



A Short Film by
Aleksandr Beaudoin





Film Treatment
by Aleksandr Beaudoin

LOGLINE: LAVANDE follows “Dropout,” a deadbeat high school junior, as he navigates his mundane life in rural New England. The entire town having already determined his fate as another backcountry failure, he too succumbs to the notion, until the whacky high school French teacher takes an unexpected interest in his future. Though both live day-by-day under extreme financial pressures, through their atypical relationship, they find something to give the other, highlighting how the tiniest action can make the biggest difference. Ending in a sudden and strange offer from Madame herself, Dropout is faced with a decision that could forever alter the course of his life should he take it, thanks to the power of language.



THEMES:

- Selflessness
- The power of language
- Role models
- Determination
- Recognition

TONE: Mundane, steady, and still – yet subtly uplifting. Almost like a milder GOOD WILL HUNTING.

As it takes place in winter, we adopt the mood that snow can bring. How it can be frigid, confining, and an obstacle, but also calm and serene under the December sun. Toward the beginning of the story we really feel the isolation present in the remote town, further enforced by the mountains surrounding the area. However, as the story continues and the central characters begin to forge a relationship, we’re suddenly aware of the beauty of the place, now that it comes with the option to leave at will.

Though Dropout has all but given up hope for himself, it's Madame's attitude and determination to set him on a new life path that instills the sense of life and "brightness" in the story, even in most frigid of winter days. But despite her positive attitude, the scenes are never too vivid, as Madame also struggles with a myriad of personal problems that she can't seem to escape.

Browns and blues are the predominant colors with purple/lavender undertones. In general, all colors are of darker hue and saturation to help instill the lack of life seemingly present in the characters lives. Dull shades also serve to remind us of the setting - a hidden country town in the dead of winter. The few moments we do notice brighter color is in Madame's classroom, which has pops of lavender and purple hidden throughout. Her apartment also carries dark pops of purple. The most lively and colorful visual is that of the lavender fields, as they become central to both characters' lives and a symbol of their hope for freedom from life's dealings.



STORY

An all but empty country road surrounded by snow-covered trees dominates the screen. Except for some slight winter wind, all is still. *A ghost town.*

But then, we spot motion. There's life.

An incredibly suave man dressed in foreign apparel is suddenly seen strolling down the dirty road. His perfectly tapered silhouette stands out against the wild nature surrounding him. From the way he walks to his noticeably expensive blazer and scarf, we can tell he doesn't belong here. That it's all strange to him.

But he keeps walking in solitude, trudging through the cold air.

Meet TRISTAN.

Just as the first car seen passes, he pauses. In the background lies a small high school. Brick. Dark. A little run-down.

His eyes fixate on it.

RING RING.

Still focusing on the school, Tristan answers his phone. Through a brief call we discover that he's international, as the phone conversation is spoken in French. From the brief subtitles, we gather that he has a partner and is currently in the random town for a small event.

Ending the call, his eyes are still glued to the school. It seems to grow before him in a menacing manner until it consumes him entirely.

He quickly steps away from the threatening building.



Just as he does, **we're thrown into a high school cafeteria, sometime in the past.**

In complete opposition to the French gentleman just witnessed, we're now looking at a disheveled and grimy TEENAGE BOY as he bites down on the shittiest looking hamburger you've ever seen. He grimaces, but hesitantly takes another bite. Disgusted, he forcefully spits it onto the floor, stands, and tosses the bit-ten-burger into the middle of the cafeteria.

Completely ignoring the LUNCH LADY demanding that he pick it up, he exits. No one is surprised and the lunch lady can only SIGH.

This is "DROPOUT."

Now, we're in a classroom.

Close-up, we see a pencil delicately adding shading to a detailed drawing. We're unable to determine the subject quite yet. Eventually though, as a good amount of time passes, we begin to make out the image: a man and a woman engaging in intercourse. We realize that Dropout is the artist and his canvas in an uncompleted Biology worksheet.

