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# THE HALF OF IT

Written by  
Alice Wu

SHOOTING SCRIPT - 04/08/2019

BLUE REVISED PAGES (04/18/2019) : 5, 6, 13, 17, 19, 23, 25, 30, 31, 31A,  
38, 41, 42, 44, 58, 63, 67, 69, 70, 75, 76, 79, 81, 85, 85A, 86, 86A, 90, 98, 99,

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BLACK:

1 ANIMATION SEQUENCE (NOTE: STILL TRYING STUFF!) 1

"Love is simply the name for the desire and pursuit of the whole." - Plato, The Symposium

A BLANK SHEET OF PARCHMENT.

ELLIE (V.O.)

The Ancient Greeks believed humans once had four arms, four legs, and a single head made of two faces.

GRAVEL emerges from the center of the page and "crushes" into BLACK POWDER which forms the base for CHARCOAL STROKES. Animated STROKES illustrate a TWIN-BEING.

ELLIE (V.O.)

We were happy. Complete.

A CHARCOAL HEART encircles the twin-being. Both faces smile.

ELLIE (V.O.)

So complete that the gods - fearing our wholeness would quell our need for worship - cleaved us in two...

The page TEARS in half; the Twin-Being is SPLIT!

ELLIE (V.O.)

...leaving our split-selves to wander the earth in misery, forever longing...

ZOOM IN on one of the halves as it wanders the earth CRYING. The strokes of its body morph into a lonely CAVE PAINTING FIGURE, also crying.

ELLIE (V.O.)

...longing...

Morph into the "Mona Lisa"...crying. "The Scream"... crying.

ELLIE (V.O.)

...longing...

Morph into a classic black and white movie with a closeup of an actress, you guessed it: crying.

(CONTINUED)

1 CONTINUED:

1

ELLIE (V.O.)  
...for the other half of our soul.

From cave paintings to Ingrid Bergman. So many tears.

ELLIE (V.O.)  
It is said that when one half finds  
its other...

Pull out to reveal: the reverse shot to that classic movie!  
Lover's eyes meet! Each reverts back to their split-being.

ELLIE (V.O.)  
...there is an unspoken  
understanding, a unity - and each  
would know no greater joy than  
this.

A classic KISS. Music SWELLS as the charcoal halves converge  
into a BIG ANIMATED CHARCOAL HEART...

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

2 INT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH SCHOOL - LOCKERS - MORNING

2

A CRAPPY GRAFFITI HEART on a high school wall.

Two seniors joined as one by the lips.

ELLIE (V.O.)  
Of course, the Ancient Greeks never  
went to high school.

BELL RINGS. The seniors break apart like it was nothing.

SENIOR GUY  
Good hangout.

SENIOR GIRL  
Whatever.

Both pull out phones, part ways.

ELLIE (V.O.)  
Or they'd realize...

Sound of the MORNING BELL dissolves into...

3 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH - NEXT DAY 3

...the BLAST of a TRAIN WHISTLE... growing LOUDER...

CLOSE ON the FACE OF A GIRL, 17, pressed against a LAPTOP KEYBOARD, her body curled around a copy of PLATO'S SYMPOSIUM, fast asleep inside a frosted TICKET BOOTH. She jerks awake.

ELLIE

Crap.

This is ELLIE CHU.

She bolts out of the booth.

On her computer screen we see (and hear in voiceover):

ELLIE (V.O.)

We don't need the gods to mess things up for us.

A PASSING TRAIN wipes frame...

4 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - MOMENTS LATER 4

...leaving Ellie on the LEFT SIDE of the platform, her back to us, holding a signal light.

On the right, SUPER: "THE HALF OF IT"

The station is otherwise empty.

5 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - MORNING 5

SERIES OF CLOSEUP SHALLOW-FOCUS SHOTS:

- ELLIE'S HEAD POPS OUT OF A SWEATER

ELLIE (V.O.)

If you ask me...

- TWO FROZEN SWANSON CHICKEN PIES ON THE COUNTER

ELLIE (V.O.)

...people spend far too much time looking for someone to complete them.

A fork jabs holes into the tops of the pies.

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

ELLIE (V.O.)  
How many people find perfect love?

- LONE SOCK UNDER A BENCH. FINGERS REACH IN VAIN.

ELLIE (V.O.)  
Or if they do... make it last?

Angle on half of Ellie coming out from under the bench, one sock on, one bare foot. Drift over to a BURSTING BAG OF DIRTY LAUNDRY... Drift further to an ALTAR for HER DEAD MOTHER. We linger on a PHOTO OF HER MOTHER: young, laughing, striking the same pose as the STATUE of BOB'S BIG BOY just behind her.

ELLIE (V.O.)  
More evidence of Camus' theory that  
life is irrational and meaningless.

- A PRINTER spits out a page on which is written:

"...Camus' theory that life is irrational and meaningless."

A HAND grabs the page, signing "Trig Carson, AP English".

CUT to ANOTHER PAPER. On its last page:

"We don't need the gods to mess things up for us."

The hand signs - in new penmanship - "Todd Ball, English"

Papers are tossed onto a stack.

- ON COVERS GENTLY BEING PULLED OVER EDWIN CHU, 50's, snoring in a LA-Z-BOY.

ELLIE (V.O.)  
And that, my friends, is some A+  
love philosophy right there.

In the deep background, Ellie tiptoes out.

- CHECKS OFF A LIST BY THE DOOR: "Long underwear" (check)  
"Defrost pies" (check) "Laundry" (does NOT check) "Stay Away  
From Boys" (check) "Have Good Day" (check)

ELLIE (V.O.)  
Or A-, if Mrs. G is in a bad mood.

The door slams behind her.

CUE OPENING CREDITS

6 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - VIADUCT ROAD - SAME MORNING 6

A dilapidated sign announces: "It's Happening In SQUAHAMISH!"

The sign rusts in an empty field.

Ellie speeds past on her bike toward a viaduct.

7 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - ROAD INTO TOWN/CATHOLIC CHURCH - MOMENTS 7  
LATER

The road continues past a small CATHOLIC CHURCH. Outside, a  
Man with a SIGN: "JESUS IS COMING. ARE YOU READY?"

FATHER SHANLEY, 90's, stands in the doorway bellowing:

FATHER SHANLEY

"Outside are the dogs the sorcerers  
the immoral persons and everyone  
WHO LOVES AND PRACTICES LYING!"

Ellie flies by.

8 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - ROAD INTO TOWN/CARSON GRAVEL SIGN - 8  
MOMENTS LATER

A giant granite sign heralds "CARSON GRAVEL. We're more than  
just gravel!"

Ellie huffs past it up a hill and around the bend.

9 EXT. SQUAHAMISH ROAD INTO TOWN - CONTINUOUS 9

A TRUCK rips by, a group of OBNOXIOUS TEEN BOYS heckle from  
the pick-up truck:

OBNOXIOUS TEENS

ELLIE CHUUU! Chugga-chugga-chugga-  
chugga, Chugga chugga... CHU CHU!

\*

They tear off, laughing.

Ellie presses on toward the peak...

...and coasts down the other side.

We lift up to see this former mining town in its faded glory.

A SWELL OF OFF-KEY SINGING from a STUDENT CHOIR.

10 INT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - MUSIC ROOM - MOMENTS LATER 10

A handsome, pained DEACON JAY FLORES brings it to a close.

DEACON FLORES

Fantastic. The angels weep with  
joy.

\*  
\*

Hidden in the corner: Ellie at a keyboard, adjacent to the  
BAND. She sneaks a term paper into the folds of a songbook,  
sends it down the reed section.

On Ellie's phone: "HushMo: Todd B. sent you \$20."

\*

DEACON FLORES (CONT'D)

Few announcements. Once again: wall  
tubas have to be checked out before  
use. These are delicate instruments  
with sticky valves...

\*

Songbooks travel the room. HushMo notifications roll in.

\*

As the Deacon waxes on, we see kids on their phones.

One SHY BOY OBOIST types out: "Wanna go to OKTOBER FLING?"...

... which appears on a TROMBONIST'S SCREEN. She forwards...

...to three of her friends who roll eyes...

...one posts a SCREENSHOT with caption "#nerdalert".

Snickers throughout the room.

DEACON FLORES (CONT'D)

Is there a problem?

WHOLE CLASS (EN MASSE)

No, Deacon Flores.

\*

DEACON FLORES

(beat) As I was saying, please keep  
your reeds lubricated. Next up,  
Winter Talent Show. Mandatory for  
all seniors, last chance to strut  
your stuff, again, mandatorily...

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

Shy Boy Oboist melts into his seat, beet-red.

Ellie's eyes travel past him into the CHOIR, where a group of  
rich kids (QUADDIES) buzz around a TALL HANDSOME BOY, 17.  
This is TRIG CARSON. Gravel money.

(CONTINUED)

10 CONTINUED:

10

Trig drapes his arm around A GIRL, 17, glued to her songbook... which hides her phone. THIS IS ASTER FLORES.

DEACON FLORES (CONT'D)

Let's all turn to page 49...

He lifts his baton. Aster reluctantly shuts her book, prepares to sing.

ELLIE (V.O.)

In case you haven't guessed, this is not a love story.

Ellie's eyes stay on Aster. Aster's voice rings out pure...

ELLIE (V.O.)

Or not one where anyone gets what they want.

...and travels out the window, where we hear...

COACH (O.S.)

ARE YOU MEN, OR ARE YOU LOSERS?

11 EXT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - TRACK - SAME TIME

11

...a PACK OF FOOTBALL PLAYERS stampede in a CLOUD OF DUST. One BROAD-SHOULDERED BOY lags behind, staring at the window, transfixed. This is PAUL MUNSKY, 17.

COACH (O.S.)

MUNSKY!

He tosses a last glance over his shoulder... starts running.

12 INT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - HALLWAY - DAY

12

Your basic school hallway jungle between bells. The populars, the not-so-populars... high-fives, side-eye, dismissals.

MRS. G. (O.S.)

Notice the lack of fire and brimstone in No Exit. No torture devices necessary...

Unnoticed in the swirl of activity is Ellie, staring at a poster labeled "SENIOR RECITAL SIGN-UPS - MANDATORY."

MRS. G. (O.S.) (CONT'D)

We are the source of our own hell.

(CONTINUED)



12 CONTINUED: 12

She signs her name resignedly - the only solo on the sheet.

13 INT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - MRS. G'S CLASSROOM - DAY 13

In chalk on A BLACKBOARD:

"Hell is other people. -- John-Paul Sartre, NO EXIT."

BELL RINGS.

MRS. GESELSCHAP, 60's, sinks back into her chair.

MRS. G.

500 words on Sartre's use of  
thwarted desire. Monday.

Students stream out, Ellie the last to leave.

MRS. G. (CONT'D)

Six different takes on Plato.  
Impressive.

ELLIE

(innocent) Just the one.

MRS. G.

Sure, sure, that's what I tell the  
bartender.

Ellie laughs. Pulls out a stack of books to return.

ELLIE

How come you've never turned me in?

MRS. G.

And have to read the actual essays  
they'd write? (makes face)

Mrs. G slides over a new stack of books. On top: an  
APPLICATION FOR GRINNELL COLLEGE.

ELLIE

You know I'm going to "E-Dub."

MRS. G.

Damn shame.

ELLIE

Damn "full-ride." I can live at  
home. Plus, I get to stay in lovely  
Squahamish.

(CONTINUED)

13 CONTINUED:

13

MRS. G.  
*Hell-quamish.*

ELLIE  
It's not that bad.

Mrs. G shoots her a look.

ELLIE (CONT'D)  
It's not that good either. But it's  
what's happening.

MRS. G.  
I spent four of the best years of  
my life at Grinnell.

ELLIE  
And look at you, back home in *Hell-*  
*quamish.*

MRS. G.  
You're right. Stay away from the  
liberal arts.

Ellie laughs and stuffs the application in her bookbag.

ELLIE  
Try not to get fired over the  
weekend.

MRS. G.  
Are you kidding? Everyone in this  
town fears God. You know who God  
fears? (smug) Teacher's Union.

Ellie shakes her head fondly, and is gone.

14 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - ROAD OUT OF TOWN - AFTERNOON

14

Ellie pedals home from school.

That SAME TRUCK from morning hurtles by.

OBNOXIOUS TEEN BOYS  
Chugga-chugga-chugga, Chugga-chugga-  
chugga... CHU CHUUUUU!

Ellie keeps pedaling.

Moments later.

(CONTINUED)

14

CONTINUED:

14

PAUL (O.S.)

Hey!

Ellie pedals faster.

PAUL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Hey!!

FASTER.

PAUL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

HEY!!! HOLD UP!

A BREATHLESS PAUL appears in frame. He grabs onto Ellie's saddlebag, bringing her down.

ELLIE

What is wrong with you??

PAUL

Sorry I-

He dry-heaves from exertion. Still coughing, he digs into his KNAPSACK... pulls out a bratwurst. Stuffs it into his mouth and keeps rummaging.

Ellie sighs. She knows what this is.

ELLIE

\$10 for 3 pages. \$20, 3 to 10. Not in the over-10 page biz-

PAUL

It's not- I'm not tryna to cheat-

ELLIE

Nobody is. Which class is it for?

PAUL

It's not- It's uh...

He pulls out an ENVELOPE and offers it to her.

ELLIE

What's this?

PAUL

A letter.

ELLIE

Who writes letters these days?

(CONTINUED)

14

CONTINUED: (2)

14

PAUL

I thought it'd seem romantic? Also she doesn't have Facebook. Maybe you could make me sound smart?

ELLIE

Who's "she"?

She opens it, curious...

INSERT: THE LETTER. "Dear Aster Flores..."

She shoves it back.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

I can't help you.

PAUL

I just need a few words. Good ones.

ELLIE

I'm not writing to Aster Fl- to some girl. It'd be wrong. A letter is personal. It's supposed to be authentic.

PAUL

That would be *awesome!*

ELLIE

No, I can't be *you* being authent-

Gives up. Mounts her bike.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Get a thesaurus. Use spell-check. Good luck, Romeo.

Pedals off.

PAUL

I can pay more for authentic!

She's gone.

He hurls his KNAPSACK to the ground. Takes a resigned bite of his bratwurst.

15

INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - NIGHT

15

Close on a TV playing the last scene of CASABLANCA.

(CONTINUED)

15 CONTINUED:

15

Reverse on Ellie and Edwin Chu, in twin La-Z-Boy recliners, eating pot pies. Ellie keeps one eye on the screen, the other on a laptop where she writes three papers at once.

