

VALENCE
SEASON 2, EPISODE 1
“AXIS”
RELEASE DATE: 02/05/2021

[[A door handle turns and clicks open. Soft wind chimes tinkle.]]

ANNE: Brought to you by Hug House Productions

WIL: *VALENCE* is brought to you by Changing Hands, an independent bookstore based on Phoenix, Arizona. Changing Hands has always been my safe place, and I'm honored to partner with them for my second season. If you'd like to support Hug House and indie bookstores, we'd appreciate if you could use our affiliate link, bit.ly/HHChangingHands. That's bit dot l y slash H H, like Hug House, Changing Hands.

My recommended read this episode is *Oval*, by Elvia Wilk, which was recommended to me by Elena Fernandez Collins, and which I devoured. Here's the summary from the back of the book:

In the near future, Berlin's real estate is being flipped in the name of “sustainability,” only to make the city even more unaffordable; artists are employed by corporations as consultants, and the weather is acting strange. When Anja and Louis are offered a rent-free home on an artificial mountain—yet another eco-friendly initiative run by a corporation—they seize the opportunity, but it isn't long before the experimental house begins malfunctioning.

After Louis's mother dies, Anja is convinced he has changed. At work, Louis has become obsessed with a secret project: a pill called *Oval* that temporarily rewires the user's brain to be more generous. While Anja is horrified, Louis believes he has found the solution to Berlin's income inequality. *Oval* is a fascinating portrait of the unbalanced relationships that shape our world, as well as a prescient warning of what the future may hold.

You can find our link, and information on the book in our show notes, as well as on the Recommended reads page on our website.

Wil: *VALENCE* is a serialized fiction podcast with discussion and depictions of struggles with mental health. You can check our show notes, or the transcripts on [valencepod dot com](https://valencepod.com) for a full list of content warnings and their timestamps. It's important to take care of yourself -- especially here in New Candler.

[[theme music - bright, synthy beat with airy, flowing strings that fade into a brief moment of a darker synth more reminiscent of the Season 1 theme]]

Scene One

INT. LIAM AND FLYNN'S APARTMENT - LATE NIGHT

LIAM: You don't have to always *get* like this when I ask questions. You *can* always just tell me to shut up.

NICO: Ha! Okay, first things first, kid: I don't *get* like this. This is how *I am*. Second off: as if telling you to shut up has ever made you shut up.

LIAM: Oh, you're deflecting.

LIAM'S INNER VOICE: Oh *he's* deflecting?

NICO: I'm not deflecting, I am *bored*.

LIAM: You know, for someone who never shuts up about himself, you *really* hate talking about yourself.

NICO: As someone who hates talking about himself, you really never shut--

LIAM'S INNER VOICE: Hurt him better.

LIAM: [cruelly] Because you hate the idea of someone actually knowing you.

NICO: Ha. *There he is*. Welcome to the party, Bitchy Vamps.

LIAM'S INNER VOICE: All you're good at is hurting people.

LIAM: Ack--fuck. What--what I mean is that, that--trust me—I get it! I fucking get it, Nico, and you *know what?* But too bad. I give a shit about you. And I'm literally just asking where you're going, or what you're doing, or—

NICO: It's none of your *business*.

LIAM: Then fine! If it's not my business, maybe n-none of it is.

Liam unconvincingly crosses his arms.

NICO: Yeah, okay. Okay, sure! Peace out.

LIAM: I mean it!

The two look at each other.

LIAM: You can't just storm out, come back later, and make out with me instead of apologizing. Because I'll fall for it, and you know that's fucked up.

LIAM'S INNER VOICE: Not his fault that you're pathetic.

NICO: [laughing] Oh, do I know that? Nah, Vamps, I don't think I *do*. I think you just like the idea of swooping in to *save* me with your heart feelings, because you know nobody can do that for *you*.

LIAM: [sighs] Are you sure that *I'm* the one who wants that?

A pause.