Abruptly, the Science Teacher notices and glares at him. Unfortunate for her, she inquires as to his activities.

Beaming with pride and joy, Dropout holds up his chef d'oeuvre for all to see. Gradually, more giggles are heard around the room as they witness his sensual creation. With a confident smile, he says but one word – "Biology!" – thereby answering his teacher's question.

With an expected SIGH, the teacher sends him to the principal's office. By the way Dropout's bag is already pre-packed and ready to go, we get the sense this is routine.

With a tiny skip and a salute, he leaves the class.



HALF NELSON (2006)

In the principal's office, an elderly man sits behind a large desk, staring at the bored student across from him. As if a critic, he examines Dropout's illustration.

From the conversation to follow, we learn this is a regular occurrence, as the Principal informs Dropout he can't keep being called to the office. As Dropout defends his artwork, the principal disregards him and instead focuses on ways to help the student. Perhaps join a club. Find something to do (that isn't annoying the shit out of everyone around him). And though Dropout is continually sarcastic throughout the scolding, the topic takes a more serious turn when the Principal tells Dropout he's on a path to never leaving the town for his entire life.

In a counter-attack, Dropout simply implies he'll inform his parents they should've raised him better. Despite his mom being an alcoholic and his father having left a few years ago.

A typical response, the Principal only SIGHS. Both silent, we truly feel claustrophobic in the tiny space.

Later that day, we watch as Dropout meanders down a long, boring, and beige hallway. Jail-like. However, the walls are populated with posters on learning foreign languages: Spanish. French. Latin.

If only for a second, upon hearing a multitude of dialects, Dropout pauses. Then he continues on.

Unexpectedly, the Spanish Teacher steps out and asks if he should be in class.

DING. DING.

Too late. Class is now over.

The school bell goes off, prompting a few students to exit the nearby French room. As they do, a middle-aged, exhausted, and whacky woman rushes to the door. Shouting down the hallway at her few students, MADAME reminds everyone to sign up for her after-school French lessons. They'll be fun!...

(Also they'll get extra points on their exams).

With the ever-familiar SIGH of a teacher, she enters her room. Though tired, even when she seems worn-down there's a hint of energy and life still present in her movements. In the room, Madame regards an old photo of her in France sitting on her desk. Nostalgia fills the room.

That evening, Dropout marches home in the winter weather, wearing way too thin of a jacket and shivering the entire way. The mood is depressing.

Then, we see the door to a mobile home swing open. The interior is retro and falling apart. It's very 80s. Dark brown and yellow, wooden cabinets, funky old couch.

Dropping his backpack, Dropout instantly grabs a large trash bag sitting by the door.

We see as he launches it into a large outdoor recycling bin - a communal one for everyone living in the mobile home park.

It lands with the shattering of alcohol bottles.

Back in the trailer, Dropout walks by a passed out, young woman on the grimy couch. His MOTHER.

Entering a small bedroom, Dropout lets uncompleted homework and worksheets fall out of his bag. From the floor, he collects them into a metal trash bin.

Then, unexpectedly, we hear a strike as a flame ignites.

A match is dropped into the bin, almost instantly catching the papers on fire.

Oddly, Dropout calmly sits on his bed. Listening for something. Waiting...

Then we hear it. A faded out beeping noise.



With a large roll of his eyes, Dropout exits, only to come back with batteries in hand. He inserts them into the damaged smoke detector above and then lifts the burning bin closer to the device. It now sends a piercing ringing throughout the trailer.

From the other room, we hear stirring as his mother wakes. *Barely*.

Dropout uses this moment to inquire about dinner.

Still half asleep, his mother mumbles that leftovers are for dinner. Sadly, we learn there is no food to have leftovers from.

With that, his mom falls back asleep in an alcoholic daze.