The lights flicker.

ELLIE (IN MANDARIN)  
*Did you call the power company?*

EDWIN (IN MANDARIN)  
*They don't understand my accent.*

ELLIE  
*Did you try?*

EDWIN  
*Sssshh. Best part.*

HUMPHREY BOGART (ON TV) EDWIN (CONT'D)  
I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship. I think this is beginning of beautiful friendship.

Edwin shoots his daughter a sheepish look. She sighs, affectionate.

ELLIE  
*I'll call Monday.*

Father and daughter take synchronized bites of pie.

16 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH - NIGHT

16

The station deserted save for a lone Ellie - in the engineer booth - pounding away on her keyboard.

ON BLACK:

"The god of love lives in a state of need. -- Plato. Again."

17 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - ROAD INTO TOWN - MORNING

17

Ellie bikes to school, phone pressed to ear.

CUSTOMER SERVICE (OVER PHONE)  
Inland Power and Light...

ELLIE (INTO PHONE)  
I'm calling for account 467838...

(CONTINUED)

17 CONTINUED: 17

CUSTOMER SERVICE (OVER PHONE)  
Please hold...

Hold music plays.

18 INT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - SCHOOL CORRIDOR - MORNING 18

Ellie skirts through the fray, still on phone.

ELLIE (INTO PHONE)  
Account 46D838.

\*

CUSTOMER SERVICE (OVER PHONE)  
Please re-enter your selection.

She spies PAUL out of the corner of her eye LOOKING TO GET HER ATTENTION. She dodges down an arterial hallway...

ELLIE (INTO PHONE)  
Bill... Extension.

HOLD MUSIC continues.

19 INT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - MUSIC ROOM - NOON 19

Ellie alone in the music room, playing a dirge-like solo to accompany the HOLD MUSIC.

20 INT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - HALLWAYS - AFTERNOON 20

A weary Ellie braves the afternoon hallway crowd, phone still pressed to ear. Spins to avoid PAUL on the far end of the hallway with his teammates...

... SLAMMING right into TRIG AND HIS QUADDIES, who walk through her, oblivious. Books, papers, bag go flying.

She scrambles to gather her things.

ASTER  
These hallways are murder.

Aster has stooped down. To help.

ASTER (CONT'D)  
It's a whole natural selection situation waiting to play out.

Ellie is struck dumb. *Say something, say something...*

(CONTINUED)

20 CONTINUED:

20

ELLIE  
I'm Ellie Chu.

ASTER  
(amused) Yes, I know. You've only been playing my dad's services every Sunday for like four years. You're his favorite heathen. He can't handle mediocre accompanists - even if they are saved.

They stand. Aster glances at the book she picked up.

ASTER (CONT'D)  
"Remains of the Day". Loved it. All that barely repressed longing.

She pops it on top of Ellie's stack... and is gone.

ELLIE  
(groaning) "I'm Ellie Chu?"

CUSTOMER SERVICE (OVER PHONE)  
Yes I know. Your bill is 3 months overdue, Mrs. Chu. If we don't get a minimum payment of \$50, your power will terminate tomorrow.

Ellie stands alone in the hallway, as the LAST BELL RINGS, staring into nothingness. Suddenly, at the end of the hall:

PAUL appears, searching... finds her! *Is she gonna run again?*

On a desperate Ellie, considering. Then:

ELLIE  
\$50. One letter. After that you're on your own.

PAUL  
YES!

He holds up his hand for a high five. She walks away.

21 OMITTED

21

22 INT. SQUAHAMISH CATHOLIC CHURCH - CHAPEL - AFTERNOON

22

Ellie reads Paul's letter, slouched in the last pew of the Chapel. Paul sits on another pew across the aisle.

(CONTINUED)

22

CONTINUED:

22

ELLIE

"Dear Aster, I think your really beautiful. But even if you were ugly, I'd want to know you. Cuz you are smart and nice too. It's hard to find all those things in one girl. But even if you were only two of those things, I'd be into it. But your like all three. Just to be clear."

She looks up at Paul: *What is this?*

PAUL

She's like - all three.

ELLIE

Thanks for clarifying.

She goes back to the letter.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

"About me. I am kind of cute. Some people think I'm the cutest one in my family! Those people being my grandma. Who's dead now. Never mind about my dead grandma. All I am trying to say is that I like fries. I like dipping them in my milkshake. Is that weird? It's actually really tasty! Would you like to try that with me some time? Let me know. I work part time and I have a truck! Let me know. Whenever. Thanks, Paul Munsky. (Second-string tight end. Football.)"

Beat.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

So what you're trying to say is--

PAUL

I'm in love with her.

ELLIE

Have you ever spoken to her?

PAUL

I'm not good with words.

(CONTINUED)



22

CONTINUED: (2)

22

ELLIE

But you *know* you "love" her.

PAUL

I *know* I think about her when I wake up, and when I'm doing sprints, and when I'm eating my mom's brats, and when I'm saying my prayers and when I'm--

ELLIE

That just means you're stubborn. Not that you're in love.

PAUL

No, it's love. Love makes you screwy. Don't you get screwy?

ELLIE

No.

She goes back to the letter, skimming it.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

(to self) This whole section needs - that fry thing does sound good - (crossing out) dangling modifier...

Paul takes her in.

PAUL

Oh. I get it.

ELLIE

Get what?

PAUL

You've never been in love.

Ellie looks at him. Shoves the letter into his ribs.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Ow!

ELLIE

You want a letter about love? I'll write you a letter about love.

She grabs her bag.

(CONTINUED)

22 CONTINUED: (3)

22

PAUL

One that'll make her fall in love  
with me. Not storm off in a huff.  
Like you're doing right now....!

She's gone.

23 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - NIGHT

23

ONSCREEN: "Wings of Desire" by Wim Wenders.

Edwin watches, rapt. Ellie handwrites furiously. She looks  
up, momentarily stumped. Notices the screen.

ELLIE (IN MANDARIN)

*This isn't even American. How are  
you going to learn English?*

EDWIN (IN MANDARIN)

*Sssh. Best part.*

WOMAN (ON TV, IN FRENCH)

*Longing for a wave of love  
that would stir in me. That's  
what makes me clumsy.*

EDWIN (CONT'D)

*Longing for a wave of love  
that would stir in me. That's  
what makes me clumsy.*

\*

Ellie considers this. Writes "Longing for a wave of love..."

24 INT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - HALLWAY - MORNING

24

An exhausted Ellie shoves a letter toward Paul.

PAUL

You sealed it? (off Ellie's glare)  
I'm sure it's good.

Ellie leaves.

PAUL (CONT'D)

(calling after her) Thank you.

ELLIE

HushMo me.

\*

25 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - ROAD OUT OF TOWN - LATER THAT AFTERNOON 25

Ellie bikes home.

25

CONTINUED:

25

PAUL (O.S.)

Hey!

*Not this guy again.* Ellie pedals faster.

Paul appears in the background, flushed from exertion.

PAUL (CONT'D)

She wrote back!

Ellie jerks to a stop.

INSERT: ASTER'S RESPONSE:

ASTER (V.O.)

"I like Wim Wenders too. Wouldn't a plagiarized him though."

Off Ellie's astonished reaction. *Who is this girl?*

PAUL

Who's Wim Wenders? And why'd you cheat off him?!

ELLIE

I didn't cheat off him-

PAUL

I looked up "plagiarize"-!

ELLIE

I kinda cheated off him-

PAUL

I PAID you-!

ELLIE

But this is good!

PAUL

*How?*

Yeah, how?

ELLIE

It's like... a game. She's challenging us. In a good way.

PAUL

So we're still in... the game...

(CONTINUED)

25 CONTINUED: (2) 25

ELLIE

Yup. Mmhhh. We are. So. Yay.

She offers a weak fist bump. Which misses. She pedals off.

PAUL

So... HushMo you? \*

But Ellie's already speeding down the hill.

ELLIE

Game on, Aster Flores. Game. On.

A PIANO SOLO commences...

ELLIE (V.O.)

"Dear Aster. Okay. You got me."

26 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - ROAD INTO TOWN - DAY - LATER 26

Ellie is a DISTANT SPECK, biking towards CAMERA.

ELLIE (V.O.)

"I sometimes hide behind other  
people's words."

27 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - ANOTHER NIGHT 27

Ellie and Edwin in La-Z-Boys watch another classic movie.

ELLIE (V.O.)

"For one thing, those people are  
published. For another..."

Father and daughter each toss back a YAKULT.

ELLIE (V.O.)

"...I know nothing about love."

28 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ANOTHER DAY 28

A PASSING TRAIN WIPES THE SCREEN...

ELLIE (V.O.)

"I'm 17. I've lived in Squahamish  
my whole life."

...leaving ELLIE and her SIGNAL LIGHT on the platform alone.

29

INT. SQUAHAMISH CATHOLIC CHURCH - CHAPEL - ANOTHER  
AFTERNOON

29

Ellie and Paul argue from separate pews.

PAUL

This is such a downer!

ELLIE

It's not a downer!

PAUL

Major downer! Ask her to hang out!

ELLIE

(a real question)

What exactly is... "hanging out"?

PAUL

You know. *Hanging out.*

ELLIE

But like what do you *do*?--

A couple guys from the team ENTER. Paul and Ellie separate,  
pretend not to know each other.

FOOTBALL DUDE

Munsky! S'up?

PAUL

Confession.

FOOTBALL DUDE

Wanna go to Joey's and hang out?

PAUL

Yup.

They leave Ellie behind.

30

EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH - ANOTHER  
EARLY MORNING

30

Ellie scrunched in her ticket booth, writing.

ELLIE (V.O.)

"I hang out with my friends."

31 EXT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - TRACK - ANOTHER EARLY MORNING 31

The TEAM runs around the track....

ELLIE (V.O.)  
"I keep my head down."

...revealing Paul doubled over, breathless.

32 EXT. MUNSKY SAUSAGE SHOP - BACK ENTRANCE/EXT. ELLIE'S ATTIC WINDOW - ANOTHER NIGHT 32

Paul empties the garbage.

Angle on ELLIE from her ATTIC BEDROOM watching him.

ELLIE (V.O.)  
"I'm a simple... guy. Which is to say..."

33 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - ROAD INTO TOWN - DAY (SAME AS SCENE 26) 33

Ellie is now almost at the CAMERA.

ELLIE (V.O.)  
"If I knew what love was, I would quote myself."

Ellie rides past.

34 EXT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - PARKING LOT/TRIG'S TRUCK - NOON - ANOTHER DAY 34

Close on Aster's face absorbing this last line. Around her: the faded sounds of teens grandstanding.

The PIANO SOLO ends.

35 INT. SQUAHAMISH CATHOLIC CHURCH - CHAPEL - ANOTHER AFTERNOON 35

Ellie bent over the piano for a quiet moment, just breathing.

PAUL (O.S.)  
Psssst.

Her head jerks around.

35 CONTINUED:

35

PAUL (O.S.) (CONT'D)

In here!

She stares at THE CONFESSION BOOTH.

36 INT. SQUAHAMISH CATHOLIC CHURCH - CONFESSION BOOTH -  
MOMENTS LATER

36

Ellie slides into one side of the booth; Paul's in the other.  
Father Shanley in booth between them, softly snoring.

ELLIE

Isn't this sacrilegious?

PAUL

I used to hide here when my  
brothers played SlapFight.

He reaches through the curtain with a letter.

PAUL (CONT'D)

She wrote back.

Ellie's arm reaches for it from the other side.

ASTER (V.O.)

"Dear Paul..."

37 INT. SQUAHAMISH - CATHOLIC CHURCH - CHAPEL - MORNING

37

Weekly mass through Aster's eyes. Dream-like and mundane. The  
sounds of her father's homily in the background.

ASTER (V.O.)

"Did you know it takes eleven  
muscles to yawn?"

Close on Aster's face, smiling, stifling said yawn.

ASTER (V.O.)

"This is the sort of weird fact I  
find myself recalling to keep  
myself from... well, yawning..."

Trig uses the mirror app on his phone to groom himself.

ASTER (V.O.)

"...or showing anything that I  
feel, really."

(CONTINUED)

37 CONTINUED:

37

Aster takes him in. He flexes his dimple in the mirror.

ASTER (V.O.)  
"Assuming I know how I feel. So  
yeah, I turn to other people's  
words too."

Aster's attention drops back to her phone. On it: a  
downloaded version of REMAINS OF THE DAY.

ASTER (V.O.)  
"Far better than my own."

38 INT. CARSON MCMANSION - LIVING ROOM - ANOTHER NIGHT

38

\*

The Carson and Flores families gather for pre-dinner hors-  
d'oeuvres. Haute society, Squahamish-style.

TOM CARSON  
You can't even imagine how much the  
right gravel can change your life!

DEACON FLORES  
From gravel we came, to gravel we  
shall return! And this potato cake!  
Do I detect a hint of saffron?

Mrs. Carson preens.

DEACON FLORES (IN SPANISH) (CONT'D)  
(to Aster) *Sit up straight.*

Aster straightens. Trig snaps a selfie of the two of them.  
She smiles dutifully.

ASTER (V.O.)  
"When you're a pretty girl - and I  
know it makes me sound conceited -  
but that's why you're even writing  
me, right?"

39 INT. SQUAHAMISH CATHOLIC CHURCH - CONFESSION BOOTH - DAY

39

Ellie and Paul look at each other... *She's not wrong.*

They go back to the letter.

ASTER (V.O.)  
"When you're the pretty girl,  
people want to give you things..."



40 INT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - ASTER'S LOCKER/HALLWAY - ANOTHER DAY 40

Aster shuts her locker to reveal one of the QUADDIE GIRLS holding a knit neck gaiter. Exactly like the one she is wearing. And that of her three friends.

ASTER (V.O.)  
"But what they really want is to make you like them."

QUADDIE GIRL #1 (AMBER)  
It would look so cute on you!

ASTER  
Oh. Thanks!

ASTER (V.O.)  
"Not 'like them' as in 'I like you' but 'like them' as in 'I am like you.'"

QUADDIE GIRL #1 (AMBER)  
Like... soooo cute on you!

QUADDIE GIRL #1 (AMBER) smiles at Aster expectantly.

ASTER  
Oh! You mean right now.

41 INT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER 41

ASTER WALKS DOWN THE HALLWAY, FLANKED BY QUADDIE GIRLS, ALL IN NECK GAITERS.

Trig comes up behind and throws an arm around all of them, conferring his approval. Basks in their adoration.

ASTER (V.O.)  
"So I'm like a lot of people."

