

EMERALD

By

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OVER BLACK:

The sound of water LAPPING at a river shore.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

A very wide river slowly carries water downstream. Moonlight shimmers on the surface. A large, arching bridge crosses over further upstream.

ANDREW (early 30s) lies with his eyes closed. He's drenched. A bleeding gash decorates his forehead.

Slowly, his eyes flicker open. He sits up groggily and immediately grabs his forehead in pain. He looks at the blood on his hand.

Andrew stands up and wobbles, disoriented. He pats his pockets--empty. He slowly turns a full 360 as he absorbs his surroundings.

He looks at the river, then at the woods that lay past the river shore.

Andrew stumbles into the...

WOODS

Moonlight shines through the slits of the trees, which are thick and hard to walk through.

BEGIN MONTAGE

1) Andrew stumbles as he walks. He trips over roots, bumps his gashed forehead into branches.

2) He FALLS to the ground. He gets up and brushes himself off.

3) More walking. He looks exhausted.

END MONTAGE

Andrew stumbles forward and stops. He sees something up ahead.

As he gets closer...

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Andrew stumbles before pavement. A deserted, winding road. Heavy fog rolls along the asphalt.

Andrew looks left. Then right. Then left again. He looks back down at the fog. It rolls to his left. He takes it as a sign and turns left, begins his journey down the road.

DISSOLVE TO:

Andrew, who now looks like a zombie as he walks, drags his feet to a stop.

Ahead of him are the dark, blocky shapes of buildings. Andrew jogs pathetically toward the...

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

Andrew's jogging comes to a stop as he looks at the buildings.

He continues down the street, walks up to buildings, peeks through a window or two just to see if anyone is still open for business, or just closing.

He looks down dark alleyways--not even a sign of a dumpster cat or stray dog.

 ANDREW
 (shouts)
 Hello!

Only his echo answers back.

He continues to walk and arrives to an INTERSECTION.

He stands in the middle, slowly turns and looks down each lane until he stops. Something catches his attention.

An 'OPEN' sign flashes on and off in the window of a house down the street.

Andrew jogs toward it.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

A one-story, brick structure converted into a business. A short iron fence encloses the property. A willow tree droops sadly over the front lawn, which is covered in English ivy.

Andrew opens the fence gate, which SQUEALS horribly from rusted hinges. He walks up the cracked pathway toward the porch.

A sign hangs above the porch which reads MADAM MALLORY, hand-painted and in cursive.

Andrew walks to the front door and opens it. He lets it slowly swing open.

He steps inside.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The door seems to close behind him on its own.

To his right, an open doorway with a curtain of wooden beads which act as privacy. He strains to look past them, and finally steps through into the...

LIVING ROOM

Lit candles everywhere, which illuminate the room. Red curtains, drawn. Many bookcases filled with books, and vases that sit atop them.

Crystal balls align a fireplace altar; above them are various paintings of mystical figures, intricate line art, and the familiar 'third-eye' portrayal of psychics and spiritual readers.

A small table stands in the middle of the room. A stack of tarot cards sit on the tabletop, placed next to a silver candelabra that holds three tall, melting candle tapers.

Andrew walks to the table and looks at the tarot cards. He looks up at a dark doorway that leads to the kitchen of the house.

ANDREW

Hello?

The house CREAKS back.

ANDREW

Is there anyone here?

No response. He resumes his attention back to the tarot cards.

With a shaky hand, he reaches for the top card of the deck and flips it over, revealing a reversed (upside down) WHEEL OF FORTUNE.

Another CREAK escapes from the darkness of the kitchen, which catches Andrew's attention. He looks at the doorway for a moment before he returns back to the tarot cards.

He flips another one over. It is a reversed DEATH card. Andrew cocks his head and turns the card a smidge. He SHIVERS at it.

WHOOSH! The fireplace comes to life! It startles Andrew.

His attention turns to the sound of a gentle CACKLE.

From the shadows of the house emerges a very elderly, short woman. White, straw hair, a large, crooked nose, a wrinkled face and mouth, the lips curling inward; she hobbles through the living room with a wooden cane.

Necklaces and bracelets JINGLE from her body, and the candlelight makes her look as if she drips in gold.

This is MADAM MALLORY.

