

NEW FRIENDS

"Pilot"

Written by

Paiman Kalayeh

COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

INT. HOME OFFICE - DAY

DOUG LARSON (30s, introspective, neurotic, Topher Grace adjacent) talks on the phone, as he paces around a furnished garage that now triples as a home office, a laundry room, and a temporary bedroom.

CUSTOMER SERVICE REP (O.S.)
(Indian accent)
Just a moment, sir, while I pull
up your account.

DOUG
No problem.

Doug listens to the sound of INTERMITTENT TYPING on the other end, as he plops down on an air mattress.

CUSTOMER SERVICE REP (O.S.)
How is your day going, sir?

DOUG
Good, good...
(then)
Actually... no, it's not. My day
has actually been going bad. I got
a parking ticket. I found out I
didn't get a job I really wanted.
And it's been a month to the day
since my girlfriend of four years
left me for a guy she met at an
escape club. But isn't it funny
how we're all programmed to say
"good," whenever someone asks how
we are? Even when we're actually
dying inside.

Doug listens to silence on the other end for a beat.

CUSTOMER SERVICE REP (O.S.)
It's like a reflex, sir.

Doug sits up.

DOUG
Exactly, Sudeep. It's Sudeep,
right?

CUSTOMER SERVICE REP (O.S.)

Yes, sir.

DOUG

Call me Doug.

CUSTOMER SERVICE REP (O.S.)

Okay... Doug.

As Doug continues talking on the phone, his older sister SALLY (early 40s, bubbly, woke, Jenna Fischer vibes) enters carrying a laundry basket. She eavesdrops in the background, while collecting clothes out of the dryer.

DOUG

I just feel like the world would be such a friendlier place, if we were more real with each other, you know?

CUSTOMER SERVICE REP (O.S.)

Yes, Doug. We need to let down our guard more often.

(then)

For security purposes, can you please give me the last four digits of your social security number?

DOUG

Three, seven, five, one.

Sally stops folding and gives Doug a death stare.

SALLY

Are you opening up to customer service again?

Doug turns to Sally.

DOUG

(indignant)

No.

(into phone)

Listen, Sudeep, I'm going to have to call you back.

Off Doug's guilty expression, we...

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLE

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. HOME OFFICE - LATER

Doug helps Sally fold the remaining laundry.

SALLY

Dude, you gotta stop calling customer service for companionship. It's creepy. And sad. But mostly creepy.

DOUG

Yeah, I know, but I have no more companions, remember? All my friends "unfollowed" me.

SALLY

What about John and Tim? I thought you guys were ride or die.

DOUG

We were. Until they got married and had kids. Now, we're more like text or email.

SALLY

What about your college friends?

DOUG

I spend more time with them on Facebook than I do with their real faces.

SALLY

What about your high school friends? I know you all live in different places, but can't you call them instead of Bank of America?

DOUG

Oh, we stopped calling each other in like 2006. Now, we only keep in touch with "likes" and "birthday memes." Friends still talk on the phone?

SALLY

Yeah, all the time. It's good for you, Doug. You need new friends.

DOUG

Do you know how hard it is to make friends after 30, Sally? Like "talk on the phone" friends?

SALLY

Not harder than after 40, but I managed. You just have to try new things. Get out of your comfort zone.

DOUG

You have no idea how "out of my comfort zone" I've gotten.

CUT TO:

INT. CROSSFIT GYM - DAY (MONTAGE)

A CHYRON that reads "CROSSFIT" appears, as Doug tries to keep up with the CLASS while they do burpees, but he face-plants.

CUT TO:

EXT. BLACK ROCK DESERT - DAY (MONTAGE)

A CHYRON that reads "BURNING MAN" appears, as Doug, dressed like a Mad Max extra, stands in a DIDGERIDOO CIRCLE, enjoying the soothing, bass-heavy sounds until a gust of wind blows dust in his eyes and mouth.