NICO: [Coldly] The problem is that one of us here isn't a fucking idiot, and it's--
[Accidentally starts laughing, then swallows and tries to get serious again] --and it sure as hell isn't m-me.
[starts laughing anyway]

LIAM: Um?

Nico keeps laughing.

LIAM: Nico? You, um--

NICO: [continuing to laugh] It's fucking FUNNY, VAMPS. It's a FUNNY JOKE.

LIAM: What is--what even is the joke here?

NICO: Ugh. You apparently wouldn't get it. LISTEN. I'm gonna be in Hamburg. Well, like. Okay not really. But that's as close as I can tell you without this tattoo mark from dear old dad blowing us to fucking smithereens. It's gonna fuckin' suck. I'm grossed out by this but I'm gonna level with you here: it's for real gonna fucking suck. I'm gonna be fine.

LIAM'S OTHER INNER VOICE: What the *fuck* is in Hamburg he can't just *promise* that he can't know it'll be fine I hate this I hate not knowing I hate not being able to help I hate --

LIAM: Oh. That's--oh. Why is it going to--

NICO: Liam please! Please, Liam. I'm trying to be real here and it's gross so can we just like *not*.

LIAM: Right. Sorry. Thank you. And I'm sorry for--

NICO: Ugh, don't you know I fucking hate apologies?

LIAM: We can't just keep--

NICO: Yeah, I KNOW. Okay? I *know*. But I have to bail.

LIAM: Surprise surprise.

NICO: This fight started because you KNEW I WAS ON A TIGHT SCHEDULE. Don't you dare "surprise surprise" me.

Liam huffs.

NICO: WELL OKAY BYE, I GUESS.

LIAM: Sure, fine!

NICO: FINE!

Nico shifts out of the room.

LIAM: [tenderly, just a second too late] No, I'm-- [sighs] Fuck.

Liam takes a deep breath in and out. He goes over to his chair and flops down.

LIAM'S INNER VOICE: You can't keep this up forever. It's been how long? Six months, maybe seven? And you still don't even know what you two are?

LIAM: FUCK.

Scene Two

INT. THE APARTMENT - MORNING

[[Soft, mellow piano music plays in the background]]

LIAM's phone buzzes, waking him up.

LIAM: [groggily] Ugh.

NICO: [distorted memory] Ha. *There he is.* Welcome to the party, Bitchy Vamps.

LIAM'S INNER VOICE: Good morning.

LIAM: Shhh.

LIAM: *Shhh.* Go . . . make coffee. Go make coffee.

NICO: [distorted memory] It's none of your business! [jump to] Oh, *do* I know that? Nah, Vamps, I don't think I do!

LIAM walks to the kitchen and preps himself a cup of coffee. Distorted moments from the fight continue to play in his mind.

NICO: [distorted memory] And as someone who hates talking about himself, *you never shut up--*

LIAM'S OTHER INNER VOICE: Don't think about it. Just don't think about it. You're just going to beat yourself up about it.

LIAM'S INNER VOICE: And now he's probably off getting killed in Germany or wherever and the last thing you'll have said to him is some monstrous nonsense because you don't know how to regulate emotions like a regular human being. Because you're not! You've always known you're a monster, so clearly this is just—

Flynn enters the kitchen

FLYNN: Morning, Liam!

Liam drops the mug, breaking it and spilling the coffee

LIAM: Shit, sorry, you—

FLYNN: Oh, fuck— not my *Fantasia* mug!

Liam magics the mug back together.

LIAM: ...I should probably still pour that out.

FLYNN: Yeahhh, honestly I don't remember the last time we mopped.

Liam pours the coffee out

LIAM: [Sighs]

FLYNN: So, you, um, you okay? You seem kinda . . .

LIAM: I'm fine. Just--just the usual. Um. Just a fight with Nico last night. It's fine.

FLYNN: The walls are pretty thin, Liam. So I'm gonna ask again: Are you sure you're ok?

LIAM: I'm sure. I know it seems like a mess. I know. I'm not saying it's *not*. I just . . .

FLYNN: He gets you. I get it.

LIAM: Yes. Thank you.

