ESCAPE FANTASIES

Pilot

By Matthew Amylon
CAST OF CHARACTERS

JOSEPHINE “JO” RUSHCLIFFE—White, 17, female. Intelligent, unempathetic, and manipulative.

RON—Pacific Islander, 30s, male. Gruff and violent, but not without honor.

CASSANDRA WASKIEWICZ—White, late 40s, female. Prim and usually soft-spoken. Fiercely maternal.

SHAUN NAPPA—White, 16, male. Angry and insecure.

COACH BALDWIN—Black, 30s, male. Friendly but not compassionate.

LAURA FONG—Hmong, 16, female. Cool and insightful. Deeply distressed below the surface.

GARRET—White, 17, male. Nice, earnest, and simple-minded.

MIKE GILLESPIE—White, 17, male. Overweight, overbearing, and manic.

MATH TEACHER—White, 60s, female. Apathetic and embittered.


A CLOAKED FIGURE—???, ??, male? Finds great joy in his own mystery and in the promise of adventure.

PAUL NAPPA—White, 40s, male. Drinker and gambler. Has given up on hope and self-respect.

PIKE—Blue-skinned amphibian, 40s, male. Quick-witted, sticky-fingered.

XELA—Pacific Islander, female, 30s. Unyielding and unafraid in her faith and convictions.


MRS PANCOST—White, female, 40s. Cheery in the face of immense stress.
Her **DAUGHTER**—White, female, 7. Adorable and shy.

Several ISLANDERS

Several PANOPLY SOLDIERS

Several SUBS

Three PANOPLY ADMIRALS

Several ISLAND LEADERS

Several WAPANAK HIGH STUDENTS

Several SOCCER PLAYERS

A SUB KING

Several MONKS

Several NUNS

An INNKEEP

Five BANDITS

A PIT BULL

Two PISTOL SHRIMP

A SQUID

Several DRAGONS

A CRAB
TEASER

1. EXT. NINE ISLANDS

A naval battle on a tropical sea at night. Several large warships hoisting the blue-red-black flag of the PANOPLY funnel tightly into a canal between two islands. Their crews are regimented, uniformed, largely Caucasian. Holding the line are smaller ships, ranging from canoes to junk, crewed by a hodgepodge of natives. Their lack of uniform, formation, organization suggests a loose alliance of multiple distinct cultures. Chaos breaks out as the line meets and Jo begins her voiceover.

JO
(V.O.)
The Panoply, the great empire that worships all gods but fear none, got more than they bargained for when they attempted to assimilate the Nine Islands and their Goddess, who has no name.

The voiceover proceeds continuously as an ISLANDER, tattooed with an elaborate pattern of tentacles, stands on the rear of a skiff as it hugs the side of one of the warships, ignoring the arrows hitting the deck around him. He pulls out a knife and slashes open his own stomach, mouthing a chant in a foreign tongue. Tentacles spill out of the hole he has cut as he falls into the water. Within seconds, tentacles as thick around as trees explode out of the water and envelop the warship.

JO
(V.O.)
The tenacity of the islanders and the power imbued to them by their Goddess empowered them to overcome the war machine of the north.

RON, an armored islander, sword stained with fresh blood, leaps off of the warship as the tentacles begin to pull it under. He lands on the water and sinks like a stone. Two SUBS—lithe, amphibious men—grab him by each arm and haul him to the surface. They drag him onto a canoe, where he stares up at the sky, coughing up water.

2. INT. TEMPLE OF THE GODDESS

An opulent temple cluttered with sculpture, tapestries, some plants. Three PANOPLY ADMIRALS sitting awkwardly on the floor avoid eye contact with a diverse group of ISLANDER LEADERS as they sign a document and Jo continues her voiceover.

JO
An armistice was signed, and three years of bloodshed gave way to peace. But the world left behind by the war was a new world, and presented its own challenges.

3. INT. WAPANAK HIGH HALLWAY

CASSANDRA WASKIEWICZ :: PRINCIPAL is engraved on the front of a door, a swastika crudely etched below. The paint scheme of this school is hideous. JO RUSCHLIFFE, female, holding a binder, her posture perfect, stands before the door and knocks.

4. INT. WASKIEWICZ' OFFICE

CASSANDRA WASKIEWICZ, late forties, prim, stares intently at a bulky computer over a cup of tea. Her office cramped and sparse. Wall calendar, motivational posters, a minifridge. She twitches at the knock and glances at the door, but JO enters of her own accord, waving casually. Waskiewicz smiles.

WASKIEWICZ
Morning, Jo. Homeroom too boring to merit your attention this morning, or is there something you want from me?

Jo makes herself comfortable as she speaks, clearing space on Waskiewicz' desk and placing the binder on it.

JO
I have a request to make. I'm interested in starting up a new student group.

She flips open the binder: it's full of hundreds of sheets of high-gloss paper, upon the first of which reads CREATIVE ROLEPLAYING SOCIETY -- PROSPECTUS AND MANUAL in large letters. Waskiewicz stares at it, brow furrowed.

5. EXT. WAPANAK HIGH

The school is ugly and misshapen from the outside. The grass dead, the pavement cracked. SHAUN NAPPA, sixteen, athletic, locks a rusty bike to a rack during the VO.

JO
(V.O.)
The expenditure of lives, resources, and black magic during the war gave way to poverty, sickness, and chaos.