ANDREW (cont'd)
(uneasy)
Hi...

Madam Mallory motions to a chair at the table.

MADAM MALLORY
Sit.

Andrew doesn't move.

ANDREW
I need help. I'm hurt.

MADAM MALLORY
You are lost.

ANDREW
Yes, and I need a phone. I need to get to a hospital.

MADAM MALLORY
Sit. I will make you some tea.

ANDREW
I don't need tea. I need a phone!

Madam Mallory smiles, then turns and walks back to the dark kitchen.

MADAM MALLORY
There's no phone here.

She disappears into the dark.

Andrew looks at the empty chair, then back at the front door through the curtain of beads.

He SIGHS and sits down.

(O.S.) The sound of water POURING INTO A KETTLE, and then a stove IGNITING.

Madam Mallory returns with a bowl of water. A washcloth soaks in it. She sets it on the table and sits herself down.

Andrew rings out the washcloth and nurses the gash on his forehead.

ANDREW
Thanks.

Madam Mallory nods.

Andrew looks around the living room, absorbs the decor. He looks back at Madam Mallory.

ANDREW
You must be Mallory?

Madam Mallory nods again.

MADAM MALLORY
You've been wandering for a thousand years.

ANDREW
Yeah, it feels that way. Where am I?

MADAM MALLORY
This town, it has no name. It's where the lost come to be found. We have passersby every night.

ANDREW
What does that mean? Does anybody else live here?

MADAM MALLORY
Oh yes. Hundreds.

ANDREW

Perhaps one of them can give me a ride to a hospital.

Madam Mallory shakes her head.

MADAM MALLORY

Nobody ever leaves the perimeter of this town.

ANDREW

Why not?

She waves the question away and points to the WHEEL OF FORTUNE card.

MADAM MALLORY

Do you know what this means?

ANDREW

I'm not here for a reading. I need help. Can you just tell me where I am?

MADAM MALLORY

You will soon find the help you seek.

ANDREW

Look, enough with the cryptic bullshit. Can't you see that I'm hurt? I need help, god dammit!

Andrew grabs his head in pain. Madam Mallory watches calmly.

MADAM MALLORY

Patience, my dear. Now, do you know what this means?

Andrew shakes his head.

MADAM MALLORY (cont'd)

This card is the Wheel of Fortune. No matter which way the wheel turns, it is impossible to try and change it. However, an inevitable crisis has underlying opportunity.

Madam Mallory pauses for a moment. She taps the card with her bony index finger.

MADAM MALLORY (cont'd)
Although, I will warn you: you've presented this card to yourself in reverse, signifying that luck is not on your side. You must feel helpless and powerless, no? That gash on your head, and the lack of a phone--or people for that matter. Presenting the reverse of this card may indicate that bad luck isn't entirely at the fault of the universe. Have you made any decisions recently that could have contributed to your present circumstances?

Andrew thinks for a moment.

ANDREW
I remember...driving...

MADAM MALLORY
Go on.

ANDREW
And then I woke up at the bank of a river. That's all that I can remember.

MADAM MALLORY
You will recall in due time, Andrew.

ANDREW
How--

(O.S.) The tea kettle begins to WHISTLE.

Madam Mallory pushes herself to her feet and hobbles to the kitchen.

(O.S.) The WHISTLE dies down, and then the sound of POURING WATER.

Madam Mallory walks back into the living room with two cups of tea that sit on small plates. She sets a cup in front of Andrew and gets comfortable in her seat.

MADAM MALLORY
Drink. It will make you feel better.

Andrew stares at the tea with hesitation.

MADAM MALLORY (cont'd)

Drink.

Andrew reluctantly takes the cup, blows the steam away, and takes a sip. He nods.

ANDREW

It's good.

Madam Mallory nods with him. She returns to the WHEEL OF FORTUNE card.

MADAM MALLORY

I'd like to add that the Wheel of Fortune also reflects a resistance to change. Do not fight it. If you do not accept this change, this transformation, then you will be stuck in this circle of events, going 'round and 'round for an eternity.

ANDREW

Transformation?

MADAM MALLORY

It will be wonderful.

She smiles with a big, toothless grin.

MADAM MALLORY (cont'd)

You just need to allow it to happen. Now drink...

