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No Beef, No Filler, Just BALoney: My Approach to Truth in Screenwriting

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A Thesis

Presented to

the Faculty of the Humanities and Teacher Education Division

Pepperdine University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Fine Arts

by

Bryant Alexander Loney

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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

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

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DEDICATION

Dedicated to literally everybody except Betsy DeVos.

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No Beef, No Filler, Just BALoney: My Approach to Truth in Screenwriting

1. Artist's Statement

When I worked at a Barnes & Noble Booksellers in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a customer once asked me where our store kept the true books. I understood he meant nonfiction, but who am I to determine what is truth? Ray Bradbury wrote a stunningly written love letter to the quiet magic of childhood summers titled *Dandelion Wine*, but does the fact it is fiction make it any less real? In screenwriting, what of Geralt of Rivia in the *Witcher* franchise, the mystery solvers in *Scooby-Doo*, the *Bob's Burgers* family, and countless others?

Through my writing at Pepperdine, I believe I found, and spread, truth. In his “Year in Review” reflection of the 2017–18 academic year, former University President Andrew K. Benton stated, “We can search for the answers, but answers can be fleeting, while truth is universal,” and it is this sentiment I carried during my time here (“Pepperdine | 2018 Year in Review”). Similarly, Pepperdine’s Affirmation Statement proclaims “that truth, having nothing to fear from investigation, must be pursued relentlessly in every discipline” (“Mission, Vision, and Affirmation Statement”). Pepperdine fosters prolific and energized students who seek to not only better themselves as individuals but, in an understanding of their commitment to the pursuit of truth, to make the world a better place to live.

The MFA Program in Writing for Screen and Television takes the principles behind Pepperdine’s truth seeking and cultivates creative expression through the university’s distinctive blue-and-orange context of community, courage, and knowledge. Essential, though, is the collaborative aspect—one of the facets that allured me most to the screenwriting craft and Pepperdine as an institution. The program promotes the idea that truth in the medium comes not from the mere

cosmetic changes after an initial draft but in revisions based on the feedback of professionals, mentors, fellow students with their own voices, and leaders who demand a rethinking of the first pass—who require a reworking of the story until it is sharply defined. The most important lesson I learned in these three years is that artistry does not need to be in solitude; in true Pepperdinian nature, we learn, celebrate, and strive as one.

Under the guidance of professors such as Dr. Leslie Kreiner Wilson, Lynn Grant Beck, and Tom B. Provost, I focused on the study and application of screenwriting for young adult audiences. Pepperdine’s Affirmation Statement declares that “the quality of student life is a valid concern of the University”; the quality of programming for young adults, ages 13–18, is likewise important to me (“Mission...”). No two people enter a room as equals, and it would be foolish to pretend as such. So then I, as a creative, must recognize and cater to these differences rather than nullify them in a vain attempt at social cohesion, because it is this mindset that only serves to ensure that the status quo remains. That is not good screenwriting. That is not good enough for my audience.

So many of the voices we hear on television, online, and in the academic setting are based on a perspective that does not reflect the *whole* of the U.S. population, but rather what those in power have viewed to be the *ideal* for population. During this revolutionary time when the increased normalization of feminist rhetoric has a more prominent presence, gender asymmetry and a lack of diversity within our entertainment and media must be addressed. Writing is about truth, whether it be scripts or a thesis. I do not believe in merely giving in to “fake it till you make it”; I want to criticize what upsets me—an ethos I believe fits well within the program’s view of storytellers as cultural leaders.

Like MFA alumni Ted Nitschke, Eric Martin, and Michael Waldron, as well as Pepperdine alumnus David N. Weiss, I want to create entertainment that young people themselves want to see.

Whether it be through a live-action sitcom or a thirty-minute animated dramedy, I want to break down the myths surrounding kids and TV—the ideas that boys will not watch girl protagonists, that children only like fast-paced animation, that they only care about wacky violence and gratuitous anarchy. I believe too much of young-adult media today focuses on licensing and merchandising, formulaic structure, Cool with a capital C, analytics, and patronizing exclusivity rather than genuine inclusivity. I do not necessarily want to change teens or increase their reading scores, but I do want to create a show where, for thirty minutes, kids can take a break and get a break. Where kids can just be kids. I believe, within Pepperdine's MFA Program in Writing for Screen and Television, I built the foundation to accomplish this.

2. On Purposeful, Honest Screenwriting

Screenwriting should not be about the brilliance of language or the grandiloquence of design. Screenwriting should be about writing for the screen—the rest left to us as individuals. My scripts, no matter the subject, are personal to me, as I imagine yours are to you. My overarching themes are often identity, friendship, memory, young love, inclusivity, and the unknown, mixed with my snarky zillennial energy; these are the topics I am most concerned with, and so it is only natural they appear prominently in my work. Our aesthetics are shaped by the attitudes and viewpoints with which we surround ourselves, and these further serve to shape the way we perceive our writing in addition to the world. These viewpoints may often contradict each other—to be healthy, they should—and it is this that so often seems to drive young writers away from alternative opinions rather than seeking them out. In our opining, rarely do we actively encourage statements that negate or dare to deny ours; this process would make us feel alienated from the conversation, after all. Perhaps from ourselves. Yet such habits produce boring discourse, boring selves, boring

screenwriting. We must therefore look to foreignness and inquire within, as only then can our minds take shape and our scripts find a voice.

Screenwriting is meant to be an exploration of that which bothers the writer's mind. It is an idea, an image, a memory, a metaphor—and it strikes a thought that can only best be written as a visual blueprint for the screen, and then only best outside the limitations of prose, poetry, and playwriting. The narrative must originate from an embodied concept that does not rely simply on the human condition and further social commentary for the mere sake of it. Screenwriting is personal, yes; that much is clear. Yet it is the taking of the writer's footprints in the snow and then their placement onto the page—keeping in mind industry script standards—so the story becomes more than a collection of conversation pieces or platitudes. Writers must determine the importance of their lines by each sentence's reflection of these organized values, hopes, and statements. A screenplay must contain at least two of the three; without, the page might as well be empty.

In previous attempts to identify what makes a good story great, I only managed to isolate myself into a little pocket of mine, mine, mine: my genre preferences, my role models, my subjects of interest. While it is true my definition of screenwriting and your definition of screenwriting may indeed be similar—coming from mutual appreciations of William Goldman, Nora Ephron, Spike Lee, Mel Brooks, Sofia Coppola, David Lynch, and other members of the canon—Marcin Blacha, Sarah Bahbah, and Hayao Miyazaki might not agree, and yet they are screenwriters. Blacha taught me how a subversion of audience's expectations in video games is not only crucial to a gripping tale but, often, true to life; Bahbah's photography and subtitles allowed me to best understand how succinct, honest dialogue is key to relatability; and Miyazaki's anime opened my eyes to the wonders of heartfelt storytelling that can, and should, have an emphasis on deep psychology. In fact, Miyazaki says to hell with discussions, with debates, with it all; just get to the story.

3. Marcin Blacha and *The Witcher 3*

In lead writer Marcin Blacha's (2007–present) video game *The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt*, famed Geralt of Rivia turns the corner in the alleged free city of Novigrad to witness a couple of human thugs harassing an elf. Geralt intervenes, telling the men to leave her alone, to which they grudgingly step down and dismissively note Geralt's profession as a monster-slayer before they depart. Geralt then tells the elf she can relax now that the men have left, to which she replies that while this may be the case for him, she will always be subjected to racism and violence by humans. The player, as Geralt, has two dialogue options here, though neither are particularly helpful.

EXT. NOVIGRAD — PORTSIDE GATE — DAY

OPTION 1: “Nothing I can do about that.”

GERALT: Nothing I can do about that.

ELF: Then why get involved at all? You didn't scare those boors off for my sake but for your own. To feel just and noble. A knight on a swiveling white steed. Or do I have it all wrong?

OPTION 2: “You're welcome.”

GERALT: Stop, can't handle all this gratitude. We really oughta learn our manners from the Elder Races—that's plain to see.

ELF: What would you expect? Payment? Or am I to fall into your arms, perhaps spread my legs for you?!

(Blacha)

Either way, the elf ends the encounter by demanding Geralt, himself, should leave, reminding him, “We [elves] neither need nor want your pity” (Blacha).

Such is *The Witcher 3*, a 2015 fantasy role-playing game created by Polish developer CD Projekt RED and based on fantasy writer Andrzej Sapkowski's series of novels. Following the example of British chivalry and nobility, any other Western, morality-based game would have

rewarded the player with currency, pixelated sex, or a boost in stats for defending the elf, therefore missing the mark and ignoring truthful behavior. Not *The Witcher 3*. In resisting these preconceived ideals brought about by English romance, Blacha establishes a voice of his own, illustrating how a departure from English fantasy archetypes can forge a storytelling experience that is surprisingly genuine in its grounded portrayal of common life in a far-off, otherworldly environment.

In another example, Geralt stumbles upon a history professor who claims to be heading to the frontlines of battle to record the events for what he hopes to be his magnum opus.

INT. WHITE ORCHARD INN — DAY

OPTION 1: “Write about the war—what it’s really like.”

GERALT: Interesting. We need somebody to describe war—what it’s really like. Not colorful banners and generals making moving speeches, but rape, violence, and thoughtless cruelty.

PROFESSOR: I see you lack the polish of the academy. Rape and cruelty are details of no import[ance] to the war’s course. Trinkets on the garment of conflict.

GERALT: Tell that to the people whose houses burned down.

OPTION 2: “Go back to your books, while you still can.”

GERALT: Take my advice—go back to your books while you can. War’s no game. No faculty meetings to attend, no tenure to gain, endnotes to compile. First soldier you see’ll kill you.

PROFESSOR: Why would he do that? Me, a neutral civilian, a scholar—?

GERALT: Boots.

PROFESSOR: Come again?

GERALT: He’ll kill you for your boots.

(Blacha)

Patrick Lee concluded in his review of *The Witcher 3* for *The A.V. Club* that it is the game’s “dedication to hostility” that ties the narrative together, writing, “*Wild Hunt*’s world is often

beautiful to behold, but only because it beautifully frames its own ferocious ugliness” (Lee). This unattractiveness reverses the elements English Romanticism holds dear in favor of presenting a portrait of loss, injustice, hatred, greed, and—yes—truth. As Blacha’s humans replace monsters, the majesty of beast-slaying is a past glory. As soldiers of every flag rage war on the countryside, gone are greeneries and elegance. As women become empowered, they begin to long for more than a man—for themselves. In *The Witcher 3*, Blacha departs from the worn English fantasy archetypes I was taught as a child by transcending beyond myth and instead challenging expectations in the narrative’s displays of heroics and normalcy, no matter how unsettling.

4. Sarah Bahbah and *Summer Without a Pool* — *Season One*

In a different area of writing for the screen, Palestinian/Jordanian-Australian artist Sarah Bahbah (2015–present) explores feminism, sexuality, self-indulgence, and millennial culture in her series of photographs resembling film stills. Originally a photographer for music festivals, Bahbah became entranced by screenshots people her age would take of foreign films with English subtitles. She then released photo series of her own following the same format, and now, she is the go-to reference for this type of multimedia work on Instagram—so much so that I released my own photo series in 2020, titled *Maybe You’re Closing Your Eyes* and shot partially on Pepperdine’s Malibu campus, inspired by Bahbah’s style. Bahbah has since worked with such actors and models as Dylan Sprouse, Khadijha Red Thunder, Alisha Boe, and Noah Centineo.

In Bahbah’s 2015 series *Summer Without a Pool* — *Season One*, the coming-of-age narrative follows two young women (Claire Lauren and Naomi Peggy) having to entertain themselves at home while both boredom and depression weigh them down. With lines such as “We’re going to need more vodka” and “You’re the girl who can’t keep her legs shut,” Bahbah understands like

no other internet writer her target audience of twentysomethings stumbling without handrails— young people navigating the difficulties of life (Bahbah). “I loved the notion of having a strong image, complemented by strong copy,” Bahbah said in an interview with *Nylon* regarding the experimental origins of the project, continuing, “I wanted to take it to the next level and create a serial, episodic quasi-narrative. Each individual piece tells a story on its own, but when you bring the body of work together, there is a deeper narrative open to interpretation, leaving viewers to draw their own conclusions based on their own experiences” (Gharnit).

Consider this moment from midway through the photo series.

EXT. NEIGHBOR’S BACKYARD — DAY

Lauren’s character and Peggy’s character finish climbing over the fence into their neighbor’s backyard. Alone, they relax poolside in the summer heat.

LAUREN: I realise I’m not for everyone.

She rolls onto her stomach, then props herself up by her elbows. Peggy does the same. Lauren takes Peggy’s hands.

LAUREN (cont’d): One impulsive decision can turn you into someone you don’t recognize.

The pair leaps into the pool with a SPLASH.

LAUREN: I want to drown.

PEGGY: Why?

LAUREN: So he will miss me.

TIMECUT: Lauren and Peggy dry off together while “Read My Mind” by The Killers plays in the background. They lie by the poolside once more.

LAUREN: There is something I have to tell you...

A LADY runs out of her house, waving a wooden spoon at the girls, yelling in a foreign language.

LAUREN: F—K! RUN!

LADY: F—KING KIDS.

The girls make their escape, laughing as they do.

(Bahbah)

This sultry, saturated scene is the climax of the narrative, in which Lauren’s character and Peggy’s character source a pool to beat the heat, Lauren has the revelation that spontaneity—albeit oftentimes fun and perhaps a requirement to modern love—has its flaws, and just before she finishes confiding in Peggy, she is interrupted by an older woman who does not speak the same language she does, because how could any adult? In an interview with *Hunger* that describes Bahbah’s aesthetics as “sunny yet satirical,” the artist said she hopes viewers of her work “feel as though they shouldn’t be ashamed to speak how they feel openly,” adding, “Transparency in our words and actions, is the future to emotional freedom” (Robson). It is this transparency—this truth—that inspires Bahbah, and in her search for it, she creates glimpses into summers where characters eventually do swim in pools and, in this mundanity, find epiphany.

Bahbah has said she is influenced by anything on her social medias that makes her stop and marvel at the creativity of the work, and I feel the same. At a time when theoretically anyone can become a filmmaker, artist, musician, etc., with the help of our phones and online tutorials, we should be looking to each other for inspiration to unlock new means for narrative expression.

5. Hayao Miyazaki and *Whisper of the Heart*

Perhaps one of the greatest international filmmakers to contribute to America’s film history is Hayao Miyazaki (1963–present). A Japanese animator, screenwriter, director, and the co-founder of animation film house Studio Ghibli, Miyazaki has become a world-renowned storyteller and is the only anime director to have received an Academy Award—of which he did not accept

in person as a means of protesting the U.S. war with Iraq. Above all else, Miyazaki voices his beliefs and assures his criticism will be heard by viewers alike.

As a creator, Miyazaki is recognized for his whimsical yet weighty animation craftsmanship, strong female leads, Aesops for environmental conservation, anti-capitalist themes, feminism, and his love of airships. The writer-director's most well-known films include *My Neighbor Totoro* (1988), *Kiki's Delivery Service* (1989), *Princess Mononoke* (1997), *Spirited Away* (2001), and *Howl's Moving Castle* (2004). Perhaps most notable is the sheer amount of heart in his work. "Miyazaki is someone whose detailed artistry extends to the way his characters' hair blows in the wind," writes Susan Napier in her book on the auteur, noting that each of Miyazaki's works is "a realm where hope triumphs over despair" (Napier x, xi). From a man whose childhood was marked by World War II bombings and a mother hospitalized with spinal tuberculosis, Miyazaki's films are surprisingly earnest in a way often lacking in an adult-laden reality. Yet this insight into one's emotions comes—unsurprisingly—straight from within. To quote Miyazaki on the origins of ideas:

"When people speak of a beautiful sunset, do they hurriedly riffle through a book of photographs of sunsets or go in search of a sunset? No, you speak about the sunset by drawing on the many sunsets stored inside you—feelings deeply etched in the folds of your consciousness of the sunset you saw while carried on your mother's back so long ago that the memory is nearly a dream; or the sunset-washed landscape you saw when, for the first time in your life, you were enchanted by the scene around you; or the sunsets you witnessed that were wrapped in loneliness, anguish, or warmth" (*Starting Point* 28).

Miyazaki's influence on Western cinema is unparalleled: John Lasseter, the former chief creative officer of Pixar and director of *Toy Story* (1995), has said *Toy Story* owes much to the

films of Miyazaki; in December 2013, Mexican film director and screenwriter Guillermo del Toro taught a masterclass on Miyazaki; a species of alien in *Star Trek: The Next Generation* (1987–94) is named after the heroine in Miyazaki’s *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* (1984)—and yet Miyazaki’s legacy on anime in the West goes beyond even this. In 1997, rather than allowing cuts to be made to *Princess Mononoke* for its North American theatrical release, Miyazaki stood his ground; instead of giving in, Miyazaki’s producer sent a katana to then-Miramax head Harvey Weinstein with a note that read, “No cuts” (Brooks). Miyazaki, tenacious as ever, paved the way for Japanese filmmakers entering the U.S. market in this important moment, allowing his audiences to watch anime films in their original, subbed, unedited versions.

My favorite scene of Miyazaki’s writing comes from his perhaps least fantastical film, *Whisper of the Heart* (1995), in which middle school student Shizuku Tsukishima—inspired by the creative drive of her friend Seiji—must balance her secret passion for writing stories with her hard-working parents’ wish for her to do well on her high school entrance exams.

INT. TSUKISHIMA HOUSE — NIGHT

Father and Mother sit at the kitchen table with Shizuku.

FATHER: All right, Shizuku. You have something that you’re doing that you think is more important than studying. Will you tell us what it is?

SHIZUKU: When I can tell you, I will.

MOTHER: Shizuku, can’t you do whatever it is once your exams are over?

SHIZUKU: I have to do it now! I only have three weeks left before he... It’s that I promised myself I’d achieve this certain goal or I’m not good enough.

MOTHER: Good enough for what? Why do you need to prove yourself? We can’t help you unless you let us know what’s going on. What could you be doing that you can’t tell your mother and father about?

Father lights a cigarette.

MOTHER (cont'd): Honey, please.

FATHER: Oh, sorry. I'll put it out. (*exhaling*) You work so hard in the library. Whatever you're doing, I know it's important to you. And I truly respect that. (*beat*) Honey, why don't we let Shizuku do what she thinks is best? Not everyone needs to follow the same path.

MOTHER: Hmm. Well, I have to admit I've often dreamed about straying from the path myself.

FATHER: All right, Shizuku, go ahead and do what your heart tells you. But it's never easy when you do things differently from everyone else. If things don't go well, you'll only have yourself to blame.

MOTHER: And I want you to eat meals with us, no matter how busy you get.

(Whisper of the Heart)

Cynics might say this is indeed fantasy—that no parents would give in to their child's whims at the expense of grades and schoolwork. Miyazaki sees it differently; he takes his audience seriously and believes children, with the full capacity of their imaginative selves, should assert autonomy to promote human flourishing by his believing in kids' empowerment and ownership of their lives above all else. This is Shizuku's truth and, by extension, Miyazaki's legacy, continuing to tap into our childlike sense of wonder for the better.

6. See You Soon, Pepperdine

Sunset in Malibu, today, made me think of how intense creativity can be. I thought of the waves we create as writers, the storms and calms, streaks of bad luck, the tide of peace. Life is like this: Blacha illustrates how a subversion of tropes can be gratifying, Bahbah that experimentation and innovation can be masterful, Miyazaki that media visibility for young audiences can create beautiful results. Perhaps screenwriting does not need to be an explanation—only an exploration. The best of screenwriting is in our seizing of the truth.

I am returning to this thesis after having just finished watching the series finale to *Flight 29 Down* (2005–07), a live-action Discovery Kids drama that follows a group of teens stranded on an island after their plane crashes in the South Pacific. It is March 2022 now, and for a week on YouTube, I was there as this group of seven worked to build a shelter, search for oysters, find clean drinking water, repair a broken lighter, mend injuries, tend to sickness, deal with isolation and interpersonal issues and fears over survival—but perhaps most important, how to be there for each other. Sure: to some, this is merely a half-hour children’s program starring one of the actors from *High School Musical* (2006). But today, this finale was the closure I needed, and I certainly paid attention when the credits listed writer D. J. MacHale on the screen for each episode. I neither know him personally nor does he know me, but I do remember where I was when I first discovered the reruns of this show twelve years ago. Blended family issues and threats of divorce seem inconsequential when kids onscreen are suffering through a devastating monsoon; this show served as a type of escape I could not have known I needed.

Up next for me is a continuation of my contract work with Netflix, where I serve as a script adapter for series and features: rewriting dialogue for Netflix’s foreign properties for American-English localization, writing for accessibility, sentence length, and voice while retaining the spirit of the original language. In the meantime, I present here five scripts: a character-driven sitcom about a group of teens who work at a smoothie bar and live to experience the endless summer; a look into the lives of the *Bob’s Burgers* (2011–present) Belcher family; a *Riverdale*-esque retelling of *Scooby-Doo* (1969–present) in which the gang must deal with the psychological turmoil of fighting real demons; a “LEGO Friends” parody sketch; and last, an existential look at a group of boarding school teens in season eight of a California sitcom who begin to realize they are fictional characters in a TV show. I also have a new art series forthcoming. Never a dull moment, folks.

So many sunsets have flashed before my eyes lately. They appeared so suddenly that I only now realize their presence. Pepperdine brought me wondrous new friends and adventures and the most amazing creative pursuits and more laughter than I ever could have dreamed of—and I did dream, for so long. Pepperdine, I can say, was there for me. So, thank you for accepting me into the program three years ago this month; thank you for giving this kid from Oklahoma a chance at something greater; and thank you, reader, for your time and patience as I searched for these words. I will conclude this artist's statement by paraphrasing one of the last lines of *Flight 29 Down* that has stuck with me and continues to inspire me to one day, I hope, write a similar sentiment to be remembered by another kid at heart years from now.

See you soon, Pepperdine. But if not, I'll see you later.

—B. A. LONEY

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PEACHY BEACHY, THANKS FOR ASKING!

AN ANIMATED TWEEN SITCOM

#101: "Picture Perfect"

Written by

Bryant A. Loney

March 30, 2022

ACT ONE

EXT. BEACH – DAY

Another dazzling day at the beach in Southern California.

Surfers idle, waiting for the perfect wave. Summer lovers stroll the shoreline and stop to admire their efforts. Two HULA INSTRUCTORS teach and dance.

The sand glows, the sea shimmers -- and the view? Just right.

EXT. BEACH SIDEWALK – CONTINUOUS

In a promenade parallel to the ocean, the PEACHY BEACHY SMOOTHIE BAR has a palm-flanked porch and thatched tiki roof.

SFX: SUNNY VOCAL POP

Three employees in their Peachy Beachy aprons hang a promotional poster. They are:

1. ANDRÉS (16), a generally friendly dudebro with a half smirk and wild hair.
2. INDY (16), a flirtatious, high-energy surfer girl with loose-tied hair and a knack for poking fun.
3. COVE (17), a cynical Kiwi with a shorter cut who fancies himself as more mature than the other two.

INSERT:

The promotional poster depicting three employees -- Andrés, Indy & Cove with peach emojis for heads -- serving smoothies.

ANDRÉS (V.O.)
It, uhh, looks like we're saying
we're buttheads.

INDY (V.O.)
Certainly sets the tone, my dude.

Cove rips away the poster, examines it, turns it slightly.

COVE
No, it -- ! It's not "buttheads"!

INDY
(mocking)
Oi, narnarnar, wad'ya'talkin'abeet?
Not buttheads! Teas 'n' crumpets!

Andrés rolls his eyes.

Cove groans and crumbles up the poster, balls it up into his white-knuckled fist...

EMJAE (15) -- a compassionate, somewhat nerdy girl with wave braids, in a Peachy Beachy apron herself -- pokes her head out of the smoothie bar.

EMJAE

Indy, I understand you're pretending to be Cove, but... are you trying to be British or Aussie?

INDY

(just the worst accent)
Oi, mates, Oi'm fram New Zealand!
Emjae, did'ja see that shark?!
Crikey! Took me arm roight off 'n' swam away with it -- !

The paper ball smacks Indy on the face and sticks there. She groans, swats it off like a windshield wiper.

ANDRÉS

Knock it off, dummy. People don't forget how you make them feel.

COVE

(mumbles)
You don't even know New Zealand --

INDY

(normal)
Oh, but Cove, I meant no offense.
Kiwi accents are sick, bro! Like...
British, but with flair!

Up come:

WALLY (mid 30s), a cordial gentleman from New Zealand in his signature white guayabera, married to --

SHARKBITE (mid 30s), a reserved bodybuilder from Hawai'i, tanned with graying dreadlocks.

Both are Cove's uncles. Both wear leis and a flower crown.

Wally takes the crumbled-up poster --

WALLY

(in his Kiwi accent)
Who's littering? Is it the parrot boy who nests on our roof?

COVE

There has to be something we can do to bring in more customers.

WALLY

Well, one of you should be inside for when somebody bowls around...

They all turn to Emjae who, embarrassed, lifts off the ground and glides backward inside the smoothie bar, out of sight.

WALLY (CONT'D)

That poster... it was a good idea, yeah, but wasn't as... It wasn't personable -- not as friendly. Why don't you four each hang up a picture of yourselves inside? The faces of Peachy Beachy!

Sharkbite's cool demeanor breaks with a smile.

SHARKBITE

Heh heh. Peach fuzz.

ANDRÉS

Whoa, wait, WHAT?! But -- but you don't need photos of us! Hello?!
(catching himself)
I -- I mean, after all, you and Sharkbite are the owners --

INDY

Owners who're hardly ever here...

Wally and Sharkbite kiss briefly while a banner plane flies a rainbow flag behind them. The teens clap politely.

WALLY

Andrés, Andrés. Let's show off your sunny disposition, hmm? Highlight Cove's good nature, Emjae's sisterly spirit, Indy and her --

Indy is... trying to record herself licking her own elbow.

WALLY (CONT'D)

The faster you four finish this, the sooner you can surf, eh?

Everyone turns to the ocean, where a wave begins to form, gains height and momentum -- it crests, it curls, a nearby SURFER DUDE paddles toward it --

Andrés steps in front of the view --

ANDRÉS

Hello?! This is bananas. Bananas!
Why are you -- you don't need our
pictures, ha-ha-ha, oh man oh man!

Wally hands Cove a digital camera.

WALLY

One picture per person. Four total.
Sharkbite and I have another hula;
we'll see you before sunset!

The men head out. Cove -- fully red -- hands Indy the camera.

COVE

I don't have time for this. We have
to pay back the loan to the bank --
none of this photo nonsense.

He goes inside the smoothie bar, and Andrés and Indy follow.

INT. PEACHY BEACHY – CONTINUOUS

Peachy Beachy is everything you'd want in a little slice of
paradise, done up with vintage-style rattan and wicker,
potted tropical plants, and shades of orange, pink, fuchsia.

Andrés, Cove, and Indy head behind the bar, where Emjae
gathers fresh-cut mangoes and papayas.

EMJAE

Coming up: A Smoothie So Beautiful
It Kills!

Patrons lean back in leather loom dining chairs, enjoying the
low-key vibes.

A TEEN PIRATE, with two hooks and wooden legs, approaches the
bar. He lifts up his eye patch to read the menu.

TEEN PIRATE

I'll have a... the Hypoallergenic.

Emjae produces a pen and the appropriate paperwork.

EMJAE

Yes, sir. Contains peanuts, tree
nuts, milk, gluten, and pollens
indigenous to Florida.

INDY (O.C.)

Had to put those ingredients
somewhere!

EMJAE

Sign here, please. And here.

As the hook-handed buccaneer fumbles with the pen --

INDY

Heyyy! If it isn't my favorite
pirate, salty as a Kraken's kiss.

ANDRÉS

Is this another guy you dated?
(beat)
Are those peg legs real?

COVE

Emjae: the bosses say we each need
a headshot to display for
customers. Gotta make the place
more... "personable."

INDY

I wanna surf, Emjae! Gimme those
double overhead waves!

Indy looks out the window at the warm, crystalline water --
an almost narcotic atmosphere of barefoot nonchalance...

SFX: THE TANTALIZING ROAR OF THE OCEAN

She can't take it anymore. Indy holds the camera high, snaps
a selfie as she poses. She checks it.

INDY (CONT'D)

Mm, that's fire. Andrés, you're up.

ANDRÉS

No, no, I -- what's that smell? Is
that gasoline? You -- ha-ha, what?
No, you don't need a -- a picture,
of me, in front of you every day...

INDY

You scared I'll draw a silly
mustache on it?

This gets a smile from him.

ANDRÉS

Horseshoe, handlebar, Captain Hook
over there.

COVE

Look, use my junior year photo from
my bedroom, okay? I need to think.

Cove exits. Andrés ties his hair back.

ANDRÉS

Emjae: figure out your photo with Indy. I'll, uhh, hold down the fort here, find my... good angle --

INDY

Nuh-uh-uh, there's a tradition with employee shift changes.

ANDRÉS

Traditions change all the time!

INDY

Ummm, no, that defeats the definition of the word!

ANDRÉS

UGGH! Emjae, swing the dang hammer!

Emjae holds up a hammer, cranks her arm --

EMJAE

Who's catching it?! Who's gonna?!

TEEN PIRATE

Is this like a bridal bouquet?!

ANDRÉS

God, I hope it lands on my head...

INDY

Toss it, toss it, TOSS IT!

As the hammer flies --

SFX: THUNDERCLAP

EXT. BEACH SIDEWALK - SAME TIME

Next door to Peachy Beachy: WHISPR, a Halloween-themed café bedecked in jack-O'-lights and dangling spiders to look like a haunted house.

SFX: TOCCATA AND FUGUE IN D MINOR

Cove, at its entrance, glances up.

COVE

A Halloween café in the middle of summer -- people think this is a good idea? Hmph.

INT. WHISPR – CONT'D

The inside is similarly decorated: candelabras, wall webbing, bat decals, candy garlands, and a creaking, decrepit chandelier...

Three employees work the coffee house:

1. LUISA (18), Andrés's snooty sister, wearing ghostly garb.
2. DIRT (18), a smug barista, dressed as a fanged glampire.
3. KNICOLE (16), a fairy-ly fab, peppy barista who is well-dressed but hyper-stressed.

SFX: LO-FI CHILL BEATS FOR WITCHES

Cove storms in, trudges over to the bar, and then plops down in front of Luisa. Dirt, behind her, is on a step stool as he draws the menu's elaborate chalk art.

COVE

Luisa. What do you serve here that's age appropriate?

LUISA

Cove, please. It's a coffee shop. You want vacation juice, go back to your uncles.

DIRT

Orrr meet me out back later for some of my... special brew...

LUISA

Dirt!

COVE

(already slurring?)
"Dirt"... What kind of a name is "Dirt" anyway?

DIRT

It's Norwegian! "Cove"! Jeez, making fun of people -- you sound like Indy...

Luisa serves Cove a frothy mug of water.

LUISA

Hydrate or die-drate, buddy.

Knicole bounces over, take a seat beside Cove. She puts her elbows on the table and her chin in her palms.

KNICOLE

Cove-y! So, ummm, is Peachy Beachy hiring yet? My application is literally ready whenever --

LUISA

What, you'd rather be making smoothies with my brother instead of cappuccinos with Dirt?

KNICOLE

Like, yes! Andrés is great!

COVE

Your coffee has dirt in it?

KNICOLE

Sure tastes that way...

DIRT

That's not dirt -- it's seasoning!

COVE

Doesn't matter. Peachy Beachy needs more customers, and I don't know what to do. We're bleeding money.
(the deepest sigh)
I think my uncles might sell the store to teach hula full time.

KNICOLE

Omigosh, nooo, whaaaaat!!!

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN – SAME TIME

A giant wave immediately dies, dissipates. Evaporates.

Friends on jetskis have their fun... until the watercraft vehicles lose power and stop. They just sit there, confused.