FLYNN: I know how things can be when two people are kind of a mess. [sympathetic chuckle]
But I also know you're both trying.

LIAM: Can we--can we not talk about this right now?

FLYNN: Yeah, for sure. Uh-- fuck. Not to mention Nico again, but--do you think you could call his friend today about the blog? Y'know, the one we helped get out of the testing facility a few months ago?

LIAM: Elisha? Yes, I can--I can give her a call. I think she's been waiting for it. How are things going with the blog?

FLYNN: Sarah and I have it *mostly* set up. We just need people to contribute their stories. So if we can get Elisha on board, we can really get it started.

LIAM: Right. Yeah, I'll go call her.

FLYNN: Thanks, bud.

Liam walks back to his room, sits down, and dials Elisha. Phone rings, she picks up.

ELISHA: Hello?

LIAM: Is--is this Elisha?

ELISHA: Uhhh, hi. Liam, right?

LIAM: Right. How, ah, how . . . how *are* you?

LIAM'S INNER VOICE: Bad. She's bad. Clearly.

ELISHA: Um, I'm hanging in there. I got back to the west coast okay, and it's been good to have some, um, some distance.

LIAM: Yeah. I'm sure. Nico said you might be interested in talking with us?

ELISHA: Yeah. I mean, I guess? He didn't really explain what you're *doing*?

LIAM: Oh. Right. Um, well, we--we haven't started anything up yet, but--you remember when we, um . . .

ELISHA: Yeah, I remember.

LIAM: Well, we've had difficulty doing anything like *that* again. But we want to keep doing *something*. So, since then, one of us--Flynn, you haven't met him yet--had the idea of starting a blog where people could share their stories about how Halo harmed them. Try to get more stories out there so that, hopefully, more people come forward.

ELISHA: Yeah. Well, I mean . . . I have to say *something* about it, and I don't know who else will actually back me up. He said I could trust you all.

LIAM: I promise that we will give your story the respect it deserves, at least.

ELISHA: Yeah, that's kinda what he said. How--how *is* he? I feel like he'd be pissed off if he knew I asked that, but I don't think I really care. The last time I saw him was *years* ago, and he just disappeared. And he seems . . . I dunno, he seems different.

LIAM: [Chuckles halfheartedly] He's, well. He's. You know. He's Nico.

ELISHA: Yeah. I get that. So you're his . . .

LIAM: God, who knows?

LIAM'S INNER VOICE: Shut *up*

A beat.

ELISHA: . . . uh-*huh*. So, I guess he's really not all *that* different.

LIAM'S INNER VOICE: Wonderful, confirmation that you're just a phase he decided to go through.

ELISHA: So, anyway, this blog. Are you planning on doing anything to, like, protect the people who submit?

LIAM: Well, ah, mmm, we're going to be anonymizing all of the accounts and using secure email servers and different methods of encryption.

ELISHA: [sarcastic] All that, huh? Against one of the biggest tech conglomerates in the world.

LIAM: Um. Honestly, I'm not--I'm not really sure. That's more of Sarah's thing.

ELISHA: Well, you need to *be* sure before you ask anyone to contribute. Otherwise, you're getting the message out there, sure, but you're putting us at risk again. Halo's too good at tracking people. They're only going to let us stay free as long as they think we'll stay quiet.

LIAM: You're right. You're completely right, I can't—

LIAM'S INNER VOICE: So stupid, absolutely reckless, leading them right back to Reilley—

LIAM'S OTHER INNER VOICE: But, but what if--you can do this. Think about this. Remember what Mahira's taught you. You have the pieces, don't you? Electricity. Marks. Something about keeping things quiet, like Luis taught you.

ELISHA: Liam? You still there?

LIAM: Yes, just--thinking. One moment, please.

LIAM'S INNER VOICE: Electricity from you. Marks from Nico. Stealth from Luis. What's the missing piece? Connecting them. We need to *connect* them. What if--email addresses? IP addresses? Data? Sarah.

LIAM: Hm. Can--hm! Can you hold on for just one more moment?

