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## As honorable as tears: comedy as surgeon, pharmacist, and clown

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A Thesis  
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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Fine Arts

by  
Emily S. Rauch

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This thesis, written by

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under the guidance of a faculty committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the graduate faculty in partial fulfillment. Of the requirements for the degree of

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### **As Honorable as Tears: Comedy as Surgeon, Pharmacist, and Clown**

In the final chapter of his autobiographical book *Palm Sunday*, humorist Kurt Vonnegut recounts an invitation to preach on Palm Sunday for an Episcopal church in 1980. His sermon focuses on the events on the evening before Palm Sunday when Christ would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey, hailed as a king. According to John's gospel, Jesus had dinner at his recently resurrected friend Lazarus' house, along with his twelve disciples and Lazarus' sisters, Mary and Martha. While Martha served, and the others ate, Mary poured an incredibly expensive perfume on Christ's feet and then wiped them with her hair. One of his disciples, Judas—yes, *that* Judas—berates her actions and suggests the money spent on the perfume would be better used for the poor. Jesus responds with: "You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me" (*New International Version*, John 12:7-8). Vonnegut, unable to sit with the idea that Jesus' sense of self is greater than his mercy for the poor, suggests that the line was delivered as a joke that was lost in translation. In the face of his pending crucifixion, Judas' upcoming betrayal, and the large crowd outside eager to see the newly risen Lazarus, Jesus copes with a "divine black joke, well suited to the occasion" (Vonnegut 18). Vonnegut claims this interpretation does not detract from the Scripture because "jokes can be noble. Laughs are exactly as honorable as tears. Laughter and tears are both responses to frustration and exhaustion, to the futility of thinking and striving anymore" (16). While I may bristle at a few of Vonnegut's theological leaps, I am hopelessly attached to the idea that Jesus joked—that he, too, used humor as a coping mechanism because it is just so human. Much like Vonnegut, I subscribe to the idea that laughing is preferable to crying because "there is less cleaning up to do afterward," and "I can start thinking and striving again that much sooner" (16). Comedy is not either/or. It is

both/and. It can bring about unity and healing when it exists at the intersection of surgical, prescriptive, and silly as demonstrated in the works of Phil Vischer, Tina Fey, and Joss Whedon.

### ***Comedy's Role in Cultural Leadership***

It is important to specify what I mean by the terms *surgical*, *prescriptive*, and *silly*.

*Surgical* refers to the comedian as satirist, to the use of “wit, irony, or sarcasm...to expose and discredit vice or folly” (“Satire”). In *American Quarterly*, Lawrence E. Mintz writes that “every kind of society seems to find fool types useful,” with “fool types” being understood as comedians (Mintz 73). He adds that American standup comedy in particular “confronts just about all the important aspects of our culture and our society and...[has] an important role in...changing social roles and expectations” (80). The surgical role requires an unforgiving scrutiny of society in its current condition with the object of rehabilitating society on the other side of the satirical work, no matter how painful or uncomfortable the incisions.

*Prescriptive*, on the other hand, refers to the comedian’s role in suggesting how to fix the maladies revealed in the surgical/satirical phase. This could either be a pragmatic answer to a systemic problem—e.g., voting for the Democratic candidate to fix the policies of the Republican one—or an attempt at establishing solidarity. For the latter, the ultimate goal would be the true purge of catharsis—whether individually, or communally, such as at a live comedy show, or a film at the theater. However, catharsis is not always possible, thus leaving solidarity to merely anesthetize. Whether alleviating the symptoms or curing these maladies entirely, the prescriptive role of the comedian is that of healer. According to Dr. Allen Cornelius, a psychology professor at the University of the Rockies, comedy and therapy operate along a



similar process: incongruity. Humor works because of incompatible expectations. A joke's setup leads the audience to believe the joke will conclude in one manner, when in reality, the punchline usually delivers an unexpected outcome. In my own experience, this is how therapy primarily works, too. Upon entering a session, I have a set of preconceived notions about myself or my circumstances. My therapist asks questions that challenge these notions and often stand in direct contradiction to them. In a productive session, I leave with my preconceived notions having changed based on the unexpected counter-notions from my therapist. Per Dr. Cornelius, humor can be successful in therapy because it can help lead a client to a perspective shift—how they perceive themselves versus how they are in reality (Chandler par. 5). In the same way a therapist “creates a common ground and establishes a comfort level with clients, a stand-up comedian is tasked with similar undertakings” (par. 9). In no way should comedy replace or negate the weight of issues brought up in therapy. However, much like Mary Poppins' insistence that a spoonful of sugar helps the medicine go down, comedy serves as the additive that makes tragedy or inescapable societal realities palatable.

*Silly*, then—or the clown's role—is more obvious. It refers to the whimsy and ludicrous joy found when comedy is a means to itself rather than a message. From scatological humor to slapstick to cringe comedy, the punchline is usually intended to elicit a laughter response rather than to drive home a message. Although psychologists and philosophers still have not settled on a singular reason why humans find things funny, one thing is true: humor is a universal human experience. James Spiegel—a professor of Philosophy and Religion at Taylor University—relays that the oldest joke in recorded history was, in fact, a fart joke written by the Sumerians in 1900 B.C. (Spiegel par. 3). I will refrain from diving any deeper into tasteless territory, but this kind of

scatological humor can also be found in the works of Shakespeare, Mark Twain, and Jonathan Swift, who was said to have published *The Benefit of Farting Explained* under the pseudonym Don Fartinando Puff-Indorst (par. 5-7). *Silliness*, it would seem, transcends time and decorum.

Individually, each of these roles in comedy has its own merit; however, I would argue that comedy is at its best, at its most meaningful when it includes elements of all three. What separates a great comedian or comedic screenwriter from one who embodies a cultural leader is largely intent. Do they intend to explore a particular issue for shock value, or do they hope their work will engage their audience in further discussion, action, and empathy toward the subject? Does their work foster catharsis and community? As a Christian, I intend my writing to be silly often, meaningful always, and without a doubt, to engage with the culture in a way that honors God and speaks to a large demographic, regardless of religious affiliation.

### ***The Pharmacist and The Clown: The False Dichotomy Between Comedy and Faith***

My faith is a central part of who I am, in case I have been too subtle up to this point. Growing up, my parents raised us as Protestants, and although my parents never picked any one denomination, they took us to a number of Baptist churches. Early on, I learned that church was a serious, solemn place. While laughter was not necessarily discouraged, it certainly was not *encouraged*. Vocationally speaking, the highest, holiest professions one could have were either a pastor or a missionary (bonus points if you were a missionary serving overseas in a developing nation). The second tier consisted of professions that were less noble, but still contributed to the greater good. These professions included doctors, lawyers, government officials, teachers, and business professionals, among others. Artists, musicians, and comedians (something I

desperately wanted to be) existed somewhere on a subterranean tier accessible only to Satan and other non-Christians. One loophole existed: if the central focus of the art, music, or comedy was faith-related, then it was encouraged. The problem, I found, was that those Christian comedians were rarely ever funny. And the Christian films...well, just take a look at Kirk Cameron's filmography.

This is not to say that there is no value in those kinds of film or comedy. For many people, this kind of media has helped strengthen their faith, and there is clearly an audience for it. *Fireproof*—the 2008 Kirk Cameron feature about a man desperately trying to rescue his marriage from ending in divorce—was made for \$500,000 and earned \$33.5 million, “a multiple of 67 on its budget” (Bond par. 2). Although incredibly lucrative, these films were made with a narrowly defined audience in mind: Evangelicals. Not only did I want to appeal to a broader audience, but I did not want to write Christian melodramas. I wanted to write genre comedies that spoke to the bleak, often incredibly funny, realities of the universal human experience and concluded with some modicum of hope for redemption, as informed my own foundational faith. So, I found myself at an impasse: I could either write subpar comedy and keep my faith intact, or I could write the kind of comedy I enjoyed and basically sell my soul to Satan. Faith and comedy could enter Mad Max's Thunderdome, but only one could leave.

Enter Phil Vischer. Much like myself, Vischer found himself growing up in a church tradition that turned its nose at his love of filmmaking and his desire to make people laugh. As he phrases it in his memoir: “I had a way of looking at normal things from a slightly twisted angle—just twisted enough that it often made me chuckle” (Vischer 16). As a kid, this behavior was called “disruptive,” but as Vischer grew older, particularly when he was in high school, his

drive to entertain people allowed him to look at MTV—both as a technical and video marvel—and wonder if there was a way to use the same technology to convey more wholesome content for young people (17, 37). The culmination of this venture arrived in December 1993, when, after years of toiling with a skeleton crew and a practically non-existent budget, Vischer and his new company, Big Idea, released the *VeggieTales* video *Where's God When I'm Scared?*

Unlike the other cartoons that influenced me as a child—*Looney Tunes* and *Scooby-Doo*, among others—*VeggieTales* featured the precise mix of silliness and prescriptive storytelling that appealed to me as a six-year-old kid. The show took place on a kitchen counter where hosts Bob the Tomato and Larry the Cucumber (voiced by Vischer and Mike Nawrocki, respectively) had an Abbott and Costello-esque routine, with Bob playing straight man to his goofier co-emcee, Larry. (Naturally, I gravitated to Larry.) It was a variety show, of sorts, in which the stories primarily took place on the kitchen counter—the set pieces were cardboard cutouts, like in a play—and all the characters were vegetables. Each episode, or video cassette, featured two Bible, or value, stories and an intermission segment: “Silly Songs with Larry.” For example, in *Where's God When I'm Scared?*, the first story—“Tales from the Crisper”—is about a young boy, Junior Asparagus (who is, in fact, an asparagus), overcoming his fear of scary movies and monsters by discovering that God is bigger than his fears. The second story is a retelling of the Biblical narrative of Daniel and the lion's den. Between these vignettes, Larry comes out and sings “The Water Buffalo Song,” a ridiculous ditty about everyone owning a water buffalo.

Unlike all the Christian media I consumed up until that point, *VeggieTales* was unabashedly Christian *and* genuinely funny. Plus, it had a large, dedicated audience. In 1998 alone, 6.2 million *VeggieTales* videos were sold—“It was...the best-selling Christian video in

history, and the number two kids' videos series in the world at the time, trailing only *Pokémon* (142). It would be easy to sacrifice one in favor of the other—and an argument could be made that in later years it was, in order to appease its increasingly non-religious demographic—but Vischer was firm from the beginning in what he wanted to create: “If God wasn’t in it, our characters were just flapping their jaws...God was the ‘why’ of everything I wanted to communicate” (113). Everything in *VeggieTales*, from the story concepts (a play on *Hamlet* called “Omelet”; Madame Blueberry rather than *Madame Bovary*; a retelling of *The Grapes of Wrath*, literally featuring angry grapes), to the Biblical lessons (loving your neighbors, trusting God over fear), to the references (Joshua and the Israelites are insulted by two French peas à la *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* as they march around Jericho), worked together to present a prescriptive Biblical way of living with levity and playfulness.

Although my intention has never been to write Sunday school stories, and the demographic I want to write to skews much older, I have been profoundly influenced by Phil Vischer. His work on *VeggieTales* is admirable, but so was his handling of losing ownership of the franchise and characters when Big Idea filed for bankruptcy. In the years since this setback, Vischer began *The Holy Post Podcast* (formerly *The Phil Vischer Podcast*), a more mature spiritual successor to *VeggieTales*, in which he and his co-hosts discuss current events—both political and within the evangelical sphere—and how Christians should respond to them. The discussion is measured, thoughtful, funny, and most importantly, relevant. A writer changes constantly—both as an individual and in the types of stories that interest them—and I think above all else, Vischer’s work and his testimony remind me that it is possible to create things and

evolve as an artist within the tension of comedy and faith—that doing so affords one the opportunity to be both silly and prescriptive in comedy.

### ***The Surgeon: Lampooning and Extracting the Truth***

In the 2003 film *Mean Girls*, Janis Ian (played by Lizzy Caplan) tries to convince Lindsay Lohan’s character, Cady, that The Plastics—the group of shiny, Queen Bee girls/bullies that rule their high school—need to be taken down. Primarily, Janis explains, Cady needs to help Damien and herself take out the worst of The Plastics: the group’s leader, Regina George (Rachel McAdams). According to Janice, removing her from power is a moral imperative. As she explains to Cady: “There’s two kinds of evil people, Caddy [*sic*]...People who do evil stuff. And people who see evil stuff being done and don’t do anything to stop it” (Fey 31). In many ways, that is what the satirist does. Like a more sedentary, less Ben McKenzie/more Gary Oldman Commissioner Gordon, the satirist ruthlessly shines a spotlight on society’s crippling ills, hopefully with the dual intention of raising awareness and surgically removing the source. As a writer, Tina Fey has done both, with a particular focus on the struggles and impediments facing women—specifically, white women.

Much like myself, Fey was a theater nerd who grew up in southeastern Pennsylvania. Unlike myself, Fey spent time at Chicago’s famed Second City until she was hired as a writer for *Saturday Night Live* in 1997. Just three years later, she was promoted to head writer—the first female to achieve that status in the history of the show (Logan par. 5). In her time with the show, Fey wrote sketches that appealed to both men and women, but her most memorable ones typically revolved around female specific issues. These ranged from commercial parodies for

“Annuaire,” a birth control pill that makes it so a woman only has her period once a year (tagline: “And when it is time for your period, hold onto your f—king hats,” followed by a black and white shot of Fey raging at work, brandishing an ax at her coworkers), to game-show parodies such as “Meet Your Second Wife,” a show where male contestants, who are happily married, meet their future wives and mistresses—all of whom are obscenely underage (par. 13, 40). Perhaps the best example, however, was a 2008 political sketch she wrote with Seth Meyers and Amy Poehler. It features Sarah Palin and Hilary Clinton, and in Fey’s own words, “[it] easily could have been a dumb catfight between two female candidates” (qtd. in Simon par. 4). However, it was not. Instead, it was set at a press conference in which both candidates address the rampant sexism they have experienced on the campaign trail—blatant objectification for Palin, systemic misogyny for Clinton.

Since then, Fey’s work has expanded to include *Mean Girls* and two critically acclaimed television series: *30 Rock* and, one of my personal favorites, *The Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* (*UKS*). Particularly in her shows, the societal ill that most concerns Fey is the patriarchal policing of women by white men and the subsequent unfair standards foisted upon women. *30 Rock* and *UKS* both feature white men in power (Alec Baldwin’s Jack Donaghy and Jon Hamm’s cult leader, the Reverend Wayne Gary Wayne, respectively) inflicting grief upon white female protagonists. However, therein lies the complication with Fey’s work: she seems to be advocating for a narrowly defined feminism that, whether intentionally or unintentionally, neglects to include women of color. Just last summer, she asked NBC to pull four episodes of *30 Rock* from circulation that featured blackface, which she refers to as “race-changing makeup” (Adalian par. 2). Previously, in the aftermath of the white supremacist rally in Charlottesville,

Virginia, Fey appeared on *SNL*'s Weekend Update (she is a University of Virginia alum) to deliver a joke-filled tirade condemning the rally. Her solution: "Instead of participating in the screaming matches and potential violence, find a local bakery you support...order a cake with an American flag on it, like this one, and just eat it, Colin" ("Weekend Update" 2:45-3:04). The piece aims for the right target. After all, in light of such ugly and uncontrollable circumstances, what better way to maintain sanity than with the absurdity of eating an entire sheet cake? The main problem, however, is that Fey can make that joke because she has the luxury of distance—the color of her skin does not put her in immediate danger from the rally. Unintentionally, it recalls parallels to Marie Antoinette's famed expression, "Let them eat cake." Fey has the luxury of ignorance borne of her own white privilege.

While Tina Fey is obviously not perfect, she has the keen ability to hide important social commentary by masking it with a joke. Some have criticized her for this, but I think that by not overtly taking a side, she allows her audience to come to their own conclusions. One of things I admire most about her is that she refuses to talk down to her audience—rather, she trusts they are clever enough to rise to her material's level. She is also unabashedly female in her voice and point of view. Regardless of her audience's demographics, Fey refuses to shy away from explicitly female material in her work—e.g., jokes about the wage gap, menstruation, and the tired trope that "women aren't funny"—yet at the same time, she holds women to the same level of accountability and scrutiny as she does men. In my own writing, I hope to mimic these approaches, while also taking the time to acknowledge that my own experiences are not necessarily universal. I do not think that being funny and acknowledging or being sensitive to experiences different than yours are mutually exclusive.



### ***The 800-Pound Hypocrite in the Room: Joss Whedon***

I often joke that the perfect popcorn film is 1999's *The Mummy*. It has everything: action, archaeology, a romantic subplot, Brendan Fraser, and most importantly, jokes. By the same math, *Star Wars* (1977) falls into that category, and were it not for the fact that *Star Wars* is as much ingrained in the public lexicon as it is my own subconscious, I would have included it in this essay. To my greater point, in the same way that George Lucas was inspired by pulp novels and serials, I have been inspired by genre films that include elements of the hero's journey and feature a strong vein of comedy. Edgar Wright certainly fits into this mold, as does Taika Waititi, but the man who has been most influential to me in this regard, particularly with his shows *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Firefly*, is Joss Whedon.

Recently, Whedon has come under fire for unprofessional, downright abusive, and sexually inappropriate behavior behind the scenes—first with Ray Fisher's accusations of toxic behavior on the *Justice League* (2017) set, and then most recently with Charisma Carpenter's accusations of him being "hostile" and "casually cruel" on the sets of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* (Robinson par. 7). The man whose claim to fame was writing strong, empowered female characters referred to Carpenter as "fat" to colleagues when she was four months pregnant in addition to making "ongoing, passive aggressive threats to fire [her]" and "mock[ing] [her] religious beliefs" (par. 7, 8). How do these heinous accusations affect the perception of his work and the influence it had on me? More importantly, how *should* it affect his influence? I believe there are some important points to glean from Whedon's #MeToo moment.

On the one hand, the cores of his shows have not changed. Buffy Summers still remains the quippy blonde who defies the horror-movie trope of the innocent blonde walking down a dark alley and getting killed (Franich par. 1). Rather than the victim, she became the hero. Despite the complaints about her calling as the Slayer, Buffy always made the choice to do what was right—eventually—to protect the world and the ones she loved. *Firefly*'s Malcolm Reynolds remains the war-damaged Captain to a crew of other misfits as he mourns the Independents' loss at Serenity Valley and learns to accept that his crew might be his new family. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* explores themes of sacrifice, loss, depression, and the triumph of good over evil—eventually—whereas *Firefly* is an interesting, if not deeply flawed, commentary on the encroachment of groupthink and big government over humanity's natural desire for independence.

Although both shows are hour-long dramas, Whedon and his writers addressed many of these themes satirically. In the episode "Hush," Buffy and her friends have a number of relationship squabbles because they are unable to communicate clearly with each other. A group of fairytale ghouls come into town and steal the voices from everyone in town. The episode becomes a funny commentary on the nature of language and communication as the gang must compensate for their missing voices by communicating nonverbally. Ironically, this makes them able to communicate more effectively. Similarly, *Firefly* explores demagoguery in the episode "Jaynestown," in which the crew returns to backwater moon where their lunk of a mercenary, Jayne, is idolized as a Robin Hood-esque hero. The town renamed itself for his namesake and even has a song celebrating his robbery of the local magistrate and sharing his wealth. In reality,

the only reason the town received the money was because Jayne tossed it from his getaway vehicle because it slowed down his escape due to its weight.

Whedon's dialogue also helps make his dramatic scenes pack more of an emotional punch. It is fast-paced, quippy, and full of pop-culture references, which makes it the perfect juxtaposition to the more tragic or gruesome content in his work. Yes, Buffy fights against vampires and demons, but many of the Monsters of the Week are metaphors for real life experiences. In dealing with a shapeshifting demon or the death of a loved one, humor is the key. It keeps the fantasy or science fiction elements grounded and accessible. While my own material has not delved deeply into either genre (yet!), it certainly takes this comedic leaning from Whedon and even harkens back to Vonnegut's preference for laughter over tears. Real life can be devastating and relentless, but it can also be hilarious and painfully uncomfortable. The former qualities are just as important to narrative as they are to real life; however, my skin is tissue paper-adjacent, and therefore, I am drawn to the latter qualities—to humor as a distraction or a defense—in my personal life and in my writing.

Yet, it remains only fair that in examining the influence Whedon's work has had on my own writing that the same level of scrutiny must be applied the more problematic nature of his material. Recently, I re-watched a few episodes of *Buffy*, *Firefly*, and *Dollhouse*, and admittedly, in light of the allegations made against Whedon, many of them were difficult to stomach. The difficulty, I think, rests in a culture that emphasizes time and time again that nobody is perfect; yet the standard for public figures seems to be unattainable perfection. We are fine with vice as long as it remains hidden. Obviously, there is a massive difference between unprofessional behavior and the likes of Harvey Weinstein, whose actions were both criminal and depraved. But

what standard defines the litmus test that determines the line between redemption and outright banishment? Justice for the victims demands that these predators face the consequences—whether legal, professional, or personal—for their actions, but once the sentence is served, is it possible for a second chance? My inclination, based on my own experience, is that you cannot separate the art from the artist. Writing, by its very definition, begins as a reflection of one’s personally held worldview, whether outrightly, like Phil Vischer, or subtextually, like Tina Fey. I think the best approach may be to note anything of value that can be salvaged from Whedon’s work—his attention to structure, his dialogue, his use of comedy to ground his material—remove the pedestal I have placed him on, so I can view him more realistically, and discard the rest.

### ***Conclusion: My Roadmap to Success***

There is a scene in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989) in which Indiana—having just bypassed two other harrowing tests in the quest to save his father with the Holy Grail—comes to a giant chasm with seemingly no way across. The test? He must make a leap of faith—he has to trust that, even though he may not see it, there is a bridge to the other side. In many ways, this is what my road to success feels like. The race to break into the entertainment industry is exceedingly competitive, and everyone takes a different path. My immediate goals are to keep polishing my scripts, keep applying to contests and fellowships, and keep networking and meeting people through Twitter. In a year that brought with it so much devastation, I was beyond fortunate to have placed as a semifinalist in the 2020 Austin Film Festival and to have had my first general meeting as a result. Most recently, that same script—“Friend Fiction”—placed as a semifinalist in ScreenCraft’s Screenwriting Fellowship in May 2021. I have found a degree of

success in contests, so I plan to keep pursuing this route. I submitted another feature script to Austin this year, and I hope to apply to Nickelodeon's fellowship, among others, this summer.

Additionally, Twitter has not only turned out to be a wonderful resource for job openings and industry insight, but also a fantastic medium for networking. This past year, I have been able to connect with the head of PlayStation Studios/Productions, the former cinematic director at my favorite video game developer, Naughty Dog, and the editor of Phil Vischer's podcast (who, as it turns out, is one half of an aspiring screenwriting duo.) Through Twitter, I also found out that the recruiting manager at Bungie (another video game developer) is a Pepperdine graduate! I plan to reach out to her once my thesis has been submitted, and I can breathe again. None of these interactions have directly led to jobs, but getting to know people in the industry has made the task of trying to break in feel far less intimidating and isolating.

Finally, in addition to applying for assistant/administrative positions in the industry, I would also like to start sending my material to representatives closer to September. This summer, I will continue polishing the scripts in my portfolio. This is probably the path that intimidates me the most, but it seems like it might be a rip-off-the-bandage situation. I have to be confident in my voice, professionalism, and material, and at some point, go after the career shift I have been working toward for the last three years—and never, ever, *ever* return to state or federal politics.

During his final taping of his short-lived stint on *The Tonight Show*, Conan O'Brien addressed his audience with a poignant, often funny, farewell address that has stuck with me since. In closing, he said: "Please do not be cynical. I hate cynicism. For the record, it's my least favorite quality. It doesn't lead anywhere. Nobody in life gets exactly what they thought they

were going to get. But if you work really hard, and you're kind, amazing things will happen” (“Conan” 3:58-4:15).

At the end of the day, I have to trust that a path is there, just like Indiana Jones. I have to trust that working really hard and having integrity will matter to the right people. I have to trust that being kind and being intentional in building relationships with colleagues will lead to references and other professional opportunities. Most importantly, I have to trust that my voice, comedic instincts, and foundational principles come through my work clearly, and that there is an audience out there hungry for the stories God has put on my heart. However, if none of those work, then I have to trust that, through my hard work, various connections, and divine intervention, I can find a wealthy husband—who is obviously a huge fan/supporter of my work and my roadmap to success—and marry rich. Fingers crossed.

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THE PEOPLE'S HOUSE

"Pi|g|lot"

written by

Emily S. Rauch

COLD OPEN

EXT. PENNVILLE BOROUGH HALL - PRESSER - DAY

Small town press conference. A makeshift dais with a podium flanked by American and Pennsylvanian flags. In front, three local MEMBERS OF THE PRESS sit in cheap fold-out chairs.

WOODROW "WOODY" NEIDERMEYER (27, Kennedy-esque in ambition and looks) steps behind the podium. Two officers and the POLICE CAPTAIN stand behind him.

WOODY

Good afternoon--

One of the reporters stands to take a picture on his phone, but it's set for timer--ten seconds of excruciating silence.

WOODY (CONT'D)

Today, police received a domestic disturbance call. Kevin Bacon, a pot-bellied pig, escaped a nearby home.

REPORTER #1

Excuse me. Was Kevin Bacon a pet?

WOODY

Yes. Under my orders, two officers pursued Kevin Bacon on foot and executed him upon capture.

REPORTER #2

You executed Kevin Bacon?!

WOODY

Yes, but--to be clear, I mean the pet pig, not the beloved *Footloose* actor.  
(then)

As a community, we grieve the Snyder family's loss. Our thoughts and prayers go with them. I commend the actions of Pennville's police force. Thank you for making our borough your top priority.

To the sound of pathetic, sporadic applause, he waves, claps the Captain on the shoulder, and steps off the dais. The Police Captain steps behind the podium.

POLICE CAPTAIN

Thank you, Mayor Neidermeyer.

(to the press)

At this time, I'll take questions...

EXT. BEHIND THE DAIS - CONTINUOUS

Woody easily shifts from plastered smile to utter disgust.

SADIE NEIDERMEYER (29), his impatient, no-nonsense sister, waits for him by her car.

WOODY

Ridiculous...I'm living a farce.

SADIE

Sure, but like if you were the mayor in a *Charlotte's Web* farce.

(beat)

Because of the pig and everything--?

WOODY

Yeah, I got it.

SADIE

--What was his name? Babe? No, that was another thing... Wilbur! It was Wilbur.

She sobers at the distressed look on Woody's face.

SADIE (CONT'D)

Woody, come on. I'm teasing.

(beat)

It was obviously more like *Gordy*.

WOODY

Why do you have so many pig references?

SADIE

I did a Google search as soon as I read the subject line on the media advisory.

A black towncar pulls up. FRANK NEIDERMEYER (60s, the gravitas of Powers Boothe) steps out from the back door.

He has a flag pin and a Member of Congress pin on his lapel.

SADIE (CONT'D)

Dad? I thought you were in D.C.

WOODY

What are you doing here? This is my press conference.

FRANK

Turns out this pigsty of a situation has the whole borough up in arms. They called in the big guns.

WOODY

Dad, you don't have to--

A group of more professional looking NATIONAL REPORTERS swarm around Frank. They trail after him as he walks to the dais.

NATIONAL REPORTER

Congressman, you're being accused of coming home to avoid a vote on the House infrastructure bill. Any comment?

FRANK

Nothing is more important than family  
...than cleaning up after family.

He waves at the reporters, all veneers, before stepping onto the dais. Woody turns to Sadie, still wearing his lapel mic.

WOODY

He gets infrastructure questions, and I get this jackassery! I worked so hard to get elected, and for what? To humiliate myself in front of the whole town while I read a pig eulogy?

Woody's lapel mic blinks red. Sadie notices. Her eyes widen.

SADIE

Woody, no--!

WOODY

No, listen to me. This backwater, incest-ridden cesspit of a town is beneath me. I'm a Neidermeyer--

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. PENNVILLE BOROUGH HALL - PRESSER - CONTINUOUS

The press conference stunned silent as they hear Woody's tirade through the speakers. Even Frank's smile falters.

WOODY (O.S.)

--and I'm better than this \*\*\*\*\* job!

A noisy PICKUP TRUCK BLARES on its HORN as it drives past, effectively cutting off Woody's swearing.

SMASH TO TITLES.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONEINT. SUSIE'S DINER - BOOTH - DAY

SUPER: "SUNDAY - FIVE YEARS LATER"

A typical, small town diner. Of interest: a plaque that reads "SUSIE'S DINER - PENNVILLE, PENNSYLVANIA EST. 1872" and a wall containing framed photos of local "celebs."

One picture shows Frank shaking hands with President Obama. Another shows Woody pinning a ribbon on a cartoonishly large pierogi.

In a nearby booth, the two sit eating breakfast. Frank lays it on thick for the WAITRESS.

FRANK

I'll have two eggs and a coffee, black.  
Don't need sugar with something so  
sweet.

WAITRESS

(to Woody)  
And for you, hun?

WOODY

Oh, I haven't --

FRANK

-- He'll have the same. Thank you,  
sweetheart.

He winks at her. She blushes, collects their menus, and returns to the kitchen.

WOODY

Hitting on the waitress. Real nice,  
Dad. Gearing up for the next mistress?

FRANK

It's called being friendly, Woodrow --

WOODY

Don't call me that.

FRANK

-- A trait you'd do well to inherit.  
Instead of being so surly all the time.

WOODY

Real solid stuff. Why am I here?

FRANK

We need to talk about reelection.

WOODY

I was just elected last week!

FRANK

You scraped by on my good name, Son,  
but you've got to take initiative here.

WOODY

I would have won even if the ballot had  
printed the correct name.

FRANK

You sure? Disgraced mayor at 27 --

WOODY

(angry)  
Recalled Congressman at 63 who couldn't  
keep his damn pants zipped shut --

FRANK

At least I accomplished something of  
significance. You were on a hot mic --

WOODY

Yeah, yeah. I know what happened.

FRANK

And you still think you could have won?

FLASHBACK - EXT. CONSTITUENT HOME - DAY

Woody walks up to the front door and knocks. MRS. SCHMIDT  
(late 50s) answers the door.

She's a mess -- tattered housecoat, makeup smeared under her  
eyes, a ferret in one hand, cigarette in the other.

WOODY

Hi, Mrs. Schmidt! I'm Woody  
Neidermeyer. I'm running for Congress.

MRS. SCHMIDT

Who? ... Wait. You look familiar.

WOODY

I-I get that a lot. But I promise --

MRS. SCHMIDT

That's it! You're the angry mayor guy,  
the one who said "\*\*\*\*\*" on TV!

The neighbor's MOWER DROWNS OUT the swearing.

MRS. SCHMIDT (CONT'D)  
What'd you call us? "Inbred hicks?"

WOODY  
(winces)  
... Backwater, incest-ridden yokels.

INT. SUSIE'S DINER - BOOTH - DAY (BACK TO PRESENT)

Woody crosses his arms.

WOODY  
... Well, maybe by a point.

FRANK  
All I'm saying is it wouldn't hurt to try to curry some political favor. Kiss some babies. Run in some kind of ironic 5K for fat people with diseases.

WOODY  
I'll need a lot more than that.

FRANK  
Most important? Cozy up to party leadership. They're really pushing that National Pork Producers Month resolution. Should be an easy "yes."

WOODY  
I don't know... My track record with pigs isn't exactly great...

FRANK  
A resolution is just a bill without balls. Just hold your nose and vote.

The waitress returns with their food and coffee.

On Woody's plate, next to his eggs, is a piece of ham in the shape of a pig's face with bacon bits for eyes and snout holes. Written in ketchup: "OINK OFF!"

EXT. PENNVILLE PARK - DAY

Woody and Sadie jog. The park has other runners and families with kids on the playground. It's Pennville at its finest.