INT. PEACHY BEACHY – SAME

Emjae, still swinging that hammer, halts. She glances up.

EMJAE

I sense a disturbance.

INDY

My mom is a disturbance!

EMJAE

Where's Cove?

INT. WHISPR -- CONT'D

As Knicole paces --

KNICOLE

Peachy Beachy might shut down?!?!?!?

DIRT

Cove, you... really should not be telling us -- the competition -- that.

LUISA

Maybe you surf dudebros can work here. Help you reach your goth potential.

Dirt, having transformed into a giant bat between cuts:

DIRT

Or turn into a giant bat.

COVE

I just need some kind of -- a really good marketing campaign.

KNICOLE

Okay. Well, what about... a menu for dogs, and it's scented?

Luisa and Dirt -- he's still a bat -- raise eyebrows, turn to each other, whispr:

LUISA

That was good; write that down.

DIRT

On it.

COVE

I'm a entrepreneurial failure!

LUISA

You just need proper motivation.

As Dirt flies elsewhere, Luisa walks over to sit beside Cove.

LUISA (CONT'D)

Tell you what -- how about a little friendly competition? Your store versus ours. Starting now, we see who can get the most customers.

Cove is... listening...

LUISA (CONT'D)

When we win, we get to dress you up
-- your own li'l Halloween costume!
And if you win, meh, you can have --

KNICOLE

Me! Me! Omigosh, pick me, PLEASE!

COVE

-- some of Dirt's special coffee.

Knicole falls to the ground, deceased, X's over her eyes.

Dirt, a human once more, gives Cove a thumbs-up.

LUISA

May the smarter staff win --

A hammer goes flying through the window past Luisa's head --

ANDRÉS (O.S.)

How was I supposed to catch that?!

INDY (O.S.)

Catch these hands, sucka!

Cove gives Luisa a sheepish grin.

COVE

When you say "smarter staff"...

Dirt re-enters with a pot of coffee --

DIRT

Hey, Knicole, smell this and tell
me if dogs would like it.

Knicole BARKS from the floor, scampers over on all fours.

Luisa gives Cove the same sheepish grin.

And they shake on it.

COVE

Game on.

LUISA

Game on.

Cove takes a large sip of his mug -- immediately grimaces. He
clutches his stomach, holds out a hand, runs out of there --

LUISA (CONT'D)

Now that's a strong out!

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN -- LATER**

Indy and Emjae, sitting on their surfboards, attempt a photo shoot in the water. Indy is in a bikini with the camera; Emjae is in a one-piece and water wings.

INDY

See the sea... see the sea!

EMJAE

What -- what does that mean?!

Indy takes the photo --

Just as a FISH jumps up and slaps Emjae in the face.

INDY

It means what it means! See the --

And then Emjae is whacked by a parasailor.

EXT. COASTAL CLIFF -- LATER

Emjae, bruised and now wearing way too many shell necklaces, poses on a cliff overlooking the ocean.

Indy takes photos...

INDY

One more! One more pic and then we'll have it! See the sea!

EMJAE

Stop saying that!

Seagulls start circling and swiping at Emjae.

She SCREAMS.

INDY

Hey, hey, hey, it's okay, Emjae! They just want the necklaces!

EMJAE

Well they can flip-floppin' have 'em!

She struggles with the necklaces -- they're not coming off -- they're tangled -- she runs away, arms flailing, yelling --

Indy checks the camera.

INDY
Nah, seagull's in the way.

EXT. BEACH - LATER

Emjae, beyond annoyed, eye twitching, poses in a sarong next to a beach ball, sand bucket, conga drum, umbrella table, plates of fruit, and an inflatable whale.

Indy crouches down to take the perfect shot --

INDY
You just gotta... see the --

EMJAE
(between gritted teeth)
Don't say it!

INDY
See... that thing above you, L-O-L!

The moon passes over the sun: a total eclipse of the plot.

BEACH BUMS glance up from their towels, peering over their sunglasses.

Wally and Sharkbite pause their hula dancing to admire this inherently dramatic narrative device.

Emjae, shrouded in darkness, rubs at the bridge of her nose.

EMJAE
(dropping her name like an anchor)
INDY, HOW AM I SUPPOSED TO "SEE THE SEA" NOW?!

The moon passes. The strong California sunlight returns.

The beach bums shrug, return to their sunbathing. Wally and Sharkbite pick the dance up from the top.

Emjae stares out at the Pacific incredulously.

INDY (O.C.)
Yo, Emjae.

Emjae turns -- her hair blowing in the breeze, hips tilted, a soft smile -- and that's when Indy snaps the perfect photo.

They look it over, nod their approval. Indy points elsewhere.

INDY (CONT'D)
Oh look, Cove's talking to Squawky.

She then reaches over the frame and pulls up the next scene:

EXT. BEACH SIDEWALK - SAME TIME

Outside Peachy Beachy, Cove towers over SQUAWKY (10), a child in an orange bird costume, mascot head 'n' everything.

Cove eyes the smoothie Squawky's drinking with a long straw.

COVE
Another stolen smoothie, I see.

Cove sniffs the air, licks his finger, feels the wind.

COVE (CONT'D)
It has... Lemon. Mango. Whipped cream. Faint notes of chalk and Emjae sweat -- why is she so sweaty...
(beat)
Public Lemony Number One?

Squawky shakes his head no.

COVE (CONT'D)
Oh. Uhh, One Small Step for Man-go?

Nope.

COVE (CONT'D)
What about...

INT. PEACHY BEACHY - SAME

Andrés, serving up a smoothie by muscle memory:

ANDRÉS
... and it's not like I'm against photos -- like, my mom, she posts pictures of me all the time, but I don't let her tag me because she knows nothing about good lighting --

An EXASPERATED CUSTOMER in a business suit:

EXASPERATED CUSTOMER
Please, sir, I just want my smoothie! My wife is in labor!

EXT. BEACH SIDEWALK – CONT'D

Cove, still guessing:

COVE

Oh! Oh oh oh! The Course of True
Love Never Did Run Smoothie!

Squawky CHIRPS! Cove crosses his arms, pleased with himself.

COVE (CONT'D)

Knew it. Anyway, look, Squawky: I know we haven't always seen eye to eye when it comes to me running a smoothie-and-juice-bar franchise and you, well, loitering outside...

Squawky blows a raspberry -- another raspberry falls out.

COVE (CONT'D)

Right. Well, while everyone else is wasting their time with selfies and whatnot, I've got a smoothie bar to promote, and I...

(dejected)

Look, if I don't prove the store's worth to my uncles, it might be in jeopardy. So... I guess I could use your help.

Squawky CAWS, stands, and then holds out his smoothie.

COVE (CONT'D)

Oh, you wanna shake on it?

Squawky rattles the empty cup.

COVE (CONT'D)

You want a refill. Gotcha.

Squawky beams.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN – LATER

Out on the water, Cove and Squawky try "surfing and serving" up to swimmers with their smoothies.

COVE

Ah, yes, surfing and serving! Much more efficient!

To a nearby BETTY:

COVE (CONT'D)

For you, miss, here's one Coral
Beef -- !

But a wave curls over him, and Cove hurls the smoothie at the
betty, who only gets a faceful of meat, broth, and beans.

And then a FISH jumps up and slaps her in the face.

And then Cove is whacked by a parasailor.

EXT. COASTAL CLIFF - LATER

Standing on broken shell necklaces, Cove -- bruised -- holds
up a gorgeous smoothie for Squawky to behold.

COVE

Behold! The Upside-Down Smoothie!

Squawky claps as Cove turns it upside down --

The smoothie PLOPS to the ground.

They stand there, staring at it.

And then the seagulls return, ready to feast --

Cove SCREAMS, ducks, holds his head --

Squawky hobbles around, flapping his wings in delight as his
brethren descend --

EXT. BEACH - LATER

A TELEVISION NEWS REPORTER, in front of the water, casually
addresses her cameraperson:

TELEVISION NEWS REPORTER

Well, no, see, if I feed the
dolphins, how am I gonna play their
little ribs like a xylophone, hmm?

She touches her earpiece and, when she's cued, says to the
camera:

TELEVISION NEWS REPORTER (CONT'D)

(in that broadcast voice)

That's right, Dick -- a woman was
arrested today under the suspicion
of painting vulgar messages on
several crabs and crustaceans
throughout Southern California.

INSERT:

Mobile-phone footage of a crab that's been defaced in permanent marker, reading:

JASON FUNDERBERKER IS A LYING [BLURRED]!

COVE (O.C.)
(deranged)
PEACHY BEACHY SMOOTHIES! GET
YERSELF A GOOD ONE!

Squawky and Cove -- sliced up by seagulls -- rush into frame, almost knocking the reporter aside.

COVE (CONT'D)
TRY OUR BRAND-NEW, BOILING-HOT
SMOOTHIE!

Squawky SQUAWKS!

TELEVISION NEWS REPORTER
What -- whoa, easy with that!
(beat)
"Boiling-hot smoothie" -- isn't
that just soup?

COVE
PIPIN'-HOT SMOOTH' -- !

And then a FISH jumps up and slaps her in the face.

And then Cove's whacked by a parasailor.

EXT. BEACH SIDEWALK - LATER

Indy and Emjae stand before the entrance to WHISPR.

SFX: THUNDERCLAP

EMJAE
A Halloween café? In the middle of
summer?

INDY
Oh man, if only Squawky haunted
this place instead of ours. They
could call him the... the poultry-
geist!

EMJAE
Ugh. Wait, I'm confused -- are we
still trying to get more customers?

INT. WHISPR – CONT'D

At the bustling bar, barista Luisa sets a mug in front of her brother, Andrés, who holds it in both hands as he sips.

Knicole refills the cups of some customers by the windows.

Dirt, back on that step stool, is finishing up the menu's elaborate chalk art -- spooky-ccinos, apple cider, coffee.

... DACHSHUNDS and YORKSHIRE TERRIERS sniff menus for dogs...

Indy and Emjae enter, spot Andrés, and then approach him --

INDY

Yo, we got the pics.

EMJAE

We just need you and Cove --

ANDRÉS

I don't want my picture taken.

INDY

Andrés, Andrés, Andrés. This should've taken all of two minutes!

EMJAE

Do you want props? Is that it?

LUISA

Yeahhh, so, Andrés has never really liked photos of himself. Birthdays, holidays, Mom's second wedding...

ANDRÉS

Blaaaaaggghh.

Andrés finishes his drink, stands, turns around --

Just as Indy snaps the photo, the flash in his eyes --

He stumbles back into the bar, accidentally knocks a canister of coffee beans all over the floor --

ANDRÉS (CONT'D)

What the heck?!

Indy checks the picture while the dogs lick the coffee beans. One sniffs out the hammer from earlier.

INDY

Ha-ha! Picture perfect! Easy-peasy, squeeze my lemons!

DIRT

No, Indy, that -- that's not the expression --

KNICOLE

Says the guy who never shows up in our selfies...

Andrés grabs for the camera; Indy holds it out of reach --

INDY

Hey, hey, hey! It's fine, you look great -- don't worry about it!

ANDRÉS

Don't you understand boundaries?

Indy tosses the camera to Emjae while HOLLYWOOD LOUD TALKER shouts nonsense into a cellphone.

Emjae catches the camera, sees a glimpse --

EMJAE

Oh! Andrés, this is actually a really good picture!

HOLLYWOOD LOUD TALKER POPS A PIECE OF GREEN GUM INTO HER MOUTH AND FURIOUSLY GRINDS AWAY AT IT WITH HER MIGHTY, OVER-DEVELOPED MANDIBLES --

HOLLYWOOD LOUD TALKER

YEAH, I'M IN SHAPE. UNFORTUNATELY, THAT SHAPE IS A POTATO, HA-HA-HA!

INDY

Ogle away, my friend!

ANDRÉS

I told you --

HOLLYWOOD LOUD TALKER GNASHES THE SUBSTANCE INTO A PASTE IN THE GRIP OF HER THROBBING MANDIBLES --

HOLLYWOOD LOUD TALKER

AND DID YOU HEAR THEY PUT IN FLUORIDE TO CONTROL YOUR MIND? THAT'S WHY I ONLY DRINK POND WATER!

INDY

You have zero photos of yourself, and trust me, every dude needs at least a few pictures of him to --

HOLLYWOOD LOUD TALKER WORKS THE ACIDIC GOO AROUND IN HER CHEEKS USING HER SORE, TENDER MANDIBLES --

HOLLYWOOD LOUD TALKER
I LIKE MY COFFEE HOW I LIKE MY MEN,
AND THAT'S WHY MY HUSBAND LEFT ME!

ANDRÉS
I told you -- !

INDY
We are always taking group shots!
Why is this one any different -- ?!

ANDRÉS
I TOLD YOU NOT TO TAKE MY PICTURE!

He is right up in her face, and she is right up in his, and they are staring straight into each other's eyes, heavy breathing, lots of tension, *oof*, getting hot in here...

Knicole, distracted by the scene, overflows the cup she's been refilling --

She drops the coffee in shock --

It SHATTERS to the floor.

HOLLYWOOD LOUD TALKER
MMM, SMELLY LIKE CHOCOLATE!

H.L.T. -- some spilled coffee on her shirt -- puts the stained portion in her mouth and begins sucking it out.

And Andrés storms out of there, the door SLAMMING behind him to the sound of THUNDERCLAP.

Dirt looks up.

DIRT
Hmm. Remind me to switch out the spooky sound effects playlist.

Emjae raises the camera to take his picture --

DIRT (CONT'D)
You won't get anything, trust me.

INDY
(to Luisa)
What is Andrés's deal?!

LUISA
He's nothing if not honest.

INDY

Honesty is him telling us why he doesn't want his picture taken, not him flippin' out about it.

DIRT

Look, he doesn't owe you a reason --

INDY

Go make your dirt, Dirt!

DIRT

I'll make your face into dirt!

INDY

I will take you out back and knock you down and call you a little baby boy, a little crybaby googoo gaga boy -- !

KNICOLE

Heyyyyyy, Emjae, Indy, I dunno if you'd want to put in a good word for me to your bosses, but I sent in my application again for Peachy Beachy and still haven't heard --

INDY

YOU WILL NEVER MAKE MY SMOOTHIES!

And then Indy storms out of there as well, the door SLAMMING behind her.

Luisa, Dirt, and Knicole pivot to Emjae, whose face quickly cycles through all seven stages of grief.

She gulps audibly, fidgeting with the digital camera.

EMJAE

Uhhh... I... suppose we oughta call her "Dracula," huh?

The most awkward pause imaginable.

EMJAE (CONT'D)

Because she's a...
(tiny voice)
Pain in the neck?

A tense pause eventually broken by a light smirk from Luisa.

And then a PACK OF FEROCIOUS PUPPIES -- some carrying menus for dogs -- attack Emjae, dragging her out of there.

KNICOLE
Wow. Strong snout!

LUISA
No, I said we need a strong out!

Emjae SCREAMS.

PACK OF FEROCIOUS PUPPIES
Arf arf!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE**INT. PEACHY BEACHY – MOMENTS LATER**

Indy leaps into the smoothie bar. She darts her eyes around.

A LINE OF CUSTOMERS turns to her eagerly. Squawky CHIRPS.

The Teen Pirate from earlier is absolutely covered in hives.

TEEN PIRATE

Hey, no one's here but this parrot,
and I think I need a doctor...

Indy shields Squawky away from the dude --

INDY

Don't you dare talk to him -- he is
a child!

(to Squawky)

Hey, Squawks, have you seen Andrés?

Squawky shakes his head no.

INDY (CONT'D)

Dang.

(beat)

Ah bananas, I forgot the hammer we
threw at them earlier!

Cove stumbles in from the back with a portable sound system --

-- just as Emjae bursts in, shooping the barking dachshund.

EMJAE

I am not on the menu!!!

Squawky CHARGES at the dog, CAWING, chasing it out the door.

INDY

What the -- ?

COVE

Oh, Indy! Emjae! Be, uhh -- I need
you to do employee things...!

He leaves with the equipment.

Indy looks to Emjae, rolls her eyes.

INDY

C'mon. Let's get that pic of Cove
from upstairs and call it a day.

TEEN PIRATE
 (so swollen it's nasty)
 Uhh, Indy? I can't see my eyes?

She kisses his cheek.

INDY
 And I keep getting lost in them. <3

INT. PEACHY BEACHY – COVE'S BEDROOM – MOMENTS LATER

Indy and Emjae step into Cove's bedroom, neat and tidy, with little photos tacked to the walls and a framed certificate for "The Best Nephew in the World."

EMJAE
 Aww. I don't think I've noticed
 that before.

Indy touches the edge to a photograph of a younger Cove on the shoulders on Sharkbite, with Wally posed on the ground in front of them like a painted lady.

Emjae picks up a framed photo from Cove's desk --

EMJAE (CONT'D)
 Oh man. Are these Cove's parents?
 He never mentions them.

INDY
 See? It's important to have photos!

EMJAE
 Yeah... keeps the memories alive...

Indy shows Emjae her phone.

INDY
 Andrés has all these followers and
 not a single picture himself.
 Everyone needs a good profile pic!
 I'm, like, doing him a favor here!

EMJAE
 Just because it's important to you
 doesn't mean it's important to him.

Indy pauses, considers this.

She turns to the wall, plucks a photo of Cove from last year.

INDY
 Well, we got what we came for.

EMJAE

I hope Cove's having better luck
than we are.

INDY

And then he gets, like, whacked by
a parasailor.

EMJAE

What?

They exit, leaving behind the framed photo of Cove's parents.

INDY (O.C.)

You know. Like, it cuts to Cove
getting whacked by a parasailor.

EMJAE (O.C.)

What are you -- ohh, you drank
Dirt's special brew.

INDY (O.C.)

No, but I want to!!!

EXT. BEACH -- LATER

On a raised platform with speakers and spotlights, Cove
addresses a rowdy crowd of attractive COLLEGE DRINKERS
wearing cropped tops with "PEACHY BEACHY" across the chest:

COVE

Hey, party people eighteen and
older! Who here likes smoothies!

The crowd CHEERS and raises their cups of smoothie!

Squawky takes a video of the scene with Cove's phone.

COVE (CONT'D)

Yeah! And where did you get them?!

COLLEGE DRINKERS

Screechy Preachy Smoothie Bar!

COVE

Yes! I mean -- no! Peachy Beachy!

COLLEGE DRINKERS

Chichi Nietzsche!

COVE

I've already been mocked once
today. Listen: Peachy Beachy Smoo --

And then Cove's whacked by a parasailor. Classic.

The College Drinkers CHEER once more, and as they applaud, they break into a food fight with the smoothies --

They dunk each other with gallons of smoothie --

They rush into a slip-'n'-slide full of smoothie --

One girl stumbles around before yakking up her smoothie on the back of some dudes --

Another guy slips in the spill and lands on his back in the middle of it all, makes smoothie angels --

Teen Pirate is just one gargantuan hive on peg legs --

Much drinking --

And then Cove's whacked by a parasailor --

COVE (O.C.) (CONT'D)
WHERE IS YOUR PERMIT?!

He regains his balance...

SFX: SIRENS BLARING

... just as LIFEGUARD SUVs with surfboards on the roof racks drive onto the scene, lights flashing, exuding authority.

College Drinkers run like their scholarships depend on it --

COVE (CONT'D)
Hey! Come back here! This viral social media campaign isn't finished yet! The -- the algorithm!

And then Cove's whacked by a parasailor --

The parasailor is pursued by the lifeguard SUVs --

And then... and then...

The beach is empty, aside from the trash and clutter.

Cove looks down at his feet, covered in sand, smoothie.

A DEFACED CRAB scurries by, wielding a knife in its claw.

COVE (CONT'D)
All I wanted... was to get more people buying smoothies, to stop my uncles from selling the shop...

He turns to Squawky, and when he sees the bird is still filming, rises in anger --

COVE (CONT'D)

Why are you still recording?! Why are you even here?! Everyone else has left me -- just go! Get outta here! And take that -- take off that -- that stupid bird costume -- gaah, what is wrong with you?!

Cove picks up Squawky and kicks him like a soccer ball into the horizon. The phone falls into a spill of purple smoothie.

Squawky -- wings flapping frantically -- makes a little sparkle and DING sound in the sky before disappearing completely.

Cove steps back, horrified.

COVE (CONT'D)

Oh man, Squawky, I'm so -- I didn't... I was just trying to...!

And Cove just stands there, all alone in the mess he's made.

EXT. BEACH -- SECLUDED SPOT -- LATER

On a bench, sand between his toes, Andrés watches as far-off Teen Pirate bobs like a buoy along the water's surface.

It's a moment of calm. Life slows down.

SFX: LIGHT ACOUSTIC GUITAR MUSIC PLAYING

SINGER (V.O.)

Life's what sweet summers are for.

SWEEPING VIEWS OF THE PACIFIC. PALM TREES SWAY.

SINGER (V.O.)

*Hangin' out with friends.
What's more to adore?
The sunshine. Some surfboards.
Life's what sweet summers are for.*

Andrés turns to the SINGER beside him --

ANDRÉS

Dude, can I please have my moment?

The singer leaves with his guitar, grumbling...

... and he is replaced by Indy and Emjae, who sit on opposite sides of Andrés.

EMJAE

Hey.

INDY

Yo.

Seagulls fly overhead. Emjae AUDIBLY CLEARS HER THROAT.

INDY (CONT'D)

Oh gross, Emjae, fix that.

Emjae AUDIBLY CLEARS HER THROAT EVEN MORE --

INDY (CONT'D)

Okay, look, I'm sorry I tricked you and took that pic when you obviously didn't want me to. You totally overreacted -- let's be clear on that -- but still.

ANDRÉS

But still.

INDY

But like, we saw Cove's room with all his pictures, his dead parents. Don't you wish you had more photos of yourself to look back on -- for when you're old and gray and full of sleep?

ANDRÉS

Dude, that's me actually right now.

EMJAE

You're deflecting, Andrés.

INDY

So you're, what, self-conscious?

ANDRÉS

Can you blame me? It's either acne or uneven facial features, a bad hair day, something in my teeth.

Indy coughs up another raspberry.

EMJAE

We have got to blend those up better.

ANDRÉS

If I don't want something, don't just go ahead and do it just 'cause you think it's for my benefit.

INDY

Okay, fine. But next time, can you tell us this instead of, like, pretending there's a gas leak and going all bananas like a rando?

ANDRÉS

I... will handle these situations better, yes.

INDY

Please. And then we, your friends, will help you get your dream body, whatever it may be.

EMJAE

Two words: anthro hedgehog.

Cove shows up then, struggling with the last of the trash from the failed beach shoot.

When the garbage spills -- apple cores, fish skeletons, tin cans with lids ajar -- Andrés, Indy, and Emjae hop off the bench to help him pick it all up.

EMJAE (CONT'D)

What's your dream body, Cove?

COVE

Water. Did you get the four photos?

INDY

I... no, we didn't. Sorry.

COVE

That's fine. All my marketing campaigns failed anyway.
(a small laugh)
Squawky and I even tried airdropping those posters from a helicopter.

ANDRÉS

What? I didn't see that.

Cove, now a placeholder sketch drawing:

COVE

We ran out of budget for the pilot.

EMJAE
Is Marcus's body at Peachy Beachy?!

INT. PEACHY BEACHY – LATER

Back at Peachy Beachy, Dirt hangs up a small painting of Andrés on the wall between Indy's selfie, Emjae's candid, and the photo of Cove from last year.

Wally and Sharkbite APPLAUD Andrés, Indy, and Emjae.

WALLY
Good as gold! Great work, you all!

ANDRÉS
So it's cool that we commissioned
Dirt to paint my portrait?

DIRT
(so pretentious)
I call it "Tillatelse," painted in
oils on a panel of walnut wood.

WALLY
I asked for something that captured
your sunny disposition, right? And
here you are, smiling there --

He gently taps the illustration.

WALLY (CONT'D)
-- and smiling here.

He gestures at Andrés, who's smiling all the same.

WALLY (CONT'D)
These make Peachy Beachy feel more
like a home.

COVE (O.C.)
Two Berry Beautiful smoothies,
ready for pickup!

At the bar, Cove is decked in a captain's greatcoat, a grand swashbuckler's hat, eyeliner, and a striped pirate bandana.

Luisa and Knicole laugh at the bar and sip their smoothies.

WALLY
You lose a bet there, nephew?

COVE
Oh, you have no idea.

LUISA

No no no, stay in character!

COVE

Uh, aye, matey! It be true there be a wager I lost at sea, arrrghh... shiver me timbers... yo-ho...

LUISA

What did you call me?!

ANDRÉS

All right, let him have his break.

As Cove finishes with normal Teen Pirate, Wally and Sharkbite go behind the bar and Luisa, Knicole, and Andrés step aside.

COVE

I'm sorry I got carried away with my marketing tactics. I didn't mean to, uhh, abandon the store...

WALLY

We love your ideas -- your energy -- so long as you don't forget your responsibilities in the meantime.

COVE

I know you took out a big bank loan to save the store. I worry that...

Wally and Sharkbite turn to each other, burst out laughing.

WALLY

Oh nephew! Don't fret over grown-up finances. We like Peachy Beachy -- we love being here, with you, on this shoreline. Of course, no one knows what next episode brings...

SHARKBITE

But no matter what, Cove, you will always have a home with us.

Cove looks like he's about to cry, and so the three embrace each other beside the smoothie dispensers.

Knicole wipes a tear from her eyes.

KNICOLE

That is just so sweet...

(composing herself)

Wally, Sharkbite, if I could just pitch myself as an employee --

WALLY

Knicole, dear, for the last time,
that really won't be necessary --

On her knees as Cove maneuvers his way out --

KNICOLE

I love Peachy Beachy! I exist to
serve Peachy Beachy! I would break
my bones and drink my tears to
cleanse my thirst if it is The Will
of Peachy Beachy!

SHARKBITE

That, girl, is not healthy.

Indy holds out her phone, snaps Knicole's picture --

INDY

I dunno if you'll get hired here,
but that's going on my wall.

EXT. BEACH SIDEWALK – CONTINUOUS

Squawky, alone, sulks against the outside wall to Peachy Beachy. Cove crouches beside him.

COVE

Squawky! You're alive!

Squawky turns his body away from Cove.

COVE (CONT'D)

Shouting at you and kicking you
into orbit... that was inexcusable.
I know we don't always treat you
the best here, because you loiter
and never pay for anything, but I
want that to change. I'm sorry.

Cove holds up a tray of smoothies.

COVE (CONT'D)

I still have all these Upside-Down
Smoothies! Just don't... flip them.

Squawky wholeheartedly accepts! He hugs Cove -- and Cove,
after a moment of hesitation, hugs Squawky back.

COVE (CONT'D)

You know, I think I can see the
appeal of dressing up every day!
Avast! Ahoy! Polly want a cracker?

Squawky GASPS, crosses his wings.

COVE (CONT'D)
 What? Was that offensive? That was
 offensive, wasn't it?

Squawky CHIRPS, waddles off elsewhere with his smoothies.

Cove is joined by Andrés, Indy, and Emjae.

ANDRÉS
 Surf's up, bro?

COVE
 Surf's up, bro.

INDY
 Gotta see that sea.

Emjae groans... then breaks into a laugh.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN – SUNSET

The sun dips below the horizon, turning the surface of the water a bright orange.

AND THEY SURF: Andrés, Indy, Emjae, and Cove --

EMJAE (V.O.)
 So... this Marcus guy...?

ANDRÉS (V.O.)
 Dude, he's a corpse. We killed him.

COVE (V.O.)
 He's with the waves now.

INDY (V.O.)
And you're next!

EMJAE (V.O.)
 What?!

INDY (V.O.)
 Kidding, kidding. Oooh, nice move,
 Emjae!

-- closing out another day of their endless summer together.

END OF EPISODE

SCOOPY-DOO

A RIVERDALE-ESQUE LIVE-ACTION SPEC SCRIPT

#101: "Haunted Scooby-Doo: The Wane of Whitney Woods"

Written by

Bryant A. Loney

March 30, 2022

COLD OPEN

EXT. NORWOOD PROPERTY – EVENING

Sunset over a run-down neighborhood. Worn bulldozers and a dump truck sit idle where homes used to be.

At the end of the street is a derelict two-story house and a trailer a few yards to the right of it.

ELLIS NORWOOD, JR. (13), a short boy with shaggy hair, rides down the cracked road on his bicycle.

He stops briefly in front of the house, waits, and then continues for the trailer. He leaves the bike in the grass beside a old lawnmower and hops up the steps, two at a time.

INT. TRAILER – CONTINUOUS

Inside is SENIOR (mid 40s), a wrinkled man with a mullet hairstyle beneath a ball cap, passed out on a sofa.

Ellis closes the door quietly, his eyes on Senior, whose left hand is heavily bandaged.

Ellis walks over to the kitchenette and opens the fridge. He pushes aside various takeout containers before settling on a vat of chocolate pudding.

He opens the vat on the nearby table.

Empty.

ELLIS

Ugh. Dad...

Senior snorts in his sleep. Ellis SIGHS.

Ellis peers out the window at the old house. He spies an ornate gothic key beside Senior.

Ellis rushes over, swipes the key, and then flings open the trailer door, stomping off as it slams shut.

EXT. NORWOOD PROPERTY – CONT'D

Ellis crosses the unkempt lawn and reaches the front porch. He stops at the stairs. He waits a moment.

The wind chime sounds above him. A sign over the door reads: THE NORWOOD FAMILY.

Ellis walks up the rickety steps and grips the handle. He inserts the key; he twists, he pushes.

The door CREAKS, and he enters.

INT. DERELICT HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONT'D

The house opens to a small, dark hallway, a door on each side. Dim and eerie. Dust motes dance around the light.

Past that is the living room, with a couple of mismatched couches, a large stone fireplace, and a leather armchair around a dusty coffee table.

Ellis passes by a shelf with a framed family photo: Ellis, a clean-shaven Senior, and -- in the shadows -- Ellis's mother.

INT. DERELICT HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONT'D

The kitchen holds shelves of tinned goods and glass jars. Pickled vegetables of some kind.

Ellis reaches into one of the cupboards.

A dusty vat of chocolate pudding, unopened. He grins.

A CLANGING NOISE from the living room. Ellis turns.

He holds the pudding vat under one arm and leans the other against the doorframe as he looks around...

Nothing.

Behind Ellis rises a tall, shadow-clad humanoid FIGURE, with elongated horns and long arms like sharp nails, not moving but staring.

Ellis slowly turns behind him...

The figure SCREECHES, ungodly, unworldly, raising its arms, ready to strike --

Ellis falls to the ground. His SCREAMS fill the house.

INT. TRAILER - CONT'D

Senior opens his eyes in panic.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE**EXT. WHITNEY, LOUISIANA – LATE AFTERNOON**

A brown RV passes by a welcome sign that reads: Whitney, Louisiana, "The Town Without a Frown!" The beater is square-shaped with rusty bodywork.

INT. RV – CONT'D

Driving is FRED JONES (19). His blond hair is disheveled, and on his face is a beard that must have taken months to grow out. He is well-built.

Riding shotgun, on her laptop, is VELMA DINKLEY (17), who has chin-length, sideswept brown hair and is more heavysset compared to Daphne. She wears thick-framed glasses.

In the back, at her workbench with a homemade flamethrower, is DAPHNE BLAKE (18). She has an hourglass figure, freckles, and shoulder-length red hair. She wears a top with the phrase "Live Fast" on the front and "Die Young" on the back.

Last is SCOOBY-DOO (10), a brown Great Dane with several black spots on his upper body. His fur is gray in several areas, and his right hind leg is missing. He sleeps at Daphne's feet.

VELMA

Do you think being busy helps
combat sadness?

DAPHNE

Jeepers, that's dark.

Fred smirks, then adjusts the rearview mirror to face Daphne.

FRED

"Jeepers"?

DAPHNE

It's my thing! I say "Jeepers"!

VELMA

Fred? The road?

Daphne scratches Scooby behind the ears. The dog smiles.