Andrew looks down at his tea. He picks up the cup and slowly sips on it, but Madam Mallory pushes the cup upward as she helps feed the tea to him.

He sets the empty cup down and sneaks a peek at the DEATH card.

MADAM MALLORY (cont'd)

Are you afraid of death?

ANDREW

Are you?

Madam Mallory CHUCKLES.

MADAM MALLORY

Look at how old I am. Do you think I should be afraid of death?

Andrew CHUCKLES too. He quiets down, as does Madam Mallory.

ANDREW

I am.

MADAM MALLORY

There is no need to fear death. It is not the end, but a beginning. It is meant to represent something of the past being no longer; closing one door, and opening another. This is the time to purge those things--belongings, memories, baggage--that are causing the pain.

ANDREW

(hesitant)

My girlfriend...broke up with me recently.

MADAM MALLORY

What was her name?

ANDREW

Katie.

MADAM MALLORY

Describe her to me.

ANDREW

Well...she has the most beautiful...no, the most amazing green eyes. That was the first thing I noticed about her. She has red hair, and kind of pale skin. She complains about it, but I don't think it's that bad. And her smile, it's so...uplifting. Whenever she smiled, it made me happy.

MADAM MALLORY

Keep going...

ANDREW

She was adventurous and loved to explore new places. Every day was something new with her. She was smart, she was funny, and she was an awesome cook. Katie was my soul mate. I knew it from the very beginning. We fit together perfectly. And one day, she just... left. She didn't want to be with me anymore.

MADAM MALLORY

You were going to ask her to marry you.

ANDREW

How did you know?

MADAM MALLORY

I can sense it in your voice. From within you.

(beat)

How's your head?

ANDREW

My headache's gone now.

MADAM MALLORY

Good.

She closes her eyes and takes a DEEP BREATH.

MADAM MALLORY (cont'd)

Look at the card. You've played it in reverse as well, and much like the Wheel of Fortune, it shows that you are resisting the change that is currently happening in your life. You must let it go in order to move on. To be free.

(beat)

Take heed, however, for if you try to change the outcome of events, you will be met with unfortunate consequences--ones that can be emotionally destructive...and others that can only be downright terrifying.

She HISSES the last word. The candlelight FADES and FLICKERS ominously. Andrew becomes uneasy.

ANDREW

How will I know when I'm on the right path? How do I know when I've met that transformation?

MADAM MALLORY

Everyone's transformation is different. It is not something you seek, but you will know when you see it.

(beat)

(MORE)

MADAM MALLORY (cont'd)
 Follow the shimmering emerald,
 Andrew. That's when you know you're
 on the right path.

Madam Mallory stands to her feet and turns away. She pauses and looks back at Andrew.

MADAM MALLORY (cont'd)
 Just remember: do not resist the
 path you feel you need to take. If
 you fight against it, you will be
 faced with something awful.

She stares intensely at Andrew, who shivers from a disturbed chill.

MADAM MALLORY (cont'd)
 You must leave now. It is time for
 me to go to bed.

She turns to walk away. Andrew stands to his feet quickly.

ANDREW
 Wait.

Madam Mallory looks back once again.

ANDREW (cont'd)
 Can I stay here? I need sleep. I am
 so tired. And my head needs to
 heal.

MADAM MALLORY
 You shouldn't sleep if you've
 suffered a concussion. You will
 find the help that you need once
 you leave.

She turns and walks toward the darkness of the kitchen.

ANDREW'S POV: just before Madam Mallory disappears, his vision JUMPS UPWARD, then fixes itself. The room begins to spin as he is now DRUNK.

BACK TO SCENE

Andrew turns and drags his feet through the living room. He BUMPS his shoulder into the doorway, the beads sway with a CLATTER as he stumbles through.

He reaches the front door, twists the knob, opens it, and SPILLS OUT into...

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

An uproar. Excited COMMOTION. YELLING, SCREAMING, LAUGHING, HOLLERING; TRUMPETS, DRUMS, HORNS; bright lights, flashing lights, colorful lights; hundreds of people, an active town, full of DRUNKEN PARTIERS.

Businesses are now open and the streets are alive with festivities.