6. INT. WAPANAK HIGH LOBBY

Shaun walks into the crowded lobby, head down. The COACH, 30s, overly friendly, sees and intercepts him. He and
Shaun dances a bit while they talk as Shaun tries to get pass.

COACH
Shaun Nappa. Just who I was hoping to see. Am I gonna see you at practice today? Playoffs are--

SHAUN
Today's Wednesday, Coach. I have work.

COACH
Oh? I thought you were gonna talk to your boss about rescheduling.

SHAUN
I tried. Didn't work. I can be there on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and I've been keeping up on my--

COACH
Well, Shaun, I've gotta ask. If your boss isn't willing to be flexible with you on this, why are you still working there? You see yourself serving up coffee all your life?

SHAUN
I see myself serving up coffee today. I need the money more than I need the practice. You know I'm--

COACH
Shaun, you're sixteen and don't have a car. How much money d'you really need? What I'm hearing here is that--

SHAUN
(suddenly outraged, flustered)
Coach, I need to get to homeroom!

Coach steps aside to let him pass.

COACH
If I don't start seeing some commitment, Shaun, there are plenty of freshman who seem to want your spot on the team more than you do.

7. INT. WASKIEWICZ' OFFICE

As before. As she speaks Waskiewicz thumbs through the binders, scanning maps, tables, charts.
My husband used to play DUNGEONS & DRAGONS in the '80s. I thought everyone just played video games now.

JO
DUNGEONS & DRAGONS is a relic. This is a roleplaying system of my own design. It's built to... to develop creativity and... critical thinking skills.

Beat. Waskiewicz rolls her eyes.

WASKIEWICZ
Critical thinking skills? Next you're going to tell me that your game encourages children to become lifelong learners both inside and out of the classroom. I WROTE that mission statement, Jo, it doesn't work on me. I'm impressed at the work you've put in, but I'm not sure I want to throw school funds after a board game. Maybe if--

JO
It's not a board g--please, Principal Waskiewicz. Cass. In light of my academic achievement--not to mention our personal relationship--I think you'd trust me on this. You were the one who was talking about the need for alternate methods to engage students creatively in light of the failure of a failed twentieth century classroom model typified by--

WASKIEWICZ
(amused)
Shush. Time for morning announcements.

8. INT. WAPANAK HIGH CLASSROOM

LAURA FONG, fashionable, half-asleep, sits in a desk and stares at the back of the neck of her boyfriend, GARRET, 17, attractive and earnest. A couple rows down, MIKE GILLESPIE, 17, overweight, manic, savors a breakfast sandwich. An elderly MATH TEACHER thumbs through a cheap paperback romance novel.

WASKIEWICZ
(over the intercom)
Good morning. The date is September 26th, 2012. Please stand
for the Pledge of Allegiance.

The homeroom teacher waves one arm as if conducting an orchestra, and the class rises as one to their feet. Everyone is utterly enthusiastic in their recitation of the Pledge except Mike, who bares it out in a chipper baritone. Laura lipsynchs. The pledge fades out into Jo's voiceover.

CLASS
I pledge allegiance, to the flag,
of the United States of America.
And to the Republic, for which it stands, one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty, and justice, for all.

JO
(V.O.)
Though the Islanders' victory caused a surge of regional pride and community solidarity, that which has been gained cannot replace that which has been lost.

WASKIEWICZ
(over the intercom)
Today is the four month anniversary--er--today marks four months since the passing of our beloved classmate Brian Fong. Please remember him and his family during today's moment of silence.

Several faces turn in Laura's direction at the mention of "family" before turning to face the flag silently. Laura groans. Garret reaches back and takes her hand in his.

GARRET
Are you alright?

LAURA
(exasperated)
It's not that. I just wish Waskiewicz didn't feel the need to make such a carnival out of it. I think she gets off on the idea of bringing us together as a community in mourning.

GARRET
(uncomfortably)
We all still miss him.

LAURA
I know, I know. Half the school popped their tragedy cherries grinding up against his corpse. But he's MY brother, you know?
9. INT. WASKIEWICZ' OFFICE

As before. Waskiewicz puts down the intercom mic, visibly distressed.

WASKIEWICZ
Please tell me I didn't just say "anniversary."

JO
You didn't just say "anniv--"

WASKIEWICZ
Liar.

JO
The money's just a formality. It validates the club enough that it'll count for an extracurricular towards the Honors program. Otherwise, no one will show up.

WASKIEWICZ
No one will show up anyway.

JO
It's just me and Mike so far. We're--

WASKIEWICZ
You and Mike. Of course. You think you could get Alex to play?

JO
Probably. I'll ask.

WASKIEWICZ
If I agree to this will you leave me alone and head to class?

JO
Absolutely, if that's what--

WASKIEWICZ
Congratulations on your club. Now off with you.

She hands Jo the binder.

JO
Thanks!

Jo heads out the door.

10. INT. WAPANAK HIGH HALLWAY

Jo emerges into a half-empty hallway. She pulls out her
phone with her free hand. Alex, illuminated, is, same, well-dressed, shares a glance at her as she walks by. SHAUN, coming from the opposite direction, swings his leg out and trips Alex. Alex clatters to the floor, glasses flying off, nose bleeding. A couple people laugh. Jo looks on, impassive, typing on her phone.