ELISHA: Yeah, for sure.

Liam rushes out of his room, phone still in hand

LIAM: [Half-yelling] Hey, Sarah?

SARAH: [Yelling from her room, muffled through a closed door] Yeah what's up?

Liam walks over to her door

LIAM: Can I come in?

SARAH: Yeah, I'm just—

Liam opens the door, Sarah is clicking and typing wildly, some muffled game noises through headphones.

SARAH: --in the middle of a match so I might pay attention to what you're saying but also I might not? Also, headphones, so talk at normal person volume instead of your sadboy whisper.

LIAM: Yes, fair, and, this, um--I don't know if what I'm going to be saying is anything at all, so—

SARAH: Perfect match.

LIAM: [Laughs] Right. So, I've been speaking with Elisha over the phone—

SARAH: Nico friend?

LIAM: Yes. She was concerned about the safety of the blog contributors, even with the encryption and whatever other precautions you have in place.

SARAH: Smart, go on.

LIAM: So, I was--my brain has several pieces that are only loosely connected. But, um, how would you feel about helping me build some sort of protective spell using my electricity, what Nico's taught me about marks, and what Luis taught me about hiding?

Sarah stops typing, takes off her headphones, and puts them on her desk.

SARAH: . . . Go on?

LIAM: So, you take their . . . data??? . . . and somehow I use that to mark them, like, to--to mark their data? And using that connection, I help hide them?

SARAH: I'm gonna unmute my mic for a sec? So shut up.

Sarah puts her headphones back on and hits a button to unmute her mic

SARAH: Uhhhh, best of luck team, but I gotta go help save the actual world. Bye!

Sarah clicks a few buttons on her keyboard/mouse, closing the game.

SARAH: Okay. Let's do this.

Sarah starts typing

LIAM: [remembering he has Elisha on the phone] Um, Elisha?

ELISHA: Yup.

LIAM: Did you hear any of that?

ELISHA: Sure did.

LIAM: Does--does that sound like anything?

ELISHA: It sounds like a lot. If this works, you can count me in.

LIAM: Okay. Amazing. Wonderful. Thank you.

ELISHA: And I want to be kept in the loop on all of this. If I'm going to help, I want to know what's going on.

LIAM: Of course.

ELISHA: Okay. Well, hit me up when the ball starts rolling, I guess. And hey, um--I mean, as much as he'll let you, make sure Nico isn't . . . make sure, um . . .

LIAM: [soft chuckle] I'll try.

ELISHA: Thanks. Talk to you soon, Liam.

LIAM: Talk to you soon. Bye.

ELISHA: Bye!

Liam hangs up

SARAH: You ready now?

LIAM: I have no idea.

SARAH: Great. So, first things first--list off each of the parts of this thing again for me? I'm gonna take notes.

LIAM: So, first, we'll need to use my electricity to somehow poke at the data you have. Then, once we have that connection between me and that data, I can try to mark them, just make that connection more permanent, which should hopefully make it less burdensome for me. Then, using that connection, try to hide their data from Halo and anyone else who might pry. Am I just--am I turning myself into a magic VPN?

SARAH: Uhhhh... that's not *really* how VPN's work...

LIAM: Well, fine. But do you think it would work?

SARAH: Only one way to find out!

Scene Three

INT. LIBRARY STUDY ROOM - THE NEXT DAY

THE TEAM (LIAM, SARAH, GRACE, MAHIRA, and now FLYNN) sit at a mothball-smelling rented library study room--where they now conduct business after being fired by the T.E.A. As always, Sarah types at her computer.

SARAH: So-- ta-da! Thanks to Liam having a bona fide brain blast, this is a *huge* step towards getting the blog set up.

A beat.

GRACE: Well, this is . . . *something*, I suppose.

LIAM: But--but we spent all night working on this.

MAHIRA: It's great! And it's definitely a start. I just, I'm not sure if it's really sustainable. Liam, are you sure you'd . . . hmm. I'm not trying to be mean about this. I just--are you sure you're *capable* of something like this?

