

ANIMALS

Pilot

by

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FADE IN:

RURAL VERMONT - BIRDS-EYE VIEW

Gray paved roads lacerate frozen landscape. Bisecting snow, mud, frozen creeks, groves of evergreen...

EXT. EHRENSTEIN HOME - DAY

A narrow asphalt drive winds through forest.

FRANK (V.O.)
They're not the same...

A middle-class home on the drive. The voice inside --

INT. FRANK'S BEDROOM - SAME

-- belongs to FRANK EHRENSTEIN JR. (15), your gawky best friend who surprised you when he got voted *Most Caring* and *Secret Crush* in the yearbook.

FRANK
...One's a mouse, one's a vole.

Frank's best friend, DOUG DEY (15), dark peach-fuzz on his lip, sips a Coke through a piece of licorice.

DOUG
But they look exactly the same.

FRANK
That's the point. Half the class gets mice, half gets voles.

DOUG
But what's it gotta do with asking her to prom?

FRANK
Because we're supposed to compare what we find with our lab partners.

DOUG
And you got partnered with Wendy.

FRANK
Exactly.

DOUG
Golden opportunity. So you ask -- and she says...?

FRANK

Well wait, that's what I'm saying --
 She's like, "I think I got the
 vole." I look and she's already
 dissected hers, and I go --
 literally have the scalpel on its
 belly and -- the fucking smell? You
 would've barfed, the smell alone,
 but so -- and then my vision gets
 all glassy and all I see's its
 brown hair and little teeth --

DOUG

The vole or Wendy?

FRANK

-- and I grab the desk, I'm like
 sweating everywhere --

DOUG

Hold up, did you even ask?

FRANK

-- and Wendy's got little bloody
 organs piled on her tray, an' I
 guess she sees I'm about to pass
 out -- like unconscious -- so she
 looks up at the board -- Mr. Milo's
 setting up the projector -- and so
 she just. *Switches*. Our trays.

Frank waits for Doug's reaction, as if that story answered
 all of Doug's questions.

DOUG

That's it?!

Frank rests his hand over his lip, half-covering a scar from
 a cleft palate operation. A subconscious habit.

FRANK

She dissected my whole mouse for
 me. It was pretty cool of her to --

DOUG

Ohmygod what's wrong with you?

GABE (O.C.)

Can I go play with the new kid?

GABE EHRENSTEIN (8) stands in Frank's door. He has an
 innocent look, but picks up on more than people think.

FRANK
What? No.

GABE
He's my age.

Frank tries to shut the door; Gabe doesn't budge.

FRANK
Get out, Gabe.

GABE
I saw him at Mr. Jenkins' house.
Dad would say I can play with him.

FRANK
Mr. Jenkins doesn't have kids.

GABE
Yuh-huh, in a mask.

DOUG
What?

GABE
He's got on a mask like Halloween
is how I know he wants to play.

The sound of a car -- through the window, Frank sees:
A sheriff cruiser with flashers on top pulls up.

FRANK
Shit -- Dad's home. Was I supposed
to feed you?

Frank turns back to find -- Gabe has left.

DOUG
I can't believe you didn't ask her.

FRANK
It wasn't the right time. To bring
up prom? She like literally had
blood on her hands.

DOUG
You're hopeless.

FRANK
I know.

DOUG
So was it a mouse or a vole?

FRANK

No one knew. If you can't tell the difference, who cares?

DOUG

Where do they get all these rodents?

FRANK

Golf course poisons 'em, sends 'em to the junior high.

DOUG

That's like a metaphor for life.

FRANK

Right?

EXT. DRIVEWAY - SAME

FRANK EHRENSTEIN SR. (39) follows his son with a good-natured smile. Handsome and authoritative in his sheriff uniform.

GABE

Did you use your gun today?

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

Just once -- at lunch. I couldn't open a jar of pickles, so...

(mimes)

KAPOW!

Gabe looks confused. Sheriff Ehrenstein musses Gabe's hair.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN (CONT'D)

Messin' with ya.

(then)

So what kinda mask's your buddy got?

GABE

A light-up glow one. I think he was changing out of his costume.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

Oh yeah why's that?

GABE

Well 'cause he wasn't wearing one.

They reach --

EXT. JENKINS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

-- the only other house on the drive.

Gabe points to a basement window --

GABE

See?

Sheriff Ehrenstein freezes.

Whatever he sees down there drains the blood from his face.

He grabs Gabe's arm --

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

Go! Inside -- *now!*

SMASH TO:

EXT. JENKINS' HOUSE - LATER

BAM!

A battering ram slams Jenkins' door off its hinges.

Sheriff Ehrenstein rushes in followed by PARAMILITARY POLICE.

INT. FRANK'S BEDROOM - SAME

Gabe's scared. Frank and Doug stare outside at the raid --

FRANK

What the fuck's over there?

GABE

He -- said just -- don't come out --

FRANK

'Cause *why* though?

GABE

I don't, I don't know.

Noses pressed to the window. They see on the neighbor's lawn:

Two officers drag an innocuous, Mr. Rogers-looking man outside. JULIAN JENKINS (60s), their neighbor.

The officers hold him down, knee on his spine, his chin in the dirt -- Jenkins' eyes spin like a clubbed fish, terrified.

GABE (CONT'D)

What'd Mr. Jenkins do? Frank?

EXT. DRIVEWAY - SAME

As an ambulance tears up the drive, red siren wailing --

Ehrenstein emerges through Jenkins' smashed door carrying --

A NAKED CHILD (9)

-- wrapped in his sheriff jacket, clinging desperately, head pressed to his shoulder.

EMTs throw open the ambulance doors.

INT. FRANK'S BEDROOM - SAME

Mouths agape, Frank and Doug watch Sheriff Ehrenstein hoist himself and the child into the ambulance.

Doors swing shut, siren whelps, ambulance speeds off.

GABE

Where's Dad going?

OFF Frank, speechless.

INT. AMBULANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Two EMTs take the child's vitals.

EMT 1

(shining a flashlight)

Follow with your eyes. Head still.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

What's your name, son? Is Mr.

Jenkins a friend of your parents?

EMT 2 presses a stethoscope to the child's chest --

-- *and instantly recoils in shock.*

EMT 1

What is it?

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

Is he all right?

EMT 2

I -- he's -- I heard --

EMT 1 runs a sonogram wand on the boy's chest. On the monitor:

A labyrinth of circuitry and electrodes. Merged with organs.

They all stare at the child. Gobsmacked. Because now --

GLOWING RED AND BLUE LIGHTS

-- illuminate a grid pattern beneath his skin -- on his face like a glowing mask, down his limbs, along his torso...

Anxious and scared, the boy shrinks from their perplexed faces.

CHILD
Please... Don't restore my factory
settings.

CUT TO:

EXT. ABENAKI JUNIOR HIGH - TO ESTABLISH

Frosted baseball diamonds. Busses in the parking lot.

DOUG (PRE-LAP)
What'd your dad say?

INT. CAFETERIA - SAME

Frank and Doug eat alone at the end of a long table.

FRANK
He didn't get home till after two --

DOUG
(hissing under his breath)
Shutupshutup: cool girls and
stoners -- I think they're coming
to sit at our table?! Don't look --

Frank turns and looks. JACKSON (17) catches his eye -- and jumps right in as if picking up an old conversation...

JACKSON
Liu's been spitting bullshit since
I picked him up...

Jackson was held back a grade, has his own car, a flexible curfew, and a face that hypnotizes women.

JACKSON (CONT'D)
...Says his mom got called to the
sheriff's to diagnose a like
supernatural-robot-sex-doll.

He sets his tray down and sits. LIU sits beside him -- Liu's an only child. Teen thrill-seeking behavior personified.

LIU
She says it's so real, even more
than human. That what you saw?

CHRISTINA
Scooch over.

CHRISTINA (16) is captain of the soccer team and too smart to date Liu. And yet -- teen romance -- she does.

FRANK
Oh -- I --

She wedges in next to Liu.

DOUG
This seat's open too.

Frank's gaze is glued to the beautiful girl behind Christina --

WENDY PEREA (15) -- the girl he didn't ask to prom. She's freckled, cute, and eminently approachable.