WOODY  
I hate jogging, Sadie.

SADIE

I know, but this isn't about you. It's about restoring your public image. We just need one person to snap a photo.

WOODY

Of what?

SADIE

You. Out and about, enjoying the offerings of your hometown and its residents. The ones you publicly insulted five years ago?

WOODY

I don't need any of this. I just need to prove myself as a congressman. Then they'll forgive me.

Sadie comes to a halt. Woody stops, too.

SADIE

You're such a dumbass! It's not about the title. Being a public servant means actually serving the public. Humbly.

WOODY

Humble? Isn't that the dating app all you hip kids are on now?

Sadie punches him on the arm.

WOODY (CONT'D)

Ow!

SADIE

Don't be a dick, Woody.

WOODY

Why did I ask you to work for me again?

SADIE

Because I'm an insanely good Comms Director. And, per House Ethics, it's not nepotism if you don't pay me. Wave.

They bypass a group running in the opposite direction. Woody slows down, flashes them a smile, and waves. It takes the group a minute before they recognize him.

RUNNER #1

Hey, it's that mayor pig guy!



RUNNER #2

Get him!

The group pivots and chases after Woody and Sadie. The two spring toward her car.

INT. WOODY'S D.C. OFFICE - MORNING

SUPER: "MONDAY"

MATT BROWN (20s, recent college grad) -- Woody's staff assistant -- sits at his desk.

Woody, flanked by Sadie and DOMINICA "DOM" CALDERÓN (50s, Afro Latina, warrior mom), his Chief of Staff, enter.

WOODY

Who is it again, Dom?

(to Matt)

Morning, Matt.

MATT

Hey --

DOM

(to Woody)

Bill Knapp. Constituent. Wants to talk about the Pork Producers resolution.

WOODY

Should be no big deal. I'm voting yes.

DOM

Exactly. Leadership loves us. Constituents hate us less. A win-win.

SADIE

Hear that, Matt? Smooth day ahead.

They disappear into Dom's office just as interns VANESSA and ANAKIN (both 18) enter.

MATT

Hey, good morning, guys.

VANESSA

Good morning.

ANAKIN

'Sup.

MATT

Glad to have you both on as interns, Vanessa and... Anakin?

ANAKIN  
Hundo p, dawg.

MATT  
L-Like the... ?

ANAKIN  
'Rents were huge fans, bruh.

Matt boots up his computer as they stash their bags. Anakin and Vanessa discuss their weekends.

ANAKIN (CONT'D)  
-- My uncle has a box, so me and my Ult-Frizz bros got to see the Caps game.  
Dope as hell. You?

VANNESSA  
For my birthday, my parents paid for my roommates and me to go see Taylor Swift at The Anthem. She was so good!

ANAKIN  
Right on, right on!  
(to Matt)  
What about you? How was your weekend?

Matt hesitates.

FLASHBACK - MONTAGE - VARIOUS

A.) INT. MATT'S APARTMENT - DAY

Matt sobs in the shower as he loofahs himself.

B.) INT. D.C. METRO CAR - DAY

Ear buds in, Matt sobs while crammed into a bench seat during rush hour.

C.) INT. MATT'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Matt sobs as he scrolls through his Instagram--engagement, baby, vacation pics.

INT. WOODY'S D.C. OFFICE - DAY - (BACK TO PRESENT)

Matt tries to smile.

MATT  
It was super.

As they exit, Matt checks the voicemails from the weekend.

VOICEMAIL

You have... 127 new messages.

When he takes the phones off voicemail, all six office lines begin flashing and ringing simultaneously.

INT. WOODY'S D.C. OFFICE - DAY

Woody's official office -- lots of ornate woodwork and drapery.

Woody and Dom sit across from BILL KNAPP (70s, good old boy).

DOM

Mr. Knapp, we appreciate you coming.  
I'm Mr. Neidermeyer's Chief of Staff --

BILL

I ain't looking for niceties. I'm  
looking for results.

WOODY

That's what I'm here for. Dom says you  
want to talk about the pork producers  
resolution. I plan to vote for it.

BILL

That's the damn problem. I run a brush  
factory in Pennville. We use pig hair  
for our products. You keep murderin'  
'em, and we can't keep our doors open!

WOODY

It's just a resolution --

DOM

One that recognizes the hundreds of  
farmers in our district.

BILL

So, four farmer-legs good, two small-  
business-owner-legs bad, huh? Then  
who's got my back?

FRONT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Matt and the interns are all on the phones. The other lines keep ringing. Matt unmutes his call.

CALLER

-- Pigs are our most indecent farm animal. Look at Porky Pig, delighting in his immorality, flagrantly refusing to wear pants! What kind of example is that for children?!

Anakin approaches Matt's desk. Matt mutes his call again.

MATT

What's up?

ANAKIN

Do you have any projects for me? Is there something I can do to help you?

Matt pointedly looks past Anakin at his unanswered phone.

MATT

Yeah, man, can you answer the phones?

ANAKIN

You got it, Chief.

#### DOM'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Sadie opens up Twitter and holds her phone out to Woody.

SADIE

You've got to see this.

#### INSERT - TWITTER VIDEO

REP. VALERIE KLECKNER (30s), a progressive freshman darling, speaks to a media scrum. The chyron reads: "KLECKNER (MA-4): REP. NEIDERMEYER EVERYTHING WRONG WITH POLITICS."

REP. KLECKNER

Representative Neidermeyer is what's wrong with politics. He's the poster child for nepotism and so in step with the sheep in party leadership, they may as well call him "Woolly" Neidermeyer.

#### BACK TO SCENE

Sadie takes her phone back and snorts. Woody glares at her.

SADIE

What? You can't get upset over a bad pun! Plus, she missed the obvious "he's so slimy, they should call him 'Boogie' Neidermeyer."

WOODY

What, are you twelve?

Dom enters, looking haggard.

DOM

Bill finally tired himself out, but  
we've got bigger problems.

FRONT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Woody, Dom, and Sadie enter into total chaos. Echoing phone greetings of "Congressman Neidermeyer's office" repeat.

Matt sees them. Puts his call on mute.

DOM

Robo-calls.

MATT

It's been like this since we opened.

WOODY

Please tell me these are calls of  
unwavering support.

MATT

Our constituents are upset over your  
support of a... pig execution? You  
didn't, like... kill a pig, did you?

Woody, Sadie, and Dom exchange looks.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWOINT. WOODY'S D.C. OFFICE - DOM'S OFFICE - DAY

Dom takes a seat at her desk. Sadie and Woody pace.

SADIE

Who would target us with these  
automated calls?

DOM

Bill, maybe?

WOODY

No. But I think I know. Remember my  
Democratic opponent, Sofia Almanza?

FLASHBACK - EXT. BOROUGH HALL - DAY

A group of protesters with pickets held high. They all wear  
pig masks except for their leader, SOFIA ALMANZA (20s).

SOFIA

This little piggy went to market --

PROTESTERS

-- This little piggy stayed home --

SOFIA

-- This little piggy had tough luck --

PROTESTERS

-- 'cause this little piggy said f --

INT. WOODY'S D.C. OFFICE - DOM'S OFFICE - DAY (BACK TO  
PRESENT)

Dom and Sadie take in this information.

SADIE

You have to applaud their commitment to  
the rhyme scheme.

WOODY

Sadie.

DOM

*Ay, Dios mio.* This is not good, Woody.  
I think... I think you have to change  
your vote.

SADIE

Agreed.

WOODY

Change my vote? I meet with the Pork Producers today -- they basically funded my entire campaign! What do I tell them? "Sorry I can't vote for this resolution -- my district still thinks I murdered a pet pig?!"

SADIE

Tell them you keep kosher.

DOM

Tell them you had swine flu during the 2009 pandemic, and this is a huge trigger for you.

WOODY

You're serious? ... How can I make up for my time as mayor if I'm a single term Congressman?

Matt enters the office. He looks exhausted.

MATT

Hey, Dom? The Pork Producers are here.

When the door closes behind Matt, Dom turns to Woody.

DOM

I know what this place can do to you, how it can suck your soul dry and turn your moral compass about. But I left being a full time mom to three boys and came back here because of you. Because I believe in what you're trying to do.

INT. WOODY'S D.C. OFFICE - DAY

Woody ushers in the Pork Producers: MARJORIE (40s, stout) and ERIK (30s).

She has a cute, little pig pin on her blazer's lapel. Erik has a bolo tie in the shape of a pig's backside, where the strings are curlicued like a pig's tail.

MARJORIE

Mr. Neidermeyer, thank you so much for taking the time to meet with us.

WOODY

Please. I'm happy to do so.

ERIK

Now we know you've got a busy schedule,  
so we'll keep this short. We're not in  
the habit of "bacon" for help.

Erik slaps his knee, hysterical. Marjorie also laughs. A  
joke. Woody breaks into conciliatory laughter.

ERIK (CONT'D)

Just a little pork humor for ya!

(all business)

Your district has the largest number of  
pork producers in a state bordering New  
York, New Jersey, and Ohio.

WOODY

So... Pennsylvania?

ERIK

Exactly! As you know, the House is  
considering our resolution this week.  
We'd love to have your support.

Woody squirms in his seat. Nervous, but resolute.

WOODY

Your organization has done great work  
supporting our farmers back home. Hell,  
supporting me. But I, uh... I can't  
vote for the resolution on Wednesday.

MARJORIE

But -- think of summer carnival season!

ERIK

I guess you're okay with deep fried  
bacon grease bits not existing!

WOODY

I'm sorry, it's just --

MARJORIE

Your father would never!

The two gather their things and storm out.

FRONT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

As Marjorie and Erik exit the office, phone calls keep  
rolling in. Matt's in the middle of one.



MATT

No, ma'am, this is Congressman Woody Neidermeyer's office.

ELDERLY CALLER

Yes, I want to register a complaint with CBS. I watched another program on your channel, and Mark Harmon was not in it. Why? He should be on every show.

MATT

Ma'am. This is a federal representative's office. I --

BACK OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Anakin is on a call.

ANAKIN

Hey, man, I'm just an intern. I --

AGGRESSIVE CALLER

Listen, pal, you tell your boss, Woody Greed-ermeyer, that We the People know Wilbur-gate was an inside job between him and the Pennville police, those  
\*\*\*\*\* --

The COPIER BLOCKS OUT his swearing.

FRONT OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

While Matt is on the phone, Vanessa approaches. She waits patiently until Matt mutes his call.

MATT

Did a caller say something inappropriate? Because... we can't --

VANESSA

Um, yes -- But I have the Schaffer family on the line. They said they scheduled a tour of the Capitol with you?

MATT

Oh, God, that's right. Could you, uh, could you take them on the tour?

VANESSA

But I've never done one before --

MATT

You'll be fine. Just point at paintings, sound like you know what you're talking about, and when in doubt, slaves built it.

Vanessa puts on a brave face as she exits. Matt sinks back in his chair. He glances over at Anakin, who has abandoned his phone and is brushing his teeth at his desk instead.

INT. CAPITOL BASEMENT - DAY

SUPER: "TUESDAY"

Woody, Sadie, and Dom huddle outside a large conference room. Other Members and staff trickle through the doors.

DOM

(to Woody)

Party leadership wants to run through votes. You ready to face the music?

Before Woody can answer, his PHONE BUZZES. He glances down at the text, which appears ON SCREEN. A text from Frank states:

"Coming to D.C. Don't be stupid. Vote for pig res."

Sadie peers over his shoulder to read it.

WOODY

(to Dom)

It's dad. Damn it, this is not good.

SADIE

I think the bigger takeaway here is how you have him listed in your phone as 'Frank Neidermeyer.' Real weird Scout/Atticus situation you two have.

WOODY

Sadie, can you run interference?

SADIE

(seriously)

Of course.

As she exits, Dom nods toward the conference room doors

INT. CAPITOL BASEMENT - CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Leadership meeting. Most of the Members at the table are middle-aged to old, white men. Some white women, only one black man. Dom is the only woman of color.

At the head of the table stands SPEAKER WRIGHT (40s, dopey in a dad way) and MAJORITY LEADER BUTTE (50s, distinguished).

Woody and Dom take a seat toward the back.

SPEAKER WRIGHT

Glad to see everyone made it safely  
back to the Swamp.

A few Members laugh. Dom discreetly mimes shooting herself.

SPEAKER WRIGHT (CONT'D)

The good news is that we have an easy  
week ahead of us. Donna?

MAJ LEADER BUTTE

Thank you, Steve.

(to the group)

Yes, with the exception of an  
environmental bill that might prove  
difficult for a few of you --

Some Members grumble in agreement.

MAJ LEADER BUTTE (CONT'D)

-- there should be no surprises. Our  
major push this week is the Pork  
Producers resolution. It supports local  
farmers, industries -- basically, this  
is a great bill for us.

Woody glances over at Dom. She nods. He collects himself before standing and clearing his throat.

WOODY

Uh, excuse me, Majority Leader Butte?

All eyes in the room turn to look at him.

MAJ LEADER BUTTE

Yes, Mr... ?

WOODY

Woody Neidermeyer. I represent  
Pennsylvania's 15th.

SPEAKER WRIGHT

Oh! Your father's old seat?

WOODY

Uh, yes. It is. Um... my office has been hounded with constituent calls all week opposing this resolution.

MAJ LEADER BUTTE

With all due respect, Mr. Needlefire --

WOODY

-- Neidermeyer --

MAJ LEADER BUTTE

-- We're talking about a resolution that, in the course of human events, means less than nothing.

WOODY

Yes. I'm aware. It's just -- my constituents are strongly opposed to it, and I'm afraid... well, I'm afraid I can't vote for it.

Gasps of outrage and shock erupt throughout the room.

MEMBER #1

Treason!

MEMBER #2

Typical Yankee, decrying South Carolina barbecue!

MEMBER #3

Socialist! I bet in your America, we eat borscht and vodka instead of hotdogs at baseball games!

SPEAKER WRIGHT

(banging gavel)

Now, that's enough!

(to Woody)

Mr. Neidermeyer, I would... strongly advise you -- reconsider your position.

MAJ LEADER BUTTE

It's important for us, as a party, to present a unified front.

Woody nods. He and Dom exit to excited whispers.

INT. WOODY'S D.C. OFFICE - DAY

Phones still ring like crazy. Anakin approaches Matt's desk.

ANAKIN

Vanessa texted me. Apparently, one of the kids on the tour yesterday had some kind of cold. Now she has one?

MATT

Okay, well, keep answering phones. I'll see if maybe I can borrow an intern from another office.

Just as Anakin exits, Frank comes into the office.

FRANK

Hi there! Frank Neidermeyer -- I'm Woody's father. Is he around?

MATT

Oh, uh, Mr. Neidermeyer. Hi. No, he's at a Leadership meeting with Dom.

FRANK

I'll wait for him to come back then.

(beat)

How in the world can you get any work done with all this racket?

Loud CLANGING comes from outside the office. Both Frank and Matt look outside the double doors.

In the room across the hall, Erik and Marjorie direct wait staff carrying catering supplies and dishes.

A banner reads "PORK PRODUCERS OF AMERICA RECEPTION". Various staffers, Members, and lobbyists have already begun to show.

Frank's devious smile turns into fake outrage.

FRANK (CONT'D)

Why, those double-crossing-pork pushers! Let me see if I can't put them in their place.

Matt watches Frank cross the hall. He has a moral dilemma--

MATT

(whisper yelling)

Bring me a pulled pork sandwich!

Matt double takes at Anakin in the back office -- he's slouched down in his seat, basically horizontal. He laughs at something on Snapchat. His phone totally ignored.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREEINT. HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING - HALLWAY - DAY

Woody and Dom walk briskly on their way back to the office. A huddled group of people disperse, revealing Sadie.

WOODY

Sadie, I thought you were running interference.

SADIE

I was! I got held up by the Pennville Press. Adnan's reporting you're voting for the resolution.

DOM

He told leadership he opposed it!

Woody and Sadie share a look.

WOODY

Dad!

SADIE

Dad!

The three of them take off down the hall, sprinting.

INT. BANQUET ROOM - RECEPTION - DAY

Frank schmoozes with Marjorie and Erik, his plate piled high.

FRANK

-- So I said to him -- are you ready? --  
I said, "Would you like some cheese  
with that swine?"

The three erupt into laughter.

MARJORIE

Oh, Frank, you're too much! It's such a shame you're no longer in office.

ERIK

Yes, your son could use some pointers.

Frank covertly checks over his shoulder.

FRANK

You can't be too hard on the boy. A disastrous showing as mayor, and now this? He doesn't have what it takes to be a career politician. But he'll vote for the resolution, you have my word.

EXT. WOODY'S D.C. OFFICE - AT THE SAME TIME

WOODY (O.S.)

DAD.

All three turn to see Woody, flanked by Sadie and Dom, standing in the entranceway to the room. He looks pissed.

FRANK

Speak of the devil! Son, I was just talking to --

WOODY

-- Yeah, I know what you were doing.  
(to Marjorie and Erik)  
If you'll excuse us, I need to speak with my father. Privately.

Woody grabs Frank's arm and drags him out of the room. As he exits, he hollers over his shoulder --

WOODY (CONT'D)

(angry)  
It... the food smells delicious!

INT. WOODY'S D.C. OFFICE - FRONT OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

The four burst through the office doors. Matt startles. He looks worse for wear -- sleeves rolled up, tie loosened.

Frank sets his requested sandwich on the edge of his desk.

MATT

(to the group)  
Welcome back, guys. I --

As he bypasses Matt's desk, Woody angrily knocks the sandwich into the trash can. Matt's joy goes with it.

Dom splinters from the group and goes into her office. Woody holds the door for Sadie and Frank, then slams it shut.

Anakin pokes his head out from the back office.

ANAKIN

It looks like you're swamped, bro. Can I help?

MATT

Yeah, Anakin. Go back to your desk and answer the damn phones.

Anakin salutes before he exits.

WOODY'S D.C. OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Sadie takes a seat on the couch, while Frank makes a beeline to the mini fridge, oblivious. Woody paces frantically.

FRANK

Sadie, so good to see you! How are the kids? How's Elijah?

SADIE

He's -- well, they're fine. But, listen, Dad -- did you talk to Erik and Marjorie on Woody's behalf?

FRANK

Well, I... of course I did!

WOODY

That is not your place!

FRANK

What was I supposed to do?

SADIE

Oh, Dad...

WOODY

Supposed to -- ? You should have done nothing! Nothing was a solid option.

FRANK

You're throwing away an opportunity to get in good with Leadership and leaving a major donor in the dust. With two year terms, the most important thing you can do is focus on reelection --

SADIE

-- The most important thing Woody can do is honor the November ballots and vote how his constituents want him to!

FRANK

Sadie, honey, that is some precious Elle Woods malarkey, but I know I raised you better than that.

(beat)

How can you vote the will of the people if you're not elected into office?

SADIE

And how can you be reelected if your constituents don't trust you?



WOODY

Oh, I don't know. Dad seemed to manage that just fine.

For the first time since we've seen him, Frank's mask slips.

FRANK

Well. I can tell when I'm unwanted.

(beat)

But mark my words, Son. When your touchy-feely approach fails -- and it will fail, just a matter of when -- feel free to come crawling back to me. I love a good 'I told you so' speech.

Furious, Woody silently watches Frank exit the office. When the door closes behind him, Woody snatches his unfinished water bottle and hurls it at the door.

SADIE

Feel better?

WOODY

No.

He sinks into the couch next to her, defeated.

WOODY (CONT'D)

Dad's right. I barely scraped by in November -- I can't afford to throw away any advantages that might come my way --

SADIE

-- So vote for the resolution.

WOODY

-- On the other hand, I was voted out as Mayor of Pennville at the age of 27 because of -- well, the pig thing mainly, but primarily -- my own selfishness -- And now, most of my constituents hate me.

SADIE

So... don't vote for the resolution.

WOODY

I mean this sincerely when I say you are the actual worst.

SADIE

Look, you messed up five years ago --

WOODY

-- Is that supposed to help, or... ?

SADIE

-- But I told you before. The title doesn't matter. You have to own what you did and earn back trust. You can't force it. But this resolution -- voting in line with what your district wants -- it's a good start.

Woody gives her an expression of unspoken gratitude. Then --

SADIE (CONT'D)

Plus, the whole "Redeemed Egomaniac Believes in System, Will Do Whatever It Takes to Earn Back Constituents' Trust" makes one hell of a lede.

WOODY

Aaaand... you ruined it.

INT. CAPITOL - OUTSIDE HOUSE FLOOR - DAY

SUPER: "WEDNESDAY"

The hall is packed with various Members, staffers, and reporters. Two Capitol Police stand guard in front of the double doors leading to the house floor.

Woody and Dom approach. She looks up from her phone to see that he's wringing his hands nervously.

DOM

Keep doing that and people are going to think you're an old time-y train robber with some lady tied to the tracks.

WOODY

Sorry.

DOM

This resolution -- it's a fancy way of saying March is as good a time as any to eat a ham sandwich. We'll recover. You'll recover. Just... vote your conscience, okay?

Woody nods and walks through the doors to the House Floor.

INT. CAPITOL - HOUSE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

He pats himself down until he finds his voting card in his jacket pocket. As he walks down the aisle --

MAJ LEADER BUTTE (O.S.)  
Mr. Neidercryer!

Woody turns around and sees the Majority Leader. Their conversation reeks of false pleasantries.

WOODY  
Twice in one week, Donna. How did I get so lucky?

MAJ LEADER BUTTE  
Let's hope that luck doesn't run out.  
We're counting on your vote today.

She claps him on the back. When closer, she adds --

MAJ LEADER BUTTE (CONT'D)  
We've afforded you some courtesies out of respect for your father. I'd hate to see those disappear.

Woody watches as she approaches another Member, then turns back to his task. He pushes his card into the voting box, casts his vote. He retraces his steps and exits the chamber.

CLOSE ON the electronic voting record above the Speaker's rostrum. It reads "NEIDERMEYER - NAY."

INT. CAPITOL - OUTSIDE HOUSE FLOOR - MOMENTS LATER

Woody looks like a weight has been lifted from his shoulders. As he pulls his phone out to call Dom, he's interrupted.

REP. KLECKNER (O.S.)  
Neidermeyer!

Woody pivots and deflates a bit when he sees who it is.

WOODY  
Y'know, there's a rumor going around that you don't have an apartment here. You just prowl the rafters of the MSNBC studio until one of their anchors mentions the free market. Then you swoop down and reveal your true form.

REP. KLECKNER  
That's funny.

WOODY

Thanks. Been workshopping it since we were sworn in.

(beat)

To what do I owe the pleasure?

REP. KLECKNER

The pork resolution passed.

WOODY

... Of course it did.

REP. KLECKNER

Imagine my surprise when I saw the votes come back and found your name as one of the two opposing Republicans.

She tips an invisible cap at him.

REP. KLECKNER (CONT'D)

It physically pains me to admit it, but I'm kind of impressed, Woody.

WOODY

Appreciate that, Val. But you of all people should know I only answer to "Woolly" now.

As he walks away, we see both of them are equally bad at hiding their smiles.

INT. WOODY'S D.C. OFFICE - DAY

Bill Knapp is back. He sits, arms crossed, on the couch opposite Woody.

BILL

Let me guess -- another pig execution?

WOODY

Uh, no. I wanted to tell you that I voted "no," Mr. Knapp.

(off his blank look)

On the Pork Producers resolution?

BILL

... And?

WOODY

And I plan to take my role as your Representative seriously. When I was mayor, I was in it for me, not my constituents. And I'm sorry for that.

(MORE)

WOODY (CONT'D)

But thanks to the idiot borough  
employee who printed the wrong name on  
the ballots--

BILL

That was my cousin, Eustace.

WOODY

-- I mean, the under-appreciated and  
grossly underpaid borough employee --

BILL

Better.

WOODY

-- I have a second chance. My dad may  
have been in it for the money --

BILL

And the heifers --

WOODY

D-Don't call them heifers -- My point  
is, I got into public service because I  
wanted to help people. You reminded me  
of that. I hope you'll continue to keep  
me accountable going forward.

Bill softens, starts to uncross his arms, but stops.

BILL

You didn't mess up the vote too bad.  
But I still ain't votin' for ya.

WOODY

That's... Okay.

He holds his hand, but Bill ignores the handshake and exits.  
Left alone, Woody leans back. A content smile.

A KNOCK. Dom enters. She flops down on the seat next to him.

DOM

Whelp. That was leadership. I haven't  
been screamed at like that since my  
youngest when I stayed hidden too long  
during Peek-a-Boo.

WOODY

Yeesh. That bad?

DOM

They told us to "start packing."

INT. DIFFERENT CONGRESSIONAL D.C. OFFICE - EVENING

Unlike Woody's office, this one is less opulent, more former storage closet. It's lit by a lot of lamps.

Woody, Sadie, Dom, and Matt sit around a coffee table with an office phone on it. They all have beers in their hands.

A rat skitters past.

WOODY

This isn't so bad. I thought they were going to oust me, not move me into a new office.

SADIE

Not bad?

She pulls back one of the curtains to reveal a concrete wall.

MATT

Also -- I don't know how, but when you flush the toilet, the refrigerator door opens. You've got to close it manually.

DOM

Intimidation tactics. I should have known something was up. Freshmen don't get nice offices. That was all Frank.

SADIE

But this downgrade was all you, Woody. Proud of you, buddy.

DOM

Yes, we all are.

WOODY

I couldn't have done all this without you guys, so thank you.

(to Matt)

You especially, Matt. Thanks for holding the fort down with the phones.

MATT

Oh, uh -- thank you, Congressman.

SADIE

Okay, Matt. Let's bask in all our hard work. Play 'em!

Matt salutes before he plays through the voicemail messages. He presses speakerphone, then --

## VOICEMAIL MESSAGE #1

Thank you, Congressman Beedlebriar, for  
your vote today --

WOODY

Please. Congressman Beedlebriar was my  
father. Call me Woody.

SADIE

Stop it!

## VOICEMAIL MESSAGE #1

-- I can rest easy knowing my pet pig  
is safe from those pig farmer ruffians.

DOM

Aww, that was sweet.

Matt plays the next message.

## VOICEMAIL MESSAGE #2

I'm a cardiologist, and I wanted to  
thank you for your hard stance against  
bacon and high cholesterol.

MATT

That's... an interesting take.

## VOICEMAIL MESSAGE #2

Also, my heart experiences a  
tachycardia arrhythmia every time I see  
you on TV. In case you're experiencing  
the same electrical impulses in your AV  
node -- or lower -- call my personal  
cell--

DOM

Oooh!

WOODY

Delete it -- Delete it!

SADIE

Matt, don't you dare! Woody, that was  
the smoothest and most weirdly sterile  
slide into your VMs I've ever seen --

MATT

Sorry, Sadie. I already deleted it.

SADIE

Woody, that could have been the one!

WOODY

Oh, sure. "How did you two meet?"  
 "Well, she left me a horned up  
 voicemail on my office phone -- "

Matt plays the next message.

VOICEMAIL MESSAGE #3

You're a little bitch, Neidermeyer!  
 Hope you have a mighty swine time in  
 hell with your other pig victims.

The group deflates. A beat, then Woody raises his bottle.

WOODY

... Hooray for democracy in action!

Hesitantly, they all clink bottles.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF EPISODE



**FLETCHER'S PASS**

"PILOT"

written by  
Emily S. Rauch

COLD OPEN

EXT. STARRETT'S DINER - NIGHT

A greasy spoon of a joint. Cicadas chirp in tandem with the buzzing light pole illuminating the gravel parking lot. A neon open sign on the front window flicks on and off.

A patron, decked in Carhartt gear and work boots, pushes the DOOR open --

INT. STARRETT'S DINER - CONTINUOUS

-- and sets off the overhead BELL as he walks inside. A pleasant, but dead inside WAITRESS (50s, a lot of makeup) past her prime flags him down.

WAITRESS

Take a seat wherever, hon. Someone'll be with ya shortly.

As she heads toward the kitchen, we track him as he makes his way to a booth in the back. While he takes a seat out of frame, we STAY ON --

ADJACENT BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Mayor BOB FLETCHER (late 50s, Joe Biden vibes) sits across from his son, LOGAN FLETCHER (30s, sardonic but handsome).

BOB

I don't understand. Your backup plan was always law enforcement if playing pro ball didn't work out. With the sheriff's seat up in November --

LOGAN

Elected office was always your thing, Dad. Not mine.

The same waitress from earlier stops by their table.

WAITRESS

What'll it be, boys? The usual?

BOB

Yes, ma'am. Thanks, Millie.

She nods and takes off, sidestepping the counter seating --

INT. STARRETT'S DINER - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

-- and bursting into the kitchen. She passes her ORDER SLIP off to the COOK (40s). He glances down at it as she pulls out a pack of cigarettes from her apron.

WAITRESS

This is the Mayor's order. Don't screw it up.

COOK

Like I would.

As she steps outside, the cook pulls a severely dented CAN of preserved hamburger out from his apron. He opens it, then dumps it out into an already SIZZLING PAN.

CLOSE ON the meat -- a parasitic WORM erupts from it, its grotesque mouth filled with hundreds of sharp, little teeth. The cook sees it, gives a devious smile.

INT. STARRETT'S DINER - ADJACENT BOOTH - LATER

Bob waves to a family that passes by before turning to Logan.

BOB

So your dream is to run the only car dealership in Fletcher's Pass?

LOGAN

Of course not. But I never planned on a career ending injury either.

Before Bob can protest, the waitress comes back with their food. CLOSE ON the burger as she sets it in front of him.

When she leaves, Bob takes a huge bite of it. Nothing. He takes another bite. Sweat begins to pool on his forehead.

INT./EXT. STARRETT'S DINER - LATER

Bob looks pallid as they head toward the exit. Just as they open the door to leave, his STOMACH audibly GROWLS.

Without warning, he projectile vomits onto the gravel. Some of it splatters on the door. Logan springs back, freaked.

LOGAN

Son of a -- Dad, what the hell?!

Like vultures, a few patrons watch the scene unfold. Head hung low, Bob looks up -- his eyes are all milky white.

BOB  
(scary voice)  
PESTILENCE, ANNIHILATION -- WE WILL  
AVENGE THOSE LOST.

Without warning, he tears his shirt in half. His movements are sluggish as he shuffles toward the --

EXT. WATER TOWER - NIGHT

Pants are gone now, too. A pair of dingy briefs and some sock garters are the only thing protecting his modesty as he climbs the tower's ladder. Logan runs after him.

The vulture patrons gather at the bottom, their phones trained on the mayor's every movement. Logan pushes through to get closer to the tower, a slight limp evident.

LOGAN  
Alright, nothin' to see here.

Bob's briefs drop into frame right at Logan's feet. This is not good. The growing audience reacts. Logan thinks fast.

LOGAN (CONT'D)  
Zero percent APR financing on your  
next car purchase for anyone who  
leaves. Now.

Reluctantly, the crowd disperses. When it's just Logan left, he looks up at Bob, who still doesn't look right.

BOB  
(normal voice)  
Logan, I -- AGGHHHH!

He chokes, convulsing. The parasitic worm, now an inch in diameter and close to a foot long, oozes out of his mouth.

LOGAN  
Wh -- OH, SHIT! DAD!

With a loud SCREECH, it plummets to the ground. Bob's eyes roll back. He loses his grip and follows. Just before he hits the ground --

SMASH TO TITLES.

"FLETCHER'S PASS"

END COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

EXT. FDA OFFICES - DAY

SUPER: "U.S. FOOD & DRUG ADMINISTRATION - SILVER SPRING, MD"

ESTABLISHING FDA headquarters.

INT. FDA OFFICES - CONTINUOUS

A labyrinth of muted gray cubicles. One occupant, SHAYNE SULLIVAN (30s), is on the phone. She's sharply put together, not a hair out of place.