Unsurprised, Dropout lies on his bed and grabs a destroyed copy of “A Tale of Two Cities” and begins reading.

Days later, Dropout peruses school grounds with two low-life friends. In a comedic interaction, his friends wonder if Dropout has sucked the principal off yet, seeing as he's always in his office.

Passing a joint around, they all simply laugh. One of the two friends at one point does imply wanting to leave the shitty town though. This hits us harder than we expect because we know he'll never be able to due to his upbringing and lack of effort.

Before we can dwell on it too much though, a faculty member spots them. The two friends bolt, but Dropout remains in his place.

CUT TO THE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE.

With physical signs of disappointment, the Principal sits in his chair. Questioning why he must smoke on school grounds, Dropout simply replies that he was the one who said to get a hobby in the first place. Fed up, the Principal states he can only help Dropout this last time. One more slip up and he'll be expelled. Then he can become another "statistic and dropout added to the town's impressive roster."

Even this is hard for Dropout to admit.

Meanwhile, in the French room, Madame rushes to view her sign-up sheet. We then feel her complete despair and pain when she notices no names listed. Her look of genuine defeat is heartbreaking.

Dragging herself back into her classroom, she passes a table full of decadent French treats. We hear as upbeat French music plays from a nearby speaker. The entire setting is cultured and cozy.

Plopping down at her desk, Madame takes note of all the empty seats, feeling like a complete failure and loser. Turning off the music, she decides to scroll through old family photos on her phone. For a brief second, she almost dials her "mère's" number. She wipes away light tears from her eyes when –

TAP.

She JUMPS and SWEARS at the gentle sound.



THE KINDERGARTEN TEACHER (2018)

A figure stands in her doorway, silent. Questioning his name, he replies with his nickname; “*Dropout*.”

Even Madame, who could give two shits about gossip, has heard about his reputation. And though it throws her off for a brief second, she moves past it, asking again, what his real name is.

Dropout doesn’t respond. He simply walks to the spread of treats, taking note of little French flags and labels inserted into each one.

Some time passes, and the two beings now sit far from each other. It’s quiet and bit awkward as Madame searches for words to say.

She tries to get as much information as she can out of him, but Dropout is very evasive. He says the least amount possible. There is a fragile moment however in their discussion when Madame tells him to have some of the snacks, and we see him rush to the table, returning to his seat with a full baguette. Despite his hunger, he is gentle and eats the food with grace. The air is very calm as the two humans learn about each other for the first time.

Somehow, Madame is able to uncover that Dropout may have an interest in traveling, so long as it’s not “here.”

In finding out that Madame is actually from the South of France herself, we see Dropout’s disdain for the town when he questions why the Hell she’s in it. Even Madame is a little thrown-off by the question.

Dropout then ends the conversation by asking how to say “shit” in French. Madame agrees to tell him, only if she can teach him some other words too. He nods, and she comes back to life as we see her enthusiasm for teaching the language.

That evening, Dropout falls into his bed. Out of a plastic bag he pulls the leftover French snacks. And lastly, an English-to-French dictionary. He jumps to the section on food.

Also that same evening, Madame prepares pasta in an old rundown apartment. It’s barely lit, but just enough so we can see various family photos and pictures of France hanging on the walls. A collage of her childhood.

The innocence instilled however, disappears the moment we see Madame combing through a large pile of BILLS. Most with late-notices, she grows anxious and as a response, tosses them all aside.

Then – darkness.

The room goes black as the power is shut off.

In response, Madame yells but one word: “MERDE.” (SHIT).



Days later, Dropout silently munches on a cracker as he examines Madame sitting a few desks away, a little closer this time. As he finishes, he looks around the room and states it's depressing. Even she can't deny it.

As a remedy, she decides to show Dropout more lively photos of where she's from. Images from her earlier life project onto the wall, intriguing Dropout, though he tries to hide any signs of interest. More importantly, Dropout wonders why she's opening up to him. Trusting him. Out of anyone.



GIFTED (2017)

In an honest moment, he admits to Madame that every other club he walked into said they were full; to which Madame says she clearly had no one. In response, Dropout states that neither did most of the other clubs. They just didn't want him to join.

Pushing down her sadness, Madame points to her photos of the lavender fields. The beauty of them mesmerizes her, even to this day. Their soft purple hue and immense beauty is also captivating to Dropout. As he stares, we notice a slight glow in his eyes that wasn't there before...*A desire*.

WE CUT TO ANOTHER EVENING and see as Dropout practices French words and phrases out loud in his room. The selection is random and amusing.

Days later, we see the principal sitting in his chair with a look of disappointment...yet again. An all too recognizable setting and mood.

He temporarily waits, taking in the silence.

Building up the courage to speak, he then declares he has to cut the after-school French lessons. It's just now that we realize he is sitting across from Madame.

Desperate to find a way to keep them afloat, Madame offers potential solutions. Unfortunately, when it comes down to it, the Principal reminds her that the school pays for her overtime to do so. And they simply can't afford it. So, in a last-ditch effort, Madame agrees to take a pay cut and \ buy the snacks herself. Surprised by her intense drive, the Principal investigates more, discovering that Dropout is the student attending the sessions and that he's doing very well.

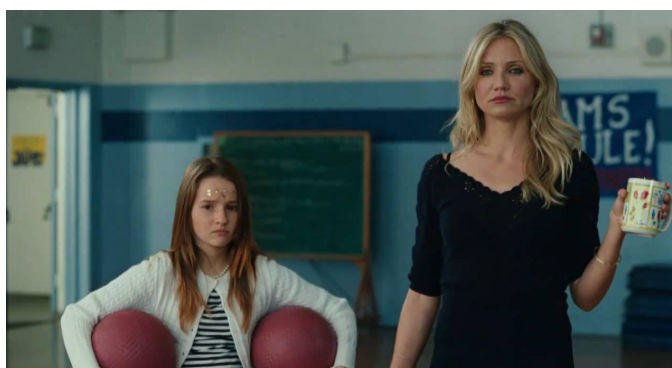
Genuinely glad and shocked that Dropout has found an interest, the Principal finishes by saying he can give Madame a little more time to find at least two more students to join.

We arrive back in the French room as Dropout watches Madame list conjugations on the whiteboard. She calmly does so with her little pep of energy, until she randomly stops and turns to face her student, questioning what his real name is. He still hasn't told her and clearly intends on keeping it that way, seeing as he still avoids answering the question.

Refusing to call him a word with such a negative implication, Madame asks how he would like to be called then, giving him the option to choose a French name. In her room, it's her rules. And there, you can be whomever you want.

Since he's still shy and doesn't offer any options himself, Madame suggests the name TRISTAN, implying it's relaxed but also proper.

Subtly nodding, Dropout agrees to it.



That evening as he studies his French notes in bed by a dim reading light, Dropout pauses and looks up, uttering the name out loud for the first time. A tiny smile emerges at hearing the sound of his new name.

Back on school grounds, Tristan stands with his two other friends from before. As they complain about receiving bad tests scores, Tristan seems lost in space. Eventually getting his attention, they ask if he'll join in smoking after school. To our surprise, he lies, saying he has detention...His very first attempt at distancing himself from the two of them.

As they all walk off, we notice Madame watching from a distance.

In the French room, Madame sits at her desk, watching Tristan write sentences on the board. She seems a bit anxious. Like she wants to say something, but doesn't know how.

Finally, she does – asking if he has any friends interested in joining the club. Almost instantly, he replies “No.” Madame then brings up the two friends she saw with him earlier. Based on Tristan's response, we get the sense he doesn't think highly of them. He doesn't want them to join.

Not knowing where else to look, Madame confesses that she has to find two more students or the sessions will be cut.

Tristan just goes silent, aggressively conjugating a list of verbs. Madame plops her head onto her desk, the sleep deprivation and constant energy finally taking its toll.

CUT TO NIGHT: we watch as Madame puts leftover French snacks in her mostly empty fridge. Completely exhausted, she lets her body drop onto the couch, sinking into the ancient pillows.

A week or so later, we watch as both the Principal and Tristan study each other with curious eyes. Neither really knows why they're there. It's a game.

Breaking the silence, Tristan questions if he's there because of "the dumpster." Having no idea what he's talking about, the Principal lets out a rapid sigh, but then goes onto state he hasn't seen him in a while. Ignoring Tristan's typically witty response, on a more serious note, the Principal asks him "what changed?"

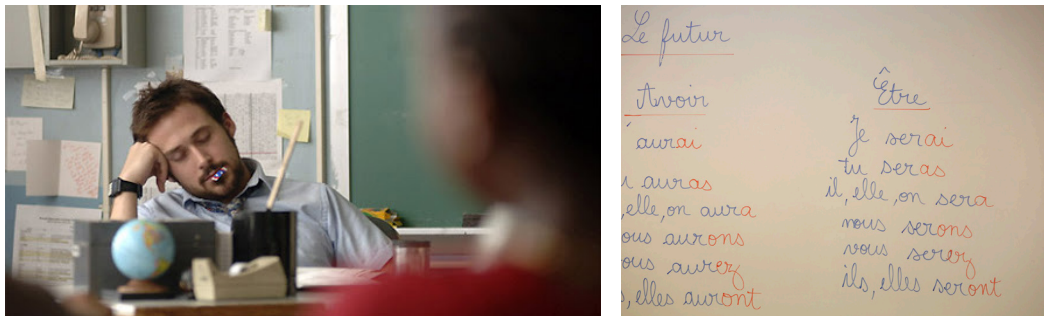
This slightly throws Tristan off-guard. But he's completely silent in return, clearly reflecting on the question himself.

A few hours later, as the school day comes to an end, Madame stares at her still empty sign-up sheet. She lets her own embarrassment, rage, and despair get the best of her and rips the paper off the wall. She shoves it into a trashcan and then rushes out with her belongings.

About a week later, we're back in the classroom. Madame inspects Tristan as he completes a small quiz. The second he finishes, she walks over and examines his responses. Of all things, she seems sad, her eyes growing a little wet.

Managing to get the words out, Madame informs Tristan they're all correct, prompting a small grin in return. It then disappears when he looks to Madame.

She regretfully admits the school is cutting their after-school sessions.



Tristan goes red. Furious. Embarrassed. Somehow feeling defeated. He finally took a chance on something and it's being torn from him.

Madame tries to explain the situation, but he won't listen. He just grabs his things and storms out, Madame repetitively yelling that she's sorry until she can no longer see him.

Her eyes well up as she stands there alone.

Next thing we know, Tristan is back in the trailer park, hurling yet another giant trash bag into the dumpster, the familiar shattering of glass echoing throughout the area.

But then, we notice as he pulls his French dictionary and notebook out of his backpack, tossing them in as well. The sound of their impact seems to carry more weight than the alcohol bottles.

Continuing his mundane life, on another boring day, Tristan samples a piece of bread in the cafeteria. Having now experienced French baguettes, this tastes especially like horseshit. Frustrated, he rushes outside.

Standing in the cold, Tristan finds himself staring at the surrounding mountains. They seem to lock him in, hiding him from other places. Cities and towns not meant for him.

We feel the intense emptiness and stillness of the space expanding all the way into the horizon.

Ever so softly, the school bell goes off in the distance, disturbing the moment.

Walking down empty hallways, Tristan kills time during third period. We recognize the area as the foreign language section. The area is quiet until the Spanish Teacher notices Tristan. Questioning if he has class, he takes his time responding. Tristan is more disappointed than anything and doesn't have the energy to come up with a clever retort.

Just as he's finally about to respond, we hear a *female voice* reply that he does indeed have class and that they're all on a break. Tristan turns to see Madame leaning in her doorway.

With an irritated sigh, the Spanish teacher continues on her way.

Madame and Tristan are the only two souls in the hallway.



DEAD POETS SOCIETY (1989)

Suspiciously, she looks around and eventually approaches. Subtly handing him a folded piece of paper, she tells Tristan to meet at the address listed at 4:30pm.

Deeply confused, but with an unexplainable sense of trust, Tristan nods, allowing Madame to promptly return to the chaos of her classroom.

That afternoon, a door abruptly BURSTS open as Madame's body flies into a room. Tristan enters soon after, quietly examining the place. It's Madame's apartment.

Shutting the door, she apologizes for the old and shitty quality. Tristan then shares that he lives in a trailer, so this is a step up.

From the tiny kitchen she yells if Tristan is hungry. Still surveying the place, he's about to respond when he notices a large stack of bills to be paid. He let's it sink in and replies, "No." Lying.

Nonetheless, we cut to a little bit later as the two study French in the rugged quaintness of Madame's home. If we didn't know any better, it could almost be a rustic home in the South of France. A serene setting.

What follows is a montage of shots as the two of them consistently study French in her apartment. As it plays, we notice how the quantity of snacks diminishes over time. Tristan stays though, fully captivated by the language and culture.



We now return to the suave European-looking gentleman from the beginning scenes. Though not apparent before, it is now clear that this is Tristan as an adult.

He still walks down country roads. His old stomping ground. A past life.

In the background, we notice a familiar building - the exterior of Madame's apartment. Tristan doesn't stop long to observe it. Instead, he takes note of the time on his phone.

As he does, we flash back to the past. Inside her tiny place, Madame tosses bill after bill aside. As they hit the floor, she notices a different looking envelope. A letter from France.

Excitedly tearing open the envelope, she pulls out a card that reads, "Bonne Anniversaire!" As her fingers flick open the card, a folded up piece of paper suddenly falls out. Reaching for it, she's confused when she sees it's a check.

Carefully, she examines it. Her eyes go LARGE at the amount listed.

She instantly dials her Mère's number.

Meanwhile, Tristan is asleep in his own room. Resting in his limp hands is his torn up copy of "A Tale of Two Cities." We notice a quote roughly highlighted in yellow.

It reads: *"I hardly seem yet," returned Charles Darnay, "to belong to this world again." "I don't wonder at it; it's not so long since you were pretty far advanced on your way to another."*

Regardless of their respective life situation, their lives are momentarily at peace.

This calm feeling is carried back into the present, as Tristan now continues through the town. Having recently passed Madame's apartment, he randomly halts at the site of a local Farmer's Market. A few country-goers enter and exit.

The site takes him into the past one more time.



Inside the market, Madame waits for some coffees to be prepared. Tristan stands beside her.

She remarks how well he's doing, noting he has a skill for languages. Something even she admits being jealous of. Not used to receiving compliments, he simply shrugs.

Having established a pretty strong relationship, Madame feels comfortable asking when everyone started calling him, "Dropout."

After a quick pause, he *finally* answers the question, quietly stating that he doesn't remember. Madame is then quick to remind him that he hasn't shared his birth name with her yet.

After a longer pause than the first, Tristan replies once again that he doesn't remember.

Luckily the coffee orders are called, giving Madame a moment to control her emotional response. She rushes to the register as a way to distract herself from the sad truth. She pulls out her credit card and hesitates. She then places cash on the counter as an alternative.

They both exit the market, coffees in hand, and walk through the chilly weather.



The farther they get from the market, the more frantic Madame seems to grow. We get the sense she wants to say something, but doesn't quite know how. She runs through many options in her mind and eventually decides to go for it.

Her feet abruptly stop in their tracks, prompting Tristan to face her in curiosity.

He looks down to see her outstretched hand. In it, rests an envelope.

Looking into her eyes, he tries to forecast what could be in it. But he could never predict what's to come.

Finally grabbing it, Madame begins explaining the situation. Still opening the offering, she goes ahead, saying she wants him to use it to enroll in a high school in France. Having not quite seen what's inside yet, Tristan is bewildered.

All becomes clear though as the folded up birthday check falls out. Upon witnessing the amount, Tristan begins shaking his head. He's afraid of the paper, what it means, the decision he's now faced with. His breathing noticeably increases and he backs away.

But Madame is more determined than ever, as if an explorer close to finishing her quest.

She tries instilling confidence into Tristan, stating he needs to leave the town and actually become the Tristan she sees him as. She's already laid down the groundwork, explaining her family would love to host him while he's there.

Remaining in a state of total shock, Tristan offers excuses, any reason he can think of not to take the money. It's too much. He's unprepared. He doesn't deserve it.

At this specific remark of his, Madame cuts in and with the most force she's ever used, proclaims it isn't true. That Tristan must stop with such nonsense.

Still on the defense, he reaffirms that that isn't his name.

Madame won't have it though. She asserts that it is. Also that he has a talent and it would be a waste not to use it.

Surprised at her intensity, Tristan finally takes a moment to think, during which Madame stresses he must promise her one thing. He looks to her...

That he won't come back.

The town goes still.

A flustered Tristan takes in her words. He ponders, questions, debates.

Ever so softly, Madame whispers that he's going to love the lavender fields in the springtime.



Tightly grasping the check, he looks to the mountains in the distance and for the first time, they don't seem as confining. More like a gateway to what lies beyond.

He then turns to Madame, her selfless eyes meeting his gaze. Eyes he will come to think of even as an adult. Eyes that he will remember forever changed the course of his life.



FROM A CLOSE UP OF HER EYES, WE CROSS-DISSOLVE TO A CLOSE UP OF TRISTAN'S EYES IN THE PRESENT. The successful eyes of a hardworking man.

He now stands at a tiny podium, the world mute around him. For some reason, he can't seem to speak. He looks down to a piece of paper and then back up, his eyes damp. The strongest emotional response we've ever seen from him.

A moment later, he finds a way to begin.

Introducing himself, we realize he's addressing an audience.

Continuing, he begins on a mini reflection of his time in the town. He reveals it's the only time he's been back in 20 years and that a lot has changed since. Evolved. That he even has a different name now.

Jumping into a new idea, he recalls how there was a time when he was sitting in the principal's office after not having been called in a while, and the Principal questioned why that was. Tristan says he never told the prick, but that he wants to tell *her*.

We now suddenly realize that he's talking to Madame.

Briefly, he describes a moment between them that changed his life. The moment she showed him the photos of the lavender fields. The images of her home. How it was the first time he learned about opening up to people. About trusting them.

And now he's here to let her know that she was right all along. That there is absolutely nothing like those fields at sunset. The unparalleled sense of safety and hope they instill. Feeling like you're in a vivid dream. A dream that, because of her, was made possible. A dream he didn't even know he had, until she gave him the tools and the lessons to paint it. New possibilities thanks to the power of language.

Finishing his speech and with the image of the lavender fields fresh in his mind, Tristan then reaches into his suit pocket and pulls out a small ziplock bag.

From within it, he pulls out a small piece of LAVENDER.

Momentarily rubbing his fingers in it, we see as he then places it on a COFFIN by his feet...

Her coffin...Madame's coffin.

Managing to hold back tears, prior to stepping away from the podium, Tristan takes note of the mountains.
The very ones he looked at with so little hope and resentment long ago.

Hope that was able to become a reality because of the small-town French teacher who took an interest in his future. Who took the time to notice him.

The one with nothing, who found something to give.

A name.

And a world.