LIAM: We've been training. I've gotten a lot stronger with my magic.

MAHIRA: I know, I know, this is just--it's a lot.

GRACE: And we still don't have any leads on anything *actionable*. This will help get peoples' stories out, yes, but it won't actually *do* anything.

FLYNN: I think you two did a really great job.

GRACE: And they did. Thank you, Flynn. You're right. I think I was just hoping for something more than just . . . protecting people who write in for a *blog*.

FLYNN: The Icarus isn't nothing.

GRACE: The what?

FLYNN: *The Icarus*. The blog.

MAHIRA: Liam, how did you get into contact with Elisha? Did Nico connect you two?

LIAM: He, ah, he did.

MAHIRA: Does he have any more intel on how she could have been taken or anything? I don't want to shut down the work you did here. I just--I think Grace and I were hoping for something that would help us get closer to actually taking Halo down. I do think that the blog is a good

idea, and I'm glad we're making sure those people won't be impacted, but . . . sorry. Um, is Nico--is Nico around? Can we ask him more questions?

LIAM'S INNER VOICE: Of course you do something good and *this* is how it's received. And now they're going to do *the thing* again.

LIAM: Nico is, um . . . out of town. For the time being.

GRACE: Hmm.

MAHIRA: Did you two--

FLYNN: Maybe we shouldn't--

SARAH: Hey. I know we all love the gossip, but we're in a meeting right now. I wrote an agenda and everything. Can we *please* stay on task.

GRACE: Agreed, this seems like something we can talk about at another time. Let's do coffee later.

LIAM: Let's not.

SARAH: So, let's get back to what Liam and I spent *all night* working on. You're *welcome*.

GRACE: [Sighs] I know you spent all night working, but that doesn't make a *blog* . . . well, *important*.

FLYNN: Grace, are you just thinking about like, early 2000s blogs? Because that's not what this is.

MAHIRA: I'm sorry, guys, but I'm still kind of with Grace. This just isn't enough.

LIAM: Listen. I am as burnt out on trying to find leads and make actual headway as the rest of you. But this is what we have right now. I'd rather not spend my time here spinning my wheels as you all talk to me like I'm not capable of--of anything.

MAHIRA: That's *not* what we're trying to say.

GRACE: You have to admit, Liam, you haven't exactly made the soundest of choices in the past.

SARAH: Um, screw what they're saying about what we did. I *know* it's great.

LIAM: [Yawns]

GRACE: And I really wish you wouldn't have stayed up all night. It doesn't exactly help when we're trying to get things done.

SARAH: Okay, Ms. Coffee-for-Blood.

LIAM: This isn't even why I'm tired. We just had to get a late start because Nic—

LIAM'S INNER VOICE: Well, now you've done it again.

MAHIRA: Oh, what a shock. Nico kept you awake with some drama even though you had to work. You *need* to talk to him about how inconsiderate--

LIAM: It isn't like that.

MAHIRA: Sure, Liam. [Sighs] I just want to make sure your relationship is *healthy*. I don't care that he's a felon, I care that he doesn't seem to --
[She cuts herself off] You already know because I've already said it a thousand times.

FLYNN: This isn't going anywhere. And I have work to do on The Icarus. I've got another submission coming in tonight from a slight out in Arizona now that Elisha's is up, and it's going to need some edits, some of the--Grace, did you forward me that release and NDA paperwork template?

GRACE: I actually just made it specific to you and the blog.

FLYNN: Oh my god, thank you. Well. The point is. I have work to do at home, and everyone ragging on Liam's love life isn't going to help.

GRACE: Then you and Liam can leave. Sarah, Mahira, can we keep discussing leads?

SARAH: [Sighs] Yeah, I guess.

MAHIRA: Yes please.

FLYNN: See you all tomorrow.

The two leave

FLYNN: Salt session with Sol?

Scene Four

EXT. AXIS PARK - DAY

LIAM, FLYNN and SOL walk around the busy, lively park. Their footsteps crunch softly on the sand footpaths.