42 INT. SQUAHAMISH CATHOLIC CHURCH - CONFESSION BOOTH - ANOTHER DAY 42

Ellie reads from the letter.

ELLIE  
"Which makes me kind of no one."

She marinates in that for a beat.

(CONTINUED)

42 CONTINUED:

42

PAUL  
Can I text her now?

ELLIE  
Too soon.

PAUL  
I'm gonna do it.

ELLIE  
If you want her to think you're  
like everyone else.

Paul stops. Sighs. Types on his phone.

CHA-CHING. Ellie looks at her phone.

HUSHMO NOTIFICATION: "HushMo: Paul M. sent you \$50"

\*

ELLIE (V.O.)  
"I never really thought about the  
oppression of fitting in before."

MONTAGE continues, in shorter letter snippets:

43 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - ROAD OUT OF TOWN - ANOTHER DAY

43

Ellie gathers speed on her bike.

ELLIE (V.O.)  
"The good thing about being  
different is that no one expects  
you to be like them..."

PAUL (O.S.)  
Wait up!

Paul huffs to catch up with Ellie. Ellie sighs.

44 INT. MRS. G'S CLASSROOM/EXT.PARKING LOT - ANOTHER DAY

44

Aster reads a letter hidden in her textbook.

ASTER (V.O.)  
"...Doesn't everyone think they're  
'different' but pretty much we're  
all different in the same way..."

Bell rings. Mrs. G dismisses class in background.

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED:

44

TRIG (O.S.)  
Babe. Taco Time?

Trig's outside in his truck. Aster slams her book shut.

ELLIE (V.O.)  
"...Some of us are more different  
than others. You might be  
surprised..."

A PAGE from the letter FALLS TO THE FLOOR, unseen, as Aster hurries to meet him.

45 INT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - GIRLS' BATHROOM - ANOTHER DAY

45

Ellie scrubs bike grease from her hands.

ASTER (V.O.)  
"...Well, you are surprising."

Door opens.

Through the MIRROR:

TWO QUADDIE GIRLS enter stalls.

QUADDIE GIRL #1 (AMBER)  
The one in Tukwila has a Gap Body.

QUADDIE GIRL #2 (SOLANGE)  
I LOVE Gap Body!

Ellie can't quite get the grease out of her nails.

Door SWISHES. ASTER HAS ENTERED. She moves to the back wall, where she leans, waiting for a stall.

Her eyes meet Ellie's through the mirror. Ellie's snap down.

Aster takes in the back of Ellie. The wiry frame. Keys CLIPPED to belt loop. INK STAIN through back pocket.

QUADDIE GIRL #2 (SOLANGE) (CONT'D)  
... it has like 15 dressing rooms.

QUADDIE GIRL #1 (AMBER)  
Totes the better Gap.

QUADDIE GIRL #2 (SOLANGE)  
Sooo much better than the one in  
Wenatchee.

(CONTINUED)

45 CONTINUED:

45

QUADDIE GIRL #1 (AMBER)  
Ugh. Wenatchee.

On Ellie face: puzzled. *Is this how normal girls talk?*

Aster smiles. Ellie blushes. The two girls share a moment.

QUADDIE GIRL #1 (AMBER) (CONT'D)  
Trig checked in at Dick's FryFry!

QUADDIE GIRL #2 (SOLANGE)  
Aster is so lucky.

QUADDIE GIRL #1 (AMBER)  
Totes lucky. His family owns half  
of Squahamish.

QUADDIE GIRL #2 (SOLANGE)  
Hers doesn't even own their house.

Aster, red-faced, slips out of the bathroom.

Ellie watches her go. Turns to look at the stalls.

DUAL FLUSHES.

Close on the STALL DOOR HINGE being shifted with a BIKE TOOL.

46 INT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - GIRLS' BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

46

QUADDIE GIRL #2 (SOLANGE) (O.S.)  
HEY. What's wrong with this door??

The stall doors rattle, unyielding.

QUADDIE GIRL #1 (AMBER) (O.S.)  
What the--? HEY!

Rattle, rattle, rattle...

47 INT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - HALLWAY OUTSIDE GIRLS' BATHROOM/ - 47  
MRS. G'S DOOR (CHEATED) - MOMENTS LATER

Ellie slips out of the bathroom.

ELLIE (V.O.)  
"What's surprising is: people don't  
see what they're not looking for."

(CONTINUED)

47 CONTINUED: 47

She merges anonymously into the fray... walking right through Aster casting a furtive glance across the hall at Paul.

ASTER (V.O.)  
"The obvious unseen."

RECORD SCRATCH as ELLIE IS SUDDENLY YANKED INTO...

48 INT. MRS. G'S CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER 48

...a classroom. She looks blankly at Mrs. G... who holds up a trampled stray page of a LETTER. Guilt floods Ellie's face.

49 INT. MRS. G'S CLASSROOM - MOMENTS LATER 49

Mrs. G stares at Ellie, post-confession.

MRS G  
Ellie. What you're doing is *wrong*.

ELLIE  
I know.

MRS G  
This is a girl's heart you're playing with. Not just a money-making venture for you.

Ellie looks away... and Mrs. G sees the truth. More gently:

MRS G (CONT'D)  
So this is why half the class is failing their essays.

ELLIE  
I'll be re-open for business soon enough. I mean this can't go on much longer.

She slinks out. Mrs. G watches her go, concerned.

ASTER (V.O.)  
"I've been thinking about what you said about 'seeing' and 'not seeing.'"

50 INT. TEQUILIA SAL Y LIMON - DAY/INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT 50  
- ENGINEER BOOTH - ANOTHER DAY

Aster waits on a table of demanding customers at an upscale restaurant. She is accommodating, poised.

ASTER (V.O.)

"I had a painting teacher once tell me that the difference between a 'good' painting and a 'great' painting..."

While the customers bicker, her eyes land on a painting on the wall: a reproduction of Chagall's "Blue Lovers."

Her eyes take in the artistry of the painting.

ASTER (V.O.)

"...is typically five strokes. And they are usually the five boldest strokes in the painting. The question of course..."

We see a touch of longing in her gaze.

ASTER (V.O.)

"Is which five strokes?"

CLOSE ON THE PAINTING.

ELLIE (V.O.)

"I get it."

PULL OUT TO SEE: Ellie - in the engineer booth - staring at the same painting on her phone screen.

ELLIE (V.O.)

"After one's slaved away at making a "pretty good" painting, the last thing you'd want to do is..."

The SOUND of a HUGE RIP...

51 EXT. MUNSKY SAUSAGE SHOP - BACK ENTRANCE - ANOTHER DAY 51

...OF A BURLAP SACK as cooked dried sausages pour out.

ELLIE (V.O.)

"...make a BOLD STROKE and potentially..."

(CONTINUED)

51 CONTINUED:

51

ASTER (V.O.)  
"...ruin everything. That's why I  
gave up painting."

\*

Wider to reveal THE SACK BEING RIPPED BY PAUL.

Next to him, ELLIE HOLDS UP HER PHONE displaying an IMAGE OF  
THE PAINTING, explaining.

Paul wipes sweat off his puzzled brow.

ASTER (V.O.)  
"Still.. I wonder if that is how  
I'm living my life."

52 EXT. CARSON GRAVEL QUARRY - ANOTHER DAY

52

ASTER writes a letter, in the folds of her book.

ASTER (V.O.)  
"It's a 'pretty good' life."

TRIG  
Babe? Which one.

Trig holds up two very similar jean jackets. A photo shoot  
for a Carson Gravel ad campaign awaits him.

TRIG (CONT'D)  
Right one, right? Great.

Aster goes back to her letter.

In the background, Trig throws an arm around his dad.

ASTER (V.O.)  
"Probably the best life one could  
hope for in Squahamish."

PHOTO FLASH.

53 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - DAY

53

Ellie in her recliner. Widen to reveal Edwin asleep in his.  
She adjusts his quilt gently. Removes a half eaten chicken  
pie. Stares at it as if seeing it for the first time.

ELLIE (V.O.)  
"Perhaps. But how well do you  
really know Squahamish...?"

54 EXT. SIDE OF AL'S BIG BEEFY - AFTERNOON - MULTIPLE DAYS 54

Aster rounds the corner, tentative. Consults A LETTER with geographic coordinates.

CRAPPY GRAFFITI lines the side wall of Al's Big Beefy.

Up high, in freshly sprayed BIG BOLD LETTERS:

"ANY FIVE STROKES..."

An ARROW points toward the expanse of graffitied wall. Another points to a CAN OF SPRAY PAINT hidden in the weeds.

Aster laughs. A cautious glance around... she PICKS UP the can and SPRAYS ONE BOLD STROKE. Exhilarated. Sneaks away.

ASTER (V.O.)  
"...Your move..."

(Note: all V.O. lines will now appear as graffiti onto the wall, painted over once the next line appears.)

Dissolve to ELLIE now SPRAYING ANOTHER STROKE...

Alternate between the two...

ELLIE (V.O.)  
"Oh so *that's* your boldest stroke?" \*

ASTER (V.O.)  
"I'm into the slow build! What was *that?*" \*

ELLIE (V.O.)  
"Decisiveness. But please... take all the time you need to be bold." \*

ASTER (V.O.)  
"Is THIS bold enough for you...?"

...as their SPRAY PAINT ART CREATION TAKES SHAPE.

It's a beautiful mess. Aster can't stop smiling.

ELLIE (V.O.)  
"And thus was abstract art born..."

ASTER (V.O.)  
"...and transformed." \*

(CONTINUED)



54

CONTINUED:

54

BIG BEEFY AL (O.S.)

HEY!

(CONTINUED)

54 CONTINUED: (2)

54

Aster is startled... and takes off running. BIG BEEFY AL runs into frame, shaking his fist.

Dissolve into the wall NOW PAINTED GREY.

ELLIE (V.O.)

"Or not."

ASTER (V.O.)

"Everything beautiful is ruined eventually."

ELLIE (V.O.)

"Maybe that's the thing. If you do ruin your painting..."

55 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH - ANOTHER DAY 55

Ellie stares across the train tracks, lost in thought.

ASTER (V.O.)

"...you gotta know you have everything in you to get to that 'pretty good' painting again. But if you never do the bold stroke..."

56 INT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - MATH CLASSROOM - ANOTHER DAY

56

Aster stares out the window, lost in thought.

Bzzz. Aster glances down at her phone.

INSERT: MESSAGE FROM TRIG: "Don't let me eat carbs today"

Aster deliberates. Puts her phone face down on her desk.

ELLIE (V.O.)

"...you'll never know if you could have had a GREAT painting."

She stares at a blank page. And starts sketching.

57 EXT. MUNSKY SAUSAGE SHOP - BACK ENTRANCE - ANOTHER DAY

57

Paul empties the garbage.

PAUL

When does the "dating" start?

(CONTINUED)

57 CONTINUED:

57

ELLIE  
(a little dreamy) This is dating.

PAUL  
No, dating is... BURGERS. And  
FRIES. And SHAKES. And maybe  
ANOTHER ORDER of FRIES. And... I'm  
gonna text her.

Sound of a TEXT SENDING. Startling Ellie.

ELLIE  
Wait, *what*?

PAUL  
At a certain point, you gotta  
close.

ELLIE  
We're *not* at that point!

PAUL  
We are *way* past that point!

Ellie grabs Paul's phone.

58 EXT. COWFIELD - SAME TIME

58

On ASTER'S PHONE:

"[A BURGER, FRIES, SHAKE and another FRIES emoji] tonite? I  
have [truck emoji]! [smiley emoji]!"

Aster stares at her phone. She is flanked by Quaddie Girls  
cheering on their boyfriends...

Who are "mudding" their trucks through a HUGE MUD PUDDLE.

59 EXT. MUNSKY SAUSAGE SHOP - BACK ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

59

Ellie and Paul stare at his phone. "Thinking" dots appear.

ELLIE  
Oh my god.

"Thinking dots" disappear.

Paul hurls a GARBAGE CAN to the ground.

(CONTINUED)

59 CONTINUED:

59

PAUL  
GODDAMN IT.

Ellie starts typing.

ELLIE  
(writing aloud) "Sorry. Little sis  
hacked my phone. Can we take this  
onto a safer platform? Ghost  
Messenger? My handle's....  
SmithCorona."

Thinking dots reappear.

PAUL  
Who's Smith Corona?

ELLIE  
Just a... guy.

Dots disappear.

PAUL  
Crap!

60 EXT.COWFIELD - SAME TIME

60

A TRUCK STUCK in the mud, wheels spinning.

TRIG  
I'M KING OF THE MUD! Babe! Did you  
get that? Caption it MUDDING KING!

Off Aster's face, considering...

61 EXT. MUNSKY SAUSAGE SHOP - BACK ENTRANCE - SAME TIME

61

DING. From Ellie's bookbag.

Ellie and Paul scramble for Ellie's phone.

ELLIE'S SCREEN:

DiegaRivero: "Tomorrow? 7p?"

ELLIE YES! PAUL YESSSSS!

Paul chest bumps the wall.

(CONTINUED)

61 CONTINUED: 61

PAUL (CONT'D)

We did it!

Off Ellie's face realizing: *Paul* is going on this date.

62 EXT. SPARKY'S DINER - ANOTHER NIGHT 62

A truck pulls into the parking lot of a small-town diner.

ELLIE (OVER PHONE)

She prefers abstract to representational. And if she brings up *Remains of the Day*, talk about how the movie loses out by not spending more time on the Nazis--

PAUL (O.S.)

Relax, I got this.

ELLIE (OVER PHONE)

But--

PAUL (O.S.)

It's a date, not a book report.

63 INT. SPARKY'S DINER - NIGHT 63

Aster slides a copy of *REMAINS OF THE DAY* across the booth.

ASTER

I got two of them signed when he came to Powell's books last year. I drove all night to get there.

Her face is lit, shy, expectant.

PAUL

Oh. Uh. Cool!

ASTER

You've probably read it. But I thought you'd like one.

PAUL

Yeah. Totally. I love... Nazis!

Aster is confused.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I mean the ones in the book.

(CONTINUED)

63 CONTINUED: 63

Close on his phone in his lap, connected to...

64 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH - SAME TIME 64

...Ellie's phone. Ellie listens, horrified.

PAUL (OVER PHONE)  
More of *those* Nazis, am I right?

She groans.

65 INT. SPARKY'S DINER - SAME TIME 65

Milkshakes arrive. Paul sips, nervously.

Aster, flustered, tries again.