Her cubicle shows none of the typical personal touches, with the exception of a Georgetown pennant.

Shayne holds up and examines a super expensive bottle of bourbon as she speaks.

SHAYNE

(on the phone)

-- very generous, Mr. Walker, but it exceeds the twenty-dollar federal gift limit. I can't accept it.

COOPER (O.S.)

Shayne.

She starts as her supervisor, COOPER DAVIS (40s, the Idris Elba of bureaucratic drones) touches her shoulder. It's more familiar than it should be and lingers.

She hangs up and tries to hide the bottle out of sight.

SHAYNE

Sorry, sir. I was just --

He smirks at her before grabbing a nearby chair and sitting.

COOPER

Relax, Sullivan. We can always rely on you to play by the rules. In fact, the director was so impressed with your work on the sugar beet crisis out in Montana that he personally chose you as lead inspector for a new botulism case.

SHAYNE

Oh, well, that's -- !

COOPER

He wants you on the scene, in person.  
Up in Fletcher's Pass --

COOPER (CONT'D)

-- Pennsylvania.

SHAYNE

(hopefully)

-- not Pennsylvania?

Immediately, Shayne's demeanor hardens.

SHAYNE (CONT'D)

No. Absolutely not.

COOPER

You don't really have much of a  
choice in this.

Shayne's breathing comes in short spurts. She grips the arms  
of her chair.

SHAYNE

That's my hometown, Cooper. I haven't  
been back in over a decade.

COOPER

That's why the Bureau thought of you.  
You know the lay of the land.

SHAYNE

Ever see The Godfather Part III? I'm  
Michael Corleone, but instead of  
mobsters, my nut job parents are...  
ghost hunters.

COOPER

Seriously?

SHAYNE

They made it semi-big on YouTube.  
Growing up, fans used to show up at  
our house. It was humiliating.  
College was my ticket out. I never  
looked back.

COOPER

Touching as that is, you leave today.

SHAYNE

Today? But we were supposed to grab  
dinner over in the Navy Yard before  
the Nats game tonight.

COOPER  
Oh God, did I not tell you? My  
girlfriend is back from Italy this  
week, so I gave her your ticket. I  
hope that's cool?

Teeth gritted, Shayne forces a smile.

SHAYNE  
So... cool.

EXT. PHILADELPHIA AIRPORT - DAY

A plane taxis onto the runway.

INT./EXT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

The muted grays of the city slowly transform into snow capped mountains, expansive farmland, dense forests.

When Shayne takes an exit, the surroundings become less populated, more Appalachia.

EXT. FLETCHER'S PASS - VARIOUS

As Shayne continues to drive, we see:

-- Dilapidated shacks. Tons of trash on the lawn. One has a rusted porcelain tub.

-- Junkyards aplenty on rolling hills. Plus, the occasional vandalized tractor.

-- A one street, former coal town with fading storefronts, a lot of bars, and an unimpressive town hall building. As Shayne drives through, we STAY ON a sign: "WELCOME TO FLETCHER'S PASS - EST. 1685."

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Shayne pulls into a spot. An attendant in overalls eyes her.

INT. GAS STATION - CONVENIENCE STORE - CONTINUOUS

She makes a beeline for the CASHIER (Cletus-type) and plunks some cash on the counter.

SHAYNE  
I need forty on pump number two.

CASHIER

Well, I'll be... if it ain't Shayne Sullivan. Your folks helped me out with a haunted radiator few months back. Haven't seen yous together in a long time.

Shayne barely manages a smile before she panic grabs two bottles of malt liquor and slaps down more cash.

SHAYNE

... aaand I'm gonna need two of these forties.

INT./EXT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Shayne slows and pulls up in front of an unconventional, but well maintained home. CLOSE ON the mailbox -- "SULLIVAN" is etched on the side.

A giant satellite dish and some proton pack-esque devices litter the front lawn. Shayne takes them in and shakes her head vigorously.

SHAYNE

Nope.

She unscrews the cap from one of her bottles and takes a quick swig before peeling out of there.

EXT. WATER TOWER - DAY

Police tape cordons off a small area at the base. Compared to last night, it's a ghost town -- except for one woman.

FLORINE "FLO" RYDER (30s, crackpot in an endearing way) squats down to investigate the scene. She looks official.

CLOSE ON what looks like a Jackson Pollock made of alien goo. She pulls a pen out from her pack and prods at the substance. When she holds it up, the goo oozes back to the ground.

FLO

(awed)

That's the grossest thing I've ever seen.

She licks the goo-covered end, intensely concentrating like a wine enthusiast. After a moment, she shrugs noncommittally.



FLO (CONT'D)  
Like a... phlegm flavored Jolly  
Rancher.

SHAYNE (O.S.)  
Excuse me!

Flo looks up to see Shayne approaching her. She's all  
business in her federally issued pullover, clipboard in hand.

SHAYNE (CONT'D)  
This area is now under the  
jurisdiction of the FDA. Unless you  
have the proper clearance --

Flo stands, nearly stumbling over in the process.

FLO  
*Gott im Himmel...* Shayne?

SHAYNE  
Flo? H-How are you? I, um. I haven't  
seen you in --

FLO  
Fourteen years, this August. And not  
one review on my podcast.

SHAYNE  
How, um... how are your folks? I know  
they ran into some legal trouble  
awhile back.

FLO  
Fine. They escaped jail time by  
giving up some of their former night  
club contacts to the German Feds.  
Helped them catch Dusseldorf's most  
notorious EDM Disk Jockey --  
(abruptly)  
Why do you suddenly care? Why are you  
here?

SHAYNE  
I work for the Food and Drug  
Administration. Whatever happened  
here is related to a string of  
locally reported botulism cases.

FLO  
That's what they're calling it?

SHAYNE  
Well... yeah. Why -- ?

LOGAN (O.S.)

Ryder!

Logan slams the door on his truck shut before striding with purpose toward Flo. Shayne freezes, adamantly keeping her back to him. She hasn't heard that voice in over a decade.

FLO

(to herself)

*Schiesse.*

LOGAN

The hell are you doin' out here?  
Unless you recently passed the state  
trooper exam, then you know --  
because we've had this conversation  
at least once a week for the last six  
years -- that you can't cross --

He absently looks over at Shayne and, upon recognition, his words evaporate. His edge softens, stunned.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Sully...

Shayne squirms at the old nickname. She does her best to meet his eyes, but it proves too difficult. As she looks away, Logan's gaze doesn't budge. Equal parts disbelief and hurt.

Flo looks between the two.

FLO

Is this gonna be that awkward ex  
thing where you pretend she didn't  
choose going to Washington instead of  
staying here with you after your  
injury?

That breaks Logan out of his trance real quick. He turns to Flo, a curmudgeon once more.

LOGAN

No, this is going to be awkward  
because you -- a grown, adult woman --  
can't seem to grasp what "stay away  
from the crime scene" means. You're  
not even a cop.

FLO

I'm a self-deputized supernatural  
slash paranormal investigator.

LOGAN

That's not a thing!

Shayne finally collects herself.

SHAYNE  
Crime scene?

FLO  
Logan, I'm telling you -- something's  
not right here.

LOGAN  
You think? I watched some... thing  
slither out of my dad's face like a  
damn Ridley Scott movie.

SHAYNE  
Wait -- your dad? Is he okay?

LOGAN  
Yeah, he's -- they've got him  
recovering in the hospital.

SHAYNE  
Because of the botulism poisoning?

FLO  
It's not botulism. This is clearly  
the work of the Matson Coven.

LOGAN  
Oh, for -- ! Not this crap again.

SHAYNE  
Excuse me, the Matson what?

FLO  
They're a local coven of witches  
hellbent on revenge for a centuries  
old wrong. Here, look.

She takes them over to the goo. Out of principle, Logan stays  
outside of the taped off perimeter. Flo points out a thin  
trail of goo that disappears into the surrounding corn field.

FLO (CONT'D)  
See? This is some supernatural magic  
goop. It tracks from here over to the  
field.

FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Through high corn stalks, the worm watches them. FROM AFAR:

LOGAN  
So where the hell is it? It fell  
right here, and --  
(realization)  
Ryder, are you tellin' me that thing  
is still alive?

WATER TOWER - CONTINUOUS

Before Flo can answer, Shayne flips out. This is not what she signed up for.

SHAYNE  
Hey! You both sound insane. I don't  
know what this stuff is, but I know  
the FDA. They take food poisoning  
seriously. Just... let me do my job.

Flo looks ready to protest, but Logan recognizes futile when he sees it. He salutes her.

LOGAN  
Yes, ma'am.  
(beat, pointed)  
Wouldn't want to come between you and  
the job.

Off Shayne's look, we CUT TO --

INT./EXT. RENTAL CAR - NIGHT

Shayne pulls up in front of the Sullivan residence again. She takes another pull from her forty before she exits.

INT./EXT. SULLIVAN HOME - CONTINUOUS

Shayne knocks on the door. Just as she considers leaving, it opens. Her parents stand on the other side.

Both in their early 60s, ERNIE (disheveled professor type) and MARIAN SULLIVAN(still clinging to her hippy heyday) are rendered speechless at the sight of their prodigal daughter.

Shayne scuffs her feet on the porch.

SHAYNE  
Um... hey, Mom and Dad.

Marian and Ernie start to pull her in for a hug, but hesitate. Instead, they pat her on the shoulder awkwardly.

MARIAN

Wow, I... welcome home, Shayne.

Shayne cranes her neck to look at her car wistfully.

INT. SULLIVAN HOME - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Not much has changed in over a decade. Large history books and specimen jars fill bookshelves. Equipment is scattered throughout -- a video camera, thermal scanners, 2-way radios.

ERNIE

Make yourself comfortable. Just watch out for the ectoplasm samples on the ottoman. You hungry?

While he and Marian busy themselves in the kitchen, Shayne takes it all in. This was a mistake.

SHAYNE

Uhhh, listen. My job gave me a hotel stipend. I can just --

MARIAN (O.S.)

You can stay in your old room. We kept it the same.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. SULLIVAN HOME - SHAYNE'S ROOM - LATER

MARIAN

We... mostly kept it the same.

Shayne's shoulders slump. Recording equipment stands where her bed once was. Newspaper clippings replace boy band posters on the walls. An inflatable mattress on the floor.

MARIAN (CONT'D)

Our YouTube show has expanded. We've branched into podcasts--ours is called "Poulter-cast".

SHAYNE

You...took down my JoBros poster.

ERNIE

We needed the recording space, and... well. You were gone for a long time, Shayne.

Right. Shayne sobers.

SHAYNE

Um... thank you. For this.

Marian presses a goodnight kiss to her forehead while Ernie smiles at her fondly. They leave her in peace.

Alone, she looks around once more before she lies down on the mattress. As she stills, we hear a HISS and watch as she slowly descends with the deflating mattress out of frame.

EXT. WATER TOWER - CORN FIELD - NIGHT

The corn stalks rustle as the worm finally slithers out from its hiding place. Soon, a small fleet of other WORMS follow it out of the corn field.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. PARK - BASEBALL FIELD - NIGHT

Flood lights illuminate the diamond below. Patchy grass and barely visible foul lines. It's sorely in need of upkeep.

Logan pops up a baseball and then angrily cracks it into the outfield with a metal bat.

He does this a few times, each more aggressive than the last. He sets himself up again when --

FLO (O.S.)

Logan!

Immediately, he drops the ball and swings wide with the bat, brandishing it like a Samurai sword. When he sees who it is, his shoulders sink.

LOGAN

Ryder, you're gonna give me a damn heart attack.

FLO

Sorry! I thought your law enforcement training would kick in.

LOGAN

A different lifetime.

He pops another ball up. WHACK.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

The hell you doin' here?

FLO

I just want to talk --

LOGAN

A little busy here.

FLO

-- About the worm. That came out of your father.

He misses this time, swings at air.

LOGAN

No way. You weren't there. It was ... scary as all shit, and I don't need you bein' all glib about it.

FLO

I won't, I promise. I'm a scientist.

LOGAN

The hell you are! You're a lunatic with a podcast, is what you are.

FLO

Oh, c'mon! Your dad has botulism like my parents only did ecstasy occasionally when they were DJs.

LOGAN

I don't understand that comparison. Did they, or... ?

FLO

No. They were super into party drugs back in Germany's club scene. It's why they moved to America, to escape it all.

(beat)

Listen, I'm telling you -- something's not right here. If you don't help me, I'm going to investigate myself.

LOGAN

And I'm telling you that is a bad idea. This is a fed investigation. Let Shayne handle it.

They're quiet for a moment.

FLO

It's real weird, huh? Her being back here?

LOGAN

Yeah, I guess so.

He swings at another ball more forcefully than last time. The crack of the bat dissipates into another silence.

FLO

So... did you miss her?

LOGAN

Damn it, Ryder!

He throws his bat to the ground.



LOGAN (CONT'D)

What d'you want me to say, huh? That her being back here has me in a tailspin? Well, it doesn't. Because it's been over a decade, and I don't think about her. Ever.

(beat)

I don't wanna talk about this with you. We're not friends. And we sure as hell aren't the Hardy Boys.

He limps off to collect his baseballs leaving Flo looking hurt. Over his shoulder --

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Stay away from the investigation!

INT. SULLIVAN HOME - SHAYNE'S ROOM - DAY

Early morning. Shayne's PHONE ALARM lights up and BUZZES "5:00AM." Without delay, she sits upright and turns it off. She allows herself the luxury of a yawn.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

Earbuds in, her feet pound against a shoddily paved back road as she runs. Dense woods and the occasional home crop up beside her. It's still dawn.

INT. SULLIVAN HOME - LATER

Freshly showered and dressed, Shayne sits at her parents' table, a full breakfast and a tablet with the Washington Post on it in front of her.

Ernie and Marian shuffle in, still groggy. They're dressed in coveralls and safety goggles. Ernie messes around with a thermal scanner.

SHAYNE

Good morning.

MARIAN

How are you up so early?

SHAYNE

Early? This is sleeping in.

ERNIE

(not totally listening)  
That's great, honey.

(MORE)

ERNIE (CONT'D)

(to Marian)

The Hastings called. Their son is back from college, and the house's plumbing has been haunted ever since. Sounds like a level four.

MARIAN

Level four? I'll go grab the camcorder.

As she exits, Shayne begins shoveling her breakfast down. She wants no part of this. Ernie claps a hand on her shoulder.

ERNIE

Honey, will you -- ?

Shayne squirms out from under his grasp and grabs a backpack.

SHAYNE

Sorry, Dad, I can't. Work.

She gives him an austere wave before bolting out of there.

INT. HOSPITAL - FRONT DESK - DAY

Shayne approaches the FRONT DESK ATTENDANT (20s) and offers her the equivalent of a friendly smile. It looks like a robot trying to assimilate. The attendant notices.

SHAYNE

Good morning.

ATTENDANT

Is it?

SHAYNE

Uhh... heh. I'm here to visit Bob Fletcher. Could you tell me what room he's in?

The attendant flips through some kind of DIRECTORY.

ATTENDANT

Looks like he's on the second floor. Far end of the hallway.

SHAYNE

Thank you.

INT. HOSPITAL - SECOND FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Shayne examines the little whiteboards outside each room, looking for Bob's name. Finally, she finds it, but before she can enter the room, DR. DUNCAN (50s, arrogant) stops her.

DR. DUNCAN

You can't go in there. Mayor Fletcher is requesting no visitors at this time.

Shayne barely bristles at his rude tone. It's old hat for a female federal employee.

SHAYNE

Hi, I'm Shayne Sullivan, lead inspector for the FDA. Mayor Fletcher was involved with an event last evening that is central to our investigation and --

DR. DUNCAN

Ma'am, the Fountainhill Dairy Association's jurisdiction ends at the county line.

SHAYNE

Fountainhill dairy...  
(realization)  
Oh, ha, no. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

DR. DUNCAN

Prove it.

Shayne fixes him with a look before she digs in her wallet for her federal ID. But nothing's there.

SHAYNE

Crap. My badge is back in my car. But! I have my D.C. Metro card. And this stub from a Nats game?

DR. DUNCAN

Ma'am, I won't tell you again --

Without warning, she sidesteps him and --

INT. HOSPITAL - BOB'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

-- bursts into the room. Bob looks up, startled by the commotion, but not surprised.

SHAYNE  
Mr. Fletcher, I --

DR. DUNCAN  
If you don't leave immediately, I'm  
calling security --

Bob holds up a hand that seems to settle everyone.

BOB  
Relax, Doc. She's fine.

At his word, Dr. Duncan exits. But not without a final glare at Shayne.

Meanwhile, Bob fixes her with a smile that oozes insincerity.

BOB (CONT'D)  
Well, I'll be. Who would have thought  
the daughter of our town's most  
"prestigious" ghost hunters would end  
up a fed?

SHAYNE  
I'm investigating the details of a  
botulism case that --

BOB  
I heard you ran into Logan?

SHAYNE  
Uhh... yes. I-I did. He mentioned you  
made contact with some kind of  
parasitic --

BOB  
What kind of yarn is that boy  
spinning? He must still be recovering  
from last night. He about passed out.  
Never could handle the sight of sick.

This doesn't track with Shayne, but it's possible she forgot  
some things in the last decade or so.

SHAYNE  
Mr. Fletcher --

BOB  
Aw, c'mon now. We were nearly family.  
It's Bob.

SHAYNE

Right. Bob. Last night was just one in a string of botulism cases here in Fletcher's Pass. Why haven't you quarantined the town?

BOB

Because it's nonsense! I must have eaten something that didn't agree with me earlier in the day. Just a little sick to my stomach -- nothing to write home about.

SHAYNE

Let's say the threat is real. Can you think of any leads that might help?

BOB

You know Fletcher's Pass as much as I do. It's prone to an oddity or two. Superstitious folks always want to blame them on the paranormal or supernatural. But you and I know that's a load of hogwash.

SHAYNE

So the reported cases?

BOB

Good old mob mentality and hysteria. That's all.

Shayne straightens and matches his own hollow smile with a forced one of her own.

SHAYNE

If you think of anything else, here's my card.

She places one on his side table before leaving the room.

INT. FLO'S HOUSE - GARAGE - NIGHT

Cheap soundproofing brandishes the walls, along with marked up maps, newspaper clippings, headshots and candid photos. Red string held up by thumb tacks connects the pieces.

It looks like the crazy killer's hideout in every cop procedural on TV.

Headset on, Flo sits behind some pretty serious recording equipment -- a mic, soundboard, and an expensive looking PC.

She flips a switch on the soundboard to 'on'. A red 'live' button lights up. A beat, then she speaks into the mic.

FLO

*Willkommen*, guys and ghouls, to another episode of "Hustle and Flo." I'm your host, Florine Ryder. And this week, as we do every week, we're examining the oft ignored, paranormal phenomena of Fletcher's Pass.

She smashes a button that plays a soundbite of the X-Files theme song before returning to the mic.

INT. JOE'S - CONTINUOUS

The prime watering hole in Fletcher's Pass. Regulars sit at the bar, watching a high school football game on mute. Logan, off by himself, nurses a beer.

The radio continues broadcasting Flo's "show" --

FLO

Unless you've been living under a rock for the past twenty-four hours, you've probably heard about Mayor Fletcher's visit to Starrett's last night. He claims his public display of upchuck was food poisoning --

The show follows this with a CHORUS OF BOOS SOUND EFFECT.

Logan gestures for the bartender.

LOGAN

Joe, turn that damn thing off.

INT. FLO'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Flo continues her broadcast.

FLO

But a number of witnesses claim his eyes went all white before he climbed the county water tower -- King Kong style, in his under trousers -- right before some kind of giant worm shot out of his face.

INT. HOSPITAL - FRONT DESK - CONTINUOUS

The front desk attendant flips through a magazine, while she listens to the broadcast.

FLO  
Now, unless "botulism" is German for  
"parasitic face burster" -- and  
spoiler alert, it is not -- then  
there is no chance that this was food  
poisoning. I've said it before, and  
I'll keep saying it -- this is  
clearly the work of the Matson Coven.

The front desk attendant sets her magazine down, concerned.

INT. FLO'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Flo spins in her chair and presses another sound effect  
button. This time, a WITCH CACKLE.

FLO  
A quick li'l history lesson: eight  
years before the Salem Witch Trials,  
Margaret Matson was accused of  
bewitching her neighbors' cows.

MOOOOO!

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. PENNSYLVANIA COURTROOM, 1685 - DAY

WILLIAM PENN presides as judge in a courtroom. MARGARET  
MATSON (20s) sits on the stand.

FLO (V.O.)  
Billy Penn -- governor of  
Pennsylvania at the time -- holds a  
trial, asks her if she's a witch.

WILLIAM PENN  
(mouthing along with Flo)  
Are you a witch?

FLO (V.O.)  
She says no.

MARGARET MATSON  
(mouthing)  
No.

FLO (V.O.)  
 Boom. Done. He lets her go.

William Penn bangs a gavel and gives Margaret a dismissive gesture.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PENNVILLE, 1718 - DAY

HENRY FLETCHER (played by the same actor as Bob) stands in front of a "PENNVILLE" town sign. A clerk holds out a bible to him. Henry places his hand on it. Holds the other up.

FLO (V.O.)  
 Fast forward some twenty years later to 1718. Penn is dead and Henry Fletcher -- ancestor to Bob -- is asked to step in as the head of Fletcher's Pass.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. COURTROOM, 1718 - DAY

Henry Fletcher bangs a gavel, then holds up a "WANTED" poster featuring Margaret's face on it.

FLO (V.O.)  
 The town suddenly adopts England's anti-witchcraft laws. Soon after --

SMASH TO:

INT. MATSON HOME, 1718 - NIGHT

Margaret Matson lies in a pool of blood, her limbs akimbo.

FLO (V.O.)  
 Margaret Matson is found dead in her home under mysterious circumstances. Coincidence?

An "AW, HELL NAH!" SOUND EFFECT.

INT. HOSPITAL - BOB'S ROOM - NIGHT (BACK TO PRESENT)

Bob lies in his bed, listening to the broadcast.



FLO

Now, the Fletchers refuse to acknowledge this series of events and the fact that they have suffered from similar mysterious circumstances over the centuries. Last night was just one example. Logan Fletcher's suspiciously timed career ending injury is another.

For a second, Bob's anger is visible. But then his eyes turn MILKY WHITE. He lies back down, his body in a seeming stasis.

INT. FLO'S HOUSE - BASEMENT - CONTINUOUS

Flo leans back in her chair, hands laced behind her head.

FLO

Some people -- well, me -- say that the Matsons have been out for revenge and that the two families have been locked in a secret war ever since.

(beat)

No matter how many times I've tried to talk to Mayor Fletcher about it, he has always changed the subject. Well, guess what? They're trying to silence me, but they can't! I'm like a ghost! They'll never shut me down!

Suddenly, there's a KNOCK at the door.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. RENTAL CAR - CONTINUOUS

As Shayne drives, Flo's broadcast continues over the radio.

FLO

*Mein gott!* They're here to shut it down. Don't forget to support the patreon!

More KNOCKING. Then --

DELIVERY GUY

Uh, I've got a Taco Bell order for a... Ghost Ryder?

Shayne switches the radio off.

SHAYNE  
(to herself)  
Still crazy as ever.

She ruminates for a minute before pulling the car over on the side of the road. She grabs her cell.

INT. COOPER'S HOUSE - NIGHT

An insanely expensive looking home office with a lot of mahogany detailing and a fireplace.

Reading glasses on, Cooper flips through a report, a half empty scotch glass beside him. His CELL RINGS. He checks the caller ID, then grins.

COOPER  
I was wondering when you'd check in.

INTERCUT SHAYNE/COOPER

SHAYNE  
Sorry. This is the first time I've had some down time.

COOPER  
No, I get it. Visiting all the old haunts. Reconnecting with family...

SHAYNE  
Not remotely. I've been doing my job.

COOPER  
Relax. It's a joke. Or did botulism infect your sense of humor, too?

SHAYNE  
I'll let you know when I hear something funny.

COOPER  
Oh, ouch! Break my heart, Shayne.  
(beat, switching gears)  
What's the latest?

SHAYNE  
Well, it looks like this particular case stemmed from an infected can of preserved hamburger.

COOPER  
Eughh. What about the victim?

SHAYNE

I spoke with the Mayor this morning, but he, uh... he was less than helpful. I looked into the preserved meat, though. Apparently, it was canned at a local plant not far from here. I'll check it out tomorrow.

COOPER

Good instinct. I'll wait to hear from you. Oh! Gen says hi by the way.

SHAYNE

Tell her... tell her I can't wait to hear about Italy.

As she hangs up, Shayne's shoulders slump. The events of the day finally catching up to her.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. HOSPITAL - SECOND FLOOR - DAY

Morning. A NURSE (50s) bypasses a few of the leftover late night cleaning STAFF. She stops in front of Bob's room and pulls out his charts. She frowns.

NURSE  
(to herself)  
Did no one update his charts?

INT. HOSPITAL - BOB'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Inside, she finds Bob seated weirdly formal as his legs dangle over the side of the bed. His face is sweaty and green, like the night at the diner, eyes unfocused.

NURSE  
Well, good morning! How's our  
favorite mayoral patient?

Instead of answering, Bob hiccups -- or at least, it looks like he does until vomit dribbles down his front.

NURSE (CONT'D)  
Aw, geez. Let's get you cleaned up.

As she grabs a towel, Bob's STOMACH audibly GROWLS. He looks up at her as she approaches, his eyes refocused and pleading.

His voice gradually distorts into the scary voice from before, his actions seemingly slow as he says --

BOB  
I don't feEL SO GOOD.

NURSE  
That's why you're here, silly goose!

Without warning, Bob jerks back and projectile vomits all over the nurse. It's an obscene amount, some even pooling on the white floors. She screams.

Bob's eyes roll back into his head as he convulses and chokes. A WORM -- much like the one from earlier -- fights its way out of his mouth.

When it splatters to the ground, we see it's only the back half of the worm. As it wriggles helplessly, Bob collapses back on the bed, passed out.

The nurse, meanwhile, watches in horror as the worm regenerates, growing its other half right before her eyes.

When the head part is complete, it bares its sharp little teeth and SCREECHES. The nurse screams right back.

The room's door bursts open as Dr. Duncan enters. His eyes widen as he takes in the scene.

DR. DUNCAN  
What in the world -- ?

The worm launches itself at the nurse, but her reflexes are too quick. She scrambles for a bed pan and deflects it.

WORM POV

It hurtles through the air right at Dr. Duncan.

BACK TO SCENE

It lands on his face. He screams as it somehow squeezes into his body through the pink, fleshy corner of his eye.

His screams transform into a garbled chokin as his eyes also roll back into his head. The nurse tries to get up and go to him, but she slips in the vomit.

Dr. Duncan's motions are jerky as he fights off the worm's control. Eventually, it's too much. He, too, projectile vomits, sending the worm flying.

DR. DUNCAN (CONT'D)  
Get out of here!

He valiantly attempts to stop it, but he slips in his own vomit and CRACK -- his HEAD hits off the DOOR KNOB hard. He crumples to the ground, motionless.

NURSE  
Dr. Duncan!

WORM POV

The WORM slithers across the floor and burrows past her Croc, into her foot with an audible CRUNCH.

Like the others, her screams are choked off as her eyes roll back. Her head tilts at an unnatural angle.

INT. HOSPITAL - FRONT DESK - DAY

Shayne approaches the front desk attendant, two coffees in hand. She hands one to the other woman -- a peace offering.

SHAYNE

Good morning.

The attendant takes one sip and nearly spits it back out. She pushes the cup back toward Shayne.

ATTENDANT

I don't take it with sugar.

Shayne looks defeated for all of a second before she takes the coffee back and gives her a hopeful grin.

SHAYNE

For next time, then.

The attendant gives her a small, grudging smile in return. Shayne jerks her head toward the elevator.

SHAYNE (CONT'D)

Mayor Fletcher's still one up?

ATTENDANT

He was, but they moved him and closed off the whole second floor.

SHAYNE

Is he alright?

ATTENDANT

Last I heard, they were replenishing fluids, But he should be fine.

Before Shayne can ask a follow up question, Logan barges through the doors. He makes a beeline for the front desk.

LOGAN

Where's my father? I get a call first thing, tellin' me --

(noticing her)

Shayne? What are you doin' here?

She waves lamely at him.

SHAYNE

Working. I came by to talk to Bob.

LOGAN

Of course you did.

SHAYNE

In a town of nearly a thousand, we're  
going to run into each other, Logan.

(to the attendant)

You were saying?

Logan looks like he's battling a short fuse, but he holds  
back and looks at the attendant expectantly.

She looks around, checking for anyone listening in, before  
lowering her voice.

ATTENDANT

Apparently, there were two other  
doctors in there with the mayor this  
morning. Said there was puke  
everywhere. And mentioned a worm?

Shayne and Logan share a significant look. The attendant  
doesn't notice.

SHAYNE

The medical personnel you mentioned.  
Are they still here?

LOGAN

To hell with that!  
(to the attendant)  
Where is my father?

The attendant looks taken aback. Shayne places a placating  
hand on Logan's shoulder. He freezes, briefly glances at it,  
then her, and deflates.

Shayne fixes the attendant with an apologetic smile.

SHAYNE

The personnel?

ATTENDANT

Uh... yeah. They're in one of the  
exam rooms two floors up.

SHAYNE

Thank you.

Logan steps aside to let Shayne go first, but she beats him  
to it and gestures for him to take point. A stalemate until  
Logan glares at her and resignedly walks ahead.

INT. HOSPITAL - ELEVATOR - DAY

The two stand in silence, a good distance apart. Logan's arms are crossed. Shayne scrolls through her emails.

Finally --

SHAYNE

Coffee?

She holds out the cup she meant for the front desk attendant. He eyes it warily before accepting it.

SHAYNE (CONT'D)

Full disclosure: the lady at the front desk did not want it.

LOGAN

Gee, thanks.

He takes a sip. His eyebrows raise.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Whoo, that's sweet.

SHAYNE

Too much?

LOGAN

No, it's perfect.

(beat)

Never could take it like you did. All black and... soulless.

He smiles at her -- a genuine thing that transforms him into his pre-injury self. Shayne can't quite meet his gaze, but there's a small grin on her face, too.

INT. HOSPITAL - EXAM ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Duncan sits on the exam table as a BALDING PHYSICIAN checks his eyes. The nurse, a vacant expression on her face, sits on a nearby chair. She twitches occasionally.

They both look up when Shayne and Logan enter, suspicious. Logan tracks this. The physician narrows his gaze.

BALDING PHYSICIAN

Dr. Duncan has suffered a concussion and is unable to see visitors --



SHAYNE

Oh, we won't be long. I'm Agent  
Sullivan, and this is --

She trails off when she looks over at Logan. He's putting on  
some serious -- very obviously fake -- water works.

LOGAN

Please. They were the only ones with  
my father this morning. And I... I  
just want to know what happened.

To Shayne's amazement, they all buy into it.

NURSE

Oh, you poor man! Your father's fine,  
Mr. Fletcher. But what happened was  
horrible! One minute, your dad was  
fine, the next, he was spewin' like  
Mt. St. Helens.

(beat)

Then he spit up some kind of worm --  
well, half a worm. But it grew back  
and tried to attack me.

Logan suddenly drops the theatrics. The Nurse is on the verge  
of tears.

LOGAN

Sorry -- grew back?

DR. DUNCAN

Don't listen to a word she says. With  
the exception of a medically  
concerning amount of vomit, there was  
nothing out of the ordinary.

LOGAN

Go back to the part where the worm  
became whole again --

NURSE

That's not true! That worm... thing  
went into him --

SHAYNE

Into him? As in --

NURSE

Yep! Right into his face.

DR. DUNCAN

I think I would remember something  
invading my own face.

LOGAN

Seriously. Am I the only one  
concerned about the whole "grew back"  
thing -- ?