LIAM: Does Salt Session with Sol *always* have to be *outside*?

SOL: [Laughing] Ay, Liam, por dios! It's a beautiful day out. Let's enjoy it, yeah?

FLYNN: [teasing] Yeah, Liam! The sun's not going to *kill* you.

LIAM: Well that's been scientifically disproven.

SOL: Come on, Flynn, it's Liam's turn to vent. Go ahead, Liam.

LIAM: I don't know. I don't even know where to start. I'm just exhausted.

SOL: Work, Nico, or just existing?

LIAM: All of the above?

FLYNN: Today's meeting with the others was *rough*.

SOL: Ah. Grace still hassling you about not having leads?

FLYNN: Yep!

LIAM: Yes.

SOL: And Mahira's still stir-crazy and not knowing how to deal with it?

FLYNN: Yep!

LIAM: Yes.

SOL: Typical! *Incredible*. That's so frustrating, Liam. But it *does* sound like the same as usual. So what's special about today?

LIAM: Sarah and I stayed up late doing something *I* was really proud of. And you know how difficult it is for me to feel proud of things.

SOL: Mmhm.

FLYNN: It's a huge deal, what they did.

LIAM: Well, thank you for saying so. But the others just didn't seem to care, because it wasn't *actionable*. And then things just sort of spiralled, and then everyone was yelling at me for my relationship with Nico, and I just--I just--I was so tired. I was just so tired of it.

SOL: Why were they talking about your relationship during a work meeting?

LIAM: The answer eludes me!

FLYNN: All three of them kind of have an older sibling complex about Liam I think. Which first, uh, no, that's *my* job.

LIAM: I'm older than you.

FLYNN: Pfft, doesn't matter.

LIAM: By several years.

FLYNN: Shhh, *mijito*, the adults are talking. [to Sol] And that's *nice* of them but it's also, like . . . everyone is just burnt out and being shitty to each other.

LIAM: Yes.

SOL: Can we talk about Nico, or will that encroach on your time to vent?

LIAM: I don't want to--I dunno--maybe. I think you two are the only people I trust to actually talk through it with me. [Deep inhale, deep exhale] So. I know. I know we're both a mess, and I know that neither of us are probably *well* enough to be in an . . . *actual* relationship. But I feel like every time we're doing well, it's ignored, even though--isn't that a feat? Isn't that more noteworthy than anything else? Because I certainly didn't even think that would ever even be *possible* in my life.

FLYNN: Mhm. It's a big deal.

SOL: But?

LIAM: But it's difficult when most of the people I care about don't want to see that. And it's difficult when I don't feel like I have any--any examples. I hardly grew up with any media, let *alone* any media with queer people, let alone any queer people who weren't just jokes, or weren't just this . . . this sanitized . . . this sanitized idea of a perfect gay couple with no issues, no trauma to work through, no . . . anything.

SOL: Right. But this is all talking a lot about the *perception* of your relationship, not *your* thoughts on your relationship. But I gather that you wouldn't be so frustrated if you didn't think this was something to protect even though it's flawed.

LIAM: Right. That's--that's the thing. I don't expect people to understand. It's just--he understands me in a way I didn't really know I needed to be understood. He makes me excited to *do* things just to do them. To experiment with my magic, to stand up for myself, to be less . . . afraid of things. He helps me take myself less seriously.

SOL: Mmm. And what do you think he gets from you?

LIAM: Something to hold him back and bore him?

SOL: [Not having any of it] *Liam*. Is that how he makes you feel, or is that how *you* make you feel?

FLYNN: [Snickers]

LIAM: Alright, fair. I just--I don't know.

FLYNN: Is it okay if I offer up some observations?

SOL: You seem pretty pro-Nico, Flynn.

FLYNN: Yeah, well, I am, kinda! I mean, he's a fucking mess, but to be fair, so is Liam--no offense—

LIAM: Nono, none taken. That's right on the money -- go on.