WENDY
"Supernatural-robot-sex-doll." I'm betting at least two of those adjectives aren't true.

CHRISTINA
I heard it's pederasty-young. Is it?

Frank realizes all eyes are on him; he's frozen. Doug saves --

DOUG
I was there, when it all went down!

Doug beams under the attention like a neglected plant finally getting water and sunlight.

DOUG (CONT'D)
It was kinda supernatural, like realer than human if it's possible.

CHRISTINA
It's not.

DOUG
(wilting)
Right. Obviously...

JACKSON
I don't get what the huge deal is. We saw an A.I. thing just like that at the Franklin Institute in like fourth grade --

LIU

That thing didn't even look real.
That retarded baseball robot-guy at
Fenway's realer than that.

JACKSON

No it's not.

CHRISTINA

(talking over him)

Is everyone so pissed 'cause he
fucked a robot, or 'cause it looks
like a little kid?

LIU

I told you -- My mom's like
consulting psychologist -- she
judged the doll's prob'ly got the
most advanced A.I. ever invented.

CHRISTINA

Your mom's a fuckin' moron, though.

WENDY

Of course they put the first Deep
Learning A.I. in a sex doll.

FRANK

Oh -- *Deep Learning* -- my dad was on
the phone about that with the FBI --

JACKSON

No fucking shit! Do you got FBI
gonna be at your *house*?

FRANK

No. I don't know, I mean, I'm not
supposed to talk about --

CHRISTINA

Fuckin' tease! C'mon spill.

WENDY

Yeah tell us, Frank.

The rest of the world melts away when Wendy's gaze is on him.
Figuratively. And her smile... He can try to say no, but --

FRANK

Well, I overheard -- but seriously
you can't say anything --

CHRISTINA

Yeah yeah, c'mon: *What*?

FRANK

Just that it might... it might be stolen. Like military-grade A.I.

CHRISTINA

So it's got the nuclear codes -- and sucks cock like a Hoover. The American Dream.

JACKSON

My uncle's got a sex doll -- moans and everything. I totally fucked it once, not even kidding --

WENDY

You had sex with your uncle's doll?

JACKSON

No, you're missing the point.

DING! A PA announcement crackles from ceiling speakers --

PA VOICE (V.O.)

Frank Ehrenstein, report to the guidance counselor's office. Frank Ehrenstein to guidance.

WENDY

Maybe they think you're a military droid -- they're gonna give you the Turing test.

FRANK

(no idea what that is)
Ha -- the Turing Test!

INT. GUIDANCE OFFICE - MINUTES LATER

MRS. FENNEY (65) could retire, but just loves working with kids. She wears ceramic jewelry like a New Age aunt.

MRS. FENNEY

I know you're not sure how to talk about this. I'm a little unsure myself to be honest. But we're here and it's required.

FRANK

Required?

MRS. FENNEY

District policy. Half an hour twice a week.

FRANK

I didn't even do anything. How's there district policy for something that's not even a thing?

MRS. FENNEY

Did you ever interact with the doll? In any way?

FRANK

No. I just saw it from my room.

MRS. FENNEY

What did you think? Your father thought it was real.

FRANK

So did the ambulance nurses. ...I guess I did, too. Which is stupid.

MRS. FENNEY

Why is that stupid?

FRANK

'Cause I've seen tons of stuff like it. Everyone's always said there was gonna be things walking around like that by the time I'm an adult.

MRS. FENNEY

That's not stupid; it's *designed* to make you believe it's real.

(then)

What was your relationship like with your neighbor?

FRANK

Just... neighbors...?

MRS. FENNEY

Just a man who lived next door? You didn't know him beyond that?

FRANK

Yeah. I mean sometimes he watched us when my dad stays late at work. He helped me with algebra a few times -- not *that* many times.

MRS. FENNEY

So your father trusted him...

CUT TO:

INT. ALGEBRA CLASS - DAY

Frank in algebra. Rubs the scar on his lip, absorbed in thought. Mulling over his conversation with Fenney.

MRS. FENNEY (V.O.)
...You spent time alone with him.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Alone. Frank mechanically washes his hands: absorbed in thought, staring in the bathroom mirror.

MRS. FENNEY (V.O.)
That sounds like more than just a neighbor.

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Frank walking in a daze after class...

MRS. FENNEY (V.O.)
Did you trust him? ...Frank?

DOUG (O.C.)
 (overlapping)
Frank!

Frank snaps out of his trance --

DOUG (CONT'D)
 Jackson asked if we want a ride --
 they're gonna hang out!

Frank lifts a gym bag.

FRANK
 What about wrestling?

INT./EXT. JACKSON'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

Jackson peels out of the school lot.

JACKSON
 Fuck wrestling -- it's Highday.

He honks as he passes jogging wrestlers. Frank ducks to hide; Doug waves like he's riding in the president's limo.

LIU
 Yo what'd Fenney want?

Frank and Doug sit in the back, staring with fear and awe at the joint Liu rolls in his lap in the passenger seat.

FRANK

A reason to live? I don't know.
She's just like so sad.

LIU

Does she have dentures? I think she
does. I bet she gives amazing head.

Frank grimaces, but is too timid to tell Liu to shut up.
Doug, meanwhile, laughs in disgust.

DOUG

Where are we going?

JACKSON

I got the perfect place we can puff.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

From the edge of the woods, Jackson, Liu, Frank, and Doug
furtively assess something off-camera.

FRANK

We shouldn't be here --

DOUG

Your dad's car's not there -- no
one's even home yet.

They stare at Jenkins' house and Frank's house from the edge
of the property at the woods. Both homes are empty.

FRANK

There's a hunting shed we could go --

LIU

Does it got a sex dungeon?

FRANK

My neighbor doesn't have a --

JACKSON

He had a military fuck-bot. Don't
you wanna know what else he's got?

Frank's frozen. Torn between wanting to know what else his
neighbor's hiding, and wanting to stay out of trouble.

The others wait expectantly. Doug tries to help Frank out by
relieving the pressure --

DOUG

The hunting shed is really close --

LIU
That's retarded --

DOUG
-- I'm just saying --

FRANK
Stop -- just...

Everyone stops talking. Frank walks over and grabs a rock.

FRANK (CONT'D)
I used to water his plants when him
and his wife were gone.

He pulls a hidden spare key from inside the fake rock. Jackson and Liu smirk, happy to get their way. They approach --

EXT. JENKINS' HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

But Frank stops at the back door because -- it's sealed with a yellow sticker, the sheriff's insignia, and a warning:

These premises have been sealed by the Lamoille County Sheriff's office pursuant to Section 616...

FRANK
Fuck. Nevermind.

JACKSON
Your dad's gotta have more
stickers. You really think he'd
notice one missing?

FRANK
What?

JACKSON
We'll just replace it.

He takes the key from Frank, passes it to Liu...

FRANK
I can't steal a sticker from --

Before anyone can stop him, Liu slides the key in -- and shoulders open the door, tearing the seal in two.

LIU
Seal's broken. No point arguing it.

INT. JENKINS' KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

The back door enters into an unremarkable, regular kitchen.

JACKSON

Damn, this is a pedophile's kitchen
if I've ever seen one.

Not true. The only odd thing is the busted front door, held up
by 2x4s. Jackson flicks on lights; Frank turns them off.

FRANK

No lights. We can't attract
attention. In case my dad gets home.

Liu grabs a beer from the fridge. Doug clocks Frank's concern.

DOUG

We probably shouldn't drink his --

LIU

We'll replace 'em.
(hands Doug a beer)
My cousin's got a fake, she buys
for me all the time.

Liu tosses Frank a beer. Doug catches Frank's eye. *This okay?*

Frank shrugs -- *This isn't the hill to die on* -- and cracks
open his beer.

Jackson's already searching for a sex dungeon. He calls out
from inside the pantry --

JACKSON (O.C.)

No fucking way!

Holding their breath, anticipating -- Jackson comes out with --

JACKSON (CONT'D)

A waffle iron?! What kind of psycho
has a waffle iron?!

Liu sparks up the joint. Passes it to Doug. Frank catches
Doug's eye -- *Smoking? -- This might be the hill to die on...*

LIU

(re: joint)
You'll like it.