Andrew stumbles down the cracked pathway and falls through the SQUEAKY front gate, to the ground. He looks up at the partiers who stand before him. He clumsily stands to his feet.

ANDREW

(slurred)

She put something in my tea...?

He nearly stumbles into a GROUP OF PARTYGOERS, but they pay no mind to him.

Andrew turns around, and sees that the HOUSE IS GONE. The ivy is gone, the willow tree is even gone, leaving the sky wide open above the empty property.

ANDREW (cont'd)

(slurred)

What's happening to me? What did she do to me?

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

Andrew SHOVES his way through the CROWDS OF PEOPLE.

The LOUD MUSIC has him SPINNING. Partygoers SPIT WITH LAUGHTER, and OBNOXIOUS, EXCITED YELLS make their faces WARP into unnatural, stretched MONSTROSITIES.

Andrew, disoriented, FALLS onto a sidewalk, a bubble of space from the crowds of people. He leans against one of the brick business structures.

He pushes himself up to his feet, and a WHISPER catches his attention.

WOMAN (V.O.)

(whispered)

Andrew...

He looks around at the many faces of the partygoers. The VOICE continues to WHISPER his name.

Andrew stumbles down the sidewalk for a moment before he stops. He sees a WOMAN. She stands diagonal from him at the intersection.

The amount of people in the intersection block Andrew's view from seeing the woman clearly.

WOMAN (V.O.) (cont'd)
 (whispered)
 Andrew...

Andrew attempts to look at the woman through the sea of faces, and notices that she wears a shimmering, emerald-green dress.

MADAM MALLORY (V.O.)
 Follow the shimmering emerald...

Andrew begins to move through the crowd.

As he gets closer, the woman's features become more visible.

Her hair is red, her skin is pale, her green eyes pop and almost radiate with an emerald glow, which stare deep into Andrew's eyes.

It's KATIE.

His face DROPS.

KATIE (V.O.)
 (whispered)
 Andrew...

Her voice is as clear as day, but her ruby red lips don't move.

She turns away from Andrew and GLIDES through the crowd effortlessly.

ANDREW
 (slurred)
 Katie!

He SHOVES his way through the drunken crowd, who pay no attention to him.

ANDREW (cont'd)
 (slurred)
 Katie, come back!

His eyes fill with tears.

ANDREW (cont'd)
(slurred)
Why did you leave me?!

Katie ignores his CRIES as she continues to glide through the crowd. Her emerald-green dress snakes behind her.

She reaches the edge of town where the sea of people SUDDENLY CUT OFF as if there is a line that they cannot cross.

Katie doesn't hesitate as she continues down the deserted, winding road that Andrew had come from.

Andrew BURSTS from the wall of people and stops. He looks back at the crowd, then back at Katie who slowly disappears into the darkness.

He steps a few feet forward, stops and looks back at the crowd once more.

ANDREW (V.O.)
Is this a good idea?

And before he can think any further, he starts his journey back the way he came, following the woman in the emerald-green dress.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Andrew jogs foolishly down the road to catch up with Katie, who continues to walk silently and gracefully along the fog-covered asphalt.

Her dress seems to float above the ground and with the fog. It undulates majestically with the side-to-side movement of her hips.

ANDREW
(slurred)
Come back, Katie...! Why did you
leave me...!

She ignores him. He wipes his nose.

ANDREW (cont'd)
(slurred)
I love you so much, and you just
leave! You just walk away!

He stumbles to the side of the road, trips over his feet and nearly face-plants into the wet ground. He manages to catch himself and stumbles back onto the asphalt.

ANDREW (cont'd)
 (slurred)
 You'll never find someone like me.
 God I miss you so much...

The two round a wide bend before they approach the BRIDGE that crosses over the river. It arches marvelously, and completely captivates drunk Andrew.

He looks back in front of him and Katie is gone.

ANDREW (cont'd)
 Katie?

He walks onto the...

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

A pedestrian walkway lines one side, while the other is protected by a short, metal fence barrier, worn and rusted from the powers of nature. Lampposts line both sides of the bridge and illuminate it.

The breeze picks up and turns into gusts toward the middle of the bridge, wildly blowing Andrew's hair.

He notices Katie, who stands on the short, metal fence barrier. She holds onto one of the lampposts that shines down on her. She faces Andrew.