CUT TO:

INT. UCB THEATRE - NIGHT (MONTAGE)

A CHYRON that reads "IMPROV" appears, as a GROUP of IMPROVISERS on stage pretend to deliver a baby, played by Doug, who is butt-naked and slathered in Crisco.

BACK TO SCENE:

DOUG

I took improv, Sally. Improv.

SALLY

Stop, you're making me upset.

DOUG

I've tried everything, but it just seems like no one wants to "friend me" in real life.

SALLY

Have you tried Squadr?

DOUG

The friend app?

SALLY

Yeah, it sets you up on a blind date with a group of complete strangers based on its "compatibility algorithm."

DOUG

You have a clipping for me, don't you?

SALLY

May...be.

Sally hands Doug a CLIPPING from her pocket.

DOUG

Women's Health, nice. Mom would be proud. Wait. Did she send this to you?

SALLY

May...be. But I wouldn't endorse it if I didn't think it worked. You know my horrible boss?

DOUG

The one who monitors your lunch breaks?

SALLY

Yeah, well, she used it after she alienated everyone in her life with her resting bitch heart. If it worked for her, then it has to work for a nice, compassionate, outgoing--

DOUG

Nice try, Sals, but pandering to my severely shattered ego isn't going to get me to try Squadr.

Doug makes a "keep it coming" hand gesture, inviting more flattery. Sally doesn't miss a beat.

SALLY

Magnetic, witty, compassionate,
outgoing--

DOUG

Okay, now, you're just repeating
yourself.

Doug looks at the clipping, not completely sold.

DOUG (CONT'D)

But isn't Squadr just for like
really sad, lonely people?

Sally gives Doug a deadpan stare.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Right.

CUT TO:

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - MEETING ROOM - EVENING

Doug sits in a circle, surrounded by a GROUP OF STRANGERS from all walks of life. He looks across the circle and notices BETTY (early 30s, hot-by-accident, introvert, Aubrey Plaza swagger). He quickly darts his eyes away from hers when she looks in his direction.

After a beat of awkward silence, PAM (40s, intimidating, Leslie Jones chutzpah) pipes up.

PAM

So, what do we do now?

Doug takes out a few books about friendship from his backpack -- *The Art of Making Friends*, *Friendship for Dummies*, and *Add a Friend IRL*.

DOUG

I actually did a deep dive on
forming lasting friendships before
coming here, and now would be a
great opportunity to do an
icebreaker.

An Iranian immigrant REZA (40s, joyful, fish-out-of-water) picks up a SMALL COOLER next to his feet.

REZA
 (Iranian accent)
 You need ice? I have extra from my
 lunch.

Reza opens the cooler and offers ice to the group, as
 CRYSTAL (24, millennial, impressionable, smoke-show)
 looks up from her phone.

CRYSTAL
 (sincere)
 Wait. So you really break ice when
 you do an icebreaker?

SPENCER (60s, posh, vain, Jeff Goldblum charm) reaches in
 Reza's cooler and takes out a BOTTLE OF YOGURT SODA.

SPENCER
 Is that "doogh"? I haven't had a
 carbonated yogurt soda since I
 golfed with the Shah in the 70s.
 (to Reza)
 May I?

REZA
 Please. My doogh is your doogh.

Spencer cracks it open and takes a swig, then struggles
 to get it down.

SPENCER
 Delicious.

ANGLE ON Doug, flipping to a tabbed section in his
Friendship for Dummies book.

DOUG
 Here we go: "Icebreaker
 suggestions." Okay, here's a safe
 one... "Go around the room, say
 your name and a fun fact about
 yourself."

PAM
 What if you don't have a "fun
 fact" about yourself?

DOUG
 Everyone has something interesting
 about them.

PAM

Not me. You know the most interesting man? I'm the least interesting woman.

DOUG

Well, that's pretty interesting.

PAM

Can that count as my turn then?

DOUG

Sure, but I didn't catch your name.

PAM

Pam. We good?

DOUG

Yes, nice to meet you, Pam.

(to the group)

I'm Doug, and a fun fact about me issssss I studied improv for two and a half years.

REZA

What is "eeem-mprov?"