NURSE

(to the doctor)

Not with your lights knocked out!  
Right after you spit that thing back  
up, you slipped and hit your head.

Shayne paces, then addresses the nurse.

SHAYNE

So this... specimen vacated the  
Mayor, then... entered Dr. Duncan --

NURSE

Yes --

DR. DUNCAN

I'm telling you there was  
nothing there -- !

SHAYNE

And then... what? Where did it go?

Suddenly, the nurse's demeanor changes, her expression vacant  
again. She twitches, her voice monotone.

NURSE

I have no idea. I did not see it  
again.

LOGAN

This is great and all, but can we  
please -- for the love of God -- go  
back to the part where the worm  
seemingly regenerated itself like a T-  
800?

The nurse tilts her head creepily. Shayne mistakes it for  
confusion and translates.

SHAYNE

You know. Like the Terminator.

Like a switch flipped, the nurse's demeanor is normal again.

NURSE

All I know is that it came out of  
Mayor Fletcher half a worm, and it  
went into Dr. Duncan a whole one.

Shayne and Logan share a look. This is not good.

INT. SULLIVAN HOME - NIGHT

Shayne closes the front door behind her, an exhausted slump evident in her posture.

For the first time since we've seen her, she looks frazzled. Fly aways in her hair, clothes rumpled.

She makes her way to the --

LIVING ROOM

-- and finds her parents seated lotus-style on the floor. They're surrounded by weird colored goos in jars and papers covered in charts and graphs.

Shayne stays back a moment and listens to them talk.

MARIAN

You always do this, Ernie. The Hastings' plumbing ghost is a free spirit.

ERNIE

But we've never seen an apparition like this before. If we could just study it --

MARIAN

It's benevolent! We made a promise -- only capture malevolent entities.

This is too much weirdness in one day for Shayne.

She jams her eyes shut and steadies herself with one hand against the wall. She presses the other to her chest, willing her breathing to even out -- a panic attack.

Marian's the first to look up and notice her. She's oblivious to what's going on as evidenced by her wide grin.

MARIAN (CONT'D)

Shayne! Welcome back. We were just about to start dinner. Do you -- ?

SHAYNE

Can't. I've gotta... I'll be back.

Without another word, she leaves. Ernie and Marian look at each other, concerned.

EXT. GRAVEL ROAD - NIGHT

GRAVEL CRUNCHES under the wheels of Shayne's rental car as she parks off on the side of the road.

She kills the ignition, flips the lights off, and gets out. Peepers trill as she flicks on a flashlight and walks into the woods.

EXT. QUARRY - NIGHT

On the other side, she emerges and sees the steep, jagged walls of the quarry.

She approaches the edge rather fearlessly and peers over. Empty beer cans and other trash litter the bottom.

She sits, legs dangling over the side, and closes her eyes. Her breathing steadies. Peace. Until --

A TWIG SNAPS behind her, and in an awesome display of physical prowess, Shayne bolts upright, pulls a hidden handgun from her pullover, and trains it on...

SHAYNE

Flo?!

Flo jams her eyes shut against the light from Shayne's flashlight and immediately throws her hands in the air. Her own FLASHLIGHT CLATTERS to the ground. Along with a SIX PACK.

FLO

*Mein gott!* I surrender!

(beat)

That's the first phrase my parents taught me in English. The second was "Please Don't Kill Me." I ramble when I'm nervous. But also, please don't kill me.

Shayne lowers her weapon and points her flashlight back at the ground. Flo scrambles blindly for her things.

SHAYNE

What are you doing here?

FLO

What does it look like?

Shayne raises her flashlight. The light lands on the six pack in Flo's hand. Shayne sees the label, smiles.

SHAYNE

Rolling Rock? I can't believe you still drink that crap.

FLO

I don't. But whenever I come out here... Force of habit, I guess.

They're silent for a moment. Flo pulls a can from the plastic rings and holds it out to Shayne.

FLO (CONT'D)

Y-You want one? For old times sake?

EXT. QUARRY - LATER

Crushed cans litter the space around Shayne and Flo as they laugh and drink the last two.

FLO

I still can't believe you punched Marcus Solt sophomore year. He showed up to spring formal with a black eye.

SHAYNE

What else was I supposed to do? You had just transferred here, and he made fun of your accent.

FLO

When I told them about it, my parents were ready to host a Bavarian banquet in your honor.

After their laughter subsides, Shayne clears her throat.

SHAYNE

Were you ever able to forgive them? For dragging you here, for making you the town outcast, I mean?

FLO

It... took me a long time to realize that resentment poisons the self, but I got there eventually.

(beat)

Plus, it helped that I wasn't the only outcast.

SHAYNE

I, um... For what it's worth, I'm sorry I never called or reached out.

FLO  
This won't be fixed in a day, but...  
thanks.

INT. SULLIVAN HOME - NIGHT

When Shayne walks into the kitchen, Marian and Ernie are seated at the table, worry apparent on their faces. Silently, Shayne sinks into a seat across from them.

ERNIE  
Is-Is everything alright?

Shayne's normally impeccable defenses dissolve as she meets both of their gazes. Alcohol has further emboldened her.

SHAYNE  
Mom. Dad. I'm... sorry about this morning. And I'm sorry it's been radio silence on my end for the past fourteen years.

MARIAN  
Oh, Shayne. You don't owe us an apology. We're just glad you're home.

On "home," Shayne's resolve breaks. She bats away tears.

SHAYNE  
For so long, I hated the fact that you guys were ghost hunters. It was just... so antithetical to me. I wanted order and predictability and sanity, and so... I left. But now... this case -- I have none of those. I don't know what to do.

Marian reaches over and covers Shayne's folded hands with both of hers. Ernie smiles at her, all love.

ERNIE  
We may not be able to change or fix the past. But is there anything we can do about this work situation?

SHAYNE  
That depends. What do you know about parasitic worms that make their hosts puke their guts out?

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. HOSPITAL - FRONT DESK - DAY

Logan flips through some old copy of Good Housekeeping, not really paying attention, as he leans against the front desk.

The attendant is busy doing a People magazine crossword.

ATTENDANT

Twelve across. Former "Laguna Beach  
and "The Hills" star. Blank "LC"  
Conrad.

LOGAN

(without looking up)  
Lauren.  
(beat, to himself)  
Why do I know that?

As she writes down the answer, Dr. Duncan pushes Bob out of the elevator on a wheelchair. Logan abandons his magazine.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Hey, Dad.  
(to Dr. Duncan)  
How's he holdin' up?

As soon as the wheelchair comes to a stop, Bob scrambles to stand. Logan rushes to his side. Gives him his arm.

BOB

(good humored)  
I'd be better without all this fuss.

DR. DUNCAN

Just hospital policy, Mayor.  
(to Logan)  
Your father is all set to go home.

LOGAN

Do we know what happened?

Like the Nurse, Dr. Duncan's face goes slack. His head tilts at an unnatural angle. In a monotone --

DR. DUNCAN

Food poisoning. All of our routine  
tests came back negative. Vitals were  
normal. Clean bill of health.  
(to Bob)

(MORE)

DR. DUNCAN (CONT'D)  
Maybe lay off the red meat a while. A-  
ha. A-Ha. A-ha.

His laughter comes out mechanical. Logan looks at Dr. Duncan oddly while Bob shakes his hand.

BOB  
(to Logan)  
C'mon. You can buy me lunch on the  
way home.

Dr. Duncan returns to the elevator, while the other two men exit. The attendant tracks their movement. Once they're fully outside, she takes out her cell and makes a call.

ATTENDANT  
(on the phone)  
Yeah, they just left. Timetable's  
changed -- it has to be tonight.

INT. LOGAN'S TRUCK - DAY

While Logan drives, Bob rides passenger. CLASSIC COUNTRY  
MUSIC PLAYS SOFTLY on the RADIO.

LOGAN  
Sure you're holdin' up over there?

BOB  
Relax, son. You're wound up tighter  
than I've ever seen you.  
(beat)  
You sure this doesn't have anything  
to do with Shayne being back?

LOGAN  
(quickly)  
Yes.  
(then)  
I don't wanna talk about it. What I  
want to talk about is the fact that  
food poisoning doesn't fully explain  
the water tower, or --

BOB  
I'm fine! Now, unless you want to  
make me un-fine, you'll buy me lunch  
and forget this whole thing ever  
happened.

LOGAN  
But --



BOB  
Promise me.

Logan starts to protest, but Bob's expression is resolute.

EXT. WATER TOWER - DAY

Shayne paces the length of the police tape before she eyes the cornfield and changes direction.

She peers into the stalks. No movement -- eerily so -- except for the wind carrying through. What is she missing?

She returns to the water tower and crouches to re-examine the goo. Her CELL BUZZES. She looks at the screen, then answers.

SHAYNE  
Cooper. Perfect timing.

COOPER  
What's the latest?

As Shayne looks down at the goo, she sees what looks like shriveled worm pieces. Those weren't there last time.

SHAYNE  
(distracted)  
Uhh... well, the good news is this doesn't look like botulism.

COOPER  
Good? That's great! What is it?

Shayne pulls out a small baggie from her back pocket and collects one of the pieces. She holds it up.

SHAYNE  
I'm, uh... still trying to figure that out. I'll update you as soon as I have something.

She straightens, looks around to make sure she's alone before a coquettish smile breaks out on her face.

SHAYNE (CONT'D)  
Matter of fact I'll tell you over dinner when I get back. Your treat.

COOPER  
Oh-ho! You drive a hard bargain, Sullivan, but... it's a date.

She hangs up, then pumps her fist in the air.

INT. SULLIVAN HOME - DAY

Shayne and her parents sit on the floor surrounded by lab equipment. Ernie looks through a microscope, the specimen from Shayne's baggie on the other end.

ERNIE

Fascinating. And you said this went  
inside a human host?

SHAYNE

That's what the nurse at the hospital  
told Logan and me.

MARIAN

Oh! You reconnected with Logan? How  
is he? He's always so handsome in his  
dealership commercials --

SHAYNE

(quickly)

Nope! No reconnecting of any kind.

(then)

His dad was one of the... hosts, I  
guess you'd call them?

Marian looks like she wants to ask more. Ernie interrupts.

ERNIE

This specimen is covered in some kind  
of psychotropic pheromone. I've never  
seen anything quite like it before.

SHAYNE

Psychotropic? Like --

ERNIE

It can alter or manipulate  
cognitive behavior in others.

MARIAN

Mind control, dear.

Shayne sits with this for a moment. Then --

SHAYNE

That would explain Mayor Fletcher's  
incident at the diner.

(beat)

Oh, God. I was really hoping this  
wouldn't get weird.

While everyone is focused on Shayne, CLOSE ON the microscope  
slide. The worm piece twitches before regenerating into a  
full worm.

It slithers off the stand and toward Marian.

MARIAN  
 (to Shayne)  
 I'll get you some tea.

As she walks toward the kitchen--CRUNCH. Her eyes turn milky white.

EXT. WATER TOWER - NIGHT

A small bonfire blazes at the base, the police tape long since gone.

HOODED FIGURES drift out of the cornfield, all of them chanting. They form a perimeter around the fire.

One of the figures pulls back her hood to reveal the MATRIARCH OF THE MATSON COVEN (70s). She has a horrible scar down the left side of her weathered face.

MATRIARCH  
 Sistren, we gather to honor our  
 forbearer, whose wrongful execution  
 set our coven's path into motion.  
 Margaret Matson could no more change  
 who she was than any of us could stop  
 breathing.  
 (beat)  
 Tonight, on the anniversary of her  
 death, we will ensure her legacy  
 remain eternal. Tonight, the  
 Broodmother must feed.

An unnatural, guttural GURGLE emits from the BASIN of the WATER TOWER, shaking it slightly.

A few streams of goo and worm pieces seep between the wood slats and into the fire. WORM SCREAMS die out as they burn.

MATRIARCH (CONT'D)  
 The time has come to activate the  
 willing.

Another one of the followers pulls back his hood -- it's the Cook from the diner.

Then another -- this one the front desk attendant from the hospital. She turns to the Matriarch and solemnly nods.

ATTENDANT  
 As you wish, Matriarch.

INT. DR. DUNCAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Dr. Duncan sleeps peacefully. Suddenly, he sits up ramrod straight, his eyes rolled back. He ungracefully gets out of bed and lumbers toward the door.

INT. NURSE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The nurse from the hospital is curled up on a couch watching TV. She's balancing a bowl of Doritos and a pathetic looking DOG on her lap.

As her eyes go white, she abruptly stands. The bowl clatters to the ground, and the DOG YELPS at the disturbance. She similarly trudges toward her door.

INT. MAYORAL RESIDENCE - NIGHT

A really nice, but older home. Logan is passed out on the couch, too tired to fully undress.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Empty. A few framed family photos hang on the wall.

Beneath, on top of a chest of drawers, sits a baseball bat on display.

BOB'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Bob sleeps soundly until he, too, stumbles out of bed. He lurches toward the door.

UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He grabs the bat. The display falls apart.

DOWNSTAIRS - CONTINUOUS

The resulting clatter wakes Logan.

LOGAN

Dad?

He gets up, walks toward the stairs, and sees Bob clambering down them. The BAT THUNKS on each step as he drags it behind him.

LOGAN (CONT'D)  
What're you doin' up so late?  
Everything okay?

Bob jerks to a stop. His neck contorts weirdly as he looks up at his son. His eyes are all white.

BOB  
(scary voice)  
WE ARE SUMMONED. I MUST GO.

LOGAN  
You're not goin' anywhere. Why do you  
have my -- ?

Without warning, Bob WHACKS him up side the head with the BAT. Logan crumples in a pile on the ground, out cold.

Bob drops the bat and steps over him.

EXT. EMPTY FIELD - NIGHT

A group of summoned shamble through a moonlit field. The nurse, Dr. Duncan, and Bob lead them.

INT. SULLIVAN HOME - NIGHT

As Shayne grabs her coat, Ernie and Marian look on, eager to dissuade her. Marian looks out of it, eyes unfocused.

ERNIE  
It's the middle of the night! Can't  
this wait until tomorrow?

SHAYNE  
I have to warn Logan. His dad was  
just released today. If that worm's  
still in him --

Before she can finish her thought, Flo bursts in, totally out of breath.

SHAYNE (CONT'D)  
Flo? What are you -- ?

FLO  
I should have put the pieces together  
sooner. Tonight's the --

She finally notices Shayne's parents and stops herself.

FLO (CONT'D)  
Shayne, I have to talk to you...  
about my... period.

SHAYNE  
It's fine, Flo. My parents already  
know about the worms.

FLO  
Oh, thank God.  
(to her parents)  
Sorry for mentioning my menstruation,  
Mr. and Mrs. Sullivan.

SHAYNE  
Look, I've got to run over to  
Logan's. Can you ride and talk?

Flo nods. After they leave, Ernie cleans up his makeshift  
lab. Marian's eyes go blank, and she lumbers toward the door.

ERNIE  
Marian? Where are you going?

MARIAN  
(scary voice)  
OUT.

A concerned beat, then --

ERNIE  
Oh, great! Think you could pick up  
some salt? We're out.

INT. RENTAL CAR - NIGHT

Shayne white knuckles the wheel as she serpentine along a  
long, country back road. Flo hangs on for dear life.

FLO  
Hey, uh, Mario Andretti? Maybe you  
should slow down a bit.

SHAYNE  
Can't. Those worm things? They can  
control whoever they enter into. So  
Logan's dad --

FLO  
-- is in serious trouble. *Schiesse!*

SHAYNE

Please tell me you raced to my house in the middle of the night to tell me this whole mess has nothing to do with that Batson thing?

FLO

Matson Coven. And, unfortunately, it has everything to do with it. So legend has it that as Margaret was dying, she possessed one of her neighbor's cows, promising to haunt them. But the plan backfired.

EXT. WATER TOWER - NIGHT

The hooded figures look on as the Matriarch continues grandstanding.

MATRIARCH

But justice can only be miscarried for so long before mortals interfere. In Margaret's haste to shoulder what should have been a divine burden, she possessed one of her accuser's cows, only to become permanently and irreversibly trapped.

(beat)

As her soul tarries in this obscene purgatory, it is our sacred duty to ensure the sacrifices are made. For it is written that the life of the flesh is in the blood.

INT. RENTAL CAR - NIGHT

Flo's explanation presumably covered the same content as the Matriarch's. Shayne processes it.

SHAYNE

All of that is... horrifying. But how does it -- ?

FLO

Her neighbor's husband earned a living fishing, so using her last vestige of magic, Margaret cursed his supply of bait, which was mostly --

Shayne's eyes grow wide as the pieces click together.

SHAYNE

Worms. So she can bring her food to her.

EXT. WATER TOWER - NIGHT

The summoned -- now including Marian -- emerge from the corn field as the hooded figures continue their ritual.

EXT. MAYORAL RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Shayne and Flo bound up the steps. Shayne pounds on the door.

SHAYNE

Logan! Mr. Fletcher!

No response. Shayne resumes pounding until the DOOR CREAKS open. She looks at Flo, who shrugs. They both enter.

INT. MAYORAL RESIDENCE - NIGHT

Shayne notices Logan's body first. She rushes to his side.

SHAYNE

Logan? C'mon, please wake up!

While she pats his face to try to wake him, he finally stirs. As his eyes flutter open, his hand comes up to rest on hers.

He's still slightly out of it as Shayne helps him sit up.

LOGAN

Sully? What're you -- ?

SHAYNE

Your dad. Where is he? These worms are controlling people, and --

Flo approaches from the kitchen with a glass of water. The two spring apart. Shayne clears her throat, flustered.

Oblivious, Flo helps Logan to his feet and hands him the glass. Shayne looks anywhere but at his naked chest.

He downs the water in a single gulp, then grabs at a flannel draped over the bannister. As he buttons it --

LOGAN

Thanks.



SHAYNE

What happened? Where's your dad?

LOGAN

I... I don't know. Last thing I remember, he was acting all weird. Even swung a bat at me.

(beat)

What's this about the worms now?

FLO

It's a whole, complicated thing. We'll fill you in later. Right now, we've gotta get to the water tower.

LOGAN

Let me just grab --

He rummages through a closet and pulls out a shotgun, pumping it with a single hand. Shayne frowns.

SHAYNE

Maybe it's better if you stay behind. We don't know what we're about to face, and... well, you might be concussed. Plus, your leg --

Logan's expression darkens. He barrels past her.

LOGAN

It's my dad, Shayne. I'm coming.

EXT. WATER TOWER - FIELD - NIGHT

Shayne, Flo, and Logan are crouched low, camouflaged by the corn as they watch the ritual proceedings.

The Matriarch gestures to two of the hooded figures.

MATRIARCH

Release the Broodmother.

Logan looks between the Shayne and Flo.

LOGAN

The hell's a Broodmother?

WATER TOWER - CONTINUOUS

The two lackeys climb the ladder, one after the other, and begin prying the wood slats from the basin. When they clear a large enough section, they pry open the panel behind it.

FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Two jaws drop, eyes wide. Flo retches out of frame.

SHAYNE  
(quietly)  
Holy crap...

WATER TOWER - CONTINUOUS

Reveal the BROODMOTHER. A horrendously bloated, unholy hybrid of bovine and woman with a prominent UDDER.

The goo from earlier secretes from its rotting flesh and seeps into the crevices of its fat pockets. Its arms, too small for the rest of its huge body, wave helplessly.

IT continues to GURGLE while the hooded figures retake their positions. Its eyes are also milky white.

MATRIARCH  
Behold your forbearer!

COVEN  
(in unison)  
Margaret.

The BROODMOTHER BELCHES, sending bits of shriveled worm pieces flying. One hits the Matriarch in the face. Deadpan, she wipes it away.

MATRIARCH  
Bring forth the summoned.

The possessed come forward led by --

FIELD - CONTINUOUS

SHAYNE  
Mom!

She springs forward, but Logan and Flo pull her back.

LOGAN  
Shayne! We have no idea how to stop that... thing. We can't just go in, guns blazing --

Shayne grabs for her concealed handgun.

SHAYNE

That's exactly what I'm going to do.  
Let go of me!

FLO

Do these seem like stable people who  
respond well to firearms?

ATTENDANT (O.S.)

Why don't you ask them yourself.

The three whip around to see the front desk attendant, crazed  
smile gleaming. She launches herself at Shayne.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS

The attendant grasps Shayne's arm.

ATTENDANT

Matriarch! I have three new offerings.

Logan pulls out his shotgun, but the attendant holds up three worms threateningly.

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

Don't make me use these.

She confiscates Logan's shotgun and ushers them along. Shayne finally rips out of the attendant's grip, but the attendant hits her in the back with the shotgun to keep it moving.

Before they emerge from the field, Flo surreptitiously grabs a few ears of corn.

SHAYNE

What, do you need a snack all of a sudden?

FLO

Just trust me. I have a plan.

LOGAN

A good one?

FLO

Ehhh...

(beat)

In German we might call it a *fehler*.

The attendant slams the butt of the confiscated shotgun into the back of Logan's head. He hollers, stumbles.

ATTENDANT

Less talking. Move.

He abides, rubbing the back of his head. Innocently, he checks out Shayne's backside... and notices the grip of her HANDGUN sticking out of her jeans' waistband.

He sidles up to her.

LOGAN

Shayne, look. I want to talk to you about our, uh, relationship.

SHAYNE

Now? You really think now is the best time?

He swallows, then makes a rash decision.

LOGAN

You're right. Terrible time.

SHAYNE

Wh -- ?

He kisses her, running his hand along her waist. Artfully, he tugs her pullover down over the gun.

Shayne's eyes go wide. She barely has time to respond before the attendant wrenches them apart.

ATTENDANT

This ain't Fifty Shades of Maize.  
Keep it in your pants, pervs.

Shayne and Logan determinedly avoid each other's gaze as they continue walking. Flo looks delighted.

EXT. WATER TOWER - CONTINUOUS

As they approach the base of the water tower, Shayne catches sight of Marian --

SHAYNE

Mom!

-- but she doesn't respond. Doesn't even look in her direction. In fact, all the summoned have an empty, slack jawed countenance.

The hooded figures chant in hushed tones. The Matriarch addresses the group once more.

MATRIARCH

Bring forth the first sacrifice!

Two hooded figures grab Dr. Duncan's arms and drag him to the base of the ladder. He goes willingly, automatically ascending it.

Shayne turns to Logan and Flo.

SHAYNE

(sotto)

We have to do something! We can't  
just --

The BROODMOTHER BELCHES, then GAGS. The three watch in horror as a stream of goo exits its mouth and completely covers Dr. Duncan. Flo dry heaves.

He finally reaches the top. His neck cranes back.

DR. DUNCAN

(monotone)

I submit myself freely to --

Without warning, the Broodmother's torso stretches out like putty. It lurches forward and unhinges its jaw, mouth wide.

One minute Dr. Duncan is there, the next he's completely gone, swallowed whole.

Collectively, the coven has no reaction, but Logan and Flo freak out.

LOGAN

WHOA!

FLO

*Heilige Schiesse!*

Shayne can't even speak. She just mouths incoherently.

MATRIARCH

We will avenge our fallen sister.  
Tonight, Fletcher blood will spill.

Logan's gaze snaps over to Bob as two hooded figures drag him forward. Logan starts to rush toward his dad, but Shayne and Flo restrain him.

SHAYNE

(sotto)

Logan, stop!

LOGAN

(sotto)

Let go of me! Ryder, where the hell's  
that plan of yours?

FLO

(sotto)

Not yet.

ATTENDANT (O.S.)

Hey!

She comes up behind Logan and hits him on the back of the head again. This time, he grunts and falls to his knees.

ATTENDANT (CONT'D)

Matriarch, the blood of Fletcher flows through his veins. He should have joined his father, but... well, he picked the vegetarian option at Starrett's.

MATRIARCH

Ah, yes. The progeny.

The Matriarch gestures for two more hooded figures to come for Logan.

FLO

No! Logan!

MATRIARCH

Prepare the mayor. And his son.

The hooded figures bring Bob to the base of the ladder. Logan tries to break free as the hooded figures drag him toward the water tower.

Shayne seethes. All in one motion, she puts the attendant in a headlock and holds her at gunpoint.

SHAYNE

Let everybody go, or I shoot!

All goes quiet. Tension tangible. Until the Matriarch laughs.

MATRIARCH

Our coven has faced unimaginable horrors over the centuries. Why would we fear you?

She holds a hand out toward Shayne. The attendant goes rigid in her arms, then begins to seize. Her eyes turn pure black as she froths at the mouth. Finally, she goes still.

Shayne immediately drops her, stunned.

SHAYNE

How-How could you -- ?

MATRIARCH

(to the rest of the coven)  
Make sure they don't escape.

The hooded figures resume chanting in unison.

As they do, a blueish forcefield surrounds Shayne and Flo, keeping them in place. They try to break free unsuccessfully.

MATRIARCH (CONT'D)  
Tonight you will die for your  
ancestors' sins. Send the virile one  
first.

The hooded figures release Logan at the base of the ladder. He grapples with them, when --

FLO (O.S.)  
Logan! Catch!

Logan stops struggling long enough to see two ears of corn flying at him. He catches them, then looks up at Flo.

Somehow, she has escaped the magical forcefield.

LOGAN  
What in the actual hell am I supposed  
to -- ?

The BROODMOTHER WAILS and swallows him in one go.

SHAYNE  
NO!

Immobile, her eyes stay on the spot where he stood, devastation clear on her face. The Matriarch laughs cruelly.

MATRIARCH  
Now, the Mayor.

Flo scrambles to pick up the attendant's abandoned shotgun as Bob begins climbing the ladder.

After only a few rungs, the BROODMOTHER GURGLES. Its whole body ripples, then -- BOOM. It explodes.

Guts and goo go everywhere, dousing everyone. Absolutely drenched, the Matriarch falls to her knees and wails.

MATRIARCH (CONT'D)  
Margaret!

The summoned collapse to the ground. Their worms slither out of them. As soon as they vacate their hosts, THEY shrivel up and CRACKLE into oblivion.

The forcefield dissipates and Shayne falls to the ground.

Shotgun in hand, Flo pumps it and fires into the air. The coven turns to look at her.



FLO  
 If any of you show your faces in  
 Fletcher's Pass again, you'll have to  
 deal with the three of us.

The coven all scramble away into the cornfield. The Matriarch starts to follow, but Flo nudges her with the shotgun.

FLO (CONT'D)  
 Not you. You have a special cell  
 waiting for you.

Shayne finally finds her footing and approaches Flo. She's on the verge of tears.

SHAYNE  
 You said three, but Logan --

FLO  
 Funny thing about cows. They're über  
 allergic to corn.

She follows Flo's gaze to the top of the water tower. Sure enough, Logan's still standing, shivering and covered in Broodmother innards.

LOGAN  
 I'm gonna need the longest shower.  
 (beat)  
 And... probably a bidet.

Shayne and Flo smile at each other, relieved.

EXT. SHERIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

A beautiful, sunny day. Logan storms out of the building.

Shayne and Flo look up from their phones. He joins them on their bench, fuming.

LOGAN  
 They won't book her!

SHAYNE  
 That's ridiculous. They have a civic  
 duty to -- !

LOGAN  
 None of the people possessed by worms  
 --

He dry heaves and shudders. Flo pats his back reassuringly.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

None of them recall anything. They  
can't book her on hearsay, so...

The three look up to see the Matriarch leave the Sheriff's  
station. In daylight, she's dressed like a sweet, old woman.

When she sees them, her smile turns victorious. She waves and  
then drives off in her station wagon.

SHAYNE

She can't just... get away with this!

LOGAN

What are we gonna do, huh? We got no  
witnesses, besides us three.

They're silent for a moment, ruminating. Finally, Flo speaks.

FLO

We keep an eye on them ourselves.  
Like Scooby Doo, or Peter Binsfield.

SHAYNE

Huh?

FLO

He was a German theologian with a  
reputation for witch hunting -- not  
important. What is important is we  
help protect Fletcher's Pass.

Decisively, she stands and salutes them.

FLO (CONT'D)

I've got some research to do. I'll  
check in with you guys later.

Her departure leaves Shayne and Logan alone. They realize it  
at about the same time, smiling awkwardly at each other  
before looking away all together.

Shayne wipes her hands off on her pants.

SHAYNE

Hey, so... we should probably talk.  
About last night...

LOGAN

Shayne, I swear to you, if I have to  
even think the word "worm" one more  
time --

SHAYNE  
About how you kissed me.

LOGAN  
(rambling)  
Right. That. Of course that's what  
you want to talk about. Duh. Idiot.  
(beat, recalibrating)  
Listen, I, uh...

LOGAN (CONT'D)	SHAYNE
I'm sorry for not giving you	(abruptly)
any advance warning.	I have a boyfriend.

Her words hang between them uncomfortably. Logan's expression is inscrutable as he takes it in. He clears his throat.

LOGAN (CONT'D)  
Yeah, your, um -- your pistol grip  
was stickin' out, and I needed to act  
quick. So...

SHAYNE  
Oh. Right. Of course.  
(beat)  
Thanks.

Her face goes red. He stands suddenly.

LOGAN  
Have a safe flight back to D.C.

INT. RENTAL CAR - DAY

Shayne sits in the parked car outside the airport car rental place. Her thumbs rapidly tap against the wheel.

Decision made, she grabs her bags, opens the door, places one foot on the pavement before--

SHAYNE  
Damn it...

She retracts back into the car and slams the door shut.

She grabs her cell and taps a few times. "CALLING COOPER" pops up on the car's multimedia screen. His voice filtrates through the car's bluetooth.

COOPER  
There she is. The pride and joy of  
the FDA. What's the latest?

SHAYNE

Well, I was right. It wasn't botulism.

COOPER

So what was it?

SHAYNE

Uh... Mad Cow Disease.

COOPER

MCD? Isn't that something only cows can get?

SHAYNE

Normally, yes, but... this particular strain evolved -- it's incredibly convoluted. I'll provide greater detail in my report.

COOPER

Nicely done, Shayne. My bosses will be happy, which means I'm happy.

(beat)

When do you get into DCA? I can send a car, and we'll debrief over dinner. There's this new place at the Wharf --

Shayne wants nothing more than to accept. But her conscience kicks in. She lets her forehead drop to the steering wheel.

SHAYNE

About that... The case may be over, but I get the sense that this Mad Cow Disease situation runs deeper than expected. I think... I think I should stick around just to keep tabs on any major fallout.

COOPER

That's a bummer, but... I'd be lying if I said we weren't looking for a mid-Atlantic field rep. Any interest?

Shayne bangs her head against the wheel a couple times for good measure.

SHAYNE

When can I start?

END OF ACT FIVE

TAG

INT. FLO'S HOUSE - BASEMENT

Flo sets up for another podcast. A CHIRP distracts her. She looks over her shoulder and sees a MOUSE.

FLO  
*Gott im Himmel!*

Before the mouse can move, Flo holds her hands out toward it. The same blue forcefield from earlier captures it. She picks up the mouse and places it just outside the door.

She moves her hand again. This time, the forcefield dissipates. The mouse scurries away.

FLO (CONT'D)  
Be free, Fievel.

END

FRIEND FICTION

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FADE IN:

EXT. NEW YORK HARBOR - DAY

A cargo ship strains against its moorings tied to a dock overlooking the East River. The Brooklyn Bridge is visible in the distance.

Forklifts and cranes sit abandoned between rows of muted, technicolor shipping containers. A stray piece of police tape blows past.

We follow it to the other end of the dock where there's a flurry of law enforcement activity. Officials in state trooper uniforms and FBI jackets buzz about.

Two ATF AGENTS, TROUT (30s, male) and CARMICHAEL (30s, female), join the fray. They look like rockstars in comparison to the other officials.

MALE ATF AGENT

The cavalry has arrived.

FEMALE ATF AGENT

What's our situation, Captain?