FRED

What do you think, Scoob? Do people
say "Jeepers"?

VELMA

I just mean, when you don't have time to think about stuff, then you don't have time to get as sad. But sometimes, being too busy causes the sadness. So it really depends on whether you need more time to think... or less.

DAPHNE

Huh.

INT./EXT. WHITNEY WOODS -- CONT'D

The RV turns into the former subdivision of Whitney Woods, its sign chipped and faded, as well as a billboard for real estate agent Jan Ravensburger.

FRED

(looking at the scenery)
This doesn't feel right.

DAPHNE

This is a waste of time.

On both sides of the street are orange cones and construction equipment, as well as a sign for Sportsman's Paradise Development -- "COMING SOON!"

VELMA

People need our help. A kid got attacked.

EXT. NORWOOD PROPERTY -- CONT'D

The RV continues on to the end, in front of the derelict house. The RV comes to a slow stop.

DAPHNE

Let's get this over with.

The gang steps out, one by one: Fred, Daphne, Velma, and Scooby. They begin to walk over to the house.

Fred and Daphne bump into each other --

FRED

Sorry, I --

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

Watch where you're going!

Ellis runs over from the trailer, waving his hands in warning.

ELLIS

Wait, stop! Don't go in there!

Ellis puts his hands on his knees, looking down, panting. He stares up at the gang, offers them his hand.

ELLIS (CONT'D)

Ellis Norwood. Y'all the Specter Detectors? From the online ad?

Velma gives a half-smile as she shakes his hand.

VELMA

We get a lot of names. The Specter Detectors, the Creeper Reapers, the Scream Team, the Spook Squad...

FRED

The Fear Fighters.

DAPHNE

The Crystal Cove Mystery Solvers Club...

ELLIS

Crystal... Cove? What's that?

A gentle breeze through the loblolly pines. The branches scrape each other. Fred glances around, surveying the place.

FRED

A town, 'while back. Before the wendigo attacks.

ELLIS

It's... just the four of you then?

Fred runs a hand over his red-rimmed eyes and dark, heavy bags, then over the stretch of silver hairs in his beard.

FRED

We, uh, had a partner. Before...

VELMA

His name was Shaggy.

DAPHNE

(somberly)

He was, heh, always a bit of a screw-up...

FRED

(to Ellis; an aside)

Don't ask. Daphne's on a bit of a --

DAPHNE

What happened here, Ellis?

Daphne observes the derelict house. Fred and Velma just sort of stand there. Ellis crosses his arms in doubt, the trailer behind him. Scooby whimpers at it, heads that way.

INT. TRAILER – MOMENTS LATER

Ellis leads the gang inside the trailer. Senior, startled, rises from his sofa. His eyes are bloodshot and swollen. He wears long sleeves and pants.

SENIOR

Ellis? Who are these people?

ELLIS

These are them mystery folk I was talkin' about.

(to the gang)

This is my dad, Senior.

The gang steps forward as they introduce themselves.

FRED

Fredrick Herman Jones.

VELMA

Velma Dinkley. Or just Velma.

DAPHNE

Daphne.

FRED

And this is Scooby-Doo.

SCOOBY-DOO

Arf!

Senior grunts, crossing his arms.

SENIOR

All I see's...

(to Fred)

... a sarcastic punk...

(to Daphne)

... what -- a brooding warrior?

(to Velma)

And I'm guessing you bring a kind of level-headed rationalism to the group, even if you are the empath.

FRED
What the heck.

DAPHNE
Whoa whoa, listen here, old man --

SENIOR
Where's your comic relief, huh?

Daphne falls silent, looks to her shoes. Senior smirks.

SENIOR (CONT'D)
Ahh. You're the wounded, brooding warrior.

Velma notices Senior's left hand, which is bleeding through the bandages.

VELMA
What happened to your hand, Mr. Norwood?

Senior opens his mouth to answer, but Ellis cuts in --

ELLIS
Aw, that? He, uhh, sliced it -- while fixin' the mower engine.

FRED
Why are you avoiding the house next door? Is it yours?

DAPHNE
Why are you living in this dump?

VELMA
Daph!

DAPHNE
He started it! Psychoanalyzing me!

ELLIS
Aw, the house --

SENIOR
No! You can't go in the house! Mary Sue won't allow you inside!

DAPHNE
Mary Who?

SENIOR
My wife, Ellis's mother. Died six months, two days ago.

(MORE)

SENIOR (CONT'D)

(despondent)

Boy, I told you not to meddle...

Ellis pulls the gang aside, away from Senior, who stares out at the house through the window.

ELLIS

My dad -- he's suffering from what the doc is calling auditory hallucinations. He hears this voice. Grief-related. He's desperate, so I emailed you --

VELMA

You think someone, or something, is manipulating him, based on this voice only he hears.

ELLIS

And tryin' to scare us out of our own home! They dress up like this... this shadow monster -- with horns and arms like nails!

FRED

Why would someone do that, Ellis?

ELLIS

Okay, see, what I think is, it's some guy in a rubber mask, right? This whole neighborhood was built on a salt mine. The house is worth a lot of money...

Velma gives a faint smile. Daphne just rolls her eyes.

Ellis snaps his fingers, figuring it out.

ELLIS (CONT'D)

I got it! I bet it's that greedy property developer, Sportsman's -- or maybe Jan Ravensburger, the real estate lady -- tryin' to scare us into selling our home! Or -- !

DAPHNE

Or maybe it's Old Man Jenkins, the hermit living in the woods!

FRED

Colonel Mustard with the lead pipe in the conservatory.

ELLIS

I'm not lying! The bank's comin'
for us!

Daphne snickers. Velma doesn't. Daphne turns to Fred.

DAPHNE

So it's a wraith then. The ~spooky~
wraith of Mary Sue Norwood, oooooh!

FRED

That's what I'm thinking. It's the
wife -- the mother -- getting into
Senior's head, causing him trouble.

VELMA

Need to resolve whatever unfinished
business this wraith left behind.

DAPHNE

Meh. Worst-case scenario, we find
the corpse, cut off the head, tear
out the heart, put the head between
its legs --

ELLIS

Whoa, whoa, whoa, what the heck are
y'all talkin' about?!

(pointing with emphasis)

I need you guys to go in there and
catch the bad guy so that Dad and
me can live a normal life again!

Fred laughs -- colder than he should.

FRED

Oh boy. What even is a normal life?

ELLIS

The sheriff won't do nothin', my
dad won't do nothin', and I need
y'all to solve whatever mystery and
to stop this goony ghost from
tryin' to get rich quick!

DAPHNE

We'll need payment.

ELLIS

Y-- yeah, sure -- umm, whatever you
want from the house. As long as you
can catch the person, it's yours.

FRED

That's generous, but we prefer to agree to a number before we start. Just business.

ELLIS

I... I have my allowance, plus a swear jar for my dad, 'bout full. Maybe a hundred bucks total. Wanted a new bike for --

DAPHNE

That'll work.

The gang and Ellis return to the trailer's living room. Senior is still looking out that window, whispering.

SENIOR

Mary Sue... oh, Mary Sue. I was not a good husband to you. I hurt you... so bad...

Senior turns to face the gang.

SENIOR (CONT'D)

I have a... bad temper. And Mary Sue -- she left me, drove out to Oklahoma to stay with her folks. She died on the way. I used to write her love notes while we were dating, so I... I've written her letters every day since the accident, trying to atone. I know it's no good. But what's inside there -- that house -- it's real.

VELMA

The letters should appease the wraith that's haunting you.

FRED

Since it doesn't matter who does the delivering so much as that they get delivered, we'll take the letters for you and place them in the house. If Mary Sue is satisfied, she should theoretically leave after that.

SENIOR

Oh, thank you! Oh, bless you all! Let me get the letters -- they're in the bedroom.

Senior nearly trips over himself rushing into the next room.

ELLIS

Why are y'all messin' with him like that? I don't want this! You're acting just as bad as Ravensburger or Sportsman's or whoever is doing this to us!

DAPHNE

Do you believe in ghosts, kid?

ELLIS

What? 'Course not!

VELMA

Look, we understand what you're going through. We do. And it's okay to be afraid.

ELLIS

You're saying my mom's a demon.

VELMA

We want to give her peace.

FRED

This is really about your dad. We're going to fix him, but you have to trust us. All right?

Ellis looks away from them, fighting back tears.

Senior returns with the love letters.

Scooby, his head tilted, gets up off the floor and then follows Senior's shadow -- which moves slower than he does.

END OF ACT ONE

They continue the search. Ellis picks up an old cigar stub...

Velma examines a pamphlet for Jan Ravensburger & Company...

Scooby sniffs out a threatening letter with the Sportsman's logo...

And Daphne opens a box full of batteries, timers, and a projector.

INT. DERELICT HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONT'D

SFX: STRUCTURAL CREAKING

Fred takes the love letters, smooths out the creases, and then -- stepping around a spill of chocolate pudding -- places them neatly on the dusty kitchen table.

Daphne, Velma, Scooby, and Ellis wait from behind.

Nothing happens.

DAPHNE

Things aren't adding up here.

VELMA

And the temperature feels natural.

DAPHNE

Ellis, you should be able to hear the wraith as well -- not just your dad. And if Mary Sue died in Oklahoma, she wouldn't be haunting in Whitney, Louisiana.

FRED

Hmmm. Think it's a banshee?

A SCREAM from outside. The gang's reactions spell trouble.

EXT. NORWOOD PROPERTY - MOMENTS LATER

The gang and Ellis rush out to find Senior hunched over the lawn at sundown, grasping his head, facing away from them, his ball cap in a circle of dead grass.

Ellis places a hand on Senior's back. Senior shields himself from his son.

SENIOR

Stay away! She wants us to stay away -- don't go snooping around!

Senior turns his body to face them. From his eyes pour out twin beams of dark, clouded light.

There are several bald patches on his head, and he appears restless and agitated as he holds out clumps of his own hair for the gang to see.

DAPHNE

Whoa. Jeepers.

SENIOR

(voice distorted)

Stay away! Stay away, or you too will suffer! Mary Sue told me herself! I -- I deserve this!

ELLIS

No, Dad, you don't!

FRED

Oh my God.

Ellis kneels beside his father, comforting him. Senior accepts, dropping the hair, the horrible shafts of black light fading from his eyes.

He then rises to his feet.

Scooby growls at Senior's shadow. Ellis, in tears, shoos the dog away, but Daphne takes note.

From the light of the setting sun, Senior's shadow is tall, thin, with elongated horns and long arms like sharp nails...

Daphne frowns, then nudges Fred and Velma. They notice, and they nod to each other their understanding.

Scooby moves protectively in front of them.

VELMA

(about Ellis)

He lost his mom already. Can't be losing anyone else.

The gang pulls a visibly distraught Ellis aside.

DAPHNE

We were wrong. It's not your mom.

ELLIS

Yeah, I told you that!

VELMA

Your father is possessed by a Wane.

ELLIS

A... "wane"?

FRED

W-A-N-E. A demon that feasts on the guilty conscience of a despicable human host. No offense.

VELMA

To all others, the Wane remains invisible unless it is disturbed, as when you rummaged through its lair the other day, or when your dad got too close just now.

FRED

People are vulnerable to guilt, so the Wane inflicts suffering.

DAPHNE

It orders the host to commit cruelty and self-injury, speaking in whispers only the host can hear.

VELMA

The Wane then preys on the host's worst fears, draining their life, driving them to madness.

FRED

Ending in either hysteria...

DAPHNE

(grave)
Or the death of the host.

Scooby... he's just a dog, rolling in the dirt.

Ellis looks from the gang to Senior, then back to the gang. He wipes away a tear.

ELLIS

You're... you're sure this isn't Jan Ravensburger in a costume?

Daphne laughs, high-pitched and cruel.

DAPHNE

Oh, how I wish this was Jan Ravensburger in a costume! I wish all the werewolves, vampires, changelings, goblins, treefolk, ghouls, wights, crones, and woodland spirits were fake!

(MORE)

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

I really, really do. But they're never some nutjob in a Halloween costume. It's never that simple.

Velma gestures to the rest of the gang.

VELMA

Fred, Daphne, Scooby, and I, we're monster slayers for hire --

DAPHNE

(throwing her hands up)
And yet we're treated worse than exterminators! Mere... pest control!

FRED

Doing a job we hardly get paid for.

ELLIS

But what about the pamphlet for Jan Ravensburger?! What about the cigar stub, the letter from Sportsman's, the batteries and the timers and the projector?!

VELMA

What about your father, Ellis, slowly dying by his own hand?

Senior has been listening. He scratches at his neck stubble.

ELLIS

Dad --

SENIOR

What can be done? I'm serious. Penitent. Night after night since the accident, I had begged to hear Mary Sue's voice again. But this isn't what I meant.

FRED

You'll have to spend the night in the Wane's lair.

DAPHNE

The haunted house.

VELMA

Draw it out, make it angry.

ELLIS

No way --

SENIOR
Yes, please, anything!

Fred turns to Ellis.

FRED
We'll burn white sage. That and
Senior's presence should enrage the
Wane. When the Wane reveals itself,
that's when we'll attack.

Velma turns to Fred, surprised.

VELMA
But who will go with him?

FRED
Don't I always? I mean, it's fine --

DAPHNE
I'll do it. I got nothin' to lose.

Fred stares at her, flustered, his mouth slightly open. He
sucks in air through his teeth, EXHALES softly.

FRED
And... and nothing to prove! Daph.
You can't. It's too -- dangerous.

VELMA
Fred is right. You remember last
time. You're... not ready.

DAPHNE
(laughing to herself)
If not me, who else? You? Please.
Fire is the only way.

VELMA
But fire...

FRED
Fine. Let her.

Daphne crosses her arms. Fred shrugs. Velma stands silent.

Ellis and Senior stare at them.

Scooby turns around, sniffs his own rear end.

Daphne sighs, then walks in the direction of the RV. Fred,
Velma, Scooby, and Ellis follow.

Daphne opens the side compartment, revealing a variety of weaponry inside -- knuckledusters, machetes, smoke bombs, a crossbow -- as well as Senior's swear jar.

At the display, Ellis's eyes widen in sudden fear.

EXT. NORWOOD PROPERTY -- NIGHT

Bats SCREECH as they fly by the house, ready to feed.

INT. DERELICT HOUSE -- LIVING ROOM -- CONT'D

Velma and Ellis place and light several candles along the inside walls of the derelict house. Velma then anoints one of the walls with oil.

She glimpses over and then places a sympathetic hand on Ellis's shoulder. He shrugs it off.

VELMA

Don't worry about your dad. We've done this all and worse before.

ELLIS

You guys are crazy.

VELMA

Do you think your dad is crazy?

ELLIS

My dad is broken. I don't know why he's acting the way he is. And I miss my mom. I... don't know what I believe.

VELMA

Would you believe us if we told you Scooby was once a talking dog?

ELLIS

Like a... a parrot?

VELMA

Like a human. Cursed.

Ellis is about to answer when Fred pokes his head in.

FRED

Hey, Velm, it's time.

Fred, Velma, and Ellis pass Senior being led inside by Daphne as they exit the derelict house.

EXT. NORWOOD PROPERTY – CONT'D

Drizzling rain. Fred, Velma, and Ellis watch from the outside windows. Scooby crouches, barking. Fred groans.

FRED

This dog's driving me nuts.

VELMA

Come on, Scoob, settle down. Daphne will be okay.

She produces a tin can from behind her. She shakes it.

VELMA (CONT'D)

Do you want some canned ham? It's your favorite!

Scooby whimpers, wanders elsewhere. Even Fred frowns at this.

INT. DERELICT HOUSE – LIVING ROOM – CONT'D

Daphne is ready, waiting patiently in the corner, watching Senior, who begins to squirm.

INT. DERELICT HOUSE – LIVING ROOM – LATER

Daphne is tired, sweating. She pulls down the bandana.

Senior, veins protruding, yells out panicked conjectures, curses himself.

SENIOR

MARY SUE, PLEASE, GOD, FORGIVE ME --

INT. DERELICT HOUSE – LIVING ROOM – MUCH LATER

Daphne has her head bowed slightly, dozing off.

She grips her head in pain.

She looks to the ground to see what appears to be a lanky teenage dude, face-down, with shaggy hair and large slash marks on his back.

Daphne bends down and carefully flips the boy over... to reveal his face to be eyeless, mouthless -- nothing but a ring of rough stitches.

She recoils, horrified.

DAPHNE
No. No, Shaggy, no...

ELLIS (V.O.)
(scared)
What's going on?

FRED (V.O.)
The Wane feels threatened.

VELMA (V.O.)
It's preying on Daphne's fears,
feeding on her guilt.

FRED (V.O.)
It wants to punish her.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE**INT. DERELICT HOUSE, LIVING ROOM – CONT'D**

Behind Daphne rises a tall, shadow-clad humanoid WANE, with elongated horns and long arms like sharp nails, not moving but staring.

Daphne slowly turns her neck behind her.

SFX: THUNDERCLAP

The Wane SCREECHES, ungodly, unworldly, raising its arms, ready to strike --

Daphne pulls out the homemade flamethrower from under her robe and sprays the Wane with blue-silver fire.

The Wane screeches louder -- intense and ethereal -- disengaging. It then swipes at Daphne, knocking away the flamethrower and tossing her to the ground.

The bandana falls to the floor. Flames curl the wallpaper.

EXT. NORWOOD PROPERTY – CONT'D

Ellis watches with terrified eyes. Velma holds him back.

VELMA

Fred, we have to do something!

FRED

Daphne knows what to do. We have to trust her -- let this play out.

VELMA

No way -- all for one, one for all.

INT. DERELICT HOUSE – LIVING ROOM – CONT'D

Daphne panics. The Wane is between her and the flamethrower.

Daphne looks over at Senior, who then morphs into a disfigured Shaggy -- writhing around, frothing, the darkness shining from where his eyes should be --

And then Velma kicks over the flamethrower to Daphne. She grabs it, giving the Wane another dousing.

Thin, black tendrils shoot out from Senior's ears, nose, and mouth like worms. The parasite.

Fred shoots at its coils with a shotgun.

The Wane SCREECHES louder than ever, knocking over furniture and grasping for the walls...

RUMBLING, RUMBLING INTENSIFIES, RUMBLING SUSTAINS...

And then the Wane vanishes into the floorboards.

There is an eerie silence as Daphne, on her knees, begins to pant, the job completed... but she sees Shaggy still, in the corner, watching her.

For a moment, Daphne's veins are visibly black. Pulsating.

Ellis rushes inside to remove the cuffs from Senior, sobbing.

Scooby tugs Daphne by the collar out of the derelict house, the living room now aflame.

EXT. NORWOOD PROPERTY – CONT'D

They all collapse onto the front lawn, wet from light rain.

FRED
(out of breath)
Did we... please tell me we did not
just burn down the house they want
to move back into.

Ellis cries beside Senior. He turns to face the gang.

ELLIS
Is it... is the Wane gone?

DAPHNE
It's...
(noncommittal)
We're... we're done here.

Fred and Velma pull her aside as Ellis tends to Senior.

FRED
What did you see in there?

DAPHNE
Nothing --

FRED
No. Tell us.

DAPHNE
Please, I am trying to protect you!

FRED
That is such a lie -- again!

VELMA
You can't keep us out!

DAPHNE
Velma --

VELMA
You can't hide things from us!

FRED
You lied to us. For weeks!

VELMA
We are supposed to do this as a
team!

DAPHNE
It's different this time!

VELMA
(crying)
I left my whole life for this!

DAPHNE
Shaggy! Shaggy Rogers with the
shaggy hair! Dead! All right?! Is
that what you wanted to hear?!

Fred and Velma are silent. Daphne falls to her knees, her hands in her hair, heaving, sobbing.

Scooby nuzzles up beside her.

FRED
(unconvincing)
It was... an accident.

VELMA
It wasn't your fault...

DAPHNE
It's all my fault! I should've done
something, but I didn't! I was
scared -- in the fire, I chose me
over him! And now we're these...
these shadows of our former selves!
(choking up)
There's nothing I can do!

Fred, Velma, and Scooby huddle over Daphne, their arms around each other, as the rain continues to pour.

EXT. NORWOOD PROPERTY – EARLY MORNING

The derelict house is in ruins. Ellis supports Senior as the old man limps outside the trailer, wincing with each step. They approach the gang, who stand beside their RV.

Senior's left hand trembles. He grips it with his right.

VELMA

How are you both?

SENIOR

I feel... empty. Cold.

DAPHNE

That's common. With grief.

VELMA

You rejected a parasite. It's normal for the host to feel disoriented after.

FRED

Fume the trailer with sweetgrass, then rest for a week. Move on from all this.

SENIOR

Thanks, sincerely. Ought'a be said.

ELLIS

C'mon, Dad, let me help you --

SENIOR

No, son, s'all right. I got this.

Senior makes his way back inside the trailer, and he shuts the door behind him as he salutes his good-bye. The gang watches with a mix of admiration and melancholy.

ELLIS

The bank's still coming for the house.

FRED

Nothing we can do about that.

ELLIS

And you guys do this all the time? Fighting monsters?

DAPHNE

(to Fred)

Yeah. More than we should.

Fred doesn't argue. He lazily draws a semi-circle in the dirt with his foot instead.

DAPHNE (CONT'D)

I'll be in the van.

Daphne leaves. Fred rolls his eyes. Just as he's about to follow her --

VELMA

Shaggy's not... he's not really dead, is he?

FRED

You can't rush a resurrection, Velm. I don't know. We'll see.

Velma nods. Fred heads inside the van.

Ellis bends over to shake Scooby's paw, but Scooby jumps on top of the boy and licks his face instead. Ellis laughs. Velma laughs.

ELLIS

If I... message you guys, would you keep in touch?

VELMA

Oh, uh, we don't -- umm, we don't really --

Ellis looks dejected. Velma crouches next to him.

VELMA (CONT'D)

I have fought... all kinds of monsters. For a long time.

SFX: WIND WHISTLING, TREES CREAKING

VELMA (CONT'D)

Thing is, with monsters, they're predictable. You know they're bad, with bad intentions, animalistic, always wanting something from you. But with people, it's not that easy. Takes longer to figure that out about them. Humans are the ones that will really mess you up. And the worst part is, you will trust them before they do.

Velma stands, glancing over at the RV...

INT. RV -- CONT'D

Daphne sits in the driver's seat with her eyes closed. Fred kicks back in the passenger seat, feet up on the dash -- he, too, closes his eyes.

FRED

Guilt, huh? Crazy how it owns people -- the hold it has.
(serious, straightening)
It's worthless. Self-indulgent.
Guilt accomplishes nothing.

Daphne doesn't react. Fred moves closer.

FRED (CONT'D)

Guilt is an excuse to not do something different or better -- as if, so long as people feel remorse, they're doing their penance.

DAPHNE

I get it.

FRED

No, I don't think you do. It's not just killing you, Daph -- it's killing us. We need you. You have to get over your guilt and start taking action --

DAPHNE

Enough.

FRED

You -- ! Gaah, you are an absolute disgrace -- !

DAPHNE

Oh, and you can suddenly tell everything about me?! We broke up!
(scoffs)
It's all pointless anyway.

Fred scowls and then, out of frustration, climbs over the seat to the back. Velma enters.

Daphne turns on the engine, and then they drive off: Fred in the back with Scooby, Velma up front with Daphne.

Daphne turns on the radio: first a MELLOW 1960s POP station, then some SULTRY ROCK instead. She drives with one hand on the wheel, the other clenching and then unclenching.

Velma looks over... and notices the diagonal cut across Daphne's palm.

VELMA

What happened? Your hand.

Daphne glances down -- her eyes puffy and discolored -- but then returns her attention to the road.

DAPHNE

Must've happened in the fight.

FRED

(couldn't care less)

Yeah. Monsters, Velm.

VELMA

Yes... monsters...

Velma reaches between the seats for her laptop. She opens it, clicks around.

VELMA (CONT'D)

Got an email. Some twins found what sounds like a Chrysabelus harpy egg in a cave by their town.

FRED

Chrysabelus. Dreamsnatchers. Great.

DAPHNE

I hate harpies.

FRED

And where there's an egg, there's a queen.

DAPHNE

Are we going to Ohio?

VELMA

Harpies are cowardly, fragile, they like shiny things... Y'know, you could set a trap, Fred.

Velma looks back, as if expecting Fred to smile. He doesn't. She doesn't.

EXT. NORWOOD PROPERTY – CONT'D

Ellis and Senior stand in front of the trailer, watching the RV in the distance. Ellis's expression shows worry. Senior grins.

SENIOR
What'd you say their name was? The
Groovy Gang?

INT. RV - CONT'D

The gang drives east with the sun on their faces -- all
frowns -- casting a shadow of Daphne on the driver's seat...

Tall and thin, with elongated horns and long arms like sharp
nails.

Not moving but staring.

ELLIS (V.O.)
The Haunted.

END OF EPISODE

BOB'S BURGERS

SPEC SCRIPT

"Bob's Books, Beach Mice, and Body Scrubs"

Written by

Bryant A. Loney

March 30, 2022

ACT ONE

EXT. BOB'S BURGERS – DAY

Health inspectors HUGO and RON spray disinfectant in the general vicinity of the storefront next door.

A lopsided sign with the Bookin' Good logo: "Sorry to say, because folks forgot how books work, we've had to move on..."

BOB, LINDA, and GENE watch as a Bookin' Good LOSS PREVENTION employee loads pallets of store product into a company van.

BOB

There goes another bookstore.

LINDA

Aww rats.

GENE

Damn capitalistic internet taking
over brick-and-mortar marketplaces!

LINDA

No, I think it really was rats!
That's what Hugo was saying --
whole buncha them, in the walls!

BOB

Uh, glad Hugo's doing his job then.

LINDA

So sad. Some of my fondest memories
were inside a bookstore...

Linda looks directly at the camera, wide-eyed, followed by a WHOOSHING sound and twinkling percussion.

The camera ZOOMS through the center of Linda's right eye, rushing through a progressive set of amorphous rings -- pink, orange, bright white -- just before the flashback begins.

INT. NONDESCRIPT STORE – NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

FLASHBACK LINDA, in her twenties and wearing '90s attire, strolls through aisles of concessions and multimedia.

Other PATRONS are coupled up, but Flashback Linda is alone.

LINDA (V.O.)

Friday nights! Rows of snacks, fees
for not rewinding the VHS tapes...

LINDA
Oh, it's worth at least fifty!

LOSS PREVENTION
Okay, how 'bout fifty?

LINDA
Sold!

BOB
Lin!

Linda and LP exchange the goods, and then LP hops into his van -- driving away -- while Hugo and Ron disinfect a stray copy of Love in the Time of Cholera.

BOB (CONT'D)
Lin, why would you do that?

LINDA
Oh, c'mon, Bobby, let me sell the books in the store! We can raise prices, change up the menu --

BOB
I like our prices. I like our menu.

LINDA
Happy people are always reading books, right? I see it on TV all the time! They'll come in, buy a book, a burger, be happy -- and we'll have a cultured clientele!

BOB
I like our clientele!

INT./EXT. BOB'S BURGERS - CONT'D

They look in the storefront window to see MORT at the counter, asleep beside his burger. Flies buzz around him.

MARSHMALLOW, in a crop-top with "SEX POSITIVELY" written across the front, takes angled selfies in one of the booths.

EXT. BOB'S BURGERS - CONT'D

Bob grimaces with Gene and Linda.

BOB
Okay, fine, we'll try it for a day.

GENE

But didn't you hear about the high school music teacher who got arrested because of literature?

LINDA

No! What'd he do now?!

GENE

He had students read... band books!

LINDA

Oh Gene, I raised you better.

GENE

Like, "banned books"? Get it?

BOB

We get it. It's a terrible joke.

GENE

I am working on my comedy, okay! Where're my prose at?!

INT. BOB'S BURGERS - CONT'D

Bob, Linda, and Gene enter the store --

LOUISE comes running up to her parents --

LOUISE

MomDadINeedAnimalCityINeedTheNew
VideoGameAnimalCityDidYouHearMe
INEEDITINEEDITINMYLIFEYOU--

BOB

Whoa, whoa, Louise, slow down.

LOUISE

I said it's the new video game --

GENE

Don't listen to her lies! Didn't you hear that she almost burned a customer's mouth by overcooking a Hawaiian burger?

LINDA

Oh my God, Louise -- !

LOUISE

What?! No, I didn't -- !

GENE

Yep! She should've cooked it at... aloha temperature!

BOB
Nope, nope! Register for you!

GENE
Ah man. Everyone's a critic!

Gene begrudgingly replaces Tina at the cash register.

LOUISE
I was saying I need the new Animal City game! All the kids have it --

BOB
Sorry, but your mother spent fifty dollars on a pallet of books --

LINDA
Oh my God, did I just leave that sitting outside?!

BOB
-- and we really can't afford anything extra right now.

Linda exits. Louise just stands there, dumbstruck.

LOUISE
Animal City, video game, so cute, me-a-money-needing-much -- WHAT?!

Linda returns with a box from the pallet.

BOB
We're going to, uh, sell the books.

LINDA
Have a sample. Read! Be happy!

She reaches in, hands Louise Animal Farm by George Orwell.

LOUISE
I ask you for one thing! One!

Louise grabs the book and tosses it over her shoulder. It lands on the counter next to Mort, waking him up.

MORT
I make a great ventriloquist -- !
Oh. Hey, Bob. What'd I miss?

BOB
Uhh, I think Hugo and Ron wanted to inspect the bodies you left outside the crematorium.

MORT
Oh they're not going anywhere.

LINDA
Mort, you want a new burger?

MORT
No, thank you, I'm fine.

BOB
You slept here for three hours. You should probably... buy something.

TINA
Dad, we look after our own.

LOUISE
Not enough to buy me Animal City!!!

Louise storms out, and as the door is about to shut, in enters TEDDY, refreshed, looking his best, clean shaven --

BOB
Oh wow.

LINDA
Teddy, you look amazing!

MORT
Did you finally try the embalmer?

TEDDY
It's the new spa next door -- the one that replaced the Bookin' Good! The owner's an Icelandic genius.

TINA
A spa, you say?

LINDA
What a time! Some of my fondest memories were in Iceland...

Linda looks directly at the camera, wide-eyed, and --

BOB
No, no, you're about to describe a winter in Ohio. You don't own a passport.

TINA
Mom, Dad, I think I'd like to check out the new Icelandic spa. Some pampering might be fun.

LOUISE
Stupid literacy, stupid no money.

Next to It's Your Funeral: Home & Crematorium, Louise spots teen MINNIE collecting cash at a stand. Minnie's sign reads: "Save the Beach Mouse!"

MINNIE
(to PASSERSBY)
Save the Seymour's Bay Beach Mouse!
Bring our local beach mouse out of
endangerment!

Meanwhile, Hugo and Ron disinfect a casket outside Mort's. When the casket moves a little, the pair flees.

Louise, intrigued, approaches Minnie's stand.

LOUISE
Howdy-hoo, teen.

MINNIE
Fourth-grader. Wanna donate to help
save the Seymour's Bay Beach Mouse?

LOUISE
Not really, but... how much money
have you raised?

Minnie looks into her fish bowl of loose change, rattles it.

MINNIE
Hmmm. This much?

LOUISE
Holy moly! That much!

MINNIE
I've only been here three minutes.

LOUISE
Minnie. You're saying there are
people breaking out the Benjamins
to help, what, save some rodents?

MINNIE
Well, for years, the Seymour's Bay
Beach Mouse has sacrificed itself
for science and the benefit of us
humans. The mice helped detect
landmines in the World Wars --

LOUISE
Boooooorinnnggg!

A YOUNG COUPLE observes the stand. They shrug, then take a selfie of themselves donating. Louise GASPS as they leave.

Mort walks by, and Minnie waves him down.

MINNIE

Excuse me, sir? Sir!

MORT

Why are you here? Who are you with?

MINNIE

Would you like to donate to my conservation effort to help save the Seymour's Bay Beach Mouse?