ANDREW
 (slurred)
 What are you doing?

Katie stares at him with sadness.

Then, she releases her grip and steps backward.

ANDREW (cont'd)
 No!!

He runs toward her.

Katie's arms lift upward as gravity pulls her downward. Andrew CRASHES into the barrier and nearly tumbles over himself.

He SNATCHES her wrist!

She slowly slides further and further from his sweaty grasp.

She stares at him with sad, green eyes. They SHIMMER into his.

KATIE
(whispered)
Let me go...

She SMILES. It's beautiful. Andrew is absolutely captivated by her stare and smile.

She slips a bit further from his grasp.

KATIE (cont'd)
(whispered)
Let me go...

Andrew's grip LOOSENS, this time on purpose.

MADAM MALLORY (V.O.)
(whispered)
Be free...

Madam Mallory's voice carries along with the wind.

Andrew slowly begins to LIFT UP INTO THE AIR. The light above them shines brighter and brighter.

ANDREW
I love you...

Katie's fingers slide through Andrew's loosening grip.

And she falls.

IN SLOW MOTION: Her dress parachutes beneath her; it creates a firework of shimmering emerald, as she falls toward the shimmering emerald river, staring back at him with shimmering emerald eyes.

The blinding white light from the lamppost engulfs Andrew...

BACK TO SCENE

SPLASH! Katie disappears beneath the surface of the river in a mess of foam and bubbles.

The white light DISAPPEARS as Andrew's face DROPS.

ANDREW (cont'd)
No!!

He pulls himself over the railing of the barrier, feet tumbling over his head, and he FALLS INTO DARKNESS...

FADE OUT.

UNDERWATER - NIGHT

SPLASH.

Andrew sinks beneath the surface. Gravity seems to pull him down further.

In the moonlight that breaks through the surface, a blocky, black shape forms before him. As he gets closer, it becomes metallic. Smashed headlights. A grill. A tire. It's a submerged car, tilted upward with the front pointed toward the surface.

He swims toward the driver side. The window is smashed open. He swims inside the...

SUBMERGED CAR

It's a tight, cramped space. He can barely twist and turn within the car.

He faces the backseat of the car and sees that the back window is smashed open as well, opening up to the black abyss below it.

Something within the darkness moves...

Andrew pulls himself closer to the back window. There's just enough moonlight to see the object growing nearer to the car.

It is round and porcelain white. A pale protrusion extends outward toward him. An appendage. A hand...

The round object is a face. Red hair delicately sways in front of it. An emerald-green dress fades into view...

Andrew backs away. His breath begins to fade.

Katie's CADAVEROUS WHITE FINGERS grip the window frame of the smashed back window, and pulls herself inside. Her red hair flows out of her face and--

Her eyelids are missing. She possesses a wide-eyed stare from two milky eyeballs that bulge from their sunken sockets. Her nose is gone.

Her mouth, twisted into a large, skeletal grin with her lips peeled backward and exposing the receding blue-gray gums that make her teeth unnaturally long.

The skin pulls against every bone, which stretches her mouth to give her a permanent expression of psychotic, nightmarish happiness.

Bubbles escape Andrew's mouth as he GURGLES a muffled YELP.

He turns and swims away from Katie toward the front of the car.

SMACK! He rams his face into the windshield. He SMACKS it with the palms of his hands. Slaps become closed-fist blows as he becomes desperate to escape.

Katie's skeletal hand SNATCHES Andrew's ankle! She YANKS him downward and he BELTS a muddy, wet SCREAM. He KICKS away from her.

His heel SMASHES into her mouth and RIPS HER JAW OFF. Black blood pours from her mouth as she releases a SHRILL, BUBBLY SHRIEK. She pulls herself up toward Andrew.

Andrew grabs the window frame of the driver side window and pulls himself outward. This causes the car to SINK further into the black abyss. He becomes desperate to breathe.

Katie's atrophied arm wraps around his waist, and she digs her bony fingers into his skin.

Andrew desperately attempts to swim away, but Katie's grasp prevents him from moving.

He TAKES A BREATH and INHALES WATER.

The car SINKS.