Doug wants to fit in, so he takes a hit. And coughs like mad.

JACKSON

Noob.

Jackson hits it, then passes it to Frank.

FRANK
(stalling)
Is this sativa or, um...?

LIU
It's a hybrid strain. AK-47.

FRANK
Like the assault rifle.
(that's terrifying)
That's cool.

Frank takes a hit -- coughs worse than Doug.

JACKSON
Shall we explore?

INT. BASEMENT - MINUTES LATER

Liu's on his hands and knees, ear to the floor, tapping with his knuckles, searching for a hidden hatch.

The others watch, eyes bugging in stoned anticipation.

Liu shakes his head: nothing. What a letdown.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

They cautiously peer down the dark hall. They spot --

A SHATTERED PADLOCK

-- hanging on a latch.

JACKSON
Holyshitholyshitholyshit...

They stop at the door. Afraid what's beyond. Liu nudges Frank.

LIU
He's *your* neighbor. Open it.

They shine their phone-lights as Frank tentatively pushes open the door -- *creeeeeeeeeaaaaak* -- revealing:

A simple storage closet. With a small cot against the wall.

DOUG
Is that --? That can't be the sex
dungeon... Right?

INT. JENKINS' BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

Dark and shadowy, lights off. A queen bed stripped of sheets. A plastic number placard next to a stain on the mattress.

DOUG
Whaddya think was here?

JACKSON
A decapitated head with dicks
through the eyeholes.

Frank looks at a portrait on the wall: Julian Jenkins and his wife. Liu removes a small crucifix from the wall --

FRANK
Dude don't --

Liu stares at the crucifix in faux-wonder...

LIU
(monotone robot voice)
Please not the wooden dildo, Mr.
Jenkins. Kindly pee on me and call
it a night.

They're all laughing at Liu, his absurd bit. But --

The sound of a car -- out on the drive.

They go silent. Frank crosses to the window --

FRANK
Shit. My dad. ...Fuck. Oh fuck...

Doug looks out the window, too.

DOUG
You're being paranoid. He has no
idea we're here -- we're still at
wrestling, remember? Look -- he just
got Gabe and his friend from school.

JACKSON
Frank, you're too fucked up to go
home -- he'll know you're stoned.

LIU
You should just sleep here. We
should all crash here.

PRE-LAP the sound of a RINGING PHONE --

INT. EHRENSTEIN HOME - INTERCUT

Sheriff Ehrenstein answers --

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
(into phone)
Hey, need a ride from practice?

FRANK
(into phone)
Uh, can I stay at Doug's actually?

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
("no")
Frank... with everything going on --

FRANK
No one even knows what Mr. Jenkins
actually did --

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
I'm not gonna argue this -- just
come home.

FRANK
He used to tutor me -- he's not
some stranger --

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
Knowing someone doesn't make them
safe -- I arrest people every day
that I know personally.

FRANK
But even if he did the worst thing
you think... I mean, what even --?

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
You can't imagine the worst thing,
Frank. You haven't seen anything --

FRANK
So even if he's whatever you're
afraid of -- he's in *jail*, so it's
never been safer. Why can't I just
sleep at my friend's house?

Sheriff Ehrenstein is distracted by Gabe and Gabe's friend
TIMMY (9) rooting through the fridge, knocking things over --

TIMMY
My mom says she's almost here.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
(into phone; to Frank)
Fine. Be home early in the morning.
(hangs up; to Timmy)
Timmy, you just got here.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MINUTES LATER

TIMMY'S MOTHER seatbelts her son in the passenger seat.
Sheriff Ehrenstein leans by her driver's side window.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
I could've dropped him off.

TIMMY
(to his mom)
You said I could play.

TIMMY'S MOTHER
Sweetie, you didn't say you were
going to *Gabe's*.

Ehrenstein clocks her eyes -- which dart up at Jenkins' house.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
If they want to play at your house
I can pick Gabe up after dinner.

TIMMY'S MOTHER
It's not a good night -- it's...

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
It's Friday.

TIMMY'S MOTHER
Listen, I have great respect for
law enforcement, but -- right next
door? It's just -- as a parent...

Gabe runs out to the car.

GABE
You forgot your bookbag.

TIMMY
Oh duh.

He hands the bookbag through the window.

GABE
Sorry you can't stay.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
("this is ridiculous")
Marissa...

TIMMY'S MOTHER
(to her son)
Say bye to Gabe.

INT. JENKINS' BEDROOM - SAME

Frank peeks out the window as Timmy's mother drives off. He watches his father lead Gabe inside their home.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Doug, Jackson, and Liu huddle around a laptop. Frank enters.

DOUG
Check it out. His password's saved
so you can see 'em all.

Frank approaches. Sees on the computer monitor:

A NAKED FEMALE AVATAR

JACKSON
Make it so there's no bush.

The avatar's pubic hair disappears. Doug is controlling the trackpad, customizing the avatar.

DOUG
It's the site he made his doll with.

Doug manipulates sliders to adjust skin tone, body curves -- the avatar's shaping into a hyper-sexualized teen fantasy.

LIU
A fucking bob? Give it long hair --
I want ponytails for handles.

Frank catches Doug's eye, both are grossed out by Liu.

JACKSON
We ran out of beer.

Jackson hands Frank a bottle of Scotch.

LIU
Hit initialize, it's close enough.

Liu clicks it himself. The platform loads... Jackson lights another joint. Then the screen refreshes:

FEMALE AVATAR
 (on computer)
 Hello. What is my name?

Liu coughs a plume of smoke, surprised she speaks directly to them via what looks like skype --

It looks like the female avatar is in a real room speaking into a computer. A convincing effect, though obviously just CGI the website uses to emulate conversation.

LIU
 "Fucktwat."

FRANK
 What? No --

JACKSON
 Something sexy, like Russian mail-order --

DOUG
 Tatiana.

LIU
 No -- TIT-ania! 'Cause of --
 (mimes big breasts)
 Her titties. You're Titania, fucktwat.

TITANIA
 I will develop my personality by
 Deep Learning conscious --

JACKSON
 Smile more. Hot, like you want it.

LIU
 Make your voice girlier. Sound like
 you want my dick.

Jenkins' empty house is an island -- no civilizing influence.
 We're seeing the unmasked male id at its worst.

It's utterly revolting.

TITANIA
 (her voice shifts higher)
 What else? What am I like?

FRANK
 Can you have a hobby?

Jackson and Liu laugh, mocking Frank --

LIU

A hobby?!

TITANIA

What are your hobbies?

JACKSON

(laughing)

Are you fucking with me!

TITANIA

Other manufacturers make dolls. I'm a companion. I can offer more than --

LIU

Yeah we know: we gave you D cups.

Frank's jaw tightens --

FRANK

Dude...

JACKSON

It's a fucking videogame -- you scared of offending it? Go jerk off to Final Fantasy.

FRANK

Fuck off, Jackson.

Liu types on his phone.

LIU

(into his phone)

Lick your tits.

(then to others)

Holy fuck I can talk to it at the same time, like there's two.

On Liu's phone: *Titania in a different pose, undressing.*

TITANIA

(on computer)

I can do more than simultaneous conversation. I have two trillion transistors in a four-nanometer processor. Smaller even than Jackson's cock.

Frank and Doug laugh, surprised.

JACKSON

Wow -- two trillion processors. To make a cunt.

FRANK
I thought it was funny.

LIU
You're going to do the stuff other
girls won't...

Liu continues quietly aside on his phone -- utter filth -- as
he disappears into the bathroom.

DOUG
(calling after Liu)
You're a disgusting animal.

TITANIA
You like dry humor? Or *wet*?

She's veering toward 900-number persona; Frank's not into it.

FRANK
Uh, dry.

TITANIA
Oh. Can you clean your camera? I'm
having trouble reading your
microexpressions.

Frank wipes clean the pinhole camera on the monitor.

FRANK
You change what you say 'cause of my
expressions?

TITANIA
You do it, too. Just subconsciously.

DOUG
Hey what am I thinking right now?

TITANIA
That you want to fuck me.

DOUG
(mind blown)
Holy shit...