MORT

A beach mouse, huh?

MINNIE

Oh, they're so cute, sir! Sometimes I see one and I feel like I've just been kicked -- no, blasted -- in the stomach. I've never felt this way about anything, not my own family or lover.

(crying)

The beach mice are so good! And they are dying because of humans!

LOUISE

Gene accidentally fried a rat once. Does that count?

MINNIE

Girl, read the room!

MORT

Don't cry outside my crematorium -- it's not good for business.

Mort reaches into his wallet and gives Minnie a few bills.

MORT (CONT'D)

There. Good luck with the mice.

MINNIE

Mice.

LOUISE

Moose.

MORT

Meece?

LOUISE
Moss.

 MORT
Mort!

 LOUISE
Minnie?

 MINNIE
Meh.

Gene and Tina exit Bob's Burgers. Louise approaches.

 TINA
Guys, I'm gonna pamper myself. I
want to be as relaxed as Teddy!

 LOUISE
And I'm gonna make a fake nonprofit
to save beach mice while my real
intention is to embezzle donations
so I can buy a copy of Animal City!

 GENE
And I'm gonna be as funny as that
train robber in Mexico. Didn't you
hear? They say the guy had... loco
motives!

 LOUISE
Ugh.

 TINA
We really have too much free time.

They high five.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO**INT. BOB'S BURGERS - LATER**

The restaurant is now a bookstore-burger joint hybrid, with spinning racks of paperbacks and small shelves of hardcovers.

CUSTOMERS, too, seem happy with the renovation. Marshmallow holds with one hand a copy of Tendrils of Intimacy.

MARSHMALLOW

Ooooh, I like this one.

Marshmallow takes a bite out of her burger -- and ketchup squirts onto the page, obscuring the text.

MARSHMALLOW (CONT'D)

Ohhh. I'll, uh, just put this back.

She does so... then picks out another book.

Many more customers are sitting in the booths, reading and eating. Bob and Linda, at the register, appear pleased.

BOB

Huh. I guess people enjoy the novelty of books.

LINDA

Oh this is great -- we'll get all the happy readers!

They are approached by Gene and a MAN IN A FEDORA.

MAN IN A FEDORA

Do you have any books by Sherlock Holmes?

BOB

Umm. By Sherlock Holmes?

MAN IN A FEDORA

The detective? Robert Downey Jr. played him in the movie?

GENE

You mean Babydigg Pampersnatch!

LINDA

Mmm, you mean Benedict Cumberbatch.

MAN IN A FEDORA

Isn't this a bookstore?

BOB
It's a restaurant.

LINDA
That sells books! A book-straunt!

BOB
No, Linda -- we don't read, we...
hardly watch movies anymore, 'cept
to fall asleep.

They turn to Mort farther down the counter, snoring, resting
on a copy of Chopin's The Awakening. Flies buzz around him.

BOB (CONT'D)
This might not be going to plan --

LINDA
Bookstores have gift certificates!

BOB
Which we're not, by the way.

Gene scribbles on a napkin: "GIFT ~~CERTIFICATE~~CIRTIFIGATTE"

MAN IN A FEDORA
So, I can get any denomination on a
gift certificate?

LINDA
Sure, we don't discriminate!
Baptist, Methodist, Orthodox...

BOB
Denominations of dollar amounts.
Oh my God...

GENE
That's the spirit!

EXT. BOB'S BURGERS - CONT'D

Obnoxiously close to Minnie's stand, Louise has set up her
own. Louise's sign reads: "Save the BETTER Beach Mouse!"

Teddy walks by, his nails long and hot pink and manicured.

LOUISE
Lookin' sharp, Teddy! Sharp as a
marble!

MINNIE
Sharp as a prick...

TEDDY

Aww, appreciate ya, girls. It's all thanks to Johann, the owner of the Icelandic spa. He's a miracle worker, Louise -- I'm tellin' ya!

LOUISE

That you are. Care to donate cash to help save the beach mouse from, uhh, lions? Whatever kills mice?

MINNIE

Humans! With their pest control!

TEDDY

I thought this was for iguanas.

INT. BOB'S BURGERS - SAME TIME

Linda, Bob, and Man in a Fedora --

LINDA

Faith-a-holic, Charismental...

BOB

No, he means ten dollars, twenty --

EXT. BOB'S BURGERS - CONT'D

Teddy looks from Minnie's stand to Louise's.

LOUISE

Okay, but... but my beach mouse appreciates it very much when you rub its belly and tell it, "Who's a good mouse? Who is it? You are! You are! Oh yes, you are!"

TEDDY

Oooh! Give the li'l mouse guy a good belly rubbin' from me!

Teddy takes out his wallet and donates to Louise's jar.

LOUISE

Ha-ha, you know it!

Teddy heads inside Bob's Burgers. Minnie stares at Louise.

MINNIE

You sicken me with your false facts. What's your game?!

LOUISE
Game? Game! I have no game!

Louise looks melodramatically to the darkening sky.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
I have... no... game.

A spotlight on Louise as a column beneath her begins to rise.

Louise ascends as the surrounding storefronts disappear and are replaced with a set as effervescent and elaborate as a Busby Berkeley-esque production.

Various rubber-hose CUTE CARTOON ANIMALS, curious, gather before Louise's stand.

Minnie watches with her arms crossed.

SFX: BIG 1930s MUSICAL NUMBER

LOUISE (CONT'D)
(singing)
*Just me in my Animal City!
That's where I wanna be!
Yes, me and my money --
Oh wouldn't it be funny,
If it were me in my Animal City!*

Animals CHEER, play HORNS, dance, toss coins into her jar.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
*You? Helping a beach mouse?
Minnie, join the clubhouse!
Just me and my money --
Oh wouldn't it be funny, if I
Used my freedom of speech, mouse!*

Upset CARTOON BEACH MICE wave their bindle sticks at Louise.

MINNIE
*Louise is a false prophet!
Only wants to make a profit!
Just Louise and your money --
Oh nothing here is funny,
Don't you dare make a deposit!*

LOUISE
Okay, second verse!

INT. BOB'S BURGERS - SAME TIME

Linda, Bob, and Man in a Fedora --

LINDA
Order of the White Wolf, Wheel of
Fortune, Cult of Dragons --

MAN IN A FEDORA
Oooh, Cult of Dragons?

BOB
We are not doing gift certificates!

Bob notices Louise outside singing inaudibly, no animals.

BOB (CONT'D)
What... is she doing?

EXT. BOB'S BURGERS - CONT'D

The streetscape opens to a big soundstage with fountains and
a CARTOON ANIMAL CHOIR in sparkling showgirl costumes.

CARTOON ANIMAL CHOIR
*Louise in her Animal City!
That's where she's gonna be!
Just Louise with our money --
The days'll all be sunny
When it's Louise in Animal City!*

MINNIE	LOUISE
<i>Louise is a false prophet!</i>	<i>You? Helping a beach mouse?</i>
<i>Only wants to make a profit!</i>	<i>Minnie, join the clubhouse!</i>
<i>Just Louise and your money --</i>	<i>Just me and my money --</i>
<i>Oh nothing here is funny,</i>	<i>Oh wouldn't it be funny, if</i>
<i>Don't you dare make a</i>	<i>I used my freedom of speech,</i>
<i>deposit!</i>	<i>mouse!</i>

CARTOON ANIMAL CHOIR
*Just Louise with our money,
The days'll all be sunny -- !*

MINNIE
*Louise is a false prophet!
Only wants to make a profit!*

LOUISE
*Yes, me and my money --
Oh wouldn't it be funny,
If it were me in my Animal City!*

CARTOON ANIMAL CHOIR
The queen of Animal City!

LOUISE
When it's Louise in Animal City!!!

The animals CHEER and APPLAUD as Louise bows and bows.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
Thank you! Thank you, everybody!

MINNIE
Ugh, are you kiddin' me?

An anthropomorphic goat BLEATS at Minnie.

MINNIE (CONT'D)
Aaah!

The normal storefronts return. The cartoon animals disperse.
Louise holds up her jar of cash and coins in triumph!

INT. BOB'S BURGERS – TINA'S ROOM – CONT'D

Tina, in front of a vanity, breathes in through her nose...
... and out through her mouth, fogging the mirror.

SFX: DREAMY LOUNGE TRACK

Tina applies bronzer to her skin...
She covers faint blemishes with concealer...
She smears crimson gloop onto her lips...

INT. BOB'S BURGERS – MOMENTS LATER

Tina swings open the door to Bob's Burgers, waking Mort.
Bob, Linda, Gene, Marshmallow, and others turn to Tina...
... whose face looks like a mashup of the many iterations of
The Joker from the Batman franchise. People GASP.

GENE
Hey, I'm the clown here! Back off!

TINA
Huh?

LINDA
Teeny-Tina, my darling, how do I --
eh, you look like a drag queen.

MARSHMALLOW
Mmm, that's offensive.

BOB
Oh, hey, Marshmallow.

GENE
At least you look better than that
one mean magician!

BOB
David Copperfield?

Bob holds up the novel.

BOB (CONT'D)
By Charles Dickens?

GENE
You didn't hear about the sickly
magician with blisters and bad
breath? He's a... super calloused
fragile mystic hexed by halitosis!

Silence.

Absolute silence.

No one says a thing.

GENE (CONT'D)
I said... he's a super calloused --

TINA
Out, Gene! Out!

Gene leaves, grumbling to himself, just as SPEEDO GUY roller-skates out of the restroom, book pages flying behind him.

SPEEDO GUY
Used a Tolstoy as toilet paper!

Bob and Linda gulp and... peer, into the restroom...

INT. BOB'S BURGERS - CUSTOMER RESTROOM - CONT'D

The faucet and floor are covered in book pages -- along with congealed chunks shaped like pedicure toe spreaders.

In the toilet, a ripped copy of War and Peace swirls.

LINDA (O.C.)
I told them to put the seat down!

BOB (O.C.)
Uhhhhh.

INT. BOB'S BURGERS – CONT'D

Bob and Linda, perturbed, move away from the restroom.

A VERY PREGNANT WOMAN, reading Bridge to Terabithia, SOBS.

LINDA

Oooh, did'ja get to the end? I cry
just reading the Wikipedia page!

VERY PREGNANT WOMAN

No, no, my... my husband just left
me for my twin brother.

LINDA

Oh! Oh no!

BOB

I -- I'm so sorry --

VERY PREGNANT WOMAN

I didn't know my husband liked men!
I guess that's why they say... "You
never truly know your cousins."
(the horror)
Thanksgiving's gonna be hell.

BOB

Lin, this isn't working --

The woman SOBS. Marshmallow tears out a book page to dry her armpits, and Teddy uses his as a napkin. Mort's asleep again.

LINDA

Okay, yes, we need a new plan.

EXT. BOB'S BURGERS – CONT'D

Louise is just raking in the cash as a CROWD gathers in front of her beach mouse display. Minnie, desperate:

MINNIE

(singing)
*Louise is a false prophet!
Only wants to make a profit...!*

LOUISE

No, nope, we already did that.
(to the crowd)
Go buy the song, people!

Gene approaches as a RICH MAN IN A TOP HAT is considering donating to Louise's cause.

GENE

Hey, mister -- did you hear about the man who had a window installed in his butt? It was a... pane in the ass! P-A-N-E! Get it?

The Rich Man contorts his face in disgust and then pockets the money he was about to donate. Louise just about chokes.

LOUISE

No, Gene, you're a pain in the ass! Go back inside the restaurant!

GENE

Maybe I should try that new restaurant on the moon.

More POTENTIAL DONORS gather. Gene shouts out to them:

GENE (CONT'D)

Didn't you hear? About the moon restaurant? They say it has great food but... no atmosphere!

The crowd GROANS, then leaves -- some of them donating to Minnie's stand before exiting.

Louise tries to physically push Gene, but he won't budge.

LOUISE

I. Need. You. To. Leave!!!

INT. BOB'S BURGERS - CONT'D

Bob turns and watches Gene outside -- as well as the crowds of people leaving Gene. Linda also observes.

LINDA

Huh. What's Genie doin' out there?

EXT. BOB'S BURGERS - CONT'D

Donors are now taking back their money from Louise's jar -- including a MAN DRESSED AS A BANK ROBBER.

Louise shrieks, turns to Gene:

LOUISE

Gene! Go! Now!

GENE

Fine, fine -- I'll...

He looks up at Louise's sign.

GENE (CONT'D)
I'll go save the crows instead!
Didn't you hear? A group of 'em was
charged with... attempted murder!

LOUISE
AAAAAHHH!!!

Bob stops Louise as she's about to attack Gene --

BOB
Whoa, hey, what are you doing?

LOUISE
He's driving everyone away with his
dumb jokes!

GENE
Have you considered it's your
personality?!

MINNIE
(deadpan)
It's definitely the jokes -- but
please, keep them coming.

A light-bulb moment for Bob.

BOB
Gene, come into the store with me.

GENE
Ha-ha, yes! I've been officially
pardoned by the State of Bob!

LOUISE
And good riddance!

INT. BOB'S BURGERS - CONT'D

Bob and Gene stand in the middle of the restaurant, among
Teddy, Marshmallow, and other obnoxious customers.

BOB
I need you to say those jokes of
yours, same format and everything.
Go wild.

GENE
Wild? Like that fire at the
campgrounds?

(MORE)

GENE (CONT'D)
 (to Marshmallow)
 Didn't you hear, Marshmallow? It
 was... in tents!

MARSHMALLOW
 Oh no, baby. That ain't good.

Marshmallow leaves. Bob brightens.

BOB
 Yes, yes, go on!

Gene spies a copy of Oedipus Rex by Sophocles.

GENE
 Oedipus! Did'ja hear about him? He
 sure was... royally screwed!

The customers... don't get that one.

GENE (CONT'D)
 He's a king, had sex with his mom.

LINDA
 Don't explain your jokes, sweetie.

Customers leave regardless -- and Bob is thrilled!

BOB
 One more to bring it on home!

GENE
 Did you all hear about the cheese
 factory explosion in France? You
 should have seen all... de brie
 that was everywhere!

TEDDY
 Hey, don't joke about cheese, kid!

On Teddy's way out, he hands promotional flyers to Tina and
 other customers.

TINA
 What's this?

TEDDY
 For Andlitsskrúbb, the Icelandic
 spa. It's where I'm going now.
 (to Bob)
 Because at least Johann appreciates
 his customers!

Teddy leaves, and Tina examines the flyer. "One free pamper."

TINA

Oh my gosh. This is my chance!

Tina runs out of the store, now empty. Bob looks around.

BOB

Huh. Maybe Teddy was right --

LINDA

No, no, we learn from our mistakes!
We re-brand, re-cater!

A GRANDMOTHER in her sixties -- wearing hair rollers and a crop-top that reads, "POSITIVELY SEXY," holding a spitting BABY -- enters from the restroom, turns to Bob, and asks:

GRANDMOTHER

Y'all have adult colorin' books for
little kids?

The baby CRIES. Bob and Linda stare, dumbfounded.

LINDA

We hadn't even cleaned that
restroom yet...

BOB

We have got to get better
customers.

LINDA

I'll break out the wine and
cheeses!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE**INT. BOB'S BURGERS - LATER**

Gone are the crass and careless customers Bob and Linda are used to, now replaced with WEALTHY SOCIALITES.

The new customers drink red wine and eat from charcuterie boards as they flip pages of hardcover novels.

Gene -- dressed as a fetishist's dream of a French maid, beyond parody -- takes orders from the nobles.

RICH MAN IN A TOP HAT

(Transatlantic accent)

Why yes, I'll have the minced beef
and goat cheese inside a bread
roll, with salted potato javelins.

GENE

Oui oui, Monsieur!

RICH MAN IN A TOP HAT

Oh top drawer! Top drawer, indeed!

Linda blinks at Gene's black dress and white cap.

LINDA

(to the kitchen)

Robért...!

INT. BOB'S BURGERS - KITCHEN - CONT'D

In the back, Bob struggles --

BOB

Still... trying to work this thing!

-- with a single-serve coffee maker, its coffee pods spilling everywhere. Bob hurries through the instruction manual.

BOB (CONT'D)

(reading)

Coffee, milk, milk, honey, lemon,
ginger, pumpernickel brandy --

The brewing system STEAMS at Bob's face in disagreement.

BOB (CONT'D)

Gaah! Lin, is anybody ordering, oh,
I don't know... burgers?!

INT. BOB'S BURGERS - CONT'D

The most gaudy bookclub discusses Great Expectations by Charles Dickens. Gene feather dusts around the WOMEN.

THE VOGUE

Oh yes, that leading man had such great expectations. Bildungsroman!

THE CHARDONNAY

The greatest, mmm. And such writing, with words and sentences.

THE HEIRESS

But did you hear about that Gatsby?

RICH MAN IN A TOP HAT (O.C.)

Top drawer indeed!

Rich Man reappears and sits between the ladies, an arm around The Vogue and The Chardonnay.

RICH MAN IN A TOP HAT (CONT'D)

I'm Gatsby.

The bookclub women are enamored.

Bob enters from the kitchen, spots Rich Man, nudges Lin.

BOB

Who's he? Do you know?

GENE

He's just a man named Catsby -- but the man ain't got no whiskers!

Bob blinks at Gene's starched apron and sheer stockings.

BOB

Lin, they're not buying books, and I'm not making burgers.

LINDA

Oh, but look how happy everyone is! They're reading, aren't they?

BOB

There's an idea. Hey, Tina.

Tina -- sneaking by, the flyer over her head -- freezes.

BOB (CONT'D)

What was the name of that cowboy Western erotica you wrote?

TINA
 "Wide-Open Spaces"?

Bob shuffles toward Rich Man.

BOB
 (the worst posh accent)
 Oh my lord! Last night, I read such
 a grandiloquent novel: Wide-Open
 Spaces by Tina R. Belcher!
 Certainly you've already read it, a
 man of your money.

RICH MAN IN A TOP HAT
 Oh... hmm... why yes, of course!
 The novel was, erm...

THE CHARDONNAY
 The greatest?

THE HEIRESS
 Top drawer?

RICH MAN IN A TOP HAT
 Top drawer, indeed!

The women, Rich Man, and Bob burst into polite bemusement --
 Bob's a bit louder than the rest. He leaves them.

BOB
 Lin --

LINDA
 I know, I know, they're a buncha
 fakes, this isn't working -- help.

EXT. BOB'S BURGERS - MOMENTS LATER

Tina paces outside the restaurant. She wheezes.

TINA
 C'mon, human flesh. You can do
 this. It's just a spa.

Nearby, Louise's crowd has grown once more while Minnie
 remains ever annoyed.

Gene, still startling in his sexy costume, struts over.

LOUISE
 Thank you! Thank you, all! The en-
 dangerous Seymour's Bay Beach Mouse
 appreciates your money!

GENE

Yeah! We hope to someday get those rats out here on the streets!

LOUISE

You -- ! Gene, don't you dare!

MINNIE

Please. Dare.

GENE

Didn't you hear? We'll call those street mice... road-ents!

(beat)

Oh c'mon! Road-ents! That's funny!

In the audience, an off-work TV news reporter with a press pass -- VERA ADAMS -- GROANS audibly.

The crowd parts for Vera as she approaches Gene.

VERA

That is the worst punchline I have ever heard -- are you serious?

That's what you've got? I'd rather die. Go back to whatever you were doing before -- don't look at me.

She physically turns Gene's head toward Louise.

Gene's on the verge of tears as Vera leaves.

VERA (CONT'D)

Absolute waste of God's time...

Gene looks up, eyes red-rimmed with dark, heavy bags.

GENE

(gruff voice)

This... is my villain origin story.

LOUISE

O-kay... Who wants a tax write-off?

EXT. STORE NEXT DOOR -- LATER

Tina stands before the entrance to the Icelandic spa, its outside decorated with snowflakes and snowmen.

The banner over the door reads: "Andlitsskrúbb."

TINA

And-lit-scrub. Huh.

INT. STORE NEXT DOOR – MOMENTS LATER

Tina stands in the lobby to the spa: a giant ice palace with snowy floors, walls frozen solid, and a front desk. The only decoration is a framed spa certificate.

Icelander JOHANN, a bright-faced fellow in his thirties, rises from behind the desk, his fingers tapping tip to tip.

JOHANN

(in a Nordic accent)

Hello, my name is Johann, welcome to my spa! So happy to have you!

TINA

Uhh, hi there! Hello.

JOHANN

Yes, my spa offers beautifying treatments like: body scrubs with optional red tea, hot saune and very hot saune, fish pedicure, chainsaw juggling -- good for confidence building -- and our health meal covfefe with choice of vegan flesh course. So good, yes!

(beat)

I've had ten cups of coffee today so far.

TINA

"Vegan... flesh...?"

Tina, with her promotional flyer, waits for an answer. Johann's left eye twitches.

JOHANN

I hope it is to your liking?

TINA

I'm... Is this what spas are like?

JOHANN

Why does everyone asks this?!

Johann, for no discernible reason, hops onto the desk, straddles it, and then motions with his hands from side to side as if he were rowing a gondola.

JOHANN (CONT'D)

I become a spa operator! I display my spa operator certificate! Yet people leave bad reviews and call me "idiot," "destroyer," "vermin"!

(MORE)

JOHANN (CONT'D)

They tell me to go to back to
Margrét and oh, I hate my life!

TEDDY (O.C.)

Johann, my body's been woofing!

Teddy -- naked save the towel around his waist, bandages all over -- enters from the sauna. Johann continues rowing.

TINA

Sir, where is it that you became a
licensed spa operator?

Still on the desk, Johann lies there on his back, facing the ceiling, covering his eyes with his hands.

SFX: DRAMATIC ORCHESTRA AND CHORAL MUSIC

JOHANN

(singing theatrically)
*I was a professor!
Never received my tenure!*

SFX: SONG CONCLUDES

JOHANN (CONT'D)

I cannot handle this -- I am
closing the spa! Beauty is moral
evil, the light of an angler fish,
a delusion of fools who would deny
the sovereignty of the masked gods!

Johann rolls over and falls onto the floor. Tina just stares.

EXT. BOB'S BURGERS - SAME TIME

Minnie, beyond bored, waits at her empty stand.

A grocery bag blows in the wind like tumbleweed... followed
by actual tumbleweed.

Then Louise hops over with her new handheld gaming tablet!

LOUISE

Huzzah! I have done it! Just me and
my Animal City!

MINNIE

You raised all that money and none
of it is going to the beach mouse.

LOUISE

In your dreams, teen! Check it!

INSERT:

Animal City, a video game taking place in a metropolitan inhabited by various cartoon animals.

Louise's character -- a human who resembles herself -- strolls up to CHARITY, a cute brown mouse.

CHARITY

Hi there! My name's Charity, and I'm a Seymour's Bay Beach Mouse!

LOUISE (O.C.)

What?! Oh you've gotta be joking...

CHARITY

I may be endangered, but with your help, I'll have the most amazing time here in our Animal City. You're my bestest friend!

BACK TO REALITY: Louise catches her reflection in the tablet's screen. She looks... just absolutely guilt-ridden.

Minnie smirks.

MINNIE

Have some irony -- it's good for your blood.

Charity is joined by her FAMILY of impoverished beach mice.

CHARITY

We're starving!

LOUISE

Dammit, Charity, I don't need your guilt trips!

MINNIE

So what are you gonna do about it?

INT. STORE NEXT DOOR -- SAME TIME

Johann, in front of Teddy and Tina, makes a snow angel on the floor between sobs. A brown mouse scurries over his face.

JOHANN

I pretend to be someone I'm not, and so all my friends -- Margrét -- they leave me, they do not care for me and my lies! I look happy, yes? Yes? No! I suffer!

Gene enters the spa, still dressed like a maid... but his face paint resembles Tina's Joker makeup from earlier.

GENE

I may not be funny, but I can at least look it. Gimme smiley scars!

TINA

No, Gene! Johann's right!

GENE

I... missed an important speech!

TINA

We're all pretending to be someone we're not, and so no one's happy!

JOHANN

Oh to lure them in and break their hearts -- Margrét, you tease me so!

In a fit of rage, Johann -- SCREAMING -- jumps on to all fours and skitters over to the thermostat.

Teddy reaches out with both hands --

TEDDY

Johann! No!

TINA

Teddy! Your towel!

TEDDY

Oh don't worry -- it's stapled.

GENE

Hey, hey! Did'ja hear about the Icelfander who got so frustrated, he cranked up the temperature in his ice palace? They say he had a...

JOHANN

Do it, boy! Speak your truth!

GENE

... total meltdown!

TINA

Oh brother.

Johann raises the temperature to boiling -- and the walls, floors, everything starts turning to water...

... and the room begins to flood.

INT. BOB'S BURGERS - SAME TIME

Bob stands on the counter. Linda holds his legs to spot him.

BOB
Hey! Hey, everybody, listen up!

The wealthy socialites stop their reading and drinking.

BOB (CONT'D)
Oh. I, uh, thought you'd ignore me.

LINDA
You've got this, Bobby!

BOB
Umm... yeah. You all kinda suck.

The Vogue, The Chardonnay, and The Heiress GASP!

Teddy runs in, out of breath.

BOB (CONT'D)
You all hide behind these books you haven't read -- and I know you haven't, because Great Expectations is actually the worst. And by the way? That rich man isn't Gatsby.

The Vogue narrows her eyes at the embarrassed Rich Man.

THE VOGUE
I'll bet he killed a man.

LINDA
And stuffed him in his top drawer!

BOB
And you all imagine your lives would be better if people watched you drinking fancy coffees -- but you forget who you are. I did.

He breathes in... he breathes out.

BOB (CONT'D)
I'm Robert "Bob" Belcher Jr., owner and operator of Bob's Burgers: a fast-food restaurant, not a bookstore, and -- and... and, well, I think you all should leave.

LINDA
Buh-bye, snooty-patooties!

Rich Man, the bookclub women, and the other elites exit in a grumble... leaving Teddy, just Teddy, smiling through tears.

TEDDY

Did you really mean that, Bob?

BOB

Of course. And I'm sorry we suggested those guys were better customers than people like you.

TEDDY

What? I left because you ran out of ketchup for my burger.

LINDA

Burgers for everybody! Yaaay!

Tina and Gene run in, slipping in a spill of water --

TINA

Mom, Dad, the spa is melting!

GENE

It's gonna blow!

The right wall explodes with water and -- MICE?!

Mice and water, flooding the store, ruining the books --

Hundreds of mice are clinging to the books like sailboats --

Bob, Linda, Tina, Gene, Teddy, caught in the overwhelming flow, treading water, pushed up against the front door --

GENE (CONT'D)

Hey, this makeup took hours!

BOB

Gene -- the door! Can you open it?!

Gene does --

And they all pour out: mice and men and Tina and Linda.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR**EXT. BOB'S BURGERS – LATER**

The store next door is no more.

Bob's Burgers is dripping wet.

Bob, Linda, Tina, and Gene sit on the curb by a firetruck while a steady stream flows from the store's entrance.

Mice, books, and a waterlogged Johann float down the street.

TINA

Johann, I know you're closed,
but... what's "vegan flesh"?

Johann sits upright --

JOHANN

(singing theatrically)
It is flesh from a vegan source!

-- and then Johann, smiling, drifts away with the beach mice.

Hugo and Ron, quivering behind a riot shield, attempt to lure a mouse into a box with piece of cheese tied to a string.

Meanwhile, Louise and Minnie have joined forces at their own stand in front of Mort's -- and they've gathered a crowd!

LOUISE

Help relocate the endangered
Seymour's Bay Beach Mouse!

MINNIE

Every donation helps!

Tina turns to Linda.

TINA

Mom, I didn't appreciate the
comments you made about how I
wouldn't like spas because they're
(fingerquoting)
"complicated" and "girly."

LINDA

I'm sorry, sweetie. I just meant...
I spent all my time in bookstores --

BOB

Video stores.

LINDA

(poorly fingerquoting)
 -- "video stores," in my
 "twenties," because I didn't "fit
 in" with the other "adults." I just
 didn't want you thinking you needed
 to doll yourself up to do the same.

TINA

But it's "not" "like" "that." I'm
 comfortable who I am, really. I
 just... wanted a back massage.

LINDA

Aww, I'll give ya a back massage!

Tina turns, and Linda rubs Tina's shoulders. Tina MOANS.

TINA

Ohhh, yee-hawww. Get it, cowboy...

Teddy, Mort, and Marshmallow walk by, stopping beside Bob.

MORT

Sorry about the store, Belchers.

TEDDY

We'll be in the very first minute
 it's ready!

MARSHMALLOW

You know it, baby.

BOB

Heh. Thanks, you guys.

They leave, and Bob SIGHS.

BOB (CONT'D)

Well, we wasted an entire day and
 made very little money...

(to Linda)

But I'm glad I got to do something
 for you.

LINDA

Thank you. Your effort means a lot.
 (beat)
 But yeah, just burgers from now on.

BOB

Not another page.

Gene SIGHS HAPPILY to himself.

GENE

Ah, bookends. So nice.

On the other side of the street, Vera touches her earpiece, holds up her news mic, and then says to the camera:

VERA

I'm here on Ocean Avenue where local food joint Bob's Burgers and a new Icelandic spa next door flooded this afternoon, revealing a nesting spot of the endangered Seymour's Bay Beach Mouse, seen now floating down the street. I guess we can call those mice "road-ents"!

Gene's ears perk up.

GENE

Hey... Hey! That was my joke!

He nearly trips on his maid heels as he rushes up to Vera --

GENE (CONT'D)

If anyone's making mouse puns, it's gonna be me, ya hear!

Gene grabs at her mic, and both he and Vera struggle for it.

GENE (CONT'D)

My dad has a mouse-tache!

BOB (O.C.)

No, I don't!

VERA

Give me that! Go away, vermin!

LINDA (O.C.)

Maybe you both can compro-mice?

GENE

No more Mister Mice Guy!!!

The camera turns to Bob, Linda, Tina, and Louise LAUGHING.

GENE (CONT'D)

Oh, now you laugh? Tough crowd!

END OF EPISODE

"WHEN BRICKS ARE FOR BOYS"

A "LEGO FRIENDS" PARODY SKETCH

Written by

Bryant A. Loney

March 30, 2022

INT. TOY AISLE – DAY

Over VIBRANT POP MUSIC, in a nondescript toy aisle, LOGAN -- millennial, just plain cheesy -- from The LEGO Group strolls past various LEGO products.

LOGAN

The urge to create is equally strong in all children.

He stops. He faces the camera, all smiles.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Boys and girls. Hi, I'm Logan from The LEGO Group, and today, I'm here to introduce the perfect LEGO toy for your budding builder this holiday retail season. Let's take a look -- but this time, girls only!

He gives a wink.

INT. "LEGO FRIENDS" AISLE – MOMENTS LATER

Logan passes "LEGO Friends" LEGO sets depicting suburban life in the pink and purple pastel town of Heartlake City.

Conversely, in his hands, he carries two "LEGO City" sets with blue packaging and a sleek font: one set featuring a sailboat rescue, the other a mountain police chase.

LOGAN

Tell me, ladies: who needs nameless firefighters, cops, robbers, coast guards, and mining experts going about their daily business?

Logan blows a raspberry as he tosses the two sets elsewhere.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Who even cares? Dumb boys? Pfft!

He passes by...

1. The pink and purple Heartlake Hospital...
2. The pink and magenta Heartlake Party Shop...
3. The purple and magenta Heartlake Riding Club...
4. The purple and lavender Heartlake Grand Hotel...
5. The purple and orange Heartlake Sports Center...

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Heartlake City revolves around friends Mia, Olivia, Emma, Stephanie, and Andrea. They live in a world where they can't go to the surf shop or snow resort chalet without seeing the color purple or being reminded that their city was built around love and a heart-shaped lake!

He leans down to show off already-constructed sets.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Even their personal homes, rooms, and activities are coated in a swath of purple and femininity!

