

DOWNSTREAM

Written by

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The exercises and techniques at Camp Newfound are no different than the ones used throughout conversion camps across the country.

EXT. WEEKI WACHEE RIVER - DAY

High noon sun glistens against crystal clear river water. So clear, you can count each grain of sand below the surface. It's majestic. Sublime. Of the earth and unbothered by mankind.

The kind of place you'd snap a family photo in front of--

SPLASH. A basketball plops onto the surface of the water. Not just any basketball. This one is signed by LeBron James in silver Sharpie. The basketball leaves the rippling water behind as it floats--

DOWNSTREAM

Cypress Trees and Palms line the river banks. Overgrown vegetation strangles the flow of water. The basketball pinballs between it all, and ends up in a--

NARROW CHANNEL

It's traveled some ways. The sun now hangs low. Tangled brush dangles above the river, casting wicked shadows over the traveling basketball.

The sun finally dips below the horizon and the world darkens. And so does the fresh river water as it collides with ocean water, turning it into a--

BRACKISH MARSH

Rotted Roots from cypress trees snake their way through the salt water. Dead palm leaves litter the surface. It's now impossible to count grains of sand. You probably wouldn't take a family photo here.

Now covered in random bits of dead organic matter, the basketball drifts slowly through the marsh. Bumping over this and that until--

A GATOR breaches.

Opens its snout and snaps down on the basketball.

It dives, taking the deflated leather with it and leaving a silent ripple in its absence.

TITLE CREDIT: DOWNSTREAM

EXT. HERNANDO COUNTY, FLORIDA - DAY

An old, but well-maintained Tundra truck zooms down a narrow state road. The wooded landscape spills into the road. Things are damp. Lush. Florida heat collects atop the hot asphalt.

SADIE (PRE-LAP)

One hundred million gallons of
fresh water bubbles up from
underground caves each day...

INSIDE THE TRUCK

SADIE (40s), kicks her shoes off, gets cozy, then flips the page of a book in her lap: "Camp Newfound: A River Paradise".

SADIE

... maintaining a crisp seventy-
four-degree temperature along the
entire seven-mile river.

JUDE, forties, taps his finger on the steering wheel as he drives. Precision all over: perfectly tapered haircut, ironed shirt. He peeks at the rear-view mirror at--

CHANCE (16), who watches the world go by in the backseat. There's a seriousness underneath all the boyishness. He gives his attention to an ENVELOPE in his hands.

"Chance" is penned on one side. He's got eyes to open it but doesn't. Instead, he sticks it between the pages of a journal and uncaps a pen to write.

JUDE

How's it going back there?

CHANCE

Good.

Jude turns down a narrow road. Static replaces the music. Wherever they are, it's remote. He rolls the volume dial down and appeals to Chance's attention.

JUDE

Show Chance the picture.

Sadie lifts the book over her shoulder. Chance scans the retro-style advert. Crystal blue water fills a narrow river. People Canoe.

JUDE (CONT'D)

This place sounds awesome.

Sadie returns to reading:

SADIE

Underwater explorers discovered new passages below, confirming the Weeki Wachee is the deepest known freshwater cave system in the U.S.

(beat)

And look--they've got manatees!

CHANCE

I read about that online. People say they're all gone.

SADIE

You can't believe everything you read on Facebook.

CHANCE

It's Reddit.

SADIE

Huh?

CHANCE

Never mind. I chose the camp because of its success rate.

JUDE

And that's all that matters. You're entering manhood now. Every decision counts.

SADIE

Well. Manatees are a fun bonus!

Sadie passes the book back. Manatees swim under transparent canoes. Happy-go-lucky campers marvel. Chance flips to the first page and latches onto the text:

Copyright 1998. Reddit's more up-to-date than this.

JUDE

Imagine petting a manatee.

Chance catches his father's optimistic gaze in the rearview and appeases him with a smile.

EXT. GAS STATION - NIGHT

Middle of nowhere, Florida. Haggard gas pumps. In desperate need of a power wash. Shitty grocery store in the b.g.

Jude pumps.

