

FRENCH CLUB

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Ingredients are arranged on a kitchen counter. Cream is poured and vigorously whisked in a saucepan over a hot stove.

A flowery apron is double knotted.

In rapid succession, eggs, sherry, Gruyère, and mustard are added to the mixture, beaten with a whisk, and poured into a dish.

A pair of ballet flat covered feet dance across the kitchen floor. In the oven, a souffle rises.

INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

An elegant dinner is arranged on a dining room table: tapered candles lit, and napkins folded like origami.

GERTIE HOOPER, 15, pours sparkling grape juice into wine glasses.

She burns her fingers as she pulls the souffle out of the oven with a dish towel.

GERTIE

Ow!

She blows on the burned finger and waves it around.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Gertie Hooper never uses oven mitts. She idolizes Coco Chanel, enjoys making purses out of household objects, and earning the highest possible number of girl scout badges.

INTRODUCING GERTIE MONTAGE:

- A Coco Chanel look-alike poses for a picture.
- Gertie hot glues some fabric together, then holds up one of her purse creations (which roughly resembles an umbrella).
- She applies a new patch to a sash overburdened with senior girl scout badges.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Her biggest pet peeve is listening  
to her mother's teeth scrape  
against her fork when she eats.

- Gertie's mother, JENNA MEYER, talks and eats. Gertie looks horrified as Jenna removes her fork from her mouth in slow motion, SCREECHING like a train slamming on its brakes.

INT. FRONT ENTRY - MINUTES LATER

The doorbell RINGS.

Gertie opens the door for SIMONE BOUVIER, 15. They hug and greet each other.

GERTIE

Entrez!

SIMONE

Bonsoir!

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Simone Bouvier is obsessed with her Grand-Mère, singing, and all things Josephine Baker. Her favorite activity: Spycraft.

INTRODUCING SIMONE MONTAGE:

- Simone's smiling Grand-Mère holds out a cup of tea.
- Simone performs in a Josephine Baker inspired banana costume.
- THEO BOUVIER, 10, plays with action figures in his room. From her own room, Simone listens in on a headset and makes notes on a handwritten map of her house.

THEO

Take that, you disgusting spider monkey! And go back to your garbage corner of the universe!

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Slow walkers are the thing she detests most in life.

- A couple of girls talk to each other and barely move through the cafeteria line, while Simone stands behind them, looking annoyed.

GIRL WITH BRACES

I mean...

CHEERLEADER

Yeah, no, totally...

GIRL WITH BRACES

...Don't you think?

CHEERLEADER

Yeah, no, for sure...

Simone's SIGHS and her eyes nearly roll into the back of her head as she listens to them, while they remain totally oblivious.

INT. LIVING ROOM - RESUMING

While Simone and Gertie CHATTER, TORI VANDERBILT, 15, lets herself in the front door.

TORI

Ciao!

They all hug.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Tori Vanderbilt excels at grand jete's, doing her hair like Brigitte Bardot, and picking up new habits that annoy her mother.

INTRODUCING TORI MONTAGE:

- Tori, dressed for ballet class, tightens a bow around her head before she grand jete's across a dance floor.

- She puts a bobby pin in her hair to complete a Brigitte Bardot hairstyle. She checks out her look in the mirror.

- She eats beef jerky sticks while sitting on her bed. Her mother, REED VANDERBILT, screams from another room.

REED VANDERBILT (O.S.)

TORI, DINNER!

She stuffs the rest of the piece in her mouth and hides the jumbo bag of jerky under her pillow.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Her worst nightmare is getting called on to diagram a sentence in Mrs. Milam's English class.

- Tori stares blankly at a sentence written on the blackboard. She winces as she picks up a piece of chalk and SCRAPES the blackboard with it.

MRS. MILAM (O.S.)  
 ...and as Tori will demonstrate, in this example we have a compound subject and a compound predicate...

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

The trio sit at an elegant table filled with french dishes.

TORI  
 You've really outdone yourself this time, Gert.

GERTIE (IN FRENCH; SUBTITLED)  
*French Supper Club shall now commence!*

SERIES OF SHOTS:

- The trio raise their glasses and toast.
- Simone and Tori ooh and ah as they taste their souffle.
- Gertie opens a can of caviar and demonstrates how to spread it on crackers.
- Tori and Simone gag on their respective bites, while Gertie eats hers happily.
- They crack creme brulee with their spoons.

INT. DINING ROOM - LATER

Simone finishes off the sparkling grape juice. Gertie spreads the last bite of caviar on what's left of her creme brulee.

GERTIE  
 They say you can eat caviar on everything.

SIMONE  
 Ew! So much ew.

TORI  
 It's a non from me.

SIMONE  
Who do you think is a better  
kisser, Justin or Felix?

Felix. TORI Felix. GERTIE

GERTIE  
What about Felix, or Clint?

Felix? SIMONE Clint. TORI

GERTIE  
Can we come to a consensus, please?

SIMONE  
I think Tori is more... intimately  
acquainted with this scenario than  
the rest of us.

TORI  
I am. And it's definitely Clint.

GERTIE  
Whaaaaat?

Simone LAUGHS. Tori fishes some beef jerky out of her purse.

TORI  
Okay. Clint or the new foreign  
exchange student. What's his name?

GERTIE  
Wait, wait, wait, you're changing  
the subject--

TORI  
What is it? Bernard? Belmont?

SIMONE  
Benoit.

Simone announces his name with a heavy french accent. Tori  
and Gertie imitate Simone's pronunciation.

Benoit! TORI Benoit! GERTIE

They all GIGGLE. Tori chews on her beef jerky. Gertie cuts  
her eyes at Tori, then pretends to clean up the table.

GERTIE  
Victoria. We just finished dinner.

TORI

So?

SIMONE

We only ask because we care. Is it time for a jerky intervention?

TORI

Shut up!

GERTIE

Hand over the junk meat and no one gets hurt.

Tori stuffs the jerky back in her purse and zips it up.

TORI (O.S.)

You can pry it from my cold, dead hands!

Gertie makes a grab for Tori's bag but Tori ducks out of the way and runs out of the room. Gertie chases after her.

SIMONE

Y'all done lost your minds.

EXT. WORTH SCHOOL - DAY

An American flag waves in front of a stately stone building. Students mill about on their way to and from class.

INSERT - SIGN

Block letters on a stone marker read:

"THE WORTH SCHOOL

Veritas Lux Mea

Est. 1957 Camden, Kentucky"

BACK TO SCENE

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The Worth School sits on a hill in the suburb of Camden, Kentucky. The esteemed institution regularly wins state championships for Girls Lacrosse, Debate Team, and their Jazz ensemble.

MONTAGE - INTRODUCING The Worth School:

- Three LACROSSE PLAYERS wave their sticks and YELL at an offensive player, who scurries away.

- Two DEBATERS clad in ties and jackets wave their hands around wildly as they speak.

DEBATER #1

...This Rubenstein analysis fails to adequately address the outcomes--

DEBATER #2

That is irrelevant!

- A handful of STUDENTS PLAY a jazzy tune on their instruments.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Their mascot is the Fighting Boll Weevil.

- A green BOLL WEEVIL MASCOT does an exaggerated victory dance.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

All students are assigned to a house when they enter the school-- House Wendell or House Hunter. They compete throughout the year, accruing points for everything from mess hall cleanup to spirit day participation and extracurricular activity attendance.

- Two PEOPLE on opposite sides of a school dining table speed clean dishes, cups, and utensils.

- A STUDENT wearing all green and a hat that reads "HUNTER" sits at a desk writing notes. Another STUDENT in an even crazier maroon outfit and bigger hat that reads "WENDELL" takes a seat next to the green student.

- A GUY wearing a maroon headband kicks a ball and takes off for first base. A girl wearing a green headband catches the fly ball and the rest of her TEAM comes running in SCREAMING from the outfield.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

At the end of each school year a winner is declared, and receives a field trip to Bluegrass Kingdom, a pizza party and the coveted Worth Cup.

- Three STUDENTS lift their arms and SCREAM as they ride a roller coaster.

- The worth cup, a giant trophy sits amongst half-empty pizza boxes and green streamers.

HUNTER HOUSE STUDENTS (O.S.)

Bubble Gum is tutti-fruity  
 Hunter had the power to whip your  
 bootie  
 Yee-Ha whip your bootie!  
 Yee-Ha whip your bootie!

INT. SCHOOL HALLS - DAY

A clock TICKS in an empty hallway. When the bell RINGS, Simone emerges from her classroom and dodges through a wave of students. She exchanges folded notes with Tori as they pass each other in the hall.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

With varying schedules, the group has creative ways of keeping each other current on the most important events of the day through a calculated system of note passing. Simone insists that they write in code.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Tori unfolds a note. It looks like gibberish hieroglyphics. She pulls out a decoder key and writes out the contents of the note on a different sheet of paper.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

On the occasion that a note is confiscated, it's contents remain confidential.

MR. TERWILLIGER grabs the note out of Tori's hand.

MR. TERWILLIGER

Ms. Vanderbilt. What's this, please?

INSERT - THE CONFISCATED NOTE

A sheet of paper full of indecipherable symbols.

BACK TO SCENE

He stares at the note, confused.

MR. TERWILLIGER  
No more writing notes in class, er,  
whatever that is...

He returns it to Tori's desk.

INT. FRENCH CLASS - DAY

Gertie deftly passes a note off of her desk to Simone. Simone unfolds it in her lap and places a decoder over it.

MONSIEUR LEBEAU drones on about the days' lesson.

MONSIEUR LEBEAU (IN FRENCH; WITH  
SUBTITLES)  
*The past participle is essential in  
the creation of compound verbs and  
the passive voice.*

Simone looks down at the note.

INSERT - GERTIE'S NOTE

It reads, "Just how many awful sweater vests does he own?!  
Answer: All of them."

BACK TO SCENE

Simone stifles a GIGGLE. Monsieur LeBeau turns back to the class and points to the board. He itches his chest over part of his sweater vest. Gertie watches, fascinated.

EXT. SCHOOL ENTRANCE - DAY

A BELL rings and STUDENTS file out with backpacks in tow to go home for the day.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
It was on an ordinary afternoon  
that the French Club met after  
school, and embarked on a field  
trip that would change the course  
of the girls' lives in unimaginable  
ways.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

Simone, Tori, and Gertie sit together at a table. BENOIT the foreign exchange student, who wears scarves even inside, sits silently beside Simone. He flashes a smile at her. She smiles back and looks away, her cheeks reddening. ROBERT, eternally dramatic, enters and slams a tote bag on his desk.

ROBERT (IN FRENCH; SUBTITLED)  
*Sorry. So sorry.*

GERTIE  
Bonjour, Ro-bear. Thanks for making an appearance.

MONSIEUR LEBEAU  
D'accord, ok gang, let's settle. First, I'd like to remind everyone to bring your "Made in France" objects in by the end of the week. Second, I'd like to introduce our foreign exchange student, Benoit, who comes to us from Dijon, in France, and will be with us all semester. Bienvenue!

Monsieur LeBeau CLAPS awkwardly and gestures for everyone to follow suit. The group CLAPS with him. Benoit smiles and bows his head.

BENOIT  
Merci.

MONSIEUR LEBEAU  
I have everyone's signed permission slips for the field trip, except Robert.

Robert looks in his bag and rolls his eyes.

ROBERT (IN FRENCH; SUBTITLED)  
Merde.

MONSIEUR LEBEAU  
Language, Monsieur Robert.

GERTIE  
You're late *and* you forgot your permission slip?

TORI  
This is not your day.

ROBERT

You can call my mom, she totally knows about it.

MONSIEUR LEBEAU

We'll take care of it. As you all know, Simone's Grand-Mère has been gracious enough to invite us to her home. She grew up in Haiti and speaks fluent French. Anything else we should know about your Grand-Mère, Simone?

SIMONE

Well, how much time do we have? She's basically my most favorite person in the world and she tells the greatest stories... But whatever you do, don't ask her about her decorating.

EXT. GRAND MERE'S HOUSE - DAY

An alligator head hangs over the front door of Grand-Mère's house. The French Club group stands on Grand-Mère's front steps, staring at the alligator head silently. A homemade WIND CHIME hanging from a tree TINKLES nearby. Simone RINGS the doorbell.

ROBERT (TO GERTIE)

So, is this like the decorating thing she talked about?

GERTIE

Zip it, Ro.

A black CAT SCREECHES and runs past them. Benoit and Robert look freaked out, but the girls seem totally fine.

BENOIT

Malchance.

TORI

Bad luck? Don't be silly, Benny boy.

Simone KNOCKS on the door but there's still no answer. She cracks the door and calls inside. JAZZ quietly plays somewhere inside the house.

SIMONE

Grand-Mère?

GRAND-MÈRE (O.S.) (IN FRENCH;  
SUBTITLED)

*Yes! Come in!*

Simone holds the door open and invites everyone inside.

INT. GRAND MERE'S HOUSE - DAY

A brightly colored room with candles lit everywhere, vials on shelves, and an alter in one corner. On a wall hang portraits of Grand-Mère's family.

Grand-Mère enters, elegant in a silk dress with a tignon knotted around her head.

ROBERT

Now can I ask about--

GERTIE

Nope.

Grand-Mère greets the group warmly.