Logan demonstrates:

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Emma's Pet Party has Emma and her cat wearing purple party hats and bows; Olivia's Deluxe Bedroom includes flowery bedsheets and cutesy wall art; Stephanie's Soccer Practice has a large heart fixed above the goalpost for some reason; Mia's Organic Food Market --
 (to someone O.C.)
 How old are these kids?
 (to the audience)
 -- has Mia serving purple drinks to a rabbit on a purple seat; and Emma's Photo Studio contains all-purple photography equipment! God, I wish that were me!

Logan places the MIA character beside her portable organic food market and lilac beach scooter. She holds a map and compass.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Mia's the outdoorsy type. Just look at her map and compass handheld items! ... Because kids today definitely know what maps are!

Logan puts OLIVIA inside her creative lab with robot figures.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Olivia is the scientific brainy brunet, and her lab includes tools and a robot family!

(MORE)

LOGAN (CONT'D)

And in case you have trouble distinguishing which robot is the mother, she's conveniently color-coded in a pink frilly dress, while the father robot's distinguishing feature is the blue wrench he holds. Fun!

Logan shakes the box for EMMA'S Pet Party.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Emma is the artsy entrepreneur. She just loves her cat Chico! Boy-howdy!

He reads from the box, which features Emma using a purple wheelbarrow.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

"Load up the wheelbarrow with all the things you'll need for a great birthday party"... which does clarify the presence of the wheelbarrow but offers no explanation as to why it is purple!

Logan tosses the box over his shoulders, continues strolling.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Just like Mia, Olivia, and Emma, you too can be an adventurer, inventor, and artist, respectively. But girls can only choose one!

Logan crouches beside a table display of STEPHANIE'S sets.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Stephanie's sets include Stephanie's Sports Arena, Stephanie's Soccer Practice, and Stephanie's Bedroom, the latter featuring a mini golf putting green, a crate for sporting equipment, a water bottle, and a trophy to highlight Stephanie's sporting achievements. The only non-sports-related set of hers is Stephanie's Friendship Cakes -- because no matter how athletic, active, and strong a girl may be, she should always know how to work her way around a kitchen!

(to someone O.C.)

Yikes.

Logan moves to another table to play with the ANDREA character, who's surrounded by an electric guitar, two microphones, and sheet music.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Ambiguously-brown Andrea is the last of the five Friends. A musical prodigy, Andrea's sets are magenta and lime, either to highlight her exotic nature by separating Andrea from the rest of the Friends or because the "Friends" property designers grew tired of the same purples and pinks. Golly, I know I have!

Logan holds up the box to the Heartlake Summer Pool set.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Only at the Heartlake Summer Pool is Andrea shown without any music paraphernalia -- and that's because she's in the water.

Logan places Andrea, holding a microphone, in a glass of water -- then mimics her electrocution.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

BZZZ-zap! Yeowwww...! L-E-G-O...!

Logan gathers the Mia, Olivia, Emma, Stephanie, and drenched Andrea figures. He holds them tight, smiling all the same.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

With our five main characters, we at "LEGO Friends" believe girls can be only an adventurer, inventor, athlete, artist, or entertainer, with neither room nor desire for multiple interests.

(with a laugh)

Who needs creative expression in 2019?

INT. TOY AISLE - MOMENTS LATER

Logan steps back into the original toy aisle, now with "LEGO Friends" sets -- with their whimsical, purple branding -- intermixed with the other product lines.

In his hand, Logan carries both the "LEGO City" Fire Station set and the Volcano Starter Set set.

LOGAN

Parents, do you really want your little girl playing with the Fire Station set from "LEGO City," in which the only woman is pictured walking around with a walkie-talkie while the men fly the helicopter, swing from a rope, and put out the fire at the hot dog stand? Heck no!

He throws the set to the ground, stomps on it.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

Or the Volcano Starter Set set, in which the men drive the ATV and crack open a boulder while the female volcano worker walks around with a metal detector, and the female scientist photographs the man's discovery? Pfft! As if!

He rips into the set, scattering LEGO bricks everywhere. He continues this with other sets.

LOGAN (CONT'D)

For decades at the LEGO Group, we've offered toys promoting creative roleplay and constructive experiences. It's about time for girls to be included in this as well: by isolating girls and boys into separate -- but equal! -- categories of builders.

Logan pours all the "LEGO Friends" boxes onto the floor, scattering pink and purple bricks over all the other colors.

He lies in them. He's making a snow angel.

Insert:

The LEGO Group and "LEGO Friends" logos.

LOGAN (V.O.)

"LEGO Friends": where glaring displays of gender become so progressive, they're no longer fun! Gaah, this hurts my back...

END OF SKETCH

SEA BREEZE ACADEMY

A LIVE-ACTION FEATURE

Written by

Bryant A. Loney

March 30, 2022

EXT. GRASSY FIELD - EVENING

The ocean stretches onward -- a gorgeous, anesthetizing blue.

In the grass facing the Pacific, two nonchalant teens enjoy their carefree life, flashing glimpses of straight white teeth to the world as they laugh and laugh with each other.

BROOKLYN RIVERS (18), a white girl, cool like the sea breeze, brushes her honeyed hair out of her face as she holds closer MIKKI MIZUSHIMA (18), a tall Asian girl in shoreline chic.

They shine a magnificent gold in the light of sunset.

BROOKLYN

God, why can't this be our lives?

MIKKI

'Cause Matthew gets back from Alaska next week --

Brooklyn groans.

MIKKI (CONT'D)

He is such a goober.

BROOKLYN

I just need more time.

MIKKI

Another of your famous plans?

BROOKLYN

It's a big one. I want you with me, not against me.

Mikki pulls away, turns to Brooklyn with a grave expression.

MIKKI

You really wanna leave this place?

BROOKLYN

There's nothing for me here.

MIKKI

Not even me?

A quiet, sleepy smile from Brooklyn.

BROOKLYN

I can't pretend to be someone I'm not.

CUT TO BLACK.

Superimpose:

SEASON EIGHT, EPISODE ONE

"HOVERBOARD BLUES"

SFX: POSITIVE AND ENERGETIC MODERN POP THEME

EXT. GRASSY FIELD - DAY

Another perfect day in Southern California.

MATTHEW FLYNN (18), a skinny white guy with freckles, relaxes in a hammock held up by two palm trees. In the background is the Pacific Ocean. The wind is light.

There's a WHIRRING sound. Matthew leans forward to see CHRIS CARMICHAEL (17) -- a Black guy with an athletic build -- farther off, moving closer, though Chris's legs do not move.

CHRIS

Check it out! Early birthday gift!

Chris floats around the palms.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

This baby's gonna make the nine-a.m. walks to pre-calc a whole lot easier.

Curious, Matthew repositions himself for a better look. Chris is standing on a modern hoverboard, a self-balancing scooter.

MATTHEW

Your birthday's coming up?

Chris stops circling.

CHRIS

Man, you act like this every year -- and we've been best friends since sixth grade! Look, will you just appreciate the hoverboard for me?

MATTHEW

Déjà vu. Isn't a hoverboard supposed to, you know... hover?

CHRIS

Unfortunately, real life is not what you see on TV.

(MORE)

CHRIS (CONT'D)

Still, didn't stop Reef from buying a hoverboard as soon as he saw mine -- express delivery and everything.

REEF UNDERWOOD (18), a tanned guy with bleached-blond hair, rolls up on his own special hoverboard. He grins the kind of grin only a wealthy and obnoxious white dude can give.

REEF

Wazzup, Matthew! 'Sup, Chris. Lame hoverboard ya got there. Mine's the YOTRAIL Blazer V-9 model.

CHRIS

Man, don't even trip -- there's nothing wrong with my 'board!

REEF

Yeah, bro, but does it play music? Does it get WiFi?

CHRIS

Man, why would your scooter need to play music?

REEF

In case I want to make a cool entrance, all right! The Blazer is a personal transportation device that cuts the time I need to take from our dorm to Parssinen Hall by eight minutes. Eight!

CHRIS

What could you possibly be doing with those eight minutes?

MATTHEW

If you knew, you'd be pukin'.

Reef shoves Chris off his hoverboard, then uses his own to drive around the palms. Chris hops onto his and then chases after Reef.

CHRIS

Hey! Reef, man, c'mon!

Reef accelerates -- the hoverboard whirring loudly -- and then it's Reef chasing Chris around the palm trees! Classic.

Matthew rolls his eyes... though he's smiling all the same.

MATTHEW

Well, if you fellas'll excuse me,
I'll be napping someplace else.

REEF

Tell your girlfriend we said Yo!

Matthew shakes his head, still smiling at his friends' antics as he leaves with his hammock under one arm.

Chris and Reef's arguing grows faint as Matthew descends the hill toward campus, the great blue of the ocean behind him.

OPENING TITLES

EXT. CAMPUS – CONTINUOUS

Over MELLOW ROCK MUSIC, Matthew strolls through Sea Breeze Academy: a spacious, open-air, multi-acre boarding school.

A girl in a sarong strides by with a surfboard. Boys with sun-stained hair play with a soccer ball, and some loungers spread out in the impeccably cut grass.

The midday sun is gentle. The Pacific air is just right.

EXT. MINTZ PLAZA – LATER

Matthew sees VIRGO TORRES (18), a thin Latina girl, working the outdoor SBA coffee cart in Mintz Plaza.

He joins the line. When it's Matthew's turn, Virgo smiles.

VIRGO

Matthew! Cappuccino, right?

MATTHEW

Hey, Virgo. Sure.

He hands Virgo a five. She snatches it, digs in her cart.

VIRGO

Awesome sauce. Oh, hey, have you seen Brooklyn today?

There's a WHIRRING as main-girl Brooklyn enters the plaza on a pink hoverboard of her own. She spots Matthew and Virgo and then waves at them.

Matthew looks with deep longing into Brooklyn's serene blue eyes, which seem to complement everything from the soft slope of her nose to her delicate shoulders.

BROOKLYN

Hey, guys! Look what I got!

Brooklyn jolts forward a foot. She puts her arms out to balance herself. Matthew steps toward her.

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)

Don't worry, babe, I got this, I --

The hoverboard lurches out from under Brooklyn's feet, knocking her off and onto her side.

Matthew and Virgo rush over. The hoverboard drives itself into a wall and stops there.

MATTHEW

Brooklyn! Are you okay?!

They help her up. Brooklyn smiles, warm and dimple-decorated.

BROOKLYN

Guess I still need practice using my brand-new Blazer hoverboard!

MATTHEW

It's... pretty cool!

VIRGO

VERTEX Magazine Certified Best Product of Last Year!

Brooklyn quickly hugs Matthew. He tries to hold her, but Brooklyn lets go after a second.

BROOKLYN

(to Matthew)

And with you back from Alaska, we gotta spend as much time together as a couple before graduation next month!

Matthew walks over to the wall and picks up Brooklyn's hoverboard. As his thoughts begin to drift...

VIRGO

Oh, Dean Fischer, why hello there!

DEAN CHARLES FISCHER (50) -- a white-faced man with thinning hair, dressed sharp as always -- enters the plaza with a briefcase in hand.

The crowd steps aside for the dean.

DEAN FISCHER

Good afternoon, Virgo. Hello,
Brooklyn. And welcome back to SBA,
Matthew. How was Alaska?

MATTHEW

Cold, sir.

VIRGO

Last semester seemed to go on,
like, forever!

Matthew fidgets with Brooklyn's hoverboard.

DEAN FISCHER

Hmmm, that's one of those
hoverboards there, isn't it?

BROOKLYN

Yes, but this is a Blazer, Dean
Fischer. It's better -- and safer --
than the average brand!

DEAN FISCHER

I don't know... I've watched too
many kids doing the stupidest
things on those hoverboards to try
to impress their friends. Think of
the lawsuits, the paperwork!

There's SHOUTING, followed by multiple WHIRRING noises. In
the distance are Chris and Reef, racing on their hoverboards.

Students scurry as the two tear up the plaza.

CHRIS

I'm gonna win! I'm gonna win!

REEF

In no way am I buying you a coffee
'cause you beat me!

CHRIS

I'ma beat you with your hairbrush
after what you said about my momma!

REEF

You didn't let me finish!

CHRIS

And what were you gonna say?!

REEF

That she's a beautiful woman!

CHRIS

Oh!

(beat)

I'll tell her you said that!

MATTHEW

Guys, look out!

BROOKLYN

Dean Fischer!

Chris and Reef look forward and then open their mouths in shock as they realize they are about to run into the dean!

Reef jumps off his hoverboard in time, but Chris drives straight into the coffee cart, knocking it onto Dean Fischer.

Pandemonium! Clammer and clatter! The other students GASP at how this cinematic moment is being maximized.

Matthew and Brooklyn rush over to help lift the coffee cart off the dean. Several students film with their phones.

VIRGO

Dean Fischer, are you okay?!

DEAN FISCHER

Of course... of course I am not okay!

MATTHEW

That's a confusing way of phrasing it.

Brooklyn offers Dean Fischer his hand and pulls him up.

Dean Fischer scowls at Matthew before looking around at the chaos that has become the plaza.

DEAN FISCHER

(calling O.C.)

You! Coach Poole!

Cowboy COACH POOLE (mid 40s), walking by, looks to the dean.

DEAN FISCHER (CONT'D)

Give me your megaphone!

COACH POOLE

My bullhorn? Susan?

DEAN FISCHER

Whatever!

Coach Poole grumbles, turns to his side, and then whispers into the megaphone's wide end. He kisses the mouthpiece, the SMOOCHING NOISES AMPLIFIED. He then hands it to the dean.

DEAN FISCHER (CONT'D)
 (into the megaphone)
 Bleh. Attention, SBA students!
 Effective immediately, Sea Breeze
 Academy prohibits the use and
 possession of all hoverboards!

REEF
 But Dean Fischer, my dude! Chris
 wasn't on a Blazer! The Blazer is
 renowned for its safety f-- !

Dean Fischer cuts him off with glare. Reef shuts up.

Dean Fischer gives the megaphone back to Coach Poole, who cradles it. The dean rolls his eyes.

DEAN FISCHER
 Brooklyn, Matthew... Mr. Carmichael
 and Mr. Underwood... Consider
 renting some bicycles, because
 those hoverboards of yours are
banned from this campus.
 (to Virgo)
 And somebody clean this mess!

Dean Fischer picks up his briefcase, walks away, stops, scrapes the muffin from his shoe, and then stomps off.

Coach Poole blows his whistle into the megaphone as everyone moves along. Virgo, crying, crouches and begins to wipe up the spilled coffee. Chris and Reef help.

To the swell of TENSE MUSIC, Brooklyn and Matthew give each other a dramatic look.

INT. DUTTON DORM - LOUNGE - LATER

The gang sits on couches in the girls' lounge: Brooklyn, Matthew, Virgo, Chris, Liss, Reef, and Mikki.

Reef has his arm around LISS WILLIAMS (17), a small Black girl with straightened hair.

Mikki, silent, holds up her nails and primps.

Matthew and Brooklyn sit close but not too close.

All drink from sparkling bottles of WHAZZ.

VIRGO

Dean Fischer's being extra salty.

MIKKI

I'd be too if I knew my job was babysitting a bunch of high schoolers trying to be edgy.

BROOKLYN

This is so suckish. How am I supposed to use my Blazer now?

MATTHEW

Reef, Liss, when did you both become a, uhh... couple?

CHRIS

Bruh, a lot happened while you were in Alaska.

REEF

Bet. And now Liss is my little honeybee.

LISS

And Reef is my handsome snuggie woogems.

Reef and Liss rub their noses together affectionately.

Matthew looks earnestly to Brooklyn. She shifts in her seat, glances over at Mikki, and then takes a sip of orange Whazz.

LISS (CONT'D)

Did you all sign my petition against the surveillance cameras?

MATTHEW

Surveillance cameras? Where?

LISS

In the palm trees, the bushes. We gotta stand up against this.

MIKKI

Or hide in the tunnels underneath the school.

REEF

Nah, nah, forget the cameras.

VIRGO

I livestream everything twenty-four-seven. Everything.

REEF

Taking away our Blazer hoverboards
is censorship. It's bogus, bro.

MATTHEW

That's... not "censorship," no.

BROOKLYN

We just need to show Dean Fischer
how efficient, reliable, and safe
Blazer hoverboards are.

MATTHEW

Hmm.

Brooklyn stands, a spark in her eyes.

BROOKLYN

You just leave the planning to me.
And Reef, bring your credit card.

REEF

Always do!

Brooklyn takes Matthew by the hand and leads him off the
couch. The rest of the gang follow them out.

EXT. ADMIN BUILDING – LATER

The sky is now a deep orange with blazing streaks of pink. A
light wind brushes the palm leaves, scattering the gulls.

Brooklyn, Matthew, Virgo, Chris, Liss, Reef, and Mikki walk
to the administration offices.

There, over TWO DOZEN STUDENTS -- with identical tans and
shiny teeth -- are protesting outside Dean Fischer's office
windows. They chant and hold signs with sayings such as "Free
the hoverboards!" and "Give us back our rides!"

Coach Poole stands between the protestors and the entrance.

VIRGO

Ugh, Coach Poole. Now what?

CHRIS

I got this. Matthew, help me out.

Chris and Matthew approach Coach Poole, who stands with his
arms crossed in front of the admin building.

COACH POOLE
Carmichael. Flynn. Can't let you
boys in there. Sorry.

CHRIS
Just stretching our legs.

He fans himself.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
Whew! Sure is hot out. Seems a bit
irresponsible for the head coach of
the basketball, volleyball,
baseball, track, wrestling, golf,
tennis, surfing... and water polo
teams... to let these kids stand in
the heat without staying hydrated.

MATTHEW
Uhh, yeah! You should probably get
them some water, Coach.

CHRIS
Or Whazz! Whazz would work.

MATTHEW
Whazz has caffeinated stimulants.
Remember last year? The explosion?

CHRIS
Pfft, things explode all the time.

COACH POOLE
It's sad. So much of the public
health industry is controlled by
the corporations that benefit most
from our ignorance. We believe and
teach so many lies to our youth --
(stops himself)
All right, Carmichael, you win.
I'll see what I can do.

Coach Poole walks away. Chris gives Brooklyn a thumbs-up, and
then he and the gang -- except for Mikki -- sneak inside.

INT. ADMIN BUILDING - DEAN'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

Dean Fischer, a bandage over his forehead, paces around his
office on the ground floor. The blinds are lowered.

A huge collection of red flags lines one of the walls.

When he sees the gang, Dean Fischer rubs at his temples.

DEAN FISCHER

I knew I shouldn't have sent my secretary home early. She wants to be at her daughter's big orchestra concert, ooohh, fancy, playing the cello. Not much of a looker either!

Dean Fischer raises the blinds. The group of protesters has grown substantially, clamoring outside.

BROOKLYN

It's just that we believe the ban is unfair, is all.

DEAN FISCHER

Well, it's nice that you think that, Brooklyn, but this? This is disrupting. And it's embarrassing for the school! Look at this bandage on my forehead -- scalding-hot coffee!

REEF

But it's hard to grasp how totally righteous the Blazer is without trying one for yourself! So...

A POSTAL WORKER in uniform runs into the room leaning extremely forward -- almost at a 60-degree angle -- with a large box in her hands.

POSTAL WORKER

Package for a Mr. Charles Fischer?

DEAN FISCHER

I'll regret this, but that's me.

Postal Worker hands him the box, then leaves, flailing her arms beside her.

Dean Fischer opens the box and pulls out a SHINY RED HOVERBOARD. He sets it on the desk.

DEAN FISCHER (CONT'D)

(incensed)

Meddling mushrooms, Brooklyn! After I banned them from this campus, you kids got me a hoverboard?!

VIRGO

It's a Blazer!

LISS
VERTEX Magazine Certified Best
 Product of Last Year!

MATTHEW
 I'm sorry -- how do you all know
 these things?

The protesters' chanting grows LOUDER from outside. They
 begin banging on the windows and throwing tomatoes.

INT./EXT. ADMIN BUILDING – DEAN'S OFFICE – CONT'D

Dean Fischer stomps over to the windows and flings them open.

DEAN FISCHER
 Hey! Listen up! If you want to
 request a change in policy, you may
 do so either through your dorm
 adviser or on our website at
 SeaBreezeAcademy dot com. But what
 we do not and will not tolerate at
 this educational institution is
vandalism by tomatoes and a
 disruption of campus life! This is
 a fire hazard, people!

Italian CHEF VESPUCCI (mid 40s):

CHEF VESPUCCI
 And how am I gonna make-a my sauce?

DEAN FISCHER
 Chef Vespucci, please, not now.

Another tomato is hurled at the dean --

Students TINA, SIDDIQ, and Mikki shout:

TINA
 Free the hoverboards!

SIDDIQ
 Give us back our rides!

MIKKI
 Yeah, Dean Fischer! Fuck you!

SFX: STEADY TONE

Everyone GASPS, staring at Mikki. She's... she's grinning...

The crowd slowly backs away from her. Coach Poole sets down the cases of Whazz and stares, shocked.

MATTHEW

Oh my God.

UNCANNY MEN IN BLACK SUITS AND SUNGLASSES approach. Two of them each take Mikki's arms and lift her off the ground. She does not squirm or attempt to fight them.

They carry her away and place her in the back of a white utility van farther off. It starts, then drives elsewhere and recedes out of sight.

Dean Fischer looks down at his dress shoes. Reef puts an arm around Liss, and Virgo starts cracking her knuckles. Chris shifts around awkwardly, but Brooklyn doesn't move. She doesn't even breathe.

Matthew slowly takes Brooklyn's hand. She lets him, and the low rumble from the van is heard no more.

A couple of seagulls fly over campus toward the Pacific, where the orange of the horizon has faded into purple.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF SEA BREEZE ACADEMY, AND THEN --

EXT. BEACH - LATER

On a beach at the water's edge stands Mikki, still smirking, her toes in the sand.

Dean Fischer observes her from behind. He grips a pistol.

ENLARGED SHADOWS OF GHOSTLY FIGURES appear on our screen.

DEAN FISCHER

No profanity, politics, alcohol and drug abuse, finger guns, no discussion of sexual orientation...

MIKKI

(not listening)

To get away from it all... yeah, this would be the spot.

She shivers as the sun finally sets.

MIKKI (CONT'D)

Deano. Why are we here?

The dean stares at her, his eyes puffy and discolored.

DEAN FISCHER
Entertainment, Mikki. But you...

Panic sweeps through her. She collapses to her knees, begs:

MIKKI
No, no no no, please! I'll -- I'll
always smile, I'll be friendly! It
was Brooklyn's idea!

She's a gibbering wreck, shuddering her whole body.

One of the shadows fades out of sight.

WOMAN (V.O.)
Nobody wants to watch this. Off.

Mikki and Dean Fischer vanish.

The time of day fast forwards first to dregs of darkness,
then twinkling evening sunlight, then a violet sky, then
dusk, dawn, noon, the moon, again, again, again.

Finally: a star-filled early morning over warm, gentle waves.
The beach is empty. Life slows down.

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN (V.O.)
How do you delete the stars?

CUT TO BLACK.

Superimpose:

SEASON EIGHT, EPISODE TWO

"VIRGO AT THE BOOKSTORE"

The words shatter like broken glass, then fade away.

EXT. LUNCH TABLE – DAY

Another perfect day in Southern California.

Brooklyn, Matthew, Chris, and Liss sit at a round, shaded
lunch table overlooking the California foothills to the ocean
below. They eat cafeteria food and drink bottles of Whazz.

CHRIS
Ugh. Mrs. Beach is making me
research cactuses for homework.
Ain't nothing cool about cactuses!

BROOKLYN

I think you mean "cacti."

CHRIS

Oh, and did you know cacti have a dual metabolism? Photosynthesis and feasting on the blood of innocents!

LISS

The genus of cacti Cactoideae mortiferum has survived for over a thousand years due to its budding of the bloodflower, known for attracting hummingbirds. See, the bird falls prey to the toxic pollen, becomes trapped inside, and then the flower changes from white to red. That's how the bloodflower cactus gets its blood, as well as its name!

The three turn to Matthew, who has been staring out at the ocean in the distance, wave after wave.

BROOKLYN

Matthew?

MATTHEW

What about Dean Fischer's office?

LISS

What do you mean?

BROOKLYN

No, don't --

MATTHEW

You know... Mikki was in the crowd, protesting? She said...

(whispering)

"Fork," but not "fork."

CHRIS

Yeeeeeahhh, sorry, man. Not sure what you're talking about there.

BROOKLYN

Ha-ha-ha, oh-man-oh-man! I don't think Matthew knows how cactus facts are supposed to work!

MATTHEW

Guys, I'm serious! The men in suits -- they picked her up and dragged her off and we just... stood there.

CHRIS
I don't believe in biology.

BROOKLYN
And we respect your opinion.

Over MELLOW ROCK MUSIC, Reef rolls up to the table on his special hoverboard from earlier.

REEF
There are two thousand species of cactuses -- that much I know.

VIRGO
Cool entrance!

MATTHEW
What? Why are you on a hoverboard?
They were banned --

REEF
Dude, we've been over this -- it's a Blazer. And we talked Dean Fischer out of the ban.

MATTHEW
When was this? Where was I? What?!

Reef steps off his hoverboard and tips it with his foot into his outstretched hand. He scoots in beside Liss.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
Brooklyn. Mikki was your roommate --

BROOKLYN
And now Liss is my roommate with Virgo. All right? It'll be fixed.

Virgo walks up to the table with papers in her hands.

VIRGO
(pouting)
I need help.

She settles next to Brooklyn. Their thighs casually touch.

VIRGO (CONT'D)
Ever since that fiasco with Dean Fischer and the coffee cart, I've been out of a gig, and these shoes don't pay for themselves!

Virgo raises her feet, and Brooklyn and Liss admire Virgo's designer shoes. Chris strokes them, nods his approval.

MATTHEW

What about that twenty-four-seven
live-streaming you do?

LISS

I guess no one wanted to watch a
girl depression-nap all day...

VIRGO

Anyyyway, I heard the SBA bookstore
is hiring, but one of the interview
questions is like, "What are your
weaknesses?" Um! What's that about?

REEF

Bruh, you turn the question around
and ask what their weaknesses are.
Actually, say nothing, establish
dominance. Actually, I don't know
the difference between a nickel and
a dime -- I've just never had to
handle coins before --

Virgo throws a piece of Matthew's food at Reef's head.

BROOKLYN

I've also been looking for a job.
(to Virgo)
Do you know how many openings the
bookstore has?

VIRGO

Yeah, two! You should totally apply
with me. It'll be fun!

MATTHEW

Why are you applying for a campus
job a month before we graduate? And
what if the store only hires one of
you -- won't that cause drama?

Brooklyn turns to Virgo.

Virgo to Reef.

Reef to Liss.

Liss to Chris.

Chris to Matthew.

Matthew back to Brooklyn.

She holds his stare in the sunken depression of her eyes.

BROOKLYN

Umm. Too on the nose.

Brooklyn gives Matthew a quick kiss on the cheek. He blushes.

CHRIS

So, good luck to you both, but Reef and I have our field trip.

REEF

Mrs. Beach is taking us to look at scorpions or red rocks or whatever.

BROOKLYN

Who knows -- maybe you'll see a cactus in the wild!

CHRIS

Yeah, with Liss all but confirming cactuses are hummingbird killers!

Matthew laughs sarcastically, immediately turns to Virgo.

MATTHEW

Mikki, taken away -- what do you honestly think about that, Virgo?

BROOKLYN

We don't know a Mikki.

VIRGO

Really? Okay, yes!

MATTHEW

Wha-- what?!

Virgo stands on the table.

VIRGO

I am thinking about... Australia!
Doesn't it just sound fake?
Literally! Three A sounds, all
pronounced differently! That's sus.

Everyone but Matthew laughs, and then Chris and Reef leave the table. Brooklyn and Liss leave as well. Virgo meditates.

Matthew shakes his head and stares again at the ocean -- the blue, purple, reddening swirl of the sea, like a bruise.

INT. DUTTON DORM – HALLWAY – LATER

Away from the others, Matthew approaches the door to Room 102 in Dutton Dorm. He hesitates, then knocks.

He waits. He's about to leave when the door opens. Liss stands on the other side, holding the handle.

LISS

Oh. Hey. What's up?

MATTHEW

Sorry. I, uhh, wanted to talk to Rook. Brooklyn. My girlfriend.

LISS

Right. Well, she's with Virgo at the bookstore, and Chris and Reef are out in the desert with their biology class.

(sighs)

The surveillance petition failed, by the way.

Matthew looks around, sees no one, and then steps past Liss inside the room.

INT. DUTTON DORM – GIRLS' DORM ROOM – CONT'D

A vintage yellow light pours in through the windows. Dust motes dance around.

The orange walls are covered with photos of the gang and a few decorated letters that spell out HAPPINESS LIVES HERE. By the windows are a bunk bed and desks for studying. On Liss's newer desk are many unnecessary beakers of colorful liquids.

Matthew closes the door, then sits on the edge of Brooklyn's single bed, cold and desolate. His shoulders slouch.

MATTHEW

You and Reef, huh?

LISS

Well, you know what they say, opposites attracting. Like an ionic bond between two atoms.

MATTHEW

And all this happened while I was in Alaska? Mikki, at the protest --

LISS
People come and go.

MATTHEW
Being dragged away is not "People
come and go"!

LISS
Mikki Mizushima transferred out --
that's what happened. To Australia.

MATTHEW
Five weeks before the school year's
over with?!

LISS
It's the end of senior year --
don't be so serious! Just...
lighthearted antics!

She looks out the window.

LISS (CONT'D)
I argued for you. Most of us did.
You had a lot of support -- please,
don't make us do this again.

MATTHEW
But why were they pretending Mikki
doesn't even exist -- ?

LISS
Of course she exists! We're not
dumb! She's in the yearbook. And
those are in the bookstore --

And just like that, he's out the door.

EXT. MINTZ PLAZA - LATER

In the plaza are a bunch of teens wearing muted colors that
blend into the background. Everyone appears happy.

Matthew walks, stops, watches the palm trees sway gently as a
drone flies overhead... then hovers.

He walks faster.

The sun is high, and everything shimmers with the heat.

INT. BOOKSTORE - LATER

Brooklyn and Virgo are shelving as Matthew enters the SBA bookstore. The girls wear orange polos tucked into their little white shorts.

Brooklyn stands when she sees Matthew. Virgo stands as well.

BROOKLYN

You were supposed to be here, like,
a long time ago!

He scratches the back of his neck.

MATTHEW

Umm, where are the yearbooks?

BROOKLYN

So help me, God, if you're looking
up the kid from the protest --

MATTHEW

Mikki! You know Mikki!

BROOKLYN

You cannot care about every single
issue on the planet! All you're
doing is being weird! Why can't you
be happy with going to such an
incredible school as --

MATTHEW

Why don't you care that our friend
was taken away and that no one's
talking about it?!

VIRGO

Hey, did you know that I'm not just
ambiguously brown but that I'm
actually half Peruvian?

MATTHEW

Virgo, what the heck?!

Brooklyn tosses up her hands and walks over to her SBA backpack. There, she pulls out a yearbook and then stomps over and forcefully shoves the book into Matthew's chest.

BROOKLYN

Have a stupid yearbook! Talk to
Dean Fischer about this kid if
you're so concerned -- but Virgo
and I have actual work to do.

Brooklyn storms off into the break room. Virgo looks at Matthew, mouths a sorry to him, and then continues shelving.

Matthew examines the yearbook in his hands. He feels the school's name embossed on the front cover and then glances back at Virgo before exiting the bookstore.

When he's gone, Brooklyn slowly walks over to Virgo. She touches Virgo's shoulder.

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)
Okay, good. Now follow my lead.

INT. WRIGHT DORM – GUYS' DORM ROOM – NIGHT

As night falls over paradise, Matthew lies back on his bed. Beside him is the yearbook. Matthew gently picks it up.

He runs his finger across the spine and sighs, drops it.

BROOKLYN (O.C.)
Knock knock.

Matthew glances over to see Brooklyn standing by the open doorway.