    JO
    (v.o.)
    The islands have developed a taste for blood. Old wounds threaten to bleed afresh; old grudges threaten to ripen into new violence.

11. INT. WAPANAK HIGH CLASSROOM

As before. MIKE's smartphone buzzes. The text on the screen reads "We're on. Launch the ad campaign." He puts his phone away, grabs his backpack, and stands on the desk.

    JO
    (v.o.)
    But a time of great strife is also a time of great opportunity. These are the conditions under which heroes are forged.

    MIKE
    Ladies and gents, may I have your attention, please?

Mike's voice seems to command authority; nearly everyone looks up. The teacher remains rapt in her book.

    MIKE
    On behalf of the Wapanak High Creative Roleplaying Society, I bring you... FREE CONDOMS!

He overturns the backpack. Dozens of condoms spill out, fluttering improbably about the room like leaves on the wind. The students grab at them rapturously, instinctively, spilling out of their chairs, knocking over desks. Mike laughs maniacally. LAURA amusedly watches GARRET snatch several condoms out of the air. The chaos finally knocks the teacher out of her rapture.

    TEACHER
    Mike Gillespie, what are you doing? Principal's office, now!
    Everyone settle--

    MIKE
    Straight away, ma'am.

Mike salutes as he speaks.

    MIKE
    (cont., to his classmates)
    Thank you and you're welcome!
he blows kisses at the others on the way out the door. At that moment the bell rings. The students rush out, tripping over condoms. Garret takes Laura by the arm and tosses her a condom.

GARRET
Mike is a hero. A little something for after soccer practice today?

Laura rolls her eyes.

LAURA
We'll see.

She examines the condom. On the package is printed in miniscule font: JOSEPHINE RUSHCLIFFE AND MICHAEL GILLESPIE CORDIALLY INVITE YOU TO THE INAUGURAL MEETING OF THE WAPANAK HIGH CREATIVE ROLEPLAYING SOCIETY AT 2:30 PM ON THE DAY OF SEPTEMBER 27TH, FOR AN AFTERNOON OF EXTRACURRICULAR MERRIMENT. Laura reads, smiles, then pockets the condom.

12. INT. WAPANAK HIGH HALLWAY

As before. Alex slowly rises to his feet, picks up his backpack by the wrong end, and his stuff spills everywhere. He sighs. Mike jogs through the hallway triumphantly, and stops when he sees Jo.

MIKE
Hey.

JO
How'd it go?

MIKE
Beautifully.

They bump fists. Mike sees Alex.

MIKE
(cont.)
Jesus. What happened to Waskiewicz?

JO
Shaun Nappa tripped him in--

MIKE
(genuinely angry)
Dick.

Jo shrugs. Mike walks over and helps Alex pick up his stuff.

MIKE
Hey, Alex. You al--

ALEX
I'm fine.
to Lauren. Mike helps Nick to his feet and slips a condom into his hand as he speaks.

MIKE
(ambiguously sarcastic)
Yo, man, you should try standing up to bullies.

ALEX
I don't really care. It's just bullying, you know?

He notices the condom in his hand.

MIKE
Yeah, I can dig it. You know they'd stop doing that to you if--

WASKIEWICZ
(over the intercom)
Alex, could you come to my office? I have your lunch.

Laughter all around. Mike stifles a shortle.

MIKE
Welp, looks like we both have dates with your mom.

13. INT. WASKIEWICZ' OFFICE

Mrs. Waskiewicz double-checks the contents of a bag lunch as Mike and Alex enter.

WASKIEWICZ
Morning, Mike. To what do I owe the--
(to Alex)
What happened to you?

MIKE
Well, Mrs. Waskiewicz, I was combating the epidemic of teen pregnancy by--

WASKIEWICZ
Shut up. Who did this?

ALEX
I tripped in the hall.

WASKIEWICZ
Oh, don't give me that... that CRAP. Sit down.

Alex sits, reading the inscription on the condom under the desk, as Mike tries to slip out the door. Waskiewicz stops him.

WASKIEWICZ
Stay right where you are, Mike. I haven't forgotten you. Alex. Who did this to you? Give me a name. I can h--.

ALEX
MOM. I fell. Can I have a Kleenex?

Mrs. Waskiewicz passes a box of tissues to Alex as she speaks. He wipes his face and stuffs one up his nostril.

WASKIEWICZ
(emotional)
I don't know why you won't let me help you. Mike, tell me who did this and you're free to go.

MIKE
All due respect, Principal Waskiewicz, what happened to your son was a vile crime, but you know I don't snitch.

WASKIEWICZ
I don't understand you kids. Someone did this to my son and you're taking his side against me, because--what? Because I'm over forty? I can't help if--

JO barges in.

JO
For the Goddess's sake. If I tell you, will you give me Mike?

MIKE
Jo. DON'T.

WASKIEWICZ
Thank you, Jo. Go ahead.

JO
Shaun Nappa tripped him. Deliberately and unprovoked. Let's go, Mike.

She grabs Mike by the arm.

14. INT. WAPANAK HIGH HALLWAY

Mike struggles his way out of Jo's grasp.

MIKE
Was that really necessary?

JO
I'm not gonna apologize for--

WASKIEWICZ
(over the intercom)
Shaun Nappa to the principal's office. SHAUN NAPPA to the principal's--is that a condom you're holding?