FLYNN: --but they're kinda complementary messes. Liam, you probably don't let yourself notice it, but Nico's gotten way more real around us. Less faking shit. More just being chill. Y'know? I think you remind him that he can just kind of be who he is, not have to be *on* all the time. I don't think many people took him seriously before you.

LIAM: Well, that's foolish of them.

FLYNN: Eh, I mean . . . he's kind of a clown. But he does that on purpose. I think you kinda bring out the parts of him that want to give a shit about things. Which I think scares the shit out of him, which makes him lash out at you. But like, you also do the same thing for the same reasons. So . . . I don't know.

LIAM: Right.

SOL: Well I don't know if I'm quite on Nico's side just yet, but I'm protective. It seems like you have something others aren't going to understand and are going to judge too harshly sometimes.

LIAM: I'm just--I'm trying. And I think he's trying. And I wish people could see that, especially on top of them dismissing my work. I'm not happy that I don't know what else to do, either.

SOL: Well of course. You're in so many no-win situations, and it seems like you're getting the blame for all of it. That's bullshit, Liam.

LIAM: Thank you. It *is* bullshit.

SOL: So. Do you feel better now that you've vented?

LIAM: A little. Thank you. [sucks breath in through teeth] Is it time for the *second* half of Salt Sessions with Sol?

SOL: Yup!

LIAM: Ugh.

SOL: So: what can you *change* about any of this?

LIAM: [glibly] I can shut myself inside and never speak to anyone or care about anything again?

SOL: [makes noise of annoyance]

FLYNN: Pffff. Not an option. I wouldn't let you.

LIAM: Please?

FLYNN: Vetoed. Next!

LIAM: I could . . . I don't know. I don't know. Can I think about it? And maybe can I text you later? I think I just need to give my brain a moment to just . . . exist.

SOL: Mmm. Do you feel any more clear-headed out here?

LIAM: Actually yeah, unfortunately.

SOL: [chuckle] I had a suspicion. It's not perfect--we're still in the middle of the city--but I thought the park would remove you a *little* from all the electricity of everything else. I thought it might help your brain rest.

LIAM: Oh. That--that makes sense. Thank you.

FLYNN: That's genius.

SOL: Thank you, thank you. I'll give you a free one, Liam. Something you can always change is just your environment. Flynn, it was a good idea to get out of there. It's always harder to heal when you're trapped in the same place you were hurt, yeah?

FLYNN: Yeah, like I've been saying for YEARS.

SOL: Get out more, Liam. You spent enough of your life trapped in the same four walls already.

They stop walking.

LIAM: You're right. You're both right. Thank you. Can we--is it okay if we just sit here for a while?

SOL: Quiet time in a park? How could I say no?

FLYNN: Yeah. That sounds nice.

FADE OUT on the sounds of the park.

END OF EPISODE 1

[[ending theme. Gentle acoustic guitar strumming.]]

WIL:

VALENCE is a Hug House production. You can find more at Hug House dot Productions. We'd also like to thank Brook Mills for the *extremely* donation towards our Season 2 IndieGoGo. We really can't express how much it means to us. Seriously.

VALENCE was created by Wil Williams.

- *VALENCE* was written, edited, and sound designed by Wil Williams.
- This episode was directed by Katie Youmans and Anne Baird.
- This episode was performed by, in order of appearance:
 - [Josh Rubino](#) as Liam Alden and Liam's Inner Voices,
 - [John Westover](#) as Nico Salvai,
 - [Katie Youmans](#) as the Halo Ad,
 - [Caleb Del Rio](#) as Flynn Velasco,
 - [Maddison Dabbs-Petty](#) as Elisha Dawes,
 - [Jordan Cobb](#) as Sarah Harris,
 - [Ishani Kanetkar](#) as Mahira Varma,
 - and [Elena Fernández Collins](#) as Soledad Márquez.

Our theme music for Season 2 was written and composed by [Travis Reaves](#), with production by [Raul Vega](#).

You can find our full cast list, and information on how to support this indie audio drama, on [valencepod dot com](#).

Until next time: protect your magic.