GRAND-MÈRE

Please, come sit down. Would everyone like a glass of mango juice?

MONSIEUR LEBEAU

Ah, oui!

BENOIT

Sounds wonderful.

The group gathers around the living room, awkwardly taking seats. Simone passes out glasses of mango juice from a tray. MONSIEUR LEBEAU takes a sip of his juice and smiles.

MONSIEUR LEBEAU (IN FRENCH; SUBTITLED)

*Thanks so much for having us!*

GRAND-MÈRE

*My pleasure, my pleasure. It's so wonderful to see all these young faces here.*

MONSIEUR LEBEAU

I'm sure the gang would love to hear about your amazing life and how you came to the United States.

GRAND-MÈRE

Well, let's see now. Simone, get that album down for me and pass it around.

Simone grabs an album and hands it to Tori, who opens the first page. The others look over her shoulder.

GRAND-MÈRE

I was born in Port-au-Prince. The largest city in Haiti.

INSERT - Grand-Mère CHILDHOOD PHOTOS

Black and white photos of Grand-Mère when she was a little girl: smiling in a white dress with her younger brother, a big family photo with her parents and grandparents. They're dressed to the nines.

GRAND-MÈRE (O.S.)

Growing up in Port-au-Prince, I lived with my parents and grandparents and little brother. It was a happy life. But when I was twelve, my daddy died. My momma moved with me and my brother to New Orleans, to live with my auntie.

INSERT - Grand-Mère NEW ORLEANS PHOTOS

Black and white photos of Grand-Mère with her mom, aunt, and brother. Grand-Mère and her brother wearing Mardi Gras masks.

GRAND-MÈRE (O.S.)

New Orleans and Haiti are like sisters. The food, the music, carnival and french language. They share all these things. And so it immediately felt like home to me.

BACK TO SCENE

Gertie points to another old photo of Grand-Mère hugging her grandmother.

GERTIE

Beautiful.

Grand-Mère smiles.

GRAND-MÈRE

That's me and my grandmother. I called her Foi.

Tori, Benoit, Gertie and Robert sit, intrigued by Grand-Mère's story. Monsieur LeBeau takes another SLURP of juice.

MONSIEUR LEBEAU

And how long did you live there, in  
New Orleans?

GRAND-MÈRE

Almost sixty years. It's a pretty  
magical place.

Gertie runs her hands over a picture of a young Grand-Mère,  
in ceremonial costume.

Simone takes everyone's cups and puts them back on a tray.

SIMONE

Grand-Mère was a gifted healer.

Grand-Mère grins. Simone sets the tray down, then lights up.

SIMONE

Would you do a reading for one of  
my friends?

Tori's hand shoots up.

TORI

Me! Pick me!

GRAND-MÈRE

I suppose I could...

TORI

I would be so honored. Please?  
Monsieur LeBeau, is that okay?

Monsieur LeBeau chuckles and straightens his sweater vest.

MONSIEUR LEBEAU

Fine with me.

GRAND-MÈRE

Alright, alright.

She motions for Tori to sit in a chair across from her and  
produces a deck of tarot cards from her pocket. Captivated,  
the group watches Grand-Mère close her eyes, shuffle the  
cards, and flip three cards from the top of the deck.

Grand-Mère points to the first card.

GRAND-MÈRE

Carrier de Mardi Gras, this is your  
past. It means chaos, confusion,  
lots of energy.

Tori nods, and leans forward in her seat. Grand-Mère points to the middle card.

GRAND-MÈRE

This is your present, Oya. A change  
is coming. All at once, shocking.  
Like lightning, see?

INSERT - TAROT CARD

Grand-Mère points to the lightning in the picture.

BACK TO SCENE

She points to the last card, then flashes a cheshire grin at  
Tori.

GRAND-MÈRE

The Empress. This is your future.  
Harmony, Abundance. She draws peace  
from being amongst the trees. She  
finds Love and Justice. That's très  
bien.

The group is transfixed by Grand-Mère's reading. Tori chokes  
back tears, moved by Grand-Mère's words.

TORI

Thank you.

Grand-Mère nods. She pats Tori's hand and then looks at the  
group.

GRAND-MÈRE

Would anyone else like a turn?

Everyone's hands shoot up.

EXT. GRAND MÈRE'S HOUSE - LATER

The group files out of Grand-Mère's house. The old woman  
holds onto Simone's arm as she walks them out.

GRAND-MÈRE

Will you come again soon, to see  
me?

SIMONE

Of course I will!

Simone hugs Grand-Mère goodbye, and everyone says their thank  
you's, and departs.

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

Monsieur LeBeau waves goodbye to the French Club.

MONSIEUR LEBEAU

Thanks gang! What an informative outing that was. Welp, see you in class. Au revoir!

Monsieur LeBeau dashes off, while the others continue down the sidewalk in the opposite direction. Tori, Gertie, and Robert walk together, while Simone and Benoit lag behind.

TORI

That was so intense. I gotta date with a sensory deprivation chamber in my immediate future.

ROBERT

Yeah girl. You gotta go home and prepare for the Empress.

SIMONE

And don't forget Oya. Living that lightning life.

The group LAUGHS. Behind them, Benoit takes Simone's hand. She looks at him and grins bashfully. He speaks with a heavy french accent.

BENOIT

Your Grand-Mère, she seems very special, no?

SIMONE

Yes. I always thought she was magic when I was growing up.

BENOIT

This seems true.

Gertie turns to address the whole group. Benoit and Simone drop hands and try to act casual.

GERTIE

So... We're going this way. Are we still on for the sleepover tomorrow at Tori's house?

SIMONE

It's a oui from me.

TORI  
I'm bringing my mom's stash of  
trashy mags!

SIMONE  
Up top, girl!

Simone and Tori high-five. Robert and Gertie break off from the group and cross the street. They all wave to each other as they part ways.

By-ee!                      SIMONE                                      GERTIE  
By-ee!

TORI  
By-ee!

EXT. VANDERBILT HOUSE - DUSK

Some workers tend to the landscaping in front of Tori's house, which looks like a spread in Southern Living.

INT. VANDERBILT LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A fat CAT lounges on an overstuffed couch.

REED VANDERBILT, a petite blonde who's forever dressed in workout attire, does a million abdominal crunches on a yoga mat. A TRAINER'S VOICE shouts encouragement from the TV.

INT. BASEMENT

Tori drops slices of cheese in to a pot and stirs. She pulls a spoon out and checks on the consistency of the fondue. Too gloopy. Tori makes a face and stirs some more.

MONTAGE: SLUMBER PARTY

--Simone, Gertie, and Tori sit on the floor eating fondue. and looking at tabloid style magazines.

--Simone and Tori paint their nails while Gertie fills in their answers for a game of Mad Libs.

--Reed Vanderbilt checks on the group, watching them in the doorway. She walks away.

--Robert and Benoit squeeze through an open basement window. Benoit gets through unscathed but Robert gets stuck. Tori and Gertie pull on him until he pops out. They all fall onto the ground in a pile, giggling. Tori "shushes" them.

INT. BASEMENT - LATER

The group sits around a coffee table eating snacks. Tori crushes a piece of beef jerky and licks her fingers. Benoit watches her, then picks up a piece and tries a bite.

TORI

What do you think? It's good,  
right?

BENOIT

Tastes like salt.

SIMONE

Robert is stalling.

ROBERT (O.S.)

Am not!

SIMONE

Get out here, then!

ROBERT (O.S.)

I just freaked out that one time.

Some MOODY music begins in the background. Robert joins the rest of the group. He chews his nails nervously.

SIMONE

Yeah, right.

TORI

Okay, let's do this. Who wants to  
be dead. Robert?

ROBERT

Ew. Pass.

Tori looks at Simone, who shakes her head no, and Gertie, who raises an eyebrow at her. Tori SIGHS. She lays down on the ground and makes herself comfortable.

TORI

Lame. Okay. I volunteer as tribute.  
Again.

Gertie moves Tori's arms across her chest and crosses them.

GERTIE

Cross them like this.

TORI

I know! I'm ready.

Simone dims the lights, then runs back over and kneels with the rest of the group.

GERTIE  
Everyone lift. With two fingers  
only. Like this.

Gertie demonstrates trying to lift Tori using only two fingers with each hand. Robert and Simone copy her, trying to lift Tori, but she doesn't move from her spot on the floor.

ROBERT  
I swear it's not going to work this  
time...

GERTIE  
Silence!

BENOIT  
Tres bizarre.

Gertie takes on a mock serious tone. Tori suppresses a smile, then goes back to playing dead.

GERTIE  
We must have absolute  
concentration. The departed will  
now allow herself to become stiff,  
and surrender to the spirits from  
beyond.

Robert purses his lips as he watches Tori stiffen, then become lifeless. Simone and Gertie remain completely serious.

GERTIE  
The spirit will now enter her body,  
and allow it to become light. Light  
as a feather, stiff as a board.

Simone joins Gertie, while Robert stays semi-frozen in terror.

SIMONE	GERTIE
Light as a feather, stiff as a board.	Light as a feather, stiff as a board.

Simone elbows Robert until he reluctantly repeats the incantation.

SIMONE	GERTIE
Light as a feather, stiff as a board.	Light as a feather, stiff as a board.

ROBERT  
 ...As a feather, stiff as a  
 board...

The group lifts Tori off the ground using only two fingers. This time, she rises up with little effort. They stand and continue CHANTING, until Tori appears to be floating several feet in the air. The MOODY MUSIC reaches a crescendo.

They slowly lower her back down, still CHANTING until she is safely on the floor again. After a moment of silence, Tori opens her eyes and smiles. The rest of the group collapses in giggles except Robert, who is still freaking out.

ROBERT  
 And on that note, I'm leaving.

BENOIT  
 Yes. I do not know what to think.

Robert goes back to the window and opens it. He awkwardly begins climbing out. Everyone watches in amusement. After Robert squeezes out, Benoit exits out the basement door.

EXT. THE WORTH SCHOOL - DAY

The Boll Weevil runs by carrying an armload of books as the bell RINGS.

INT. CLASS - DAY

Simone and Gertie pass a note back and forth while Monsieur LeBeau writes verb conjugations on the board. She unfolds it.

INSERT: SIMONE'S NOTE

It reads: "Grand-Mère under the weather. Asked if the three of us could come by after school. Wanna skip French Club?"

BACK TO SCENE

Gertie shows Tori the note, they nod their heads in agreement and Gertie scribbles something on the paper. She passes a note back to Simone. She unfolds the note and decodes it.

INSERT: GERTIE'S NOTE

It reads: "French Club can suck it!"

BACK TO SCENE

Simone smiles.

INT. GRAND MERE'S HOUSE - DAY

While Grand-Mère rests in bed, Simone puts an extra blanket over her legs and tucks the edges in. Tori sets some flowers on her bedside table. Gertie brings a cup of tea in and hands it to Grand-Mère.

GRAND-MÈRE  
Merci, sweets.

GERTIE  
Bien sur.

Gertie and Tori take a seat on a bench. Simone continues to futz with the blankets. Grand-Mère shoos Simone away.

GRAND-MÈRE  
Will you stop fussing? Come sit.

Simone obeys, sitting on the bed next to Grand-Mère.

Outside Grand-Mère's window, the wind blows. The wind chime TINKLES.

SIMONE  
So you're not feeling better, Grand-Mère?

GRAND-MÈRE  
When you get to be my age, "better" becomes pretty subjective.

SIMONE  
Should we call the doctor?

GRAND-MÈRE  
It's just a cold! Listen child.  
There's something I've been wanting to ask you.

Grand-Mère pulls a key from around her neck and holds it out to Simone.

GRAND-MÈRE  
Unlock the drawer over there for me sweets, and bring me what's inside.

Simone goes over to a desk and unlocks the drawer.

INSERT: Inside the drawer

Amongst a smattering of office supplies, a brass figure sticks out of the drawers' contents. Simone pulls it out.

BACK TO SCENE

She hands the figure to Grand-Mère, who traces her fingers over the head and body of the figure.

GRAND-MÈRE

You haven't seen him since you were just a little thing. But do you remember my brother Moses?

SIMONE

Of course.

Grand-Mère presses the brass figure back into Simone's hand.

GRAND-MÈRE

He's been out in Carrollton for a little while, doing some important work. Truth be told, I don't know how much longer he'll be there so I need you to take that to him as soon as you can. Take the girls with you. Will you go, girls?

SIMONE

But why can't mom--

Grand-Mère shakes her head.

GRAND-MÈRE

No, no, Simmy. That won't do. You know your mother thinks I'm full of mumbo jumbo. So it has to be you. Has to be the three of you.

She clasps her hands around Simone's and gives them a squeeze. She grabs an old photo off her bedside table and hands it to Simone. Simone studies it.

INSERT: OLD MOSES' PHOTO

A black and white photo of Old Moses, wearing a white shirt with an intricate design around the neck. He smiles warmly and holds a chicken under one arm. She flips the photo over and sees an address written on the back.

BACK TO SCENE

GRAND-MÈRE

This is him. Old Moses in Carrollton. Promise me, now.

SIMONE

I promise. But I don't understand what I'm supposed to do...

GRAND-MÈRE

All you have to do is find my brother and give that to him. The rest will make sense when you get there. Is it a deal?

SIMONE

It's a deal.

GERTIE

Consider it done.

Gertie and Tori walk over to Simone and stand beside her. Grand-Mère looks relieved. She gives Simone a big hug.

GRAND-MÈRE

Oh thank you! Thank all three of you!

TORI

Happy to help, ma'am.

Grand-Mère nods and sits back on her pillow. She takes a sip of her tea.

EXT. GRAND MÈRE'S HOUSE - DAY

Simone, Tori, and Gertie walk their bikes on the sidewalk. Simone looks at the brass figure in her hand.

TORI

Your grandmother is so cool. The only mission my grandmother has ever sent me on is to go get her some collector's edition stamps at the post office.

GERTIE

Yeah and why is her brother, like secretly living a few hours from here?

SIMONE

No idea. I thought he still lived in New Orleans.

GERTIE

We need to schedule an emergency French Club meeting, stat.

TORI

Yeah, how are we going to pull this off?

SIMONE

My house. Tomorrow at 6 PM. Be ready to make a plan.

Simone looks at the picture of Old Moses once more, and stuffs it and the brass figure down in her pocket. She rides off, while Gertie and Tori exchange knowing glances.

INT. SIMONE'S ROOM - DAY

Simone has several large maps laid out on the bed, along with binoculars, a ruler, compass, and a calculator. She's drawing lines with a Sharpie when Gertie and Tori enter.

SIMONE

Close the door. Did anybody see you come in?

Tori slurps from a big gulp while Gertie carefully shuts the door.

GERTIE

Your mom?

Simone rolls her eyes. Tori and Gertie approach the bed.

SIMONE

We'll have to take our chances. Have a seat.

GERTIE

Holy cartography!

TORI

It's worse than I thought. She's gone full Josephine Baker, spy edition on us.

SIMONE

Whatever that is it sounds awesome and likely a limited edition so you better get me one.

TORI

I love the world war II vibe in here, but it might be time to start thinking about updating our technology, just a tincy bit.

GERTIE

Rule #1 of practicing spycraft is you don't do anything that could be tracked by anyone, Tori.

SIMONE

Thank you for explaining that, Gertie. I feel like you really understand me.

GERTIE

That's because I'm a better friend.

Tori makes faces at both of them and SLURPS out of her big gulp.

INSERT - MAPS

Simone points to hand made maps of the state of Kentucky with dots, arrows, and destination points. She circles the dots and draws arrows across the page.

BACK TO SCENE

Tori takes one last, long slurp through her straw. She and Gertie look on, intrigued.

TORI

So the story is... you guys are sleeping over at my house tomorrow night, and I'm saying that Simone and I are spending the night at Gertie's?

GERTIE

That should work. In theory.

SIMONE

It'll work.

GERTIE

What are we gonna do about wheels?

TORI

I talked to Ken Nakamura after Bio and he said his uncle still has his taxi company and will give us a ten percent discount.

GERTIE

That sounds great!

TORI

It is great... but it's still gonna be three hundred dollars.

Tori forces a smile and looks worried.

SIMONE

How are we gonna come up with that?

TORI

I called a few other places to see if there was anything cheaper out there.

GERTIE

And?

TORI

Most of them laughed and hung up.

SIMONE

Oh for heaven's sake.

TORI

Ken said his uncle would wait in the car for up to four hours. So I think this is actually a really good deal. Plus, he was available.

Tori tosses her cup across the room into the trash. She fist-pumps the air as it goes in.

GERTIE

Okay, everyone go home and round up as much money as you can, however you can, and let's pray it's enough.

SIMONE

Meet at Gertie's in the AM. We leave at 0900.

TORI

Just so we're clear: That's nine in the morning?

Simone and Gertie give Tori a look. Gertie gives Simone a solid nod and thumbs up, and Tori gives her a mock salute.

GERTIE

See ya then!

TORI

Ay ay, Captain.

## PACKING FOR THE JOURNEY MONTAGE

--Gertie puts on sunglasses. She gets out her suitcase and stuffs some rain boots in, then adds canned sardines, a Swiss army knife, a compass, and macarons.

--Simone puts on a trench coat and packs binoculars, a heavy duty flashlight, and two walkie-talkies. She wraps the brass figure in a handkerchief and places it gingerly in her bag.

--Tori puts on a headband. She packs beef jerky, candy bars, and multiple packs of gum. She throws in headphones, and a container of bobby pins.

--Gertie zips up her suitcase and pulls out the handle.

--Simone zips up her backpack, puts it on, and tightens the straps.

--Tori zips up her backpack, puts it on, and turns the light off on her way out of her room.

## EXT. GERTIE'S FRONT YARD - DAY

Simone checks the signal on a walkie-talkie.

SIMONE

Check 1, Check 2.

Gertie makes checks on a list. Tori rides up with her hoodie pulled around her head. She jumps off her bike and hides it behind some bushes.

TORI

Is the coast clear?

GERTIE

Mom's working all day.

TORI

Sweet.

Tori removes the hoodie and drops the undercover act. Simone messes with the knobs on the walkie-talkie. Tori grabs a wad of bills from her back pocket.

SIMONE

Testing, testing.

Tori SLAPS the cash into Gertie's hand.

GERTIE

How much is this?

TORI  
Ninety-eight actual dollars!

Tori claps Gertie on the back, impressed with her work.  
Gertie nods, un-enthused.

GERTIE  
Did you rob someone?

TORI  
No, I turned the house upside-down  
and cashed in every last cent. You  
guys got more than ninety-eight  
actual dollars?

GERTIE  
I had some saved up Christmas money  
in my piggy bank.

TORI  
Oh yeah? How much?

SIMONE  
Check 1. Check, check, check.

Gertie pretends to check some more items off her list.

GERTIE  
Two ten.

TORI  
Two hundred and ten dollars? What  
are we doing with our lives? We  
should be going to Vegas!

Simone switches her walkie-talkie off and hooks it onto her  
waistband. Tori pops a piece of chewing gum in her mouth.

SIMONE  
This is all great. I got a hundred  
and four myself. Is that going to  
be enough?

GERTIE  
Yep, and we got over a hundred left  
over for incidentals.

Gertie makes some notes on her clipboard.

TORI  
What kind of incidentals?

SIMONE

I don't know. Food or emergency  
medical supplies after you bust  
your ass?

Simone smiles at Tori sarcastically. She puts her backpack  
on, checks her watch, and looks up the street.

SIMONE

Wonderful. Let's get this show on  
the road. When's Ken's uncle  
supposed to be here?

TORI

Any minute.

Gertie puts her clipboard away. Simone looks up the street  
again and taps her foot impatiently. Tori blows a bubble.

A purple Buick Riviera pulls up and slams on it's breaks.  
There's a large magnet sign stuck on the door that reads  
"JIMMY'S GYPSY CAB CO. 555-4242." KOREAN POP MUSIC plays  
inside.

Tori's bubble POPS. The trio pick up their bags.

The front driver's side window rolls down, revealing JIM  
NAKAMURA, 60's, a jolly fellow who looks dapper in a fuzzy  
fedora.

JIM

Is this the French Club?

SIMONE

You got it.

JIM

I'm your driver. Jim.

GERTIE

Pleased to make your acquaintance.

He POPS the trunk open. The trio throw their bags inside,  
close it, and hop in the car. They speed away.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

The car drives along the interstate, zipping past 18 wheelers  
and minivans.

INT. CAR - DAY

Jim bops along to the MUSIC playing in the car. He has several bobbleheads on his dash that dance along to the music, too. The three girls sit squished together in the back seat.

JIM  
Everyone comfortable?

Everyone is not comfortable.

Yeah! SIMONE So great. TORI

GERTIE  
Super comfy. Are these seats leather? They're really nice.

JIM  
Just let me know. Because if not, we can get someone up here in the front seat. Of course, Mike may not like that much.

INSERT - FRONT PASSENGER SEAT

MIKE, a small terrier, lays on a blanket in the front seat and GROWLS.

BACK TO SCENE

Nah. SIMONE We're good. GERTIE

JIM  
Found him on the streets of Harlem. The dog, I mean. Back when I was living in New York. Who knows how long he'd been out there. Way I figured, seemed like him and me, we were meant to be together.

INSERT - MIKE BEAUTY SHOT

Slow-mo of Mike, hair blowing in the wind. He leers at the group in the back seat, revealing some missing teeth.

BACK TO SCENE

GERTIE  
He seems... super sweet.

JIM  
He's kind of damaged.

Jim LAUGHS a big belly laugh.

JIM  
But I love him anyway! That's  
family for you. Feel the same way  
about my brother.

Jim LAUGHS at his own joke again. Tori laughs too, and Gertie smiles. Simone takes out the picture of Old Moses and studies it.

TORI  
Sounds like you get along with your  
brother about as well as I get  
along with my sister.

JIM  
Oh yeah? You two aren't close?

TORI  
I don't know. She's away at  
college. People say we're like oil  
and water, or something.

JIM  
Sometimes it gets easier as you get  
older. Especially if you make an  
effort to hang out with each other.  
You'll see.

Tori nods. Gertie looks out the window while Simone sticks the picture of Old Moses back in her pocket.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

A MAN IN OVERALLS fills his truck with gas while he chews on a toothpick. He hums along to COUNTRY MUSIC playing over the gas station loudspeakers.

Jim pulls his riviera into the parking lot and stops at a pump next to the MAN IN OVERALLS. He watches as Jim jumps out and begins to pump gas, while Tori, Simone, and Gertie emerge from the back seat and scurry inside the mini-mart.

Jim nods at the man and SINGS a line of the country song while he pumps gas. Mike looks out the window.

The Man in Overalls slowly screws the gas cap back on. He chews on his toothpick, gets a squeegee out and cleans off his windshield.

The trio emerges, CHATTERING. Tori holds two big gulps, while Simone and Gertie have icees. Tori hands the extra big gulp to Jim.

TORI  
For you, sir.

JIM  
Cheers.

The Man in Overalls puts the squeegee back, shakes his head, and drives away.

Simone stops at a pay phone while the others squeeze into the back seat and close the doors.

EXT. PHONE BOOTH

Simone punches in a number and listens to the RING on the other end.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Grand Mere sits at a kitchen table with a cup of tea and a stack of tarot cards spread out before her. She answers her telephone.

GRAND-MÈRE  
Hello?

INTERCUT SIMONE/Grand-Mère

SIMONE  
Hi Grand-Mère, it's Simmy.

GRAND-MÈRE  
Hi, Simmy! Your journey's going well so far, hmm?

SIMONE  
Yeah, great. I just wanted to call and see how you're feeling.

GRAND-MÈRE  
Much better. Yes, good as new.

Grand-Mère LAUGHS. She traces some of the cards in front of her.

INSERT - SKELETON CARD

Grand-Mère touches a card with a picture of a skeleton riding a horse.

BACK TO SCENE

SIMONE

Oh, I'm so glad! I've been worried about you.

GRAND-MÈRE

No more worrying, now.

SIMONE

Okay.

EXT. CAR - DAY

Jim hangs the gas pump back up and hops in the front seat. Tori rolls the back window down. She yells in Simone's direction.

TORI

Yo Simone, let's go! We're burning daylight over here!

EXT. PHONE BOOTH - CONTINUOUS

Simone waves back at Tori.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Grand-Mère picks the skeleton card up and holds it in her hand.

GRAND-MÈRE

Remember, sweets. If you get lost, sometimes the best thing you can do is be still. Close your eyes and listen.

INTERCUT SIMONE/Grand-Mère

SIMONE

I remember.

GRAND-MÈRE

I know you've heard old Grand-Mère say these things a hundred times, but now's the time to really hear me.

SIMONE

I hear you, Grand-Mere! Listen, I  
gotta go. I love you.

GRAND-MÈRE

I love you too, Simmy.

Grand-Mère hangs up the phone. She COUGHS hard and spits some  
blood into a tissue.

EXT. GAS STATION - DAY

Simone runs back to the car and hops in the back seat.

GERTIE (O.S.)

There she is!

TORI

Finally!

She slams the door and Jim drives away.

EXT. BYPASS - DAY

The car zooms back onto the interstate.

INT. CAR - DAY

The group rides along quietly. The only sound that can be  
heard is the SLURP of their drinks through straws. SOUL MUSIC  
comes on the radio. Jim turns up the volume.

DRIVING ACROSS KENTUCKY MONTAGE:

--The group bops to the music.

--The speedometer flicks up in speed.

--Simone taps her feet to the beat.

--Jim sways and the trio does some epic car dancing.

--The buick flies over a hill and into the distance.

INT. CAR - LATER

Empty icee and big gulp cups lay scattered throughout the  
car.

Tori crosses her legs. She uncrosses them and crosses them  
again. Simone gives her a sideways glance.

TORI

I might have a situation here.

SIMONE

Seriously?

TORI

You don't have to pee? None of you have to pee?

SIMONE

You gotta pace yourself on the Big Gulps, man.

TORI

Well I drink my drinks fast. Everyone knows this about me.

Simone and Gertie roll their eyes.

GERTIE

Big Gulps are hereby banned on road trips from this moment forward.

TORI

Let it be so! Why do you always talk like you're running a session of congress or something? Okay we actually need to stop now.

Tori shifts in her seat. Uncrosses her legs, then crosses them back.

GERTIE

Jim, do you think we could make another pit stop?

JIM

Uhoh. I don't think there's another town for 30 miles or so.

TORI

People may not appreciate my failed attempt at holding it...

Gertie looks out the window for a moment. They're in the middle of nowhere.

GERTIE

You're going to have to pull over.

JIM

Yeah, yeah, ok.

Jim pulls onto the side of the road. Tori tears out of the car before it's even come to a complete stop and makes a run for some nearby bushes.

TORI (O.S.)

Thanks!

GERTIE

Should I go with her, or...?

SIMONE

I wish you would, so I don't have to.

GERTIE

Wanna rock, paper, scissors for it?

Gertie and Simone pound their fists three times. Simone makes a paper signal with her hand. Gertie makes a rock, and GROANS.

GERTIE

Best two out of three?

SIMONE

Uh, no.

GERTIE

OK, fine.

Gertie opens the door with a SIGH.

EXT. HIGHWAY - CONTINUOUS

Gertie takes off after Tori, who is nearly to the bushes. Tori looks around, scoots behind the bushes a tad more, and drops her drawers. She lets out a YELP of relief. Gertie nears the bushes and slows to a walk, PANTING.

TORI

Thank you Lord! That was almost a full blown disaster.

GERTIE

We can't take you anywhere.

TORI

Are you kidding? Just think how boring it would be without me!

Tori LAUGHS. Gertie taps her foot impatiently. Tori checks her jacket pockets, but doesn't pull anything out. She stares off into the distance.

TORI

Gert?

GERTIE

Yes.

TORI

You don't happen to have a piece of anything on you that would serve the purpose of toilet paper, do ya?

Gertie closes her eyes and scratches her head. She checks her jacket pockets and her pants pockets, pulling out several items.

GERTIE

Let's see. I've got a receipt, a movie ticket stub, or one wool glove.

TORI

Oh, tough choice.

Gertie forces a sarcastic smile.

GERTIE

The world can't wait to hear your decision.

TORI

I'm gonna go, one wool glove.

Gertie hands the glove over to Tori.

GERTIE

How did I know you were gonna pick that one!

TORI (O.S.)

I really appreciate it, Gert.

Tori pulls up her pants, looking refreshed. She holds the glove out to Gertie.

TORI

Do you want this back, or...

GERTIE

What do you think?!

Gertie marches back to the car as Tori tosses the glove over her shoulder and follows suit.

INT. CAR - A MINUTE LATER

Tori and Gertie climb into an empty back seat. Jim has Mike in his lap, and SINGS a song to him that's playing on the radio.

GERTIE  
Where's Simone?

JIM  
Simone? I thought she was with you?

Gertie looks to Tori. Tori's eyes narrow, and she looks around.

JIM  
I don't know, she got out of the car like a minute after you did.

Tori looks out the window towards the hills. In the distance, she sees an old tractor and a log cabin.

TORI  
Hang tight, Jim. We're gonna have a look around.

GERTIE  
We are?

JIM  
Sure thing. Take your time.

Jim goes back to SINGING to Mike. Tori gets out of the car again and heads toward the cabin. Gertie follows her.

EXT. GARDEN - DAY

A handmade WIND CHIME hangs from a post amidst a ramshackle garden. Simone sits quietly beneath it. She hears a the sound of a HEARTBEAT. The wind kicks up and the heartbeat fades.

Tori and Gertie hurry toward Simone. Gertie looks around to make sure they're alone, then speaks in an urgent whisper.

GERTIE  
Simone! Are you alright?

TORI  
Simone!

Simone doesn't turn around. Gertie reaches her and puts a hand on her shoulder.

GERTIE

Simone?

Simone turns, quietly sobbing. She grabs on to Gertie's shoulder.

SIMONE

Grand-Mère. Grand-Mère has these same wind-chimes.

GERTIE

I know she does.

She sits down next to Simone. Tori joins them, and sits as well. Simone wipes her nose on her sleeve.

SIMONE

I heard them from all the way down at the car.

TORI

They do seem like the exact same wind chimes.

GERTIE

I thought you just talked to Grand-Mère and she sounded better?

SIMONE

I did. She did. I just...

From a cabin window, a BOY peers out.

GERTIE

Sweetie, I'm happy for you finding the wind chimes and everything, but I think we're trespassing right now, so... are you ready to go back to the car?

Tori and Gertie stand up, and help Simone up, too. They exit the garden and walk by the cabin, heading toward the car. Tori catches a glimpse of the Boy in the window and her eyes widen.

TORI

Ah! Creep show. Uh, guys, I think we're being watched.

She gestures toward the window. Simone and Gertie look that way, but the Boy has disappeared.

SIMONE

Who was it?

TORI

I don't know and I don't want to know.

They round the corner and almost run into a 10 year-old BOY who is staring at them. The whole group jumps, startled.

GERTIE

Crotte de bique. You scared us!

TORI

I'm glad I just peed!

Simone brings her hand up to her chest. She smiles at the Boy. He stares back, not saying a word.

SIMONE

What's your name?

The Boy says nothing.

TORI

You're kinda funny, aren't you.

The Boy looks inside the house, then back to the trio. He signs something and waits for them to respond. Gertie pokes Simone.

GERTIE

Don't you know sign language?

SIMONE

A little...

TORI

What's he saying, Sim?

The boy signs the same thing again.

SIMONE

Water? Water road?

The boy shakes his head and tries again.

SIMONE

Water path? Water map.

GERTIE

Water map? What the heck is a water map?

The boy nods, points, and starts pantomiming paddling with an oar.

SIMONE  
Canoe? Paddle?

Tori shrugs. The boy nods and continues signing. Simone shakes her head, not understanding.

SIMONE  
I only took one class on sign  
language, okay? It was just  
supposed to be for spy knowledge.

The Boy looks inside his house. The voice of an ANGRY MAN begins yelling.

ANGRY MAN (O.S.)  
LEON!

TORI  
Okay. Time to go.

The boy continues signing. The Angry Man's voice gets louder.

ANGRY MAN (O.S.)  
LEON!!

SIMONE  
Take the boat?

The boy points and nods. He runs back inside and slams the door.

ANGRY MAN (O.S.)  
Dammit, Leon!

The trio stand frozen momentarily.

TORI  
Are we supposed to follow him  
inside, you think?

SIMONE  
Hell no. We're not going in there.  
Come on.

They dash back towards the car.

EXT. CAR - DAY

The trio get back in the car.

GERTIE  
So we take the boat. And we follow  
the water map.

SIMONE  
 Something like that.

The car pulls away.

MONTAGE - ARRIVING IN CAROLLTON

- A sign on the side of the road reads "Carollton - 10 Miles." The car zips past the sign.
- Some cows graze in a field. The car zooms past the cows.
- The car drives through a quaint small town Main street.
- They continues slowly up a steep gravel road.
- The car finally parks at the end of a driveway.

INT. CAR - DAY

Jim turns the keys in the ignition off. He looks up and sees a shack at the top of the hill.

JIM  
 You sure this is it?

Simone looks at a piece of paper in her hands.

SIMONE  
 This is the right address.

JIM  
 Ok. Want me to come with you gals?  
 You know, help you check out the  
 scene and whatnot?

Wind Chimes TINKLE from the porch.

SIMONE  
 We'll be alright.

The girls get out of the car. Jim reclines his chair back, readying himself for a nap. He closes his eyes. Mike lays down on the seat next to him to take a nap, too.

JIM  
 You know where to find me if you  
 need anything.

They pick up their bags and approach the front steps. Simone KNOCKS on the front door. Gertie looks around, inspecting the place. Simone KNOCKS again. Tori tries to be sly and looks in a front window.

TORI

Alright. So Old Moses likes Maxwell House coffee and woodworking. And it looks like he makes potions and stuff in his free time!

GERTIE

Thanks, Nancy Drew.

Gertie walks around the front porch. Simone tries the door. It opens. She walks in, barely making a sound. Gertie follows.

TORI

This is how we're gonna play it, eh? Breaking and entering?

GERTIE

Would you shut up for one minute!

INT. SHACK - DAY

The shack is littered with woodwork in various stages: half formed shapes and pieces of wind chimes. There are a few knives on a table, several coffee cans, and some fishing equipment. On top of a corner table are bunches of feathers, herbs, and gemstones. Dried corn hangs from the walls.

Tori checks out the wind chimes.

TORI

Yo, these are just like the ones from the creepy kids' cabin!

Simone picks up a few feathers and inspects them. She puts them back and sees an old framed map hanging on the wall.

INSERT: Carrollton Woods Map

Browned on the edges, the map shows the shack, a river rolling through the woods, and multiple paths leading to a place called the Circle of Trees.

BACK TO SCENE

Simone gingerly lifts the frame off the wall and carries it to a back window. She looks out and sees a river running through the back of the land. There's a canoe sitting near the edge of the water. Gertie joins her, looking at the map and the canoe outside.

SIMONE

Water map.

GERTIE  
Take the boat!

Tori joins them and they marvel at the map.

TORI  
Can you make a copy?

SIMONE  
Yes.

Simone takes the frame over to a table. Gertie rushes over and clears some stuff out of the way. Simone puts the map down. The table isn't very level and it slides back, nearly shattering on the floor. Tori catches it with her lightning reflexes. They all exchange a look of relief.

GERTIE  
That was almost terrible.

Tori sets it gingerly on the table and holds it in place.

Simone digs through her backpack and pulls out a folder of papers. She thumbs through them and chooses a piece of tracing paper. She places it over the top of the map and copies the details onto the paper.

Gertie opens up her bag and gets out her rain boots and rain jacket. She puts them on.

TORI  
What are you doing exactly?

GERTIE  
I thought I'd wander off for a couple of hours and find some puddles to jump in.

TORI  
I'll let Jim know what's up.

Tori LAUGHS at her outfit and exits.

EXT. WATER'S EDGE - DAY

A turtle sits on the riverbank. Water trickles over rocks and flows down through the woods.

SIMONE (O.S.)  
UGH!

Simone and Gertie are throwing all their weight into moving the canoe, but it barely budes along the rocky ground. Simone runs around and pulls from the front end.

GERTIE

Heeve ho!

The canoe inches a little closer to the water. Tori comes running down to the shore with Jim and Mike following close behind.

TORI

I told him he didn't have to help!

JIM

It's no problem. We'll have you in the water in no time at all! Grab that other side, will you Tori?

Jim picks up the back of the canoe, Tori takes the unmanned side, they pick the boat up, and walk it in. The front of the canoe floats into the water.

JIM

Jump in, Simone!

Simone hops in the front and the rest of the group gives the boat one last push.

JIM

See? Team work makes the dream work!

SIMONE

Thanks, Jim!

Jim picks Mike up, smiles and waves at them. He makes Mike wave his paw.

JIM

Safe journey!

Gertie stomps through the mud in her rain boots, unscathed. She jumps in the boat, barely dirty, and dusts herself off.

Jim heads back to his post by the car. Tori takes one final step before hopping in. She hits a muddy spot and her sneakers sink down.

INSERT - TORI'S SHOES

Mud gushes over her white sneakers as she fights to pull them out.

BACK TO SCENE

TORI  
Ack! Catastrophe!

Gertie bites her lip and tries not to smile. Simone bursts out LAUGHING.

TORI  
I had plans today. I'm skipping the ballet for you people. Swan Lake.

SIMONE  
And I really appreciate it.

Simone uses the paddle to try and hold the boat still. Gertie watches, bemused, as Tori struggles to get her feet out of the mud.

TORI  
No! Ew!

SIMONE  
Tori, get in the flippin' boat.

Tori awkwardly pulls herself in, losing a shoe in the process.

TORI  
Oh frick n frack. My shoe!

Gertie reaches from the back of the boat and grabs the sneaker just in time.

INT. BOAT - CONTINUOUS

Tori drags herself to her seat in the boat. She's a mess. Gertie hands the mud covered shoe to Tori.

GERTIE  
Never say I didn't do anything for you.

Gertie paddles from the back of the boat. Tori, in the middle, tries in vain to wipe the mud off her shoe with the back of her hand.

TORI  
Gert, you got anything that would serve the purpose of a paper towel...

GERTIE  
Don't even start.

TORI  
I'm sorry, shoe. You deserve better  
than this.

Tori dunks her shoe in the water multiple times.

GERTIE  
She's lost it.

SIMONE  
Oh I think it's been lost for a  
while now.

The trio continue paddling down river, past trees and tall  
grass.

A frog CROAKS in the distance.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Sun streams through tree canopies, and the wind blows through  
the leaves.

Gertie takes a break from paddling and watches the water.  
Tori picks up Gertie's paddle and continues on. Simone  
paddles slowly, looking out from the front of the boat. Tori  
gets out a candy bar and crushes it.

TORI  
(chewing)  
So the plan is just to keep going  
until we stumble across Old Moses  
fishing along the side of the  
river, or what?

SIMONE  
Plan is to end up at the Circle of  
Trees. Judging from the map, it's  
the most likely place we'll find  
Old Moses.

TORI  
Sounds promising.

SIMONE  
Big rock coming up on the left!

TORI  
Heard that!

Tori and Simone successfully paddle around the rock.

GERTIE

Nice!

Simone returns to paddling.

SIMONE (SINGING)

Our paddles clean and bright,  
flashing like silver,  
swift as a wild goose flight.  
Dip, dip and swing.

Tori paddles in unison with Simone's singing. Gertie and Tori join in the singing.

GERTIE

Dip, dip, and swing.

TORI

Dip, dip, and swing.

SIMONE

Dip, dip, and swing her back.

The oars churn through the water in synchronized motion.

The trio have a magical moment together, and then hit another rock in the water with a sudden JOLT. The canoe is stuck.

GERTIE

Zut!

TORI

Oh Mylanta!

SIMONE

What the--

Simone halfway stands up and pushes her oar against the rock, but they don't budge. Tori joins in and pushes her oar against the rock too. They rock back and forth.

SIMONE

It's scraping against the bottom,  
back there.

GERTIE

I'll get out and push that way.

Gertie jumps out of the boat and pushes.

GERTIE

Light. As. A. FEATHER!

Tori stifles a LAUGH. Simone SNORTS.

SIMONE

Let's push together on three. One,  
Two, Three.

The group pushes in unison and the boat rocks.

GERTIE

Again!

The boat inches off the rock as they push, floating back into the current. Tori and Simone are still standing, and lose their balance as the canoe lurches forward.

TORI

Woah!

SIMONE

Ah!

The canoe flips over and floats toward the bank. Tori and Simone fall into the water with a SPLASH. They emerge PANTING and SPITTING out water.

TORI

Balls that's cold!

SIMONE

Dear sweet lord!

GERTIE

There go our supplies!

INSERT - BAGS FLOATING UPSTREAM

The girls' belongings float away with the current.

BACK TO SCENE

Gertie runs across the rocks and along the bank, trying to catch the bags. She catches herself on some brambles, but keeps going.

GERTIE

Oh, fudge.

EXT. RIVERBANK - CONTINUOUS

Tori pulls herself out of the water, still missing one shoe. She hops around to pull the other shoe off, and dumps water out of it.

Simone drags herself out of the water too. She lays down on her back and wrings out the corner of her shirt.

EXT. DOWNSTREAM

Gertie has one bag and is scurrying along trying to get another one. She grabs for it. It's just out of her reach. She runs a little more and grabs for it again.

GERTIE  
Come here, bag!

EXT. RIVERBANK

Tori is sitting on the bank with her hands on her knees. Simone sits up and smiles at her.

SIMONE  
This is going well, right? Good day.

Tori stands up and offers Simone a hand.

TORI  
Yeah. Epic. One day they'll write songs about us.

They walk off together, three shoes between them, SQUISHING with every step.

EXT. DOWNSTREAM - A FEW MINUTES LATER

Tori and Simone catch up with Gertie, who's drying the bags on rocks and separating supplies out. Tori has a piece of jerky hanging out of her mouth.

GERTIE  
Good news/bad news. I was able to salvage two bags, with some water damage to our supplies. Tori, your bag is gone I guess. I never did see it. I'm sorry.

Tori spins around, revealing her backpack strapped to her shoulders.

TORI  
I was wearing it when I fell in, champ. But I appreciate the extra effort. Hope you didn't over exert yourself looking for it.

GERTIE  
Nah. I did find this though.

Gertie tosses Tori her missing shoe. She hugs it.

TORI

Two shoes and I still have my  
jerky. I'm almost a real girl  
again!

They survey the supplies on the rock.

INSERT - SUPPLIES DRYING OUT

Gertie has arranged the binoculars, Swiss army knife, duct  
tape, snacks, walkie-talkies and flashlight to dry.

BACK TO SCENE

Simone unfolds her tracing paper map and sees if it's still  
legible. She holds it up to the light.

INSERT - SIMONE'S MAP

It's water damaged on one side but you can still make out the  
path that leads to the Circle of Trees, and a couple of  
symbols still recognizable along the way.

BACK TO SCENE

Simone looks around trying to determine their location.

SIMONE

Gertie did you see where the canoe  
ended up?

GERTIE

It's downstream a ways, but we lost  
the paddles.

SIMONE

So, we keep going on foot. Pick up  
the trail down that way.

Simone looks at her map and points to an area downstream.

TORI

And how are we going to get back to  
Old Moses' shack at the end of all  
this?

SIMONE

In theory if we find Old Moses  
he'll be able to get us back there.

GERTIE

If we get so far down the path and we think we're not going to find him, we can always call it. Turn back.

TORI

Sounds like a good option.

Simone packs their supplies in her bag and throws it over her shoulder. Gertie pulls her can of Sardines from her bag, opens it, and digs in with her fingers.

GERTIE

Are you guys starving? I'm starving.

She swallows a sardine down in one gulp. Tori gags.

TORI

Ugh. I'm never gonna be that hungry.

SIMONE

That. Is. Nasty. Seriously, rethink your snack choices.

Gertie swallows another one and grins`at them. She pantomimes some karate moves.

GERTIE

Protein, gals! Gotta keep our energy up!

Gertie sets off to lead the group on their new hiking adventure.

EXT. RIVERBANK - LATER

The trio make their way down the riverbank. At the start of a trail, there's an opening with two trees on either side. One has clay closed eyes and an open mouth, the other has open eyes and large ears. Tori points to them.

TORI

What in the world?

GERTIE

It's creepy, yet cute. It's crute.

Simone glances at her map. There are two faces drawn near the start of the trail. She points to them.

SIMONE

They're here. We're going the right way.

Gertie and Tori continue staring at the tree faces. Simone looks through her binoculars.

SIMONE

Let's keep an eye out. There may be others.

A bird SINGS a strange song on a nearby branch as they climb a steep hill.

Gertie looks in the direction of the bird's song as she walks.

MONTAGE -- EXPLORING THE TRAIL

--Gertie holds out a hand, helping Tori and Simone jump across a ravine.

--The group follows the trail. Tori picks up a walking stick and taps it along tree trunks as they go.

--They jump over an old, fallen tree.

--They continue on, passing a bottle of water to each other as they go.

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

The trio come upon some giant, muddy footprints in the trail. Fear spreads across their faces.

TORI

Probably made by some kind of... bear, right?

They walk around and study the tracks. Gertie kneels down and touches them with two fingers.

GERTIE

Not any bear track I've seen... Not any animal track I know of, in fact...

Simone paces back and forth, trying to keep her cool.

SIMONE

Cool. This is awesome. So now there's either a dinosaur or some kind of a bigfoot that we should plan on running into at some point.

Tori checks how pointy her stick is. Pulls a knife out from their things. Begins sharpening it.

GERTIE

All we can do is keep going. The trail is the safest place to be.

TORI

No, the safest place would be my comfy chair at Swan Lake. They were orchestra seats. Unobstructed view.

EXT. WOODED PATH - DAY

The girls make their way down a steep stretch of trail. They approach another tree with features attached to it.

SIMONE

There. There's another one.

INSERT - FACE TREE

This tree has open eyes and a large nose made of the same clay as the others.

BACK TO SCENE

TORI

Less cute. More creepy. Cu-weepy?

Simone searches around with her binoculars some more.

GERTIE

See anything?

SIMONE

Maybe. Looks different than the others. Over that way.

The girls run to another distant tree. This one only has arms. When they get closer, they see it has a band around its trunk with dozens of locks attached to it.

TORI

Umm...

INSERT - SIGN

A wooden placard shows a picture of an open lock, an arrow, and a picture of a cube.

BACK TO SCENE

GERTIE

I think it wants us to take one.

SIMONE

Uh. No way.

TORI

I want to support your decision, but I'm actually with Simone on this one.

GERTIE

Okay, well if it puts some kind of hex on me, you guys can say I told you so.

Gertie studies the locks. She pulls on one. Then another.

GERTIE

I just have a feeling...

SIMONE

There's no way to get it off of there, anyway. So it doesn't even matter.

Gertie runs her hands over a couple more locks, then chooses a small, brass one.

GERTIE

Bobby pin?

Gertie holds an open hand out to Tori, waiting. Without missing a beat, Tori takes a bobby pin out of her hair and hands it to Gertie, who starts picking the chosen lock. She rattles the bobby pin around.

SIMONE

Well, looks like it didn't work. Guess we should be going.

TORI

Oh, she's not done yet. You haven't ever seen Gert pick a lock before?

Gertie holds out her hand again. Tori pulls another bobby pin out of her hair and hands it to her. They've done this before. Simone keeps watching, as if she is witnessing a car wreck.

GERTIE

Come on...

INSERT - THE LOCK

Gertie jabs at the lock with the pin and it clicks open. She pulls it off the tree trunk.

BACK TO SCENE

GERTIE

Works every time.

SIMONE

Did you win some kind of Girl Scout lock picking contest or something?

Tori LAUGHS. Gertie smiles as she examines her new possession.

GERTIE

Locksport International Junior Championship.

Simone peers at it from an arm length away, like being too close to it might cause something bad to happen.

SIMONE

Keep that thing away from me!

Gertie locks it on to a necklace she's wearing without saying another word.

EXT. PATH - DAY

The group walks on. Tori stuffs three pieces of gum in her mouth at the same time. Simone wipes some sweat off her face with a handkerchief and re-ties it around her neck. Gertie touches the lock, making sure it's still there.

INSERT - THE LOCK NECKLACE

The brass lock hangs securely around her neck.

BACK TO SCENE

A STRANGE SOUNDING ANIMAL GROWLS in the distance. The girls stop in their tracks.

SIMONE

I think it's a safe bet to cross a dinosaur off the list.

TORI

Who is going to call it? I'm not calling it. But somebody else should call it.

SIMONE

We don't even know what that is. It could be harmless. We're not calling anything yet.

TORI

Harmless? The odds are zilch that that's harmless.

GERTIE

Simone said it's not time to call it.

TORI

We should have just stayed at the cabin and waited for Old Moses to come back. Why didn't we do that?

Simone pretends to look through her binoculars and clenches her teeth.

SIMONE

Tori, I love you, but please stop talking.

Another STRANGE ANIMAL SOUND rings out. Tori speaks more urgently. The group's pace quickens.

GERTIE

What the--

TORI

It's getting dark. We don't even have a flashlight that works. But y'all are like, fine with putting all our lives in danger?

GERTIE

Tori, Simone said stop talking.

SIMONE

Feel free to turn around if you're so inclined.

TORI

Oh yeah, split up. Perfect. That's the one guaranteed way to make this situation even worse.

GERTIE  
Just shut up, Tori.

TORI  
I had Swan Lake tickets! Could have  
been sipping on a shirley temple  
during intermission right about  
now. Love a good shirley temple...

GERTIE  
SHUT UP, TORI!!!

Gertie SCREAMS. It echoes through the entire forest. Everyone stops, and Tori blinks back tears. She puts her backpack down, gets her water bottle out and takes a drink.

Simone pretends to look through her binoculars, while Gertie stares at the ground uncomfortably.

Tori reaches down to put her water bottle back. A large, hideous SPIDER with red spots sits on the side of her bag, but she doesn't notice.

INSERT - SPIDER CRAWLING

The spider crawls across her backpack.

BACK TO SCENE

Tori puts the backpack on, adjusts the straps, then SLAPS her hand against her neck.

TORI  
Ow!

The spider is flicked onto the ground and runs away.

SIMONE  
What happened?

Tori rubs the site of the bite.

TORI  
Nothing, I think I just got bit by  
something.

Simone comes over to inspect Tori's neck. Gertie takes a couple of steps towards them and looks on.

SIMONE  
Yeah, it is a little red.

Gertie gets a tube of antibiotic ointment out of her bag.

GERTIE

Take this.

TORI

Thanks. Probably just a bug bite.

Gertie pulls the ointment out and hands it to Tori, who applies it to the infected area.

TORI

Let's keep going. It's fine.

Tori shoves the ointment back in her pocket and the group begins walking again. Gertie compulsively checks the lock around her neck. It's still there.

The trio continue on in awkward silence. Simone looks through her binoculars. Her steps quicken. Tori and Gertie's steps quicken to keep up with her.

Simone breaks into a run. Tori and Gertie run too, staying a few steps behind Simone.

SIMONE

There! Do y'all see that?

Simone points to something in the distance.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

She jumps over a log and pushes through some brush covering the path. Tori and Gertie crane their necks, trying to see what Simone is talking about.

They come upon a series of bear traps. Open metal jaws with huge spiked teeth. Simone throws a protective arm up.

SIMONE

Woah, woah, woah. Careful now.

Tori touches her walking stick against the opening of one of the traps and it makes a loud SNAP. The girls jump back, terrified. Tori yanks at the stick a couple of times, but it doesn't budge.

TORI

So don't step in those.

GERTIE

Check this one out...

Gertie examines a closed trap with a large chunk of black and white fur sticking out of it. Tori and Simone rush over to look.

SIMONE

Looks like something managed to escape... Most of it did, anyway.

GERTIE

What kind of--

Gertie touches the fur with a couple of fingers. Simone takes a step back and turns around. Tori and Gertie follow Simone, carefully walking around the traps.

SIMONE

Let's get out of here. I think the Circle of Trees is only a little further.

Simone walks through a trip-wire. A SNAP goes off.

SIMONE

Oh sh...

A HUGE NET falls on top of them with a WOOOOOSH trapping them underneath. They all SCREAM. After a moment, we DOLLY across the trio struggling beneath the net.

SIMONE

I'm pretty sure that was my bad.

GERTIE

I just have one question: Tori, do you still have my knife?

Tori is already furiously sawing away at the net with the knife. It's not going to be a quick job. She wipes sweat from her forehead.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

The girls have cut through various parts of the net. Tori tries to wriggle through a hole, but only gets her shoulder out and then gets stuck. Simone finishes another cut but can only shake her arm through. Gertie grabs the knife and takes a turn.

TORI

You think Old Moses set all these traps?

SIMONE

It's possible. Didn't see any traps  
or equipment like this at his  
place, which makes me think no.

TORI

Valid observation.

Another STRANGE ANIMAL GROWL, closer than the others. The  
group jumps.

SIMONE

(to Gertie)

Cut faster. Cut faster please.

WILLADEAN THREADGOODE, a weathered woman who's tough as  
nails, stomps toward them with an ax slung over one shoulder.

The trio straighten their posture as much as they can under  
the net. Tori itches the back of her neck.

WILLADEAN

Came out here to check on my traps,  
and see all this mess.

GERTIE

Begging your pardon... ma'am. We  
were just passing through and your  
net-- We got caught in your net.  
Obviously.

WILLADEAN

Cut all to bits... Y'all ruined it.  
Ruined it good. Who's gonna pay me  
for a new net? Somebody better.

TORI

We can pay you! How much do you  
need?

The girls look at each other, panicked. Willadean pulls out a  
giant knife. The girls SCREAM.

WILLADEAN

Lot of people don't know this about  
nets. The more you struggle, the  
worse you get tangled.

She starts toward the girls, raising the knife.

SIMONE

Don't kill us!

They SCREAM and Willadean cuts the net open in one SLASH. She gathers up pieces of net, and puts them in a cloth bag.

WILLADEAN

(to herself)

Y'all got any idea how long it takes to rig up somethin' like this by yourself? Man.

The girls stand up, attempting to collect themselves.

SIMONE

If you don't mind us asking ma'am, what are you trying to catch out here, anyway?

WILLADEAN

A 'Squatch, what's it look like? Sure wasn't trying to catch three jenny's in it, I can tell you that much.

GERTIE

Do you mean like a Sasquatch? We saw some tracks a while back.

Willadean starts LAUGHING. The girls try to laugh along, but they're too freaked out. They fidget.

WILLADEAN

Yeah. Big ole' mean hairy thing that'll likely tear your head off. Lives up here in these mountains. You never seen one before?

The girls shake their heads.

MONTAGE: 'SQUATCH WATCH FOOTAGE

--Amateur photographs of broken branches, footprints, and newspaper clippings detailing the 'Squatch Watch in Eastern Kentucky.

--Blurry video footage of a hairy creature running through the woods.

WILLADEAN (O.S.)

Me and the 'Squatch been catchin' glimpses of each other since I was a little girl, and one of these days I'm gonna catch him. YOU HEAR THAT, SQUATCH?

Simone and Gertie start to inch away from Willadean, who has moved on to resetting a couple of large traps. They're nearly as big as she is.

WILLADEAN

Name's Willadean, by the way.  
Willadean Threadgoode. What're  
y'all doing all the way out here,  
anyway?

GERTIE

Pleased to make your acquaintance,  
Willadean.

TORI

We've been trying to get to the  
circle of trees, but our map got  
messed up...

Tori itches her neck again. Simone and Gertie elbow Tori as hard as they can. She nearly CHOKES. Simone speaks through clenched teeth.

SIMONE

Tori!

WILLADEAN

Oh sure! Loghenge, I like to call  
it. Good news is, you're almost  
there. It's just over that hill and  
down a piece. You'll see it.

Relieved to be pointed in the right direction, the girls relax a little.

GERTIE

Awfully kind of you.

SIMONE

We're real sorry about your net.

Gertie and Tori nod in agreement. Willadean clicks the last trap into locked position and picks up her ax.

WILLADEAN

Apology accepted. Reckon I'd a done  
the same thing if I was in your  
shoes. But y'all be careful out  
there, ya hear? How're ya fixed in  
the weaponry department?

TORI

We have a knife.

Tori holds up the swiss army knife.

WILLADEAN

Well that ain't gonna cut it. Get  
it?!

Willadean CACKLES at her own joke. The girls attempt a LAUGH. She marches over and brandishes her ax with a flourish, then offers it to Tori.

WILLADEAN

Here, take mine. I got three more  
at home.

TORI

Holy hatchet.

Tori holds it reverently, as if she's accepting Excalibur.

TORI

(to the ax)  
I'm going to call you Pretty.

Willadean hands her a strap that holds the ax, nods at them, and starts off for the woods.

WILLADEAN

Hope ya find what you're lookin'  
for!

SIMONE

You too!

WILLADEAN

Oh, I will. Don't you worry about  
that.

Willadean CACKLES one last time before she disappears.

EXT. CIRCLE OF TREES - NIGHT

The girls appear over a hill and hurry down. Simone gets there first, and looks around at the large circle of stumps with a stone fire pit in the middle. On top of each of the stumps, a couple of items sit: feathers, rocks, or bundles of corn husk.

Tori and Gertie catch up to Simone and look around. Gertie picks a couple of feathers up off a stump and examines them.

TORI

What is this place?

Simone puts her hands on the stone pile and looks inside it.

SIMONE

Probably use this area for some type of rituals. Grand-Mère used to do stuff like this all the time.

TORI

What kind of rituals?

SIMONE

You know, calling on your ancestors and asking gods and saints for advice and stuff.

Tori looks at a couple of rocks on a stump and picks them up. She sits down on a stump.

SIMONE

No, no, no! Don't sit there!

Tori jumps up as if she's been stung on the butt.

TORI

Ack!

Simone bursts out LAUGHING.

SIMONE

I'm just kidding. You can sit there. I mean, as far as I know.

TORI

2nd act of Swan Lake would have been starting right about now...

Tori moves some corn husks out of the way, then slowly sits back down on the stump. She looks at Pretty, turning it over in her hands. Her vision goes blurry and then comes back into focus. She closes her eyes and squints; puts a hand up to her head.

Gertie walks over and looks at the stone pit.

GERTIE

Simone, do you still have my matches?

SIMONE

Yep. Think you can get this working?

GERTIE

I have seven badges in fire proficiency.

TORI

Why does anyone need matches?

Gertie and Simone smile at each other. Simone digs in her bags and tosses the matches to Gertie. Gertie pulls some old homework out of her bag and crinkles it up.

TORI

Nope, nope. Why are we doing that?

Simone looks for some small sticks and hands them to Gertie.

SIMONE

Oya. Remember, Tori? A change is coming. Like lightning.

TORI

I guess...

Tori puts her hand up to her head again. Her vision goes blurry and back into focus.

Gertie strikes a match, lights some paper, and a fire crackles to life. A breeze blows through and rustles everyone's hair.

The Bird SINGS its strange song again. There's one empty stump. Simone gets out her brass figure and places it there.

SIMONE

Seemed like something should go there.

Tori clasps her hands and begins praying.

TORI

Lord, Jesus we don't want any trouble. We are not trying to contact any demons or people who know demons. Lord, if you see any demons coming this way, turn them around and march them some other direction. We're just trying to find Old Moses. Amen.

Gertie blows on the fire and it lights up. Simone joins her around the stone structure.

SIMONE

I think we should hold hands.

Gertie feeds the fire with a couple more thick sticks and takes Simone's hand.

GERTIE

It's just like light as a feather,  
stiff as a board, Tori.

Tori stands up and paces around the stumps. Her vision goes blurry momentarily and she stumbles around. She itches the back of her neck.

TORI

Except that it's not like that at  
all. We don't know what we're  
doing! Hello!

SIMONE

Are you feeling okay, Toro? You're  
acting kinda... strange.

TORI

Got a headache. Confused.

GERTIE

Come on. We need you to help us  
complete a circle around this fire.

Tori crosses herself and joins them, stumbling over.

TORI

The only reason I'm doing this is  
because we promised Grand-Mere we'd  
get you to Old Moses. I'm dizzy.  
Super dizzy, actually. But if this  
turns out to be a bad idea I'm  
gonna to quit French Club and find  
new best friends.

SIMONE

Sounds good to me.

GERTIE

Whatever you have to tell yourself.

SIMONE

I'm a little worried about you  
though, for real.

TORI

It's fine. I'm probably just dying  
from whatever bit me back there.

Tori closes her eyes again and squints. She itches the back of her neck vigorously before taking their hands.

They stand in a circle and listen to the fire CRACKLE. Tori glances over at the brass figure, still laying on the stump.

TORI

Somebody probably needs to say something. Not me, one of y'all two.

SIMONE

That's the spirit.

Tori looks over at her friends, and they look blurry to her. Gertie CLEARS her throat.

GERTIE

The figure will now surrender to the spirits from beyond. The spirit will now enter the figure, and allow it to become light. Light as a feather, stiff as a board.

The girls squeeze each another's hands.

GERTIE

Light as a feather. Stiff as a board.

SIMONE

Light as a feather, stiff as a board...

TORI

Light as a feather, stiff as a board...

GERTIE

Light as a feather, stiff as a board...

The girls' faces light up as the fire explodes, crackling as it sends sparks into the air. The wind picks up and the sparks blow toward the trees.

A gust of wind sends a tornado of leaves swirling around and around them, flying high into the air, until the forest disappears and they can't see anything but leaves and debris. They hear a swirl of WHISPERS and a brief swell of MUSIC.

The wind dies down, the leaves float to the ground and we're suddenly:

EXT. CORN MAZE - MAGIC HOUR

The trio stand side by side amidst dense rows of corn stalks. They take in their new surroundings.

GERTIE

It seemed like that worked?

Simone looks over and sees the brass figure sitting on a column made of husks. She goes to retrieve it.

INSERT - BRASS FIGURE

Simone grabs the figure off the column and gives it a squeeze.

BACK TO SCENE

Tori leans on her ax for support, while Gertie checks and finds the lock still hanging around her neck. She takes two walkie-talkies out of her hip pack.

The group hears DISTANT LAUGHTER, faint MUSIC and silverware tinkling against plates.

TORI

Y'all hear that? Sounds like someone's having an awesome party.

SIMONE

Yeah. If we could just figure out how to get there...

They look around, trying to figure out where the sounds are coming from. The corn maze splits off, and there's two paths to choose from. Simone jumps as high as she can, but can't see over the tops of the stalks.

Gertie tries both walkie-talkies, switching them on and off.

GERTIE

Check one. Check two.

They don't turn on.

GERTIE

Which way?

SIMONE

You and Tori go that way, and I'll go this way.

Tori and Gertie both shake their heads.

TORI

We shouldn't split up.

Simone puts a hand on Tori's shoulder. Her mind is made up.

SIMONE  
I'll be fine.

GERTIE  
Simone...

SIMONE  
Come on, it's getting dark.

Gertie hands Simone a walkie.

GERTIE  
At least take this. Just in case  
they start working again.

Simone tries the knob herself with no different results. She marches off into the corn maze, walkie-talkie in hand, without looking back.

Tori and Gertie look at each other and head into the corn maze going the other way.

EXT. CORN MAZE - LATER

The wind blows through some corn stalks. The sound of the DISTANT PARTY picks up and dies away.

Tori and Gertie turn a corner and hit a dead end.

TORI  
Frick n Frack. Now what?

GERTIE  
We turn around and try again.

They retrace their steps and come to another split in the corn maze.

TORI  
Which way did we go before?

GERTIE  
I think it was right. So, this time  
we go left. Right?

TORI  
Definitely.

GERTIE  
Wait... Got anything we could use  
to write with?

Gertie searches her pockets and hip pack, and pulls out some Chapstick and a compass.

INSERT - GERTIE'S COMPASS

When she holds it out to check their direction, it spins endlessly in circles.

BACK TO SCENE

GERTIE

Mise en abyme.

Tori checks her pockets, pulling out some gum wrappers. She finds the antibiotic ointment in the other pocket and hands it to Gertie.

TORI

Will this work?

Gertie smears a white arrow against the stalks in the direction they're headed.

GERTIE

Bread crumbs. So to speak.

The wind picks up as they disappear into the corn stalks again.

EXT. CORN MAZE - CONTINUOUS

Simone makes her way through the maze. She hears VOICES getting louder, and the sound of GLASSES CLINKING. Her pace picks up. She comes to a wall of corn stalks and looks around to see the path split off to her left or right.

She tries to turn on her walkie-talkie, switching the knob around, but it's still dead. She stops, closes her eyes and listens to the SOUNDS around her. A crow CAWS as it flies overhead. She turns to the right, following the crow, and continues on.

EXT. CORN MAZE - CONTINUOUS

Gertie and Tori march on.

Gertie tries the walkie-talkie. The light flashes on briefly. She holds the walkie-talkie up to her lips and tries to contact Simone.

GERTIE

Simone, come in, do you read? Come in, Simone.

Tori and Gertie crane their faces right next to the speaker, but there's no answer.

TORI

Fudge.

GERTIE

I'll keep it on and we'll try again  
later.

Tori gets Pretty out and spins her around in her hands. They turn a couple of sharp corners and crunch through fallen corn stalks. Tori starts SHIVERING.

TORI

Did it get really cold all of the  
sudden?

GERTIE

The sun is setting, genius.

TORI

Oh. Right.

Tori zips up her jacket and pulls the hood over her head. Gertie stops and writes another white arrow. She shoves the ointment back in her pocket, then runs to catch up with Tori.

EXT. CORN MAZE

Simone hits a dead end. She tries her walkie-talkie again, but nothing happens.

SIMONE

Zut.

She turns around and doubles back the way she came, but there's no other path to take. There's a low HUMMING sound and she's running around in circles. She hears an ominous WHISPERING.

WHISPERING VOICE (O.S.)

GO BACK.

Simone's breathing gets faster, panicked. She checks the brass figure and squeezes it tighter in her hand.

She looks up and closes her eyes. Listens to the HUMMING around her. Hears the faint sounds of Grand-Mère's voice.

GRAND-MÈRE (O.S.)

Remember, Sweets...

She opens her eyes and sees a small tunnel cut out of a wall of corn stalks. She walks over to it and kneels down.

EXT. CORN TUNNEL

Simone looks down through the tunnel. She sees flickering light at the other end.

She takes a deep breath, gets down on her belly, and starts to crawl through to the other side.

EXT. CORN MAZE

Tori and Gertie come to a familiar looking split in the maze and stop. There's a white arrow pointing left painted on the stalks.

TORI

Feels like we've been here  
before... Oh wait! We have.

Gertie clicks on her walkie-talkie and speaks.

GERTIE

Simone, come in Simone. Are you  
there?

They listen to STATIC on the other end.

GERTIE

We shouldn't have let her go by  
herself.

TORI

Well, we're stupid. And lost.

Gertie draws an 'X' over the first arrow, and draws another one pointing right. They turn and disappear again.

EXT. CORN TUNNEL - CONTINUOUS

While crawling, Simone's coat gets stuck on an end of stalk. She reaches back and yanks the stalk off. Her jacket rips.

SIMONE

Ugh!

She looks toward the flicker of lights ahead. The HUMMING gets louder.

Simone's walkie-talkie falls off her belt, but she doesn't notice. As she inches closer to the end of the tunnel, the light from the walkie-talkie flickers on.

EXT. FIELD - CONTINUOUS

She shoves her body through the other end of the corn tunnel. She struggles through the hole and emerges out of the other side.

SIMONE

Whew!

She catches her breath and hears a CHORUS OF HUMMING. In the distance, she sees a table set for a grand feast. Around the table, a group of people sit, SINGING in unison. She gets up and walks toward them.

EXT. CORN MAZE

Tori and Gertie shuffle along. Tori practices swinging Pretty. Gertie touches the lock around her neck. Tori grabs a stalk and tries chewing on it.

TORI

You know what's weird, Gert? My neck's stopped itching and nothing has been blurry since we got here.

GERTIE

That's good.

TORI

Is it, though?

GERTIE

Sure.

TORI

Are we alive? Is this real life? Did we die in the woods!?

Tori grabs Gertie's shoulders, on the verge of hysterics. Gertie LAUGHS, a little nervously.

GERTIE

That's ridiculous. Of course we're alive.

TORI

OK, but how do you know?

GERTIE

Because. I'm here with you and I can feel my feet in my shoes and smell... corn...

TORI  
Not convincing.

They come to another dead end.

TORI  
You can't prove we exist right now.  
This could be heaven. Or hell. Or  
purgatory!

Tori is losing it. She's grabbing onto stalks and hanging off  
of them.

TORI  
With no food, nothing to do but  
count corn stalks! Corn stalks  
forever...

GERTIE  
Tori, get ahold of yourself!

More WHISPERING kicks up with the wind, but Tori is the only  
one who can hear it.

WHISPERING VOICE (O.S.)  
DON'T TRUST HER. DON'T BELIEVE HER.

Tori blinks, a little stunned. She grabs on to Gertie's coat.

TORI  
Did you hear that, Gert?

GERTIE  
Hear what?

TORI  
That... That voice.

GERTIE  
Oh Mylanta. Tori, there's no voice.  
I swear, of all the times to lose  
your mind...

WHISPERING VOICE (O.S.)  
DON'T TRUST--

TORI  
SHUT UP!! SHUT UP!!

Tori swings Pretty through thin air, swinging so hard she  
falls backward through a patch of stalks. Gertie looks beyond  
Tori's fallen body and sees a path that was previously  
hidden.

GERTIE

Haha! Toro, you did it!

She helps Tori up.

TORI

I did?

They turn their bodies sideways, shimmying through the pathway. Gertie GIGGLES.

GERTIE

We're getting out of here!

They take off running pseudo-sideways through the corn maze path. After a beat, the WHISPERING kicks up again.

WHISPERING VOICE (O.S.)

RUN, LITTLE GIRL... RUN!

They both SCREAM and run faster than they have in their entire lives. Corn stalks slap them in the face, and Tori passes Gertie. She breaks through and falls into a

EXT. CLEARING

Gertie falls right behind her. Tori lifts up her head and blows some stray hairs out of her face. Gertie rolls onto her back and breathes a sigh of relief. Tori LAUGHS and jumps up. She pulls Gertie up and hugs her.

TORI

Haha! We did it, Gert! We're not going to die in the haunted corn maze!

GERTIE

...Unless we're dead already.

Gertie smiles at Tori and they wrap their arms around each others' shoulders. They hear glasses CLINKING and unintelligible CONVERSATION.

TORI

Let's find Simone.

They walk into the setting sun and toward the sound of voices.

EXT. FIELD - MAGIC HOUR

Simone approaches the banquet table, which is situated under a giant tree. The HUMMING gives way to SINGING in French.

On the table, there's big plates of fish, okra, mango and sweet potatoes and cakes topped with pineapple. Some bottles of wine are scattered about.

Simone spots an old man seated at the head of the table. Tall and majestic, this is OLD MOSES. Around the table are a mix of men and women, wearing clothes from different eras. One MAN at the table PLAYS the guitar. Another WOMAN plays a small drum. There are two empty seats at the table.

Old Moses catches a glimpse of Simone and smiles at her. He beckons her to come and sit in the empty chair next to him.

OLD MOSES (IN FRENCH; SUBTITLED)

*Well hey there, Simone. It's been a long time. Come have a seat and visit for a while.*

SIMONE

*I'd love to.*

He stands up, and extends a large, sturdy hand to her.

OLD MOSES

*I'm very pleased to see you again. You must be famished.*

SIMONE

*I am pretty hungry, now that you mention it.*

A lady sitting next to Simone, wearing a beautiful dress and head wrap, makes Simone a plate. This is MADELEINE. She passes the plate to Simone, and kisses her on both cheeks.

MADELEINE

*Wonderful to meet you, Simone. I'm Madeleine.*

SIMONE

*Thank you. It's nice to meet you too.*

A flash of recognition crosses Simone's face. These are the people from Grand-Mère's old photos. Another woman dressed in traditional clothes, FOI, pours a drink into a goblet and takes it to Simone. She kisses her on both cheeks.

SIMONE

*Foi? I've seen pictures of you at Grand-Mère's house. I've seen pictures of... all of you.*

Foi nods and returns to her seat.

Two other gentlemen sitting at the table, JEAN-LOUIS and FRANCOIS, are dressed in loose fitting linen suits. They get up from their seats and each bring Simone a beaded necklace. They bow reverently in her direction.

SIMONE

*Jean-Louis and Francois. Thank you so much.*

Francois smiles bashfully at Simone and Jean-Louis shakes her hand. She smiles back at them.

Jean-Louis and Francois return to their seats. Simone admires the beads placed around her neck, then a look of worry flashes across her face. She turns to Old Moses.

SIMONE

Am I... dead?

OLD MOSES

*No, child. You're still very much alive. Eat. We're waiting on one more to arrive.*

Old Moses gestures toward the other empty seat at the table. Simone eats from her plate and takes a sip out of her goblet. She takes a bite of food.

SIMONE

*This is so good!*

Foi and Madeleine smile at her.

OLD MOSES

*Foi is a sorcerous with creating flavor.*

Simone takes more bites now, eating quickly. She talks with mouthfuls of food.

SIMONE

So, is this some kind of party?

OLD MOSES

Yes, it's a welcome party of sorts.

SIMONE

How lovely. I have some friends  
traveling with me. They may be lost  
in the maze...

OLD MOSES

They'll get here soon enough.

Foi says something to Madeleine.

FOI (IN FRENCH)

*She looks like Marguerite, no?*

MADELEINE

*As I live and breathe. She's the  
spitting image of your sister!*

Foi and Madeleine LAUGH. Simone smiles at them in between  
chewing. She takes a bite of mango.

SIMONE

*This is the best mango I've ever  
tasted.*

FOI

*Francois grows the best mango in  
Haiti--*

JEAN-LOUIS

*In the world!*

Francois waves her off.

FOI

*It's true. Right in our backyard!*

MADELEINE

*I think you were a farmer in  
another life.*

They all laugh.

FRANCOIS

*I would have gladly grown more  
mango, but there were always too  
many sick people to take care of.*

Francois shakes his head. Simone takes another bite of mango,  
finishing off the whole piece.

The sound of WINGS FLAPPING rush over their heads. Out of the  
shadows, Grand-Mère walks up to meet them.

GRAND-MÈRE

You've found your ancestors, I see.

SIMONE

Grand-Mère?

Simone jumps up and gives Grand-Mère a big hug. The others get up to greet her. This is a happy reunion.

FOI (IN FRENCH)

*It's Marguerite!*

JEAN-LOUIS

*Marguerite, how we've missed you.*

Madeleine and Grand-Mère embrace. Jean-Louis gives her a big hug next, and wipes tears from her eyes. Foi joins in on the group hug.

MADELEINE

*Marguerite, we've been waiting!*

They LAUGH. Francois and Old Moses give Grand-Mère hugs as well.

OLD MOSES

*Come, sit down. You must be exhausted.*

JEAN-LOUIS

*Tell us everything. What a journey, you've had, my daughter.*

Grand-Mère nods.

EXT. FIELD - MAGIC HOUR

The group sits, eating dessert together. Grand-Mère sips from her goblet of wine.

FRANCOIS (IN FRENCH; SUBTITLED)

*...A toast to Simone. Thank you for joining us old folk.*

The whole group LAUGHS.

JEAN-LOUIS

*Here, here!*

Jean-Louis raises his glass and clinks glasses with those around him. They eat giant slices of cake.

SIMONE

I feel like I'm in a wonderful dream. Please, tell me more about all of you.

FRANCOIS

*I first saw Foi at a friend's party. She had on a white dress with a big blue sash. I thought she was the most beautiful woman I had ever seen.*

Foi LAUGHS.

FOI

*He asked me to dance and I said no! Then I changed my mind, so I asked HIM to dance!*

FRANCOIS

*And I said yes.*

He smiles bashfully.

MADELEINE

*Well, Jean-Louis and I met when he stole some of my family's chickens.*

JEAN-LOUIS

*Woman! They wandered into our yard, if you want to know the real story. Guess they didn't like living at your house.*

MADELEINE

*Yeah right!*

The whole group LAUGHS even harder. Foi slaps the table. Madeleine holds her stomach as she CACKLES.

Simone gets the brass figure out of her pocket. She passes it to Old Moses.

SIMONE

I almost forgot.

OLD MOSES

*Thank you. The key to your entry into this place. You held the gate open for your Grand-Mère to enter, too.*

SIMONE

For Grand Mere to enter?

Old Moses drops the figure in his front shirt pocket. Grand-Mère catches Simone's gaze and winks at her. Old Moses puts a hand over Grand-Mère's and pats it.

GRAND-MÈRE

*How long will you stay, brother?*

OLD MOSES

*I'll go back soon.*

Grand-Mère gets up and walks over to Simone's seat. She hugs Simone's neck.

GRAND-MÈRE

*It's almost time, Simmy...*

FOI

*Oh no! A few more minutes.*

MADELEINE

*Not yet, daughter.*

SIMONE

You mean you won't come back with me, Grand-Mère?

GRAND-MÈRE

No, my darling girl.

Simone stands up and takes Grand-Mère by the arms.

SIMONE

But you said you were getting better...

Grand-Mère shakes her head.

GRAND-MÈRE

*It's just my time, child. As it becomes everyone's time, eventually. You wouldn't want me to stay back and watch my light slowly fade away.*

Simone weeps and hugs Grand-Mère's neck. Madeleine joins them.

MADELEINE

*Beyond the mountains, there are more mountains. She isn't really gone, if you keep her with you.*

Madeleine puts a hand on Simone's heart. Foi joins them and puts a hand on her shoulder.

Jean-Louis and Francois shuffle over and put hands on her other shoulders. Old Moses SINGS to Simone, and the others join in.

Gertie and Tori walk up on the scene and listen. The group puts their arms around the girls and they all sway to the music.

OLD MOSES  
Latibonit (lyrics to latibonit)

The group harmonize with Old Moses. They continue HUMMING as they hug Simone goodbye. Simone turns to embrace Grand-Mère one last time. She's fighting tears again. Grand-Mère holds Simone's face in her hands.

GRAND-MÈRE  
*Take care of your old mom and enjoy  
your beautiful life. I couldn't be  
more proud to call you my  
granddaughter. We will see each  
other again. I love you, Simmy.*

SIMONE  
*I love you, too...*

Grand-Mère kisses Simone's hands and joins her relatives. Old Moses summons the girls to gather round.

OLD MOSES  
Listen carefully. Getting out of  
here isn't as easy as getting in.

The girls look at one another. Moses points towards DARK WOODS a short distance away.

OLD MOSES  
Through those woods, there's a gate  
that will get you back to the other  
side. Right now, it's open and  
there's all manner of spirits  
passing through.

GERTIE  
Passing through?

OLD MOSES  
Travelling between places. Some are  
good. Some not so. But plenty would  
be happy to start over in a new  
body, if given the chance.

Moses nods. Looking at all of them.

OLD MOSES

As soon as you leave here, you run.  
As fast as you can. Until you get  
to the other side. When you get the  
gate closed, lock it.

Gertie touches the lock around her neck again. Old Moses  
nods, and puts a hand on Tori's and Gertie's shoulders.

OLD MOSES

Don't listen to anything you hear  
in there. Don't speak to anyone but  
each other.

The girls look terrified. Moses hugs each of them  
reassuringly.

SIMONE

Thank you, Old Moses.

OLD MOSES

Allez avec la lumiere.

They part ways and Gertie and Tori put their arms around  
Simone as they head into the woods.

INT. DARK WOODS - EARLY EVENING

The trio pass the boundary of the woods in silence. Tori  
shivers. Squinting against the gathering darkness, they can  
barely make out a rough path.

WHISPERING VOICES (O.S.)

GO BACK... DON'T TRUST HER...

SIMONE

Nope.

The girls take off in a sprint down the path, zigzagging  
around skinny trees and narrowly avoiding large rocks. They  
breathe heavily. The wind picks up, nearly pushing them  
backwards.

WHISPERING VOICES (O.S.)

TURN AROUND OR DIE... LIVE WITH US  
FOREVER...

Two thick vines crawl toward them on the ground, reaching for  
them like giant arms.

WHISPERING VOICES (O.S.)

STAY WITH US...

One vine gets ahold of Simone's ankle. She SCREAMS, while Gertie runs from the other one. Tori brandishes Pretty and hacks at the vine holding Simone.

Tori YELLS as she strikes the vine over and over, chopping it to pieces. Simone pulls the last of the vine from her ankle and chucks it into the woods.

Ensnared by another vine, Gertie SCREAMS trying to escape. Tori wheels Pretty around and goes to work, hacking at the thickest part. Simone stomps the vine for good measure.

They pull Gertie up and take off down the path again.

In the distance, they see enormous, metal Gate. Tori pulls two bobby pins out of her hair and passes them to Gertie. They yell at each other over the wind.

TORI  
For the lock!

Gertie nods and takes the pins. She stops running to work them into the lock. A gust of wind kicks up and thrusts her several feet backward.

SIMONE  
Gertie!

TORI  
Gertie!

GERTIE  
AH!

Gertie grabs on to a nearby tree trunk to steady herself. Simone and Tori, with their arms still linked, take several steps back to help Gertie. They form a human chain: Simone links arms with Tori; Tori to Gertie's waist so she can work the lock with two free hands.

GERTIE  
Come on!

The Gate clangs up ahead. Some debris blows past them and the voices start again.

WHISPERING VOICES (O.S.)  
STAY... SHE'S NOT YOUR FRIEND...  
YOU'LL DIE, LITTLE GIRL...

TORI  
Watch Out!

Tori and Gertie duck; Simone turns her face into the tree trunk to hide from the passing detritus.

TORI  
We gotta move, Gert!

GERTIE  
I know, working on it!

She wiggles the pins around some more and it unlocks with a CLICK. She pulls the lock off the chain and holds it in her hand.

GERTIE  
Got it!

The group pushes back into the wind, running toward the gate. They work together with their arms linked, and reach the gate's opening. More debris flies at them. Some dirt flies into Simone's face.

SIMONE  
UGH!

She wipes her eyes, and rubs at them again with her free hand.

WHISPERING VOICES  
YOU'LL NEVER MAKE IT... LITTLE  
GIRL... TURN BACK...

GERTIE  
Simone, you go through first!

Simone nods and pulls herself through the gate, still holding on to Tori's arm. Tori moves through next. They pull their side of the gate closed. Gertie is left holding the other side. She moves along, pulling it closed as she goes. She gets it closed, and readies the lock.

TORI  
Hurry, my hands are slipping!

INSERT - TORI'S HANDS

Her hands lose their grip on the gate. It starts to inch open again. She gets Pretty out and loops it through the gate bars, clutching it with both hands.

BACK TO SCENE

Sticks, pebbles, and rain fly at them. They try to guard their faces, but the backs of their bodies get pelted.

SIMONE  
Ow!

WHISPERING VOICES  
GO BACK... LET US IN... COME WITH  
ME... GIRL...

Gertie holds the lock up to the gate, but as she's looping it through, she drops it. She SCREAMS.

She walks herself to the ground, holding on to the gate with one hand. She grabs the lock on the ground and hands it to Simone. Simone hooks it through both gates and locks them together.

There's one final GUST of wind, a storm of leaves, HISSING and WHISPERING. Abruptly, they hear a SUCKING IN sound and everything goes black.

EXT. SHACK - MORNING

The trio lays face down next to Old Moses' shack. Gertie sits up and pulls a leaf out of her hair. Tori's already scratching her neck again.

GERTIE  
Is everybody okay?

Simone opens her eyes and sits up.

SIMONE  
No. I'm really sorry I dragged  
y'all into this whole mess. If you  
want to find a new best friend,  
I'll understand.

GERTIE  
Are you kidding? We knew what we  
were signing up for.

Gertie struggles to keep a straight face, and they all LAUGH.

SIMONE  
Yeah, I'm sure you saw all of that  
coming.

TORI  
Man, I'll admit it, though. That  
was way cooler than Swan Lake.

SIMONE  
At last, the truth comes out!

TORI

We better go see if Jim is even still here, or else it's gonna be a long walk home...

Tori tries to stand up and passes out.

INT. CAR - MORNING

Jim is at the wheel while peppy MUSIC plays on the radio. Tori opens her eyes to a blurry Simone hovering over her.

SIMONE

She's awake!

Tori grabs at her head.

TORI

Water?

Gertie, sitting in the front seat with Mike in her lap, passes a bottle of water to Tori.

SIMONE

You alright, Toro? You had us worried.

Tori takes a drink of water. She doesn't completely make her mouth and water dribbles down the side of her face. She vigorously itches her neck.

TORI

I've been better. Neck so itchy.

JIM

That don't look too good. We're taking you to get medical attention.

GERTIE

You've been out for about three hours.

JIM

Looks like a red-backed widow spider bite to me. I have a cousin who had that once. On her big toe. Not too good, buddy.

Jim shakes his head.

GERTIE

What happened to her?

JIM

They were able to save the toe. But she was never really the same person after that, you know what I mean? Walked with a limp. Terrible.

Jim makes a face at the memory of it all. Gertie looks horrified. Tori itches her neck again. She pulls down her shirt for Simone to take a look.

TORI

How does it look now, Sim?

INSERT - TORI'S SPIDER BITE

It's now a bulging red mass with puss coming out.

BACK TO SCENE

Simone dry heaves and looks away. She forces herself to look back at the bite. From the front seat, Mike stares at the whole scene.

SIMONE

It's safe to say it's definitely... not better.

GERTIE

Hang on Tori, we're almost there.

EXT. CAMDEN MEDICAL CENTER PARKING LOT - CONTINUOUS

Jim pulls in and stops at the front doors. He jumps out, and opens the car door for them.

JIM

Here we are!

Simone and Gertie jump out of the car. They help Tori out. She gives Jim a big hug. He doesn't expect it and nearly falls over.

JIM

Woah, woah!

TORI

Thanks for everything, Jimbo.

JIM

Do me a favor once they get you fixed up. Call your parents, okay?

TORI  
Ay, ay, captain.

She salutes. Gertie gets out their wad of cash.

GERTIE  
Oh my gosh, we almost forgot. Here!

She hands it to him. He shakes his head and hands it back to her.

JIM  
It's already been taken care of by  
a generous donor. Dropped the money  
by and told me to give you this...

He hands them the Empress card from Grand-Mere's deck. The girls are momentarily stupefied. She takes a long look at it, then stuffs it in her pocket. Jim hops in his car and waves.

JIM  
Good luck out there, French Club!

He floors it out of the parking lot. Gertie and Simone help a delirious Tori into the Medical center.

#### MONTAGE - THE AFTERMATH

-- In a hospital room, a doctor applies bandages to Tori's neck while Gertie and Simone look on.

-- The girls' parents rush in to the room, hugging each of them.

-- Tori sips on water from an oversized mug, while Trent and Reed sit on her bed with her. Gertie and Simone talk animatedly to their parents. The television plays in the background. A news story shows Willadean Threadgoode being interviewed with the headline "Eastern Kentucky Woman Catches Sasquatch."

-- A BELL rings and students emerge from classrooms. Simone passes Tori in the hall and hands her a note.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
After Tori was successfully treated  
for her rare red-backed widow bite,  
you could say that life got more or  
less back to normal.

#### INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Tori unfolds the note, holds up her decoder, and reads it.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Tori and Gertie both got epically grounded for leaving town and lying about it. Simone's parents let her off the hook in light of Grand-Mère's recent passing.

INSERT - SIMONE'S NOTE

It reads: "I know you're still grounded. But we have a new mission. Meet after yearbook photos to discuss."

BACK TO SCENE

Mrs. Milam finishes writing a sentence on the blackboard. She turns to face the class.

MRS. MILAM

Now, who wants to diagram these sentences?

Tori's hand shoots up first to volunteer.

MRS. MILAM

Tori? Great, come on up.

Tori dashes toward the blackboard.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

They were closer than ever. But something else was different, too. Something maybe only the three of them realized.

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Simone is stuck behind the same two Slow Walkers.

CHEERLEADER

I mean, am I wrong?

GIRL WITH BRACES

No, for sure.

CHEERLEADER

Right?

GIRL WITH BRACES

No, totally.

SIMONE

Jenny, did you get a new haircut?  
It looks really great on you.

GIRL WITH BRACES  
I did! Thanks so much!

CHEERLEADER  
Go ahead, Simone. We're just  
gabbing away over here.

SIMONE  
You don't mind? Oh cool, thanks.

Cheerleader waves her on and Simone moves ahead.

INT. CAFETERIA - CONTINUOUS

Simone joins Gertie and Tori at their lunch table. They CHATTER happily until Gertie catches a glimpse of Girl With Braces SCRAPING her fork against her teeth. Gertie's eye starts twitching. Tori puts a hand on Gertie's arm. Everything gets quiet, all Gertie can hear is metal SCRAPING.

TORI  
Gertie, you're doing it again.

GERTIE  
Doing what?

Gertie's eye twitches again.

SIMONE  
The scary, eye twitchy thing.

GERTIE  
I. Can't. Help. It.

TORI  
Gertie. Focus on the sound of my  
voice.

Slowly, the SCRAPING noise fades out and Tori and Simone's voices get louder. Simone waves in Gertie's face. She and Tori pick up their lunches and stand up.

SIMONE  
Gertie. We're going to move away  
from the noise a little bit.

They walk to

EXT. CAFETERIA PATIO

Where they sit at picnic tables that have just been vacated by a GROUP OF JOCKS. They put their trays down.

TORI

There. That's better.

Gertie takes a bite of her food. All she hears is the sound of some distant birds TWEETING.

GERTIE

Much better.

SIMONE

Anybody want to take a road trip next weekend?

They smile at each other.

INT. GYM - DAY

It's yearbook picture day and a PHOTOGRAPHER is set up with a camera on a tripod facing the bleachers. Benoit and Robert sit side by side waiting. Gertie is one row in front of them, obsessing over the lettering on the French Club sign.

Monsieur LeBeau waves Tori and Simone over and they sit down next to Gertie.

MONSIEUR LEBEAU

As you all know, it's Benoit's last day. We'll miss you, Monsieur Benoit!

BENOIT

Merci. It's been wonderful getting to know all of you.

He looks right at Simone.

TORI

But mostly, it's been wonderful getting to know Simone, right Benny?

Simone reddens and slaps Tori on the arm.

MONSIEUR LEBEAU

I have Benoit's contact info. if anyone wants to write to him when he gets back to Dijon.

TORI

That's okay, Simone already has it, don't you Simone?

SIMONE

Tori, I'm going to kill you--

Tori LAUGHS as Simone tries to compose herself.

GERTIE

Attention! Let's get focused,  
people. This photo's not going to  
take itself.

Gertie holds up a sign that says "French Club." The  
Photographer counts to three. Monsieur LeBeau squeezes in  
with the group.

MONSIEUR LEBEAU

Say, "Fromage!"

The group copies him in unison. The camera clicks and a flash  
pops.

ALL

Fromage!

INSERT - YEARBOOK PICTURE

The picture fades to black and white, and the last thing we  
see are the smiling faces of Simone, Gertie, and Tori. A  
large, old key hangs from Simone's neck.

FADE OUT.