The POLICE CAPTAIN (50s, great mustache) looks over and acknowledges them with a somber head nod. Beside him, a crouched BOMB DISPOSAL OFFICER delicately pokes at a device.

POLICE CAPTAIN

Agents Trout, Carmichael.

(beat)

It's worse than we thought. The terrorists deposited an explosive device, and it's set to explode in two minutes. If we don't defuse this, the entire city of New York will be reduced to rubble.

(to Male Agent)

Trout, you're our only hope.

Agent Trout stands for a moment, hands on his hips. An obviously fake breeze tussles his jacket and hair just so.

AGENT TROUT

Let's do this.

Before he can move, Agent Carmichael grabs his arm --

AGENT CARMICHAEL

Agent Trout -- Timothy. Just... be careful.

He winks at her.

AGENT TROUT  
I never am. Why start now?

The bomb disposal officer steps aside, allowing Agent Trout to get into position. There's only a minute left on the countdown.

He wipes his brow, then removes a back panel on the device. Behind it, a tangled mess of colored wires. The other officials watch as he pulls out a pair of pliers.

He exhales slowly, then cuts a green wire.

All is still. The clock stops --

But before anyone can celebrate, the countdown resumes, careening toward zero at the speed of light.

AGENT TROUT (CONT'D)  
(sharp inhale)  
... Oooh.

As if by magic, a pair of GLASSES APPEARS on the Police Captain's face with a POP. He removes them dramatically.

POLICE CAPTAIN  
My God...

He gestures for the Bomb Disposal Unit. A group of men in bomb suits crowd around the device, hurriedly working.

Agent Trout steps away from the chaos and approaches Agent Carmichael. He takes her hands in his.

AGENT TROUT  
Agent Carmichael -- Olivia. I know  
this isn't a great time --

BOMB DISPOSAL OFFICER (O.S.)  
There's a bomb about to destroy New  
York City -- It's objectively a very  
bad time.

AGENT TROUT  
(ignores him)  
-- but I can't keep it to myself  
anymore. I'm in love with you.

AGENT CARMICHAEL  
Agent Trout...



AGENT TROUT  
We might die --

BOMB DISPOSAL OFFICER (O.S.)  
-- Oh, we're definitely gonna die!

His words set off a chain reaction, as other responders at the scene run away, screaming for their lives. He joins them.

An OFFICER remains a little too close to the device.

AGENT TROUT  
-- but I needed you to know.

AGENT CARMICHAEL  
Timothy, I've loved you since second  
period geometry class sophomore year.  
It's only ever been you.

Without delay, they share a grotesquely romantic kiss as the bomb behind them explodes. A black and orange mushroom cloud fills the screen behind the two agents.

We watch as the Officer is fully engulfed in flames -- his face melting a la *Raiders of the Lost Ark*.

VOICE (V.O.) (PRE-LAP)  
Timothy... Timothy!

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PENNSYLVANIA DMV - DAY

TIMOTHY TROUT (30s, cute in a non-threatening Gap ad kind of way) -- the same guy as the ATF agent -- sits in a cubicle at a cluttered desk. A nearby sign reads "PENNSYLVANIA DMV."

Muffled YELLING comes in from the PHONE cradled in his neck as he furiously scribbles away in a notebook.

DETAIL: Written in longhand, we see Agent Carmichael's last line of dialogue from the previous scene.

TIMOTHY  
(into phone)  
Uh-huh. A junior licensed driver can  
only drive alone between the hours of  
11 P.M. and 5 A.M. if they have a  
notarized affidavit confirming their  
work schedule.

Timothy's supervisor, CODY (20s, big douche energy, hipster goatee), continues calling him. He's the face-melting officer.

CODY

Timothy!

Startled, he shoves the notebook out of sight and puts the phone call on mute. Cody takes in his disheveled appearance.

CODY (CONT'D)

You okay, man? You look worse than usual.

TIMOTHY

Yeah, I'm -- fine. Sorry, I've got a call. Did you need something?

CODY

Tonight. You and me. The Frizz Kids ultimate frisbee scrimmage.

TIMOTHY

Uhh... wow, I would, but there's this short story contest deadline coming up. I have to work on my submission.

CODY

Oh, nice! I'm liking this side of you, Trout. All motivated and shit. I've said it before -- this is the perfect job to practice your writing.

TIMOTHY

By... transcribing customer complaints for the Department of Motor Vehicles?

CODY

Absolutely. Just gotta apply yourself, man. You could be in the communications department in no time.

Timothy glances at GLADYS (50s, overweight) one cubicle over in the communications department.

Covertly, she pours a flask into a big gulp cup. When she notices him staring, she holds the cup up in a "cheers" gesture before chugging its contents.

INT. PARKING GARAGE - EVENING

Timothy pushes a button on his keys. HIS CAR, totally unremarkable, BEEPS in response. He gets in.

INT. TIMOTHY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

He sits behind the wheel, stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic. A cacophony of CAR HORNS is drowned out by the dulcet tones of Motley Crüe (or whatever band doesn't cost a fortune).

EXT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

He pulls into the drive-in lane.

INT. TIMOTHY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

At the window, a PIMPLY FACED TEEN turns to hand Timothy his food. When the teen sees who it is, his face lights up.

PIMPLY FACED TEEN

Oh, hey, Timothy! Let's see--we've got your usual, and I added two extra sauce packets, just like you like.

TIMOTHY

(sheepish)

I... thanks.

He takes the food and pulls forward. CLOSE ON the center console. It's full of identical sauce packets and napkins.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Pastel decorations and a shiny banner that reads "FUTURE MRS. COMSTOCK" hang on the walls. Girls in day dresses fill the room, sipping mimosas and socializing.

Timothy makes his way through such a throng. On the other side, he spots his younger sister, CAMERON (late 20s, girl next door), who's wearing a "BRIDE TO BE" SASH.

He raises his drink to her. She gives a small wave in return.

Cameron's fiancé, ADAM (30s, New England prep aesthetic) beelines for Timothy, a tray of tiny sandwiches in hand.

ADAM

Contrary to popular belief,  
Pennsylvania doesn't have any brothel  
laws prohibiting more than six women  
from living under the same roof --

TIMOTHY

(sarcastic)

Oh, good. That's been a huge concern.

ADAM

-- but this is definitely a violation  
of the county's fire code. All the  
synthetic fibers in these dresses?  
All that shiny lingerie? This whole  
place. A tinder box.

TIMOTHY

Here. Law school has clearly broken  
you. Give me --

He takes the sandwich tray from him.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Seriously, Adam, I got this. Go watch  
the game. Last I read, Phils were up  
by two.

Adam shoots him prayer hands as he bolts out of there.

REFRESHMENT TABLE - CONTINUOUS

Timothy sets the tray down just as HEMA LAGHARI (early 30s,  
Indian) piles a plate high with various foods.

As she eyes the spread strategically, he notices how pretty  
she is -- even with the cookie dangling out of her mouth to  
save room on the plate.

He tries to find an in when he remembers the sandwich tray.  
Standing taller, he clears his throat and points to it.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Excuse me, do you want one of these?

She looks mildly annoyed until she sees what he's offering.

HEMA

(muffled)

Oh, score!

She adds a few to her plate. Then, without a second thought,  
she shoves the cookie into her dress pocket and pops another  
sandwich into her mouth.

Only then does she actually notice him, mid-chew, and--oh no, he's cute. She tries to swallow quickly and retain her dignity, but the sandwich takes longer to chew than expected.

HEMA (CONT'D)  
(food in mouth)  
This is really embarrassing.

TIMOTHY  
(amused)  
What?

Finally, she swallows. Shoves her hands in her pockets.

HEMA  
Sorry -- totally not the dignified behavior of the maid of honor.

TIMOTHY  
Do we have you to thank for putting this together?

HEMA  
No. I mean, I tried. But I wanted to put up a "Future and Present Ms. Trout" banner because a wedding shouldn't strip you of your fundamental identity because of some archaic, patriarchal --  
(beat, reining it back in)  
-- but I let Adam's mom take over. Because they have tiny crab cake money. I've got overworked-resident-slash-side-hustle-on-Etsy money.

TIMOTHY  
Hard to argue with that.  
(beat)  
Wait, you're a resident? Do you work with Cameron?

HEMA  
I do. Sorry, I'm Hema. You must be --

TIMOTHY  
Her older brother, Timothy.

Recognition. Off their smiles:

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - LIVING ROOM - LATER

The shower has died down, with only a few people left mingling. Adam, Cameron, Timothy, and Hema are huddled on the couch, mid discussion.

CAMERON

Oh, Tim, by the way -- did you get Mom's text?

TIMOTHY

Uh-huh. Dad's new girlfriend posted a vacation selfie of them on Facebook and hashtagged it "Only Couple Things." Now, Mom refuses to get together for Mother's Day.

CAMERON

Of course she does.

Sensing her frustration, Adam briefly glances up from his law textbook and gallantly pivots the conversation.

ADAM

(to Timothy)

How's your submission coming? For that short story competition?

HEMA

Oh, way cool. You write?

TIMOTHY

Yeah. And, uh... I'd rather not get into it, Adam.

CAMERON

It's not even started, is it?

TIMOTHY

Uhhh, no... not even started.

Adam and Cameron shake their heads knowingly. Hema looks between the two, then narrows her gaze on Timothy.

HEMA

Why haven't you completed it?

TIMOTHY

Oh, it's really not worth getting --

CAMERON

Olivia.

ADAM

Olivia.

Hema looks even more confused.

HEMA  
I don't get it. Who's Olivia?

INT. HIGH SCHOOL - DAY - FLASHBACK

SUPER: "2006"

A younger Timothy (18) stands in the cafeteria, surrounded by a bunch of nerdy boys in graphic tees and thick glasses.

He's shorter and chubbier than present with awful posture.

CAMERON (V.O.)  
Back in high school, Timothy was  
obsessed --

ADAM (V.O.)  
Obsessed? Cam, you make him sound  
like a serial killer.

HEMA (V.O.)  
Oh, God, did he murder a string of  
teenage girls?

TIMOTHY (V.O.)  
No! And thank you, Adam!

CAMERON (V.O.)  
Fine, he was in love with Olivia  
Carmichael, the prettiest, most  
popular girl at school.

Across the way is OLIVIA CARMICHAEL (17), who is seated in a mix of other cheerleaders and football players.

Timothy looks on, totally smitten, as she throws her head back and laughs. His own friends nudge him forward.

CAMERON (V.O.)  
Senior year, he got it in his head  
that he was going to ask her to prom.

HEMA (V.O.)  
(gasps)  
No!

TIMOTHY (V.O.)  
Please stop.

ADAM (V.O.)  
Way worse. So, his friends finally  
convince him this is a good plan, and  
when he finally works up the nerve --

Timothy is right in range of Olivia, but she's oblivious. Just as he calls out her name, his nerd friends grab his pants and pull them down.

Olivia still doesn't notice him, but the rest of her group does. They point and mercilessly laugh at him.

Frozen in place, Timothy watches as the quarterback drapes his arm around Olivia and hands her a corsage.

Heartbroken, Timothy tries to hop away, pants down around his ankles. But he trips and face plants in front of everyone.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - LIVING ROOM - PRESENT

Hema sits there, stunned.

HEMA

That's...

Timothy's head is burrowed firmly in his hands.

TIMOTHY

The most humiliating thing you've ever heard? Yeah, it is.

HEMA

No, the saddest.

TIMOTHY

Oh, God...

CAMERON

Hey, now. It's no sadder than running an Etsy account for Chris Pine-as-Captain Kirk body pillows.

HEMA

Traitor! Don't make my support of the emerging gig economy weird.

(beat)

Hold up. I still don't get it. What does Olivia have to do with your submission? ... Like, are you dating?

TIMOTHY

No! I'm definitely single. I just --

ADAM

(oblivious)

He just never got over her.

(MORE)



ADAM (CONT'D)

Which is why instead of any finished writing, he has the esteemed title of her top tier Instagram stalker --

TIMOTHY

Follower! He means follower.

ADAM

317 likes a day isn't a follower, Tim. That's a stalker.

Before Hema can say anything else, her PHONE BUZZES. She glances down at it, and turns to everyone, apologetic.

HEMA

I'm on call. Sorry, guys.

She gets up to hug Cameron and Adam.

HEMA (CONT'D)

Thank you so much for letting me be a part of this. I love you both.

When Timothy stands, there's some deliberation on how they should leave things. They settle on a weirdly formal handshake.

HEMA (CONT'D)

I hope you finish that story. I'd love to read it when you do.

TIMOTHY

Thanks. I'll definitely try. Really nice meeting you.

They all watch her leave. When the door closes behind her, Timothy turns on Cameron and Adam.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Thanks for that, guys.

CAMERON

She would have found out eventually. It's good to air everything out now because I'm going to need all hands on deck for wedding preparations.

TIMOTHY

As your loving and exceedingly gracious brother, I will overlook this affront to my dignity and offer whatever help I can.

CAMERON  
That's the spirit!

ADAM  
And speaking of weddings --

Adam gives Cameron a significant look. She deflates a bit, but soon rebounds with resolve and nods.

CAMERON  
Tim, you know we love having you as a roommate, right?

TIMOTHY  
(suspiciously)  
Yeah... Adam was just saying the same thing yesterday.  
(beat)  
Is something wrong, or... ?

ADAM  
No, nothing's wrong. But we're going to be married, and there's a chance we could start a family soon.

CAMERON  
Which would mean that we're going to need more space.

TIMOTHY  
What, like a remodel or something?  
I'm down. I just binge watched a "Fixer Upper" marathon this weekend --

ADAM  
No, we -- we want you to move out.

TIMOTHY  
You're kicking me out?

Yes.

ADAM

CAMERON  
Not so much "kicking" as "encouraging" you to find your own space and establish a life separate from ours.

Timothy sinks back into the couch, flabbergasted.

TIMOTHY  
I can't believe you guys are kicking me out.

ADAM

You're 31. Of course we're kicking --

CAMERON

Encouraging --

ADAM

-- "encouraging" you out.

CAMERON

I love you, Tim. You know that. But I think finding a space of your own will be good for you. You can't keep burrowing away in Olivia. Otherwise, you'll miss out on what you have waiting for you here in reality.

Her words hit him like a freight train. Off his look:

INT. CAMERON'S APARTMENT - TIMOTHY'S ROOM - LATER

Timothy's room is about what you'd expect from someone who still lives with his sister. There are framed movie posters lining the walls, and other collectibles on shelves.

In PJs now, he sits at his desk and pulls out his notebook.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. SOUTHERN PLANTATION - NIGHT

1860s Virginia -- Timothy, now dressed in a Union soldier uniform and period appropriate facial hair, carries a bundle as he makes his way up the steps of a regal plantation home.

He knocks before the door swings open. Olivia, now dressed in southern finery, stares at him agape.

OLIVIA

Sir, I assure you. We want no more war-inspired treachery in this household, you hear? My husband lost his life to this damnable war.

She goes to close the door on him, but he holds out a hand.

TIMOTHY

Please, ma'am. Have pity on a lowly soldier. My sister --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. CAMERON'S APARTMENT - TIMOTHY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Timothy erases a section of his writing.

CUT BACK TO:

EXT. SOUTHERN PLANTATION - NIGHT

Timothy continues speaking --

TIMOTHY  
-- my overbearing commanding officer,  
uh... Hema --

As if by magic, HEMA (dressed as his commanding officer, mustache and all) POPS in beside him, waves, then POPS away.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)  
-- forcibly removed me from my  
barracks, and now I've nowhere to go.

OLIVIA  
You have my sympathy, Soldier, but  
surely you must know the cost of  
fraternization between a Union man  
like yourself, and me, an emotionally  
vulnerable war widow of the  
Confederacy.

As Timothy weighs his actions, we see his supervisor, Cody, being gruesomely stabbed to death with bayonets by both Union and Confederate soldiers in the background.

While Cody's body is being dragged away, Timothy responds --

TIMOTHY  
I would never dare to encroach upon  
your kindness, ma'am, but perhaps --  
Perhaps we can jointly benefit in  
alleviating our burdens through a  
shared yoke.

OLIVIA  
By "yoke," surely you mean my four  
poster bed?

TIMOTHY  
I do indeed, ma'am.

INT. PENNSYLVANIA DMV - DAY

Back at work. Timothy looks miserable as he listens to Gladys explain her job.

GLADYS

Next month it'll be thirty years with PennDOT. Wasn't until last year, though, that they put me in charge of communications. Even got my own sign.

She points to a very sad looking hand written sign that says "COMMUNICATIONS ASSISTANT" in Sharpie.

GLADYS (CONT'D)

Well, I'll get my own sign. This is a temporary placeholder until the permanent one shows. Something about a strike in the Chinese factory.

TIMOTHY

Aren't you the only one in the department, though?

GLADYS

Yeah.

TIMOTHY

So why are you the assistant?

Instead of answering, Gladys takes a long, hard sip from her Big Gulp.

EXT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DAY

Timothy drives into the drive-in lane.

INT. TIMOTHY'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

The same teen from before greets him with enthusiasm.

PIMPLY FACED TEEN

Hi, Timothy! Here ya' go!

TIMOTHY

Thanks.

(beat)

Hey, do you, uh... ever get the sense that your life is going nowhere?

TEEN

Not really? I mean, I'm only 17.

(beat)

I guess if I was old -- like, 29, or something, and working the same job then, yeah. Absolutely.

Timothy gives him a pained smile before driving away.

INT. CAMERON'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

While Timothy is splayed out on the couch, eating and watching a baseball game, Cameron makes dinner.

She glances over at Timothy a moment before returning to her food. She shoots for casual, but hits pestering instead.

CAMERON

So... any luck finding a new place?

TIMOTHY

Yeah, I reached out to a few people on Craigslist.

CAMERON

And?

TIMOTHY

Uh, well --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

TIMOTHY'S POV

We see ROOMMATE #1 (30s, Filipino), who is well dressed and looks totally normal.

ROOMMATE #1

I'm really low-key. As long as there's mutual respect, we're good.

TIMOTHY

I completely agree.

ROOMMATE #1

I just have a few rules.

TIMOTHY

Oh, sure, that's --

Roommate #1 unfurls a list so long, it rolls out of frame.

ROOMMATE #1

First, I hate olives. If I even sense a hint of them, I will have a full-on meltdown. Second, I have a very strict bedtime of 6:30pm every night. I need absolute darkness dead silence. Otherwise, I can't sleep.

TIMOTHY

(quietly)

Ohhh...

ROOMMATE #1

(ignoring him)

-- and I believe in a communal refrigerator. What you bought, I have every right to consume.

(beat)

Unless it's olives.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. COUNTY COURTHOUSE - DAY

Timothy walks in, looking uncomfortable. ROOMMATE #2 (50s, stout) sits with his hands between his legs. He's dressed sloppily, with a loud tie and ill-fitted suit.

ROOMMATE #2

Timothy! This is gonna be great. Just two confirmed bachelors chasing skirts on the side!

TIMOTHY

Uh, sure -- hey, this is a... real weird place to meet, man.

ROOMMATE #2

No, you'd think that, but actually --

He leers after a WOMAN who walks past. She's clearly upset, dabbing at her eyes.

ROOMMATE #2 (CONT'D)

-- This is the best place to meet women. Most of them are here for small claims stuff. Divorce, unpaid alimony, y'know?

A PAROLE OFFICER approaches the roommate.

PAROLE OFFICER  
You're up. Let's go.

He stands, revealing a pair of handcuffs around his wrists.  
As he's being led away --

ROOMMATE #2  
I swear, I'm going to make my parole.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

The same coffee shop from before. This time, Timothy sits across from ROOMMATE #3 (30s, female). She's dressed, head to toe, as a mime -- makeup and all.

Silence, then --

TIMOTHY  
So... do you -- ?

She holds a gloved finger to her mouth. Then, she mimes a noose, puts it over her head, and pulls. She lets her tongue hang out, and when she closes her eyes, there's a black 'X' on each eyelid.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)  
(under breath)  
... okay.

As he gets up and leaves, she points at him and mimes a belly laugh.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. CAMERON'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Cameron's curled up on the other side of the couch, her plate in her hands. She looks pained.

CAMERON  
They couldn't have all been that bad.

TIMOTHY  
Oh, no, Cam, they could. And they definitely were.

CAMERON  
It's been a month. You must have seen at least one normal one.



Timothy hesitates. He really didn't want it to come to this.

TIMOTHY  
Well, there was one...

Off her look, he grabs his laptop from his stashed messenger bag. He flips it open and types a moment.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)  
Ah, here we go.

INSERT - LAPTOP SCREEN

A Craigslist ad for someone by the name of KEVIN KANE with the heading "ISO: ROOMIE LOOKING FOR A BROME SWEET BROME." From the few visible pictures, his place looks incredible.

BACK TO SCENE

CAMERON  
This looks totally normal! What's wrong with...  
(reading)  
Kevin Kane?

TIMOTHY  
Oh, come on! Under likes, he just wrote "proper squat technique and emotional honesty."

CAMERON  
Okay, kind of... off. But! With a place like that, what does it matter?

TIMOTHY  
I don't know...

CAMERON  
Timothy. I say this as someone who really doesn't want her older brother around on her wedding night --

TIMOTHY  
-- Eww.

CAMERON  
-- please reach out to this guy.

He balks, then resignedly nods. She beams.

EXT. CORNER CAFE - DAY

A few tables with umbrellas are scattered on the sidewalk.

Timothy sits across from KEVIN KANE (36), a guy with a jacked bod and a jacked emotional quotient. He's wearing professional running clothes and a sweatband around his head.

A few girls make eyes at him as they pass, but he's too engrossed in his conversation with Timothy to take notice.

KEVIN

-- I'm gonna be real with you, Tim. I got divorced two years ago, training for my 15th marathon isn't going as well as I'd like, and Hallmark hasn't released their Christmas movie schedule yet, which is -- frankly -- a real bummer, bro.

TIMOTHY

Oh, uh --

KEVIN

Listen, man. I like you. I think this is the beginning of a beautiful bro-relationship.

(then, serious)

But I never do anything without explicit consent -- whether romantically or in roommate negotiations. So what do you think? You ready for this or nah?

Timothy hesitates, before sitting up taller.

TIMOTHY

Uh, yeah.

(then, more firmly)

Yes. I'm in.

KEVIN

Noooooice! Gimme some skin!

Timothy reservedly slaps him five. The other patrons look on, completely weirded out by the display.

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - DAY

A tastefully decorated, but distinctly male space.

Hints of Kevin are visible -- a mountain bike, marathon medals hanging on the wall, and a framed wedding photo that's been ripped in half, with only the Kevin portion remaining.

Timothy, Cameron, Adam, and Hema file inside, carrying an array of different sized boxes. While Cameron and Adam walk further into the house, Hema struggles with her box.

Timothy notices and approaches her.

TIMOTHY

Thanks again for the help. Here,  
lemme --

HEMA

Oh, um... thanks.

They smile warmly at each other for a little too long. Then --

HEMA (CONT'D)

So, uh, do you just want to -- ?

TIMOTHY

Oh! Uh, just set it here --

HEMA

What, like on your shoulder, or -- ?

TIMOTHY

Yeah, that should work. Here --

Timothy stands to his full height, extra box in tow. He strains under the added weight, but he looks pretty damn proud of himself as he stands with both boxes.

Hema looks kind of impressed until --

Kevin lumbers into frame, hunched over, with Timothy's mattress strapped to his back. It's an effort, but he tackles taking it up the stairs all by himself.

As he does so, Timothy watches, deflating with each step he takes. Hema's jaw drops.

KEVIN

Go ahead and... make yourselves... at  
home. Dub T and Dub K's casa... is  
your casa.

TIMOTHY

Cool. Thanks, Kevin.

As Kevin clears the second floor, Timothy hobbles over to the coffee table to set the boxes down.

ADAM

Dub T? What the hell is that?

Timothy turns to see Adam holding a large box with a law textbook perched precariously on top. Timothy takes the box from him. Adam snatches the textbook.

TIMOTHY

Timothy Trout, Kevin Kane -- both have double letters. So Kevin coined Dub -- short for double -- 'T' and Dub 'K'.

Behind them, Hema finally has a moment to take in the rest of the home.

HEMA

Is this MTV's "Cribs", or what? This house is amazing. What does Kevin do?

TIMOTHY

I... I actually have no idea.

HEMA

Maybe the better question is who is Kevin doing to snag such a sweet --

Before she can finish, Kevin walks down the steps. He lifts the bottom of his shirt to wipe his face and exposes his super ripped stomach in the process.

Hema stares, her words quickly evaporating.

HEMA (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Whoa...

Timothy looks between the two and frowns. Sensing some kind of weirdness, Cameron steps in.

CAMERON

So... Kevin, thank you so much for helping with this move.

KEVIN

Are you kidding me? Happy to do so. I missed arms this week, so Dub T's really helping me out.

Timothy shakes off whatever weirdness from before. He tries on Kevin's new vernacular for size.

TIMOTHY

That's what... bros do.

KEVIN

Exactly! Hey, why don't you all stick around for supper? I'll grill up some brats -- it'll be a christening 'cue.

No one else even gets a chance to respond.

HEMA

YES!

EXT. KEVIN'S PLACE - BACKYARD - NIGHT

As Kevin mans the grill, the other four sit at a table on the deck. They all look exhausted, but content. While Hema's in the middle of a story, Timothy covertly checks his phone.

HEMA

-- My parents are, like, way old school. They wanted to set me up with some handsome nerd who teaches robotics at the University of Delhi. But as a product of Norah Ephron, I wasn't about that. I wanted to practice medicine --

INSERT - PHONE SCREEN

A quick scroll down reveals pictures of Olivia's Instagram page, the same woman as the ATF agent and war widow. Timothy stops on her newest photo: a "candid" of Olivia sleeping in full makeup captioned "GOOD MORNING SUNSHINE 🌞🌻🌺 "

Timothy taps on the screen to give it a like.

HEMA (O.S.) (CONT'D)

-- And if by some miracle of Kāma the American dating hellscape actually works out, I want to marry for love. A notion my parents deemed so uncool that they haven't spoken to me in three years.

KEVIN (O.S.)

Brutal. After my divorce, my folks took out an ad in our hometown paper announcing their decision to "consciously disown" me because they liked my ex so much, so I feel you.  
(beat, smooth)  
But you're not totally opposed to dating, right?

BACK TO SCENE

That's enough to get Timothy's attention. He pretends to text while obviously listening.

At the same time, Cameron's eyes widen as she not at all subtly jabs her elbow into Hema, who has gone bright red. Hema responds, totally flustered, but trying to play it cool.

HEMA

Um... no. I-I am not totally opposed.

KEVIN

Right on.

He throws a wink over his shoulder in her direction, which just about gives Hema the vapors. Timothy sees this and aggressively tries to change the subject.

TIMOTHY

Probably not a good time right now though, right? What with Cam's wedding coming up and all of your Maid of Honor responsibilities?

CAMERON

True. Don't forget -- bar trivia stuff.

TIMOTHY

Bar trivia stuff?

HEMA

There's a pub by my place that runs a trivia night. And the prize for the championship is a year of free drinks and a \$250 Amazon gift card.

(beat)

I'm thinking about calling our group "Drop Dead Shiva" --

ADAM

-- Which is a terrible name.

HEMA

-- Which is a great name, thank you very much. But with just Adam, Cam, and me, we're short team members.

TIMOTHY

How many?

HEMA

Ideally? Two.

KEVIN

What about Dub T and me?

TIMOTHY

Excuse me?

HEMA

What?

KEVIN

Well, I've got an extensive knowledge of sports and Guatemalan politics --

With his back still to them, Hema addresses Timothy.

HEMA

(mouthing)

What does he do?

Timothy throws his hands up.

KEVIN

-- and I scoped all those action figures and movies Dub T's got. Dude could hold his own with nerd stuff.

TIMOTHY

He's... not wrong.

HEMA

Are you serious? You guys'll do it?

Timothy hesitates, but one look at the hopefulness on her face makes him cave.

TIMOTHY

I'm in.

KEVIN

Hell, yeah! I'm down.

Hema grins, wide.

EXT. KEVIN'S PLACE - LATER

Timothy walks Cameron, Adam, and Hema out to their car.

CAMERON

(to Timothy)

See? I told you -- not murder-y and no weird bed times. Kevin is great.

TIMOTHY

Yeah, he... really actually is.

As they approach the car, Adam has a minor freak out.

ADAM

Son of a -- I forgot my contract law book. We've gotta go back.

CAMERON

To school? But that's all the way across town from Hema's place.

ADAM

I know, babe, but I've got an exam on Monday, and --

TIMOTHY

I'll do it.

They all turn to gawk at him. He swallows.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

I mean, I can drive Hema home -- she's closer to me now anyway -- and you guys can go get that thing that keeps Adam from having any kind of social life.

Over Cameron's shoulder, Adam flips him off. Before Timothy can respond, Hema cuts in.

HEMA

Totally works for me.

INT. TIMOTHY'S CAR - NIGHT

While Timothy drives, Hema remains silent, absently fiddling with her hair. Timothy's eyes are locked straight ahead, knuckles white as he grips the steering wheel.

Finally, Hema clears her throat.

HEMA

Thanks again for the ride.

TIMOTHY

Oh, no problem. I really don't mind. Plus, Cameron's been a bit on edge, with the wedding and everything, so I probably saved you from a super uncomfortable ride back.

HEMA

Probably.

(beat)

It's really sweet, though. The way you look out for each other, I mean.



TIMOTHY

Ever since our parents split, it's pretty much been just the two of us. Well, until Adam entered the picture.

He should stop there, but Hema looks on expectantly.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

For so long, she's put up with all of my crap -- the whole apartment thing, the shitty job, and the, uh... the Olivia situation -- that I feel like it's my turn to step up. Especially with all this wedding stuff.

HEMA

Uh, yeah. Girl is borderline aboutta crack. She nearly bit an intern's head off last week.

TIMOTHY

Yikes.

(beat)

I think -- I think her thought process is that if she can pull off the perfect wedding, then she can somehow avoid our parents' fate.

HEMA

That's... a lot riding on terrible bridesmaids dresses and DJ versus a live band.

He pulls up in front of her apartment building and throws the car in park.

TIMOTHY

Yeah, well, if there's one thing the Trouts have never been accused of, it's having realistic expectations.

It's silent for a moment, then --

HEMA

Damn, dude. That's hella insightful.

They share a quick laugh before Hema clears her throat and tucks her hair behind her ear. She uncaps a water bottle and takes a quick swig.

HEMA (CONT'D)

Um, thanks again. Don't forget -- trivia, next week.

TIMOTHY  
Yeah, I'll -- I'll be there.

As she goes to grab the door handle, he's overcome with the need to be chivalrous. He reaches over to grab it for her --

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)  
Here, let me --

-- but instead knocks the open bottle and spills water all over Hema.

HEMA  
Agghhhh!

TIMOTHY  
Oh, my God -- I am so sorry! Let me --

He opens the center console to reveal an insane amount of napkins. As he grabs for them --

HEMA  
Why do you have so many napkins?

TIMOTHY  
My father invented... them. What? No.  
That's a total lie. What the hell am  
I saying? Here, I can help --

HEMA  
No, it's -- I'll be fine. Really.  
It's just water. Thanks. For the  
ride. Not the baptism. Um... good  
night!

Timothy waits until she safely walks inside her building before he sinks his forehead against the steering wheel.

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - TIMOTHY'S ROOM - NIGHT

The new room is bare. Unopened boxes are stacked and scattered throughout.

Timothy sits at his desk and pulls out his notebook.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ELVHEN FOREST - DAY

A fantasy landscape, much like the Shire. Tents and wagons litter the open space, while tall trees line the perimeter.

Timothy, an elf, is decked out in plate armor, a sword sheathed on his belt. Kevin, a handsome giant, is dressed in similar armor, but with a huge double-bladed axe on his back.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - TIMOTHY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Timothy furiously and spitefully erases some writing.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ELVHEN FOREST - CONTINUOUS

Kevin is now a hideous dwarf with a noticeable limp.

