mom, you will not be able to reap her soul to help her move on.

DALTON

I will figure it out.

Sampson sighs and looks around.

SAMPSON

Do me a favor and tell everyone goodbye for me, will you?

DALTON  
Who is everyone?

Sampson looks at Dalton and gives a sad smile.

SAMPSON  
The other reapers.

Sampson fades.

FADE OUT

EXT. CEMETERY - NIGHT

Dalton stands in the same cemetery in front of his mother's headstone. It is dark with a full moon out.

Emery appears and walks towards him.

EMERY  
What did he do?

DALTON  
What?

EMERY  
Sampson. What did he do?

Dalton is confused.

DALTON  
I'm not entirely sure. He said something about becoming a reaper.

EMERY  
Goddammit stupid old man. What was he thinking?

DALTON  
I'm sorry what is going on.

EMERY  
He traded places with you to save your soul. Now he can never come back.

Emery glares at Dalton.

EMERY (cont'd)  
You're a reaper now.

FADE TO BLACK