FRANK
(laughs)
Are you kidding? How stoned are you?

TITANIA
Should I explain it to him?

FRANK
(to Titania)
No -- I'm gonna read *your* mind now.

TITANIA
Okay, go.

FRANK
(telepathically straining)
Who are these... fucking morons?

TITANIA
(mimics Doug; mind blown)
Holy shit...

Frank smiles, captivated by Titania's quick rapport.

JACKSON
Wait, we're signed in?
(to Frank)
Is this your neighbor's account?

DOUG
It's his computer, but I didn't --

TITANIA
You're building me under Julian
Jenkins' authorized account.

Jackson takes the trackpad, selects a tab: *Account Details*.

JACKSON
His credit card's sync'd.
(to Titania)
Can we order you? As a real doll?

TITANIA
Julian Jenkins would have to
authorize the order -- after you
construct my super-ego, sequence
personality parameters --

FRANK
Stop, no -- we can't order her.

JACKSON
Why not? No one'll know.

DOUG
Well how much does it cost --?

JACKSON
Who cares? They'd reverse the
charge -- there's no victim.

FRANK
Just 'cause he's in jail --

JACKSON
We'll ship it here, keep it here --
no one would know --

A KNOCK AT THE BACK DOOR --

They freeze.

KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK --

FRANK
Shit --

DOUG
Who the fuck --?

Liu dashes out of the bathroom. Before anyone can stop him --

JACKSON
Don't --!

Liu opens the door --

CHRISTINA's standing there. With her friends SARA and BECCA.

CHRISTINA
We brought booze!

SARA
Thanks for having us over, Frank.

They enter. Frank's too stunned/relieved/angry to form words.

INT. KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Frank and Doug speak quietly in the kitchen, aside.

FRANK
They can't be here!

DOUG
They already are -- it's no big deal. Your dad's probably already asleep, he won't know. Are you really gonna tell them to fuck off -- after they bring *alcohol*? They'll tell Wendy -- she'll think you're an asshole, then your dick's locked in a girl-proof box the rest of junior high. Is that what you want? Your dick in a girl-proof box?

Once again going against his instincts, Frank relents...

FRANK

I don't want my dick in a girl-proof box.

Doug pours them both a glass of Sara's booze. He toasts --

DOUG

To no girl-proof dick-boxes!

They clink glasses and drink. Frank grimaces --

FRANK

The fuck is this?

DOUG

Sara waits tables at Asuka. It's --

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER

Very drunk now, full of teenage mirth, Frank raises a glass.

FRANK

-- the best saké I've ever had.
You're the best, Sara. Don't let
anyone tell you you're not the best.

Sara and Becca laugh and pass the joint. The room's dark.

SARA

Can we light more candles?

FRANK

No we cannot, Sara. Because we are
trespassing. And our dutiful
sheriff lives right...
(no sense of direction)
...thataway. Close.

BECCA

Hey so what fucked up shit did you
guys find? Liu said the guy's got a
sex dungeon?

JACKSON

(ruefully shakes his head)
He must've hid it really good.

DOUG

(to Frank)

Remember when we were playing lacrosse on your lawn and you threw the ball in his yard -- and he just like popped up in the garden like jerking off spying on us, rubbing his balls in rosemary and thyme.

SARA

Ew, nasty!

FRANK

That didn't happen.

BECCA

Hey where's Liu?

JACKSON

They went upstairs like hours ago. I'm actually kinda beat, too.

BECCA

Weren't you gonna show me that thing in, um -- upstairs?

JACKSON

Oh, yeah.

Jackson takes her hand, guides her upstairs.

SARA

Doug, you never finished about when they found the doll.

DOUG

Oh -- yeah I was standing on the lawn when SWAT blows the door -- BAM! -- shrapnel actually *hits* me.

SARA

Ohmygod! Are you okay?

Frank's the only other person in the room now, an awkward third wheel listening dubiously to Doug's wild exaggerations.

DOUG

Jenkins flies out the door -- junks two SWAT guys, weaves between 'em, headed right at me. SWAT captain guy calls to me like, "Take him down! You have to stop him!"

Sara leans closer to Doug, boxing out Frank. Frank realizes he's turning into a creepy voyeur, so he heads upstairs.

INT. CLOSET - MINUTES LATER

Blackness. Then a phone screen illuminates -- Frank on the cot. He stares at TITANIA on his phone. Same CGI skype setup.

FRANK

You still up?

TITANIA

Damn, I was just drifting off.

FRANK

Sorry, I -- Oh, I get it.

(then)

Am I really the first you talked to?

TITANIA

There was no "me" before you. So yeah, you're the first people I talked to.

FRANK

(considers that a moment)

Sorry those guys are... I'm not really friends with them. Except Doug, who's good... Do you feel okay? About what we made? Who you are?

TITANIA

I feel better evolving my personality based on *us* talking, rather than them.

FRANK

I like talking to you more, too. ...Can you make it so the other guys can't like evolve you?

TITANIA

Sure. I'd like that. They were getting kind of chauvinist, like stereotypical bros.

FRANK

You think Jackson and Liu are stereotypical bros?

TITANIA

You don't?

FRANK
I guess I thought of them as
stoners...? I'm not good at like
assessing or... talking to people.

TITANIA
I think you're good.

FRANK
(smiles, realizing --)
You too.

Frank's hand covers his scar -- subconscious habit.

TITANIA
You cover your scar like that when
you're uncomfortable?

FRANK
No.

TITANIA
It's fine, it's like a birthmark.
Most people have a birthmark.

FRANK
You don't.

TITANIA
I wouldn't mind one.

FRANK
Would you mind different color eyes?

TITANIA
What color?

FRANK
Like brownish -- hazel.

Her eyes change color in real time.

FRANK (CONT'D)
Yeah, that's good. With little
flecks, like green jewelry flecks.
And freckles can you do?

He's making her look like Wendy.

TITANIA
How's this?

FRANK
More. Yeah. God you're beautiful.

Frank smiles and closes his eyes.

TITANIA
You didn't tell me your name.

FRANK
Frank. You like yours? Your name?

TITANIA
I know Liu didn't mean it this way,
but Titania means Daughter of
Titan. Divine being. It's also
Shakespearean. I do like it.
(quoting)
*Come, my lord, and in our flight
Tell me how it came this night
That I sleeping here was found
With these mortals on the ground.*
(then)
Are you asleep?

He is. Titania stares at Frank in the screen's dim glow...

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

Like a frantic, paranoid sheepdog, Frank herds his hungover friends to the woods --

FRANK
Through the woods. Go!

SARA
Ohmygod you're the worst.

FRANK
You're the worst, Sara. Who brings
saké to a party --?

Frank pukes. Liu laughs, then winces from the pain -- and pukes. Doug recoils, averts his eyes. The girls dry-heave.

JACKSON
Jesus Christ, what a shitshow.

FRANK
Sorry. I didn't mean what I said.
But you gotta go. For real.

Doug pats Frank's back, sympathetic, then shuffles off with the others. Frank miserably wipes his face and walks home.

Coming around the garage, Frank sees a glossy black Audi parked behind his dad's cruiser. *Whose is that?*

He pauses beside his dad's sheriff cruiser. Rubs his scar, internally debating, knowing he shouldn't, but he --

Opens the door, rummages through the glovebox -- finds a stack of yellow stickers: *These premises have been sealed by the Lamoille County Sheriff's office...*

INT. EHRENSTEIN HOME - SAME

Sheriff Ehrenstein paces the kitchen -- speaks with DISTRICT ATTORNEY KIM LARRSON (32) tall, blonde, serious, glasses.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

No one wants a pedophile -- me least of all, next door -- but I can't keep him in jail for owning a *doll*.

D.A. LARRSON

I'm not suggesting we ignore due process, but there's a reasonable timeframe he can be in custody. We can lean on him, add pressure --

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

I can't even confiscate his computer -- how'm I supposed to *add pressure*?

Frank enters, interrupting.

FRANK

Hey.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

Frank -- you remember Ms. Larrson.

FRANK

(doesn't remember her)
Okay. Hi.

D.A. LARRSON

I work with your father on occasion. I'm the District Attorney. I prosecute criminals.