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - NIGHT

Chance's face distorts behind the glass of a FISH TANK. Prepaid phones stack on the shelf over his head.

-- **INSIDE THE TANK**, Seminole Warrior figurines bow hunt goldfish. Lucky pennies litter the bottom of the murky water.

GRANT (O.S.)
Need a penny?

Chance draws back--

GRANT (16), stands over him. Kind eyes, but kinda far apart. Probably never laid them beyond his hometown.

CHANCE
Can't be good for the fish.

Grant points to a discolored goldfish.

GRANT
Nah, it's fine. That's Skull Crusher. He's been in that tank since before I was born. Rusty pennies are his kryptonite.
(beat)
Grant.

Grant forks over a rusty penny.

CHANCE
Chance.

GRANT
Chance?

CHANCE
Short for Chancellor.

GRANT
Cool. Just passing through, Chance?

CHANCE
Sort of.

Chance hangs the penny over the fish tank--

GRANT
Make a wish first.

Chance looks over his shoulder:

-- **IN THE LOT**, Jude leans into the passenger side and gives Sadie a sweet kiss. Chance wishes in his head and drops the penny. The fish scatter away from the sinking rust.

GRANT (CONT'D)

So you're headed to New Dawn?

Chance bristles.

GRANT (CONT'D)

No judgment. I hear kids do well there.

CHANCE

That's what I hear. How'd you know?

GRANT

That camp is the only reason people "sort of" pass through town. We supply their food.

A manager WHISTLES towards the register. A customer waits.

GRANT (CONT'D)

Gotta split. Hope your wish comes true.

As Grant turns to leave--

CHANCE

Are there manatees in the river?

GRANT

Not anymore. Later.

INT. TUNDRA - DAY

Chance watches as neat, well-maintained houses pass by. The neighborhood is cute, hidden away alongside a river.

Chance returns to his journal. The page is now half full. He picks up where he left off.

-- **NIGHTFALL. EVEN MORE REMOTE**, The page is now full of words. Chance pens his signature at the bottom. Turns out this isn't a journal entry.

Chance looks up--

The cute neighborhood is long gone. Uncared for trailers litter the world. We've entered a southern shanty town.

EXT. ENTRANCE, CAMP NEWFOUND - NIGHT

The tundra pulls into camp, driving past a welcome sign that hangs between two palms. Rows of wooden cabins line both sides of a dirt road.

Now parked, everyone exits. Appraises the picturesque space.

Smoke billows behind a hulking MAIN CABIN. An orange glow from the campfire behind it lights the undersides of nearby trees. Standing between the main cabin and a row of trees--

A GATEKEEPER, wearing all black, glares at the family.

Sadie passes Chance his bag, stuffed with belongings. Chance takes it, then reaches into the trunk. Pulls out a basketball.

A LeBron James signature marks the leather.

JUDE

You're going to take that?

Chance nods. Jude quietly disproves. Shuts the guidebook in his hands and takes a phrase with him:

JUDE (CONT'D)

Remember, channel your masculine energy.

Jude peacocks. Puffs his chest out. Chance mimics him. Gathers courage. Steps to the Gatekeeper.

The Gatekeeper's eye contact is firm, pulling Chance's attention towards him, as if by tractor beam.

GATEKEEPER

What makes a man?

Chance looks back at Jude. Chest still puffed.

CHANCE

Confidence?

GATEKEEPER

Confidence? Or Confidence.

CHANCE

Confidence.

Seemingly pleased, the Gatekeeper extends his hand.

GATEKEEPER
Mission statement.

Chance flips past a few loose pages in his journal. Rips out the signed page he worked on in the car and hands it over.

EXT. FIRE PIT, CAMP NEWFOUND - NIGHT

The Weeki Wachee gently flows in the b.g of a massive fire. Ten feet high. Embers at the base burn bright red and glow against the faces of--

CAMPERS, COUNSELORS, AND PARENTS.

Nine teenage campers in total, nervously watch the fire. Parents stand behind them, absorbing the scene.

Nine counselors, one for every camper, encircle the fire.