PAM

Improv is what white people do when their daddies neglect them.

BETTY

Or any type of comedy really.

ANGLE ON Spencer, looking at the man sitting next to him like he recognizes him. The man, ISAIAH (30s, garrulous, pop culture savant, Sam Richardson warmth), turns to Spencer and smiles.

ISAIAH

Hello.

SPENCER

You look so familiar.

ISAIAH

(non-judgmental)

Because you can't tell black people apart, or because I recently bagged your groceries at the Whole Foods on Santa Monica.

SPENCER

That's it! The Whole Foods reason.
I voted for Obama. The first time.

Isaiah waves to the group.

ISAIAH

Good evening, I'm Isaiah
Washington. Like the homophobic
actor. Minus the homophobia. And a
fun fact about me isssss I've seen
Barenaked Ladies live 64 times.

CRYSTAL

Oh, are you a sex addict? So's my
brother.

ISAIAH

No, Barenaked Ladies is a popular
rock band from the 90s.

(singing)

*Chickity China the Chinese
chicken. You have a drumstick and
your brain stops tickin'.*

CRYSTAL

(alarmed)

Wait. Chicken from Chinese
restaurants can make you go brain
dead?

ISAIAH

The lyrics aren't meant to be
taken literally. I think.

Everyone turns to Spencer, who bows to the group with his
hands in prayer.

SPENCER

Namaste. I'm Spencer Farnsworth
and yes, that is Farnsworth as in
Farnsworth Toilet Seat Covers, the
award-winning toilet seat cover.
And I guess a fun fact about me is
I once dined with the Dalai Lama
and Richard Gere.

DOUG

No way! What did you ask his
holiness?

SPENCER

If he ever regretted turning down
a part?

(MORE)

SPENCER (CONT'D)

(flummoxed)

Did you know Richard Gere passed on Alec Baldwin's role in *It's Complicated*?

ISAIAH

Yeah. So he could do *Nights of Rodanthe*. I'm a big Gere-head.

Everyone turns to Betty, who sits next to Isaiah.

BETTY

(nervous)

My turn. Okaaaayyyy... um... hi... I'm Betty... and a fun fact about me issssss... I draw graphic novels.

ISAIAH

I love *The Walking Dead* books.

BETTY

Oh, my stuff's more "underground."

DOUG

What's the name of one of your books?

BETTY

My latest is called *How to Become a Self-Loathing Misanthrope in Five Easy Steps*, but you wouldn't know it. "Underground" is code for "not published yet."

DOUG

(optimistic)

Yet.

BETTY

Right. Yet.

Doug and Betty lock eyes for a split second. Just long enough to suggest they might have an electric, series-long "will they/won't they" that will break our hearts into a million fucking little pieces. Or they might not.

ANGLE ON Reza, bowing his head to the group.

REZA

Salaam-alaykum, my name is Reza Mahmood Soltani. I drive Uber. And funny fact about me is I am doctor back in Iran.

BETTY
Oh, wow, what kind of doctor?

REZA
How do you say...
(motions to crotch)
Khram.

BETTY
A urologist?

REZA
No...

Reza pulls the loose skin on his neck.

REZA (CONT'D)
Khram.

CRYSTAL
A neck doctor?

SPENCER
A ball sac doctor?

BETTY
Also known as a urologist.

REZA
Yes, ball sac.

PAM
Copy that.

Everyone turns to Crystal, who is on her phone.

CRYSTAL
Give me a second, I'm almost done
posting a boomerang.

Crystal blows a kiss to her phone, then taps the screen.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)
There.
(looks up from phone)
Okay, so, I'm Crystal Baller. You
might recognize me from "the
'gram."

BETTY
I'm not on Instagram.

PAM

I deleted all my social media after my cousin got catfished by an old Filipino lady pretending to be Idris Elba.

CRYSTAL

Oh... well, I have like over ten thousand followers.

ISAIAH

Ten thousand and one.

Isaiah holds up his phone.