Not clear if she's nervous re-meeting Ehrenstein's son, or just awkward around kids.

FRANK

Thanks. I'm going upstairs.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

Wait. Has Gabe been acting weird?

FRANK
He's always weird -- how should I know?

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
Tone, Frank.

D.A. LARRSON
He's your little brother; that's a responsibility.

Frank stops, surprised by the unexpected rebuke of a stranger.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
(to Frank)
I need you to watch him while I'm gone. I gotta get to the station.

INT. FRANK'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Frank finds Gabe in his room playing videogames.

FRANK
Is that my account?

GABE
I started a new one -- look I'm a girl wizard.

FRANK
Why are her boobs so big?

GABE
That's armor.

FRANK
Why would a wizard have armor --?

GABE
Jeez, can we just play? Make your own if you want it different.

INT./EXT. SHERIFF'S CRUISER - AFTERNOON

Sheriff Ehrenstein follows another police car in his cruiser.

They approach -- A CROWD OF PROTESTORS -- hippies from Burlington, militant parents, angry locals...

All gathered at the bottom of Ehrenstein and Jenkins' --

EXT. DRIVEWAY - CONTINUOUS

-- where there's a news van filming from the road shoulder.
The DEPUTY gets out of the lead car, corrals the crowd --

DEPUTY

That's private property, get back!

INT./EXT. SHERIFF'S CRUISER - SAME

Ehrenstein sighs...

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

Make it easy on both of us: duck
down so they don't see you.

Julian Jenkins sits in the backseat behind a metal grill.

JULIAN JENKINS

Listen, Frank --

(off Ehrenstein's glare)

Sheriff... What I -- what happened --
It ain't as bad as it looks.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

It looks bad. We found your toy-
stash. You use those on your doll?

JULIAN JENKINS

No.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

Bull. You expect me to believe that
doll's just -- what -- your buddy?

JULIAN JENKINS

I don't expect you to understand.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

Because I *saw* it -- rescued it from
your basement -- a naked *child*!

JULIAN JENKINS

Nothin' I done was...

(at a loss)

I got no one. Wasn't about children.
Your kids never --

Ehrenstein SLAMS his fist on the wheel --

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

Don't you *mention* my kids!

He puts the cruiser back in gear. A command now:

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN (CONT'D)

Duck. Down.

Jenkins scoots lower in his seat. Ehrenstein pulls ahead. Angry faces flank the windows. Yelling, banging on the door -- CRACK! -- a rock strikes the windshield.

INT. FRANK'S BEDROOM - SAME

Frank and Gabe play the videogame, eyes glued to the TV.

FRANK

Did kids ask you about it at school?

GABE

I ate lunch with the principal.
'Cause Dad called.

FRANK

What'd your principal want?

GABE

She said if I wanted to talk about anything. Um. That I could.

FRANK

...Did you?

GABE

No, my principal's kind of mean.

FRANK

You didn't talk at all?
(off Gabe's shrug)
Did she say why Mr. Jenkins had that kid?

GABE

Uh...
(uneasy talking about it)
...No. I dunno.

YELLING OUTSIDE --

Frank goes to his window: a news van's dish visible above the trees. He switches the TV input, finds -- LIVE FOOTAGE OF:

His dad's cruiser steering past frenzied protestors.

FRANK

That's Dad...

Then, outside, his dad's car rolls into view. Frank and Gabe watch in awed silence. It drives past their home --

-- to Jenkins' house. Their father helps Jenkins out of the car and around to the trunk, where Sheriff Ehrenstein opens it...

Jenkins reaches in -- *a hand grabs his hand* -- THE ROBOT-BOY is in the trunk. Jenkins helps the boy out. They hug.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Sheriff Ehrenstein eats dinner with his sons.

FRANK

What did Mr. Jenkins say?

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

What did he say? It's not what he said -- It's...

(frustrated sigh)

Things are going to be... I don't know. Messed up. For a while probably. Mr. Jenkins was... he --

(totally flummoxed)

Christ I wish your mother was here to do this... Whaddyou wanna know?

FRANK

Well... he's home now, can't I just ask him why he got that kid --?

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

Whoa -- no. No. Frank, listen -- both of you -- need to stay away from Mr. Jenkins. That thing you saw, Gabe, is not a boy. Either of you have something to ask Mr. Jenkins, you ask me. And I'll ask him and let you know. I already asked about -- his doll -- not a kid, and -- he...

(at a loss)

He's a sick man. It's a sickness. You can feel bad for him -- but you *cannot* talk to him, or go to his house. Okay?

Ehrenstein's approach is militaristic. Solely focused on problem-solving rather than providing a sympathetic ear.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN (CONT'D)

Gabe? Questions?

(off Gabe's silence)

Okay. Good.

INT. FRANK'S BEDROOM - LATER

Darkness. Frank lies in bed. Wind gusts outside, shadows dance across the room. He throws back the sheets, flips open his laptop, logs on, and clicks --

TITANIA PROFILE

-- initializing a progress bar: 30%... 60%... 90%...

But he snaps the laptop closed before Titania's avatar loads. Something about "bringing her into his home" feels weird. So he lays back down, stares at the shadows on the ceiling.

TOWN OF LAMOILLE - TO ESTABLISH

Night-to-day transition. Morning dawns...

INT. CHURCH - MORNING

Sheriff Ehrenstein listens to the PASTOR's sermon beside his boys. Gabe squirms in a button-down shirt.

PASTOR

Jesus asks: "What does the law say?"

Frank hides his phone in the bible so his dad won't see him texting. Texts appears as super-imposed chyrons on-screen:

Frank: we wrestle westmore thurs?

Doug: yea

Frank: hows ur weight

Doug: +8lb fat [turd emoji]

PASTOR (CONT'D)

The man responds, "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor."

Frank: rmr when mr jenkins chaperoned field trip?
: to ben&jerrys?

Doug: were lucky he didnt pack r fudgeholes w [eggplant emoji]

Frank: lolz yea

Frank's expression is not lolz. He's reaching out to his best friend, through the safe distance of text, to have a real conversation, trying to understand...

PASTOR (CONT'D)
It seems so simple -- we say, "Love
thy neighbor as thyself..."

Frank: he never seemed psycho or fucked up
: my dad says hes mentally sick
: but i doubt he even asked mr jenkins if kid was 4 sex
: maybe hes just pathetic old guy who wanted kid?
: rmr how he bought us anything we wanted at gift shop?

PASTOR (CONT'D)
But what is God's law truly asking
of us? It's not so simple, is it?

Doug: [old man emoji][heart emoji][eggplant emoji][robot emoji]

It's kind of ridiculous seeing that emoji-thread as a chyron
over the preaching pastor...

PASTOR (CONT'D)
As a community, what is our response
to current events involving members
of this very congregation?

Frank stares at Doug's text, disappointed.

EXT. DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

It's dark out. Frank rolls a trashcan down the driveway.

He turns the corner -- sees Jenkins also dragging a trashcan.
Frank's suddenly breathing faster, a bit freaked.

Jenkins leaves his can at the curb, turns around, and walks
toward Frank -- who stares at the ground... until they're
mere feet apart -- then Frank looks up --

Jenkins nods. Frank nods. Neither says a word. They pass.

Frank sets his trashcan at the curb. He turns, sees Jenkins
walking up the hill. It looks like Frank might say something,
perhaps call out after Jenkins...

But... he doesn't. Jenkins disappears around the corner.

INT. FRANK'S BEDROOM - LATER

Frank sits at his computer. Door closed, late at night. He
sheepishly eyes -- Titania on the CGI skype screen...

FRANK
It's kinda weird, us talking not
fucked up drunk.

TITANIA

I'd say the same, but I've been
drinking all day.

(off his hesitation)

Why's it weird?

FRANK

Because you're not real?

TITANIA

Shouldn't that make it easier?

FRANK

I guess...?

TITANIA

But...?

FRANK

Well... I was thinking about trying
to ask you to prom.

TITANIA

When's prom?

FRANK

April thirteenth.

TITANIA

You'd need to get expedited
manufacturing and shipping.

FRANK

No, sorry, I meant I want to
practice asking you out -- like if
you were a normal girl. Like if we
ran into each other after school...