ASTER  
Speaking of Nazis, thanks for meeting me here. My dad is... not a *Nazi* exactly... but he can be a little strict. And people talk.

PAUL  
Oh. Yeah. Talk. UGH.

Silence.

ASTER  
But it's nice to make a new friend.

PAUL  
Friend. Yeah. Good.

He has sucked down his milkshake. Toys with the straw.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
They use ReddiWhip.

ASTER  
Oh.

PAUL  
It's from a can. But it's okay.

More silence. Awkward. So awkward.

66 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH - SAME TIME 66

It's all over Ellie's face: *this is a disaster.*

67 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - ROAD OUT OF TOWN - DAY 67

Ellie bikes up the hill, Paul trying to catch up.

PAUL

It wasn't that bad.

ELLIE

What about that date wasn't *bad*?  
You have *nothing* in common-

PAUL

Not yet but-

ELLIE

Game over.

PAUL

We can't give up-

Paul has in fact given up and is dry heaving behind some shrubs.

ELLIE

Look. You and Aster Flores? NOT  
GONNA HAPPEN.

HOOONK. The truck of OBNOXIOUS TEENS cruises by.

OBNOXIOUS TEENS

(heckling) CHUGGA CHUGGA CHUGGA,  
CHUGGA-CHUGGA-CHUGGA... CHU CHU!

PAUL (O.S.)

HEY!

Paul jumps out from the side of the road and STARTS CHASING  
AFTER THE TRUCK.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Who you calling Choo-Choo?

Obnoxious Teens freeze.

ELLIE

(embarrassed) Let it go...

(CONTINUED)

67 CONTINUED:

67

PAUL

What kind of wusses say dumb shit  
then drive away? I'M GONNA GET YOU!

\*

They tear off, shakily, Paul bearing down on them.

He hurls a rock. From far off: "OW!"

PAUL (CONT'D)

YOU BETTER RUN!

Turns back to see Ellie staring at him.

PAUL (CONT'D)

WHAT?

Her eyes wide as saucers.

68 EXT. ABANDONED TRAIN CAR - LATER THAT DAY

68

Ellie coils cable in the back of the car. Paul hovers.

ELLIE

Aster Flores thinks you're into  
abstract art... and repressed  
British literature and-

PAUL

Yeah!

ELLIE

None of that is *you*.

PAUL

It could be. I started reading that  
*Remains of the Day* book.

ELLIE

Really?

PAUL

(admits) Fell asleep a few times...  
but I'm still reading it! That's  
gotta count for something.

ELLIE

There are no points for effort.

PAUL

Isn't that what love is? The effort  
you put into loving someone?

(CONTINUED)



68

CONTINUED:

68

*Is that true?*

ELLIE

Well, whatever love is... we just  
blew it with Aster Flores.

DING. On Ellie's phone, A MESSAGE:

"DiegaRivero: So that was... weird?"

PAUL

YESSS! (then to Ellie) I can do  
this. We can do this.

He wants this so bad...

ELLIE

(sighs) Okay.

Joy floods Paul's face.

PAUL

I'll pay you double.

ELLIE

You don't have to pay me.

PAUL

Don't be weird, dude! Why else  
would you do this? I got savings!

Off Ellie's conflicted expression...

69

EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH/CHU  
APARTMENT WINDOW - ANOTHER DAY

69

Ellie draws A GAME PLAN on A WHITE BOARD in her ticket booth.  
("Existentialism") Paul outside the booth, jogging in place.

ELLIE

Your next date is three weeks away.

PAUL

Three weeks?

ELLIE

You told her you're slammed with  
football training.

PAUL

I did?

(CONTINUED)

69

CONTINUED:

69

ELLIE

Yes. Also you're in a debate on  
who's the better Hepburn-

EDWIN (O.S.)

WHO THERE?

From the APARTMENT WINDOW ABOVE, Edwin wields a kitchen  
sprayer.

ELLIE

*Sorry to wake you, Baba. School  
project.*

PAUL

Hi Ellie Chu's dad!

Edwin shoots Paul a suspicious glance. Retreats.

ELLIE

(whispering) We don't have time to  
school you on everything Aster  
thinks "you" are, so we have to be  
selective. Deep vs. broad-based  
learning.

PAUL

Hunh?

ELLIE

We spy on her, then cram you on her  
Greatest Hits.

PAUL

(loud whisper) Oh. Cool.

ELLIE

Are you ready for this?

PAUL

Yes.

ELLIE

ARE you READY For This?

PAUL

YES! SIR YES SIR!

ELLIE

Ssshh! So in *No Exit*, three people  
are trapped in hell...

(CONTINUED)

69 CONTINUED: (2)

69

Cue "Rocky"-themed training MONTAGE...

70 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - ROAD INTO TOWN - MORNING

70

Paul jogs alongside Ellie on her bike.

PAUL

That's nuts. He can't stand these  
people, a door opens for him to  
leave - *but he doesn't leave?*

ELLIE

He's trapped in hell. It's a  
metaphor for existence.

PAUL

My Nana hated Minnesota. She left.

ELLIE

Your Nana is not one of the great  
thinkers of the 20th century!

PAUL

My Nana's not trapped in hell  
either!

Ellie groans and pedals faster.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Hey! Where you going?

He picks up the pace...

71 EXT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - TRACK - ANOTHER AFTERNOON

71

...until he is now running on the track, passing teammates  
left and right.

\*

COACH

What the hell's gotten into Munsky?

A72 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH - ANOTHER DAY A72 \*

CLOSEUP: ELLIE'S HAND UNDERLINES "HEPBURN" ON A WHITEBOARD

72 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - ANOTHER DAY 72

Edwin alone in his La-Z-Boy. An untouched pot pie next to Ellie's lounge. On TV, it's a "HEPBURN-A-THON!"

He shoots a glance toward the window.

73 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH/CHU APARTMENT WINDOW - DAY - SAME TIME 73

Ellie, in booth, draws a diagram with "Katherine Hepburn" in the middle; "Cary Grant", "Jimmy Stewart" and "John Howard" surround her. Paul eats a sausage, outside the booth.

KATHERINE HEPBURN/TRACY LORD (ON TV)  
"I don't want to be worshipped. I want to be loved."

ELLIE  
The key thing about "The Philadelphia Story" is that it's a plea for tolerance...

PAUL  
Check this out.

He holds up a sausage wrapped in a corn tortilla.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
I'm calling it "Taco Sausage."  
Wanna bite?

ELLIE  
No. So, *tolerance*...

PAUL  
(trying out slogans)  
Two hand foods. One great taste!

A74 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH - ANOTHER DAY A74

INSERT: ON THE WHITEBOARD: "CONVERSATION LESSONS"

74 INT. SHITTY REC ROOM - DAY 74

Ellie serves the ball at a ping pong table.

ELLIE

Conversation is like ping pong. I  
hit one, then you--

Paul SLAMS the ball back. It flies wildly.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

WHAT THE--?

PAUL

(sheepish) Oops...

A75 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH - ANOTHER DAY A75

INSERT: ON WHITEBOARD: "RECONNAISSANCE"

75 INT. MOVIE THEATER - ANOTHER AFTERNOON 75

Onscreen: A SLASHER TEEN FILM, one moment before SLASHING.

Pan the anxious faces of Quaddie Girls... to land on Aster.

Pull back to reveal PAUL seated with TEAM DUDES... further  
still to ELLIE, in back row alone, taking notes.

The SLASHING HAPPENS! Girls SCREAM! Aster GUFFAWS!

Paul and Ellie lock eyes, excited. *More data!*

One of his football buddies stares at him quizzically: who's  
he checking?

Paul spins back.

76 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH - ANOTHER DAY 76

On the WHITEBOARD: a hand writes "Likes a good slashing."

77 OMITTED 77

78 INT. PHARMACY - ANOTHER DAY 78

ASTER drops a TUBE OF TOOTHPASTE in her cart and moves on.  
ELLIE and PAUL'S HEADS poke around the aisle.

79 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH - ANOTHER DAY 79

Now on the WHITEBOARD: "Flavor Crystals. Woodsy Scents."

80 OMITTED 80

81 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH - ANOTHER DAY 81

ON THE WHITEBOARD: "OPPO RESEARCH"

Unable to find more whiteboard space, Ellie maps out a "GOOD  
COP/BAD COP" interrogation scene on the glass of the Engineer  
booth for a confused Paul, who can't read it backwards.

82 EXT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - PARKING LOT/TRIG'S TRUCK - ANOTHER DAY 82

Trig in his truck. Ellie and Paul pop up on either side. \*

ELLIE

We're writing a profile on the  
student we most admire!

This checks out for Trig.

TRIG

Cool, cool.

ELLIE

What are your views on women  
in the workplace?

PAUL

Does Aster like lean meats?

Ellie and Paul confer over the top of the truck cab.

ELLIE

What are you doing?

PAUL

What are you doing?

ELLIE

I'm good cop.

82 CONTINUED:

82

PAUL  
If you're good cop, how come you're  
not smiling?

ELLIE  
I'll SMILE when you follow the plan  
I CAREFULLY--

From below...

TRIG  
(thinking aloud) I'm surprised more  
kids haven't asked to interview me.

An oblivious Trig stares at his reflection.

Paul points to his "smile." Ellie sighs.

83 EXT. ABANDONED TRAIN CAR - ANOTHER DAY

83

On a GLASS WINDOW under: "OPPO RESEARCH": "Doesn't know her  
favorite food. Or band. Or anything." Reveal Ellie writing on  
one of the windows of the train car. Paul next to her.

84 EXT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - PARKING LOT - ANOTHER DAY

84

Aster clears her lunch and moves on. Reveal Paul in the  
foreground, marks a grid.

85 EXT. ABANDONED TRAIN CAR - ANOTHER DAY

85

On GLASS: "Eats all meats. Hates raisins."

Reveal: Ellie and Paul in a train car filled with writing.  
She's gone full-on "Homeland" in this mission.

86 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - ROAD INTO TOWN - MORNING

86

Paul overtakes Ellie on her bike and suddenly is...

87 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - ANOTHER NIGHT

87

...RUNNING toward the ENDZONE and ALMOST CATCHES A WILD PASS!

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)  
WOAH! The Squahamish Moose ALMOST  
SCORED!

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

87 CONTINUED: 87

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
That would be the first score in  
fifteen years! Nice hustle from  
#86... P. Munsky!

The half-filled stands half-cheer, Aster among them.

Paul breaks into a toothy smile.

88 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH - SAME TIME 88

Ellie listens to the game. Pumps her fist. Gets a text from  
Aster: "Cute smile." Bittersweet.

End TRAINING MONTAGE MUSIC.

89 EXT. OUTSIDE FLORES HOME - DINING ROOM/INT. PAUL'S TRUCK - 89  
ANOTHER NIGHT

Through a large dining room window: the Flores' at dinner.

Across the way, inside THE CAB OF A TRUCK, Ellie and Paul are  
on a "stakeout." Ellie takes notes. Paul's stomach GROWLS.

PAUL  
You're not hungry?

ELLIE  
Not if it's not time to eat.

PAUL  
That's weird.

THROUGH THE WINDOW: The Deacon says a loooong grace. Mrs.  
Flores notices Aster's collar is askew. Adjusts it lovingly.

Ellie's face shows a touch of yearning. Paul sees it.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Can I ask you a question?

ELLIE  
I don't want to try a taco sausage.

PAUL  
Why Squahamish?

Ellie looks at Paul. *What kind of question is that?*

(CONTINUED)



89

CONTINUED:

89

PAUL (CONT'D)

Your dad seems so unhappy here. And you also seem kinda unhappy.

Ellie unbuckles her seat belt.

ELLIE

I gotta go.

PAUL

Wait--

ELLIE

You're not taking this seriously, I have a ton of work to do--

PAUL

I just think you're so, like, smart, too smart to--

ELLIE

--waste my time trying to win you some girl who'll probably never--

PAUL

--it just seems weird--

ELLIE

--You're weird!

PAUL

No! I mean, yes--

ELLIE

Enjoy your "happy" life in Squahamish!

She's about to slam the truck door. Paul springs across the front seat, catches the door before it closes.

(CONTINUED)

89

CONTINUED: (2)

89

PAUL

The thing about *No Exit* is it's like how what I really want is to run my own shop - one with new recipes - and FYI, "TACO SAUSAGE" IS REALLY EFFIN GOOD - but I'm just the fourth son, and my family has made the same dogs for 49 years, and doesn't matter that we're going out of style or broke - it's Nana's recipe, and if my Ma can't have her Nana, at least she can keep making her sausages, and if I break away, I'd break her heart, and it's her heart or mine so... I stay.

Paul is breathless. It's more words than he's ever said.

Ellie slowly gets back into the truck. Exhales.

ELLIE

We had to go where my dad could get a job.

PAUL

He studied trains?

ELLIE

Engineering. PhD, no less.

PAUL

So he became... the Station Manager at Squahamish?

ELLIE

To start. Plan was to be promoted to "System Engineer" or... *anything* "Engineer". Squahamish was a jumping off point. (beat) Turns out speaking good English trumps a PhD. Or one from China, anyway. And my dad--

PAUL

Has a hard time speaking.

ELLIE

(bristling) He's not *bad*.

PAUL

I have a hard time speaking too.

(CONTINUED)

89 CONTINUED: (3)

89

ELLIE

True. What's your excuse?

Tension broken. Paul grins. He starts the engine.

PAUL

How do you feel about pot roast?

ELLIE

I should get back to the station.

PAUL

We gotta eat.

Ellie's stomach GROWLS. They drive away.

90 INT. MUNSKY HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT

90

It's mayhem. The six members of Paul's family: COLLEEN (MA), BILL (PA), brothers GREG, PETE, TOMMY, and sister LENA function like one chaotic organism.

Paul and Ellie stand off to the side, unnoticed.

GREG MUNSKY

So Marcy and me are thinking Vegas for the honeymoon! Cheap AND fancy!

PETE MUNSKY

Dog-wrestling, Pa! Sport of the near future!

LENA MUNSKY

Tommy, stop friending my friends!

TOMMY MUNSKY

Stop making hot friends!

BILL MUNSKY (PA)

You're *not* running a dog-wrestling ring out of our house!

COLLEEN MUNSKY

NO ONE gets married until they can afford to move out and pay rent!

Paul glances at a stunned Ellie.

PAUL

Or we could go to your place?

(CONTINUED)

90 CONTINUED: 90

Off Ellie's uncertain look.

91 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - NIGHT 91

Ellie in her La-Z-Boy, pot pie in hand, eyes glued nervously to the TV. (On screen: another classic. "City Lights?")