Laughter up and down the hall. Mike storms off. Jo is left standing alone. Suddenly she smiles.

JO
(v.o., peppy)
For those with the skill and determination to thrive in a world of turmoil, a lifetime of adventure awaits! Join the Wapanak High Creative Roleplaying Society today!

End of teaser.

ACT ONE

1. EXT. SMILEY'S INN--NIGHT

Light pours through the windows and the cracks of the wood exterior of the inn. Laughing and music from inside. During the VO a CLOAKED FIGURE stands before the door and nails a sheet of paper to the door, using the back of his dagger as a hammer. On the paper reads "EXTRAORDINARY INDIVIDUALS SOUGHT TO ENGAGE IN AN ADVENTURE. REWARDS UNTOLD. FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTION CONVENE WITHIN AT MIDNIGHT."

JO
(v.o.)
Destiny is not subtle. Most simply choose to ignore it.

2. INT. WAPANAK HIGH HALLWAY

Jo looks within her locker (meticulously organized--mirror, calendar, maps, a neat stack of identical buyer). Over the VO Laura approaches her and holds up a condom.

JO
(v.o.)
To follow the path laid out for you requires either intense conviction or extreme apathy.

LAURA
I'm in.

JO
You're in? As in you're playing?

LAURA
Yeah.

JO
Why?
I mean if you're gonna be like that--

JO
No, no, it's just--

LAURA
You thought I was too mainstream or whatever to join your club. You watch too much TV. I've been--

JO
I don't watch TV. And I don't--

LAURA
Don't interrupt me. I've been playing D&D since I was nine.

JO
Fine. Good. First meeting's tomorrow. We're making Alex's character over lunch today. You wanna--

LAURA
Alex who?

JO
Waskiewicz.

LAURA
Ugh. You know, Shaun could get kicked off the soccer team over Alex snitching him out.

JO
(lies without missing a beat)
Shaun could stand to be taken down a peg.

3. EXT. NAPPA HOUSEHOLD
Shaun parks his bike out in front of a run-down house. The lawn filthy. Rusty chopper in the driveway. Pit bull on a chain barks at him. He lets the bike fall on the grass.

4. INT. NAPPA HOUSEHOLD

PAUL NAPPA, Shaun's dad, unshaven and lethargic, sits on the couch, beer in hand, watching football. The house dirty, littered with empties. He speaks without looking up as Shaun throws his backpack on an armchair and sits down.

PAUL
Shouldn't you be at work?

SHAUN
It's not even noon, Dad.
School, then.

Shaun makes finger-quotes as he talks. Tries to act tough and uncaring around dad.

SHAUN
Yeah. Principal needs "time to clear her head" while she "figures out what to do with me." So I’m home for now.

PAUL
That bad, huh?

SHAUN
Yeah. Her kid tripped over my foot.

PAUL
Principal sends her own kid to that school? Kinda like eating where you--

SHAUN
He’s a faggy little kid. She had him up in a private school up til--

PAUL
Anyway, fridge is damn near empty.

SHAUN
I’ll go shopping before work, if you--

PAUL
Nah, you got homework. Gimme the cash, I’ll take the Harley.

Portentous beat. Shaun gets up suddenly as he speaks, and leaves as the voiceover carries us into the next scene.

SHAUN
I got it.

JO
(v.o.)
Those who ignore destiny’s call are often crushed under the burden of complacency and mundanity.

5. INT. WAPANAK HIGH CAFETERIA

Alex grips his bag lunch, scanning the crowded cafeteria, during the VO. He sees Jo, Mike and Laura sitting at a table together waving to him.

JO
(v.o.)
And those who refuse to have become the easiest prey.

As Alex waves back, an athletic SOCCER PLAYER grabs the paper bag and throws it to the floor. The bag bursts and hemorrhages yogurt. He intones in Alex's ear as he passes:

SOCCER PLAYER
Snitch.

Jo, Mike and Laura watch this play out. Mike has a few courses' worth of foil-wrapped cafeteria food on a tray. Jo has a few thick binders and isn't eating. Laura nibbles at a salad.

LAURA
It's so stupid. The more they hurt him, the more he snitches, the more they hurt him. Eventually someone'll end up expelled or dead.

Mike looks at Jo angrily. Jo avoids eye contact, then meets his gaze, visibly distressed. Laura notices the tail end of this exchange.

LAURA
I'm missing something, aren't I?

JO
No.

MIKE
Alex wasn't the one who snitched Shaun out.

JO
Mike--

MIKE
Jo did. Just so I wouldn't be in detention for the first meeting of the club.

Alex sits down as Laura speaks. Mike slides him a cheeseburger and a milk from his tray.

LAURA
Jo, that was none of your business.

JO
I didn't think--

LAURA
It doesn't matter. You need to tell the soccer team it was you so they don't kill Alex over--
It's no big deal, I'll just

LAURA
Shush.

MIKE
Maybe if she hadn't snitched in
the first place we wouldn't be--

JO
Guys, we have, like, fifteen
minutes to make our characters.

As she speaks she hands Alex and Laura each a binder.

JO
Character sheet's under the blue
tab.

They flip as Laura talks.

LAURA
This conversation isn't over.

JO
Just for now. The first thing you
need to decide is your character's
race. There's--

ALEX AND LAURA
(at once, emphatically)
Human.

Mike points his thumb down and makes a protracted fart
noise.