Adam dons wizard robes, a staff in hand, while Cameron wears a cloak, a quiver and bow strapped to her back.

KEVIN

Sir Bro, are you certain you wish to proceed? You have my loyalty, regardless. I would rather die than break the brother code.

TIMOTHY

For Olivia, the woman I love? I... don't have much choice.

ADAM

There is always a choice, young one --

TIMOTHY

(breaking character)

Dude, c'mon, we're the same age.

The group approaches Hema, an ethereal female elf. She glows in a shimmering gown and crown of twigs.

Breaking character, Timothy swallows. Hard. He shakes it off and resumes his role.

Hema, on the other hand, goes in and out of character as Timothy in real life adjusts his writing.

HEMA

Greetings, travelers. Welcome to the Shire -- no, that's copyrighted. Shit. Uhh... welcome to... New... Elf... land -- yes! Newelfland!

Upon recognizing Timothy --

HEMA (CONT'D)  
 You! The fair Olivia awaits rescue.  
 However, the trek before you is  
 arduous. Are you prepared, Sir Bro?

TIMOTHY  
 I am.

HEMA  
 (breaking character)  
 Seriously? Are you sure? Because it  
 is not fun up ahead. Kind of shallow,  
 not worth the time, the effort,  
 fantasy yadda yadda yadda...

Timothy clears his throat pointedly.

HEMA (CONT'D)  
 Okay, geez! She's... over yonder, or  
 whatever.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - TIMOTHY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A knock startles Timothy.

KEVIN (O.S.)  
 Bro, you in there?

TIMOTHY  
 Uh... yeah, just give me a sec.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. ELVHEN FOREST - CAVE ENTRANCE - LATER

Timothy, Cameron, Adam, and Kevin approach the cave from a  
 forest clearing.

Cody emerges from the mouth of the cave. He is now an orc,  
 grotesque horns and discolored, leather-like skin. Olivia  
 remains trapped in his grasp.

OLIVIA  
 My love, you returned for me!

TIMOTHY  
 I will always return for you, now and  
 in a thousand lifetimes.  
 (to Cody)  
 (MORE)

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Release her, foul creature! And face  
justice at the hand of my sword!

Cody drops Olivia. She scampers to Timothy's side. They share a moment.

CODY

Have you even listened to my podcast,  
Sir Bro?

TIMOTHY

AFTER HIM!

The four unleash a joint attack. After a time, Cody falls to his knees, bloodied and nearly beaten. Olivia at his side, Timothy takes one final swing with his sword.

Before it comes in contact with Cody's neck --

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - TIMOTHY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Timothy shoves his notebook out of sight before he answers the door.

TIMOTHY

What's up?

Kevin holds up an Xbox controller, as if he's parting with the second half of a best friends forever necklace.

KEVIN

You. Me. Some brewskis. And some  
Madden. You want in?

Timothy thinks for a second -- does he want in? It's terrifying, but the answer is obvious.

He takes the controller.

TIMOTHY

Absolutely.

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - TIMOTHY'S ROOM - DAY

Morning. Timothy is fast asleep, stretched out on his stomach, one leg hanging out from under the covers.

Kevin barges into the room, startling Timothy awake. He's wearing another sweatband around his head and a pair of racquetball goggles. Literally nothing else.

We only see from the waist up, though.

KEVIN

Dub T, up and at 'em!

Timothy groans. He tries to switch sides, but before he does, he catches a glimpse of Kevin's junk.

TIMOTHY

(muffled)

Oh, my God, dude --

He tries to turn away, but the damage is already done. Fully awake, he sits up, uses his pillow to cover his own bare chest, and resolutely keeps his eyes slammed shut.

Kevin, meanwhile, continues to stand in the doorway, not uncomfortable in the least.

KEVIN

I've been giving this some thought, bro, and this weird hiding thing you've got going on has gotta get bent. What you need is some quality gym and 'gyne' time.

TIMOTHY

Please tell me 'gyne' time doesn't mean what I think it means.

KEVIN

Oh, yeah. That's "gyne" like wine and dine, bruh.

TIMOTHY

(quietly)

Oh, my God.

He pulls the covers up over his head, but Kevin's relentless. He starts opening all the window blinds in the room.

KEVIN

Listen, you're never gonna get Hema if you keep stuttering and fumbling your way through life.

This gets Timothy's attention. He pulls the covers down, but keeps his eyes resolutely shut.

TIMOTHY

I'm not -- what, Hema? I'm not.  
Pssht!

(beat)

I'm... not into her.

KEVIN

Okay, fine, whatever. Then we find you some other girl. Point is, you're not living your best, most confident Dub T life. And that doesn't sit right with me.

Timothy deflates. Without thinking, he opens his eyes to address Kevin -- but he's still very much naked.

TIMOTHY

Agghh! Would you -- I can't take you seriously without pants on, man!

Otherwise clueless, Kevin looks down and seems genuinely shocked. He holds both his hands up.

KEVIN

Bro, I am so sorry. Party foul on me.

EXT. SWOLE AND VOID - LATER

Kevin and Timothy, both dressed in workout clothes, approach what appears to be an abandoned warehouse. "SWOLE AND VOID" is painted on the front in dripping red paint.

TIMOTHY

Uh, Kevin, I was only partially joking about the pants thing.  
(beat)  
Please don't kill me.

Kevin looks confused for a moment. Then realization sets in, and he laughs.

KEVIN

Good one, bro. Nah, this is my cross fit gym.

TIMOTHY

I'm sorry, what?

INT. SWOLE AND VOID - CONTINUOUS

Typical cross fit fare -- kettle bells, ropes, exercise balls, etc. -- is spread throughout the space. Kevin leads them past the front desk, where he winks at the girl working there.

They situate themselves toward the back of the class. The INSTRUCTOR (30s, jacked hipster) is hyped and ready to go.

INSTRUCTOR

Nice to see some new faces in here.  
Everyone ready to go?

KEVIN

Hell, yeah!

INSTRUCTOR

Appreciate the enthusiasm, Kane.  
Let's start with a warm up run, huh?

MOMENTS LATER

A series of shots showing the class:

-- The warm up run. Timothy breathes hard as he runs the track around the gym. The rest of the class laps him no less than four times.

-- Kettle bell swings. Timothy tries lifting 20LB bells, but the instructor switches them out for 5LB bells. Kevin's in the back furiously lifting 75LB bells, no issue.

-- Jump ropes. Timothy stands in between Kevin and the Instructor. They're both jumping rope seamlessly. Timothy brings the rope around once, gets his legs tangled in it, and face plants.

OVER BY THE WEIGHTS - LATER

Timothy is sprawled out on his back while the rest of the class congratulates each other on a session well done.

Kevin approaches him and holds out his hand. Timothy takes it and is pulled to his feet effortlessly.

As he stands, he finally realizes there's a FIT GIRL (late 20s) standing next to Kevin.

KEVIN

Dub T. Not bad for your first time.

Timothy's breathing hard. He wordlessly gives a thumbs up.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

You remember that thing we were  
talking about earlier?

Not subtle at all. Timothy shakes his head violently, hoping not to be embarrassed in front of this pretty girl.



KEVIN (CONT'D)

Well, this is Ashleigh. We met during my last Ironman. Her circuit runs are better than mine, believe it or not.

ASHLEIGH

(to Timothy)

Hey! Nice to meet you.

She holds her hand out. Timothy goes to shake it, he even tries to speak, but exhaustion wins out. He immediately passes out on the floor.

Ashleigh looks disgusted. As she walks off, Kevin valiantly tries to save face.

KEVIN

It's an altitude thing!

EXT. CORNER CAFE - DAY

Timothy and Cameron sit at one of the tables on the sidewalk. He's rocking a nasty bruise on his forehead and nursing an iced tea. Cameron looks on, concerned.

CAMERON

How're you holding up?

Gingerly, Timothy prods at the bruise and flinches.

TIMOTHY

Oh, you know. Totally humiliated.

CAMERON

There's no way you were the first person that's ever passed out at cross fit.

TIMOTHY

No, the instructor literally said -- "this has never happened before."

CAMERON

Well, I think it's sweet you still have me listed as your emergency contact. Why were you even there?

TIMOTHY

Kevin is convinced that I'm in need of some serious "gym and gyne" time.

CAMERON  
(horrified)  
Is that short for -- ?

TIMOTHY  
Yeah.

CAMERON  
Ewww!

TIMOTHY  
Yeah. He thinks my problem is that  
I've gotta get jacked, gotta put  
myself back out there. But, Cam, I --  
(beat)  
-- I think I might just be pathetic.

CAMERON  
Tim, c'mon. That's not --

TIMOTHY  
-- I mean, I couldn't close with  
Olivia. Hell, I couldn't even say hi  
to a girl at the gym today without  
passing out.

CAMERON  
Okay, but that's because the doctor  
said, technically, you were dead for  
a minute and a half --

TIMOTHY  
Oh, God.  
(beat)  
I've gotta get in better shape...

CAMERON  
-- Plus, Olivia was, what? Thirteen  
years ago? This isn't high school  
anymore, Tim. You have friends and  
family that genuinely care about you.

TIMOTHY  
Thanks. I, uh -- It's just... hard,  
y'know? You hear that internalized  
broken record all the time, and at  
some point, you start believing it.

Cameron reaches across the table and squeezes his hand.

CAMERON  
That's just life. But your friends  
aren't going anywhere. Neither am I.

INT. BANQUET HALL - DAY

The wedding reception venue. It's the nicest space you can get with a budget in Pennsylvania. It's empty, save for a few facilities staffers sweeping or emptying trash.

Adam sits in a foldout chair, nose in one of his textbooks, while Hema and Cameron get into it.

CAMERON

Hema, we've been over this. My dress doesn't have a train. We don't need a fourteen foot long carpet runner.

HEMA

Okay, but who doesn't have a train on their dress? Like, what's the point? If a wedding happens in the woods, and no one's around to Instagram how extra the dress was, then why should I be emotionally invested?

CAMERON

That's definitely not the saying --

Timothy shuffles in through the front doors, still in his work clothes. He catches Hema's gaze. She gives him a small wave. Before he can greet her, Adam interjects.

ADAM

There he is! Do me a favor?

TIMOTHY

Uhhh... what?  
(to Cameron)  
Hey, sorry I'm late.

CAMERON

No, this is actually perfect timing.

HEMA

(to Timothy)  
Traffic on 3rd?

TIMOTHY

Yeah, it was --

CAMERON

Tim, someone --

ADAM

--It was me. I'm the someone.

CAMERON

-- forgot all of our stuff back at the apartment. Party City is way closer. Would you mind running over there to pick up a few things?

TIMOTHY

Yeah, no problem --

CAMERON

Oh! Hema, why don't you tag along and help? You understand my color scheme in a way that my own flesh and blood does not.

TIMOTHY

What's to understand? It's blue.

Cameron and Hema share a horrified look.

CAMERON

See? It's cerulean!

HEMA

Oh, God...

Hema bolts toward the doors, gesturing for Timothy to follow.

HEMA (CONT'D)

C'mon, you color blind cretin.

INT. PARTY CITY - DAY

Timothy pushes a cart filled with a few items while Hema walks the next aisle over. His phone BUZZES. A new Instagram post from Olivia. He goes to open it --

HEMA

What about these? They scream Cameron's Pinterest wedding board.

Hema holds up a pack of streamers. Timothy doesn't look up right away. His thumb hovers over the notification. Debating.

Just as she notices his distraction and moves on, dispirited, he pockets his phone and ignores the notification. Then, he shuffles to meet up with her in the other aisle.

While she looks at a pack of plastic champagne flutes, he picks up a children's party balloon and holds it in front of his face.

TIMOTHY  
Is this the right blue?

Hema turns to look and is met by Chase the police pup from  
"Paw Patrol."

HEMA  
Timothy!

She punches his arm in a way that's supposed to be playful.  
But it's painful enough that he drops the balloon to massage  
his arm. He tries to play it cool.

TIMOTHY  
Oww! Take it easy there, Tyson.

HEMA  
Cameron would actually kill us if we  
brought that back with us.

TIMOTHY  
No way. She would see it as a bold  
interpretation of her color scheme.

HEMA  
Absolutely not. She would kill you.

She picks up the balloon and places it back on the shelf.  
They're both giggling. In his hysteria, Timothy accidentally  
drives the cart into a shelf of baby shower decorations.

They both race to place everything back in its place.

HEMA (CONT'D)  
Hey, man, you've lost cart  
privileges.

She reaches to grab the cart from him, but one of her hands  
lands on his. That sobers him. He clears his throat and yanks  
his hands away in an attempt at subtle.

Oblivious to the whole exchange, Hema addresses him normally.

HEMA (CONT'D)  
How is it possible that you're a  
writer, and yet, you are terrible  
with descriptive colors?

TIMOTHY  
I'm a monochromatic writer.

HEMA  
Your sister says you're really good.

TIMOTHY

Clearly all that childhood blackmail  
is working.

HEMA

No way. I've never known Cameron to  
ever say anything she doesn't mean.

(beat)

So when can I read it? Your  
submission?

Timothy goes still. Thinks quickly.

TIMOTHY

Tell you what -- as soon as I finish  
it, I'll let you read it.

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - TIMOTHY'S ROOM

At his desk, Timothy reaches for his notebook, but stops.  
Instead, he reaches for his laptop and cracks it open.

CLOSE ON the laptop screen. A blank document titled "SHORT  
STORY SUBMISSION" on it.

Hands on the home keys, he exhales sharply. Starts to type.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. WHITE SPACE - CONTINUOUS

In a white space absent of anything, Timothy stands with his  
hands behind his back. He breaks the fourth wall and speaks  
directly to the audience.

TIMOTHY

Just twenty-seven hours earlier, in a  
town of little consequence, Timothy  
Trout -- er... Jeffrey Finklestein  
decided once and for all to abandon  
his fictions and rejoin reality --  
despite its numerous shortcomings --  
after a lifetime spent avoiding it.

POUNDING. A HIDDEN DOOR bursts opens as Olivia kicks it in  
dressed in pioneer finery. She steps out and cuts him off.

OLIVIA

Don't you miss me, Tim? Don't you  
want to rescue li'l ol' me from the  
nefarious Podcast Cody?

He slams his eyes to block her out and focus. As he does, a glitch makes her temporarily transform into a hideous witch. Instantly, she goes back to normal and disappears with a POP.

Timothy checks to make sure the coast is clear before opening both eyes and clearing his throat. Again, he speaks directly to camera.

TIMOTHY

While his, uh... his friends were delighted, his tried and true avenues of escape were not shy in voicing their dismay with his pronouncement --

A different DOOR SLAMS OPEN. This time, Olivia stalks in dressed in impractical lady gladiator armor, her bust noticeably bigger than before.

OLIVIA

Timothy, Caesar Cody has declared all hot blondes must serve as prey for the Coliseum. You must help.

He slams his eyes shut. POP. She disappears. He resumes.

TIMOTHY

"Even though it is painful and infinitely more lonely," they stressed, "reality is what you wish to embrace?" Jeffrey Finklestein nodded. "Yes," he told them. "For this time, I am not alone --

A different hidden doors bursts open, revealing Olivia once again. This time in a slinky catsuit with a utility belt and two automatic pistols. Her boobs are cartoonishly large now.

OLIVIA

We have to move quickly, Trout. Ambassador Cody has gone rogue. Only someone with your... middling upper body strength and extensive knowledge of real time strategy games can bring him down.

Timothy jams his eyes shut once again. POP. This time, he transforms into an old western sheriff, spurs and all.

He holds his arm out for Olivia who has gone back to pioneer finery.

TIMOTHY

Lead the way, ma'am. I got an itchy trigger finger and a mighty strong urge to kiss you on the marriage parts.

The two exit through the hidden door. When it closes, we WHOOSH to --

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - TIMOTHY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Timothy slams his laptop closed and pushes it to the side. He lets his head sink to the desk. Defeated, he turns and notices his notebook. He hesitates, then flips it open.

INT. GRUBER'S TAVERN - BOOTH - NIGHT

A dimly-lit pub. Stickers, license plates, and other kitsch covers the walls. A chalkboard with an obscene Benjamin Franklin sticker, reads "TRIVIA NIGHT! QUALIFYING ROUND."

Timothy, Cameron, Adam, and Kevin occupy a booth in the back corner. Pacing back and forth, Hema addresses them, giving off major Patton vibes.

HEMA

Thank you all for coming. We have a lot at stake tonight -- first, free alcohol. For. A. Year. People! Then, a \$250 Amazon gift card -- which we will not be splitting because I'm still waiting for my Chris-Pine-as-Steve-Trevor pillow prints to come back for my Etsy store, and this wedding is not cheap, no offense --

CAMERON

None taken --

HEMA

-- So everyone better have brought their A-game tonight because I am still on thin ice from last time.

Kevin snags a handful of peanuts from the bowl in the middle of the table. Mouth full, he asks without any shame --

KEVIN

What 'appened last time?

HEMA

Oh, I'd really rather --



ADAM  
It was just last year...

INT. GRUBERS TAVERN - FLASHBACK

SUPER: "TRIVIA NIGHT, LAST YEAR"

A similar scene to the one we just left, only this time, it's just Cameron, Adam, and Hema seated at a table.

ADAM (V.O.)  
It was... what? About a week before  
your licensing exam?

HEMA (V.O.)  
No, I refuse to --

CAMERON (V.O.)  
-- It was.

Hema shoots up out of her seat, wearing scrubs. She looks wild -- hair matted, eyes bloodshot, various food stains down her front.

The other two try to talk her down, but she's too far gone.

HEMA  
-- Ohhhh! What, so they got the  
points because they guessed Al Gore?  
Well, here's some more inconvenient  
truths for ya' -- tampons are a tax  
on my uterus, and when fast food  
restaurants charge extra for sauce  
packets, it's literally a tax on my  
right to the pursuit of happiness!

She picks up a drink, slams it back, stumbles, goes to set it on the table, but it smashes to the ground instead.

IRATE MALE TRIVIA PLAYER (O.S.)  
You're a tax on my pursuit of  
happiness right now!

HEMA  
Oh, I'm sorry. I forgot. We hold  
these truths to be self-evident that  
all men can blow m --

INT. GRUBER'S TAVERN - BOOTH - PRESENT

They all look at Hema in astonishment.

HEMA

I'm not proud of it, okay?

(to Adam)

You are dead to me.

(to everyone else)

Tonight, we just have to be one of four teams to move on, so let's focus on not totally humiliating ourselves.

CAMERON

I mean, okay, but how many other patrons are you going to sexually harass tonight?

Timothy smirks at that. Before he can respond, the TRIVIA MASTER (40s) gestures for everyone's attention. His level of enthusiasm indicates this is the only thing he has.

TRIVIA MASTER

Trivia heads, are you ready to rumble?! Take your battle stations!

Hema squeezes into the booth, taking a seat right next to Timothy. It's a tight fit. He definitely notices and tries to scoot over, but Kevin is not a small dude.

She leans over to talk to him. He lowers his head.

HEMA

Don't make me regret inviting you.

Timothy salutes her.

TIMOTHY

That's... one hell of a pep talk.

MOMENTS LATER

More empty beer bottles and plates litter the group's table. A continuous series of shots highlighting the night.

-- FOCUS ON Hema, ardently pleading her case with the group.

HEMA

No, guys, I'm telling you.

"Crossroads" won the Razzie for Worst Original Song for Britney Spears'

"I'm Not a Girl, Not Yet a Woman."

-- FOCUS ON Adam arguing with Timothy.

ADAM

Uh, no, Tim. Pretty sure I'm the one who's been holed up in the library for 72 hours straight studying common law, and I'm pretty sure the answer is Frederic Bastiat's "The Law."

-- FOCUS ON Kevin.

KEVIN

What is the 1992 Super Bowl winning Washington Redskins?

HEMA

Hey -- Hey, Kevin? You don't have to answer in the form of a question, man. This isn't Jeopardy.

-- FOCUS ON Timothy.

TIMOTHY

Listen, Max Rebo heads up The Max Rebo Band at Jabba's Palace in "Return of the Jedi." The Mos Eisley Cantina Band is different. They're called Figran D'an and the Modal Nodes.

Hema snaps her fingers until Cameron hands her a pencil. She furiously writes it down. Adam gawks at Timothy.

ADAM

Oh, my God, dude. How are you single?

-- FOCUS BACK ON Kevin.

KEVIN

Who is Otto Perez Molina of Guatemala's Patriotic Party?

Hema turns to Timothy.

HEMA

(mouthing)

WHAT DOES HE DO?

-- FOCUS ON Cameron.

HEMA (CONT'D)

Are you sure?

CAMERON

Remember, back in the spring, when I got food poisoning, and the only channel I could get was TLC? "Say Yes to the Dress" definitely takes place at Kleinfeld Bridal.

(beat)

And Atlanta is at Bridals by Lori.

HEMA

(horrificed)

Oh, God. You watched both?

INT. GRUBER'S TAVERN - BOOTH - LATER

The gang's table has more empty bottles and plates with picked clean wings.

The chalkboard from earlier has all team names crossed off except for five. The Trivia Master looks elated.

TRIVIA MASTER

Alright, everyone. We have five teams left -- The Curious Case of Feminine Button, Mission Unpossible, Waka Flocka Lamé, Close Encounters of the Turd Kind, Drop Dead Shiva --

KEVIN (O.S.)

WHOOOOO!

TRIVIA MASTER

-- And T-Rex Positive.

HEMA

(not super subtly)

NERDS!

Cameron thwacks her arm to try to keep her in line. Hema shrugs with drunken bravado.

TRIVIA MASTER

This is the final question of the night. For the semi-finals --

(beat)

Between what hours may a junior licensed driver drive on their own in the state of Pennsylvania if they have a notarized affidavit confirming their schedule?

A confused hush fills the space. Who the hell would know this? Timothy Trout, that's who. His whole body thrums with excitement as he realizes this.

TIMOTHY  
 (to himself)  
 Eleven P.M. to Five A.M.  
 (to the whole room)  
 Eleven P.M. to Five A.M.!

Silence. Then --

TRIVIA MASTER  
 CORRECT!

Absolute chaos erupts from their booth as the gang freaks out. They all grab at Timothy, celebrating their champion.

Without preamble, Hema grabs him and plants a quick, sloppy kiss on his mouth. Everyone else is too busy to notice. Except Timothy. It's all he notices.

Before he can process any of it, she turns and pounds her chest aggressively at the losing team.

HEMA  
 YEAH, WHAT NOW? GET SOME. GET SOME!

Two bouncers grab her by the arms and escort her outside.

EXT. GRUBER'S TAVERN - LATER

The group stumbles out of the bar, whooping and cheering. Kevin hoists up their reward -- a blue RIBBON that reads "IT'S A BOY!"

Hema is beside herself with excitement. And inebriation.

HEMA  
 I'm so proud of you all! Except Adam.

ADAM  
 Hey! I held my own with those legal questions, thank you very much.

CAMERON  
 You tell 'em, honey.

KEVIN  
 (to no one in particular)  
 I think they gave us the wrong ribbon?

Hema bounds up to Timothy and links her arm in his. He freezes for a moment and looks around, but no one else seems scandalized by the action.

HEMA

Timothy, you're a little rusty, man. You totally messed up that question about that pod racing guy. The weird, squishy one -- what's his name? Sub-vulva?

Timothy turns bright red and abruptly corrects --

TIMOTHY

Sebulba --

HEMA

-- Yeah! ... What'd I say?

TIMOTHY

In my defense, I don't know anyone that knows Sebulba's home world.

HEMA

Which is a problem because we really need you firing on all pistons, or cylinders, or whatever.

The two trudge along in silence for a moment as her elbow jabs into his side occasionally.

Maybe it's the heady scent of her shampoo, or maybe he's drunk, too. Either way, he has an idea and a burst of courage all at once.

TIMOTHY

Hey, we should -- what if you helped me study up? We could watch movies, and you could quiz me. Y'know, make sure I'm firing on all... the car parts.

HEMA

Oh, uh...

Timothy might actually puke, but he tries to play it off as no big deal. Completely oblivious, Cameron interjects --

CAMERON

No, that's a great idea! Then you guys can carpool to wedding prep.

Hema turns to her, tears brimming.

HEMA  
 (offended)  
 Cameron. I would never -- we can do both.

TIMOTHY  
 So... is that a yes?  
 (beat, then backpedaling)  
 Because it's -- I mean, you don't have to feel obligated --

HEMA  
 (abruptly)  
 No -- ! I mean, let's do it. Because like the fourth installment of the "Bring It On" franchise, I'm "in it to win it," Trout.

They laugh until Hema missteps and nearly falls. Cameron grabs one side, while Timothy last minute grabs her arm with one hand. The other accidentally grabs her boob.

TIMOTHY  
 Oh, my God -- I'm so sorry!

HEMA  
 Hubba, hubba. Buy a girl a drink first, sailor.

TIMOTHY  
 Oh, God! I'm so sorry. It's --

CAMERON  
 It's totally fine. She won't remember any of this.  
 (to Hema)  
 No, no! Left leg, then the right.

Hema catches Timothy's gaze. She tries to wink, but ends up blinking instead. Despite his humiliation, he grins.

INT. PENNSYLVANIA DMV - DAY

Same garbage, different day. Timothy's at his desk, listening to another customer call. We just hear muffled yelling.

As he types, a frisbee flies in from out of frame --

CODY (O.S.)  
 Think fast!

-- and hits him square on his bruised forehead. He bites back a yelp, but his eyes are definitely watering.

Cody looks apologetic for all of two seconds before he saunters over and gives dual finger guns to Timothy.

CODY (CONT'D)

What are you working on?

Timothy MUTES the call and looks back at his typed notes.

TIMOTHY

Ralph, here, is insisting he's a sovereign citizen and shouldn't have to pay the gas tax because--and I quote -- "these roads ain't shit."

CODY

Still? We've gotta get you out there. Third episode, second hour of "Watch Me Leadership, Watch Me Nae Nae"--my leadership podcast -- I talk about carpe diem. You gotta seize that carp, man.

TIMOTHY

That's definitely not --

CODY

-- Because a fish isn't just gonna hop in your boat. You gotta Hemingway that shit. Down a bottle of scotch and just -- punch a marlin right in the face. Now, I know --

CLOSE ON his PHONE as it VIBRATES against the desk. A new text from Hema. As he glances at it, it appears on screen.

HEMA (TEXT)

So sorry about last night hopefully  
I'm not a super embarrassing drunk??



Timothy's heart sinks. The kiss, walking arm in arm -- she regrets all of it and probably hates him. Except --

HEMA (TEXT) (CONT'D)

The civic theater is playing Alien  
tonight do u wanna go?

Timothy's smile widens in tandem with his realization. She meant to offer her help. Suddenly, nothing else matters.

CODY

Trout, are you even listening to me?



TIMOTHY  
Uh... not really?  
(abruptly)  
I'm taking a half day.

He rips his headset off, slings his messenger bag over his shoulder, and tears out of the office. His notebook is left behind, abandoned on his desk.

CODY  
Whoa -- Hey! You can't just up and  
leave in the middle of a work day!

Timothy doesn't even acknowledge him, just keeps walking as he types out a response to Hema.

EXT. CIVIC THEATER - NIGHT

Timothy stands outside, hands jammed in his pockets. He looks like he put some effort into his appearance.

A white sedan pulls up to the curb, and Hema exits the back seat. She's dressed super casually, hair hastily tied back.

HEMA  
Hey! I am so sorry. Work ran late, so  
I had to grab whatever was in my  
locker. Then my Uber was late...

TIMOTHY  
It's no problem.  
(beat)  
Next time, I could just pick you up.  
Y'know, if you --

HEMA  
Really? That'd be awesome.

TIMOTHY  
Yeah, and if you spill another drink,  
don't worry. We already established  
I've got plenty of napkins.

HEMA  
Huh?

Only Timothy feels the heat of his failed joke. Hema just looks confused, having forgotten the incident entirely.

TIMOTHY  
Never mind. Bad joke.  
(beat)  
After you.

As they walk to the entrance, Hema takes in his appearance.

HEMA

Hey, man, you, uh... you look good.

(beat)

Got a hot date or something?

TIMOTHY

Oh, did I not tell you? After this,  
Thelma and I are gonna paint the town  
red.

He gestures to a crazed-looking old woman on the other side of the street. She's pushing a shopping cart filled with feral cats and succulents.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Yeah, I think tonight's the night I  
ask her to go steady.

He makes a show of crossing his fingers, while she laughs and bumps her shoulder into his. He holds the door open for her and follows in after.

INT. CIVIC THEATER - MOMENTS LATER

Timothy and Hema are seated nearly dead center. Hema's devouring a box of Reese's Pieces. He's got a bag of popcorn. Other people are filing in.

HEMA

Why do they keep it so cold in here?

She rubs her arms to keep warm. Without second guessing it, Timothy shrugs out of his jacket and hands it to her.

TIMOTHY

Here.

HEMA

Oh!

(beat)

Um, thank you.

TIMOTHY

No problem.

She puts it on just as the lights dim. While he looks straight ahead, she tugs the jacket a little tighter around her, a small smile visible on her face.

Without looking, she goes to grab a handful of popcorn, but Timothy reaches in at the same time. They both recoil. The awkwardness hangs heavy.

Sorry! TIMOTHY (CONT'D) Sorry. HEMA

They both lock eyes, offer uncomfortable, conciliatory smiles, and then quickly look back to the screen.

Timothy's PHONE BUZZES loudly enough that two other movie goers glare at him from down the row. Hema elbows him.

HEMA (CONT'D)  
Please tell me you're not one of  
those people who texts during movies.

TIMOTHY  
No, of course not! I forgot to switch  
it off.

As he goes to turn his phone's ringer off, he sees an Instagram push notification: "NEW POST FROM OLIVIA CARMICHAEL."

INSERT - PHONE SCREEN

A picture of Olivia and a bunch of friends in sundresses and floppy hats eating brunch. They all look like models. The caption reads "BESTIES FOR LIFE <3 <3 <3 #NOFOMO."

Timothy stares wistfully. He types out a comment: "STUNNING 🍷." Not even a second later, a notification pops up: "OLIVIA LIKED YOUR COMMENT."

BACK TO SCENE

He stares at the screen -- a dumb grin.

The glow from his phone is distracting long enough for Hema to finally notice. She looks over just in time to see Olivia's picture on his screen.

She nudges his elbow on the armrest.

HEMA  
Dude, what the hell?

Timothy looks up, sheepish. He stashes his phone away.

TIMOTHY  
Sorry! You're right, I was -- sorry.

HEMA  
(deflecting)  
Geez, Trout. Take a break from  
stalking for a minute and get into  
this Ridley Scott masterwork.

TIMOTHY  
Heh, I'm not --  
(clears throat)  
Yeah, let's do this.

They both look back at the screen. Where their arms were previously touching on the armrest, Hema noticeably pulls hers away.

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - TIMOTHY'S ROOM - DAY

Morning. Timothy's fast asleep. Kevin barges into the room, his bright orange muscle tank matches his sweatband. It reads "DO YOU EVEN LIFT (UP OTHERS WITH POSITIVITY) BRO?"

He drops to the floor and starts doing diamond form push ups.

KEVIN  
Dub T, let's gooo! Up and at 'em!

Timothy groans and pulls the covers up over his head.

INT. KEVIN'S CAR - LATER

On the way to the gym, Kevin and Timothy pull up to a stoplight. Kevin drives a Tesla roadster, the top down.

Timothy looks uncomfortable as he takes it in -- a car worth more money than he's ever made in his whole career.

TIMOTHY  
(casual)  
So, what do you do for work?

Before he can answer, literally any Carly Rae Jepsen song (preferably "Run Away With Me") comes up on shuffle.

KEVIN  
Oh, hell yes! This song's a straight  
banger, bro.