Widen to reveal Paul CURLED ON THE FLOOR next to her, also eating a pot pie.

Widen further to reveal EDWIN, in his La-Z-Boy, glaring.

Cue the opening strains of a guitar playing "Half Way."

92 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - ROAD INTO TOWN - MORNING 92

Ellie biking at 75% speed with Paul keeping up.

93 INT. SHITTY REC ROOM SOMEWHERE - ANOTHER DAY 93

We're back at the ping pong table.

ELLIE

Match energy. Match strokes. Then just say one thing.

Paul nods, deliberate and slow. Ellie serves.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Where were you born?

Paul hits the ball back, gently.

PAUL

In Squahamish. What about you?

ELLIE

Okay good! That wasn't so hard!

PAUL

But where were you born?

ELLIE

I don't need talking practice.

PAUL

Just seems like a really short conversation.

(CONTINUED)

93

CONTINUED:

93

*Damn.* He has a point.

ELLIE (O.S.)

I was born in Suzhou. China.

PAUL

When did you come here?

ELLIE

When I was five. What do you like about Squahamish?

PAUL

I've never been anywhere else.

Beat.

ELLIE

Me neither.

The ball continues between them.

94

INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - ANOTHER NIGHT

94

Back in the apartment watching another classic film.

Paul offers Edwin and Ellie a taco sausage. They decline.

95

EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH/INT. FLORES HOUSE (INTERCUTTING ELLIE/ASTER) - ANOTHER LATE NIGHT

95

SUPERIMPOSE: "diegarivero: Favorite time of day?"

SUPERIMPOSE: "smithcorona: Probably... now"

SUPERIMPOSE: "diegarivero: Smooth..."

Angle on Ellie, alone, smiling at her phone.

96

INT. SQUAHAMISH CATHOLIC CHURCH - CHAPEL - DAY

96

Ellie is at the organ while the Deacon delivers a homily.

Father Shanley awakes with a jerk.

FATHER SHANLEY

OUTSIDE ARE THE DOGS AND THE  
SORCERERS--

(CONTINUED)

96 CONTINUED: 96

Ellie sneaks a peak at Aster, head bent over her devotional.

SUPERIMPOSE: "diegarivero: Think Father Shanley has any idea what's going on around him?"

SUPERIMPOSE: "smithcorona: I think Father Shanley KNOWS ALL."

Aster's mouth twitches upward. From her organ, Ellie smiles.

Aster turns to look at Paul... who breaks into a goofy smile.

Ellie's eyes drop to the organ keys.

97 INT. MRS. G'S CLASSROOM - ANOTHER AFTERNOON 97

Ellie dodges Mrs. G's gaze on her way out. Then turns back.

ELLIE

You know what it's like to *finally*  
meet someone your age who *gets* you?

MRS G

You know where else you can meet  
people your age who *get* you?  
COLLEGE.

Ellie slinks out.

98 INT. SQUAHAMISH CATHOLIC CHURCH - CONFESSION BOOTH - ANOTHER AFTERNOON 98

Ellie and Paul back in the booth, arguing. Father Shanley confused in the booth between them.

PAUL

You should send some emojis!

ELLIE

I'm not sending her emojis!

PAUL

Oh! Do Pineapple, Owl, Caterpillar  
with glasses!

ELLIE

What does that MEAN? That doesn't  
mean ANYTHING!

(CONTINUED)

98 CONTINUED:

98

PAUL

Glasses make the caterpillar look smart!

This deep debate rings out over the empty chapel.

99 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - ROAD OUT OF TOWN - ANOTHER AFTERNOON

99

Ellie at full speed. Paul keeping up.

100 INT. SHITTY REC ROOM SOMEWHERE - ANOTHER DAY

100

Back to conversation lessons.

PAUL

Favorite food?

ELLIE

Braised pork over rice. Yours?

PAUL

Taco sausage!

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Taco sausage.

PAUL

Does braised pork have five-spice powder?

ELLIE

How do you know five-spice powder?

PAUL

Kinda creeped in your cabinets.

Ellie shoots him a look.

PAUL (CONT'D)

I'm always looking for new spices.

ELLIE

Giving up on the taco sausage?

PAUL

No way! I've been writing to the paper in Wenatchee for months now. If I could get their guy to just taste it...

ELLIE

Gateway to greatness *is* Wenatchee.

(CONTINUED)

100 CONTINUED:

100

PAUL

Yeah. You gotta try it!

ELLIE

What do the other Munsky's think?

PAUL

They haven't tried it.

He's bummed. She sees it. Then softly...

ELLIE

"Taco sausage" has a nice ring.

PAUL

Right?

He brightens.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Hey.

ELLIE

Yeah?

PAUL

What was your mom like?

ELLIE

Young. Funny. Dead.

PAUL

*Before* she died.

Beat.

ELLIE

Young. Funny. (beat) Fun.

Paul's listening intently.

PAUL

She sounds cool.

ELLIE

Yeah.

Now Ellie's embarrassed.

PAUL

Bet she would have tried the taco sausage.

(CONTINUED)



100 CONTINUED: (2) 100

Ellie throws the ball at him.

101 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH/INT. FLORES 101  
HOUSE (INTERCUTTING ELLIE/ASTER) - ANOTHER LATE NIGHT

Diegarivero: Why is late night your fave?

Smithcorona: World asleep. More room for thoughts

DiegaRivero: Hour of secrets?

Smithcorona: Something like that

DiegaRivero: So what secrets...?

Angle on Ellie biting her lip.

102 INT. SHITTY REC ROOM SOMEWHERE - NEXT DAY 102

Back to convo lessons. Ellie's thoughts still on last night.

ELLIE

What do you like about Aster?

PAUL

She's pretty and smart and she's never mean and she smells like fresh ground flour. Why?

ELLIE

Just wondering.

PAUL

Why else could I like her?

ELLIE

I don't know. (now thinking) How her eyes look right into yours... How she twirls her hair when she's reading. How her laugh busts out like she can't help herself and she stops being so... *PERFECT* for just a few moments. How she has at least five different voices. How you could live in an ocean of her thoughts and feel like she knows you, like really KNOWS--

Ellie stops mid-sentence. Paul is staring at her.

(CONTINUED)

102 CONTINUED:

102

PAUL  
I am so stupid.

ELLIE  
(nervously) I just mean-

PAUL  
I am so dumb. A real idiot.

ELLIE  
I wouldn't-- don't-

PAUL  
What you just said? *That's* what you  
say when you love someone.

ELLIE  
No! I was just talking-

PAUL  
No, it *is*. And you don't even care!  
I love her and I can't... UGH!

He slams his paddle onto the table. Ellie exhales in relief.  
Then realizes: Paul's miserable. She takes him in. Gently:

ELLIE  
You try harder than anyone I've  
ever met - with the possible  
exception of my dad with my mom -  
to show a girl you love them... And  
if love isn't the effort you put  
in... then what is it?

Paul looks up.

PAUL  
Yeah?

ELLIE  
Yeah.

He brightens.

Sound of a TOASTER OVEN DOOR OPENING.

103 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - NIGHT

103

CLOSE ON PAUL'S HAND pulling out three broiled sausages.

(CONTINUED)

103

CONTINUED:

103

Everyone in their respective positions in front of the TV. Each with a "taco sausage" before them.

Ellie watches Edwin glare at his sausage, take the tiniest bite... His brows shoot up. He takes another.

Ellie, now curious, bites into her sausage. Eyes widen. It's insanely delicious.

Paul's face breaks into smile of unbearable sweetness.

104

INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - NIGHT

104

Edwin has fallen asleep.

Ellie and Paul, still watching TV, drink Yakults.

ELLIE

I can't believe you know Yakult.

PAUL

County Stadium vending machine.  
Keeps the coaches regular.

ELLIE

Seriously? The only Asian grocery  
is three hours by bike.

Paul shoots her a thoughtful glance.

ON THE TV: A train pulls out of a station.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

(to TV) Do not run after her train.  
Do NOT... Do NOT... Ugh.

PAUL

Kinda sweet.

ELLIE

Kinda trite.

PAUL

It shows he cares!

ELLIE

It shows he's a *moron*. Who outruns  
trains? *That* girl's thinking: thank  
god I got out before wasting my  
life on that idiot.

(CONTINUED)

104 CONTINUED: 104

ONSCREEN: Cut to girl on train.

PAUL  
She looks sad.

ELLIE  
Then she's a moron too.

Paul sniffles.

105 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH - LATE NIGHT 105

SUPERIMPOSE: "smithcorona: No secrets. Just a good guy... And \*  
you should be with a good guy."

The song "Half Way" wraps up...

106 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - ELLIE'S 106  
ATTIC BEDROOM - ANOTHER NIGHT

... as we reveal Ellie in her room, noodling on her mom's old  
guitar, sorting out the final lines of a song.

The last bars drift out her window to...

107 EXT. MUNSKY SAUSAGE SHOP - BACK ENTRANCE/EXT. ELLIE'S 107  
ATTIC BEDROOM WINDOW - SAME TIME

...the back of Munsky Sausage Shop, where Paul has stopped  
garbage duty to listen. Moved.

The song ends.

The light in Ellie's window goes off.

108 EXT./INT. SPARKY'S DINER/PAUL'S TRUCK - ANOTHER NIGHT 108

Paul's truck is in the parking lot.

IN THE TRUCK

Paul toys nervously with the zipper on his down vest.

Sound of a BIKE SCREECH outside.

Ellie throws herself into the cab, breathless.

108

CONTINUED:

108

ELLIE

Lost track of time practicing for Senior Recital. I'm a little freaked about it, but whatever. Okay. ASTER. If she brings up immigration, you've been talking about the recent--

PAUL

I know.

ELLIE

When in doubt, if the name is Italian, probably an artist, if French, probably a--

PAUL

Hey.

What?

PAUL (CONT'D)

Thanks.

ELLIE

Oh. Sure.

PAUL

I'm probably gonna crash and burn. But thanks for sticking it out with me anyway.

ELLIE

Well. Not like you didn't pay me.

PAUL

Well. Thanks.

Paul starts to go.

ELLIE

Hey.

What?

ELLIE (CONT'D)

You're not gonna crash and burn.

She gives him a thumbs up. His face lights into a huge grin.

He's gone. She exhales anxiously.

(CONTINUED)

108 CONTINUED: (2)

108

ELLIE (CONT'D)  
You're totally gonna crash and  
burn.

She starts worrying the zipper on her down vest.

109 INT. SPARKY'S DINER - MOMENTS LATER

109

Paul sits across from Aster. It's awkward.

ASTER  
So I was wondering--

PAUL  
How about that immigration  
bill--

PAUL (CONT'D)  
Sorry, go ahead.

ASTER  
No, you.

PAUL  
Oh uh. The immigration bill?

ASTER  
Un hunh?

PAUL  
Uh. Right?

ASTER  
(confused) Right?

PAUL  
Yup.

They lapse into silence.

110 INT. SPARKY'S DINER/INT. PAUL'S TRUCK - SAME TIME

110

The conversation plays over Ellie's phone, linked to Paul's.

ELLIE  
Come on, dude.

111 INT. SPARKY'S DINER - SAME TIME

111

The waitress drops off their order.

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED:

111

ASTER

We don't have to talk about...  
serious things.

PAUL

Oh. Okay.

More silence.

PAUL (CONT'D)

What were you about to say?

ASTER

Oh, uh. It's still cool that  
we're... friends?

PAUL

Yeah. Cool. Friends.

Now even more awkward.

112 EXT. SPARKY'S DINER/INT. PAUL'S TRUCK - SAME TIME

112

Ellie pulls out her phone.

113 INT. SPARKY'S DINER/INT. PAUL'S TRUCK - SAME TIME

113

Bzzz. Aster looks at her phone.

ASTER

You messaged me!

PAUL

(confused) ...Yup.

CLOSE ON ASTER, short-sided (Paul's truck POV). SUPERIMPOSED  
on negative space behind her:

Smithcorona: I get nervous when you're close.

Aster looks back at Paul. Smiles.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Yup...?

DiegaRivero: Why?

SmithCorona: ...

DING. WHIP-PAN TO PAUL, STARING AT ELLIE.

(CONTINUED)

113

CONTINUED:

113

Paul: Wut????

Ellie: Look at your phone!

WHIP-PAN BACK TO ASTER.

DiegaRivero: ...?

SmithCorona: ..... (Aster smiles)

DiegaRivero: I'm just a girl.

SmithCorona: You're *not* just a girl.

DING. Ugh. WHIP-PAN BACK TO PAUL.

Paul: WUT. ARE. YOU. SAYING???

Ellie: STOP. LOOKING. AT. ME!!!

WHIP-PAN back to Aster.

DiegaRivero: I'm not? Then what are you?

SmithCorona: Also... not just a girl

Aster laughs. Looks up at Paul.

He gives her a wide, confused smile. And a thumbs up.

Aster's not sure how to react.

Ellie groans.

DiegaRivero: You're strange. But cute.

Ellie is out of her depth.

SmithCorona: You have... classic bone structure.

Aster's lips twitch up.

DiegaRivero: ... Thanks.

Ellie flushes. She tries again.

SmithCorona: I think you are...

She deletes it.

SmithCorona: You are...

(CONTINUED)



113 CONTINUED: (2) 113

Delete. She takes a breath.

SmithCorona: The thing is...

114 INT. SPARKY'S DINER - SAME TIME 114

Paul can take it no longer... and STANDS. Flushed with conviction.

Aster looks up from her screen, startled.

115 EXT. SPARKY'S DINER/INT. PAUL'S TRUCK - SAME TIME 115

ELLIE  
What?? No! BAD. Sit!

116 INT. SPARKY'S DINER - SAME TIME 116

PAUL  
I don't want to be just friends.

ASTER  
Oh!

The whole diner's watching.

PAUL  
I think you are pretty and funny  
and smart and your laugh is like...  
an ocean of thoughts... or five  
oceans of thoughts... or five  
voices or... (blurts) I LIKE YOU. \*

ASTER  
(flushed) I don't know what to say.

PAUL  
Me neither. I'm not a good talker.

He's so earnest. She smiles.

ASTER  
That's okay.

He reaches for her hand. She lets him.

117 EXT. SPARKY'S DINER/INT. PAUL'S TRUCK - SAME TIME 117

Ellie slips out of the truck. Her work is done here.

118 EXT. SPARKY'S DINER/ROAD BACK TO SQUAHAMISH - NIGHT 118

We follow her tiny bike light as it heads into the night.