CRYSTAL

Aww, thanks! Anyway, I guess a fun fact about me isssss I got retweeted by Jen Selter once.

DOUG

Who's Jen Selter?

CRYSTAL

Umm, only like the biggest Instagram fitness model ever. She made over ten million in sponsorships last year.

Crystal holds up her phone, which plays a video of Selter doing her signature squats in a tropical setting.

BETTY

This is America.

The conversation dies down and morphs into an awkward silence.

PAM

Now, what?

ISAIAH

Every group of friends on TV has a central hangout like "Central Perk" in *Friends*. Maybe we should establish our central hangout.

DOUG

Great idea, Isaiah, but...

Doug flips to a section of *The Art of Friendship* book.

DOUG (CONT'D)

The more time we can spend getting to know each other, the more likely we'll form intimacy, which is the key to becoming good friends. That's why you usually make your best friends at school or work.

BETTY

Because you spend so much time just talking.

DOUG

Exactly.

ISAIAH

We could try to get jobs at the same company.

SPENCER

Orrrrrr we can start our own company. I can back the entire series A to get us operational.

DOUG

I was thinking something less legal and more intimate. Like a road trip. I mean, what better way to get to know each other than...

(singing)

On the road again! I just can't wait to get on the--

Doug turns to a stone-faced Pam to finish the lyric.

PAM

I get car sick.

BETTY

Me too.

REZA

I get sick of being in car.

DOUG

Okay, no road trip. Got it.

SPENCER

Sooooo, should I have my people lease an office space?

BETTY
Orrrrrr, should we discover our
central hangout?

Betty and Doug lock eyes again for a brief second.

BETTY (CONT'D)
I don't know. Sounds kinda fun.

DOUG
Why don't we put it to a vote?

Doug looks around the room. No one objects.

DOUG (CONT'D)
All those in favor of launching a
small business raise their hands.

Only Spencer raises his hand.

DOUG (CONT'D)
All those in favor of discovering
our central hangout raise their
hands.

Everyone else raises their hands, even Spencer.

SPENCER
(admitting)
I always wanted a central hangout.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. ORIGIN COFFEE - DAY

Doug, Crystal, Spencer, Pam, Betty, Isaiah and Reza walk into a trendy coffee shop. They size up the PRETENTIOUS CLIENTELE, who are observing a BEANIE-TOUTING BARISTA, as he delicately pours hot water over a "dripper."

BETTY

I feel like we just walked into a meth lab, but for caffeine.

ISAIAH

This is the most centrally located coffee shop to all of us.

Spencer looks up at the ARTISANAL CHALKBOARD MENU.

SPENCER

Excellent bean selection. I haven't had an Yirgacheffe roast since I paddle boarded the Nile.

REZA

Pattle bored?

PAM

It's a sport only rich white people do like polo or lacrosse.

SPENCER

I used to play polo and lacrosse.

PAM

(to Reza)

See.

Crystal looks up at the menu.

CRYSTAL

Do they have like a pumpkin spice bean?

Doug notices something offscreen, flabbergasted.

DOUG

Umm... you guys should check this out before you order anything.

The group turn their heads in the direction Doug is looking, only to find another GROUP OF FRIENDS already sitting in the main couch area.

They glare at our group with palpable hostility.

ISAIAH

It appears this central hangout has already been claimed.

CRYSTAL

Whatever. This place is too "bougie" anyway.

SPENCER

Don't you mean "bourgeois"?

CRYSTAL

No, I mean like "super fancy." You speak French?

PAM

I don't even drink coffee.

REZA

Me either. Too bitter.

Reza takes a swig of his bitter yogurt soda.

BETTY

What are some other TV central hangouts besides coffee shops?

ISAIAH

"Restaurant establishments" are pretty common, like "the Peach Pit" in 90210 or "the diner" in *Seinfeld*. Although, some would argue "Jerry's apartment" was the central hangout. Personally, I'm Team "Diner."

DOUG

(suggesting)

I saw a diner down the street on the way here.

CUT TO:

INT. DINER - MOMENTS LATER

The group enters only to find another GROUP OF FRIENDS sitting at a large booth.

They glare at our group with palpable hostility.

BETTY
What about "bars"?

ISAIAH
Yeah, a "bar" is a popular central hangout: *Cheers, How I Met Your Mother, Always Sunny.*

PAM
There's a wine bar around the corner with light jazz and complimentary tastings from 5-8.

Everyone turns to Pam.

PAM (CONT'D)
(covering)
I heard... back at the coffee place.

CUT TO:

INT. WINE BAR - MOMENTS LATER

The group enters, and the BARTENDER immediately recognizes Pam.

BARTENDER
Hey, Pam!

Everyone turns to Pam and gives her a knowing look.

PAM
What? We go to the same gym.

ANGLE ON Doug, noticing something disappointing offscreen.

DOUG
You gotta be kidding me.

The rest of the group turns only to find another GROUP OF FRIENDS already holding court at a high top.

They glare at our group with palpable hostility.

BETTY
Okay, is every central hangout taken in this city?

Pam picks up a WINE TASTING SAMPLE off the bar and swishes it around, while a LIGHT JAZZ TRIO plays on the stage behind her.

PAM
Maybe it's a sign.

ISAIAH
A sign of what?

Pam downs the sample and puts the glass back on the bar.

PAM
The universe doesn't want us to be a squad.

No one says anything.

Doug looks worried. He can feel their temporary bond quickly slipping away. He needs this.

DOUG
No... the universe wants us to be a squad. The universe just needs to show us a central hangout that's actually available. Like... my place. It's just a few blocks from here.

BETTY
Like "Jerry's apartment."

DOUG
Right, or *Three's Company*, or... umm... back me up, here, Isaiah.

ISAIAH
New Girl, *Melrose Place*, *The Big Bang Theory* -- apartments are arguably the most popular central hangout on TV.

DOUG
Whadaya say, Pam? One more stop before you break up the band?

Pam picks up another wine tasting sample off the bar and swishes it around, contemplating her fate.

PAM
Fine. But if the universe gives me another sign, or you have a Fifty Shades room, I'm out.

A different BARTENDER recognizes Pam.

BARTENDER 2

Hey, Pam.

Everyone gives Pam a knowing look.

PAM

What? He...also goes to my gym.

INT. HOME OFFICE - LATER

Reza, Isaiah, Pam, Crystal, Spencer and Betty awkwardly stand in Doug's cramped residence, while he tidies up.

DOUG

Sorry for the mess. I wasn't expecting guests.

Isaiah bounces up and down on Doug's air mattress.

ISAIAH

Is this the Serta Never Flat? My parents have the Coleman Double High, but this feels firmer.

DOUG

Yeah, I'm just slinging it here at my sister's home office until I find a new place.

SPENCER

What happened to your old place?

DOUG

My, uh... ex... lives there.

ANGLE ON Betty, taking a mental note: "Single. Check."

CRYSTAL

You used to live with your ex? That must have been super weird.

Doug holds up the *Add a Friend IRL* book, changing subjects.

DOUG

Okay, so, according to my research, the more we open up, the faster our bond will deepen. So, why don't we go around the room another time...

PAM

Here we go again.

DOUG

But this time, let's reveal something real about ourselves, like why we're here.

BETTY

Like, why we joined Squadr?

DOUG

Yeah, but you have to keep it 100. Otherwise, the bonding won't take effect.

Pam folds her arms and lets out a deep sigh.

DOUG (CONT'D)

I'll start -- I joined Squadr because... well... keeping it 100... I'm sick and tired of calling customer service numbers just to make small talk with another human being.

CRYSTAL

That's creepy. And sad. But mostly creepy.

DOUG

Yeah, I know, that's why I'm here -
- I want to have real, human interactions again, instead of creepy, desperate ones -- I want to have real face-to-face conversations again, instead of occasional text chains -- and I want to have real friends again, in the flesh, instead of former real friends, who only exist on social media, or should I say, anti-social media.

Isaiah stands up and starts a slow clap, but after three claps, no one joins in, so he stops.

ISAIAH

No one's gonna join in. Cool.

Isaiah sits back down.

DOUG

What about you, Isaiah? What brought you here?

ISAIAH

Well, it's not as significant or inspiring as your answer, but, in a nutshell, my parents made me. They think I spend too much time on my computer and said I needed to make some friends or else they'd change the wifi password and never tell me the new one.

CRYSTAL

Heartless.

ISAIAH

Actually, it was pretty heartfelt. They really care about me, so here I am.

Doug turns clockwise in the circle to Spencer.

DOUG

What about you, Spencer? You seem like you have no problem making friends wherever you go.

SPENCER

That's funny, my personal guru said the same thing to me the other day. And it's true, I have many, many, many, many friends.

BETTY

So, why'd you join Squadr?

SPENCER

Because I was kite-surfing next to a pod of dolphins the other day and I had this epiphany.

REZA

(sidebar, to Pam)
"Kite-surfing" is rich white people sport?

PAM

That's right, dear. You're getting it.

SPENCER

As I became one with the dolphin pod, I realized my human pod is only made up of ultra-rich, ultra-successful people. I should have a pod with more regular, everyday people so I can get into the heads of my customers. Figure out what they really want in a toilet seat cover. So, I had my team set me up on Squadr, and the rest, as they say, is history.

REZA

(sidebar, to Pam)

"Water skiing?"

PAM

You got it.

Doug turns to Reza, who's next in the circle.

DOUG

How about you, Reza? Why'd you join Squadr?

REZA

I just move here before Travel Ban 6.0 went into effect. All my friends also plan to move here to open restaurant together, but now they can't because of ban. So, I am here all by myself. I don't know many people, so when I heard one of my passenger talk about the Squatter, I log on.

CRYSTAL

What kind of restaurant were you going to open?

REZA

(obvious)

Persian.

CRYSTAL

Oh, because "poke" is really hot right now.

Doug turns to Betty, who's next in the circle.

DOUG

What about you, Betty?

BETTY

100... okay... well... I joined Squadr becausssse... well... I have debilitating social anxiety... and my therapist thinks it's a good idea for me to step outside of my comfort zone more and meet new people. So, here I am, stepping outside. Yep. Stepping waaaayyyy outside.

CRYSTAL

You have anxiety? OMG, I got the worst FOMO last year, when I couldn't go to Coachella.

Doug turns to Crystal, who is next in the circle.

DOUG

What about you, Crystal? It sounds like you have thousands of people who want to be in your squad.

CRYSTAL

Yeah, but they're all just thirsty creeps who want to have my babies.
(to Isaiah)
No offense.

ISAIAH

(chipper)
None taken.

CRYSTAL

I grew apart from my IRL friends, when I started pouring all my time and energy into becoming an influencer. So, I signed up for Squadr to make new IRL besties, but also because they're paying me to document my experience.

Crystal holds her phone up and talks into it.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

Hey everybody, I'm on my first Squadr date. Okay, gotta go. Don't forget to swipe up for new merch!

Crystal puts her phone down, as Doug turns to Pam, who looks back at him, stone-faced.

DOUG

What about you, Pam? Why'd you--

PAM

Pass.

Doug looks at the rest of the group. The mood in the room suddenly gets weird.

DOUG

Don't worry, Pam. This is a safe place.

PAM

I'm good.

Doug looks at the rest of the group again.

DOUG

Okay... um... we can just come back to you later.

PAM

No, we can't.

DOUG

We can't?

PAM

No, because we won't be here.

Pam gets up and puts on her coat.

DOUG

But, Pam--

PAM

But nothing, Doug. Don't you get it? You can't just go around forcing people to open up. And you sure as hell can't go around forcing friendships to happen. They should happen naturally. And there's nothing natural about this.

DOUG

Pam, wait. The universe didn't give you a sign.

PAM

Here's my sign.

Pam flips Doug the middle finger, as she abruptly crosses off.

Doug turns to the rest of the group and notices Spencer, Crystal and Reza putting on their coats.