MIKE
Booooooriiiiiiiiiiing.

LAURA
I've always been made
uncomfortable by games deciding
your abilities by your race.

ALEX
What's wrong with humans?

MIKE
What do you mean 'What's wrong
with humans?' Look around you,
guys.

Mike swings his arms out dramatically, indicating the
entirety of the cafeteria.

MIKE
Why would anyone ever want to be
human?

LAURA
MIKE
Jo, you explain, I'm still fuzzy on the lore.

Jo opens up another binder. Her speech continues into the next scene as a voiceover.

JO
Pike is a Sub, a member of an amphibious race inhabiting the coral reefs surrounding the nine islands.

6. EXT. UNDERWATER CITY

The city is beautiful and exotic, carved into a cliff of coral. A crowd of Subs treading water in skintight clothing are gathered around in a sphere as a handful of Sub athletes play a soccer-like game in the water. PIKE, 20s, gilled, blue skin, webbed hands, sly, twitchy, darts through the crowd, picking pockets, cutting purses, retrieving handfuls of pearls, while Jo's VO continues.

JO
(v.o.)
Like many who grow up poor in a rich place, envy more than greed drew him to a life of crime. By his twentieth year he was a master thief.

7. INT. UNDERWATER PALACE--SUB KING'S CHAMBERS

Over the VO Pike steals silently into a lavishly-decorated bedroom where an aged SUB KING floats unconscious above a bed of colorful polyps. Beside the bed rests a beautiful crown inlaid with pearls. Pike considers the crown.

JO
As Pike's skill grew, so did his ambition. In attempting to burglarize his people's king he found more than he bargained for.

Pike carefully lifts up the crown. As he considers it at eye level, a head-shaped bubble resembling the sleeping king appears within it, such that the head is wearing the crown. The head screams, the sound distorted by the water. The king awakens and backs off into a corner of the room. At the same time the door opens and two SUB GUARDS are framed in the doorway, holding pistol shrimp. The pistol shrimp snap their claws, and jets of air whizz by Pike's head as Pike covers his ears, dropping the crown. Pike regains his composure, pulls a small squid from his belt, and squeezes it, releasing an improbable amount of ink that blackens the entire room.

8. EXT. OCEAN--DAY
Pike surfaces and stands up at the bully, then looks to the island on the horizon. As Jo narrates he looks at the crown in his hand, then begins to swim. The narration continues into the next scene, ceasing once more to be a voiceover.

**JO**

(v.o.)

Now the most wanted man in the sea, Pike has fled to the islands, to him a strange and unfamiliar world.

9. **INT. WAPANAK HIGH CAFETERIA**

As before. Jo shuts the binder as she finishes speaking.

**MIKE**

Basically I’m a badass. I can do this thing with my dagger where-

**LAURA**

Thief-types are boring. I pretty much always play a wizard. I can be a wizard, right?

**JO**

Character creation works on a point-buy system. You have a hundred ten points to spend on skills and spells. All the magic is under the green tab.

Laura flips to the green tab and encounters a phone-book-looking checklist of spells. She lights up; kid in a candy shop. She pulls out a highlighter and starts marking things off. Jo turns to Alex.

**JO**

Alright, Alex, thief and wizard are covered, so, broad strokes, that leaves healer and fighter.

**ALEX**

Healer, like, a priest, right? I’ll do that.

As Jo speaks, she turns Alex’s binder to another tab.

**JO**

Divine magic is more of a package deal than wizardry because you’re not in as much control over it; the Goddess is directing her magic through you. So for eighty points-

**ALEX**

The Goddess is you, right?

Awkward beat. Mike bursts out laughing.
I guess so.

ALEX
So how do you get to be a priest? What’s my backstory?

Jo closes her eyes as she enters Narrator Mode. Her speech continues into the next scene as V.O.

JO
You were raised in seclusion, living in service to the goddess in a monastery atop a mountain.

10. EXT. MOUNTAINTOP MONASTERY

Overhead shot. An island mountain wreathed in clouds. A beautiful and ancient building made of stone, combination castle and cathedral. It zooms into the courtyard, where dozens of MONKS sit cross-legged in quiet meditation.

JO
(v.o.)
It was here that he--

ALEX
(v.o.)
She.

11. INT. WAPANAK HIGH CAFETERIA

Jo opens her eyes.

JO
She?

ALEX
My character’s a girl. Definitely. Can she be a girl monk?

JO
I dunno. Maybe a--

MIKE
Alex, I have so much respect for your in this moment.

He offers a fist. Alex stares at it for a bit and then bumps it nervously.

JO
Alright. How about a nun?

ALEX
Okay.

Jo closes her eyes again. Her speech again turns into a voiceover as the scene switches.
It was here in this mountaintop convent that she was granted the blessing of the Goddess and gained access to the powers of heaven.

12. EXT. MOUNTAINTOP NUNNERY

The same set, only now the monks have metamorphosed into hooded NUNS kneeling in prayer. XELA, late 30s, rapturously devout, looks up at the sky as a shadow passes overhead. As Jo speaks the scene cuts once more to the overhead shot as a dozen armored DRAGONS ridden by PANOPLY SOLDIERS wielding flaming spears swoop down on the convent.

JO
(v.o.)
Her dearest wish was a life of piety and healing, but the war paid no heed to her intentions.

A dragon lands on the tower of the convent. The dragon coughs and spits out a cannonball-sized bezoar dripping with oil, catching it in its teeth. Its rider lights the bezoar with the tip of his spear, and the dragon flings it with its neck into the courtyard, where it explodes, killing a few nuns. As more projectiles fall around her, Xela raises her staff and a translucent white shield coats her and the nuns to either side of her, protecting her.

13. EXT. MOUNTAINSIDE

Xela makes her way quickly but trepidatiously down a steep mountain face then stops herself, looking down at a village below, as Jo narrates. The tail end of the narration moves into the next scene.

JO
(v.o.)
The destruction of her convent has forced her into a secular world of vice and desire. Also, you should come up with a name for her.

14. INT. WAPANAK HIGH CAFETERIA

Jo opens her eyes as she says that last sentence. Alex things for a second.

ALEX
Xela. With an X. Like, "Alex"
spelled backw--

A tater tot hits Alex on the side of the head. Laura snaps her binder closed.

LAURA
You can stop this at any point if you come clean about snitching.
JO
Fine.

LAURA
I'm calling Shaun.

She pulls out her phone. Scene intercuts with INT. NAPPA HOUSEHOLD--Shaun is putting groceries in the fridge when his cell rings. He answers.

SHAUN
Laura? What's up?

LAURA
Hey Shaun. I'm putting Jo Rushcliffe on. You need to talk to her.

SHAUN
I do? Why do I--

Laura tosses the phone to Jo.

JO
Hey, Shaun.

SHAUN
Hey, Jo. Apparently I "need to talk to you."

Jo looks around. Mike and Laura glare expectantly.

JO
Shaun, I was the one who told Cass--who told Principal Waskiewicz about what you did to Alex.

SHAUN
You stupid bitch! What the hell did you--

Jo puts down the phone and slides it across the table to Laura as she speaks.

JO
There. Done. You talk to him.

Laura picks up the phone.

LAURA
Shaun, I'm trying to get the guys to stop torturing Alex. If I give the phone to Rowan, will you tell them to call off--

SHAUN
If Waskiewicz didn't snitch, he
Another intercut signifying a time jump of a few seconds.

LAURA
(to Jo)
He wants you to tell Waskiewicz you were wrong about him so he doesn't get suspended.

JO
Cass won't believe a story involving me being wrong.

MIKE
Tell her you just lied to her, then.

JO
That hurts my standing. I'll do it if he joins the club. We still need a fighter and--

MIKE
Really, Jo?

LAURA
Don't you think there are more important things to worry about than--

JO
It's not an unreasonable request. Tell him.

Another short time jump.

SHAUN
What, like Dungeons & Dragons?

And another.

LAURA
He's in.

Cut to another table where a bunch of soccer players, including GARRET, are hanging. Laura hands the phone to ROWAN, 18, hath a lean and hungry look.

LAURA
Shaun needs to talk to you.

Rowan grabs the phone.

ROWAN
Speak.
\textbf{Scene:}

Apparently the Waskiewicz kid didn't snitch on me, apparently. Lay off him.

\textbf{ROWAN}

If that's what you want.

\textbf{SHAUN}

Apparently it was Jo Rushcliffe. Either way, both of them are going to be in the same place tomorrow after school playing board games.

Rowan looks sideways at Laura.

\textbf{ROWAN}

Yeah, thanks for clearing that up.

\textbf{SHAUN}

I'm in deep with Waskiewicz still, so I can't do anything other than give you a time and a place. I'll be with them. Make them suffer?

\textbf{ROWAN}

Absolutely. So you'll be missing practice again?

\textbf{SHAUN}

Yeah.

\textbf{ROWAN}

Alright, see you when I see you.

He hands the phone back to Laura. Jo watches from the other table.

\textbf{JO}

Looks like everything's gonna work out fine.

\textbf{END OF ACT ONE}

\textbf{ACT TWO}

\textbf{1. INT. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL MY LIFE}

A gratuitously pastel suburban cafe.SHAUN sits behind a register in a ridiculous polo shirt, working on a problem set in the absence of custom. MIKE, toting one of Jo's binders, walks up to the counter. As Jo narrates he pours the entire take-a-penny dish into the empty tip jar. Shaun notices him a second later than he should.

\textbf{JO}

(v.o.)

The northern continent has a god for every iota of their society. Their entire existence is suffused
As Shaun talks, he pours the tip jar back out into the take-a-penny dish.

**SHAUN**
Hey, Mike. Want anything?

**MIKE**
Double cappuccino, maximum allowable amount of sugar. We need to build your--

**SHAUN**
Three fifty.

As Mike talks, he lays down three ones and starts counting out fifty pennies from the take-a-penny dish. Shaun sets about making the cappuccino.

**MIKE**
I'm here to build your character for the game session tomorrow.

**SHAUN**
I thought I was the, uh, the warrior. What's to--

**MIKE**
The fighter. But there are loads of options within that. You can--

**SHAUN**
Doing homework wasn't part of the deal. Stop that. Sit down.

Shaun puts the pennies back in the dish and puts two quarters from his own pocket in the register. Mike rolls his eyes, puts a condom in the tip jar, and sits at a table, opening up the binder and pulling out a pen as he talks.