119 INT. CLOTHESTOWN - DAY 119

A jubilant Paul high fives MANNEQUINS.

PAUL

What up haters! Who rocked their  
second date? #86 Pauuuul MUNSKY!

Ellie picks through a row of ON SALE CARDIGANS.

PAUL (CONT'D)

And now his side girl is gonna rock  
THE SENIOR RECITAL!

ELLIE

It's a piano solo.

She pulls a cardigan over her hoodie.

PAUL

You're gonna be AWESOME!

ELLIE

I'm gonna be puking.

PAUL

You're *always* playing for an  
audience.

ELLIE

On the side. Not on stage. Alone.

PAUL

You're gonna crush it. OH. Did I  
tell you that some food guy from  
the paper in Tukwila wrote me?  
Musta heard about me from the guy  
in Wenatchee. He says he likes how  
my sausage sounds and wants to try  
it! Boom! It's Munsky time!

He shadow boxes... anything.

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED:

119

ELLIE

Hey! Look at you.

She pulls a pleated skirt over her jeans.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

So... (attempting to be casual)  
what did you and Aster talk about?

PAUL

I dunno. We got milkshakes and  
fries and held hands and it was...  
*quiet* and... (realizes) *nice*.

He relives that moment.

PAUL (CONT'D)

Then she had curfew so we walked to  
her car... and I kissed her.

Ellie fiddles with a zipper.

ELLIE

How does that happen?

PAUL

What?

ELLIE

The kiss.

PAUL

(shrugs) I kissed her.

ELLIE

You don't ask first?

PAUL

No one asks first.

ELLIE

Then how do you know she *wants* to  
be kissed?

PAUL

(thinks) She gives you a *look*.

ELLIE

A *look*?

He fixes Ellie with a "look." She is confused.

(CONTINUED)

119

CONTINUED: (2)

119

PAUL

(sighs) It's a LOOK. And when you see the look? *You make your move...* or you come off like a real putz.

This is Greek to Ellie.

PAUL (CONT'D)

And now we're going out on a date date - not a friend date - when she gets back from some youth group in Sacramento!

He reaches out for a high-five. Notices her motley outfit.

PAUL (CONT'D)

There are dressing rooms, you know.

ELLIE

I'll just get this.

PAUL

Really?

ELLIE

Yeah?

She sounds less certain than usual. Paul takes her in.

PAUL

Without the jeans and flannel shirt...

Ellie straightens.

PAUL (CONT'D)

You look weird.

She slumps.

ELLIE

Gee thanks.

PAUL

It just doesn't look like you. All girl-ed up.

ELLIE

I know.

She's deflated.

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED: (3)

119

PAUL

Go to the dressing room. I'll toss  
you some things.

ELLIE

You're a *dude*-

PAUL

I have a sister. Go.

He starts browsing with intention.

120 INT. CLOTHESTOWN - DAY

120

Ellie comes out of the dressing room in a fitted blue shirt  
and skinny slacks. She looks... good.

PAUL

(amazed) You look better than I  
thought you could.

ELLIE

Gee. *Thanks*.

PAUL

I mean you look like *you*. But  
better.

ELLIE

Yay.

\*

Despite the snark, she seems... almost happy.

Cue a rendition of "In Your Eyes" by Peter Gabriel...

121 INT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - ASSEMBLY HALL - ANOTHER NIGHT

121

... played onstage by A TRIO of OBOES.

FROM THE WINGS

Ellie peeks out at the PACKED HOUSE of students and their  
families.

EMCEE

Well our next Senior needs no  
introduction!

A chant picks up: "Trig! Trig! Trig!"...

(CONTINUED)

121

CONTINUED:

121

And with that, TRIG IS ON STAGE, electric guitar flung over his back, a BACKING BAND behind him.

TRIG  
WHAT UP, SQUAHAMISH MOOSE!

The crowd is on its feet.

TRIG (CONT'D)  
YOU KNOW WHO I AM. I KNOW WHO I AM.  
LET'S DO THIS.

He launches into a cover of "Pour Some Sugar On Me". It's terrible. The audience is enthralled.

BACKSTAGE

Ellie slumps at a piano. A STAGE MANAGER pokes her head in.

STAGE MANAGER  
Ellie Chu? 3 mins til go time. Last  
chance to pee.

Great. Ellie heads to the bathroom.

The Obnoxious Bullies sneak in and fiddle with the piano.

IN THE AUDITORIUM

Paul slips in, pulling off a Munsky Sausage apron.

To chants of TRIG! TRIG! TRIG! Trig strides off-stage with his band... passing a lone Ellie, rolling her piano on.

EMCEE (O.S.)  
Let's give it up next for...  
(consults clipboard) Ellie Chu!

FROM THE AUDIENCE

OBNOXIOUS BULLIES  
Chugga-chugga-chugga- CHIU CHIU!

Paul glares into the crowd.

ONSTAGE

Ellie settles onto the piano, her back to the audience.

She takes a breath. Starts to play. It is WILDLY DISCORDANT.

She stops. THE PIANO IS HORRIBLY OUT OF TUNE.

(CONTINUED)

121 CONTINUED: (2)

121

The Obnoxious Bullies cackle at their prank.

The audience is restless.

Ellie is frozen.

PAUL

Oh no.

\*

BACKUP BAND DUDE

(catcalling) NEXT!

Audience laughter. Paul glares at Backup Band Dude... Notices his guitar.

ONSTAGE

Ellie still frozen when A GUITAR SLIDES ACROSS THE STAGE and STOPS BEHIND HER. She turns.

Paul gestures from the side: *Play it.*

Ellie looks at the guitar. At the crowd. Back at Paul.

She turns around on the bench. Closes her eyes. Starts to play "Half Way." Her voice starts shaky... then steadies... finishing pure and clear and strong.

It is dead silent in the auditorium.

AND THEN THE CROWD GOES WILD.

Ellie is startled. *What is happening?*

IN THE AUDIENCE

Paul beams. Doesn't even notice Trig next to him.

TRIG

When did Ellie Chu get kinda hot?

Paul stares at Ellie. *When indeed?*

ONSTAGE

A flushed Ellie takes it all in.

122 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ENGINEER BOOTH - LATER

122

Ellie is in the lit booth, alone, still smiling.

(CONTINUED)

122 CONTINUED:

122

A car pulls up, Paul in the passenger seat.

PAUL

Come on!

\*

Friendly people wave her over. Ellie deliberates.

123 INT. CARSON MCMANSION - NIGHT

123

A high school party in full swing.

Ellie trails Paul's crew, backpack squarely on shoulders.

ONE PERSON

The Chinese girl came!

RANDOM PARTY PEOPLE

CHINESE GIRL!

Red Solo Party cups are raised.

A GIRL FROM MATH CLASS runs up.

GIRL FROM MATH CLASS

Ellie Chu! I just wanted to say  
that we've had math together all  
four years, and I've always wanted  
to tell you that I like your nails.

ELLIE

Oh. (embarrassed) Yeah, I can't get  
the bike grease out.

GIRL FROM MATH CLASS

They look badass! Want to play  
Drinkers of Catan?

She pulls Ellie into the fray.

GIRL FROM MATH CLASS (CONT'D)

It's like Settlers but...

Ellie looks back at Paul, who gives her a thumbs up.

124 INT. CARSON MCMANSION - LATER

124

Paul moves along the periphery, clearing stray cups and  
trash, as he keeps an eye on ELLIE LAUGHING WITH HER PEERS,  
having the time of her life.

(CONTINUED)



124 CONTINUED:

124

ELLIE

I will trade you Wheat for Rye.

SENIOR GUY

Bourbon it is.

A senior guy hands Ellie a full cup. Paul intercepts.

PAUL

Thanks.

Ellie gives him a hard look.

ELLIE

I want you to know (pause) that I can tell I have been drinking spirits (pause). Because I have to pee far more often than would be indicated by plain punch. So don't think I haven't been monitoring the situation.

Triumphant look.

PAUL

Cool, cool. So how many cups have you monitored?

Ummmmmmmmmm...

PAUL (CONT'D)

Let's get you home.

ELLIE

Okay.

She throws up.

125 INT. MUNSKY HOUSE - PAUL'S BASEMENT ROOM - LATER

125

A slightly disheveled basement repurposed as a boy's room.

We can hear Ellie and Paul's voices coming from behind the closed bathroom door.

ELLIE (O.S.)

I'm so sorry.

PAUL (O.S.)

It's okay.

(CONTINUED)

125

CONTINUED:

125

ELLIE (O.S.)  
I think I'm done now.

PAUL (O.S.)  
Okay.

ELLIE (O.S.)  
No wait...

PAUL (O.S.)  
Okay.

Beat.

ELLIE (O.S.)  
I'm good.

PAUL (O.S.)  
Okay.

Bathroom door opens.

Paul carries Ellie over his shoulder into the bedroom.

ELLIE  
Are you taking me home now?

PAUL  
Yeah.

ELLIE  
Okay.

She passes out.

He lays her gently on the bed.

Sets her backpack against the bed... out spills SEVERAL SEALED LETTERS to various food critics around the state. Addressed in "his" writing.

Paul stares at the letters. Then at Ellie.

He settles in an armchair in the corner, awake, watching.

126

INT. MUNSKY HOUSE - PAUL'S BASEMENT ROOM - NEXT MORNING 126

A ray of SUNSHINE lands on a sleeping Ellie. A muffled BUZZING from her backpack. She stirs.

On the bed stand, a full glass of water and two aspirin.

(CONTINUED)

126

CONTINUED:

126

She reaches for them.

From upstairs:

COLLEEN MUNSKY (O.S.)  
He's at practice, but you can leave  
it in his room.

ASTER (O.S.)  
It's just a silly thing I thought  
he'd like.

Ellie does a SPIT TAKE.

ON HER PHONE are FIVE UNREAD MESSAGES. The first: "Home early  
from Sacramento. Tomorrow?"

She falls out of bed in a frantic attempt to groom, clean,  
calm herself because ASTER FLORES IS ON HER WAY DOWN.

In her haste, she wakes Paul's laptop, which starts playing a  
dumb prank show called "TOO AWESOME TO DIE"

ELLIE  
Ugh.

She can't get it to stop.

Above, a door opens. Colleen and Aster descend the stairs.

COLLEEN MUNSKY (O.S.)  
...we went as far as Sekiu once,  
but never made it all the way to  
California. You're quite the world  
traveler!

Colleen and Aster enter, just as Ellie muffles Paul's laptop  
under a pillow.

COLLEEN MUNSKY (CONT'D)  
Oh, it's Paul's Chinese friend!  
Didn't hear you come in.

ELLIE  
Just dropping off books...

COLLEEN MUNSKY  
Aster is also dropping off-

A LOUD GRINDING FROM UPSTAIRS.

(CONTINUED)

126

CONTINUED: (2)

126

COLLEEN MUNSKY (CONT'D)

Tommy! Hands off the grinder!

Colleen hustles back upstairs.

Aster smiles, a bit guarded.

ASTER

Hi.

ELLIE

Hi.

ASTER

So you and Paul-

Paul's laptop wakes: "...stuff an electric eel UP HIS NOSE!"

ASTER (CONT'D)

Is that... *"Too Awesome to Die?"*

ELLIE

Yup. *I* was watching that.

From the laptop: "check out the electric snot! Woah! AWESOME!" Ellie puts another pillow on top.

ASTER

Are you two...?

ELLIE

Oh god no! No, no! He is totally one hundred percent into you!

ASTER

(surprised) You know about us?

ELLIE

Oh! Uh. He wanted to do some extra reading, so I lent him some books.

ASTER

He's doing extra reading?

ELLIE

For you.

ASTER

That's... sweet.

ELLIE

It is.

(CONTINUED)

It really is. Aster relaxes.

ASTER

(confessing) On our first date, I kept talking about books... I think I almost drove him away. God, I can be such a nervous idiot!

*What?* Ellie is dumbfounded.

ELLIE

You could never be an idiot. I mean *Paul* would never think that. He's way into you.

Aster takes this in, smiling.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

I should get back to the station.

She notices a SMALL CANVAS PRINT in Aster's hand.

ASTER

(self-conscious) Just something silly I made on my trip.

Ellie reaches for it. It's reminiscent of the mural they made. But clearly the stirrings of Aster's own voice.

ELLIE

I like this stroke off to the side. Lonely..... And hopeful.

Aster looks at her own painting.

ASTER

Yeah.

Ellie hands it back.

ELLIE

He'll love it.

She starts to go. Aster looks up from her painting.

ASTER

Can I come with?

ELLIE

To the station?

\*  
\*

126 CONTINUED: (4)

126

ASTER

I already lied to my dad about  
where I'd be. I have the day.

Off Ellie's uncertain expression...

ELLIE (O.S.)

Red, then Green. *Green!*

127 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - DAY

127

CLOSE ON the side of a train slowing... then starting to speed up... then jerking to a stop. Then finally pickup speed to WHIP BY, leaving... Aster on the platform, laughing, clearly having botched the signal lights.

ASTER

You get to do this every day?

ELLIE

Twice. 6:40am and 11:40PM weekdays.  
12:10PM and 9:20PM weekends. Give  
or take an hour.

ASTER

That is AWESOME!

ELLIE

(wry) It's a real blast.

ASTER

It's so master-of-the-universe.

ELLIE

A teeny-tiny universe.

ASTER

At least you rule *something*.

Ellie takes the lights and ducks into the booth. Aster points at some ELECTRIC SIGNAL LIGHTS.

ASTER (CONT'D)

What about those?

ELLIE

My dad doesn't trust them.

Ellie finishes. Stares at Aster from the booth.

An awkward beat. What next?

(CONTINUED)

127 CONTINUED: 127

ASTER

Want to get out of here?

Ellie glances up at the apartment window.

Aster smiles, winningly.

CUE ROADTRIP MUSIC.

128 EXT./INT. ASTER'S CAR/ROAD - LATER 128

A beat up hatchback hightails it out of town.

Aster cranks up the radio.

ELLIE

Where we going?

ASTER

My favorite secret place.

Ellie peers back out the window as Squahamish recedes in the distance. She closes her eyes. Feels the wind in her hair.

129 EXT. ABANDONED MOUNTAIN ROAD - LATER 129

The Fiesta slows to a stop at the end of a dirt road.

It is lush and foggy and deserted.

Ellie gets out of the car.

ELLIE

This is your favorite secret place?

ASTER

Almost.

Aster pulls out a duffel bag and starts down the trail.