HENRY, (30s), with heaping shoulders and unassuming eyes, stands tall before Chance. He holds a paper grocery bag in one hand and extends his free hand to Chance.

HENRY
I'm Henry.

CHANCE
Chance.

Chance shakes. Henry locks it in tight--

HENRY
When you shake another man's hand,
lock it in tight and shake firmly.

Chance tightens his grip. Henry nods.

HENRY (CONT'D)
Good. Only shake like that for the
rest of your life. These are your
provisions.

Henry hands the paper bag towards Chance. Chance looks inside:

A disposable camera encased inside a waterproof housing and a book titled "Becoming A Man".

THEO (O.S.)
Welcome to Camp Newfound!

THEO (40s) speaks into a microphone connected to an amp. As he emerges from the shadows of the camp, his eyes and smile are wide - like he's seen the light and it's at the end of a gluten-free granola bar.

THEO (CONT'D)

I'm Theo. Founder of Camp Newfound and leader of your journey into manhood. The counselors before you are volunteers from the adult program. They found success here, and now they steward the youth program. You can go to them for guidance.

(beat)

You're here because you believe the way you are is not set in stone. You believe in the power of choice. A choice that aligns with your values.

Counselors reach into their back pockets, extract doggy bags, and finger them open.

THEO (CONT'D)

The first part of this journey is presence. Let go of distractions and be right here, right now.

Henry opens the doggy bag before Chance.

THEO (CONT'D)

Remove any security blankets. Discard your creature comforts. The comfort of home goes along with your phone.

HENRY

Dump your phone.

Chance obliges. Drops his phone in the doggy bag.

THEO

Introduce yourself. Give a firm handshake to your neighbor. Lock eyes. Show him that you are where your feet are.

Chance looks to his right.

TURTLE (17), doesn't look back until his father not-so-secretly smacks him in the back of the head.

Turtle finally gives in and turns, revealing speckled cheeks. The beginnings of a beard. The beginnings of manhood.

TURTLE

Turtle.

CHANCE

Chancellor. I go by Chance.

They shake.

TURTLE

Hope you have what it takes bud.

CHANCE

What do you mean--

With that, Theo retreats to his place. Chance twists his face, uncertain of Turtle's implications.

Meanwhile, Theo reaches for a wooden staff. The tip is charred BLACK. He raises it high above his head--

THEO

Together, you'll face your
salacious desires and cast them
into the fire.

Theo SWINGS his staff at the base of the fire. Toasted logs SNAP. The flame ROARS as it collapses in half. Campers recoil as embers float up into the night sky.

Theo points the charred end of his staff at a camper--

THEO (CONT'D)

You. What's your greatest fear?

Dave (16), late to Puberty, hesitates. He fidgets with the cross on his necklace and looks back to Mom and Dad for guidance--

THEO (CONT'D)

Eye contact.

-- then quickly averts his gaze back to Theo.

DAVE

My greatest fear is not doing what
God wants me to do.

Theo grins, pleased by the answer. Dave relaxes.

Theo points the staff at various campers:

CAMPER 1
My greatest fear is not being
present.

CAMPER 2
-- letting my parents down.

CAMPER 3
-- not having a family of my own.

Theo's staff finally points at Chance. Chance thinks. Hard.
He wants to say what he means and means what he says.

CHANCE
My greatest fear is not living life
as my true self.

Theo turns and points his staff at Turtle.

TURTLE
What he said.

Theo rolls his eyes, half expecting a half-assed effort from
Turtle. Turtle grins in Chance's direction. In a whisper:

TURTLE (CONT'D)
Good one bro.

In the b.g, Theo finally throws the charred staff in the
fire. As the flames engulf the staff, Theo booms into the
microphone.

THEO
I want every camper to take a
picture of themselves before the
fire.

FLASHES go off around the campfire as campers take film
selfies. Each flash reveals the thick smoke as it swirls away
from the fire and fades into the night sky.

THEO (CONT'D)
Soon, your perversions will fade.
The old you will dissolve, just as
the rising smoke dissolves into
clean air.

Chance winds the camera. Turns it towards himself. SNAPS--

FADE TO WHITE: