

THE LOCALS

Written by

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COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

EXT. YOSEMITE - CAMPSITE - DAY

The great outdoors. Granite cliffs, cedar trees, and dirt. You can practically smell the campfire.

Two German tourists, RALPH (40), glasses and binoculars, and HELGA (35), mom-jeans way up high, flop out of their tent. They speak in GERMAN ACCENTS.

RALPH  
(inhaling obnoxiously)  
Cedar. Juniper. And, do I detect  
und whiff of deer feces?

HELGA  
Mein Güte, Ralph. It's all over  
your shirt. You rolled right into  
it when you got out of the tent.

RALPH  
Wow, would you look at that? Nature  
is truly special.

Ralph hands Helga a camera with a smiley face STICKER on it. Ralph models his soiled shirt. This is going on the fridge.

A twig snaps nearby. Ralph makes a shush gesture and pantomimes a bear. Helga hunches down to form a human-tripod for the best angle. Ralph pokes at the bush with a stick.

SNAP. Ralph SCREAMS. The shutter of the camera CLICKS. Out of the bushes emerges... ILANA PEREZ (30), all attitude and messy pony in her Ranger uniform. She scowls.

ILANA  
Good photo for your obituary.

Ralph clutches his racing heart. Helga inspects the camera.

RALPH  
I'm not dying. What is she saying?

HELGA  
Never mind, Schnucki. You're so  
cute when you're screaming.

ILANA  
Need you folks to come with me. We  
got a bear situation.

RALPH

Exhilarating. We'd like to see it.

ILANA

A man with passion. Life ain't beat that out of you? Let's go.

RALPH

What is this, Nazi Germany? In your little green uniform, telling us where to go. Let me tell you, that did not work well for us.

ILANA

Sir, this is America. Our laws help everybody enjoy their freedom. I will make everybody here safe -- if I got to, by force.

RALPH

It is our right to enjoy the national parks as we please. Your advisories are merely that. Advisories. And, so --

A deafening ROAR sounds somewhere above them.

ILANA

Sound like a happy bear, Schnucki?

HELGA

Ralph, you promised not to get into any more brawls. I told you not to have that breakfast beer.

RALPH

I'm practically sober. No, I refuse, on the basis of --

An honest-to-god GRYPHON, the eagle-headed, lion-bodied, winged beast of myth, swoops down.

Helga's camera FLASHES.

Ilana pulls Helga to safety, lunges for Ralph. Too late. The gryphon plucks Ralph off the ground. Helga cries out. Ilana hefts an exasperated sigh.

RALPH (CONT'D)

Avenge me!

And eats him.

END COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

EXT. YOSEMITE - CAMPSITE - DAY

TESS WINKLE (28), a scrappy camper with equal helpings of freckles, dirt, and wonder on her face, tweezes a strand of fur off the ground. Sniffs it, winces, then bags the fur.

She sniffs the air and follows the scent. In front of her, an orange rope cordons off a section of the park. She shrugs and ducks under the rope.

She spots the camera Helga dropped. Picks it up.

ILANA (O.S.)

Hey, asshole! Orange ropes mean nothing to you?

Ilana, with blood on her face, marches over to Tess.

TESS

I, uhm, didn't know it was orange. Color blind. Rare in women, I know. Is that blood on your face?

ILANA

How you know it's blood if you're color blind?

TESS

Maybe I can see red, but not orange. Color blindness is a spectrum, dude.

ILANA

What color's my hat?

TESS

Plaid?

Ilana cracks a half-smile at her.

TESS (CONT'D)

Listen, I'm tracking something, and it went through here. Sorry I crossed the line. I'll go around.

ILANA

Nope. Rules are rules. We got a two hour hike back to the station. Hope to God you're not a talker.

TESS

Listen, I basically gave up my whole life to get here, today -- the one day in the next five years this thing's musk is strong enough to track. Can you please, just. I dunno. Not die, but...

ILANA

What thing're you tracking?

TESS

Oh, uh... a deer.

Ilana narrows her eyes at Tess. Points to a DEER a sneeze's distance away from them. The deer walks with a limp.

ILANA

There you go, dummy. Prime-musk-day a success. Time to go.

TESS

Yup. Quit my masters and came all the way down from Alaska to see a deer. Guess I'm out of excuses.

Ilana corals Tess into the woods. Tess breaks off toward the deer. It startles and falls. She calms it. Fashions a splint using a branch and twine. The deer gets up and trots away.

ILANA

Impressive. But, you ain't off the hook. And, don't try to run. I was a US Marshal. Masters of --

Tess runs. Ilana rushes after her, ready to lunge.

ILANA (CONT'D)

-- capture!

Ilana makes it to where the deer was. ZIP. A twine snare slips around Ilana's ankle. She falls. Tess waves goodbye.

TESS

That would've been a cool line if I hadn't just trapped you. Sorry!

EXT. YOSEMITE - CLEARING - DAY

Tess takes a breather. Chuckles to herself. Dumb ranger. She takes a whiff of the fur in her bag. Coughs. Sniffs the air. Studies a similar fur tuft on a branch. She leans in to sniff. Dry heaves.

TESS

Worse than shower drain hair.

She follows the trail to a cave with an out-of-place grass curtain covering the entrance. Unspooked, she walks right in.

INT. BILLY'S CAVE - DAY

At the entrance of the cave, Tess stands with her mouth agape. Eyes cranked open. Whoa.

The cave equivalent of a studio apartment. Bed of saplings. Questionable bucket in the corner. Functioning portable DVD player. Real ancient tech.

Her wide-eyes fix on BILLY (273), the Sasquatch your drunk uncle swears he saw. Billy freezes in the middle of scrubbing his armpits with moss. Tess reigns in her excitement.

TESS

Whoa, there. It's okay, big fella.  
Me, Tess. Tesssss. Tess is friend.

BILLY

Hi, Tess! I'm Billy. You spooked me; I almost tore you limb from limb. Come in! Don't worry, I'll ignore how rude it is to sneak up on a fella while he's bathing.

Tess backs up a little, suddenly aware that this six hundred pound creature might turn on her.

TESS

You talk!

BILLY

Some people say, too much!

TESS

You kidding? You make those ASL gorillas look like dip shits.

Billy twirls his fur like a crushing girl twirls her hair.

BILLY

Oh, stop. You're just saying that.

Tess pulls out the camera Helga had in the teaser.

TESS

No, this is amazing! I've been looking for you most of my life.

(MORE)

TESS (CONT'D)

Any cryptids, really. I'm thinking selfie. You know what a selfie is?

BILLY (O.S.)

No pictures. Especially selfies.

Billy's bigfeet poke out from his hiding place under his bed.

TESS

Billy, bud. If I don't get a picture, how am I gonna rub it in people's faces that I'm not crazy?

BILLY (O.S.)

You can't tell anybody you were here. Like, the opposite of yoga.

Tess weighs the camera in her hand. Paces a bit.

Then, pockets the camera. Billy gets out from under the bed. He and Tess sit down on logs around a firepit. Billy pulls a weird pre-historic looking teapot off the fire. Pours tea.

BILLY (CONT'D)

Few fun facts about me. Favorite animal is squirrel. Favorite animal doubles for favorite food. And, I love your hair. May I groom you?

TESS

Just one picture?

BILLY

May I. Groom you.

Tess nods. Billy picks through her hair.

TESS

What about just a picture of your --

BILLY

Listen, chief, refocus that energy. Ask some questions, maybe?

TESS

How old are you? Are there other mythological beasts? Can I live here? Can I touch your fur? Will --

BILLY

(interrupting)

273. Yes. Never ask a bigfoot if you can touch their fur... did you ask if you can live here?

TESS

Sorry. Just, I quit my masters in mythology to *prove* cryptids are more than legends. I knew, but everybody called me crazy. So, hanging with cryptids is kind of my life's purpose, now. You know?

Billy forces a bigtooth smile. Out of sight of Tess, his ape finger smashes a red button on the side of his log.

Light pours in from the cave entrance. Ilana walks in.

ILANA

If you're pushing that button 'cause you broke another fuckin' Friends DVD, I'm gonna -- oh.

TESS

Ah! Billy, save me!

ILANA

You little piss-ant. Y'know, assaulting a ranger is a felony.

TESS

Billy, quick!  
(Billy sits there)  
Billy, smash her on the head!

ILANA

Girl, Billy ain't gonna hurt me.

BILLY

Ilana only visits when I push the distress beacon, but I like to think we're friends.

TESS

Distress beacon?

Tess's face drops. She puts down her rabbit skull teacup.

ILANA

That's what upsets you. Not the fact I can throw your ass in jail?

TESS

Sorry if I came on strong, Billy.

BILLY

No! No. If I don't report you, they cut off my supply of batteries and 90s sitcoms. That's all.

Tess allows herself one big SIGH, then picks herself up.

TESS  
Whatever. Take me to jail.

EXT. YOSEMITE - TRAIL - DAY

Ilana leads the way down a trail. Tess mopes behind.

ILANA  
Don't let it brighten your mood,  
but I ain't taking you to jail.

Tess stops as she crosses giant, clawed tracks. Ilana clocks her reaction. Fixes her with a mom-warning-toddler look.

ILANA (CONT'D)  
Don't you fuckin' dare...

Tess runs down the trail of mystery tracks, which lead into a cave. Too excited to know better, Tess enters. Ilana follows.

INT. GRYPHON CAVE - DAY

Ilana blinks. Inside, Tess jumps up and down and points at...

A napping BABY GRYPHON (1), a great dane-sized miniature of the eagle-headed, lion-bodied beast of myth.

Tess cools down, gears in her head turning. She looks at the display of Helga's camera. Back up at the Baby Gryphon.

Ilana grabs Tess by the collar, but Tess fights back.

TESS  
No! I came here to find cryptids.  
You ruined Billy for me. You're not  
ruining this. Besides, I think--

ILANA  
Come on. I ain't doing two corpse  
loads of paperwork today.

Ilana tugs, but Tess YIPs loud enough to wake the Baby Gryphon. The Baby Gryphon wakes up. Shakes the sleep off.

TESS  
I'm staying. Unless... you feel  
like telling me what you know about  
the park's cryptids.

ILANA

I hate you so much right now.

(sighs)

The national parks ain't just for campers. All the mythological beasts in America got rounded up and situated to live in the parks, where they can only threaten outdoorsy folk. Dick.

The Baby Gryphon CLICKS its beak. Sits up. Stretches.

ILANA (CONT'D)

(faster)

Tell the truth, you campers are a stump in my rump, always making my job hard. Example: this moment. As a ranger, my job is to keep people safe and manage the wildlife. Billy is one local. But, most locals will eat you, not make you tea.

TESS

How did they round up the...  
*locals?*

ILANA

Theodore Roosevelt was a fuckin' maniac. Nobody's sure how he did it, to be honest.

The Baby Gryphon SQUAWKS.

ILANA (CONT'D)

Now, time to go, before I bite the bullet and let it kill you.

EXT. YOSEMITE - CONTINUOUS

Ilana yanks Tess out of the cave.

TESS

This is so cool. Why doesn't the public know about this?

ILANA

Too many freaks out there. Only rangers can know.

TESS

So, can I be one? I mean, I already found a bigfoot and a gryphon in the same day. Side-note, how have more people not seen locals?

ILANA

Most people got enough sense *not* to follow big tracks into a cave. And, folks looking for locals're usually too dim to recognize tracks.

TESS

I can't tell if you just called me smart or dumb.

ILANA

Kinda says it all, don't it?

INT. RANGER STATION - DAY

A notice on the cabin wall reads: "DO NOT ENTER CAVES. RISK OF DEATH." The ranger station has a few maps and old photos framed on the walls. Ilana unlocks a door with a sign that reads "RANGERS ONLY" and brings in Tess.

INT. RANGER CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

A stuffed black bear in a glass case towers over the tiny room. Nothing else there.

TESS

Very... impressive.

Ilana rolls her eyes, then flips four light switches in a specific pattern. The bear case SLIDES across the floor, revealing a staircase.

INT. RANGER SECRET LAB - DAY

At the bottom of the stairs lies a state-of-the-art headquarters. Science-fiction looking goos float in chambers. Blips blink on radars. A fairy, DONNA (379), butch-Tinkerbell, clips her tiny toenails at a tiny desk.

DONNA

Aw, chrissakes. Another visitor seen a local?

TESS

Is that a fairy?

DONNA

Are you an asshole? See, we can both make observations sound like questions.

TESS

I am so sorry. First day seeing a local. What should I call you?

DONNA

Donna. Thanks for askin'.

Tess walks over to Donna and offers her hand. Donna grips Tess's pointer finger and shakes, a twinkle in her eye.

Behind them, Helga rocks back and forth on a bench.

HELGA

How you are all so calm! Und sky demon ate my Schnucki!

She jumps off the bench, rabid, and her flailing arm hits CLIFF TYSON (50), a decisive but shy man hiding behind a blonde mustache, in the chin. He speaks softly.

CLIFF

Donna, can you please help the screaming lady?

Donna flits over. Farts pixy dust on Helga. She passes out.

CLIFF (CONT'D)

That's what you get. The other girl, too, please.

TESS

Is this... hazing?

DONNA

Sorry, hun. Wants me to dust you. Make you think you seen a bear.

TESS

I saw a Sasquatch and a gryphon. No bears, today.

ILANA

No bears ever. They're the only beast of legend that don't exist. Hallucination of the fairy dust.

TESS

What? No. They're in documentaries. I mean, I've trapped a bear!

DONNA

CGI. And, you probably walked in on  
fairies bumping uglies. Ready?

TESS

Wait!

Tess pulls out Helga's camera. She displays the picture of  
the gryphon eating Ralph. Cliff casually takes the camera.

TESS (CONT'D)

Let me prove I'm ranger material.  
Let me take care of the gryphon.

CLIFF

No, I don't think so. I just used  
less force seizing your leverage  
than I use trimming my mustache.  
We're looking for people a little  
more capable than that.

(giggles)

Besides, even I can't kill a  
gryphon. That's what Ilana is for.

TESS

Nobody said anything about murder.

CLIFF

Donna, why isn't this brave girl  
dreaming about bears, right now?

Donna strains her face, but nothing happens.

DONNA

I only got so much in the chamber,  
boss. Give me an hour.

CLIFF

Hate to pressure you, but you have  
five minutes and some beans. Ilana?

Ilana takes Tess by the arm, leads her to a heavy bolted  
door, thrusts her in with Helga, and locks it.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. HOLDING CELL - DAY

Tess stumbles into the holding room. The cell has a purgatory look to it, similar to a dentist's lobby. Helga stumbles in after her and wakes up.

TESS

You okay?

HELGA

Bear ate my husband!

Donna SQUIRMS her way through the crack under the door, out of sight of Helga.

DONNA

(whistles)

Hey, freckles. Brought some booze.  
If you're gonna forget everything,  
might as well get a head start.

Donna yanks a flask under the door. Tess takes a big swig.

TESS

How're you okay with gryphon  
murder? Where's your local unity?

DONNA

Honey, I ain't okay with it. But,  
better to be a collaborator than a  
grease stain with wings. You got a  
better idea, by all means, share.

TESS

I found a baby gryphon alone in a  
cave, pretty far from where I found  
the camera. The momma must've lost  
her pup, right, which would cause  
her stress. Thus, the mauling. Just  
reunite them, and the momma calms  
down. I figure, if I didn't know  
where my family was, I'd eat some  
guy, too.

DONNA

Respect. I ate the one guy I made  
sprites with. Wasn't personal.

Donna wiggles back under the door.

HELGA

Bear. Ate.

TESS

Your husband, yeah. Donna?

The door inches open. Tess peers out.

DONNA

I keep this office humming, and all damn day it's me helping off other locals. You're a fuckin' goof ball, but you save that gryphon, at least I'm doing something.

(off Tess's nod)

You get caught, don't finger me.

TESS

My pleasure. You have any string?

INT. CLIFF'S OFFICE - DAY

Old school office decorated with taxidermied cryptids. A stuffed HYDRA dominates the room. The three heads stare from behind Cliff's desk. Cliff fidgets, Ilana across from him.

ILANA

She trapped a ranger!

CLIFF

Couldn't it have been a fluke?

Ilana leans over his desk, her face inches from Cliff's.

ILANA

Fluke my ass. We can't let her go. She's nosier than an elephant on a pogo stick.

Cliff stands next to the hydra, tries to look big. Ilana grabs a dragon tooth off the desk and talks with her hands.

CLIFF

Sorry, I don't think she's ranger material. Stop trying to menace me.

ILANA

She's smart. Smart enough to find Billy on her own.

CLIFF

Bruce was, too.

ILANA

Bruce couldn't find his own nutsack, let alone Billy's.

CLIFF

Ilana... Have some respect.

ILANA

Tess won't die like your shit-for-brains nephew.

Ilana points the dragon tooth at Cliff. Slowly lowers it as she realizes you don't insult dead nephews.

CLIFF

You know what I got after eight years in the CIA?

ILANA

PTSD?

CLIFF

A healthy obsession for discipline. I listen to you, but at the end of the day, when I give an order, I know you'll follow it. If I didn't, you'd be out of a job. Dead to the only world you know. Know how I know you'll follow the chain of command?

ILANA

'Cause I'm an asshole.

Cliff gingerly takes the dragon tooth out of Ilana's hand.

CLIFF

Worse. You're military. A marshal, too. She's a civilian, Ilana. She trapped you, sure. But, frankly, she'd have to trap you, another ranger, poo on our floor, then escape the underground bunker for me to consider her talent worth the risk. We're dusting her.

INT. RANGER SECRET LAB - DAY

Donna types at her desk like a regular, loyal drone. Ilana leaves Cliff's office. ANOTHER RANGER pets a small ELF-THING.

...and Tess BURSTS through the holding cell door and across the lab in a blur. Everybody goes on red alert. Ilana and Another Ranger chase. The Elf-Thing hides in a trash can.

Tess is within Ilana's grasp. Tess jumps up the stairs. Ilana and Another Ranger close in. And...

Fall flat on their faces. A string SNAPS from a tether. A weight on the string zooms around them. Once. Twice. Trapped.

ILANA  
How in the hell?

DONNA  
(stilted)  
What on Earth? Here, let me help  
you out of this unexpected  
predicament.

ILANA  
Bet my hat she'll go back to  
Billy's. I'll catch her.

Donna meanders -- ties her shoe on the way -- over to them. Cliff creeps out of his office. Takes in the scene.

CLIFF  
Okay. Recruit her. She didn't poo  
on the floor, but I can admit when  
I'm wrong. But, Ilana, if she falls  
out of line, bad day for you.

INT. BILLY'S CAVE - LATER

Ilana bursts in past the grass curtain. Billy slams shut his portable DVD player.

BILLY  
Log dammit!

ILANA  
Watcha watching there, Billy?

BILLY  
Nothing. Friends. Season five. The  
one with the pivot. Nothing weird.

Billy hides his crotch with the weird pre-historic teapot.

ILANA  
Can I have some tea?

BILLY  
Why are you in my cave!

ILANA  
Looking for Tess, but I'm guessing  
you thought you were alone.

Ilana hears a twig snap outside the cave. Readies herself.  
One. Two. Three. She jumps through the grass curtain.

EXT. YOSEMITE - CLEARING - DAY

Tess leans, super caj, against a tree. She points up at...

A giant suspended cage woven with saplings.

ILANA  
Shit on a shingle! When'd you have  
time to make this?

Tess grabs the cage's tether. Gets ready to yank.

ILANA (CONT'D)  
Hold up! You can be a ranger!

Billy pops his head through the grass curtain of his cave.

BILLY  
Wow. Cool cage.

ILANA  
Don't do it, Tess. Trap me once,  
shame on you. Trap me twice, pretty  
impressive. But, trap me three  
times, you can't be a ranger.

Tess's face contorts between joy and despair.

TESS  
I really wanted to be a ranger.  
This is devastating.

ILANA  
Tess, you haven't pulled the  
trigger, yet. Just --

Tess yanks the tether. Billy claps. Ilana braces. Nothing.

TESS  
The tether was pure showmanship.  
You're on a pressure plate.

BILLY  
Now, that's craftsmanship.

ILANA  
Can you get me out once it falls?

Tess nods. Ilana walks off the plate. The cage falls on her.

ILANA (CONT'D)  
I hadn't officially instated you,  
so no foul. By the power vested in  
me by Park Superintendent Cliff,  
zap, now you're officially a  
ranger. No more shenanigans. I hate  
shenanigans.

Tess WHOOS and gets to work unraveling cord to open the cage.

ILANA (CONT'D)  
First order as a ranger, help us  
decommission the gryphon.

Tess stops unraveling cord.

TESS  
Kill it?

ILANA  
Quick and painless, if we can.  
There a problem with the cage?

TESS  
I'm... just not sure I can open the  
cage this way. Kind of goes against  
my whole reason for making a cage.

ILANA  
If there's a better way to open it,  
we'll do that. But I need to know,  
if better don't work, you willing  
to listen to your ranking officer  
and open it the ugly way?

TESS  
I'll do what it takes.

Tess's hands stay still.

ILANA  
I vouched for you. If you can't get  
this cage open, Cliff will want you  
dead, and my career's over. If you  
can't take an order, we're enemies.

BILLY  
Seems dramatic.

Tess struggles a beat. Then resumes unwinding cord.

TESS  
Can Billy come?

BILLY  
Field trip! Hey, how come after all  
that yapping about the cage, you  
opened it the same way you started?

EXT. YOSEMITE - TRAIL - DAY

The ranger, the new ranger, and bigfoot tromp through the woods. Tess drops to the ground and points at a track, and the cave in front of them.

TESS  
The pup.

BILLY  
I dig Tess's plan. Aside from  
leading a hundred-fifty pound man-  
eater out of its cave, it really  
makes sense, champ.

Tess salutes Billy. Runs into the cave. Ilana elbows Billy.

ILANA  
Don't encourage this behavior.

INT. GRYPHON CAVE - SAME

Arms folded across her chest, Tess studies the Baby Gryphon. He stares back at her. Ilana joins her side.

TESS  
How do we move him?

ILANA  
Juiced up cattle prod.

TESS  
Ha, ha. Not funny.

Ilana hides a high-tech cattle prod behind her back. The Baby Gryphon squawks a half terrifying, half cute meow.

ILANA  
You really care about them, huh?

TESS

More than anything. I mean, besides people. I love people. That would be weird if I liked locals more than people.

ILANA

Not that weird. I like most locals more than people.

TESS

Oh my god, right? But, then, how do we live with ourselves, if...

ILANA

We're following orders. Keeping our fellow humans safe.

TESS

Humans are too complicated. Mythical creatures are simple. Give a gryphon pup a rat, and its your best friend. No weird social interaction necessary. At least, that's what the books say.

A rat scurries past Tess's foot. She stomps it. The Baby Gryphon licks his beak.

EXT. YOSEMITE - TRAIL - DAY

Tess backs out of the cave with the rat dangling from a stick. The Baby Gryphon ambles out of the cave.

TESS

So, we just lead Toto back to where that nerd got eaten by Dorothy.

BILLY

Did you name the gryphons Toto and Dorothy? What kind of names are those for hyper-predators?

ILANA

Good question, Billy.

BILLY

My full name is Beeldziil. Besides, I'm a lovable goofball. Not a kill--

TESS

Ah!

TOTO, the baby gryphon, hurtles toward Tess. Tess runs.

Toto POUNCES.

His wings fold back for speed. Claws extended. Terrifying, for a baby. Toto plows into Tess. They grapple on the ground.

ILANA

Tess!

Ilana leaps into action. Tess SHRIEKS. Ilana pries at Toto, but he won't budge.

Billy steps in and plucks Toto up, no problem.

The shrieks from Tess taper into laughter as Toto licks her face from the air.

ILANA (CONT'D)

You all right?

TESS

You kidding? I'd pay money for that. Feels like a shot of adrenaline and fulfilled dreams.

Another fat lick from Toto. Along Tess's arms and face, scratches ooze blood. Ilana tends her wounds.

ILANA

Either you're fuckin' nuts, or real dedicated.

Ilana wraps a bandage around Tess's arm. They share a smile.

BILLY

My money's on both. I could've picked him up in the first place, chief. You bled for no reason.

ILANA

True mark of a ranger.

EXT. YOSEMITE - CAMPSITE - DAY

The rangers, bigfoot, and the beast make their way, wary of the pissed off mother gryphon lurking nearby. Toto squirms. Tess gives it scratches behind the ears. He purrs.

ILANA

Not everyday you see an ultra-apex predator enjoy head scratches.

TESS

Lot of firsts for me, today. Seeing  
a bigfoot, petting a gryphon.  
Making a friend.

ILANA

Friend, huh?

TESS

Don't make it weird.

ILANA

(observing landscape)

This is where the visitor got ate.

Toto SQUAWKS. Tess points up into the trees. Look.

DOROTHY (9, the gryphon that ate Ralph) spreads her wings  
from her perch atop a redwood.

ILANA (CONT'D)

Make or break, kid. Dorothy's gotta  
accept Toto, and I gotta see some  
sign she's not gonna, I dunno, tear  
more visitors to shreds.

Billy puts down Toto. Tess pets Toto and points at Dorothy.

TESS

Time to go home, little buddy.  
There's your momma.

Dorothy dives off the tree, torpedoing toward the group,  
razor beak pointed. Dorothy swipes at them.

Tess and Ilana duck and roll, and Tess's heart breaks.

TESS (CONT'D)

There was your momma.

BILLY

Okay, I'm out. Not good with  
gryphon blood.

Billy bails off into the woods. Ilana pulls pieces of a high-  
tech laser out of her pack. Starts assembling. She sees Tess  
freaking out, and stops to put a hand on Tess's shoulder.

ILANA

Toto still gets to grow up.  
And, I promise, the nightmares  
stop. Eventually. For sweet, brief,  
periods.

Ilana hands Tess a nightmarish harpoon. Tess's hands shake around the harpoon. She swallows a lump.

Dorothy SWOOPS at Tess and Ilana, wings WOOSHing. They both barrel roll out of the way.

Dorothy rockets toward Tess. Tess stands, deer in headlights.

Looks like Tess is gonna be lunch. Ilana breathes in. BZZ.

The laser fires straight at Dorothy. At the last second, Dorothy veers up and the charge smokes a tree. Ilana looks up from her scope.

ILANA (CONT'D)

Come on, I know you're tougher than  
shit. Stuck around longer than  
Billy -- limp dick coward. Now,  
show me you're tougher than Bruce.

TESS

What, by not dying?

ILANA

That's the idea --

Dorothy dives from above. Distracted by Tess, Ilana's too slow to dodge. She swings the laser to parry. The claws ZING off the metal, but tear a gash in her shoulder. Ilana howls.

Ilana grits her teeth. Takes aim. Deep breath. And nearly fires into her own foot when her arm falls during the shot.

The gryphon swoops. Tess ducks and rushes to Ilana's side.

TESS

Med kit?

ILANA

In my bag.

In her bag are ropes and medical supplies. Tess pulls things out of the bag and messes with... something. Ilana winces.

ILANA (CONT'D)

Taking your sweet fuckin' time back  
there. It ain't my mom's purse.

Tess brings the med kit and wraps Ilana's arm in a sling.

Ilana flexes her arm. Much better. She hands Tess a collapsible bazooka.

TESS

Oh, I... Don't have a lot of  
experience with weapons.

ILANA

Heat seeking. Unless a chopper full  
of children goes by, you'll be all  
right.

TESS

Why'd you have to say children?

Dorothy bellows above them, wings stretched for another dive.

ILANA

Now, please.

TESS

I... Don't have a good shot from  
here. Cover me!

Tess runs around the side of a tree. Ilana fires off a few  
shots with the laser and keeps pace behind her.

Tess kneels down with the bazooka. She looks over her  
shoulder at Ilana, who runs up behind her, and...

Trips over the rope from her own pack, which WHIZZES around  
her in a knot.

ILANA

Are you fuckin' kidding me?

TESS

I'm sorry! Just, listen --

ILANA

Tess. Please, tell me this is a  
trap you set up days ago.

TESS

I --

ILANA

Please, lie to me. Tell me I don't  
got to hunt you down like the  
gryphon that's about to eat us.

TESS

(fighting tears)  
It'll be quick and painless.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. YOSEMITE - CAMPSITE - DAY

Ilana thrashes against her restraints. Tess approaches to tighten them. Ilana tries to bite Tess. All while Dorothy swoops through the group.

ILANA  
Traitor! I vouched for you.

TESS  
I'm sorry! Just, trust me.

ILANA  
Trust you? You're feeding me to a god damn gryphon!

TESS  
I'm not!

The gryphon SQUAWKS above.

ILANA  
Kinda feels like you are.

TESS  
You know there's a better way.

ILANA  
All I know is we're gonna get our guts splashed across the woods 'cause you couldn't follow simple orders.

Tess runs away.

ILANA (CONT'D)  
You're not even gonna die with me?

Tess returns with Toto, and kneels next to the gryphon pup.

TESS  
Nobody is going to die.

Tess reaches around Toto. Toto YELPS, but Tess scratches behind his ears and he settles. Tess pulls her hand back covered in goo. Smears it on Ilana.

ILANA  
What in the fuck!

Tess smears the goo on herself.

TESS

We came in too hot, smelling like people and bigfoot.

ILANA

And then we fired god damn lasers at her. You think covering us in ass juice is gonna calm her down?

TESS

Not with that attitude.

Tess goes prone and showers Toto in scratches. Toto purrs.

TESS (CONT'D)

Relax. Our lives depend on it.

Wind whips under Dorothy's wings as she lands ten feet away.

She looses a deafening CAW. Sniffs around.

Tess inches off the ground, one hand still petting Toto, the other deferentially raised by her side.

TESS (CONT'D)

Easy, girl -- lady. Woman? Yeah, you're a grown ass woman.

Dorothy squints at this strange creature touching her pup. Tess steps forward, Toto in tow.

A foot closer. Now in striking distance. No turning back.

ILANA

Tess, stop!

Ilana wriggles against her ropes. Her momentum causes her to roll over, and continue rolling down a hill.

Startled, Dorothy rears up, her talons scything through air. She takes to her wings. Then plucks up Toto. And Tess.

ILANA (CONT'D)

Flying fuck! Put her down!

Dorothy flies Tess to the top of a tree towering above Ilana.

ILANA (CONT'D)

You could've been a ranger! Why'd you have to be so stupid!

Billy shows up from behind a tree.

BILLY

Billy, to the rescue!

ILANA

What the hell, you coward. It's too late. She's deader than dead. Cliff was right. She couldn't follow the rules, and now she's dead. At least come untie me, so I don't die, too.

BILLY

You know, you can be a real cynical dick. I'm gonna help Tess. You just sit there and think about the tone you use with me.

Billy starts scaling the tree.

EXT. TREETOP - SAME

Beak dripping saliva, Dorothy approaches a branch at the top of a redwood. She loses a terrifying SCREECH. And...

Carefully sets Toto and Tess down on the branch. She coos. Nuzzles both of them.

TESS

Holy shit. It worked? My plan worked. I'm two hundred feet up a tree, but my plan worked.

She eases a hand toward Dorothy. Dorothy leans forward and accepts the head scratches.

TESS (CONT'D)

I'm a genius.

EXT. YOSEMITE - CAMPSITE - DAY

Ilana glares as she thrashes against her restraints.

ILANA

Gah! Starting to hope that thing *did* kill her.

Tess plops onto the ground and releases a rope.

TESS

Sorry. Never been more alive.

BILLY

Oh, buddy, so glad you got down.  
These feet are too big for trees.

Billy falls the whopping five feet he made it up the tree.  
Ilana wiggles to get a better view of Tess standing over her.

ILANA

How?

TESS

Pretty easy rappel down the tree.

ILANA

No, how did you kill the gryphon?

TESS

Jesus Christ, haven't you figured  
out that I'm not going to kill  
locals? You'd think it'd sink in  
after I hog-tied you.

Dorothy slams to the ground next to Tess. Tess pats her.

BILLY

Whoa! How you doin'?

TESS

See, she's cool. Even Billy's weird  
Friends thing didn't phase her.

Tess bends down to untie Ilana.

ILANA

Tess, stop.

TESS

Please, Ilana. If she was gonna eat  
you, she'd rather have you tied up  
all neat like a birthday ham.

ILANA

If you untie me, this ain't gonna  
be a happy ending.

TESS

Look, Dorothy's chill now! You  
don't have to hurt her.

Ilana squirms at her restraints. The gryphon's not the issue.

TESS (CONT'D)

Oh. Right. You were serious about  
that *becoming enemies* thing?

ILANA

Cliff won't give a lick about the gryphon now that she's calmed down. He's gonna get worked up we have a cryptozoo-terrorist on the loose.

TESS

I'm a cryptozoo-activist, at worst.

ILANA

Activists don't leave rope burns on folks other than themselves.

Tess pets Dorothy.

TESS

Hello, I just *soothed a gryphon*. Like to see Bruce do that. Oh, wait, he can't. He got killed by a unicorn, the least aggressive local in cryptozoology.

(beat)

Can't you tell Cliff you fell in a trap I made for the gryphon?

ILANA

Cliff's a creep, not an idiot.

TESS

Well, at least let me escape, then?

ILANA

Ding dong, that's what I'm doing.

TESS

Oh.

ILANA

We're friends. And, you saved a cryptid's life. Least I can do is give you a head start.

Tess puts her hand on her hip.

TESS

Well, do you want to come with me?

ILANA

Course. But, somebody's gotta keep Cliff in line. If I don't get fired, anyway.

TESS

End of our adventures, I guess.

ILANA

Take care of yourself, kid. And, don't go sniffing out a secretive place to hole up in the park. We cross paths again, you better have another trap ready.

Tess hugs Ilana. Still tied up, Ilana hugs back with her neck and shoulders. Billy snuffles. Then joins in a group hug.

Tess exits the hug, and pulls Billy away with her.

TESS

Billy, I'm moving in. And, now that we're friends, you can't say no without being a total dick.

INT. CLIFF'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Still hog-tied, Ilana hops over to a chair in Cliff's office and sits. Donna flutters over Cliff's shoulder.

DONNA

Girl's too much! Breaks the baddest bitch in Yosemite, and a gryphon, same day. She's something else.

ILANA

Yeah, something else. Wonder how she escaped our holding cell?

Cliff looks at Donna. Donna hauls ass out of the office. Ilana wriggles against her ropes.

CLIFF

Ilana, I told you it'd be a bad day for you if your girl messed up.

ILANA

Cliff, her plan worked. She brought the mom its pup back, and now it's code green. Nicer than Donna.

CLIFF

Yeah, but what if it didn't work, and I had a dead visitor, dead ranger, and a pissed off gryphon? I'd probably lose my job.

Cliff dabs sweat. Fidgets. Tugs his mustache. Seems so small, but desperate in a cornered-animal way.

ILANA

Probably.

CLIFF

I'm protecting locals, Ilana. We kill one local to save the rest. If I get fired, they'll send in a new, gung-ho Park Supervisor with bloodlust and the drive to make this park one hundred percent safe for humans. Do you want that?

ILANA

Course not!

CLIFF

We'll see. Ilana, you're going to kill that gryphon.

ILANA

No, I'm not. Didn't you hear me? It ain't a threat.

CLIFF

It's no longer a threat. But it will be a punishment.

(sheepishly)

I need to know you're faithful.

INT. BILLY'S CAVE - DAY

Ilana enters Billy's cave. He throws a pelt over something.

BILLY

Whoa! Privacy, friendo. I may not have a door, but at least say knock-knock.

ILANA

Billy, shut up.

Tess pops out from under the deer hide.

BILLY

(stilted)

Ah! The terrorist! I'm not harboring her or a collaborator in any way!

TESS

Should I activate the trap I made for you? You'll love it - I spent a lot of time making it comfortable.

ILANA  
No trap. I need you.

Tess throws her arms around Ilana.

TESS  
You missed me!

ILANA  
No, I need you out of hate. Cliff needs to go. And you're gonna help me get rid of him.

TESS  
When do we start?

ILANA  
Well, first we need to trick a Spriggan into giving me a fake gryphon heart so Cliff doesn't know I'm on your side. And, I could use your help smacking around a trollop of trolls messing with campers. But, once we got those ducks in a row, we get Cliff out of here.

BILLY  
Count me out for the Spriggan one.

ILANA  
So the plan is, we get Billy --

Tess rifles through her bag and pulls on a ratty t-shirt.

ILANA (CONT'D)  
What're you doing?

TESS  
Putting on my Black Sabbath shirt.

ILANA  
Why...

TESS  
Can't trolls smell Christian blood?

Ilana looks at Tess like she's dumber than rocks.

ILANA  
God, this is gonna be hard.

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

INT. LA TIMES - DAY

At a desk sits Helga. Disheveled, not a happy ex-camper. Her supervisor, MARGE (50) approaches and taps Helga on the shoulder. Helga jumps.

HELGA

Bear! Oh, guten tag, Marge.  
Something the matter?

MARGE

What're you working on, there?

HELGA

Travel piece. Top 10 reasons to  
never go on holiday to Yosemite.

MARGE

I see. And, does it mention bears?

HELGA

Numbers 9 through 2! Number 1 is  
even more sinister. Park rangers.

MARGE

Right. In your last article, you  
mentioned that they can fly?

HELGA

The bears? Ja. Swoop right down and  
bite the head off your Schnucki.

MARGE

Okay, Helga. We all feel for you.  
Why don't you take some time off?  
Get your head together.

Helga nods and jumps up. Grabs a stack of papers.

HELGA

Wunderbar. I was going to wait for  
my holiday to return to Yosemite to  
investigate. Danke.

Marge gives her a wry thumbs up.

MARGE

Watch out for the rangers.

END OF SHOW