DOUG
Where are you going?

CRYSTAL
You made it weird, sooooo.

SPENCER
I was picturing a central hangout
with more seating options.

REZA
I'm his Uber.

As they cross off, Isaiah and Betty put on their coats.

DOUG
You too?

ISAIAH
I'm very sensitive to personal
conflict.

BETTY
The books were a little much.

Betty locks eyes with Doug one last time.

BETTY (CONT'D)
Nice to meet you.

DOUG
You too.

Betty and Isaiah cross off, leaving Doug looking defeated and alone in his shitty living situation.

CUT TO:

INT. HOME OFFICE - LATER

Doug paces around the room, on the phone.

DOUG
That's what I'm saying -- we live
in a "swipe left" society. Nobody
sticks it out anymore, you know?

Doug turns to find Sally, hands on hips, doing her best "Angry Mama" imitation.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Listen, Deepak, I'm going to have
to call you back.

Off Doug's guilty expression, we...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT 3

FADE IN:

INT. HOME OFFICE - LATER

Doug stands near Sally, as she loads the washer.

SALLY

I thought you were done with
customer service companionship,
Doug. What happened to Squadr?

DOUG

I joined and went on a date.

Sally stops loading the washer.

SALLY

Aaannnddd?

DOUG

Aaannnddd... it didn't go so well.

SALLY

Why? What happened?
(psychic)

Did you make it weird by trying to
start a deep conversation?

DOUG

No. Maybe. Yes.
(frustrated groan)
How the hell did you know that?

SALLY

Because older sister intuition.
But also because you've been
making it weird by trying to start
deep conversations since we were
kids.

CUT TO:

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

A 5-YEAR-OLD DOUG and a 10-YEAR-OLD SALLY eat dinner at a
table with their PARENTS.

DOUG

Mom, Dad, what are the highest and
lowest points of your life?

Doug and Sally's parents look at each other, stumped.

BACK TO SCENE:

DOUG (CONT'D)

I was just trying to get the group to connect. Intimacy is the key to forming close friendships.

SALLY

Is that something you learned in a book about making friends?

DOUG

Big sister intuition?

SALLY

No. There's a giant stack of books about making friends right there.

Sally points to a stack of books about making friends on Doug's nightstand, which is actually a file cabinet.

DOUG

I can't help it if I'm interested in the human condition.

SALLY

And I love that about you, Doug. But you can't learn how to make friends from a book. Friendship is one of those things you can never master. You have to just let it happen on its own. No interference. Capiche?

Sally lightly double-smacks Doug on the cheek.

SALLY (CONT'D)

Sorry. I don't why I just turned into an offensive Italian-American stereotype.

CUT TO:

INT. HOME OFFICE - LATER

Doug lies in bed, looking at his phone.

INSERT PHONE SCREEN - Doug opens the Squadr app and clicks "Recent Squads." We see icons for Reza, Spencer, Betty, Isaiah, Crystal and Pam.

Doug's thumb hovers over the "Group Message" icon for a beat, before clicking it.

Doug sits up and begins typing a message in landscape mode, which means it's going to be thoughtful AF.

CUT TO:

EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - NEXT DAY (ESTABLISHING)

CUT TO:

INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - MEETING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The whole group sits in a circle, like at the beginning of the episode, except for Pam. Doug glances at his watch, then at Pam's empty chair. She's not coming.

DOUG

Okay... I guess we're all here.

Doug turns to the group.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Thanks for coming. I know I said it in my group message, but--

Pam suddenly enters and takes her seat, throwing Doug off.

DOUG (CONT'D)

But... let me start... by saying it again...

Doug looks directly at Pam.

DOUG (CONT'D)

I am so sorry for trying to manufacture our friendship. I should have never pressured anyone to open up, especially you, Pam. I just really wanted us to click, which, now that I think of it, is probably why I have such a hard time making new friends. I'm always waaaayyy too eager to make a connection with everyone I meet and just end up driving them away with my deep conversations.

Doug turns to the group.