**MIKE**
This is the fun part, trust me. Alright, first off is race. There's fairies, antifairies, subs, raptors, golems, unsapients, kitsunes, strays, minha mães, asura--

**SHAUN**
I can just, be, like, a human, right?

**MIKE**
You too? I don't understand you people!
MIKE
Okay, okay, you're a human.

He ticks off a box. Shaun walks around and hands him his cappuccino as the conversation continues. The foam on the beverage is immaculate.

MIKE
Alright, before I forget, what's your character's name?

SHAUN
Um. Shaun. Does it have to--

MIKE
Anything but Shaun. You can't be yourself, that way leads to madness. That way you'd be both--

SHAUN
Fine. What's your guy's name?

MIKE
Pike.

SHAUN
Okay, then, Faun. Or Ron. Don. Gast--

MIKE
I like "Ron." I'm writing it down. Next up, weapon of choice. Sword, spear, axe, halberd, kusarigama, bare knuckle--

SHAUN
Sword.

MIKE
Epee? Foil? Longsword, shortsword, broadsword, greatsword? Katana, scimit--

The bell rings. Shaun ducks back behind the counter and talks nervously as MRS. PANCOST, 40s, walks in followed by her DAUGHTER, 7-ish. As they talk, Mike makes faces at the daughter. She laughs, then gets scared, then laughs again, as he permutes his face.

SHAUN
Hey Mrs. Pancost.

PANCOST
Afternoon, Shaun.

SHAUN
Usual?
That'd be lovely.

She pays exact change and then drops a couple ones in the tip jar, noticing the condom uneasily.

SHAUN
That'll be just a minute.

PANCOST
Thanks, Shaun. Say "Thanks, Shaun."

DAUGHTER
Thanks, Saun!

They go sit. Mike taps his pencil for a few beats. Then:

MIKE
So I'm assuming longsword, if we're--

SHAUN
(trying to be quiet)
Not with people around.

2. INT. WASKIEWICZ' CAR--AFTERNOON

MRS WASKIEWICZ drives while Alex sits in the passenger's seat. He watches identical houses pass by the window as Jo narrates.

JO
(v.o.)
The moral code of the Panoply is torn a thousand ways by the dictates of their gods. For each paradise you attain, a thousand hells lay credit to your soul.

Awkward silence.

WASKIEWICZ
You must be pretty excited about this game club.

Beat.

WASKIEWICZ
Do you know who else is in it?

ALEX
Jo, Mike Gillespie, Laura Fong, Shaun Nappa. That's it, I think.

Beat.

WASKIEWICZ
Well, Shaun won't be playing. He'll be taking a week off for...
what he did to--

ALEX
He didn't. Jo's promised to tell you the truth tomorrow. She just threw out a name to pull Mike out of detention.

WASKIEWICZ
Jo was just looking out for you. She cares about you, you know. I remember when--

ALEX
Jo isn't who you think she is, mom. Back when she was babysitting me she'd give me half what you paid me not to tell you she was leaving me alone to go over to Gillespie's house--

WASKIEWICZ
So either she's a liar or you're a liar, is that it?

ALEX
We both lied to you. Kids tell grown-ups what they want to hear. You wanted to hear that I still needed a babysitter when I was twelve years old, so we--

WASKIEWICZ
"Grown-ups." Listen to you. It's all "kids" and "grown-ups." "Us" and "them." That's Gillespie talking. I don't know if I want you hanging out with him. And Shaun Nap--

ALEX
Well, who AM I supposed to hang out with, mom, huh?

Waskiewicz seriously considers this for a few beats.

WASKIEWICZ
I'll write up a list.

Beat. Alex starts laughing, then Waskiewicz bursts out laughing.

3. INT. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL MY LIFE

The shop is empty again. Shaun sits down across from Mike, sipping a coffee, as Jo narrates.

JO
(v.o.)
The Goddess of the nine islands
issues many commandments, but the
are paramount. The first
commandment is to be extraordinary
at any cost.

SHAUN
So you and Jo aren't a thing, are
you?

MIKE
Not in the biological sense, no.
More of a Steed and Peel thing. Or
Wonder Woman and Etta Candy. Or
Mario and Lui--

SHAUN
How'd you get that way, though?
Jo's so...

MIKE
We've lived next door since we
were nine. We didn't really become
friends until I started driving.
She can't drive 'cause of her
seizures so I--

SHAUN
Seizures?

MIKE
She's epileptic, yeah. She doesn't
get them all that much anymore but
she can't legally drive.

SHAUN
But nothing ever happened between
you. Did you ever try?

MIKE
Nah, it's not like--

SHAUN
She's not a dyke, is she?

MIKE
No.

SHAUN
Is she a virgin?

MIKE
Why do you want to know?

SHAUN
Well apparently she's going to be
my dungeon mistress or whatever,
so--

MIKE
It's none of your business.
GARRET and LAURA, Garret having changed into a sweaty soccer uniform, are awkwardly stretched across the backseat of Garret's car, making out. They start fumbling with their clothes as Jo narrates.

JO  
(v.o.)  
The second commandment of the goddess is to seek happiness in all things.

Laura reaches into Garret's pants and he grabs her wrist and sits up.

GARRET  
Hey, um, you're planning on doing Rushcliffe's board game thing, right?

Laura seems somewhat confused at the interrupted foreplay.

LAURA  
It's not a board game. It's more, like, a collaborative story. Like a video game but with Jo Rushcliffe's brain instead of a computer. So, like--

Garret laughs awkwardly.