Andrew's GHOSTLY MOAN travels down into the black abyss with the car, his body, and Katie's. An army of bubbles escape his mouth and rush to the surface.

FADE OUT.

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

Drunk Andrew stumbles through the crowds of partygoers. He collapses against a brick wall in a bubble of space on the sidewalk.

He watches the partygoers walk by as they ignore him, too busy having fun themselves.

Finally, he stands up and SHOVES his way through the crowd. He CRIES for Katie in drunken slurs, but she is nowhere to be found.

He enters the intersection.

Andrew pushes himself through the crowd until it tapers off at the end of the street; beer bottles and other trash from the celebration litter the area.

He shuffles like a zombie toward a four-door car as he pulls out his keys. He grabs the door handle and pauses for a moment.

ANDREW (V.O.)
Is this a good idea?

...is his last thought as he climbs into the vehicle.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

Andrew's car sloppily drives down the winding road.

INT. ANDREW'S CAR - NIGHT

Andrew's eyes are red and swollen from crying. He SNIFFS.

ANDREW
I loved you so much...

He wipes his nose.

The car TREMBLES as he drifts off the road for a moment. He swerves the steering wheel to the left and straightens the car out.

Andrew drunkenly buckles his seat belt.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The car rounds a wide bend, nearly going off the road again before straightening back out. Up ahead is the BRIDGE.

INT. ANDREW'S CAR - NIGHT

Andrew leans forward and stares at the large structure in awe as he begins to pass under it. The steering wheel loosens in his grip.

He looks forward.

The fence barrier appears in his headlights. A bridge lamppost blinds him.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

CRASH! The car SMASHES through the fence barrier.

INT. ANDREW'S CAR - NIGHT

Andrew's forehead SMACKS into the steering wheel.

EXT. BRIDGE - NIGHT

The car soars through the quiet, night air in deafening silence. The front end tilts down, and the trunk end rises upward and over.

For a moment, the car seems to be frozen in the air.

SPLASH.

The back window SHATTERS as the car lands end first into the water.

INT. ANDREW'S CAR - NIGHT

Water SPRAYS into the car and churns into it as the car begins to SINK.

Andrew, dazed from the impact with a bleeding forehead, sits in the seat and threatens to pass out as the water behind him fills the car.

The water bubbles up to him.

The moment it touches him, he SNAPS awake.

The car completely submerges underwater.

UNDERWATER - NIGHT**SUBMERGED CAR**

Andrew unbuckles his seat belt and tries to open the door, but the pressure difference prevents the door from opening.

A bubble of air allows him to continue to breathe, but not for long as the inside quickly fills up with water. His chest becomes submerged. Then his shoulders. Then his neck.

ANDREW

Oh god, oh god, oh god...

With one last breath, he WHIMPERS:

ANDREW (cont'd)

No...

He chokes on one last bubble of air before the water washes over his face.

His palms SLAP the windshield, which turn into closed-fist blows.

He swims to one door and SMACKS his gashed forehead into the window. He swims to another door, and again SMACKS his face into the window, disoriented.

He grips the passenger assist handle and rears his legs back into his chest.

BAM. He kicks at the driver side window. BAM! Again. And AGAIN.

He becomes desperate as his breath begins to fade.

STATIC crunches in his ears.

He kicks and kicks and kicks, bubbles slowly escaping from his mouth.

CRACK! The window, still intact due to tempered glass, CRACKS from the window frame. Andrew kicks again, and it SHATTERS.

The car sinks DEEPER.

Andrew pulls himself toward the shattered window. Unbeknownst to him, his seat belt wraps around his chest.

He pulls himself through the window, kicks frantically toward the surface.

SNAG! The seat belt holds him in place! He kicks and kicks to attempt to get loose, and his foot becomes tangled in the lap strap of the seat belt!

The car SINKS, and the seat belt YANKS him downward.

He lets out a watery SCREAM--his last breath.

Bubbles rush from his mouth and to the surface. The car pulls him down into the darkness of the river.

ANDREW'S POV: as he sinks further to the bottom, the bubbles slowly ascend to the surface of rippling green river. In the moonlight, the rising bubbles SHIMMER, and the surface of the water looks exactly like EMERALD.

FADE OUT.

OVER BLACK:

The sound of water LAPPING at the river shore.