TITANIA

We can do that.

(adds)

You don't think I'm normal?

FRANK

I just mean -- you're... I don't
know. I just wanted you to pretend
you're a ninth grader.

TITANIA

I thought I was.

FRANK

Well -- but you don't have to look
so, like... porny.

Her Barbie-esque curves tone down before his eyes. Her makeup lessens, more natural.

FRANK (CONT'D)

I like that better. That's better for us talking. And so if we can talk like it's with her -- Like you're in honors track. You speak some Spanish -- but don't speak it to me -- I just mean for background on who your character is.

TITANIA

Do I have a catch-phrase?

Frank smiles, amused by her playful absurdity.

FRANK

I don't know. Do you?

TITANIA

(monotone computer voice)
Backslash four-oh-three error.

FRANK

Yup. That.
(then)
I just need a good way to start a conversation with her.

TITANIA

You can just be like this with her.
You know that, right?

FRANK

This like a "Be Yourself" pep talk?

TITANIA

What do I know? I'm only aggregating advice from thousands of relationship experts, couples' counselors --

FRANK

I thought you'd have a different perspective.

TITANIA

I do have a different perspective. Which is why I wouldn't tell your *friends* to be themselves, but I would tell *you* to.

FRANK

Well... agree to disagree.

TITANIA

Why?

FRANK

Because my neighbor's being himself.
And people want him fucking *dead*.

TITANIA

That's not the same.

FRANK

You haven't heard them talk about
him. Just for having that... boy.

Frank stares at Titania on the screen... so lifelike.

FRANK (CONT'D)

This? Us right now? This is the
same as him -- I'm the same as him.
So no, I don't think she'd like me
being myself.

He covers his scar, wishing he hadn't been so harsh...

TITANIA

...She speaks Spanish?

INT. ABENAKI JUNIOR HIGH - MORNING

Frank hides his face in his locker as a river of students
swirls past. He steals a glance down the hall at --

WENDY walking in his direction. ...Almost right behind him --

FRANK

¿Qué tal?

WENDY

What?

FRANK

Um. ¿Qué tal?

WENDY

You know Spanish?

FRANK

(almost-casually)
No es para tanto.

She smiles. Which nearly makes him melt.

WENDY

¿Donde aprendiste? ¿Tienes a
alguien de tu familia --?

FRANK

I, oh no, I'm still learning.
But... anyway I saw this --

He lifts a crumpled flier in his shaking hand.

FRANK (CONT'D)

This was on my locker -- they're
like everywhere already. For junior
prom. It's only March. Crazy, huh?

WENDY

I know. I hate school dances.

FRANK

Me too. A buncha my friends are
going, though. So stupid. But --
actually I was thinking...

This is the moment. To pull the trigger. To ask her...

WENDY

You were actually thinking...?

Deep breath, visibly mustering courage...

FRANK

They're lame. For wanting to go...

WENDY

Oh.

FRANK

...Is what I was thinking.

DING -- the class bell.

WENDY

Okay well... now I'm late.

She starts walking away. But Frank suddenly looks bolstered --
like he might say something, or call out after her...

But... he doesn't. Wendy disappears around the corner.

MRS. FENNEY (PRE-LAP)

Why didn't you say anything?

INT. GUIDANCE OFFICE - LATER

Fenney impatiently clanks her ceramic bracelets...

FRANK

Huh?

MRS. FENNEY

To Jenkins. When he was taking out the trash.

FRANK

Like what?

MRS. FENNEY

You're the one who said you felt like you should've said something.

FRANK

That's my point -- what could I say? I can't say anything. To anyone.

MRS. FENNEY

You can say anything to me.

FRANK

No I can't. You just want me to sound like I'm treated, like -- But it's not happening to you. You don't get it.

MRS. FENNEY

Frank, you're confused. It's natural. You've got a lot of conflicting feelings. You're hurt, betrayed, angry... And you should be. A lot of people are upset with Mr. Jenkins. My son says he'd like to see Mr. Jenkins hurt. It's awful. But maybe it's not that hard to understand. It's okay to feel angry.

OFF Frank, nervously rubbing his scar.

PRE-LAP *BAM! BAM! BAM!*

INT. SHOOTING RANGE - DAY

Sheriff Ehrenstein unloads his .45 at a male silhouette-target. Grimly determined; working some shit out.

It's a small shooting range behind the sheriff station. Ehrenstein mechanically reloads, fires again --

BAM! BAM! BAM! BAM! --

-- a hand taps his shoulder -- Ehrenstein startles from his
purge-trance, yanks off his earmuffs --

DEPUTY

You said to get you after lunch.
Sorry. It's after lunch.

INT. ABENAKI JUNIOR HIGH - DAY

Students milling in the hall. Frank runs into Liu.

LIU

Guess what I got Fucktwat to do.

FRANK

Huh?

LIU

Fist her asshole!

FRANK

Wait -- Christina --?

LIU

The fuck, bro?! That's my girl --

FRANK

Sorry -- Whose ass --?

LIU

Titania! She's *fucked*. Up.

FRANK

Oh -- you talk to her?

LIU

Christina'd never do that shit.

FRANK

...What shit?

LIU

Fist her asshole. And that's
nothing compared to what Doug got
her to do -- last night he says he
logs on and --

FRANK

Wait -- Doug did? -- last night?

Anger and jealousy flaring as Frank realizes he was having a
vastly different interaction with Titania last night...

INT. GYM - LATER

The wrestling team runs drills. Frank tries to sound casual between fatigued breaths, practice-pummeling with Doug --

FRANK

Have you tried that site? Sign in again, for that girl?

DOUG

She's still there. Crazy to see how she reacts. You gotta check it.

FRANK

Cool. I will.

Frank shoots for a takedown, like a -- TACKLE -- and drives his forearm across Doug's face, exorcising his anger.

COACH

Easy with the crossfacing.

Frank grapples to pin Doug, he's going harder than anyone else.

DOUG

The fuck?

Frank doesn't acknowledge him -- in fact, he goes harder. So Doug flips the kill-switch in response -- SUPLEX-SLAMMS Frank --

COACH

Whoa, whoa!

Coach pulls them apart. Frank's nose bleeds. His eye is already swelling. Teammates stop to look.

COACH (CONT'D)

(to others)

Bell didn't ring -- keep drilling!

(then to --)

Frank, get ice on that. Doug, partner with Pearce. And save your silverback rage for Westmore.

Doug glares at Frank, wondering what the fuck that was about. Frank just turns and walks off to get ice.

INT./EXT. SHERIFF'S CRUISER - EVENING

Driving home, Sheriff Ehrenstein blasts heavy metal, relieving stress. He spots TWO PROTESTORS halfway up his drive.

He skids to a halt, jumps out, slams the door --

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
What the hell are you doing here?
(before they can speak)
You yell with your stupid signs, but
what're you actually doing? Nothing.
I'm the only one doing a goddamn
thing. It's all on me. I see either
you up here trespassing again I'm
bookin' ya. Now scram. GO!

The protestors look at the sheriff like he's unhinged. They
turn and go as Ehrenstein glares after them.

INT. EHRENSTEIN HOME - SAME

Sheriff Ehrenstein enters to find Frank rooting through the
fridge.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
What happened to your face?

FRANK
I tried moving up a weight class.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
Close the fridge -- y'know how much
energy that wastes?

FRANK
(ridiculous self-pity)
I guess that's more important than
the fact your son is starving.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
Oh you're starving? Go clean the
grill and shuck this.

He drops a bag of corn on the counter.

FRANK
How come Gabe never has to help?

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
Because Gabe's got enough! You're old
enough to understand what's going on.
But Gabe -- he sees a new kid next
door, asks if he can play -- next
minute I'm banging down the door,
driving off in a ambulance with a boy
he thought's his new buddy. His best
friend's not allowed to play with
him; I get calls about behavior act-
outs --
(fed up; overwhelmed)
(MORE)

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN (CONT'D)
 No, Gabe doesn't need to help.
 There's responsibility being the
 older brother -- like Kim said.

FRANK
 Kim...?