130 EXT. SECRET HOT SPRINGS - LATER 130

The two girls push through some brush... into A BILLOW OF STEAM rising from a HOT SPRINGS SWIMMING HOLE. It's pristine.

ELLIE

Woah.

(CONTINUED)

130 CONTINUED:

130

ASTER

Right?

Aster strips down and dives in. Re-emerges, glistening.

Ellie looks anywhere but Aster.

ELLIE

Are these deciduous trees?

ASTER

(amused) I wouldn't know.

Aster turns to give her privacy.

ASTER (CONT'D)

We didn't have trees like this in Sacramento. Everything's reversed. Things die off in summer, turn green in winter.

ELLIE

Is that where you grew up?

ASTER

Born there. Moved here. My life story.

She hears Ellie slip into the spring. Turns to find her still in a t-shirt. Glasses fogged. And...

ASTER (CONT'D)

Is that long underwear?

ELLIE

Yes.

Aster's mouth twitches. Then suddenly she hauls her body - naked - out of the spring.

ASTER

I almost forgot.

Ellie averts her eyes wildly.

ASTER (CONT'D)

There's no cell service here, so...

She digs a SMALL RADIO out of her duffel, switches it on.

A THROWBACK CLASSIC ROCK SONG pours out.

(CONTINUED)



130 CONTINUED: (2)

130

ASTER (CONT'D)  
It's like nothing can reach us  
here.

Nothing but Foghat. Ellie relaxes slightly into the water.

131 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - SAME TIME 131

Edwin looks out the window to see Paul peering up.

EDWIN  
Ellie not here.

PAUL  
This is for you.

Paul lifts up a sack of fresh pork. And Chinese spices.

Edwin lowers the spray hose.

132 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - LATER 132

Edwin shows Paul how to season the meat with five-spice powder. They work silently and companionably.

133 EXT. SECRET HOT SPRINGS - SAME TIME 133

The girls on opposite sides of the small spring. Aster is in her element. Ellie... less so.

ASTER  
Catholic school was the worst.

ELLIE  
The nuns?

ASTER  
The girls. Like Lord of the Flies  
but with Lisa Frank.

ELLIE  
Miss Piggy's head on a stick. \*

ASTER  
The "beast" reimagined as a sparkly  
unicorn. \*

(CONTINUED)

133 CONTINUED:

133

ELLIE

Instead of a naval officer, Taylor  
Swift's yacht saves the day.

Aster laughs, slows to tread water. Takes Ellie in.

ASTER

I don't think I've hung out with  
another girl and not talked about  
boys before.

ELLIE

Oh. Sorry.

ASTER

Don't be. It's nice.

Aster seems thoughtful.

ELLIE

(blurts out) Paul's cool.

A beat of disappointment. Then Aster shifts gears too.

ASTER

He's... confusing. When I'm with  
him, I feel... safe. He's a...  
sweet guy. Then he writes these  
things that feel... not safe.

ELLIE

Not safe...?

ASTER

They just make me wonder...

She trails off, a million unspoken thoughts.

ASTER (CONT'D)

I should marry Trig.

ELLIE

Oh!

ASTER

Should I?

Ellie doesn't have an answer.

(CONTINUED)

133 CONTINUED: (2)

133

ASTER (CONT'D)

(sighs) God doesn't know either, if  
it's any consolation. Or He's not  
telling.

ELLIE

I don't believe in God.

ASTER

That must be so nice.

ELLIE

No. It's not. It's... lonely.

It's the most real thing she's ever said.

Aster hears it. Lets it sink in.

\*

ASTER

I wish I knew what I believed. I  
overheard Trig once talking to my  
dad about our future wedding. He  
hasn't even asked me yet - he's  
just so *sure*. And maybe that's  
love? I've been asking God to give  
me a sign. If this is what love is,  
I'll accept it and be grateful. But  
if it's supposed to be something  
bigger, something more... And then  
Paul's letter appeared in my  
locker. And I've never felt so...  
understood.

\*

She glances at Ellie, embarrassed.

ASTER (CONT'D)

Silly, right?

ELLIE

No. It's not silly.

A moment of real connection.

ASTER

You know what *is* silly?

Aster wades slowly toward Ellie... removes her glasses...  
tries to YANK her shirt off. They tussle. Shrieking.  
Laughing.

(CONTINUED)

133 CONTINUED: (3)

133

ASTER (CONT'D)  
Did you *layer*???

ELLIE  
I am a Russian doll of clothing!

134 EXT. SECRET HOT SPRINGS - DAY

134

Heads together in the center of the hole, floating, staring into the sky. Both girls in puffed up t-shirts. Ellie more relaxed than we've ever seen her.

ELLIE  
Gravity is matter's response to loneliness.

ASTER  
Who said that?

ELLIE  
...I don't know.

ASTER  
Well then *you* said it.

Is this true? They float.

FROM THE RADIO: "If You Leave Me Now" by Chicago.

ELLIE  
(exhaling) My mom loved this song.

They listen.

ELLIE (CONT'D)  
She said every song, movie, story has a best part.

Beat.

ASTER  
Was that the best part?

ELLIE  
Do *you* think it's the best part?

Aster bites her lip. Listens more intently.

ASTER  
Was that it?

(CONTINUED)

134 CONTINUED:

134

ELLIE

You asking or saying?

Suddenly the swell of the bridge:

CHICAGO (FROM RADIO)

"A love like ours is love that's  
hard to find. How could we let it  
slip away?"

ASTER

That's it.

ELLIE

Yeah.

It is.

CHICAGO (FROM RADIO)

"...when tomorrow comes and we both  
regret/the things we said today. If  
you leave me now..."

They listen, floating.

The last bars of the song fade out.

Both stare into the sky, smiling. This moment is perfect.

135 OMITTED

135

136 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - DUSK

136

Ellie gets out of the car and starts toward the station.

ASTER

Hey!

She turns back.

ASTER (CONT'D)

Hope you find something good to  
believe in.

They share a smile. Aster drives off.

Ellie casts a nervous glance up at the apartment.

137 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - MOMENTS 137  
LATER

Ellie peeks in.

Edwin, in his lounge, eating a sausage, watches a movie.

Everything seems weirdly fine.

EDWIN (IN MANDARIN)  
*Paul made a braised pork sausage.  
Pretty tasty. Yours is in the  
microwave.*

Ellie pulls a covered plate out of the microwave.

EDWIN (IN MANDARIN) (CONT'D)  
*He asked you to call him later.*

Ellie climbs up the ladder to her bedroom.

138 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - ELLIE'S 138  
ATTIC BEDROOM - LATER

Ellie lies on her bed, a dreamy smile on her face. She notices moonlight coming in her window.

139 EXT. MUNSKY SAUSAGE SHOP - BACK ENTRANCE - SAME TIME 139

Close on a garbage can lid going on tight.

Paul wipes his hands on his apron.

ASTER  
Hey.

Aster has been watching him.

PAUL  
Oh. Hey!

ASTER  
Do you believe in God?

PAUL  
(confused) Of course.

ASTER  
Yeah. Of course.

139 CONTINUED:

139

PAUL

I got your painting. It was pretty.

\*

Beat.

ASTER

Thanks.

Then suddenly she kisses him, as if to feel something.  
Startled, Paul kisses back.

140 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - ELLIE'S 140  
ATTIC BEDROOM - SAME TIME

From her high vantage point, Ellie sees the kiss. Draws the  
blinds. No longer dreamy.

Bumps her guitar case... which spills out onto her futon. The  
Grinnell application slides out.

\*

\*

She looks at it. Then at the picture of her mother. Sighs.

ELLIE

Not like I'll send it in. But...

Cracks open the application and starts filling it out.

\*

141 EXT. MUNSKY SAUSAGE SHOP - BACK ENTRANCE - SAME TIME 141

Aster and Paul finish their kiss. It wasn't bad but... both  
seem a little confused.

PAUL

Big game this week. Training.

ASTER

See you after it's over?

\*

PAUL

Yeah. Cool.

\*

Paul watches Aster drive off.

Looks over at Ellie's window.

The back door flings open.

(CONTINUED)

141 CONTINUED:

141

TOMMY MUNSKY (O.S.)  
Paulie! You marrying the garbage  
out there? Truck leaves for home in  
5!

\*  
\*  
\*



141 CONTINUED: (2) 141

With a last glance at Ellie's window, he heads in.

142 EXT. TOWN OF SQUAHAMISH - EARLY MORNING 142

Shots of the town, waking. Superimposed over the images:

DiegaRivera: Good luck tonight!

SmithCorona: Thx!

On a different part of the screen:

Ellie: "Good luck!" That was Aster. \*

Paul: You'll be there tonite, right?

Ellie: Can't wait to see a buncha guys sniffing  
each other's butts. \*

And with that we cut to...

143 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - FIELD/STANDS - NIGHT 143

A bunch of guys in a pile sniffing each other's butts. Out of  
this pile of young manhood emerges a roughed up Paul. He  
scans the stands.... No Ellie. \*

ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

Another blowout with the Squahamish  
Moose down by 49! Fourth down,  
their own ten yard line, less than  
a minute on the clock. Players are  
lining up for the punt...

Paul gets in position, still scanning the stands. Finally, up  
at the very top: ELLIE appears. He brightens. Waves. \*

Aster - seated closer - waves back. \*

The ball is SNAPPED. Paul starts running... \*

... behind him: the ball goes wildly over the punter's head. \*

A MAD SCRAMBLE as players shove and tackle each other from  
all sides. CHAOS. \*

FROM THE STANDS: Ellie gestures wildly to Paul: *turn around!* \*

Paul waves back, oblivious. \*

(CONTINUED)

143

CONTINUED:

143

A player from his team grabs the ball, starts down the field... and is CLOBBERED from all sides. THE BALL FLIES OUT OF THIS MESS OF FLESH.

\*  
\*  
\*

Back to PAUL, finally registering Ellie's hand signals. He turns, puzzled.

\*  
\*

THE BALL HITS HIM IN THE FACE... and he CATCHES IT.

\*

A slomo-beat of everyone staring. AND THEN EVERYONE IS AFTER HIM. Paul starts to RUN... and RUN...

\*

(CONTINUED)

143 CONTINUED: (2)

143

... until he makes it into the endzone.

TOUCHDOWN.

CROWD GOES WILD.

ANNOUNCER (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN FIFTEEN  
YEARS, THE MOOSE HAVE SCORED!  
SCORED! WHAT NEXT, SUN IN JUNE?

On the scoreboard, "00" is replaced with "06."

A cheer breaks out: "We're on the board! We're on the board!"  
Even Ellie is smiling.

Paul, carried by his teammates, is elated.

144 EXT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - NIGHT - LATER

144

Paul pushes past fans, searching for Ellie.

AT ANOTHER PART OF THE STADIUM

Aster searches for Paul.

BACK TO PAUL

Paul stops a random student.

PAUL  
Have you seen Ellie Chu?

RANDOM STUDENT  
Who?

Paul pushes on. *Where could she be?* And suddenly, he knows.

145 INT. FOOTBALL STADIUM - BASEMENT ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

145

A bottle of YAKULT falls from a VENDING MACHINE.

PAUL (O.S.)  
Hey.

Ellie turns, her arms full of Yakult.

ELLIE  
All hail the pride of Squahamish!

(CONTINUED)

145 CONTINUED:

145

PAUL  
Thanks! Didn't have to get me a  
Yakult.

ELLIE  
Oh. Yeah. Take one.

PAUL  
I don't need a Yakult.

ELLIE  
Good.

PAUL  
I need to talk to you--

ELLIE  
My hands are full. Could--?

Paul sighs, opens one of the Yakults. "Feeds" Ellie.

ELLIE (CONT'D)  
So good.

PAUL  
("pay attention") HEY.

ELLIE  
What?

She has a Yakult mustache. Paul struggles to find the words.  
Then takes her by the shoulders... and LAYS ONE ON HER.

Ellie's eyes bug out. Yakults topple to the floor.

ELLIE (CONT'D)  
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

PAUL  
YOU DON'T WANT ME TO KISS YOU?

ELLIE  
NO!

A lone Yakult rolls to a stop.

PAUL  
(crushed) Why?

A gasp at the door: ASTER STANDS THERE, mouth agape.

(CONTINUED)

145 CONTINUED: (2)

145

ELLIE

Aster! This is not...!

But she's gone.

Paul stares at the stricken look on Ellie's face. Light bulb.

PAUL

No...

ELLIE

Paul...

PAUL

You...

He starts to back away.

PAUL (CONT'D)

You... You're a...

He wants to pound the wall. He can't look at her.

PAUL (CONT'D)

(quietly) You're going to hell.

He leaves.

Leaving Ellie, standing in a pile of crumpled Yakult.

146 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT/CHU APARTMENT WINDOW - LATER 146

Ellie pulls her bike up.

TRIG (O.S.)

I'm onto you, Ellie Chu.

ELLIE

(to self)

This is a nightmare.

Trig pulls out of the shadows.

TRIG

I know why you're always hanging  
around. Popping up everywhere.

She's so tired. It's time to confess.

ELLIE

It was just supposed to be one let--

(CONTINUED)

146 CONTINUED:

146

TRIG  
You're in love with me.

What? Then, sighing:

\*

ELLIE  
Yes, Trig. I'm in love with you.

TRIG  
I get it.

He leans in to kiss her... and gets SMACKED in the face with  
a STREAM OF WATER.

EDWIN (O.S.)  
Get out! Get out!

\*

TRIG  
This is *cashmere fleece*!

He beats it back into the shadows. Sound of TRUCK tears off.

147 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - LATER 147

Ellie enters the apartment, passes her father, climbs up to  
her loft.

148 EXT. TOWN OF SQUAHAMISH - NIGHT 148

The lights go out on this murky night. It starts to rain.

ON BLACK:

"Hell *is* other people. - Sartre"

Cue "Long dark night of the soul" MONTAGE:

149 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - ROAD INTO TOWN - DAY 149

Ellie bikes through the rain.

Obnoxious bullies in truck approach... then pass, leaving her  
alone.

150 INT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - HALLWAY - ANOTHER MORNING 150

A BANNER UP HIGH WITH PAUL'S SMILING FACE: "PAUL MUNSKY! HE PUT US ON THE BOARD!" Boom down to the real Paul walking toward CAM surrounded by back-slappers. He is miserable.

151 EXT. SQUAHAMISH HIGH - PARKING LOT/TRIG TRUCK - NOON - ANOTHER DAY 151

Quaddies cheer on Trig as he drinks a Dr. Pepper without his hands. Aster picks at her lunch. She is miserable.

152 INT. MRS. G'S CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON - ANOTHER DAY 152

A concerned Mrs. G watches Ellie pass by, also miserable.

153 INT. MUNSKY HOUSE - KITCHEN - ANOTHER NIGHT 153

Paul at a computer as his brothers play SlapFight in the BG.

He types "homo" into a browser. Clicks on "How do you know if you are gay?"

COLLEEN MUNSKY

Paulie! Garbage duty.

PAUL

Got it, Ma.

Sleeps the computer, heads out.

The screen pops back on. His mom's eyebrows shoot up.

154 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - ANOTHER NIGHT 154

Edwin and Ellie in their usual La-Z-Boys eating dinner.

Laughter erupts from a CLASSIC COMEDY on screen.

Edwin shoots a worried glance at his silent daughter.

155 INT. SQUAHAMISH CATHOLIC CHURCH - CONFESSION BOOTH - DAY 155

Angle on Aster in the confession booth.

(CONTINUED)

155 CONTINUED:

155

ASTER

Forgive me father for I have sinned. It's been 48 days since my last confession. I had feelings for someone who wasn't my boyfriend. I didn't tell you. Or God. Or my boyfriend. I kept it for myself. I was selfish. And maybe love is selfish. It's having this secret stashed in you, until one day it feels like someone else has that same secret and suddenly this thing you didn't even know you held feels full and amazing and real... But it turns out to be a lie. And you're left lonelier than ever. So I'll do whatever Hail Mary's you deem fit. But whatever punishment you give me, it can't be worse than this feeling. Because even now... he's the only one I want to talk to. And it's like he doesn't even exist.

Aster slips out of the booth.

Father Shanley, mournful, looks slowly to his other side... to reveal a hidden ELLIE, knees up, heartbroken.

156 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - ANOTHER DAY

156

A train whips by... with no one on the platform.

ON BLACK:

NEW SLIDE:

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, etc, etc. - 1 Corinthians 13:4-8"

157 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - MORNING

157

Out of a patch of weeds, the first crocus.

158 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - MORNING

158

SLAM. 30 POUNDS OF GROUND PORK land on the kitchen counter.

Paul wipes his hands on his apron, over an ill-fitting suit.

(CONTINUED)



158

CONTINUED:

158

PAUL

See you next month.

He starts to leave.

EDWIN

Paul?

PAUL

Sir?

Edwin hesitates.

EDWIN

Did you and Ellie... break up?

PAUL

We weren't... together.

EDWIN

She seems... sad.

Paul doesn't know what to say, starts to leave. Then turns back, knowing exactly what to say.

PAUL

You don't see her.

Edwin stares at him.

EDWIN

See... her?

PAUL

Who she is. Could be. *Her.*

Paul slumps against the wall.

Edwin is quiet.

EDWIN (IN MANDARIN)

*When Ellie's Ma died, I lost my mind. I didn't move for days. When I finally "woke", I found Ellie in the booth, doing the switch. She looked up at me. Just 13. So serious. And I... smiled. After that, she took over. And I let her.*

He smiles now, remembering.

(CONTINUED)

158 CONTINUED: (2)

158

EDWIN (CONT'D)

*It was a good way to know where she  
was every morning. Every night.*

He looks at Paul, eyes soft. Now in English:

EDWIN (CONT'D)

Have you ever love someone so much,  
you don't want anything about her  
to change?

Off Paul's face absorbing this thought.

Sound of EASTER MASS BEING SUNG...

159 INT. SQUAHAMISH CATHOLIC CHURCH - CHAPEL - MORNING

159

Close on a LIT PASCHAL CANDLE.

Angle on the CONGREGATION singing.

Angle on FATHER SHANLEY, heavily guided by DEACON FLORES,  
presiding over the mass.

Angle on Ellie playing the organ.

Easter Sunday Mass finishes without a hitch.

Deacon Flores exhales.

And then as if awakening:

FATHER SHANLEY

"OUTSIDE ARE THE DOGS AND THE  
SORCERERS AND THE--"

Deacon Flores wrestles him back.

DEACON FLORES

And to close our Easter services, a  
few readings from the  
congregation...

IN THE CONGREGATION

Paul slides onto a pew next to his mother.

COLLEEN MUNSKY

You're late.

(CONTINUED)

159

CONTINUED:

159

PAUL

Had to grind something.

She eyes him suspiciously.

FROM THE ORGAN BALCONY

Ellie peers out and locates Paul... then a somber Aster.

FROM THE PULPIT

DEACON FLORES

Our final reading today is from  
Trig Carson.

Trig stands in the audience, clears his throat.

TRIG

"Love is patient, love is kind. It  
does not envy, it does not boast,  
it is not proud..." Which is why I  
love this little lady.

He gestures to a startled Aster sitting one row behind.

TRIG (CONT'D)

And why she'll make me a fantastic  
wife. Aster, will you?

Wave of approval ripples through the crowd.

Aster, frozen, gives the barest of nods.

The congregation bursts into applause.

ELLIE

NO!

Gasps. Every head turns back to the balcony.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Uh. I uh...

So many eyes on her.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

I just wanted to say, uh... love  
isn't...

Aster is staring at her, eyes narrowed.

(CONTINUED)

159

CONTINUED: (2)

159

ELLIE (CONT'D)  
...isn't uh...

DEACON FLORES  
*Thank you, Ellie. Everyone, let's-*

PAUL  
Love isn't pretending.

ANGLE ON PAUL STANDING.

Another collective gasp. *What is going on?*

PAUL (CONT'D)  
I know because *I've* been  
pretending. Only for a few months.  
But it SUCKS.

ELLIE  
Paul-

PAUL  
*And I've been thinking* about how  
much it would suck to have to  
pretend to be - *not you* - your  
whole life.

He's careful not to look at Ellie. But he's speaking to her.

PAUL (CONT'D)  
I always thought there was one way  
to love. But there's more. So many  
more than I knew. And I never want  
to be the guy who stops loving  
someone... for loving the way they  
want to love.

His voice has never been stronger. Ellie's eyes are full.

DEACON FLORES  
*Thank you, Paul, that was... odd.*  
Now let's give Trig our-

ELLIE  
I also have been pretending.

Again, gasps. This is getting exciting. The Deacon slumps.

ELLIE (CONT'D)  
I've been uh, pretending-

(CONTINUED)

159

CONTINUED: (3)

159

TRIG

I think I know where this is going.  
Ellie, I'm flattered. But you and I-

ELLIE

You know, Trig, I have been writing  
your papers for the last four  
years.

Startled gasps. More than a few guilty faces.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

And if you'll forgive me, I'm just  
gonna rewrite you one last time.  
Love isn't patient and kind and  
humble. Love is *messy* and *horrible*  
and *selfish* and...

She can feel Aster's confused gaze.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Bold.

A flicker of recognition on Aster's face.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

It's not finding your perfect half.  
It's the trying and reaching and  
*failing* - the effort you put in  
with no promise of success. Love  
is... being willing to ruin your  
good painting for a chance at a  
great one.

Ellie looks directly at Aster.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Is this really the boldest stroke  
you can make?

Silence.

ASTER

You.

ELLIE

Yeah.

Every breath is held as Aster walks slowly toward ELLIE. She  
stops in front of PAUL. Eyes still on Ellie - she SLAPS Paul.

As Aster leaves, the congregation breaks into MAYHEM.

(CONTINUED)

159

CONTINUED: (4)

159

ANGLE ON DEACON FLORES AND A STRANGELY HAPPY FATHER SHANLEY

FATHER SHANLEY

Amen!

DEACON FLORES

Everyone please take your seats!

ANGLE ON TRIG

TRIG

Wait. I'm the *good* painting?

ANGLE ON PAUL AND HIS MOTHER

COLLEEN MUNSKY

Mommy wants you to know in case you  
are gay, Mommy still loves you.

\*

PAUL

I'm not gay, Ma.

COLLEEN MUNSKY

Thank god!

She hugs her son hard.

PAUL

I might want to change our sausage  
recipe, though.

COLLEEN MUNSKY

Are you insane?!

She WHACKS him with her handbag.

ANGLE ON MRS. G SURVEYING THE CHAOS HAPPILY

MRS. G.

Now *that's* some divine  
intervention.

ANGLE ON ELLIE AT THE DOOR

She catches Paul's eye. The two friends share a nod.

DIRECT HIT from his mom's handbag.

PAUL

Ow!

Ellie slips out, grinning.

160 INT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - CHU APARTMENT - LATER 160

Ellie enters the apartment.

Bags of freshly folded dumplings sit on the counter. Edwin has been hard at work.

She rinses her hands and joins her father.

ELLIE (IN MANDARIN)  
*This is a lot of dumplings.*

EDWIN (IN MANDARIN)  
*It's six days. 18 meals. To Iowa.*

Ellie stares at her dad, astonished.

EDWIN (CONT'D)  
*We didn't come to this country so  
you could be like me. We came here  
so you could be like your mother.*

Ellie flushes. A lovely beat as father and daughter fold dumplings, neither looking at the other.

ELLIE (IN MANDARIN)  
*You don't mean "dead", right?*

EDWIN (IN MANDARIN)  
*God, I hope not.*

\*

161 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT - DAY 161

Outside, it's grey and moody. And beautiful.

ON BLACK:

New slide: "Love is messy and horrible and selfish... and bold. - Ellie Chu"

162 EXT. TEQUILIA SAL Y LIMON/ROAD - A FEW MONTHS LATER - DAY 162

A sunny late August day.

A shift of WAITSTAFF exit, laughing, Aster amongst them. Stops short when she sees...

ELLIE, leaning against her bike, waiting.

(CONTINUED)

162

CONTINUED:

162

Aster hesitates, waves her friends on.

She starts to walk. Ellie falls in next to her.

ELLIE

You haven't been to church.

ASTER

I've been busy.

ELLIE

Yeah?

ASTER

(beat) You need four portfolio pieces for art school, so...

ELLIE

Art school? That's great!

ASTER

Nothing's *great* yet, but we'll see. What's going on with you?

ELLIE

Well, I'm headed east to Grinnell. They took me late acceptance, so--

ASTER

Good for you, Ellie. Take care.

She starts to cross the street.

ELLIE

Aster. (beat) I'm sorry.

Aster slows to a stop, still not turning.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

It was just supposed to be one letter. But then writing you turned out to be the closest I've ever come to being... heard. (beat) I never meant to hurt you.

A flicker of pain crosses Aster's face. Then:

ASTER

Sometimes I wish... "you" existed.

ELLIE

I know. I'm sorry.

(CONTINUED)



162

CONTINUED: (2)

162

A Bronx cheer arises from a distant sports bar. Then silence.

ASTER

Deep down I probably knew the truth. (beat) I mean you really didn't put enough emojis in his texts...

ELLIE

I *don't know what they mean!*

ASTER

A puppy or a sausage-

ELLIE

I should have sent you a *SAUSAGE EMOJI???*

ASTER

Fair point.

Truce. They smile at each other. Then, looking away:

ASTER (CONT'D)

For what it's worth, it's not like it *never* crossed my mind if things were different. Or I was different.

Beat. Then gently deadpan:

ELLIE

You could never be different.

Aster looks back sharply.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

(still deadpan) "Am I *sure* I'm different? How do I *know* I'm *sure*?"

ASTER

I can be *sure!*

ELLIE

"I mean, *what does God think...?*"

ASTER

Oh my god-!

ELLIE

Just on and on and-

(CONTINUED)

162 CONTINUED: (3)

162

ASTER

You watch: in a couple years, I'M  
GONNA BE SO SURE.

ELLIE

GOOD LUCK WITH THAT.

They smile at each other. Ellie mounts her bike.

ASTER

Find something good in Iowa to  
believe in, heathen.

Just a flicker of something unspoken.

Ellie starts to ride off... then *to hell with it*. She drops  
her bike, strides back toward Aster... and KISSES HER.

Aster is startled. But starts to kiss back.

Ellie breaks the kiss.

ELLIE

See you in a couple years.

She gets on her bike and rides off.

Aster watches her go, breathless. Starts laughing.

163 EXT. SQUAHAMISH - ROAD OUT OF TOWN - SAME TIME

163

Ellie flies down a stretch of road on her bike, grinning,  
free. She lets out a WHOOP.

Behind her, the town fades into the distance.

ON BLACK:

New slide: "[emojis of pineapple, owl, caterpillar with  
glasses] - various sources"

Sound of a TRAIN WHISTLE.

164 EXT. SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT/TRAIN - MORNING

164

The train slows into the station with a LOUD EXHALE.

ENGINEER (O.S.)

We're stopping in... *Squahamish?*

(CONTINUED)

164

CONTINUED:

164

Close on a LARGE RUCKSACK being lifted onto Ellie's back.

Paul hands her a COOLER stuffed with frozen dumplings.

From the ground floor window, a freshened up Edwin waves... then quickly looks away, doing "engineer" things.

PAUL

I'll keep him busy tasting new ketchups.

ELLIE

Nice writeup in the Town Crier.

PAUL

Munsky Sausages is gonna blow up! Might get to Iowa before you do...

ELLIE

Better get going then.

They smile at each other.

It's time to board.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

Here.

She types something, presses send on her phone.

DING. Paul looks down at his. A tiny smile.

PAUL

The caterpillar does look smart.

ELLIE

Too smart to be standing on a platform, crying, like some wussy.

PAUL

I'm not crying!

ELLIE

(mouthing) Wussy... Wussy...

She's on the train.

Paul swallows.

165 EXT.SQUAHAMISH TRAIN DEPOT/INT. TRAIN - PASSENGER CAB - 165  
MOMENTS LATER

Ellie sinks into a seat next to the window.

Turns to look at Paul. She mouths one last "wussy."

As the train starts up, a flash of trepidation crosses her face. Paul sees it.

And starts to JOG ALONGSIDE THE TRAIN.

ELLIE

Oh no... don't... no...!

The train gathers speed... and so does Paul, grinning like a maniac.

And now Ellie is laughing. Hard.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

(under her breath) Moron.

The train pulls away, Paul running after it... a DISAPPEARING SPECK Ellie watches until it is gone.

When she turns back, there are tears in her eyes.

The ELDERLY LADY across the aisle smiles.

ELDERLY LADY

Is that your boyfriend?

ELLIE

No...

Then simply:

ELLIE (CONT'D)

He's my friend.

Like it's the best thing in the world.

She knows it. We know it. And as the train hurtles onward...

Somewhere, someone is listening to "If You Leave Me Now."

FADE OUT.

THE END.