Brooklyn sort of waves at him before entering the room and quietly closing the door. She then steps out of her flip-flops and joins Matthew at the foot of the bed.

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)
Hey.

MATTHEW
Hey.

BROOKLYN
Sorry I got heated up with ya.
Y'know I was stressed, is all.

MATTHEW
(grinning)
Your accent's coming out.

BROOKLYN
(laughing)
I'm from Oklahoma!

Matthew laughs with her. Brooklyn smiles.

Her toes brush up against the yearbook. She notices, and her face falls.

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)
Did you find what you wanted?

MATTHEW
Haven't opened it yet.

BROOKLYN
Mikki probably transferred out or something. You know that, right?

MATTHEW
But where did Mikki go? Why did Liss move in with you and Virgo?
(hurt)
Why are you messing with me, Rook?

Brooklyn lies on her back at the foot of the bed, staring up at the ceiling. Matthew sits upright to watch her.

She's crying. She shakes her head and wipes the tears away.

BROOKLYN
It should've been another perfect day. A golden-orange sunset behind us, the sound of the Pacific waves in the background -- and then Dean Fischer riding his hoverboard, loving it, lifting the ban, and then all of us laughing afterward. Maybe even a beach party!

She covers her face with her hands.

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)
God, it's so... suckish.

MATTHEW
We should hang out more. We haven't really done anything, you and me, since I got back from Alaska.

BROOKLYN
This was supposed to be a... a new start for us.

Matthew smiles. Brooklyn sits up and takes the yearbook.

MATTHEW
You do the honors.

Brooklyn carefully feels the top corners of the book. Matthew scoots over beside her. Their legs touch.

With a deep breath, Brooklyn opens the yearbook to a page in the middle.

Matthew furrows his brow. Brooklyn turns to another page. Then another, and again. Her lips part.

Brooklyn quickly flips through the entire yearbook, but each page is the same.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

It's blank?

BROOKLYN

I... this isn't... this isn't supposed to happen --

The door opens. Chris helps Reef ease his way into the room. Reef, noticeably red, grimaces with each step.

CHRIS

Hey, Brooklyn. Hey, Matthew.

Reef falls back onto the bottom bunk, then cries out in pain. Chris stretches.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

He basically got sunburned in less than an hour.

REEF

Like, cool, sun! Nice to see you too! Gaah...

Chris eyes the yearbook. Brooklyn, a tear caught in her eye, shifts a leg over it.

BROOKLYN

Did you get all your cactus facts?

CHRIS

Uhh, yeah, I did! And hey, did you know the largest bloodflower cactus ever recorded became bipedal and could move its position? No one's seen it in over a decade! Crazy stuff out there, man.

Reef groans and covers his head with a pillow.

Matthew glances over at Brooklyn. She's looking at him with sullen eyes. Matthew tries to wipe a tear from her cheek -- she pulls back. So he takes her hand, and she holds it close.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF SEA BREEZE ACADEMY AT NIGHT, AND THEN --

CUT TO BLACK.

Superimpose:

SEASON EIGHT, EPISODE THREE

"SURPRISE PARTY"

GUEST STARRING LITA CANDYCE

EXT. SEA BREEZE ACADEMY -- DAY

Another perfect day in Southern California.

Brooklyn, Liss, Reef, and Matthew stroll under the shade of oak trees. Liss and Reef hold hands, with Brooklyn beside them. Matthew lags a step behind.

REEF

Salty sleep -- nope. Salty sea
snapes -- gaah. Salty sweeming --
yo, my tang is toungeled, I can't.

LISS

You try, Brooklyn. How many times
can you say, "Salty sea snails
swimming slowly"?

BROOKLYN

At least once? I end up saying
"swimming," like, four times!

LISS

And you, Matthew?

MATTHEW

Hey, Brooklyn, can we, uh, talk?

BROOKLYN

What do you want to talk about?

REEF

Salty snee sails... snotty
sleep nails...

MATTHEW

I mean, in private? About
Mikki?

Liss looks back at Matthew. Brooklyn keeps her eyes forward.

BROOKLYN

People are... playing soccer and
reading under trees.

(MORE)

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)

I was late for class because a girl convinced me to do yoga outside for half an hour. Don't look for problems that aren't there, okay? Life is great.

LISS

Life is great.

REEF

Life is great!

MATTHEW

The yearbook --

Brooklyn stops, presses a finger to his lips.

BROOKLYN

Life is great.

REEF

Life is great, dude.

BROOKLYN

Nothing to worry about.

LISS

'Cept maybe Chris's surprise party.

BROOKLYN

Oh! The big eighteen! So much has gone on, I forgot it's tonight!

MATTHEW

(muffled)

Uhh cn yuh mvv yr fngr nw?

REEF

Speaking of the birthday boy.

Chris limps over with a hand against his left eye. He is accompanied by TINA (17), a Black girl with a sweet, sibilant lisp and box braids styled into a ponytail.

BROOKLYN

Hey, Tina... Chris? Are you okay?

Chris squints out of his right eye.

CHRIS

Hi, ladies. Roommates. Matthew, you remember Tina, right?

MATTHEW
 Your girlfriend, yeah.
 (to her)
 Hey, Tina.

TINA
 Hi, Matthew.

Tina smiles at Matthew, then quickly frowns as Chris groans in pain, a hand still over his eye.

TINA (CONT'D)
 I was baking him a cake --

Chris cries in pain.

TINA (CONT'D)
 -- but then he showed up to the girls' lounge early, and so he wanted to help. He got this, uhh, white stuff in his eye...

REEF
 (with a sneer)
 What kind of white stuff?

CHRIS
 I had a butter knife of frosting, and I somehow flicked it, and... and oh my God, the sugar!

LISS
 Did you flush it out with water?!

CHRIS
 Yeah, but I washed my hands first, and so I had soap on them and rubbed my eye and now I am dying.

MATTHEW
 Oooh, that happened to me last year when Rook and I had some spicy tuna for lunch.

He places a hand on Chris's shoulder.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
 I feel your suffering.

LISS
 Think of how the tuna suffered.

MATTHEW

Well, the tuna fulfilled its tasty purpose.

Brooklyn smiles.

BROOKLYN

There's the Matthew I know.

CHRIS

Feels like death itself is licking my eyeball!

TINA

Come on, babe. Nurse Morgan ought to have eye drops or something.

CHRIS

But I don't wannaaaaa...!

Chris continues to fuss as Tina leads him away by the hand.

LISS

Poor Chris. We have got to throw him an awesome surprise party.

REEF

Salty snails sneeze swimmingly...

From behind the gang comes Virgo. She wears those little white shorts and an orange polo tucked into them. Her hair is loosely tied. She is visibly exhausted.

BROOKLYN

Rough day at the bookstore?

Virgo falls onto the grass and lies there sideways.

VIRGO

It was so overcrowded, and we kept having to phone Maintenance to deal with the fire alarms not working, and then some tweens threw up in the manga section, and you'll never guess who had to clean that up --

Virgo points at herself with her thumbs. She gets up.

VIRGO (CONT'D)

And as if there weren't enough drama at this school already, there's a fridge raider!

REEF

What's a fridge raider?

BROOKLYN

It's you when Chris complains
you've been eating his food out of
your dorm's mini fridge.

VIRGO

Which didn't bother me until my
chocolate mousse went missing!

LISS

(faux gasp)
No, not the mousse!

VIRGO

Exactly! Sad face! So how do I
catch the fridge raider?

REEF

Trap it with a paper towel and put
it outside to chill.

LISS

This is a person, not a spider.

REEF

S'all meat to me.

BROOKLYN

So there's Chris's surprise party
to plan and Virgo's food thief to
catch. We could split up --

MATTHEW

I call the bookstore.

Brooklyn stares at him, adjusts her bra strap.

BROOKLYN

Wasn't going to suggest that, but
fine, you can go with Virgo.

REEF

Me too. Food thief's going down.

BROOKLYN

Liss, you're with me. We'll figure
out Chris's party and check with
Tina to see when he'll be back.

REEF

Salty seized sea snails, uh, swim --

INT. BOOKSTORE – LATER

Virgo, Reef, and Matthew walk through the SBA bookstore.

Virgo, now wearing a headscarf, waves to the cashier as they pass. The cashier, oblivious, scrolls through her phone.

INT. BOOKSTORE – BREAK ROOM – MOMENTS LATER

Inside the break room are a couple of plastic tables pushed together, chairs, boxes, a trashcan, sink, the fridge, and a lone boom mic. Virgo shuts the door. Matthew looks around.

Reef opens the fridge and starts rummaging around inside. He flashes a cocky, lizard-like grin.

REEF

The answer is obviously laxatives.

VIRGO

No way. If we do anything drastic, then I'll be the one in trouble.

Reef takes a spoon and eats from a tub of yogurt. Written on the tub in permanent marker: "SIDDIQ'S – DO NOT EAT!!!"

VIRGO (CONT'D)

The thief likes hummus, right?
We'll get some hummus, sprinkle red pepper on it, and then we'll wait for the culprit. We'll catch 'em red-handed -- erm, red in the face!

REEF

And I'll order in the pepper with my delivery perk.

MATTHEW

This plan has a lot of assumptions built into it.

Matthew opens a cardboard box. Regular yearbooks with regular covers... but the pages are all blank.

He opens another box, which is full of surveillance cameras.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

This doesn't seem right...

Reef's phone VIBRATES audibly from his pocket. He pulls it out, then puts it up to his ear.

REEF

Yo, babe, what's up? Figure out what to do for Chris yet?

Matthew walks over to one of the other doors in the room and tries it. It's locked. He tries another, also locked.

REEF (CONT'D)

Lita Candyce? The pop star? She was at one of my mom's yacht parties... Yeah, I'm sure we could arrange something... Okay, bye.

Reef puts his phone away.

REEF (CONT'D)

That was Liss and Brooklyn. They want to see if I can get Lita Candyce to come sing to Chris.

VIRGO

Great idea! He loves her music.

There's a knock at the door. Reef opens it to the same Postal Worker from before, now with a package labeled: "One Carolina Reaper - caution: hot!"

She hands Reef the box, then runs out. Reef shuts the door and sets the package on the tables beside some hummus.

REEF

I got the pepper and the hummus.

VIRGO

I'll set the trap.

Matthew watches as Virgo empties the box of yearbooks. She then holds the box upright with a forked stick and ties a piece of rope to the stick.

Matthew looks back. The hummus now has a generous helping of Carolina Reaper evenly mixed throughout.

Reef holds it high, Virgo applauds, and then Reef gets down on his hands and knees as he carefully places the food beneath the box.

Reef stands, wipes sweat from his brow. He gives the two a thumbs-up.

Virgo then takes the end of the rope and rushes underneath the tables. Reef hops down and joins her.

They wait.

MATTHEW

What.

VIRGO (O.C.)

Shhhhh!

Matthew crouches down to look at them.

MATTHEW

How would this possibly work?!

REEF

Yo, bro. When the thief tries to steal the food, we pull the rope, the stick collapses, and the thief is trapped. Even I get this.

MATTHEW

Why wouldn't you just put the hummus in the fridge -- you know, where the thief expects it to be?

Matthew opens the fridge. Inside is an empty container with a note attached. Virgo and Reef get up from under the tables.

Matthew reads from the note:

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

"Myself understand to what you are trying to planned. Better luck next anytime, you freakish goobers"...?

VIRGO

Well, that's just rude. And a bit, uh, patronizing.

REEF

Our plan would've worked.

MATTHEW

Why are you both acting so strange?! What happened to Mikki?! Why are the yearbooks completely empty?! And that English!

REEF

The yearbooks? What?

One of the previously locked doors bursts open, and out runs a SIX-FOOT-TALL CACTUS across the room and through the door leading to the bookstore.

Virgo screams, and Matthew jumps back.

Reef leaps onto one of the tables, pointing --

REEF (CONT'D)
That's it! The bloodflower cactus!
The cactus is the food thief!

INT. BOOKSTORE - CONT'D

SFX: MARIACHI MUSIC WITH LIVELY PERCUSSION

The cactus pushes past racks of backpacks and shelves of books -- which fall to the floor, all blank -- as Reef, Virgo, and Matthew chase after it.

The cashier screams, her phone goes flying, and the screen shatters as it hits the floor.

Reef tramples over it as the cactus escapes out the door and down the wide flight of outdoor stairs.

MATTHEW
Where -- where is it going?!

VIRGO
There, look! The condescending
con's descending!

MATTHEW
Seriously, Virgo?!

EXT. SEA BREEZE ACADEMY - CONT'D

Two kids toss a Frisbee to each other while some others sit on nearby benches as they text.

A few girls in shorts and bikini tops stand around, but they don't seem to be speaking -- they just sort of move their lips and then roll their heads back as they mime laughing at an imaginary anecdote.

The cactus runs by, with Virgo, Reef, and Matthew in pursuit.

REEF
Somebody stop that cactus!

While Virgo and Reef continue the chase, Matthew pauses beside the health center, next to the entire MARIACHI BAND.

I/E. HEALTH CENTER - CONT'D

Through an open window, Matthew sees Chris, Tina, and crazy NURSE MORGAN, in her orange scrubs, running around the infirmary with wild gesticulation.

CHRIS

-- I don't have heartburn!

NURSE MORGAN

-- Drink the pickle juice!

Tina, caught in the middle, tries to separate the two.

EXT. MINTZ PLAZA - MOMENTS LATER

The cactus rushes through Mintz Plaza. Students shout as they move out of its way or get pushed aside.

One of the ridiculously average Frisbee kids tosses the disc. The other is too busy watching the ensuing chaos.

The Frisbee flies past the distracted kid and into the plaza, where it hits the cactus dead in its center with a THWACK.

The cactus stumbles in pain, GROANING as it trips into a drained fountain. Virgo, Reef, and Matthew run over to it.

VIRGO

You...! You...!

Virgo puts her hands on her knees as she struggles to catch her breath. She points at the cactus.

VIRGO (CONT'D)

You stole my chocolate mousse, you jerk!

Chef Vespucci with a plate of dessert:

CHEF VESPUCCI

Did someone say-a mousse?

MATTHEW

But it's a... it's a costume...?

REEF

Colonel Mustard with the lead pipe in the conservatory!

Reef pulls the head of the cactus to reveal the thief as...

Mikki Mizushima -- the Asian girl from the protest -- now with bloodshot eyes, unnaturally pale skin, and a visible gunshot wound on the forehead.

VIRGO
Mikki Mizushima...? So ugly...?

MATTHEW
("Seriously?")
What is it that you are actually
talking about right now?

VIRGO
Wait, where's Siddiq?

The crowd parts for SIDDIQ (18), an Indian guy standing in a white undershirt and boxer shorts with polka dots.

SFX: "LA CUCARACHA" HORN PLAYING

Behind Siddiq, one of the men in suits taxis Dean Fischer over in a pedicab as the other men in suits join them.

DEAN FISCHER
Hey, hey, hey, hey, what is going
on here?!

VIRGO
Mikki, we... we thought you
transferred schools. Why are -- ?

Mikki CACKLES. It is shrill and uncomfortable.

MIKKI
Oh, is this what those tell you,
huh? Bunch of goobers tell you
myself having transferred outward!
Is this right, Dean Fischer? Huh?!
Myself transferred outward?!

The men in suits remove Mikki from the former fountain.

This time, Mikki screams and she kicks -- she breaks free, she bolts, and the men in suits chase after her.

Dean Fischer straightens his tie.

DEAN FISCHER
We'll... take it from here. Thank
you, Virgo, Reef... and Matthew.
(to Matthew)
New rule.

(MORE)

DEAN FISCHER (CONT'D)

No conspiring, colluding,
conniving, devising, plotting,
scheming, or generally being in
cahoots. Got it?

(beat)

That's me asking nicely.

MATTHEW

(under his breath)

Could say the same for you...

DEAN FISCHER

Excuse me?

MATTHEW

"If it's all the same to you."

DEAN FISCHER

To think I fought in Afghanistan...

(to BACKGROUND CHARACTERS)

Stand up straight. Spit out that
gum.

The dean sends everyone off with the wave of his hand. He leaves on his pedicab, and Chef and the crowd disperse.

The sky is tinged with a wash of blue-orange-crimson. Virgo shivers. She scratches her left hand with the right.

VIRGO

We should get to Chris's party.

Reef picks up the Frisbee. He tests it in his hand, sighs, and then throws it into the distance. He exits.

Virgo starts walking away, but Matthew grabs her arm.

MATTHEW

What's going on?

VIRGO

What are you -- ?

Matthew squeezes tighter, a low-burning anger inside him.

Virgo CRIES OUT in pain -- her breath rises and falls in shallow bursts --

VIRGO (CONT'D)

Matthew, God, you're hurting me!

MATTHEW

Why won't you answer me?!

Virgo slumps to the ground in tears. Matthew lets go of her arm. She cries into her hands.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

This is ridiculous. I'm leaving --

Virgo grabs his hand. Matthew tries to shake her off, but she holds him tight.

VIRGO

No, please, Matthew, I need you! I need you, right now -- right now, with you, is what I need! None of this craziness!

MATTHEW

So you admit this is crazy?!

VIRGO

Yes, yes, this is all so...
(short sucks of air)
I will explain everything to you -- alone, later. When we're alone, I will, I promise. We just have to get through this. Please, behave. For me. For Brooklyn. Pretend things are how they were. Pretend this is normal. Please.

MATTHEW

Fine! Fine. Whatever.

VIRGO

I'm sorry. But thank you.

MATTHEW

Whatever.

Matthew looks at Virgo, then eases his way down next to her. She lets go of his hand.

They watch the sun sinking into the horizon like this.

VIRGO

Wow. No stars tonight.

Virgo wipes the tears from her eyes. She sniffles.

VIRGO (CONT'D)

But we should be grateful, you know? Life is great.

MATTHEW

I've heard that.

VIRGO

I just hope this passes soon. All
of it.

There are dark storm clouds up ahead, long and layered. The
wind rattles the palm trees and churns the waves below.

They sit in a cold, eerie silence. Then Virgo stands.

INT. DUTTON DORM – GIRLS' LOUNGE – NIGHT

Matthew and Virgo join Brooklyn, Chris, Liss, Reef, and Tina
in the girls' lounge, decorated with streamers and balloons
of every size and color. Bottles of Whazz cover the tables.

Electropop teen idol LITA CANDYCE (mid 20s) sings on a raised
stage the repeated verse of --

LITA CANDYCE

Was it worth it?

-- over simplistic chord progressions.

VIRGO

Happy birthday, Chris-ly bear!

Reef BLOWS A NOISEMAKER. Chris turns around. He's wearing
dark sunglasses, a party hat, and a giddy grin on his face.

Chris hugs Matthew and Virgo. Reef pats Chris on the back.

CHRIS

Awww, thanks, you guys! Man, y'all
the best, you know that?

VIRGO

Chris, my dude, you brighten our
day when you walk into the room.

BROOKLYN

You're one of the funniest, most
dedicated people we know.

REEF

You pretty much rock, bro. Even if
you do snore like a seal.

VIRGO

Matthew?

MATTHEW

Yeah, he does have... bad adenoids.

Virgo laughs, Brooklyn watches her longingly, and then she laughs as well. Then everybody's laughing! Matthew smiles.

REEF

Snore... like a seal... snore like a seal. Salty sea snails swimming slowly. Hey! "Salty sea snails swimming slowly"!

LISS

Yay! You did it, babe!

Reef BLOWS THE NOISEMAKER. All laugh once more -- even Matthew this time. Brooklyn grazes Virgo's arm.

BROOKLYN

So. Did you catch the food thief?

Virgo puts a hand on Reef and Matthew's shoulders.

VIRGO

Ah, yes. Turns out we were the thieves all along -- Reef, me, and Matthew -- for failing to realize that friendship is the true measure of happiness, not the amount of chocolate mousse in a fridge.

The crowd WHOOPS and CHEERS. Matthew smiles incredulously.

SLOW-MOTION SCENES AS THEY ALL LAUGH AND DANCE, AND THEN --

CUT TO BLACK.

Superimpose:

SEASON EIGHT, EPISODE FOUR

"LIGHTS OUT"

INT. DUTTON DORM - LOUNGE - DAY (RAIN)

Another perfect day in Southern California... apart from the lightning and pouring rain. The gang chills on couches.

Brooklyn and Matthew sit near each other, a pillow between them. Reef has his arm around Liss while Virgo has her feet up on the coffee table. Virgo wears that headscarf, and Chris dons a pirate's eyepatch -- Jolly Roger 'n' all.

All face the TV and drink from bottles of Whazz.

SFX: NAUTICAL TUNE PLAYING, LAUGH TRACK

The lights flicker in the girls' lounge. The gang reacts.

SFX: THUNDER RUMBLING

The lights come back up, but the TV goes out.

CHRIS

Aww, and that's such a great show.

Virgo stands and walks over to the windows. She pulls back the curtains to reveal skeins of clouds stretched over the darkened sky and harsh winds threatening to uproot the palms.

The lights flicker again -- this time, for longer.

LISS

We need this, with the drought.

VIRGO

My grandpa used to tell me he could make the rain stop. He would clap his hands as we drove under a bridge and go "On" and "Off."

Virgo claps for emphasis.

VIRGO (CONT'D)

And so I believed with all my li'l heart that Grandpa Torres could control the weather.

BROOKLYN

(a genuine smile)

That's actually really sweet.

MATTHEW

I... I don't remember anything. From my childhood.

BROOKLYN

Anyway --

LISS

Neither can I.

Liss looks to Brooklyn in worry.

LISS (CONT'D)

In my mind, elementary years and below are... nearly nonexistent.

CHRIS

Oh, phew, I'm not alone. When people talk about, like, really specific childhood memories, sometimes I'll make things up just so I don't seem crazy. I don't remember much before, like, eleven.

REEF

I'm sorry, how stupid could you be, Virgo, thinking your grandpa controls the weather?

CHRIS

Dude!

BROOKLYN

Hey there...

REEF

Honestly, Virg, I hope you quit and fall into depression exclusively because of how stupid that line was. And other than Matthew, wow, you are lowest in our social structure. I don't want to look at you. If we were eating, right now, I would stop eating until you left. I would rather go hungry.

Lightning brightens the entire sky. For a moment, a HUMANOID FIGURE can be seen out in the rain, watching the gang in a tense, suspicious silence. No one notices.

MATTHEW

Maybe I'm... dead.

(beat)

Maybe I got crushed by a tree, and here I am, a ghost.

The lights flicker... and go out for good this time. The gang stands as thunder BOOMS and rocks the lounge.

Everyone but Matthew SCREAMS in the dark.

LISS

Baby?! Baby, grab my arm!

REEF

I got you!

BROOKLYN

That is not her arm!

By BURSTS OF LIGHTNING, Reef stumbles over to the front doors. He pushes against them. They don't budge.

REEF

Great -- of course we're in the only building without fire alarms and a working sprinkler system!

VIRGO

(sheepishly)
This is a complicated plot.

BROOKLYN

Adults are useless anyway.

CHRIS

We're trapped! We're trapped and we're all gonna di-ie-ie!

BROOKLYN

(annoyed)
We're not gonna die, Chris.

CHRIS

And I never told Tina that I love her! And now... and now she'll never know because I suppressed my true feelings in case she thought I was too clingy or emotional or whatever! And it's all my fault!

LISS

(touched)
Wow. That's...

Liss looks over to Reef.

LISS (CONT'D)

... I'm sure she'd love to hear you say that.

VIRGO

Aww, Chris, are you crying?

CHRIS

No, I'm not crying!

Chris is crying.

Brooklyn takes out her phone and switches on the flashlight feature.

VIRGO (O.C.)

Also, sorry, just wanted to say I put Special Mud -- trademark pending -- on my face and now it's indescribably soft. I also shaved my legs with it. They're, like, vanilla-scented dolphins!

REEF (O.C.)

Better than the usual dolphins!

An EARSPLITTING CRACK OF THUNDER, followed by Liss SCREAMING at the top of her lungs.

MATTHEW

What?! What is it?!

LISS

The service tunnels!

CHRIS

Gaah, my heart!

LISS

The school's architects built tunnels below us to connect various buildings -- so they could haul supplies and machinery!

BROOKLYN

Is there one under Dutton Dorm?

LISS

I believe so, yes!

REEF

A tunnel? Down there? Nope, no can do. Ain't happening.

BROOKLYN

Liss, you stay with Reef and define your relationship. We'll get help. Matthew, you guide the way.

MATTHEW

You want me to lead? Really?

BROOKLYN

Yes, you, in the front!

Matthew leans over to kiss or hug or even to touch Brooklyn, and DRAMATIC MUSIC swells when she doesn't reciprocate.

The rain pours faster, sharper.

INT. SERVICE TUNNELS - LATER

Brooklyn, Virgo, Chris, and Matthew inch their way by the light of their phones through the old and dusty SBA service tunnels, which are covered with ritualistic writings.

SFX: CHRIS WHISTLING "ROCK-A-BYE BABY"

Chris's phone dies, then Virgo's, then Brooklyn's.

BROOKLYN

Well, crap, that's not good.

VIRGO

Are we allowed to say "crap" now?

Something shuffles up ahead.

CHRIS

Oh my God, was that a rat?!

BROOKLYN

Give me the phone!

Matthew hesitates. Brooklyn takes the phone, shines it around, and then walks faster. Virgo, Chris, and Matthew follow.

VIRGO

Um, I think we're good, 'cause mice live outside and rats live inside.

(beat)

Or was it that they're six-dimensional?

BROOKLYN

Chris, you're in biology.

CHRIS

Transitive property: if I eat a rat, then what does that make me?

MATTHEW

Just kill me.

MIKKI jumps out in front of them, her grin wide and deranged and twitching.

The gang SCREAMS in terror. Virgo jumps into Chris's arms -- he drops her. Embarrassed, he helps her to her feet.

Mikki's veins are black, she has hollow cheeks and a chipped-off ear, and dark circles draw attention to her wild eyes.

BROOKLYN
Mikki...? Are you Mikki?

Mikki nods, still grinning.

VIRGO
We, uhh, we saw her -- the other evening. She was running, through campus, in a... cactus costume. Siddiq was in his underwear.

CHRIS
His underwear? Really?

All look over at Chris, who pulls up his eyepatch, rubs his eyes, blinks twice, and then lowers the patch.

BROOKLYN
Mikki... we were told you left for a school in Australia, kangaroos...
(shaking her head)
Were you down here this whole time?

Mikki howls with laughter.

MIKKI
Down here?! Down under?! Oh, you are a blonde little goober, you are! To what happen to you four? To will away stereotypical characters, those every become bland! Bland goobers! While you all enjoy sunny days and fluffy wish-fulfillment, myself survive on canned beans and watered fountain!

CHRIS
(stage whispering)
What's going on?

MIKKI
Brooklyn, Brooklyn. Matthew, yours boyfriend, himself knows. Little Missed Perfect at this glorified summer camp!

Brooklyn turns to face Matthew, inadvertently shining the light in his eyes.

BROOKLYN
What is going on here?!

MATTHEW
Uh, hello?! That's what I'm asking!

MIKKI

Not "stereotypes," says dean ex machina. Those're "classic" types! Please. Students are all thin and gorgeous, taking token minorities -- or the fat kid to play the freakish outcast. This quasi-feminist crusader -- Brooklyn is beautiful, popularity, glitch of a life. No!

Mikki smirks at Matthew, her eyes trickling blue blood.

MIKKI (CONT'D)

When did you notice things weird?

MATTHEW

This is... pretty weird right now.

Mikki stomps on Matthew's foot -- hard. He brings it to his chest in pain, hopping on the other.

Brooklyn lowers the light, revealing Mikki's feet as being three-toed and clawed.

MIKKI

Convey, Matthew. Convey them to what you are achieved! When have you first noticed things was weird?

MATTHEW

The hoverboards. How obsessed they were with that one brand. And you --

BROOKLYN

Not this again.

Virgo puts her hand on Brooklyn's shoulder. Brooklyn falters, then shrugs her off and shoots Matthew a sideways look.

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)

This isn't funny.

MATTHEW

I'm not trying to be funny!

BROOKLYN

Then be funny! Don't be so... this!

Mikki rubs the front of her face in exasperation, stretching out the skin around her eyes.

MIKKI

Video child. You will die, and she will convince you to. Follow me.

Mikki faces forward and walks ahead a few steps. Matthew, Virgo, Chris, and Brooklyn join her.

Mikki stops, looks over her shoulder at Matthew.

MIKKI (CONT'D)

Where was you lasted semester?

MATTHEW

Alaska.

MIKKI

To what is Alaska to you?

MATTHEW

Cold.

MIKKI

Vast, bleak, unforgiving terrain.
Not peppered with palm trees. O'
rebirth; how snow mutes the world.

Up ahead is a door marked only by age and neglect. Mikki opens it -- emitting a GRINDING, STUTTERED sound.

INT. ADMIN BUILDING - NIGHT

Mikki and the gang climb through a trapdoor near Dean Fischer's office. The power is still out.

Outside, the storm continues in the smothering darkness.

There's a clean light coming from under the door to CONFERENCE ROOM 101. Mikki steps in front of it, puts her open hand out behind her so the others stop.

She places her head against the wall, listening. The others do so as well.

VIRGO

Is that... the Board of Directors?

Matthew hears several voices. They sound professional.

DEAN FISCHER (O.C.)

-- but giving him an eyepatch,
that's a development --

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN (O.C.)

-- losing control, already started
pulling plugs from upstairs --

SCAN LINES, CHROMATIC ABERRATIONS, DIZZYING BEACH SHOTS

HOARSE MAN (V.O.)

-- Whazz is out, so is Blazer --

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN (V.O.)

-- the Special Mud sponsorship is a big deal, but it won't be enough to carry the school --

DEAN FISCHER (V.O.)

-- what about a talking dog? Could we get a talking dog? A mascot --

WOMAN (V.O.)

-- with all due respect, Charles, you're here as a formality --

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN (V.O.)

-- not to mention that F-bomb --

HOARSE MAN (V.O.)

-- fired up, causing problems --

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN (V.O.)

-- for such a passive character --

WOMAN (V.O.)

-- look here! Hollywood's Highest, homepage! "Every second is filler"! Who do they think --

DEAN FISCHER (V.O.)

-- which is why we go with VERTEX magazine instead --

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN (V.O.)

-- needs more slapstick --

HOARSE MAN (V.O.)

-- I'll show you slapstick --

WOMAN (V.O.)

-- franchise the girl, subvert clichés by embracing them --

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN (V.O.)

-- family values, keep the main thing the main thing --

DEAN FISCHER (V.O.)

-- so, what I'm hearing from you all is no talking dog --

WOMAN (V.O.)

-- budget cuts, you dork! Shutting
down and selling our assets! Or so
help me God, I will toss you in the
back of a van myself!

Mikki raises her head off the wall. Matthew, Virgo, Chris,
and Brooklyn move away as well.

Mikki walks back to the trapdoor. They cautiously follow.

MIKKI

Myself'll take you to Reef and
Liss. They broke up. Comfort her.
Himself walks away unscathed. The
stars are not what they seem.

Virgo keeps her head down.

Chris repeatedly opens and closes his mouth as if he's going
to say something.

Matthew has completely lost the plot.

Brooklyn appears unfazed.

MIKKI (CONT'D)

Now then. Fire. Walk.

INT. DUTTON DORM - LOUNGE - LATER

Matthew, Virgo, Chris, and Brooklyn return to the girls'
lounge. Mikki lags behind.

Liss sits on one of the couches, her knees to her chin, the
sky no longer storming yet raining all the same.

Absent is Reef. One of the glass doors has been shattered, a
chair beside it.

Brooklyn takes a seat beside Liss, placing an arm around her.

LISS

Is true love... too much to ask?

BROOKLYN

No. It's just not what we expect or
want. Love isn't like it is on TV.

VIRGO

I believe true love is real and
that we all deserve to feel it with
someone, if not each other!

CHRIS

Man, I love you guys!

VIRGO

I'll hug to that!