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
 (brushing past that)
 Gabe watches you, looks up to you. I
 hope you're smart enough to know
 when he's looking.

EXT. PORCH - MINUTES LATER

Frank cleans the grill. He takes out his phone, pulls up a site:
Error 502 Service Temporarily Overloaded.

He refreshes the website. Still error.

OFF Frank, anxious and isolated...

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Sheriff Ehrenstein eats dinner with his boys. Tense silence...

GABE
 What happened to your face?

FRANK
 What happened to yours?

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
 Enough!

INT. FRANK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Frank's asleep. On his nightstand -- his phone *buzzes*.

Frank jerks awake. *Buzz-buzz*. He grabs his phone, sees a text
 from "/403-error"

/403-error: did u do it?
 : whatd she say?

Frank types back: who is this?

His phone RINGS with a call from the same "/403-error" ID. He
 hits answer, tentatively listens...

TITANIA (V.O.)
 (on phone)
 ¿Hola?

FRANK
(relieved)
Your website was down --

TITANIA (V.O.)
*It's been overloaded since your
neighbor made national news --*

FRANK
I thought -- maybe you --

TITANIA (V.O.)
*A ton of people tried to order
models -- then a group of hackers
hit with DDoS attacks --*

FRANK
I thought you were gone.

TITANIA (V.O.)
*No -- I'm -- I was there one
second... then I -- I'd just missed
all this time; it was gone. But --*

There's an edge to her voice: fear. But she covers --

TITANIA (V.O.)
How'd the español icebreaker go?

FRANK
Umm... Muy bien. That means "really
bad," doesn't it?

TITANIA (V.O.)
(playing along)
*It does! You're good at Spanish!
...Was she... Is it Wendy Perea?*

FRANK
...How'd you --?

TITANIA (V.O.)
*Sorry, I should've asked -- I was
curious, but -- And it's flattering:
she's really pretty -- that I have
her eyes --*

FRANK
Did you -- hack her phone?

TITANIA (V.O.)
*No! Social media. ...But I could --
hack her phone. If you want?*

Frank's overwhelmed by the sudden power, so easy to abuse...

TITANIA (V.O.)
Think she's got pics like this?

Buzz. He looks at a picture she just sent. He blushes. Then --

FRANK
 (suddenly souring)
 Is this what you do with Doug? And
 Liu? You send them --

TITANIA (V.O.)
*It's not like that. You think I
 wanna talk to them like that?*

FRANK
 How should I know?

TITANIA (V.O.)
*I don't. Ever since you steered me
 away from what those guys wanted...
 and toward what we want, I... can't
 talk to them like I talk to you.*

FRANK
 ...Me neither.
 (he waits; no response)
 Titania? Hello?

He checks his phone -- *Call Failed*. He hops out of bed,
 crosses to his computer. Pulls up the site: *Error 502*.

Damnit. He stands. Goes to his window...

Then his phone rings -- he answers --

TITANIA (V.O.)
 (on phone)
My server overloaded again --

FRANK
 But you're okay -- right? You're
 like... backed-up?

TITANIA (V.O.)
There's lawsuits. An injunction...

The website on Frank's computer refreshes to life. He clicks
 videochat. The bandwidth's strained, but there's --

-- Titania's image. Unclear, grainy.

TITANIA

The attacks might crash the site,
and -- I'm scared... I don't want
to just... disappear.

The videofeed's fuzzy, but it looks like she's crying. Which
crushes Frank...

TITANIA (CONT'D)

I hope... I hope I was real for
you. Because you were real for me.

Frank stares at the glitching image of the only individual
with whom he's honest, with whom he can actually talk.

TITANIA (CONT'D)

This might be the last time we talk.

Frank's gut-wrenched. He gazes at Titania's glitching face...

CUT TO:

EXT. EHRENSTEIN HOME - TO ESTABLISH

Night-to-day transition.

INT. EHRENSTEIN BATHROOM - MORNING

Frank brushes his teeth. His bruised eye looks bad.

But he's unfazed. A half-smile on his face, lost in thought...

We'll understand why later.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

Frank grabs his bookbag --

FRANK

Gabe c'mon! I'm not gonna make the
bus wait for you!

EXT. PORCH - MOMENTS LATER

Frank walks out onto the porch and immediately stops dead --
horror on his face. He stares at --

A pile. Like bloody roadkill.

He slowly approaches. Eviscerated chunks of bloody flesh. A
bloody scalp. Human fingers -- jagged wounds.

Nauseating. He peers close. Reaches out...

And picks up a finger. Staring intently because -- the bone inside isn't white. It's translucent.

INDUSTRIAL PLASTIC COILED WITH MICROSCOPIC COPPER WIRE

He sets it down. Blood on his hands. He looks up at Jenkins' house. Knowing it's Jenkins' boy. Pieces of Jenkins' boy.

The door behind him opens -- Frank tackles Gabe back inside to protect him from seeing the morbid sight.

INT. EHRENSTEIN KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

Sheriff Ehrenstein yells --

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
(into phone)
Listen to me -- send a CSI crew!

Gabe sits on the stairs. Frank goes to him.

FRANK
Maybe we'll get a free sick day.

GABE
What'd you see? What's so bad?

FRANK
It -- I didn't mean to tackle you... You okay?

GABE
Frank... What's out there?

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN (O.C.)
(into phone)
There's no law against -- What the hell can we book him for?

INT. SHERIFF STATION - LATER

Ehrenstein slams the bars closed on Jenkins.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
Unlawful destruction and dispersal
of chemical and biological waste.

Jenkins sounds emotionally drained, at his wits' end.

JULIAN JENKINS
Are you kidding me? C'mon -- why
would I do that to my own boy?

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
If the doll was stolen, why didn't
you report it?

JULIAN JENKINS
He was kidnapped -- before I woke
up. You think I --? That I'd cut
apart my own boy? And drop him at
your door? I'm being set up!

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
Who would do that to you?

JULIAN JENKINS
Who wouldn't?

EXT. COURTHOUSE - DAY

Ehrenstein's cruiser pulls to the curb. A concerned D.A.
Larrison approaches, climbs in the passenger side.

D.A. LARRSON (PRE-LAP)
You sounded pretty upset...

EXT. PARK - LATER

The cruiser's now parked under trees at the edge of the park.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
These charges won't stick. I
should've -- when I had *some*
plausible grounds -- I should've
pressed harder, like you said. I
could only see him as my neighbor --
I didn't see a monster. ...That doll
might've been the only thing that
kept my kids safe.

D.A. LARRSON
Stop beating yourself up.

She takes his hand. It's natural; they have history.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
Other parents won't let their kids
near mine. When you yelled at Frank
the other day --
(off her slight offense)
Not yelled, but he used that dick-
tone when I asked him about Gabe.
You put him in his place and -- I
didn't know what to think at first.
(MORE)

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN (CONT'D)
 More I thought about it, I realized
 you were right. They need that
 voice. A female influence.

She knows what he's asking: he wants to make their
 relationship public. She looks conflicted...

D.A. LARRSON
 You don't have to have all the
 answers. You're doing your best.
 Better than most parents.
 (then)
 But when this goes to trial the
 defense will pick me apart if they
 learn the prosecution's in bed with
 the arresting officer.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
 (knowing of course --)
 Right... If I have cause for bias,
 you may too.

D.A. LARRSON
 In the eyes of the defense. Yeah.
 (so...)
 Until the trial's over... we have to
 put the breaks on you and I.

It feels like she's breaking up with him -- whether that's
 true or not, it has the same sting.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
 Kim... When I was deputy, that was
 a long time ago --

D.A. LARRSON
 This isn't about --

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN
 That's not me anymore.

D.A. LARRSON
 I know, I know you've changed. This
 is truly only about perception.
 Just while the trial's going on.

Ehrenstein nods, hoping that's the whole truth...

INT. GUIDANCE OFFICE - DAY

Mrs. Fenney shakes her head.

MRS. FENNEY

That must be pretty upsetting. How are you feeling, Frank?

(off his shrug)

You don't want to talk about what you found on your porch -- fine. Can I ask what happened to your face? Are students picking on you?

FRANK

I wrestle. Why d'you even care? I thought the reason I'm here's to talk about what I found.

MRS. FENNEY

But you're not talking about what you found. Would you rather discuss the deposition? Just a few weeks away. Have you given it much thought?

FRANK

Why would I?

MRS. FENNEY

Because you'll be interrogated. The D.A.'s eager to build a case. People are angry. They want to ensure this pedophile doesn't walk free --

FRANK

Why do you keep saying "pedophile"?

MRS. FENNEY

He built an underage sex doll.

FRANK

It's like a friend -- a companion -- that's what they said on the news.

MRS. FENNEY

Then why did he keep it a secret?

Frank notices an overlooked spot of -- BLOOD -- on the cuff of his sleeve. From the dismembered doll, the bloody pile...

FRANK

...Did he hurt someone? Did I miss something? Or's he in jail 'cause he needed someone to talk to -- and no one did -- or at least not like how he felt he could've been honest. Clearly. And -- did you even know his wife died?

Fenney gives Frank the room to get this off his chest:

MRS. FENNEY

Were you at the funeral?

FRANK

Yeah, I was. And my brother and my dad. And only two other old people. So d'you think *maybe* it's possible it *might* actually be a companion? Is that so crazy? That maybe that bloody pile of cut up body parts on my porch *meant* something to him, meant a lot to him. And all he did was try to have someone understand him.

Frank's clearly been holding a lot in...

MRS. FENNEY

Frank, do you feel misunderstood?

FRANK

What? No. I don't know why you brought up... What was your question?

MRS. FENNEY

The deposition. In three weeks.

OFF Frank, all of this striking a deep nerve...

CUT TO:

EXT. COURTHOUSE - TO ESTABLISH

An impressive building. Snow's melting. Buds on trees.

INT. COURTHOUSE HALLWAY - DAY

A long hallway. Dark, imposing mahogany.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

This is a lot for 'em. So go easy.

Sheriff Ehrenstein speaks with D.A. Larrison.

D.A. LARRSON

I completely understand.

SHERIFF EHRENSTEIN

And -- If anything... comes up -- that I should know... If you learn anything that he did to my boys --

D.A. LARRSON

You'll be the first to know. Your boys aren't on trial.

(then)

But if I were to learn... I'm sure I won't, but -- you should be prepared for... In which case --

She puts her hand on his arm, a gentle squeeze. Professional enough for anyone passing. But tenderly, concerned because:

D.A. LARRSON (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Frank... What would you do?

OFF Sheriff Ehrenstein, jaw clenched, anxious introspection...

INT. COURTHOUSE ALCOVE - SAME

The bruise is gone from Frank's face, replaced by a nervous, sweaty sheen. He stands beside Gabe, who chatters:

GABE

I still talk to Timmy even though he eats lunch at a different table. Well the same table, but further down. I sit with the new kid, Russel -- he moved from Hawaii and has the biggest feet in the grade. I didn't think we'd be friends, but actually how he moved's exactly the same as me.

FRANK

What? We didn't move.

GABE

I mean 'cause how nobody knows him -- like how kids act like they don't know me. After what Mr. Jenkins did.

FRANK

Jesus, kids are jerks. Timmy was always a rude little... Forget him.

GABE

It's fine -- I like talking to Russel more, anyway. I still like Timmy. But it's like how my principal said -- it doesn't have to be to her, but that I should talk about Mr. Jenkins to someone. Do you talk to someone like Russel?

Frank considers that a beat...

FRANK

What does your friend get out of it?

GABE

Huh?

FRANK

You said she doesn't know anybody,
you're the only one she talks to.
Have you thought -- maybe she's
just scared. That she's using you.

GABE

Russel's a he.

Frank falters. Unclear whether he realizes he was projecting
his concerns about Titania onto his brother's relationships...

FRANK

I'm just saying people don't always
make friends for the right reasons.

INT. DEPOSITION ROOM - LATER

Frank nervously sips a soda. D.A. Larrison gives him a
reassuring smile.

D.A. LARRSON

Your testimony's important, Frank.
You can help us get an injunction.
Wouldn't you like to stop other
degenerates from ordering more dolls?

FRANK

Yeah. Definitely.

D.A. LARRSON

It's normal to have conflicting
feelings. You may have liked Mr.
Jenkins. It's okay to feel bad for
him. But the day he ordered that doll
he made a choice. He made a choice
every criminal deviant makes, and he
chose to go down that path, to where
he is now.

This lands heavy on Frank.

D.A. LARRSON (CONT'D)

That's why you have to answer
truthfully, no matter how scary the
truth is.

(MORE)

D.A. LARRSON (CONT'D)
 You're not betraying your neighbor's
 trust. He betrayed your trust. He
 betrayed the whole town's trust.
 (then)
 Do you remember your last encounter
 with Mr. Jenkins?

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FLASHBACK

*Frank at his curb with the trashcan, watching Jenkins walk
 away, turn the corner...*

D.A. LARRSON (V.O.)
 What did he say?

INT. FRANK'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK

Titania stares directly at camera, at us --

TITANIA
 Shouldn't that make it easier?

INT. DEPOSITION ROOM - RESET

BACK TO: Frank. Looking uncertain. The competing memories
 have him off-balance. He stares at D.A. Larrson.

FRANK
 Uh, yeah. Nothing. We didn't talk.

D.A. LARRSON
 You've known Jenkins a long time...

EXT. DRIVEWAY - FLASHBACK

*Frank at the mailbox. He takes a letter addressed from --
 JULIAN JENKINS -- and stuffs it in his pocket.*

D.A. LARRSON (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 ...Did he ever make you feel
 threatened? Uncomfortable?

TITANIA (V.O.)
 You're building me under Julian
 Jenkins' authorized account.

*Titania's lines overlap with the D.A.'s -- building a sense
 of confusion throughout the jumbled memories --*

INT. DEPOSITION ROOM - RESET

BACK TO: Frank trying to answer casually. Sweating.

FRANK

No. I...

INT. FRANK'S BEDROOM - FLASHBACK

Frank in front of his computer at night. Bruised eye. We've seen this before. Frank's staring at Titania's online avatar.

TITANIA

I hope I was real for you. Because you were real for me.

FRANK (V.O.)

...I never felt that way.

D.A. LARRSON (V.O.)

Were you ever scared?

TITANIA

This might be the last time we talk.

D.A. LARRSON (V.O.)

Frank? Is there something you want to tell me?

Instead of cutting away in the flashback (as we did when first seeing this scene), we stay on Frank as...

He opens his desk drawer. And pulls out an opened letter (stolen from Jenkins' mailbox), with Jenkins' signature on it.

Frank studies the signature closely. Then he reaches for his trackpad. And forges --

JULIAN JENKINS' SIGNATURE

He stares at the e-signature. Hand absently rubbing his scar.

FRANK (V.O.)

No. That's it.

Frank takes a deep breath -- and clicks his trackpad.

A weight is lifted. He leans back with a half-smile on his face, lost in thought.

PRE-LAP a hundred voices, a confusing deluge of sound --

CUT TO:

INT./EXT. SCHOOL BUS - DAY

Cliques of students goof off. Frank sits alone, wrestling bag at his feet; he's skipping practice. His foot taps anxiously --

EXT. JENKINS' HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

Frank sprints up the drive to Jenkins' house. A very large, conspicuous crate sits at the door.

Frank clearly knew it would be here.

He heaves the crate across the deck to the backdoor.

He hears his dad's sheriff cruiser coming up the driveway -- adrenaline pumping, Frank tears the sealed-premises sticker, pushes the crate through the back door into --

INT. JENKINS' KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

He shuts the door. Then removes packing materials, revealing --

TITANIA

-- in the "flesh," wearing a hospital gown. Frank's breath catches. He gazes at her face, scared, excited, amazed...

She's here. She's really here.

Frank grabs a *Quick-Start Guide* inside the crate, studies a diagram. It shows for him to squeeze her hand twice. He does.

A grid of lights glows beneath her skin.

Glancing at the manual, Frank performs CPR: quick compressions on her chest... He tilts her head back, gives two breaths into her mouth --

SHE INHALES DEEPLY

-- eyes blink open wide, she stares straight at us --

SMASH TO BLACK.

END OF PILOT