DOUG (CONT'D)

Anyway, I know, we can just go on another Squadr date and forget we ever met, but what if we went on a do-over? Only this time, I swear I won't try to get deep or reference any books. This time -- I'll let our friendship develop naturally. Like all friendships should.

Doug looks out at the circle. No one speaks up, then...

Isaiah stands up and starts another slow clap, but this time, after the third clap, Betty stands up and joins in... then Reza... then Spencer... and Crystal... who simultaneously films it on her phone.

Everyone turns to Pam, who stays seated, staring forward, stone-faced, which immediately kills the vibe. Everyone sits back down.

Beat of silence.

PAM

I push people away.

Everyone turns to Pam.

PAM (CONT'D)

That's what I do.

Pam turns to Doug.

PAM (CONT'D)

That's what I did to you the other night, because, if you couldn't tell, it's a little hard for me to let people in. Ever since my best friend took her life six years ago, I started putting all these walls up.

The group listens intently.

PAM (CONT'D)

I couldn't bear getting that close to anyone and then suddenly losing them all over again, so I started shutting everyone out... until I had no one left to shut out.

Pam turns to Doug.

PAM (CONT'D)

I'm the one who should be apologizing. My husband says I have to learn how to pull instead of pushing all the time. I'm working on that. Anyway... that's why I joined Squadr.

The group looks around at each other. Mostly, they're all looking at Doug.

DOUG

I feel like the natural thing to do right now is a group hug, but I don't want to make anyone uncomfortable.

The group looks around at each other. Mostly, they're all looking at Pam now.

PAM

Okay, but make it fast.

They stand up and have a very quick group hug, then sit back down.

PAM (CONT'D)

Now, what?

ISAIAH

Well, technically, we never found our central hangout.

CRYSTAL

OMG, you guys! I don't know why I didn't think of this the other night but I know the perfect place!

CUT TO:

INT. "CENTRAL PERK" POP-UP - DAY

The group sits in the main couch area at a pop-up "Central Perk," just like the cast of *Friends*. Spencer leans back in his comfy armchair, as he sips an espresso.

SPENCER

Now, these are some great seating options.

Crystal takes a selfie with her coffee.

CRYSTAL

Yeah, and they have a pumpkin
spice bean.

DOUG

Not to mention the best part --
this place hasn't been claimed.

PAM

Well... now it has.

The group looks around at each other. Mostly, they're all
looking at Doug again.

DOUG

Didn't you say, you don't drink
coffee?

PAM

Reza and I went halvesies on a case
of La Croix. We good.

Reza takes a La Croix out of his cooler and hands it to
Pam, then offers another can to the rest of the group.

REZA

Fancy water?

ISAIAH

No thanks. All flavored water
tastes like Skittle burps to me.

Pam stops sipping her La Croix and looks grossed out, as
Betty turns to Doug.

BETTY

Wait. Wasn't there something in
your group message about an
"apology pizza?" Or am I just
making that up?

DOUG

You are 100 percent making that
up.

Betty and Doug lock eyes, as the gang continues to
naturally bond. We pull back in a crane shot on this new
set of friends. Not close friends. But they might get
there eventually.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

FADE IN:

INT. "CENTRAL PERK" POP-UP - DAY

The whole gang sits in the main couch area, sipping their beverages. Betty gets up.

BETTY

I'm going to get an overpriced baked thingy. Anyone need anything?

Everyone shakes their head, so Betty crosses off. Isaiah notices Doug watch Betty cross off, longingly.

ISAIAH

(sotto, to Doug)

Why are you longingly watching Betty? Do you want to have her babies?

DOUG

No. I wasn't longingly watching her. I was longingly watching that customer enjoy their overpriced baked thingy.

ISAIAH

Good, because whenever someone dates someone in their friend group on TV, it usually causes a major rift when things don't work out, which they usually never do.

DOUG

Well, it's a good thing I don't want to have her babies then.

Doug locks eyes with Betty from across the room and forces a smile, as we...

FADE OUT.

END OF EPISODE