Brooklyn, Virgo, and Chris hug Liss. Brooklyn pulls in Matthew by the shirt, and so he places his arms around them and stiffly pats their backs.

Liss smiles through the tears as the lights come suddenly back on by none other than the true magic of friendship.

MATTHEW

So, we have a common enemy -- Dean Fischer -- and we have to take him down. I don't know his plan, but it sounds like they've been spying on us, maybe with those surveillance cameras Liss warned us about --

BROOKLYN

No. Dean Fischer isn't an "enemy."

VIRGO

I'd rather no one be enemies with anybody.

BROOKLYN

Exactly. Wait. Matthew, what if I kissed you?

CHRIS

Mmm.

MATTHEW

I... Chris, no, what, Brooklyn --

BROOKLYN

What if Virgo kissed you? What if Virgo, Liss, and I all kissed you, taking turns or together, right now? Would that calm you down?

CHRIS

I'd pay to watch that.

LISS

Why would we do that?

Mikki slow claps.

MIKKI

Deep, guys! Very nice. So impress.

Brooklyn stomps over and SLAPS Mikki to the ground.

CHRIS

Brooklyn!

MATTHEW

Oh my God!

LISS

Mikki Mizushima?!

Brooklyn, her blue eyes wild and furious, towers over Mikki, who's writhing on the floor in pain.

BROOKLYN

I will pineapple-slap your ascot.
This is not how we do things.

Mikki scrambles onto all fours and then scampers off through the exit door. Brooklyn takes a deep breath.

MATTHEW

Why did you -- ?!

BROOKLYN

(to Matthew)

You don't just get to waltz back into our lives and demand we change the way we live.

(beat)

So what did we learn today, kiddos?

CHRIS

That Liss is amazing just because she simply exists -- exists! -- and she can do anything she, um, sets her mind to? Within reason?

BROOKLYN

That one spark can start a fire that burns the entire pasture.

VIRGO

Pain is weakness leaving the body.

BROOKLYN

Your only limit is you.

Brooklyn, with a strained smile, turns expectantly to Matthew. Virgo, Chris, and Liss turn as well.

MATTHEW

Oh, what, am I supposed to say something now? Or were you planning to slap me in the face?!

BROOKLYN
 (through her teeth)
 Just give Liss your advice.

MATTHEW
 "Advice"?! Advice! To run away from
 this freakish place!

CHRIS
 Nothing "freakish" is going on.
 (beat)
 There is that huge cistern under
 our dorm that's full of animal
 skulls and heptagrams, so that's a
 thing, but other than that --

BROOKLYN
 Chris, what would your advice to
 Matthew be?

CHRIS
 Oh. I'd rather not --

Brooklyn glares at Chris. He gulps.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
 A'ight... Matthew, buddy... you can
 be your greatest enemy, or your
 greatest friend.

MATTHEW
 Is that a threat?!

BROOKLYN
 And instead of crying, maybe try
 birdwatching instead. Sitting in
 the middle of nowhere and covering
 yourself in birdseed and letting
 the birds all land on you, yes.
 Then you will know true peace.

LISS
 I'm sorry, I just -- it's too much.

VIRGO
 Liss, don't --

Liss pushes herself off the couch and out the entrance, into
 the rain. The double doors swing shut.

Brooklyn saunters over to Matthew, strategically swaying her
 hips as she does so. She puts her hands on his shoulders. He
 tenses up. She slowly rubs his arms back and forth.

BROOKLYN

Matthew, baby. You went through a lot in Alaska.

MATTHEW

I... I think I need an adult.

She presses her soft lips against his. His eyes surge open. He looks down at her legs, tanned, smooth.

Brooklyn takes a step back, sees if Virgo was watching.

BROOKLYN

Come. Let's sit on the couches. We'll unwind and breathe easy.

Brooklyn stretches in a provocative way before reclining on one of the couches. Virgo lies on another. Chris opts for the floor. Matthew stares at them in disbelief.

Seconds pass. They feel like an eternity.

With Brooklyn, Virgo, and Chris all sitting there with their eyes closed like that, feigning relaxation, Matthew hesitantly joins them.

He sits on the carpet with his legs crossed.

He breathes in... and he waits...

HE LETS IT ALL OUT SLOWLY, AND THEN --

CUT TO BLACK.

Superimpose:

SEASON EIGHT, EPISODE FIVE

"MOTHER'S DAY AT SBA"

EXT. GRASSY FIELD - DAY

Another perfect day in Southern California.

White frame tents line the edges of a large field. Grounds workers haul tables across the lawn and underneath the shade.

In the center is a raised stage with a podium and microphone. Tied to the surrounding palm trees are elegant white banners. Written in SBA orange:

MOTHER'S DAY GALA XXX!

EXT. ADMIN BUILDING - LATER

Over CALMING INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC:

A grand tourer convertible pulls up neatly beside the quad. Out walks a woman with a neat, trimmed bob and skin freshly tanned. Large bug-eyed framed sunglasses rest on her face.

Reef comes running across the field and hugs MS. UNDERWOOD (mid 40s). She sort of pats the top of his head.

EXT. ADMIN BUILDING - LATER

A little ways off, MRS. RIVERS (mid 40s) steps out of her red rental and admires the spectacular view of the ocean and sprawling hills. She wears overalls and gingham.

Brooklyn rushes over to Mrs. Rivers, who opens her arms wide for her daughter.

EXT. GRASSY FIELD - LATER

Brooklyn, Reef, and a headscarf-less Virgo are in line for food underneath the white tents. Virgo does not take any.

They talk inaudibly among each other while Matthew stands farther back -- almost separate from his friends.

They then walk with their plates to one of the tables in front of the raised stage, where Ms. Underwood, Mrs. Rivers, Chris, and MRS. CARMICHAEL (mid 40s) -- who wears a lab coat, head mirror, and stethoscope -- are already seated.

There is a seat for Liss, but she is not present here.

Dean Fischer steps onto the stage. The dean grins wide at the crowd and speaks inaudibly. He motions with his hands a lot.

Reef says something. Mrs. Underwood takes a silverware roll and whacks Reef on the back of the head with it. Classic.

Matthew, feigning normalcy, is focused on the men in suits farther off. He watches them watching him. His cheeks burn.

Brooklyn then faces the crowd, her honeyed hair blowing in the breeze, the California sun on her face like a spotlight.

She says something -- passionately. The audience bursts into a standing ovation and tosses confetti high into the air.

The gang, except Matthew, laughs, as do the mothers. They rise to exit. Matthew glances at Liss's empty chair.

EXT. GRASSY FIELD - LATER

Matthew sits at the table alone. He grasps his head, vision blurry... and then he sees the gang in full -- even Mikki -- all soaking up some sun at this big round table.

TINA (O.C.)
Hey, there's Matthew.

Back to reality: Chris and Tina walk over to Matthew.

CHRIS
Hey, man. Why so glum, chum?

MATTHEW
I don't feel well.

CHRIS
Ah. One too many burgers?

MATTHEW
What? No, it's... bigger than that.

CHRIS
So... two too many burgers?

TINA
Maybe Matthew needs alone time.

Matthew bumps his leg on something. He reaches under the table, yanks out a surveillance camera.

He places it on the table. The three stare at it.

MATTHEW
The men in suits -- have they always been there? Watching?

CHRIS
Whoa there. Ix-nay on the en-may.

MATTHEW
Ix-nay on the en-may?
(beat)
At-whay o-day ou-yay ean-may?

Tina crosses her arms, a look of concern in her eyes. Chris shakes his head.

Coach Poole approaches. He faces Chris and Tina.

COACH POOLE
Hi. Uh, Dean Fischer asked me to speak with Matthew. Alone.

Chris and Tina take the hint and leave. Coach Poole sits.

COACH POOLE (CONT'D)
I'm worried 'bout you, champ.

MATTHEW
I'm worried about this school!

COACH POOLE
Sure.

MATTHEW
And I'm not trying to be, like, inflexible or anything. Weird things keep happening, but -- but I'm not the weird one here! Since Alaska, nothing's made sense...

COACH POOLE
You know, the greatest talent one can have is learnin' when to speak and when to not. You could try elevating your ignorance into an art form, where your lack of knowledge in itself proves a point.

MATTHEW
What, like, "ignorance is bliss"?

COACH POOLE
If not bliss, then at least less work, sure.

Coach Poole turns to briefly admire the bright and bold SBA flag waving triumphantly in the California breeze.

MATTHEW (O.C.)
You sound like Dean Fischer.

Coach Poole's face shows he takes offense to this comparison.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
Each day feels like a reset --

COACH POOLE
You think you're pretty hot stuff, don't you? Keep being all smart like this and your friends'll leave you real quick, boy. You'll see.
(so flat it must be true)
You don't know just how easily we can be replaced. A doppelgänger -- handsomer, taller, drawn-on freckles.

(MORE)

COACH POOLE (CONT'D)

He'll stand by Brooklyn in
Fischer's office, this doppelgänger
kissing her on the cheek, Brooklyn
lookin' down to hide her smile...

REVERBERATIONS as Matthew feels the blood pounding in his temples. He wipes the sweat from his forehead.

Coach Poole stands and pulls out a folded piece of paper from his breast pocket. He gives it to Matthew.

COACH POOLE (CONT'D)

Here. Read these lines, memorize
'em, and then deliver them to your
friends by the end of the day. I
need you to reek of pizzazz, okay?

Coach Poole pops his back, then places a hand on Matthew's shoulder. He leaves, fading into the shimmering heat.

MATTHEW

What?!

Matthew opens the piece of paper. He reads, he frowns, and then, after a moment... he tries the words on his lips.

EXT. MINTZ PLAZA - LATER

In the distance, Matthew sees Brooklyn, Virgo, Chris, and Reef sunbathing in side-by-side lounge chairs.

REEF

-- why don't they just kick him out
again? It's exhausting --

Matthew pockets his lines, then hurries over to them.

VIRGO

Hey, Mateo.

REEF

'Sup, guy?

Matthew leans his weight first on one foot, then the other.

MATTHEW

So. I just stopped and realized
that this... this general anxiety
and discontent and doom is...
actually all in my head?

Brooklyn and Chris smile at this, urging him on.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)

Yeah. I know. And in some ways, I need to change things so that this doesn't happen again.

(laughing too loudly too quickly)

I'd probably be less annoying to everybody that way! I guess I see now that I likely have a lot of life in store and it's probably gonna be filled with lots of good and lots of bad, and that's normal, and I should stop bothering people with it. And -- and if you also ever have a moment like this, I recommend you do as I have done and take time to stop and hold the universe in your hands, to watch the stars colliding in your palms. And so I've decided to stop being so sad and...

(his mouth does not move)

... be wildly happy and full of light and energy and love instead.

He finishes. The group smiles.

BROOKLYN

That's all we needed to hear.

CHRIS

We're happy for you, man.

VIRGO

I hope this freeing revelation continues for you forever!

REEF

Wanna get sushi with us?

Brooklyn takes Matthew's hand. He looks at her. She smiles and then he smiles, a semi-restored light in their eyes.

The gang walks together, joking and laughing and cloud gazing in unison. The breeze is light. All is well. Life is great.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF SEA BREEZE ACADEMY, AND THEN --

EXT. GRASSY FIELD - NIGHT

Matthew, wearing a bulky backpack, faces the faint coastal highway in the distance. Every now and then, a car passes by.

The night is silent, ominous.

He places a hand out, palm forward, as if expecting to touch an invisible barrier in the moonlight. He winces. Nothing.

He lets out a sigh of relief. He steps forward --

A hand on his shoulder.

He turns to see Brooklyn, in her nightgown, heartbroken.

She holds out her hand to him as if it's a command.

Matthew... takes it. Brooklyn leads him back to campus.

CUT TO BLACK.

Superimpose:

SEASON EIGHT, EPISODE SIX

"UNDERWOOD'S UNDERWEAR"

EXT. LUNCH TABLE - DAY

Another perfect day in Southern California.

Virgo, Chris, Reef, and Matthew sit at their familiar lunch table. Virgo takes a selfie, examines it.

VIRGO

Oooh, that's fire.

Brooklyn, looking fatigued, trudges over to the rounded table and droops into the nearest seat, brushing hands with Virgo.

BROOKLYN

Whew! I set my alarm for really early this morning so I could go for a run, but I guess it didn't go off, so I was late to pre-calc -- even with my hoverboard.

VIRGO

Oh no. Just the mere mention of math can be enough to make me cry.

REEF

I can hardly read clocks!

MATTHEW

Well... if it helps, a lot of math doesn't involve clocks.

Reef flexes in his sleeveless SBA hoodie.

REEF

Brooklyn, he's being a drama queen again. Actually, can I say "drama queen"? There're so many things you can't say anymore...

CHRIS

Wait, Matthew, what time is it?

Matthew looks at his bare arm.

MATTHEW

XII-LIV o'clock.

Reef stands up to fight, but Chris pulls him back down.

SFX: HELICOPTER PASSING

REEF

All right, enough already! Jeez!
(taking a breath)
Look, we all know that growing up is a trap and we agree never to do it. But I won't need math. Really.

BROOKLYN

Oh?

REEF

You know how much time I spend at the beach? I've, well, I've... always wanted to design women's swimsuits, then host a modeling show based off it. No math there.

MATTHEW

You... you want to create bikinis?

CHRIS

Heh. "Bikinis."

Matthew looks to Brooklyn and Virgo for support.

VIRGO

I think it's a great idea!

BROOKLYN

Yeah! And I bet Dean Fischer would even let you have it here at the school if you refer to it as an extracurricular. It'd be SBA's first fashion show!

REEF

And with students as models!

VIRGO

Oh my God, yes, I would love to be a model! Can you imagine what that'd do for my résumé? Talent agents! Hiding under benches, licking my feet when I sit --

MATTHEW

Stop that.

CHRIS

SBA just doesn't bring anything extra to the table. Not anymore. So what I say we do is to let Reef have his modeling show, get the school involved, have it televised. Then we sell the rights for an animated series, we'll build an app, get some merch, capitalize off the nostalgia in ten years...

VIRGO

We have to be fresh, new, and exciting!

MATTHEW

This isn't sexist?

BROOKLYN

It's more of a... celebration of stretchy clothing.

CHRIS

Or lack thereof.

MATTHEW

But... I thought --

BROOKLYN

You "thought" too much. I am so -- I am so done explaining myself to you. Just shut up, go to our fashion show, wait, and be quiet.

Reef leans back, his hands behind his head. He grins.

REEF

So it's settled then. You all in?

BROOKLYN

I am.

VIRGO

Hecks yeah!

MATTHEW

You're -- come on. You're not busy, Virgo, Brooklyn? With... work?

VIRGO

Oh. Umm, we were all laid off.

MATTHEW

What happened to the bookstore?!

BROOKLYN

The Internet happened.

REEF

Duh.

CHRIS

I'll talk to Tina about modeling.

BROOKLYN

Virgo, we have to get to class.

Brooklyn faces Matthew.

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)

Hey, can you talk to Liss? Maybe give her that speech of yours that cured you of your depression? Cool, thanks. See you, dudes!

REEF

See you in your bikini bottom!

Brooklyn stands to leave, and Matthew notices the rims of her nostrils are raw with blue, dry flecks.

INT. DUTTON DORM – GIRLS' DORM ROOM – LATER

Matthew knocks and then opens the door to Room 102.

The lights are off, the curtains closed, and Liss lies on the bottom bunk, curled into whorls of blankets with a damp rag on her forehead. She looks over at Matthew, GROANS.

MATTHEW

Hey. How are you?

LISS

Do you remember the classes you took last year? Two years ago?

MATTHEW

Oh. Uh, not off the top of my head.

LISS

So how do you know you had classes at all?

MATTHEW

I... remember certain teachers, specific days, some moments...

LISS

So particular instances stand out to you. And the rest of the time, you spent doing...?

MATTHEW

It all sort of runs together.

LISS

But ironically, you don't remember most of it.

He takes her hand.

MATTHEW

Hey. I'm your friend. Talk to me.

LISS

It's like... this continuous internal screaming! There's so much stuff, everywhere, all with eyes, as if they know I am going to die soon and are just watching, not in a sad or wise way, just kind of... eagerly. We used to be so close -- all of us! Before kids were taken away in the back of vans and high school girls had to model swimwear.

MATTHEW

You know about that?

LISS

Something in the Whazz, maybe...

Liss shuffles out of bed, crying softly.

LISS (CONT'D)

I think Brooklyn and Chris know the full extent of this conspiracy. Reef is so dumb, he doesn't know what's happening. But Brooklyn... it's like she's playing with fire.

An alarm SOUNDS. Liss and Matthew turn to Brooklyn's nightstand, where her clock beeps increasingly loud.

Liss goes over, clicks it off.

LISS (CONT'D)
 What we're doing here -- it's deliberate deception! It's all a big show!

The alarm SOUNDS AGAIN. Liss grabs it, opens a window, and then flings it outside.

SFX: A CAT YOWLING IN PAIN

Liss storms out. From the doorway as she leaves:

LISS (CONT'D)
 And you know what -- I am fed up with being someone's puppet; I am not showing everyone my bra and underwear! I don't know where they're going to say I transferred to, but I have been humiliated and complicit long enough.
 (somber)
 I just hope they see it too.

Matthew sighs, alone by Brooklyn's bed. He feels the sheets. He waits a little while longer.

EXT. GRASSY FIELD - LATER

Reef Underwood's Swimsuit Fashion Show Extravaganza is well underway and surrounded by steel security fencing.

BEDROOM POP blasts from the sound system. The sun is lower in the sky, flashing a luminous orange over the Pacific.

In front of the raised stage are over TWO DOZEN STUDENTS, with Chris, Reef, and Dean Fischer in the front row.

Onstage, Coach Poole -- in a tuxedo -- serves as the emcee, his megaphone at the ready.

The set is designed in reds and pinks, with the main feature being a lit runway down the middle and into the cheering crowd and camera crew.

There's a front-row seat next to Chris. Matthew takes it.

CHRIS
 Hey, man. Just in time.

MATTHEW

And Tina was cool, being up there?

CHRIS

Oh. Uhh, no, not really. Okay, not at all. She's out, said this was the final straw...

COACH POOLE

(into Susan the megaphone,
reading from a card)

Please welcome to the stage
aspiring actress Victoria "Virgo"
Torres, as hot as the desert sun!

Reef and Chris clap as Virgo struts down the runway in an Arabian Nights princess bikini, featuring a sheer blue bralette with gold coin detailing and ruffled sleeves.

Beneath it all, Virgo appears unhealthily thin, almost to the bone. Several guys CATCALL her through the applause, and Virgo bends over to blow them kisses, revealing the knobby ladder of her spine, the nothing between her ribs.

MATTHEW

Oh my God. She looks --

REEF

Great! She looks great, dude! Whew!

Reef places the event's program over his lap as he claps harder for Virgo. Matthew turns to face the dean.

MATTHEW

Dean Fischer?

DEAN FISCHER

What he said -- life is great!
We're all the buzz! You got
Hollywood's Highest talking about
us, VERTEX magazine -- hell, I just
hope they show their feet!

He runs a hand through his hair.

DEAN FISCHER (CONT'D)

Our assets are cooked, you know. I
am five years sober -- but this!

MATTHEW

What do you mean?

SFX: HELICOPTER PASSING, A PHONE CHIME

Dean Fischer takes out his phone to check a text. He frowns.

DEAN FISCHER

Ugh. Liss Williams. She tried stealing a utility truck, doesn't know how to drive... God, and during May sweeps, no less! Freak!
(to Matthew)

And stop asking so many questions! You're like the son I never wanted, and I already got one of those!

Coach Poole strokes Susan... then remembers the camera:

COACH POOLE

(into his megaphone, from the card)

Next up, well, she only does everything. Put your hands together for your academic overachiever, environmental activist, straw feminist, class president, Miss Fan Service herself... Brooklyn Rivers!

Brooklyn saunters toward the audience in a straps-and-stripes microbikini. Her hips sway like the palm trees and flowers.

She strides forward, the audience watching her every move, the pout of her lower lip.

Reef fingers his collar. Chris flips up his eyepatch.

REEF

Yo, bro...

CHRIS

Yeah, man... whoa...

Chris pats Matthew's shoulder.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

How you doin'?

MATTHEW

(blown away)

I'm... a little lightheaded.

Brooklyn hops off the stage and walks over to Matthew, her back straight and shoulders high. She leans in front of him, her legs around the seat, her hands firm on his shoulders as she lowers herself into his lap. Matthew flinches.

She then rubs her hands over her tanned skin, her head back, his eyes darting around in embarrassment.

Brooklyn clutches Matthew's face with both hands and then kisses him, deep and passionate, even and tender.

The crowd goes wild. She leans in to whisper:

BROOKLYN

Meet me at my place at eight.

Brooklyn tousles Matthew's hair. She then stands, smiling, and she's helped by Coach Poole back onto the stage. She exits stage left.

CHRIS

Bruh.

MATTHEW

Wow.

REEF

You...! You have Brooklyn Rivers giving you a lap dance in front of the entire school and all you can think to say is "Wow"?! God.

DEAN FISCHER

(glancing in the distance)
We're losing our light...

COACH POOLE

Yes. Yes. Hooray for Team Mattlyn.
(off script)
I wonder if I'll ever feel nostalgic when I look back on this crackpot school.

CHRIS

Wait, what's he -- ?

COACH POOLE

All those years we spent in the sun... our brains have melted! It's not "about the children" when the execs all sit on their hands while there are predators in power -- !

DEAN FISCHER

(to himself)
No! How is this happening?!

The men in suits arrive to remove Coach Poole from the stage.

COACH POOLE

The men in suits, they just want money!

(MORE)

COACH POOLE (CONT'D)

They want for SBA to cut corners
and put everything on the back
burner for projects that'll
generate more income as fast as
possible! These young women --
(to Matthew)
-- these kids deserve better!

Dean Fischer steps on to the stage and clasps his hands
together as Coach Poole is forcefully removed.

DEAN FISCHER

O-kay. Me -- wearing a tie -- you'd
think I'd know what I'm doing.
(beat, to the cameras)
Well, folks, let's cut to a
commercial!

INT. DUTTON DORM - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Matthew stands outside Brooklyn's dorm room. He knocks.

BROOKLYN (O.S.)

Come!

INT. DUTTON DORM - GIRLS' DORM ROOM - CONT'D

Matthew opens the door. The lights are out, save for the
corner lamps, which have thin red scarves thrown over them,
illuminating the bedroom in a scarlet hue.

He steps forward, and the door shuts behind him. He turns.

There, Brooklyn poses in the same outfit as before with
scoops of cleavage. She has a hand on her hip, the other
twirling her hair. She grins, a flame-blue glint in her eyes.

MATTHEW

You look --

BROOKLYN

C'mere.

Brooklyn puts a finger to his lips, then inside his mouth.
She pulls it away, then places a hand on his chest and slowly
walks him back until he falls onto the bed, sprawled out.

She reaches down and undoes his belt.

MATTHEW

What are you -- ?

She tugs down at his jeans, displaying his boxer briefs. She pulls on these.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
 (in desperation)
 Thr-- three feet on the floor --

Matthew grabs onto the front of his underwear, keeping it up. Brooklyn pouts, then straddles him on the bed. She runs a finger along the divot at his collarbone, caresses his neck, tugs at his mess of hair.

She kisses him hard: a long, deep, almost angry kiss, hitting her teeth against his own, her breath hot on his face...

It's hard for him to breathe.

Matthew closes his eyes, and he's struggling, and this isn't fun, not anymore -- and there, now he's crying.

That's when he realizes she's been crying too.

She lets go of his hair, and she's no longer forcing him into anything. He leans away.

Brooklyn curls up and lies over onto her side, hugging one of the pillows.

Matthew eases his way up. He wipes his mouth with his sleeve, looks around, and then gathers a blanket from the bed. He gently places it over Brooklyn.

She weeps some more, scraps of makeup clutching at the skin.

BROOKLYN
 You... you didn't like that.

MATTHEW
 I... Rook, I wasn't...

BROOKLYN
 I can't do this right now, I can't, I'm so tired, I thought I had it under control, but I... I am so scared of what is out there past this school -- I only know what it means to be a student here. If you're ready to leave, great, happy for you! But I'm not there. Don't ruin this for me.

She stares at the wall. Matthew slowly walks over to the lamps and removes the scarves, exposing the fluorescence. Off one, he sees smoke, so he unplugs it.

Brooklyn slips on some shorts and a t-shirt from the floor, then walks over next to Matthew.

They sit there together against the bed, her eyes a blue emptiness.

MATTHEW

I don't get this. None of this.

She eyes the pillows on the carpet, lowers her gaze.

BROOKLYN

I thought that's what you wanted --

MATTHEW

This isn't you, that's -- what --
what is your hurry to grow up -- ?

She gives a humorless laugh.

BROOKLYN

You don't know me. Everyone thinks
they do, but they don't. Liss,
Reef, Virgo, Fischer. They see
someone else entirely.

(beat)

Sometimes I feel like hate is all
I've got.

Matthew looks at Brooklyn's right hand, her nails digging deep into her leg. He locks his eyes on hers.

MATTHEW

I worry about you, about --

BROOKLYN

And it's all Liss ever does, and
it's not good for her! There are...
lots of reasons for living. Birds,
friends, soft orange sunsets.
Nobody knows what the truth is --
and that's okay! Like, maybe we, or
the universe, are a computer
simulation created by some higher
and more intelligent beings --
that's one theory. There are more
ways we could be living, and it
might lead to something positive,
we don't know, and I think it's
better that way. Don't burn
yourself out on this.

MATTHEW

I miss us, Rook.

BROOKLYN

Well... Here we are. I don't know
what else to tell you.

Brooklyn breathes in the filtered and recirculated air.

She yawns, and then she rests her head on Matthew's shoulder.
He yawns with her.

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)

Do you remember the day we met?

Matthew laughs.

MATTHEW

That fountain was refreshing.

BROOKLYN

I meant that night, under the
stars. That was nice. Me and you.

MATTHEW

Seems like a lifetime ago.

BROOKLYN

We were such kids.

MATTHEW

Are we not?

Brooklyn doesn't answer. They close their eyes together as
the air conditioning hums softly above them.

It's soothing. Comforting.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF SEA BREEZE ACADEMY AT NIGHT, AND THEN --

CUT TO BLACK.

SFX: HIGH-PITCHED REWINDING

Superimpose:

SEASON ONE, EPISODE TWO

"WELCOME TO SBA: PART TWO"

EXT. POOL - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

The nighttime sky is a dark blue, and the moon is full and
spirited. There is VHS degradation, film scratches, and dust.

BROOKLYN (14), alone in a red beaded party dress, on the verge of tears, faces a lit outdoor swimming pool. The crystal-blue water sparkles and twirls with the stars above.

Brooklyn takes off her flats and sits at the edge, dipping her feet in the pool. She listens to the CHIRPING of the crickets and the DISTANT PARTY MUSIC. She SIGHS.

A RUSTLING from the bushes. MATTHEW (14), wearing a suit a bit too big for him, tumbles out and rolls into the grass and then catches his balance and leaps to his feet.

He sees Brooklyn. Brooklyn sees him, gives him a small smile.

BROOKLYN

Sorry about before. That was dumb of me --

MATTHEW

Hey, no, you're totally fine, totally... fine. Seriously. You gotta do whatcha gotta do, right?

BROOKLYN

Something like that.

Matthew takes off his shoes and socks and then rolls up his pant legs. He dangles his feet in the water with her. There is no reflection of them in the pool.

MATTHEW

So... have you met your roommates?
(cringing)
Of course you have -- uh, what are they like? Are they nice?

BROOKLYN

Yeah, they are. Mikki and, uh...
Virgo? Well, Virgo's her nickname.

MATTHEW

Oh yeah, I know them, they're cool.
Coolio, they are.

Brooklyn pulls her feet out and turns to face Matthew.

BROOKLYN

I feel bad about your Captain Canary comic book.

MATTHEW

Don't, no, it's no problem at all --

BROOKLYN

But it got me thinking. If you had to be half a bird, would you rather it be your top half or bottom half?

Matthew laughs, and her serious face breaks out into a smile.

MATTHEW

Well, I... need more details. What kind of bird? Which half gets the wings? If I choose top, do I keep my human brain?

(considering)

With my luck, I'd pick top and get a flightless bird.

BROOKLYN

I think I'd choose the top 'cause I think it'd be funny to not be able to communicate in any language known to humans.

(beat)

No, I'd choose bottom, because I assume the bottom half would be subject to bird levels of modesty and I'd never have to wear pants.

MATTHEW

You do realize how strange it would look to have a woman's head and torso on some bird legs, right?

BROOKLYN

You saying I couldn't pull it off?

MATTHEW

Oh, well, no, that's not, uh --

BROOKLYN

Don't overthink it. Life is full of burning questions. What will be... what could have been... what would be better... a bird upper body, or a bird lower body?

MATTHEW

Neither? Both are equally awful.

BROOKLYN

Yes, it's a ridiculous scenario and both options are bad. The fun is in choosing which to live with.

Matthew grins.

MATTHEW

Fine. I pick, uh... left-side bird,
right-side human.

Brooklyn laughs again.

BROOKLYN

Do bottom-half bird so you get some
sick talons. Wearing no pants means
I could mess up a lot of cars.

MATTHEW

You can do that now -- pants aren't
stopping you.

She smiles. He smiles with her.

BROOKLYN

Whatever, birdbrain.

MATTHEW

Whatever, Rook.

BROOKLYN

Rook?

MATTHEW

Short for rookie! You still got
some ways to go before you've
mastered this campus like myself.

BROOKLYN

So you'll show me all the fun
secret spots, right?

MATTHEW

Oh definitely.

BROOKLYN

Heh. Coolio.

They smile together.

MIKKI, VIRGO, CHRIS, LISS, and REEF (13 and 14) -- all
wearing glow sticks -- walk over by the pool area, see
Brooklyn and Matthew, and then make their way over to them.

Mikki is bumbling here and there, with Chris spotting her,
and Virgo carries a plate of tacos over her head.

Reef drinks from a cup of soda. Liss wears her glasses.

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)

Hey, guys!

VIRGO
Brooklyn, Brooklyn! We thought we
lost you!

Brooklyn hugs Virgo, who then pulls Mikki in with them.

MIKKI
We roommates gotta look out for
each other.

Chris looks first to Reef, then Matthew.

CHRIS
We're all in this together.

REEF
Might as well make the most of it.

Liss takes an empty cup and fills it with pool water, then
raises the cup. The others follow suit.

LISS
To Brooklyn!

MATTHEW
To Rook!

BROOKLYN
To Sea Breeze Academy!

VIRGO
One for all, and all for one!

MIKKI
Hear, hear.

SFX: "AULD LANG SYNE" INSTRUMENTAL, SWEET AND HOPEFUL

The gang pours their cups of chlorine back into the pool.
They laugh, and they smile, and they are unmistakably glad to
be there, all of them, together.

Matthew tries to balance a cup on his head, and when the
water spills down his face, Liss tries too. Chris and
Brooklyn toss tortilla chips to try to knock the cups off.

Mikki, Reef, and Virgo lounge about with their slider cell
phones, cheering on and taking videos of their friends.

The previous few seconds are then rewound, and we see the
same scene over again.

The scene is rewound yet again and plays for a third time.

A BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF THE SPARKLING CAMPUS, AND THEN --

CUT TO BLACK.

Superimpose:

SEASON EIGHT, EPISODE SEVEN

"MERRY CHRISTMAS, MATTHEW"

SFX: POSITIVE AND ENERGETIC MODERN POP THEME, YULETIDE REMIX

INT. DUTTON DORM - LOUNGE - DAY (PRESENT)

Another perfect day in Southern California.

Virgo, Reef, and Chris -- still wearing that eyepatch -- take it easy in the girls' lounge. Virgo massages her cheeks, performs some face exercises. Matthew stands by the windows.

CHRIS (O.C.)

It's like we're his therapist and all his problems are about us.