He blasts it and starts jamming out to it. While Kevin's distracted, his PHONE CHIMES. Curious, Timothy glances over and --

His stomach sinks.

HEMA (TEXT)

ok hotshot but drinks are on you 🍷

Kevin is oblivious as Timothy crosses his arms, glaring.

INT. SWOLE AND VOID - OVER BY THE WEIGHTS - DAY

Patrons occupy the surrounding equipment. Kevin stands beside Timothy, who is stretched out on a weight bench.

KEVIN

The key is trust, bro.

TIMOTHY

Oh, is it, Kevin? Is trust the key?

KEVIN

I mean... yeah, that's why I said it.

Timothy nods, still upset. He eyes the single weight on either end of the barbell above him.

TIMOTHY

Well, in that case, are we sure that's enough weight on this?

(beat)

Because I am deceptively stronger than I look.

KEVIN

Normally, I'd warn against muscle strain, but I dig that you're not afraid of a challenge.

Kevin adds two more weights to the barbell. He resumes his position as spotter. As Timothy lifts -- each rep visibly more difficult for him -- we see Kevin's gaze wander for just a moment.

He locks eyes with a stunning, Gabrielle Union-esque PATRON who seems to be struggling with the lat machine. He forgets himself for a moment and abandons his post.

LAT MACHINE

He approaches the woman.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I completely respect your independence and competency as a woman, but it looks like you might need help?

The woman looks up, ready to protest. As soon as she takes in his appearance, though, she completely switches gears.

STUNNING PATRON

Oh -- sure! I just can't seem to get the weights in place.

TIMOTHY (O.S.)

Uh, Kevin?

WEIGHT BENCH

Timothy's arms are locked at 45 degree angles, shaking. He squirms beneath, unable to lift it enough to rack it.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Kevin? Kev -- Dub K?

LAT MACHINE

Kevin fiddles with the pin and the weights. The woman examines her nails.

STUNNING PATRON

So what do you do?

KEVIN

Uh, somewhere between 230 and 250, depending on the day.

STUNNING PATRON

(giggling)

No, I mean, like, for work.

TIMOTHY (O.S.)

KEVIN!

WEIGHT BENCH

Timothy squirms, tries to keep the bar up. Suddenly, it drops.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Oh, shi -- !

LAT MACHINE

Kevin finally turns around. His eyes widen as he sees what's happening. He springs into action.

WEIGHT BENCH

After hurdling over a machine, he dives for the barbell and manages to grab it before it crushes Timothy's larynx.

Timothy springs upright, his breathing heavy and erratic.

KEVIN  
(wrecked)  
Bro, I am so s --

Timothy fumes. He opens his mouth to respond, thinks better of it, then holds up a hand and fervently shakes his head. He storms toward the exit. Kevin is crushed.

As he stands there, the stunning woman approaches him.

STUNNING PATRON  
Hey, so I, like, never do this.  
But... here's my number. You should  
call me some time.

Kevin takes the proffered slip of paper, closes his eyes, and exhales. When he reopens them, he looks at her mournfully. There are damn well near tears in his eyes.

KEVIN  
I would love nothing more than to  
thoroughly and respectfully seduce  
the hell out of you, but I broke the  
sacred spotter's broath today.

He hands the paper back to her.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
I can't accept this.

She scoffs, clearly not used to rejection, and leaves.

INT. DIVE BAR - NIGHT

Bluesy country plays as Timothy sits on a barstool nursing a beer. A couple patrons sit alongside him, watching the Eagles game on an analog TV. Others sit at the nearby tables.

Kevin comes in from outside and sits down next to Timothy. Timothy makes a point of ignoring him.

KEVIN  
I know there's nothing I can say that  
could possibly make up for --

TIMOTHY  
Dude, I almost died.

KEVIN  
I know, bro. And I'm so sorry. Let me  
buy you a beer.

Timothy only shrugs. Kevin flags down the BARTENDER (50s, tattooed, built like a tank), who wears a motorcycle cut.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
(to the bartender)  
Hey, Troy. Can I get two Yuenglings?

Troy eyes them skeptically. Kevin waves him off.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
It's cool, man. He's with me.

TROY  
(to Kevin)  
Good to see you, brother. Haven't  
been around much lately.

For the first time since Timothy has known him, Kevin looks distinctly uncomfortable. He shifts in his seat.

KEVIN  
After the, uh... the split was  
finalized, and she moved out, I  
couldn't -- well, it was just --

Troy grunts in response, unable to emote more eloquently. He fills two steins and slides them across the battered bar top.

TROY  
On the house.

KEVIN  
Thanks, man.

TIMOTHY  
Yeah, th --

TROY  
Never you. Yours goes on the tab.

When he leaves, Kevin and Timothy remain in tense silence.

KEVIN  
I used to spend a lot of time here  
after my divorce.

TIMOTHY  
You, uh... you never talk about it.  
Your split from --

KEVIN  
Aly. We were together seven years.



TIMOTHY  
... What happened?

KEVIN  
Million dollar question, bro. She was  
my best friend. We shared  
everything... until we didn't. And  
one day, before we could fix any of  
it, she just... left.

Troy brings over two shots. Before Timothy can protest, Kevin  
slams back both. Immediately, his demeanor changes.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
Whooo! Now, that will put hair on  
your chest, bro.  
(to Troy)  
Bring us another round. Not a true  
bro hang without a little liquor.

TIMOTHY  
Uh, Troy? I'm all set, man. I don't  
really drink much.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. DIVE BAR - LATER

Timothy and Kevin are surrounded by a collection of empty  
drinks. Timothy speaks with great emotion.

TIMOTHY  
That's the thing though -- Kevin?  
That's the thing. 'Cuz, like, it's  
Desert Island, right? So of course I  
can't pick Legally Blonde and Bend It  
Like Beckham. But I would, Kevin. I  
would pick both. Every damn time.

SMASH CUT TO:

TABLES - LATER

More empty bottles. Timothy stands on one of the table tops,  
grasping one like a microphone. He drunkenly sings along to  
Cyndi Lauper's "Time After Time".

SMASH CUT TO:

BAR - STILL LATER

Even more empty bottles. One of the patrons is fast asleep, face smashed up against the counter.

Kevin speaks with intense conviction while Timothy nods along fervently. They're both super drunk, speech slurred.

KEVIN

-- So she's a veterinary student with a cat and a lot of love to give. And he -- uh, what's his name? He played Superman?

TIMOTHY

Henry Cavil?

KEVIN

Nah, before him.

TIMOTHY

Uhhh... oh, Brandon Routh!

KEVIN

Yes! So that guy is a firefighter who has closed himself off to love and commitment. But one day, a cat shows up at his door, and suddenly, he has to open his heart to someone else for the first time, probably since 9/11.

TIMOTHY

(awed)

Whoa...

KEVIN

So then they meet -- I think they bump into each other buying ice cream --

TIMOTHY

-- Classic meet cute.

KEVIN

-- Classic meet cute -- and she teaches him how to take care of the cat. But--and here's the artistry of it all, bro -- she's also helping him renovate his house.

TIMOTHY

So... while they're falling in love -- ?

KEVIN

-- They're cultivating a home, both  
physically and metaphorically.

Timothy has to take a moment. He dabs at his eyes with a  
grimy napkin. Kevin downs another drink.

TIMOTHY

Damn, dude...

KEVIN

Nine Lives of Christmas, bro.  
Hallmark's Sistine Chapel.

SMASH CUT TO:

TABLES - LATER

Both Timothy and Kevin are on the table, makeshift bottle  
mics in hand. Taylor Swift's "You Belong With Me" plays.

They are no less dedicated than Timothy's first performance,  
but all the more drunk.

SMASH CUT TO:

BAR - LATER

Near closing time. Most of the patrons have filed out.

As Troy cleans up for the night, Timothy works on stacking  
shot glasses like a house of cards. Kevin nurses the last of  
his drink. Both still struggle with speech.

KEVIN

What about you, bro? Whassup with you  
and Hema?

TIMOTHY

What's up with you and Hema?

KEVIN

Why are you repeating me?

TIMOTHY

No, I mean you and -- nevermind. I'm  
not -- I mean, she would never be  
into --

(beat)

There's nothing going on.

KEVIN

Oh, come on! What have I always said?

TIMOTHY

Amputees are queens and not a dealbreaker. As long as they're down for nub stuff --

KEVIN

No, no, about feelings and shit.

TIMOTHY

Emotional honesty.

KEVIN

Exactly. Something's up, bro. Spill.

Timothy gets quiet, his shot glass tower abandoned.

TIMOTHY

I'm... I'm hung up on someone else.  
Have been for awhile.

KEVIN

Someone else?

Timothy pulls out his phone and pulls up Olivia's Instagram page. He shows Kevin. Her picture fills the screen.

TIMOTHY

Olivia Carmichael. I've been in love with her since high school.

KEVIN

I mean, I'm sure her inner beauty is incomparable, truly beyond the scope of our English language, but holy shit, dude. An absolute ten.

TIMOTHY

I know, man. But she never gave me the time of day back then, and I...

KEVIN

You... ?

TIMOTHY

(wincing, all at once)  
I abandoned all my original writing and started writing stories where the two of us fall in love and end up together.

Kevin's jaw drops. Timothy deflates, burying his face in his arms on the bar top.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

I know! It's --

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

-- pathetic.

KEVIN

-- literally the most  
romantic thing I've ever  
heard.

Timothy's head bolts up. Kevin has never been more serious about anything in his life.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Wait -- what??

KEVIN

Have you sent any of them to her?

TIMOTHY

Of course not!

KEVIN

Dude, you gotta send 'em.

TIMOTHY

... You think?

KEVIN

Are you kidding me? This is like if  
Ryan Gosling in The Notebook had  
crippling social anxiety and was  
replaced with the handsomest teller  
at your bank. Rolling Stone's Peter  
Travers calls it "a real panty  
dropper."

(beat)

You gotta do it, bro.

TIMOTHY

Yeah... you're right! I'm gonna do  
it!

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - TIMOTHY'S ROOM - DAY

Timothy totally zonked out, limbs sprawled on the bed. His  
ALARM BEEPS, flashing 11:46AM. He reaches for it blindly,  
knocking over a few items before he finally turns it off.

He grabs the nearby Advil, pops a couple, then blindly  
reaches for his glass of water and knocks it over.

Still not fully functioning, he rolls out of bed and tilts his head, mouth open to collect the water that drips over the nightstand's ledge. Not a good idea. He sputters, coughs.

His PHONE starts BUZZING. Once he calms down, he grabs the phone and looks at the screen.

It's an Instagram notification -- "OLIVIA CARMICHAEL SENT YOU A MESSAGE." At once, he clicks on the app and opens her message.

INSERT - INSTAGRAM DM

There's an intricate block of text, but toward the top, it clearly reads: "SO I READ YOUR STORIES..."

BACK TO SCENE

Timothy can't breathe. He rips the covers off, stumbling out of bed.

TIMOTHY

Oh God, oh God, oh God, oh God --

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

He keeps repeating it. Keeps walking, until he stops outside Kevin's door. He pounds on it.

TIMOTHY

KEVIN!

Kevin swings the door wide open with his free hand, while the other clutches a Louisville slugger. He's wearing a hockey goalie mask and a pair of boxer briefs. Timothy freaks.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

What the hell, dude! It's me.

Kevin lifts the mask, and relief washes over him. He claps Timothy on the shoulder. Timothy flinches, head throbbing.

KEVIN

Oh, thank God. Sorry, bro. Thought it was someone from work for a hot sec.

TIMOTHY

From work? Why would you -- ?

KEVIN

It's kind of a long story. See, I was in Antigua, and --

TIMOTHY

No. No time.

(beat)

Why did Olivia Carmichael message me  
to tell me she quote "read my  
stories" unquote?

KEVIN

(awed)

No way...

Timothy holds his phone out. Kevin snatches it and skims  
through the message. He can barely contain his excitement.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I can't believe you did it.

TIMOTHY

Did what?

KEVIN

Seriously? You don't remember?

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - TIMOTHY'S ROOM - FLASHBACK

SUPER: "LAST NIGHT"

The bluish glow from his laptop illuminates Timothy's face as  
he types furiously. There's a maniacal glint in his eye.

Kevin stands by, egging him on. He's totally sloshed.

KEVIN

C'mon, jus' shhend it, you coward!

INSERT - LAPTOP SCREEN

An e-mail window with an insane amount of text. The cursor  
hovers over the send button.

Timothy types a bit more, then --

TIMOTHY

WHOOO! I'm gonna live forever!

He clicks the mousepad, the EMAIL SENT WHOOSH sounds,  
finalizing his decision.

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - HALLWAY - PRESENT

Timothy can't speak, too horrified.

TIMOTHY  
(monotone)  
I'm gonna die immediately.

KEVIN  
No, no, no. This is a good thing. She  
read your stories and still wants all  
up in that, bro.

TIMOTHY  
Eww, what?

KEVIN  
Seriously, Dub T. Did you even read  
the whole thing? She wants to meet up  
with you.

Timothy takes his phone back and reads through the whole  
thing. Sure enough, Kevin's right. He drops his phone and  
stares straight ahead, eyes wide.

TIMOTHY  
Oh, my God...

KEVIN  
We got you gym time, bro. Time to  
cash in on that hashtag gyne time.

Timothy picks up his phone. Kevin hip thrusts unhelpfully  
until Timothy finally shoots a message back.

TIMOTHY (TEXT)  
Glad you liked the stories. I'd love  
to meet up. When is a good time?

As soon as he sends it, he braces his hands on his knees,  
face pale --

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)  
Oh, God.

-- and promptly pukes in the hallway. Kevin rubs comforting  
circles on his back as HE continues HEAVING off screen.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - DAY

Cameron and Adam sit at a table, mid-discussion. Timothy  
bursts in, disheveled and still in his work clothes. But his  
stride has a bounce in it. Plus, he's grinning stupidly.

TIMOTHY  
Hey. Sorry I'm late.



He walks over to their table and takes a seat. Cameron doesn't look up from her work, but Adam acknowledges him.

ADAM

You doing okay, man? You look off. Is it a stroke?

(beat, urgent)

Do you smell toast?

TIMOTHY

What? No!

CAMERON

What happened to you on Saturday? You never texted me back. I had to lug all this stuff over here by myself.

TIMOTHY

I'm really sorry, Cam, and I definitely owe you one. But I have an insanely good excuse.

Off their prompting gazes --

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Olivia asked me out.

Cameron's jaw drops. Adam bursts out laughing.

CAMERON

What?! When?

TIMOTHY

Yesterday. She DM'd me on Instagram.

Adam keeps laughing.

CAMERON

H-How?

TIMOTHY

I sent her some of my, uh, stories. And she --

CAMERON

You what?!

TIMOTHY

Yeah, I --

Adam laughs even harder at this. Finally, Timothy snaps.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)  
(to Adam)  
Dude, what?

At this, Adam sobers. He wipes at the tears in his eyes.

ADAM  
Sorry, it's just -- this is such a good joke? I mean, not only does Olivia just happen to ask you out, but she does it after she reads your stories? Just... masterful.

This sets Timothy off. Angrily, he pulls up Instagram on his phone and shoves it at Adam.

TIMOTHY  
Does this look like a joke, jackass?

As Adam reads through the message, Cameron cranes her head to read over his shoulder. Concern, rather than excitement, shows on their faces when they finish.

ADAM  
(quietly)  
Holy shit...

TIMOTHY  
Yeah.

ADAM  
Sorry, man. I thought--

TIMOTHY  
--That I was too much of a loser to pull it off? Yeah, I got that much.

CAMERON  
(carefully)  
No one thinks you're a loser, Tim. Of course we're happy for you.  
(beat)  
... But are you sure you want this?

TIMOTHY  
What I want? Are you kidding me?

CAMERON  
What about Hema?

TIMOTHY  
What about her?  
(beat, "casual")  
Did she, uh, say anything about me?

CAMERON

Not really. But that's why you couldn't help on Saturday, right? Because you two were hanging out? You guys have been spending a lot of time together, I just thought --

TIMOTHY

I mean, yeah, Hema's great, but she doesn't -- she isn't...

(beat)

Olivia's all I've ever wanted for so long. And now that she's finally noticed me, the two of you can't even be happy for me. Unreal.

CAMERON

Tim, that's not what I meant!

ADAM

Oh, c'mon, man! Don't be like that.

Timothy ignores both of them and storms out.

INT. HEMA'S PLACE - NIGHT

A small, but well decorated apartment with South Asian decor. A couple Chris Pine body pillows are piled in a corner.

Both Hema and Timothy are seated on her couch as they run through notecards. There's a large stack of used cards on the coffee table next to some takeout containers and beers.

Timothy's food is practically untouched.

TIMOTHY

Uhhh... Laura Roslin?

HEMA

Laura Roslin? Are you kidding me?  
That's Battlestar Galactica.  
Sigourney Weaver plays Tawni Madison  
in Galaxy Quest.

TIMOTHY

Oh, right. Sorry.

HEMA

Hey, man, are you okay? You seem sort of... off.

TIMOTHY

Huh? Oh, no, I'm fine. Just tired.

She looks at him expectantly. He shifts, uncomfortably.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Just the same stuff. Adam and Cam are giving me grief because of -- uh, because we were at the movies on Saturday instead of helping them --

HEMA

Oh, yeah. Cameron already gave me an earful. But, like, how many times can you see THX 1138 in its original thirty-five millimeter format?

TIMOTHY

Exactly! And then at work, Cody's been riding me about applying myself. But what incentive do I have? Gladys? Who I'm pretty sure has a thyroid issue and a drinking problem?

HEMA

Yeah, that's rough, man. Have you tried talking to Cody?

TIMOTHY

I mean, I guess I could. But he probably wouldn't listen anyway.

HEMA

Well, what about asking him for more comms related responsibilities? You keep saying you want to write more.

TIMOTHY

Yeah, but then I'm actually investing time into this job like it's a career, and I would rather die than--

HEMA

Oh, my God -- Trout!

TIMOTHY

What?

HEMA

You know what your issue is? Nothing is ever your fault. You're somehow always the victim. You don't like your job? Quit it! You have writer's block and can't write anything? Boohoo. Go write something else!

(hesitant, then)

Some girl totally ignored you in high school? Well... either ask her out, or get over it!

That hits him hard.

TIMOTHY

Hema, all due respect, but you don't know what the hell you're talking about. What gives you the right -- ?

HEMA

You know what I did when my parents threatened to cut me off if I didn't marry the dude they picked for me? I went to med school, worked my ass off, and got a job, man.

(beat)

You have two choices in life -- either quit or yoot up and stick it out.

TIMOTHY

(confused)

Yoot?

HEMA

Yeah. Short for uterus. They're crazy strong.

TIMOTHY

Oh.

(beat)

Gross...

They both avoid each other's gaze, a new and uncomfortable tension between them. Hema tries to break it.

HEMA

More like Wonder Womb-an, am I right?

She holds for laughter, but Timothy is still bristling from earlier. Her shoulders sink -- did she go too far?

His PHONE BUZZES. He glances at it, so relieved at the interruption. A text from Olivia. He stands abruptly.

TIMOTHY

Right. Listen, I think I've got to call it a night.

HEMA

What? We barely even made a dent in these flashcards!

TIMOTHY

(bitter)

Yeah, well, I'm gonna need a full night's sleep if I'm ever going to have a fighting chance at a life as perfectly figured out as yours.

HEMA

Oh, real nice, Tim. Very mature.

He doesn't bother looking back as he exits.

HEMA (CONT'D)

Oh, c'mon! Tim!

The DOOR SLAMS shut. Hema sinks into the couch, hurt.

HEMA (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Couldn't wait until after trivia on Friday to chew him out, huh, Hema?

EXT. HEMA'S PLACE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Timothy leaves Hema's apartment, still fuming over their conversation. A few steps out, he reads Olivia's text. It pops on the screen --

OLIVIA (TEXT)

"Soooo glad we're doing this!!!! Does next Friday work?"

He pockets his phone without responding.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. SPACESHIP - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS - NIGHT

Space Captain Timothy sits at his desk, glancing over the captain's log. There's a KNOCK at the door. He answers it.

The DOOR SLIDES OPEN with a HISS, revealing Olivia. She's like something out of a 1950s B-list sci-fi-movie -- herself, but with green skin, a skimpy minidress, and a third boob.

OLIVIA

Captain, the engineers say we don't have much time before we make direct impact with that asteroid.

TIMOTHY

And there's no way to divert course?

OLIVIA

None whatsoever. But I... I find myself not caring much if it means I get to spend the last few moments of my life cycle with you.

They kiss. When he pulls back, Hema is visible -- as herself, with normal proportions -- between them.

HEMA

Captain -- Timothy. Are you sure this is what you want?

TIMOTHY

Why does everyone keep asking me that? Yes! I'm sure.

To prove it, he pulls Olivia toward him and they resume making out. As they go at it, we see flashes of Olivia's second tongue.

Hema clears her throat. They ignore her. She keeps trying to get Timothy's attention.

HEMA

She's not real, man! I mean, she's real, but not to you.

OLIVIA

Ignore her, Captain. I've never been more real.

(beat)

I will need to shut down my ovulation protocol if we wish to copulate before the next lunar cycle.

She begins unzipping her minidress, which opens in the front. Timothy stares, transfixed. Hema rolls her eyes.

HEMA

Oh, come on! Seriously? I... can't compete with that. I barely have two boobs. I keep praying I'll be reincarnated with huge cans, but honestly? I wouldn't bank on it.

OLIVIA

See? Even she admits she is the lesser specimen. Why would you wish to mate with someone whose hips are so weak and structurally unsound?

HEMA

Excuse me -- ! No -- Timothy, what do you want? Seriously. You have to decide. Because I have not exactly been subtle about where I stand --

This is all too much. Timothy cracks. He jams his eyes shut and when he opens them again, only Hema remains. Arms crossed, she looks at him impatiently.

Timothy takes two confident strides forward, plants his hands firmly on her hips, and crushes his lips to hers.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - TIMOTHY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Timothy jolts up in bed, breathing heavy, a terrified look in his eyes. His room is dark -- it's night. He shakes his head as if clearing his mind like an Etch-A-Sketch.

He reaches for his phone on the nightstand and texts back a response to Olivia.

TIMOTHY (TEXT)

Friday works for me. Meet you there!

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

A.) INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - DAY

Timothy sits on the couch in front of the TV eating cereal. Kevin races down the steps.

KEVIN

Dub T, it's D-Day -- delts, bro.

Timothy holds up his bowl and shakes his head. Kevin looks disappointed.

B.) INT. PENNSYLVANIA DMV - DAY

Timothy's on the phone as he transcribes a call.

TIMOTHY

(on the phone)

So you're upset because... you were ticketed for going... thirty over in a school zone because... speed limits don't apply because they're designed by... pinko Commie bastards. Got it.



His PHONE BUZZES.

CAMERON (TEXT)  
SOS Adam's weak lawyer arms are no  
match for all these tables.

Timothy glances at his notebook stashed away on the corner of his desk. He types a response.

TIMOTHY (TEXT)  
Sorry can't they're keeping us late  
at work 🙄🐱

He takes his messenger bag and discreetly leaves.

C.) INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - TIMOTHY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Still in work clothes, Timothy collapses face first on his bed.

His phone BUZZES. He looks at it.

INSERT - PHONE SCREEN

A text from Hema. "HEY, SORRY IF I CAME OFF A LITTLE STRONG LAST WEEK. YOU'RE MY FRIEND. I JUST WANNA SEE YOU THRIVE." Three dots, then: "WANNA GRAB APOLOGY TANDOORI CHICKEN LATER? MY TREAT."

BACK TO SCENE

Timothy ignores it, tosses the phone on his pillow.

INT. SWANKY BAR - NIGHT

SMOOTH JAZZ PLAYS over the sound system. GLASSES CLINK while good looking people in cocktail attire make small talk.

Hema and Kevin sit at one of the tables. They're both dressed up, looking like total snacks. Kevin laughs at something Hema said and briefly covers her hand with his.

KEVIN  
I'm glad we're finally doing this.  
I'm just sorry it took this long.  
Work has been kind of crazy.

HEMA  
Your work. Remind me again... ?

Kevin smiles at her easily.

KEVIN  
You want another round?

He waves over their waitress. As he does so, his bicep bunches through his suit jacket. Hema bites her lip before she lets her head sink into her folded arms on the table.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
(to the waitress)  
Excuse me! Can we -- ?

Hema lifts her head up.

HEMA  
No, Kevin. Kevin? I can't.

KEVIN  
Oh. Is something wrong, or... ?

HEMA  
Nothing's wrong. This has been great.  
Like, really great. And you're --  
(sighs, frustrated)  
-- literally a hottie with a body --

KEVIN  
(deeply flattered)  
Thank you.

HEMA  
-- But I... I'm kind of into Timothy?

KEVIN  
Oh --

HEMA  
-- And I just can't --

KEVIN  
(realization)  
Oh, God -- Timothy is my best friend.  
I would never --

He cuts himself off, realizing how this might sound to Hema.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
Not that you're not desirable and  
deserving of love --

HEMA  
Oh, um, thank... you -- ?

KEVIN  
If this were another time and place --

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
 -- I would respectfully  
 motorboat the hell out of  
 those.

HEMA  
 -- I would climb you like a  
 damn tree.

They smile at each other, understanding. Hema subconsciously puffs her chest out a bit more.

KEVIN (CONT'D)  
 Exactly. But Timothy's my bro. I -- I  
 screwed everything up.

HEMA  
 How?

Kevin hangs his head, another broath broken.

KEVIN  
 Well... I'm the one that convinced  
 him to ask out Olivia.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - LATER

Cameron and Adam make paper flowers at a table as Hema bursts in, mascara streaks visible. The two look up, alarmed.

CAMERON  
 Hema! What's wrong? Did -- ?

HEMA  
 Timothy asked Olivia out.

Cameron and Adam exchange a knowing look. Hema remains frozen in place. Adam cautiously approaches her.

ADAM  
 Why does that matter?

When her eyes land on Cameron, no words are necessary. Cameron rushes to her side and pulls her into a hug.

Hema immediately crumbles, sobbing into her shoulder. Adam gives Cameron a questioning, slightly alarmed look.

HEMA  
 I just... I like him so much.

Cameron pulls her in tighter, giving Adam an answering look. He nods and pats Hema's back unsure, trying to be soothing.

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - TIMOTHY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Timothy gets ready for his date. He stands in front of his mirror, trying to decide between two nice shirts.

Kevin slides to a halt at the door, out of breath.

KEVIN

Bro! You can't go out with Olivia.

TIMOTHY

What? No way! That's the opposite of what you told me last week.

KEVIN

No, bro, listen. I was on a date with Hema --

Timothy whips around, shirts forgotten, his anger palpable.

TIMOTHY

You WHAT?

KEVIN

Well, you never outright said you were into her, and we got to talking, which led to drinks -- but nothing happened! I swear. Never would have anyway because she's totally into --

TIMOTHY

No, stop! I'm done overthinking this! I don't need your help, or -- or your wingmanning. I've got this, man. Thanks, but no thanks --  
(sarcastic)  
-- bro.

That hits. Kevin holds up both hands and slinks out into the hallway, absolutely stung.

INT. RESTAURANT - NIGHT

A nice restaurant. Nothing five-star, but certainly a stretch for someone with Timothy's income.

He sits alone at a table for two. His wine glass nearing empty. A WAITER stops by.

WAITER

Sir, I'm sure your... guest will be here, but we have a strict policy for reserving tables.

TIMOTHY

Oh, she'll definitely be here. She's just running late.

The waiter gives him a look that says, "Sure, Jan" before he walks away. Timothy strains to clearly see the entrance.

Finally, he catches sight of Olivia. He stands up and waves at her, but on the way up, his knee knocks the table. He saves the wine, but the other guests look at him, disgusted.

She sees him, waggles her fingers in return, and walks over to his table.

There's an awkward moment where they can't figure out the greeting -- she goes hug, he goes handshake. But eventually, she kisses him on the cheek. They each take their seat.

OLIVIA

I'm so glad we're doing this.

TIMOTHY

Yeah, me too.

OLIVIA

I mean, I'll be honest. I didn't remember. But after I read your stories -- which were so sweet by the way, and like, I am so flattered -- I remembered. You ran track, right?

Timothy's face falls.

TIMOTHY

No, that was Timothy Rodriguez, and he was six foot four.

(beat)

And... also Dominican.

INT. GRUBER'S TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Hema, Cameron, Adam, and Kevin are in the same booth from semi-finals. The Trivia Leader walks up.

TRIVIA MASTER

Laghari, don't you have one more player? That, uh, tall, awkward one?

HEMA

Nope. It's just us. Let's do this.

## INT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Timothy and Olivia sit in slightly awkward silence as they eat. He clears his throat. Sweat stains are visible through his blazer under his arms.

TIMOTHY

So, uh... I saw on Instagram you have two sisters?

OLIVIA

Huh?

(beat)

Oh! No, those were just two models I hired to look like my sisters. Metrics show that accounts with perceived family relations have a higher follower rate.

TIMOTHY

Oh, uh... that's a shame. My sister has been a huge life raft for me. When my parents split, she was --

OLIVIA

Could you move a little to the left?

He obliges. She turns around, primps, then snaps a selfie.

OLIVIA (CONT'D)

The lighting is really good in here.

## INT. GRUBER'S TAVERN - CONTINUOUS

The group listens in as the Trivia Master asks the next question.

TRIVIA MASTER

The experimental colony where the Alliance tried to chemically induce peace in the movie Serenity.

KEVIN

This is all Dub-T.

HEMA

Yeah, well, he's not here.

Adam gives it a shot.

ADAM

Is it Endor?

Hema glares at him.

INT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Timothy sits with his chin in his hand, mouth agape, as he listens to Olivia.

OLIVIA

So yeah, then I became an Instagram influencer, but before that, I rode with the Property Brothers for a bit.

(conspiratorially)

Turns out, they're just one person, and they just Parent Trap him to make it look like two.

TIMOTHY

Wow. That's -- That's a thing you said.

A different waiter approaches their table. It's -- Cody?

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Cody? What are you doing here?

CODY

I, uh, work nights.

TIMOTHY

Oh.

Cody sets a replacement bread basket on the table.

CODY

If you need anything else, just --

Olivia looks up from her phone and freaks at the bread.

OLIVIA

(to Cody)

What is wrong with you? I specifically told the last waiter that I'm gluten free... by choice. What are you, fat and dumb?

CODY

Uh, sorry. I, uh --

OLIVIA

(mocking)

Duh-duh-duh -- where is your manager?

CODY

I can go...

Cody takes the bread basket with him as he retreats, but Olivia has caused such a scene that the MANAGER is already at their table.

MANAGER

Excuse me, Miss. What seems to -- ?

OLIVIA

I want that fat guy fired.

TIMOTHY

Olivia, that's --

MANAGER

That seems a bit extreme.

OLIVIA

Oh, I'm sorry -- does being the manager of a cut-rate restaurant make you smart enough to make that call? Because from my end, I'm the one paying here.

The manager hesitates before he turns to Cody. Quietly --

MANAGER

Go ahead and pack up.

Humiliated, Cody retreats, avoiding Timothy's gaze.

MANAGER (CONT'D)

Apologies for the evening, Miss.

OLIVE

Yeah, fine. Whatever. Can we get a free appetizer?

The manager nods and heads to the kitchen. Timothy stares at her in disbelief. His hands balling into fists.

OLIVIA

God, what a loser.

She goes back to eating, but Timothy finally explodes.

TIMOTHY

No! Olivia, you're the loser.

OLIVIA

Excuse me?



TIMOTHY

Yeah, you're a monster! You got a guy fired for doing his damn job.

(beat)

This whole time I thought you were what I was looking for, but I think I already found that in my family. And my roommate. And... Hema.