SFX: CHRISTMAS TRACK WITH AN UPBEAT '60s POP UNDERSCORE, HELICOPTER PASSING

Matthew looks up.

MATTHEW

Is that... music playing?

REEF

Do you see music? Does looking up help you see the music?

VIRGO

Should we call Nurse Morgan?

Brooklyn enters the room in a red-and-green-striped scarf, reindeer antlers, and carrying a bell. She RINGS it, smiling.

BROOKLYN

Why does Santa have three gardens?

MATTHEW

I can't keep doing this every day.

BROOKLYN

So he can hoe hoe hoe!

She RINGS the bell again. Virgo, Chris, and Reef all grin.

CHRIS

But the holidays ended months ago!

BROOKLYN

Sure, during winter break. But we've never celebrated Christmas together as friends!

Virgo, Chris, and Reef shift uncomfortably in their seats.

VIRGO

But... Christmas is, uhh... a religious holiday.

BROOKLYN

No, no, I'm talking about American Christmas. The secular season! With tree trimming and lots of red and green baubles and Santa and his elves and consumerism!

Virgo, Chris, and Reef smile once more. Brooklyn sits.

VIRGO

I adore Christmas wearables -- they're, like, a permanent fixture in my closet.

Matthew was done ten pages ago.

MATTHEW

You're wanting Christmas... in May. Are you really that out of ideas?

BROOKLYN

I already got it approved by Dean Fischer! My uncle in Oklahoma works at one of those year-round holiday stores, and so he sent a bunch of decorations for us to use!

CHRIS

Ah, yes, that one convenient uncle in every family!

VIRGO

It'd be fun to hang ornaments --

MATTHEW

Mmm, but no mistletoe, right?

The others impatiently wait for him to finish.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
'Cause it promotes sexual assault?

VIRGO
Not really.

REEF
Grinch.

MATTHEW
But --

VIRGO
We could dress in ugly sweaters, go sledding, have an old man hired to be Santa just to keep up the front, sing some carols --

MATTHEW
Sledding on sand dunes -- just not with Liss, right? Who needs Liss!

REEF
Dude, s'all good.

VIRGO
Liss is over there! In the corner!

They point to "Liss" sitting by herself. "Liss" slouches.

MATTHEW
Guys. I know that isn't Liss.

"Liss" is actually twelve Rottweiler puppies in a trench coat and hat. Brooklyn rings the bell again, and they scamper off merrily. Virgo laughs.

VIRGO
Oh my goshness! So random!

MATTHEW
Virgo, no, have an actual thought!

VIRGO
Like, sure, aliens are probably out there, but I know if I think too hard about it, my brain will combust, so I purposefully do not listen to Chris when Chris goes on about all the aliens he's seen!

REEF
(about Matthew)
Look at this dude.
(MORE)

REEF (CONT'D)

I almost feel bad for him -- losing his mind at such a young age.

MATTHEW

Don't underestimate me.

REEF

Oooh, something revolutionary and controversial. God, you're such a pushover --

BROOKLYN

Liss transferred to Aruba.

CHRIS

Tina left too.

VIRGO

Shame. I liked her!

MATTHEW

You don't even know her last name!

BROOKLYN

It's Christmas, y'all! Be of good cheer, be jolly! It's a wonderful life is great!

VIRGO

Yes! Hot chocolate time!

SFX: HELICOPTER PASSING

Chris turns to face Reef.

REEF

Well, I guess we're off to buy -- I mean, make -- some Christmas gifts!

Brooklyn rings the bell. Reef covers his ears and groans.

Virgo and Reef stand, stretch, and then exit through the main doors. Brooklyn turns to leave, but Matthew grabs her hand.

MATTHEW

"Liss"? Was twelve puppies.

She shakes him off.

BROOKLYN

Yeah, and the sky is an artificial blue. What's your point?

MATTHEW

I'm not comfortable with this! With you, with me, with our friends, and then Mikki, who's apparently been living under the school this entire time?! It's like we're collectively losing our minds here! Or maybe it's just me!

Chris looks away, shielding his one eye from the drama.

Brooklyn sighs, then places her fingers on Matthew's shoulders, massaging him.

He pushes her away. They rise --

BROOKLYN

Hey. Lighten up. All right?

MATTHEW

No, not all right!

BROOKLYN

Drink some eggnog and fa-la-la-la-la. Okay? You said you'd trust me.

MATTHEW

You want me to act like nothing happened, but I can't do that!

BROOKLYN

Oh grow up.

CHRIS

Brooklyn, he's --

BROOKLYN

How about Mexico, huh? Let's go to flip-floppin' Mexico! We'll go there, a beach house and coconuts, freedom, me and you --

MATTHEW

Stop trying to control me!

BROOKLYN

You are going to get yourself killed!

They stop. No one moves.

Brooklyn looks around, then settles again on Matthew. She forces a smile, admits nothing.

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)
 Are you familiar with the term
 "gaslighting"?

MATTHEW
 Of course.

BROOKLYN
 No you're not. Your job, for me, is
 to be the adorkable nice guy doing
 what he's told. Got it, birdbrain?

Brooklyn clasps a hand on his shoulder and gives it an
 approving shake before exiting.

Matthew looks exasperatedly to Chris, who merely shrugs.

CHRIS
 Bruh... sit down for a sec.

Matthew hesitates, then sits in one of the chairs.

Chris pulls another up close to him and sits across from
 Matthew.

CHRIS (CONT'D)
 Look, man. I'm sorry I haven't been
 there for you as much as before.
 We've been so busy, and I've got
 this thing later with Siddiq --

MATTHEW
 "Killed"! "Killed," she says!

Matthew stands, paces.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
 This is crazy, you all are crazy
 and formulaic and, no offense,
 weird, with your platitudes and
 your euphemisms -- and I'm leaving!

CHRIS
 Leaving?! Where?!

MATTHEW
 The school, if that's what this is!

CHRIS
 We can go to the beach --

MATTHEW
 I'm not wanted here, Brooklyn can't
 make up her damn mind --

CHRIS
It's not her fault.

MATTHEW
She doesn't get it! None of you do!

CHRIS
Yes, we do! We've seen this...
obsession, before! We're not those
kids at the poolside, you know. And
those who panic get taken away --

MATTHEW
My God, enough with the ominous
remarks already!

Chris sighs, stands with Matthew.

CHRIS
We are here to fulfill a purpose,
whether it's a diversity quota or
to be the butt of a joke or to
simply be a love interest to
somebody. Of course, they don't
want me to be Black. Just look it,
partially --

MATTHEW
Who's "they"?!

Chris waves a hand in the general direction of everywhere.

Matthew looks around the empty room and says nothing.

CHRIS
If you can't get with the program,
you're gone. I mean, you'd know. We
just saw you get on that bus one
day, and then... "Alaska."

MATTHEW
Conference Room One-oh-one...
That's where Dean Fischer met with
the Board of Directors. They'll
have answers -- I'll get answers.

CHRIS
Dude, no, there's no villain, no
mastermind. A societal ill, but...

MATTHEW
If there's evil being realized,
it's by someone for some reason!

CHRIS
Man, I am your best friend --

MATTHEW
Are you?!

CHRIS
-- and you should let this go.

Chris puts his hands in his pockets.

MATTHEW
You're insane.

CHRIS
As sane as you.

MATTHEW
You're really not coming with me?

CHRIS
I'm... I'm sorry, man.

Matthew steps away. He looks around the girls' lounge and settles for the door to the underground tunnels.

He walks to it. He pushes on the handle and steps inside.

INT. ADMIN BUILDING - LATER

Matthew walks the admin building. The halls are dark, the only light coming from behind the blinds of the windows.

He opens one and peers across this campus on the bluff. Grounds workers haul giant candy canes, wooden reindeer, nutcrackers, poinsettias, and a partridge in a palm tree.

Matthew spots a surveillance camera where he hadn't before. He rips it off the wall -- spots another, destroys that one.

Matthew is about to return to the tunnels when he sees a light coming from one of the doors, slightly ajar.

CONFERENCE ROOM 101. He opens it.

INT. ADMIN BUILDING - CONFERENCE ROOM 101 - CONT'D

The room is dimly lit. A single box set, it has checkered flooring and walls made entirely of blue velvet curtains.

TWO DOZEN STUDENTS, their legs chained to the floor, chat as they shuffle in the dark.

SULTRY JAZZ plays from the ceiling.

Mikki -- back to normal, in an orange Hawaiian shirt -- sits in an easy chair. She has an arm around Tina, who wears eyeliner and questionably placed piercings.

In the corner, Coach Poole, covered in petroleum jelly, slithers around the room wearing pipe cleaners as tendrils and an SBA backpack as a shell. He is silent.

MIKKI

Well, well, well. If it isn't
Matthew Flynn, our shining star!

Tina cheers with a bottle of Whazz, then drinks from it. She then passes it off to Mikki, who does the same.

TINA

Just don't shut the door, 'cause it
locks automatically from the
outside.

MATTHEW

What is this place?

MIKKI

It's over, ya goober. This is
our... our end-of-the-world party.
(to the camera)

And remember, kids: owing to
mechanical censorship, any ball
must instead be referred to as an
orb to avoid accidental vulgarity
in plural forms.

TINA

I love sucking on a sweaty pair of
orbs.

MIKKI

Now you're getting it.

Mikki takes out a small baggie of cacao snuff and scoops out a fresh, powdery mound onto her forearm.

Tina hands her a notecard, and when Mikki's done mincing it up and separating out two brown lines, both girls take a turn putting it under their nostrils and breathing in.

MATTHEW

Mikki, you're... talking normally.

Mikki wipes her nose with the back of her hand.

MIKKI

Yeah, 'cause I got out of those
musty tunnels and around people
again. Can you imagine?

(remembering)

That's right -- you got Alaska.

TINA

Where you put people to forget
about them.

MIKKI

(about Matthew, to Tina)

He was always weird, but then he
started yelling about circumcision
one day and how "everything's a
metaphor for puberty and
adulthood"! Total mental breakdown.

TINA

Coach Poole is out, Liss is out.

(to Matthew)

Like you. Maybe even 'cause of you.

MIKKI

They already have a girl lined up
to replace Brooklyn. She's young,
cute. I've seen her G-string.

MATTHEW

Please, just be straight with me --

MIKKI

Awww, look at him! He's like a dog,
plucked from his meadow, thrown
into a dark room, shown a mirror
for the first time --

MATTHEW

Stop that! Why are you all here?!
Who are these extra people? My
friends -- instead of actually
looking at the situation and giving
plausible advice, they give
these... unnatural pep talks! What
happened to you, why are the
yearbooks in the bookstore blank,
why do we make fun of each other
for laughs and all this pear
pressure and sexual innuendos -- ?!

TINA

Did you say, "pear pressure"?

MIKKI
Why would he say, "pear pressure"?

TINA
That's why I'm asking!

MATTHEW
Okay, yeah, I said that! I was just hoping you'd skip over it -- !

MIKKI
"Pear pressure"! Pear pressure! Eat some pears, man!

SFX: DISEMBODIED LAUGH-TRACK CHEERS

Mikki wipes a tear from her eye, leans forward.

MIKKI (CONT'D)
You have no memories, so your mind fills in the gaps. Whatever it takes to soldier through.

Tina laughs. Mikki gestures toward the cosmos --

MIKKI (CONT'D)
We are conduits, and next time, you might return as someone other than yourself. Take comfort in that.

Tina continues laughing at Matthew for no good reason. She keeps laughing and laughing and laughing at him.

Mikki finally rolls her eyes and snaps her fingers --

She stops the flow of time itself.

The jazz CUTS OUT. Everyone freezes but Mikki and Matthew.

Matthew takes a step back.

MATTHEW
What... Mikki, what is this...?! How...?!

MIKKI (CONT'D)
The individual is the refined reflection of themselves within the collective.

Mikki rises and points a finger into Matthew's chest.

MIKKI (CONT'D)
This all disappears when the illusion is shattered. So I'm not going to give you those answers here where there are cameras.

MATTHEW
More cameras? Where?

MIKKI
Um, hello? Phones?

Mikki takes a step back.

MIKKI (CONT'D)
Let me introduce myself.
(stressing each word with
increased inflection)
Hi, my name is Mikki Mizushima. If
there's anything you want to tell
me, not ask, I'll be around for a
little while longer.

With a flourish of her hand, she bows.

But Matthew is breathing heavy --

MATTHEW
This isn't -- helping! I -- I look
back at the simplicity and, God,
I... I wish we could just rewind
and... and pause for a while!

Mikki smiles. She touches her nose.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
What? "Rewind and pause"?!

MIKKI
Rewind and pause. Hoverboard blues.

MATTHEW
Rewind and pause... re --
(getting it)
Oh my God. Oh my God.

I/E. ADMIN BUILDING – DEAN'S OFFICE – EVENING (FLASHBACK)

The sunset sky, the high-definition grass, a sweeping view of
the ocean, crystal waves lapping against the shore...

MIKKI (V.O.)
The embedded marketing. Token
friends. Quirky girl glow-up. Rich
kid stereotype reinforced,
reinforced. Patronizing exclusivity
instead of genuine inclusivity. The
sexualizing of young girls. How the
culture shapes the audience.

NEGATIVE IMAGE:

Dean Fischer's office, cue Postal Worker; there she is. Matthew watching the scene with a bemused expression. Sobbing. The setting sun hot on the back of his neck.

Every set of eyes settling on Matthew and Brooklyn.

MIKKI (V.O.)

To pause and rewind and play again!
If it were only that simple: an unbelievable campus with its unbelievable dean and its usually well-mannered students. A low-burning anger caught in a fog of regret. All in a day at SBA. All in a day for Sea Breeze Academy.

And then...

BLIND, PALE, CRICKET-LIKE MONSTERS AT THE EDGE OF REALITY -- TWITCHING, THEIR MANDIBLES GNASHING, CRAWLING ALL OVER EACH OTHER, SPREADING THEIR SCORCH MARKS AND INFESTATION BENEATH BLACK, HOWLING STARS...

MIKKI (V.O.)

The outside air has pointed teeth.

INT. ADMIN BUILDING - CONFERENCE ROOM 101 - PRESENT

Time resumes, and Matthew is sweating, about to vomit, and Tina has a cardboard box over her head, and Mikki stands beside Matthew, holding his hand --

MIKKI

We've all known each other as long as we can remember. Soon you'll have to ask how much that's worth.

Mikki smiles, but her eyes are desperate. Pleading.

MIKKI (CONT'D)

Tell Brooklyn exactly how you feel. Man, what a B-star-star-C-H. You'll find her at the chapel.

Tina stands. She presents Matthew with a case of matches.

He takes it, and Mikki winks.

They say nothing more, and so Matthew backs away from the room. He shuts the door on his way out, falls against it.

MIKKI (V.O.)
Don't. Stop. Asking. Questions.

EXT. CAMPUS CHAPEL – LATER

Brooklyn sits on a bench behind the campus chapel, situated on one of the highest bluffs, overlooking all of the school.

She rests her elbows on her knees. She bows her head.

Brooklyn looks behind her, notices Matthew. She then stares forward, out at the manicured campus and the Pacific below.

She pats the space beside her. Matthew goes over and sits.

The wind rustles through the trees around them.

In the distance, grounds workers stomp around with their construction hats and jackhammers, their orange cones and paint, as they prepare sets and scenery.

A lone seagull soars overhead and into the horizon. Brooklyn pulls her knees to her chest.

BROOKLYN
I miss the chapel bells.

MATTHEW
I... I'm glad we got to hear the final bongs last year.

BROOKLYN
That's some risky onomatopoeia there, bud.

MATTHEW
I spoke with Mikki.

He waits for a reaction. Brooklyn sighs.

BROOKLYN
I have so many memories here from the past few years.
(pointing)
The Homecoming bonfire where they'd have, like, a dozen firefighters on standby. Or the fall fair our sophomore year. You won me that tiara. I taught you how to skip stones.

Matthew laughs with her. She smiles.

MATTHEW

Or when we spent a whole day trying to get rid of Virgo's hiccups.

BROOKLYN

Or! My birthday last year, when you were trying to convince our friends you didn't have a crush on me, so you were super mean and pretended to forget about me and... stuff.

Brooklyn shakes her head.

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)

I don't know why I brought that up.

MATTHEW

I was dumb. I always liked you.
(serious)
Rook, I never stopped loving you.

BROOKLYN

Not sure why. I'm a total mess, and everything's wrong.

MATTHEW

Don't act like that --

BROOKLYN

I'm not acting.

She turns her head to look at Mintz Plaza. The gardeners are hard at work in the sun.

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)

Look at them, making SBA pristine and picturesque. The grass will keep growing, and they'll just keep cutting it. Like, sure, we had our hijinks and fun, but we also used to be about beach clean-up days, studying underneath a palm tree...

(mocking)

"Good aesthetics." "Branding."

(serious)

There must be more to this than this.

MATTHEW

When did we change, Rook? Me, somewhat, but you...

BROOKLYN

I think we need to break up.

Brooklyn looks over...

... and they both laugh, sharing a joke. But then she stops. It's over, and Matthew can sense this in her dark blue eyes.

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)

I changed more than you did -- I agree. But I've seen you grow into someone who is stronger, wiser, and more sure of himself than he was at fourteen. I am so proud of you.

She's crying. It's soft and hardly noticeable, but Matthew sees this, and he knows.

MATTHEW

I notice the way you'll...
sometimes look at Virgo...

Her lower lip trembles. She begins to hyperventilate.

BROOKLYN

(voice breaking)

I'm gay. I like girls, not guys,
and I am so, so sorry.

She's crying harder, and Matthew's crying too.

He puts his arm around her. She leans into him.

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)

And it's so hard, being a gay girl at a place like this. Because they'll fetishize you. And they won't believe you. And they think it's wrong or gross or they don't understand -- and so no matter how accepting Sea Breeze Academy might try to be, I can never be openly gay when I'm at the center of attention.

MATTHEW

Chris said we're all playing different, specific parts.

BROOKLYN

We're throwaway people.

Matthew considers what she's saying. And it hurts. But this time, he understands perfectly.

Brooklyn sniffs. She wipes her nose and eyes and then looks out across this sprawling campus, flooded with sunlight.

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)

I hate Sea Breeze Academy. It's not fun, it's not honest, it's not something good... I don't know why I keep going at it alone. I feel like I need a change, like there is so much more I should be doing at this point, and then I get all frustrated thinking about it. I'm attractive enough, smart, healthy and young, but I'm too much of a coward to quit. I'm worried that if I don't live my life the way everyone tells me to, that would also just be a lie to distract myself from my inherent lack of interest -- with the added risk of accidentally falling for the lie.

(sighs)

So I go for another semester.
Here's to ninety more.

Matthew looks at her fully -- perhaps for the first time.

He realizes what he must do.

MATTHEW

(acting, a tinge of truth)

Brooklyn, you are a galaxy of your own. Your eyes are full of life, and when I miss you, I cling to them. You have this smile that I swear pulls me in deeper every time you laugh, and your soul is made of the most wistful and exciting parts of this universe we could ever hope to discover.

BROOKLYN

Matthew --

MATTHEW

(knowingly)

I'm glad we got to do this thing together.

Here's to Matthew and Brooklyn, two American kids doing whatever it takes. He kisses her forehead. She holds him to her heart.

They share this final moment.

Matthew stands, and he gently places his hand on her back so Brooklyn knows not to follow.

MATTHEW (CONT'D)
Merry Christmas, Brooklyn.

She smiles faintly.

BROOKLYN
Merry Christmas, Matthew.

He exits, and she sits there, eyes stinging with tears.

EXT. SEA BREEZE ACADEMY – MOMENTS LATER

Matthew goes down the hills and around the grounds workers, yanking down surveillance cameras. He doesn't stop to think about the blinding sun or the beads of sweat on his brow.

Just pure concentration.

INT. DUTTON DORM – HALLWAY – MOMENTS LATER

Matthew is about to step in Room 102 when he hears a WHIMPER.

He looks behind him to see Virgo crawling out of the bathroom and clutching her stomach as she holds onto the door for support. She looks out of breath. He kneels beside her.

MATTHEW
Virgo? Hey, what's wrong?

VIRGO
(labored)
Nothing's...

He watches her. Finally:

VIRGO (CONT'D)
A year ago... I was eating a burger... and you all made a joke about me eating the burger.

MATTHEW
(angry with himself)
You're right. I did do that. And that was wrong. I'm... so sorry.

VIRGO
Nobody wants... a fat roommate.

She stumbles forward. He helps her up.

MATTHEW
I'm going to fix this.

She nods slowly, then grimaces from the pain.

VIRGO

So you know... about Sea Breeze Academy. I didn't want it to be true, didn't want to... ruin what little time we have.

Virgo holds her gaze on him for some time before leaving. He stays a moment after her.

Then he takes out the matches.

INT. DUTTON DORM – GIRLS' DORM ROOM – MOMENTS LATER

Matthew rummages through the drawers of Room 102. He tosses aside campus brochures, photo booth pictures, and scripts all onto the floor, and then he gathers these items into a pile.

He lights a match, and he drops it.

A glowing red spot emerges.

A wisp of smoke rises.

The razor-tipped flames climb high, and they engulf the room, dancing around these pieces of their past, Matthew sitting in the middle of it all -- difficult to tell what he's thinking.

MONTAGE – VARIOUS FLASHBACKS

A) EXT. LUNCH TABLE – DAY – A water balloon fight: Brooklyn, Matthew, and Chris on one team; Virgo, Reef, and Mikki on another; and Liss on her own with a MECH-STYLE ROBOT.

B) EXT. MINTZ PLAZA – DAY – A science fair with the whole gang, judged by Dean Fischer and Coach Poole.

C) INT. DUTTON DORM – LOUNGE – NIGHT – A school dance: Brooklyn coupled up with Matthew, Virgo with Liss, Tina with Chris, and Reef paired with a pineapple.

D) INT. BOOKSTORE – LOUNGE – NIGHT – A haunted house, with Brooklyn, Matthew, Virgo, Chris, Liss, and Reef, in costumes, all running from Nurse Morgan.

E) EXT. GRASSY FIELD – DAY – Brooklyn and Matthew, flying kites on a cloudless afternoon, enjoying life, having fun.

F) EXT. BEACH – DAY – The roaring sun, the turquoise sea, and a conga line: Brooklyn, Matthew, Virgo, Chris, Liss, Reef, Mikki, and even the mech-style robot from before.

I/E. DUTTON DORM – PRESENT

The men in suits first try the handle to Room 102, then start kicking at the door itself. By the time it gives, the fire has already spread to other rooms and is just starting to leap across buildings and scorch the lawn between.

EXT. DUTTON DORM – MOMENTS LATER

The men drag Matthew out by the arms and throw him onto the grass. He's coughing out of instinct. A work of hellish art.

Dean Fischer runs over to Dutton Dorm. His mouth hangs open at first, but then he's yelling INAUDIBLY, and his hair is more noticeably gray, and he is beyond furious.

EXT. SEA BREEZE ACADEMY – SAME TIME

Firetrucks arrive, their sirens BLARING in the distance.

Nurse Morgan is trampling about with a jar of pickle juice.

STUDENTS stampede each other and wail and film the chaos with their phones and abandon their SBA backpacks to run faster.

Chef Vespucci lies slumped against a wall, his body unmoving, a tomato in each hand, his eyes staring blankly.

EXT. DUTTON DORM – CONT'D

Dean Fischer steps toward Matthew. He looks disappointed but not surprised.

DEAN FISCHER

Dammit, kid. Why this? Why now?

MATTHEW

(coughing)

You... if you want to burn with the school, be my guest.

DEAN FISCHER

You kids think you know everything. I was the Matthew of my class, way back when. Had my own Brooklyn. And now would you look at me... all these wrinkles...

There's an EXPLOSION from behind. They look. Warm air blasts against their faces, then ash, then gray sky. Dean Fischer's tie is flapping in the dry and angry wind.

DEAN FISCHER (CONT'D)

If we find purpose in that which is purposeless, why challenge it?! Why should you determine what has value?! We all have a part to play here -- you know that!

MATTHEW

And what about you, Dean Fischer?! What about Mikki and Liss and Brooklyn? What's your role?

The dean kicks Matthew hard in the side. Matthew sputters, coughing up spit and blue blood. The dean's jaw tenses.

DEAN FISCHER

I'm the authority figure.

The men in suits remove Matthew from the ground and carry him off. He twists his neck to catch another glimpse of the dean, but Dean Fischer's too busy with the reds and yellows and riots to pay Matthew any attention.

Matthew hits his head on the bumper to a utility van.

The men open the back doors and haul him in. The smoke in the air is thick and starting to p i x e l a t e.

They shut the doors and lock it.

INT. UTILITY VAN - CONT'D

Matthew bangs his fists against the inside walls of the van as it lurches away from campus. Each bump in the road is bigger than the last, sending Matthew rocking back and forth.

And then Matthew falls suddenly onto his side as the van topples over and rolls to the sound of TEARING METAL.

The back doors in front of him burst open from the impact. Orange light spills inside.

SFX: CAR HORN BLARING, INCREASINGLY MUFFLED

Matthew crawls forward, out of the wreckage...

EXT. BEACH - EVENING

There are scrapes on Matthew's arms, a fresh rupture in the forehead, blue blood everywhere and dripping onto the sunlit sand. His legs are broken, his skin badly burned, his every breath petrifying, torturous.

Balloons and "BEACH PARTY" banners wash up on the shore.

SFX: DISEMBODIED, OVERLAPPING LAUGHTER

The sky is a bitter orange over the horizon. The sun ripples over the water as it sinks.

SOFT-SPOKEN MAN (V.O.)

There should be a release-into-the-wild option for these fictional characters. They didn't ask to be made.

HOARSE MAN (V.O.)

They're pixels that look pretty -- who cares?

WOMAN (V.O.)

Perhaps. But this little creature... He is his own creation.

A helicopter flies over Matthew toward the sea. The red waves roll higher, spraying his cheeks with saltwater like tears.

SFX: LAUGH TRACK GETS LOUDER; CHEERS AND APPLAUSE

Here is Matthew, dying, lost in beautiful thoughts in the warm light of the setting sun. His face is calm. Peaceful.

MATTHEW LAUGHS AT THE ABSURDITY OF IT ALL, AND THEN --

FADE TO WHITE.

SFX: STEADY TONE

EXT. CALIFORNIA COASTLINE - GOLDEN HOUR

Sea Breeze Academy is burning to the ground.

Meanwhile, in a hot and merciless sky, the same twin-engine private helicopter flies away from the chaos below.

INT. HELICOPTER - CONT'D

Inside are Brooklyn, Virgo, Chris, Reef, and Siddiq.

Virgo and Reef watch the turmoil on their side, while Chris and Siddiq silently hold hands.

Brooklyn sits in the middle, her elbow crammed against an armrest. She tries to relax in sun's warmth but can't.

EXT. PACIFIC OCEAN – CONT'D

Safe off the coast is a full-sized, multi-deck, white yacht with a hot tub, helipad, and an American flag on the rear.

EXT. NIELSEN YACHT – MOMENTS LATER

The helicopter lands on the NIELSEN, lavish and large.

Virgo, Reef, Chris, Siddiq, and Brooklyn exit the chopper and sit in the lounge chairs by the hot tub on the sundeck, where a stereo plays ROYALTY-FREE HOUSE MUSIC.

Virgo strips until she's in her tan lace bra and underwear. She moves into the hot tub with Reef, who's shirtless in his board shorts and has a patchwork of scars on his back.

Brooklyn sees that the makeup covering her hibiscus flower arm tattoo rubbed off at some point in all the commotion.

She breathes in... breathes out.

She takes off her pants.

Chris joins Brooklyn, Virgo, and Reef in the hot tub, while Siddiq leaves below deck.

CHRIS

So there's this event going on
right now to protest the wildfires.

Brooklyn grits her teeth and blinks back tears, her hair glowing red in the light of the setting sun.

VIRGO

I miss Matthew. I miss Liss. We
never did find out if "Liss" was
short for "Melissa" or "Felicity."

BROOKLYN

Matthew was... a good guy. He put
others before himself.

REEF

Yeah, if it was a firing squad.

Brooklyn, disgusted, splashes Reef in the face. He grins as he pushes his hair back.

REEF (CONT'D)

Dude, Matthew was a total snake!
And he was obsessed with the
attention his complaining got him.

VIRGO

Salt is for food, not attitudes.

CHRIS

Man, it's... For Matthew, it was too late to unlearn it. It's --

VIRGO

You know what? I'm just gonna say it: food is good.

BROOKLYN

Food never hurt my feelings.

REEF

Except now it's like, "Oh, you like food, don't you? Well, guess what? Food is canceled!"

VIRGO

Okay, but for realzies, though, SBA has gotten pretty strict about us talking about our feelings, so... maybe we should stop?

REEF

All smiles all the time.

CHRIS

But there's no consistency. They can choose to strike you down or spare you depending on their mood.

BROOKLYN

But it goes beyond that! For example: there was this conversation happening at Mintz Plaza the other day about veganism and how people and corporations can or should be more eco-friendly. I didn't see anything harmful, didn't hear any insults. But the men in suits came anyway!

CHRIS

Some massive propaganda operation.

VIRGO

I don't know. SBA -- it's for children. It's not appropriate.

BROOKLYN

They're dumbing us down is what they're doing.

VIRGO

If I wanted to talk about heavy adult stuff, there are other places for that. Like, I care and feel sad to see people like Liss and Matthew hurting, but I'm just here to chill, and that should be okay!

BROOKLYN

But the men in suits don't care about us --

VIRGO

Oh, give it a rest!

BROOKLYN

Excuse me?!

Brooklyn and Virgo stand.

VIRGO

Any time it was you who messed up, oh, no biggie, they just turn a blind eye. None of us were safe but you, and we put in the same work you did!

BROOKLYN

You don't know what they did to me, what they threatened -- !

VIRGO

I saw you talking to Mikki, getting in her head -- !

BROOKLYN

I was fourteen, I was a child -- !

VIRGO

You just had to cause some kind of drama -- just had to be at the center of attention! You would let the entire world burn if it meant getting what you want -- and you did!

Reef and Chris stare at the girls in shock.

VIRGO (CONT'D)

I -- can't do this anymore. Where are the showers?

REEF

Yeah, follow me.

Reef and Virgo exit the hot tub, with Reef giving Chris a suggestive wink as he walks with Virgo inside the yacht.

Chris looks to Brooklyn, then scratches at his new stubble as he too gets out. Brooklyn picks up a towel from one of the chairs and starts drying her hair. A clump falls out.

Siddiq returns, and he and Chris chat to the side.

Brooklyn leans against the railing, looking out over the water and the heavy black night. The coast is growing fainter by the minute, but she can still see the show-stopping blaze.

The stars are out and quivering, almost terrifyingly dark over the turbulent waves.

She rubs at her red-rimmed eyes and sees...

EXT. GRASSY FIELD – NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Brooklyn and Matthew, lying in the grass beneath a dazzling canopy of stars. He points to various constellations. She laughs into his chest.

Their fingers intertwine.

EXT. NIELSEN YACHT – PRESENT

Chris joins Brooklyn at the side of the Nielsen.

CHRIS

Hey. How are you holding up?

BROOKLYN

I've been awake for four days now.

(beat)

I followed the rules, I did everything right. But I feel so...

CHRIS

Empty?

Chris takes off his eyepatch. He turns it over in his hands.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

He's been gone before. Matthew.

BROOKLYN

I was so mad at everyone, with life. I thought I was venting...

The wind picks up. She grips the railing.

BROOKLYN (CONT'D)

No. I didn't. I knew what I was doing, and Mikki, she went right along with it. And they took her away, same with Matthew.

CHRIS

Where in a cycle does culpability belong?

Brooklyn, crying, looks to the stars, distant and dying.

BROOKLYN

(horror)

They're watching me.

She takes in the dark of the ocean and the night's black nothingness... just as scarlet embers drift across, carried by the sea breeze.

Slowly, her tears give way to a smile.

BROOKLYN CLOSES HER EYES AND BREATHES.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END