OLIVIA

Who the hell is Hema?

Timothy's on a roll. He abruptly stands and throws his cloth napkin to the table. He thinks better of it -- he can't afford a replacement -- and neatly folds it.

He looks down at the table as he talks, too afraid he'll chicken out otherwise. Some of the nearby guests listen in.

TIMOTHY

Just this really kind and incredible girl who's brave and calls me out on my crap. And I'm... pretty sure I'm in love with her. Only, my head's been so far up my own ass, I haven't told her. And instead of honoring a commitment I made to her, I'm here on this horrible date with you. But I --

When he finally does look up, Olivia is over at the bar, flirting with a super handsome dude. He seems to be into it. She takes a selfie with both of them in it.

As Timothy glances around, it finally sets in how disruptive he's been. He tries offering a few weak, apologetic smiles.

Nearby, an ECCENTRIC ELDERLY WOMAN (70s) in a mink stole pipes up.

ECCENTRIC ELDERLY WOMAN

What are you waiting for, young man?  
Go after the oriental woman you love!

EXT. RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

He starts to call an Uber when he spots an abandoned bicycle.

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

Timothy pedals like his life depends on it, tie and suit jacket flapping in the breeze.

Snow and slush spits up as he rides. It's freezing. He did not think this through.

EXT. GRUBER'S TAVERN - LATER

Timothy skids to a halt, red-faced and completely out of breath. He stashes the bike and tries the door. Locked. He POUNDS on it impatiently.

Finally, one of the BOUNCERS (40s, jacked) opens it. He blocks the entrance, arms crossed.

BOUNCER

Sorry, mate. Back of the bar's closed for trivia finals.

TIMOTHY

No, you... you don't understand. My team Drop Dead Shiva is in there --

BOUNCER

Why aren't you in there with 'em?

TIMOTHY

Be... Because I'm an idiot. Look, man --

He SLAMS the DOOR in Timothy's face. Refusing to give up, Timothy POUNDS on the DOOR again.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Hema! Hema! Hema...!

Finally, she comes outside. She does not look happy.

HEMA

What the -- hell, man? You know I'm already on thin ice here.

TIMOTHY

I'm sorry. I had to tell you, I -- went on a date with Olivia.

HEMA

You came all the way here to tell me that?

TIMOTHY

Yes -- I mean, no! Not just that. Turns out she's terrible, by the way. Just self-absorbed and rude and shallow. An absolute b --

HEMA

You're a piece of work, Tim. You bail on trivia. Then you drag me out here to tell me how bad your date was?

TIMOTHY

No, no, listen! The whole thing finally made me realize I never loved Olivia. It's you, Hema. I lo --

HEMA

I just needed you to show up, man!

Timothy falls silent, startled by her outburst. Hema's eyes are bright with tears.

HEMA (CONT'D)

I mean... you gave me your word and then bailed. And I know trivia is stupid. But it was important to me! And now you're here telling me you love me because, what? The chick from high school didn't meet your weird, unrealistic fantasy expectations?

TIMOTHY

Hema, c'mon. That's not --

HEMA

God, I'm such a loser. I thought...  
(beat, vulnerable)

I thought between all the rides and how much time we were spending together that you were -- that we were friends, at least --

TIMOTHY

We are friends!

HEMA

Apparently not, dude! Because real friends don't lie. And they sure as hell don't treat people they care about like pawns or-or characters in one of their stupid stories.

(beat)

You won't quit your job. You won't finish your short story. And you won't ask me out until you literally have no other options.

(beat)

... You're an asshole, Tim.

He stands there frozen, a mixture of pain and guilt visible on his face. He has no idea what to say.

TIMOTHY

Hema... I --

HEMA

We lost, by the way. Hope she was worth it.

She walks back into Gruber's, the door closing behind her.

EXT. ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

Timothy pedals furiously through the bitter cold night.

EXT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

He pulls into the drive thru lane.

EXT. FAST FOOD RESTAURANT - DRIVE THRU WINDOW - CONTINUOUS

The same pimply faced teen from the beginning looks shocked, but not by the fact that Timothy's not in a car.

PIMPLY FACED TEEN

Timothy! What's up? You haven't been around in forever. Did you order -- ?

TIMOTHY

Do you think I'm a bad person?

PIMPLY FACED TEEN

Huh?

TIMOTHY

Do I strike you as a bad friend?

The teen has to think on it a moment. He looks down.

PIMPLY FACED TEEN

I wouldn't say "mean," but... in the two years you've been coming here, you never once asked what my name is.

TIMOTHY

(to himself)

Yikes...

(beat, earnest)

I'm so sorry. What is your name?

PIMPLY FACED TEEN  
Oh, I never tell people. Too  
embarrassing.

EXT. ROAD - MOMENTS LATER

This time, Timothy rides much more leisurely.

As the opening notes of Skeeter Davis' "The End of the World" play, his face becomes increasingly despondent.

The song continues playing through --

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - MONTAGE - VARIOUS

A.) Timothy in the kitchen. A plethora of junk food is laid out before him on the counter. He selects the cans of spray cheese and whipped cream and sprays both into his mouth

Kevin looks on, horrified.

B.) Timothy huddled up in a blanket on the couch with the same dual cans. He's in an old t-shirt and running shorts with a few weeks worth of scruff on his face.

A tear rolls down his cheek as he eats. REVERSE ANGLE on the TV to show he's watching The Nine Lives of Christmas. He quotes along with the movie.

TIMOTHY  
"How many more clues do you need?"

C.) Timothy has a full on beard now. He's in the same get up from the last shot, plus a few orange food stains.

He sits down at his desk and exhales as if he has nothing left. We see his notebook, but he doesn't grab it. Instead, he puts his headphones on and pulls his phone out.

INSERT - PHONE SCREEN

Podcast player. An obnoxious image of Cody beaming and flashing finger guns with "WATCH ME LEADERSHIP, WATCH ME NAE NAE" superimposed over it. It's about half way through.

BACK TO SCENE

Timothy hits play.

CODY (O.S.)  
 (through the headphones)  
 -- Leadership is all about taking  
 ownership for your shortcomings --  
 both personal and professional. It's  
 about making tough choices. Let's  
 look at my apprentice... Winnothy.  
 Now, Winnothy's biggest issue is  
 blaming everyone else for his  
 problems --

Timothy sits back and takes this in -- the same thing Hema  
 said. He throws his head back and glances at his notebook.

Is he ready for this?

INT. PENNSYLVANIA DMV - DAY

Still bearded, Timothy sits at his desk, not really listening  
 to the MUFFLED YELLING on the other end of his call.

When Cody walks past, he rips his headset off and sets off  
 after him.

TIMOTHY  
 Hey, Cody!

ANOTHER CUBICLE - CONTINUOUS

Cody looks back. When he sees it's Timothy, he freezes. Their  
 power dynamic has shifted since the restaurant debacle.

CODY  
 Oh, uh, hey, Trout.

TIMOTHY  
 Listen, I --

CODY  
 What can I do for you?

TIMOTHY  
 I'm... sorry about what happened at  
 The Burg. Olivia was an ass. But I  
 was wrong, too. I should have said  
 something, and I didn't, and I'm just  
 ... I'm so sorry you got fired, Cody.

Cody squirms. He looks uncomfortable for all of two seconds  
 before seamlessly shifting back to his regular self.

CODY  
 Episode six, half hour in, right?

Despite himself, Timothy grins.

TIMOTHY

Yeah, I finally listened to it.  
You've got some solid stuff in there.

(beat)

And it's made me realize I... I have  
to quit this job.

Rather than be offended, Cody nods sagely.

CODY

I knew this day would come  
eventually. We'll miss you, Trout.  
Just remember -- some are born great,  
some achieve greatness, and some just  
have to Tom Clancy black ops that  
shit into submission.

TIMOTHY

That's... thank you, Cody.

They shake hands. Gladys pours one out into her Big Gulp and  
cheers to him.

EXT. CAMERON'S APARTMENT - DAY

Hands shoved in his pocket, Timothy loiters outside Cameron's  
place until he can muster up some courage.

Finally, he knocks.

INT. CAMERON'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Cameron's on the couch, engrossed in the episode of "Say Yes  
to the Dress" currently playing. Over her shoulder --

CAMERON

Adam, can you grab that?

Dutifully, he abandons his textbook and honors her request.  
He reaches for the handle, only to be met by Timothy.

He waves lamely when Adam's mouth seems incapable of closing.

ADAM

Tim. What are you -- how are you  
doing?

TIMOTHY

Uh... honestly? I've been better.

CAMERON (O.S.)  
Who is it?

ADAM  
(to Cameron)  
It's your brother.  
(to Timothy)  
Wanna come in?

Timothy nods. He makes his way to the couch and sits further away from Cameron than normal. She's cold in her reception.

CAMERON  
Hey. What are you doing here?

TIMOTHY  
I owe both of you an apology. I  
promised I'd help with all the  
wedding stuff, and then I bailed.  
(to Cameron)  
You deserve way better. I've been a  
crappy brother, and I'm sorry.

She scoots over and covers one of his hands with hers.

CAMERON  
I... forgive you.  
(beat)  
But you owe me so much free labor.

He pulls her into a hug, squeezing tight.

TIMOTHY  
I'm good for it.

CAMERON  
I mean all the free labor you --

TIMOTHY  
Yeah, geez, I get it.

CAMERON  
I'm glad you're back.

TIMOTHY  
... I'm sure you know my date with  
Olivia was --

CAMERON  
We know. She was not kind to you on  
Instagram.



TIMOTHY

I tried to tell Hema how I feel, and  
I messed that up, probably beyond  
repair --

ADAM

Oh, we definitely know.

His response has more ire than expected. They look at him.

ADAM (CONT'D)

What? She's my friend, too.

TIMOTHY

-- Plus, I'm pretty sure Kevin never  
wants to talk to me again.

ADAM

Man, you don't half ass failure at  
all, do you?

TIMOTHY

Not helping.

CAMERON

You have to fix things, Timothy. You  
have to apologize and make amends.  
Just look at Mom and Dad. They got  
back together, and --

TIMOTHY

They what?

CAMERON

How did you not hear? They ran into  
each other at Club Med, and the  
trainer Mom was revenge dating left  
her for the tennis instructor Dad was  
normal dating. They posted some  
pretty nauseating pics on Instagram.  
Called it their "second honeymoon."

TIMOTHY

So they're not coming to the wedding?

CAMERON

Consider it a gift. Do you really  
want to see Mom and Dad go at it?

TIMOTHY

God, no. And also -- God, thank you.

EXT. CAMERON'S APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Timothy sets off down the hall.

ADAM (O.S.)  
Tim, wait!

Timothy turns to see Adam jogging to catch up to him.

TIMOTHY  
Everything okay?

ADAM  
Yeah, definitely.  
(beat)  
I haven't had a chance to ask yet  
because you temporarily became an  
absolute goblin --

TIMOTHY  
That's... fair.

ADAM  
-- But would you be my best man?  
(rambling)  
It's just I'm an only child, and law  
school has kind of cut me off from a  
lot of my other friends. But I love  
your sister, and I never expected  
we'd jive like we have. You're like  
family to me, the little brother --

TIMOTHY  
-- We're the same age.

ADAM  
-- that I never had. So will you?

TIMOTHY  
Yeah, man. I'm -- that's...  
(beat)  
Thank you.

Adam tries to shake on it, but Timothy pulls him into a hug.

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - NIGHT

Kevin sits on the couch, flipping through some kind of spy  
gadget magazine when Timothy walks through the front door.

KEVIN

Hey, br --

(beat)

Timothy. How was your sister's?

TIMOTHY

It was fine.

The ensuing silence is suffocating until Timothy can't take it anymore.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

Kevin -- Dub K, I'm so sorry. For everything, man. You were just trying to help, and I... I'm sorry for taking our breath in vain.

Kevin puts his magazine down, but he remains silent.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

I love that you call me "bro." It makes me feel like family. And I love that we're roommates because like Brandon Routh and the vet chick, it feels like we've built a home --

(choked up)

-- both physically and metaphorically.

KEVIN

Bro. I --

There are no words adequate enough. Kevin shoots up out of his seat at the same time Timothy starts walking toward him.

They meet in the middle and hug it out in the most over the top masculine display of affection.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

I'm the one that should be sorry, Dub T. I never should've asked out Hema --

TIMOTHY

No way. I'm the one that didn't say anything.

KEVIN

Yeah, but I've seen enough Hallmark movies to know better. You were scared. How could you admit to me what you couldn't admit to yourself?

TIMOTHY

Thanks, man. We're square. Promise.

He sinks into the couch.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)  
I screwed it all up, though. She  
wants nothing to do with me.

KEVIN  
Nuh-uh. No way.

TIMOTHY  
What?

KEVIN  
I don't buy it. I've seen when love  
dies, and this ain't it, bro.

TIMOTHY  
Then what do I do?

KEVIN  
I'm gonna help you win her back, bro.  
(beat)  
Commence Operation Gyne Time.

TIMOTHY (PRELAP)  
Eww. Dude, you gotta stop with the  
whole --

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - TIMOTHY'S ROOM - DAY

Timothy sits on his bed, phone to his ear.

KEVIN (V.O.)  
Never. Now, the first thing you need  
to do is apologize.

SPLITSCREEN OF TIMOTHY AND HEMA IN THEIR RESPECTIVE ROOMS.

On the left, Timothy's mouth moves as he speaks, but we hear  
the actual voicemail.

On the right, Hema listens to the voicemail in real time,  
wrestling with her feelings.

TIMOTHY (V.O.)  
(voicemail)  
Hema. Hi. I'm sure I'm the last  
person you want to talk to, but I  
wanted to say I'm sorry. You were  
right. I am a coward, and I never  
took your feelings into  
consideration. I'm just... I'm sorry.

SFX: VOICEMAIL END BEEP

Timothy hangs up.

BACK TO NORMAL SCREEN

Hema's looks at her phone, deciding. A few tears fall as she deletes the message and tosses her phone.

INT. CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - PATIENT ROOM - DAY

Hema talks to her patient -- a YOUNG GIRL in a hospital bed hooked up to all number of tubes. She smiles as Hema starts making funny faces and gesticulating wildly.

KEVIN (V.O.)

Next, you need to make a grand gesture. Demonstrate how much she means to you.

TIMOTHY (O.S.)

Hema!

Through the room's window, Hema sees Timothy standing in the vestibule. He has a huge bouquet of flowers in one hand and a ridiculous number of balloons in the other.

YOUNG GIRL

(to Hema)

Is that your boyfriend?

Hema shakes her head wildly. She picks up the phone and calls security. Her words are drowned out by Timothy's voicemail.

TIMOTHY (O.S.)

(voicemail)

Still not picking up? That's okay. I get it. More than anything, I just -- I miss you Hema. Call me back.

SFX: VOICEMAIL END BEEP

When Hema hangs up, she looks back out the window. Timothy's still there, smiling, arms wide, until someone enters the vestibule through the front revolving door.

A massive GUST of WIND is trapped in the door and creates a kind of suction vortex. Timothy is physically dragged backward as his balloons get caught in the door.

INT. CONVENTION CENTER - DAY

A bunch of nerds in costumes wait in line. A giant poster with Chris Pine's headshot on it reads: "TODAY: MEET & GREET". A few security guards block off a curtained area.

KEVIN (V.O.)

Then, you have to do something that reminds her you care about what she cares about.

Timothy pays off a kid dressed as a Ninja Turtle to cause a distraction.

As the security guards abandon their post to deal with the now crying kid, Timothy slips past the curtain.

CURTAINED OFF AREA - CONTINUOUS

CHRIS PINE sits on a stool, deeply engrossed in something on his phone. An aura of light literally radiates around him. Timothy freezes, then forces himself to breathe.

TIMOTHY

Chris -- Uh, Mr. Pine?

Chris Pine looks up. He gives a warm smile.

CHRIS PINE

Mr. Pine was my father. Please, call me Chris Pine.

(beat)

You look troubled. How can I help?

TIMOTHY

Well, see, I had this friend, who is a huge fan of yours --

CHRIS PINE

-- They usually are.

TIMOTHY

-- And I like her. Like, really like her. But I screwed everything up, and I thought -- maybe if I could get you to FaceTime her...

Chris reaches out and places a hand on Timothy's shoulder.

CHRIS PINE

Of course. What a gift to help reconcile true love.

Just then, both of the security guards from earlier walk in past the curtain.

The guards see Timothy --

TIMOTHY (V.O.)  
(voicemail)  
So I... I met Chris Pine today --

-- and tackle him out of frame.

SPLITSCREEN OF TIMOTHY AND HEMA.

On the left, Timothy goes down, revealing the real source of Chris Pine's aura: an assistant holding a light behind him.

On the right,

INT. HEMA'S PLACE - DAY

Hema clutches one of her Chris Pine body pillows, crying, as she listens to Timothy's voicemail. Empty ice cream containers surround her.

TIMOTHY (V.O.)  
(voicemail)  
-- and you were right. He does smell like pine. And something... citrus-y? Anyway, all I could think was "Hema should be here" and you weren't. And... this sucks. Not hanging out with you, I mean. Just... would you call me back? Please?

SFX: VOICEMAIL END BEEP

BACK TO NORMAL SCREEN

EXT. HEMA'S PLACE - NIGHT

In a trench coat, Timothy stands outside Hema's building holding a stereo blasting Peter Gabriel's "In Your Eyes."

KEVIN (V.O.)  
And if all else fails, bro, you can always try outright humiliation.

When nothing happens, he bumps the volume up super loud.

A HORNDOG OLD LADY on the floor below Hema's opens her window and leans out of it.

HORNDOG OLD LADY  
Oh, yes. Take it off, young man!

TIMOTHY  
What?  
(realizing)  
No! I'm not here to strip, ma'am.

Finally, Hema comes to her window and opens it.

HEMA  
Timothy -- what the hell?

TIMOTHY  
Hema! I've been trying to call you.

HEMA  
I know. I've been ignoring you!

TIMOTHY  
I'm sorry --

HEMA  
Just -- go home, man.

A cop car with flashing lights slowly approaches. Its SIRENS give a short WHOOP WHOOP before it comes to a stop.

Timothy rushes to shove his stereo into his car.

TIMOTHY  
I'm here. Whenever you're ready, just call or text or -- oh, shit!

He gets into his car and peels out. The elderly woman tracks Timothy's car. She's all smiles.

HORNDOG OLD LADY  
I'll have what she's having!

HEMA  
There is no having, Mrs. Shafer!

She slams her window shut.

TIMOTHY (V.O.)  
(voicemail)  
Kevin says if you haven't responded by now, it's likely a lost cause. But I just... I miss you, Hema.

SFX: VOICEMAIL END BEEP



EXT. CORNER CAFE - DAY

Cameron and Hema on their respective lunch breaks.

CAMERON

So... have you talked to him yet?

HEMA

He left me fifty-seven voicemails.  
Three of them were just him trying to  
rap Hamilton.

(beat)

Listen, I know he's your brother and  
everything, but it... still hurts,  
y'know? I don't want to be his -- or  
anyone's -- consolation prize.

CAMERON

Timothy is the most relationally  
inept person I've ever met. But I  
also know he's... trying?

(beat)

So maybe -- when you feel like you  
can -- maybe hear him out?

HEMA

I'll... think about it.

INT. SWOLE AND VOID - DAY

As Timothy works out, he spots the woman whose number Kevin  
refused. Timothy sets his weights aside and approaches her.

TIMOTHY

I don't know if you remember me --

STUNNING PATRON

You were with that super emotional  
guy. The one that shot me down.

(beat)

What's his deal anyway? Is he, like,  
your boyfriend or something? It's  
cool if he is, I just thought --

TIMOTHY

No, he's not my boyfriend. He just  
cares. A lot. Way more than I think  
I'm capable of. He turned you down  
out of some misguided sense of  
loyalty to me, but he was -- is --  
super into you.

This immediately changes her demeanor.

STUNNING PATRON

Oh my God, do you think?

Even as she says this, she hands him her phone. He takes it and starts entering Kevin's number.

TIMOTHY

I do, which is why I'm giving you his number. Call him.

STUNNING PATRON

Thank you, I --

TIMOTHY

-- And if you break his heart, I will... write you a strongly worded letter. Got it?

She nods, mildly threatened.

INT. KEVIN'S PLACE - TIMOTHY'S ROOM - DAY

The day of the wedding. Timothy stands in front of the mirror. He's clean shaven, put together -- he looks good.

Kevin stops in and claps him on the back.

KEVIN

Lookin' good, bro. I gotta bounce and pick up my date.

TIMOTHY

How -- ?

KEVIN

Oh, I always check plus one. Hasn't failed yet.

(beat)

See you there, Dub T.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - GROOM'S ROOM - DAY

Adam straightens his own tie. He works on his breathing. The DOOR CLICKS open as Timothy enters.

TIMOTHY

You ready?

ADAM

Nervous as hell, but yes. I'm ready.

Timothy claps him on the back. As he's about to leave--

ADAM (CONT'D)  
Hey, Cameron refuses to see me before  
the ceremony. Would you mind -- ?

TIMOTHY  
Checking in on her? No problem.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Timothy walks brusquely on his search for Cameron. He's so  
focused, he nearly bumps into Hema.

She's stunning in her bridesmaid dress. Timothy swallows and  
tries to keep his palms from sweating.

TIMOTHY  
Oh, sorry! I'm just --

HEMA  
Yeah, I'm just grabbing Cameron  
water, so...

TIMOTHY  
You, uh... you look beaut --

HEMA  
She was asking about you.

TIMOTHY  
Thanks.  
(beat)  
Um, look --

HEMA  
Later, Tim. We can talk... later.

TIMOTHY  
Good -- I mean... good.

She pats his arm awkwardly as she slips past.

INT. WEDDING VENUE - BRIDE'S ROOM - DAY

Cameron fusses over her veil and dress. She's a lot more  
nervous than Adam. Timothy KNOCKS and enters.

TIMOTHY  
Cam, what's -- ?

Cameron doesn't bother with prelude, just launches into it.

CAMERON

What if this is a huge mistake? What  
if we turn into Mom and Dad --

TIMOTHY

Who are back together and keep  
posting boomerangs of them both  
making out on Instagram Stories?

Cameron laughs. He squats down, eye level with her seated.

TIMOTHY (CONT'D)

They are not you and Adam. Okay? Love  
finds a way. ... Or something.

CAMERON

Okay. ... Eloquent as ever, Tim.

Cameron sniffs and dabs at her eyes to keep her tears from  
messing up her makeup.

CAMERON (CONT'D)

I'm really proud of you. You've  
screwed up a lot, but you're trying,  
and you're growing.

(beat)

I love you so much.

Timothy reaches out and squeezes her hand.

TIMOTHY

I love you, too, Cam.

(beat)

You look beautiful. Let's get you  
married, huh?

INT. WEDDING VENUE - CEREMONY - DAY

Adam and Cameron stand up at the front, with Timothy and Hema  
flanking them respectively.

Timothy looks out into the crowd and spots Kevin. He's seated  
next to the hot chick from the gym. They're holding hands.

Timothy then looks over at Hema. They share a look. Cameron  
manages a nervous smile in Adam's direction. He returns a  
warmer, more assured one and winks at her.

PASTOR

We're gathered here today...

INT. WEDDING VENUE - RECEPTION HALL - CONTINUOUS

SFX: CHAMPAGNE BOTTLE CORK POP

The new couple sits at a long table and kisses as everyone around them cheers. The rest of the room is filled with people mingling, dancing, and eating.

DOWN THE TABLE

Timothy cheers with the rest of them, but he catches Hema's gaze. She quickly looks away. He turns back to his food.

But then he hears the song change. It's Beyoncé's "Crazy in Love." Mind set, he walks over to Hema.

TIMOTHY  
Do you want to dance?

HEMA  
(laughs)  
No way. I don't dance.

TIMOTHY  
Neither do I.

Ignoring her protests, he pulls her out onto the dance floor.

DANCE FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

Things are awkward at first. They both stand there kind of bobbing, having to compensate for the volume of the music.

HEMA  
(yelling)  
I told you, man. I don't dance!

Timothy ignores her and begins unleashing a full arsenal of Embarrassing White Guy Dances. They receive a lot of dirty looks, but at least Hema's laughing now.

HEMA (CONT'D)  
(yelling)  
This is so embarrassing!  
(to the rest of the crowd)  
I don't know him!

He shrugs and continues humiliating himself. Hema bites her lip before she starts doing her own terrible dancing. They are not even remotely in sync.

Timothy catches his breath a moment and watches as Hema dances. He resumes his bad moves, taps her on the shoulder.

TIMOTHY  
(yelling)  
I'm sorry for bailing on trivia!

HEMA  
(yelling)  
What?

TIMOTHY  
(yelling)  
I'm sorry for being a shitty friend!

She stumbles to a stop. He joins her.

HEMA  
(yelling)  
It's... I forgive you.  
(beat)  
Friends?

Timothy wants so much more, but this is an olive branch he won't let slip out of his grasp.

TIMOTHY  
(yelling)  
Always.

They resume dancing, smiling.

EXT. WEDDING VENUE - NIGHT

Kevin, the hot chick from the gym, and Timothy throw rice as Cameron and Adam duck into a limo.

They watch it drive away, CANS CLANKING behind it.

KEVIN  
Dude, where's Hema?

TIMOTHY  
Oh, she had to leave. Early shift tomorrow. But we're friends again.

Kevin and his date both look unimpressed.

KEVIN  
Bro. Have I taught you nothing? That was the moment.

STUNNING PATRON  
That was totally the moment.

TIMOTHY  
How do you -- ?

KEVIN  
Oh, I filled her in on everything.  
(beat)  
Honestly, bro, I'm suffering the  
first case of second hand blue balls.

TIMOTHY  
So... I should tell her? How I feel?

YES! KEVIN YES! STUNNING PATRON

Timothy reaches for his phone and shoots a text to Hema.

TIMOTHY (TEXT)  
Hey, wanna go down to the pier after  
your shift tomorrow?

SMASH TO:

EXT. PIER - NIGHT

Ferris wheel, carousel, fried food -- a carnival in full swing. In a suit and tie, Timothy makes his way through the throng of people.

He's careful not to damage the bouquet of daisies in his hand as he slips past. He strains to see over the crowds.

Hema!

TIMOTHY

No response. He keeps pushing through until he reaches the base of the Ferris wheel.

HEMA (O.S.)  
Timothy!

He glances up, shielding his eyes from the colored lights.

TOP OF THE FERRIS WHEEL - CONTINUOUS

Hema waves down at him.

HEMA

I'm so sorry! I should have waited,  
but now the stupid thing is stuck!

DOWN ON THE GROUND - CONTINUOUS

Timothy glances at the operator's booth. Chris Pine -- wearing a fake goatee to match Cody's and dressed in a mechanic's coveralls -- works on getting the thing going again. He sees Timothy and flashes him a thumbs up.

At ease, Timothy looks up again, judging the distance between the top and where he is. He sets the bouquet on the ground. Then, he rolls up his sleeves and climbs the Ferris wheel.

TOP OF THE FERRIS WHEEL - CONTINUOUS

Hema watches as he scales the side and absolutely freaks.

HEMA

What the hell, man? You're gonna get  
yourself killed!

It should take longer, but somehow Timothy is at the top. She reaches out and steadies him as he climbs up into her bucket.

TIMOTHY

Hi.

HEMA

Um, hi. Next time, could you maybe  
wait for the ride to be fixed like a  
normal person?

TIMOTHY

Sorry, I couldn't wait.

(beat)

I'm so sorry. For everything, Hema. I  
didn't get a chance to say anything  
last night, but I'm in love with you.  
Would you... be my girlfriend?

HEMA

Yes! A thousand times yes!

Boston's "More Than a Feeling" crescendoes as Timothy sinks his hand in her hair and kisses her.

SMASH TO:



EXT. PIER - PICNIC TABLE - DAY

Frustrated, Timothy tears the page out of his notebook and crumbles it up. He stands to throw it in the trash, but hesitates. He glances at his notebook.

Mind made up, he tosses both in the garbage can.

EXT. PIER - CONTINUOUS

A sailboat sails by, completely untethered to the pier.

TIMOTHY'S POV

Hema sits on the edge, her back to him, her legs dangling off the side.

BACK TO SCENE

He wipes his palms off on his shorts. He's not slovenly, but not dressed up like at the wedding. Just regular Timothy.

As soon as he sets foot on the PIER, it CREAKS, and Hema turns to look up at him. She's also dressed more casually with no makeup. She's never looked prettier.

HEMA

Hey!

He sits down next to her. Their knees accidentally brush, but neither one rushes to pull away.

TIMOTHY

Hi.

They're silent for a moment as their legs swing in tandem.

HEMA

Um, thanks for the invite. It's beautiful out here.

TIMOTHY

Yeah, I, uh, I used to come out here all the time to --

(abruptly)

Hema, I like you. I mean, I've always liked you, but I like you as more than a friend. Do you... maybe feel... the same way?

HEMA

I... also like you as more than a friend.

TIMOTHY

Okay, that's -- cool. Good. I mean,  
that's... also good.

In silence, they both look out into the water, their grins --  
his giddy, hers small, but full of possibility -- visible.

HEMA

Tim, I... like you so much, but... I  
also think you might have some things  
to work through before we do... this.

She gestures between the two of them.

TIMOTHY

Things to work through?

HEMA

Well, there's the whole friend  
fiction thing, and how just a few  
months ago, you were convinced you  
were in love with someone else --

TIMOTHY

Oh. Right.

HEMA

-- Plus, what are you doing for work  
now?

TIMOTHY

(deflating)

I... I honestly don't know.

HEMA

See? But it's cool because I have my  
own hangups to sort out, too, y'know?  
So we'll sort out our stuff together.

TIMOTHY

Just not --

(emphasized)

-- together?

HEMA

Yeah, not right away, at least.

(beat)

But I'm definitely not going  
anywhere.

CLOSE ON their hands as Hema slowly moves her fingers until  
they're fully laced in his. Timothy glances down at them,  
then back up at Hema. She smiles at him, heart full.

This isn't how he thought it was going to go, but this is good. It might even be better.

TIMOTHY

Okay then.

HEMA

Okay then.

As they bask in each other and their decision, Kevin approaches in a hurry. He's dressed in a full on wet suit, and he's carrying a briefcase. He notes their clasped hands.

KEVIN

Noice. Knew you two would get there eventually.

HEMA

Kevin, where did you -- ?

KEVIN

Sorry, can't chat. I'm late for work.

He swan dives off the pier into the river, briefcase and all.

They track him as he surfaces and climbs up into a high end speedboat. He sheds his wetsuit, revealing a tux.

Timothy and Hema look at each other stunned before they burst into laughter. Kevin takes off in the speedboat.

HEMA

Okay, but what does he do?

TIMOTHY

I seriously have no idea.

As the camera pans back into an AERIAL SHOT --

HEMA (V.O.)

So, what's this new story about? The one you're writing?

TIMOTHY (V.O.)

It's... It's about this loser, Jeffrey Finklestein, who has to decide between living in reality or the fictional world he has created.

HEMA (V.O.)

Whoa... What does he decide?

TIMOTHY (V.O.)  
I'm not sure. But I think... I think  
he chooses reality. He has a lot  
anchoring him there.

HEMA (V.O.)  
Is there a side piece Finklestein?  
Because if you need inspiration --

TIMOTHY (V.O.)  
Absolutely not.

HEMA (V.O.)  
What? You could call her Karen...  
Whiteperson! No one would even know  
it was me.

TIMOTHY (V.O.)  
I would! Plus, I mentioned Jeffrey's  
a loser, right? There's no way he  
would, erm... y'know. Get with  
someone as cool and... as pretty as  
you.

HEMA (V.O.)  
Wait, are you flirting with me?

TIMOTHY (V.O.)  
I'm... definitely trying to.

HEMA (V.O.)  
Noice!

FADE TO BLACK.

END