GARRET  
Jo Rushcliffe's brain is a computer.

Laura forgets about the impending sex, wrapped up in the game. Her speech carries over into the next scene as a V.O.

LAURA  
Point. No, it's really exciting, though. Look.

5. INT. PANOPLY LIBRARY

An enormous lantern-lit library within a castle. Shelves reaching stories high, comically large ladders. LARA, 20s, manicured and monocled, sits in a circle of books, reading from two at once.

LAURA  
I'm playing as a girl named Lara, who's learning magic at this university in an empire called the Panoply, who are kind of the bad guys, I guess.

6. EXT. PANOPLY FOREST--NIGHT

Lara, hair tied back, clothes hung up on a tree branch a
safe distance away, she with a bone in a circle of stones arranged in an intricate runic pattern around her. As Laura narrates, she slits the goat's throat. As the goat bleeds out in her arms, a BEING OF FIRE arises before her. The entity reaches out and touches her forehead, and disappears inside her. She glows, her eyes turn red, and she stands, staring up at the moon.

LAURA
So Lara got too ambitious and tried to summon this demon prince, whose name has, like, seven syllables and no vowels, so you know he's hardcore. But he possessed her so now she's a super-powerful wizard but he's slowly taking over her brain so he can be reborn as a mortal and conquer the world or whatever.

7. EXT. SHIP AT SEA--SUNSET

Lara, her eyes still red stands on the deck of a ship as it approaches an island. She watches the green flash as the sun sinks below the horizon and Laura narrates. Garret's mounting laughter can be heard as her narration concludes.

LAURA
So she went to the Nine Islands, which is where the game takes place, to try and find some magic that'll get rid of what's-his-name and set her free.

8. INT. GARRET'S CAR

As before. Garret is cracking up.

LAURA
What? It's so fun! You should--

Garret kisses her.

GARRET
God, you're a nerd. It's adorable.

They make out a bit. Garret pulls away again, suddenly guilty.

GARRET
Look, you shouldn't go tomorrow, though.

LAURA
What?

GARRET
Just skip it. Trust me.

LAURA
...? Is that about Shaun? He's just going to--

**GARRET**
You can go next time.

**LAURA**
Garret. What's Rowan going to do to Jo?

Garret puts his hand to his face and avoids eye contact.

9. **EXT. WAPANAK HIGH SCHOOL**

Shaun stands nervously out by the bike rack. Jo exits the lobby and approaches him during the voiceover.

**JO**
(v.o.)
The laws of the Goddess are fair, but for the ordinary, the weak, for those in suffering, she is the cruelest god of all.

**JO**
You're in. Go to homeroom.

Shaun breathes a sigh of relief.

**SHAUN**
She's not making me talk to her?

**JO**
I don't think she wants to see your face. Something's got her upset.

**SHAUN**
She's always upset.

**JO**
Not really. She's upset now, though. Fight with Alex, I think.

Beat. Shaun extends a hand and Jo awkwardly shakes it as they talk.

**SHAUN**
Thanks for helping me out with this.

**JO**
No problem. I'll see you after school in the greenhouse?

**SHAUN**
I thought we were meeting in D-9.

**JO**
Yeah, but according to Laura a
Bunch of the soccer guys were planning on barging in and throwing paint at my face, so. We're hiding.

SHAUN

Cool.

Beat.

JO

Anyway, I need to put in an appearance in homeroom.

She walks back towards the school the lobby. Shaun pulls out his phone and begins composing a text message to Rowan—THEY'LL BE IN THE GREENHOUSE—then looks back towards Jo, and cancels the text. The phone asks if he'd like to save the text as a draft. He sighs, hits yes, and pockets the phone. Then he walks back into the school.

ACT 3

1--INT. SMILEY'S INN

Night. The inn has mostly emptied out. RON, PIKE, LARA, XELA, and the CLOAKED FIGURE sit at a table, on the center of which sits a wooden chest. They each have a mug of ale. An INNKEEP cleans glasses and stares surreptitiously at those gathered. A chandelier swings lightly on its rope, shuffling the shadows around. Everyone stares each other down waiting for the figure to speak as Jo narrates.

JO

(v.o.)
The man before you all--the vaguely masculine figure, that is, wrapped in a black cloak--has said nothing for almost three minutes. You grow bored of him and survey one another instead. There's the knight, bloodstained longsword swinging at his hip, his eyes cold and full of memory. The mainlander, her eyes an unnatural red, watches everything with a smile on her lips, as though she knows something you don't. The nun watches her uncomfortably, one hand clutching the staff at her side as she clutches her ale in the other. Lastly--

2. INT. WAPANAK HIGH GREENHOUSE--EARLY AFTERNOON

JO, MIKE, ALEX, LAURA and SHAUN sit cross-legged in the greenhouse, surrounded by tables stacked with potted plants. Papers, binders, pens, markers, dice everywhere. A whiteboard laid down on the floor, scored in 1" squares, a
scale map of the inn inscribed on it in dry erase marker. scored Sunlight streaks through, casting an unearthly glow on Jo's hair.

ALEX
Sorry, Xela doesn't drink. She's a--

JO
I mean, just cause she's a nun doesn't mean she has to--

ALEX
She doesn't, though.

As Jo talks we intercut briefly back to the inn, with Xela's ale replaced with water, until Shaun interrupts Jo, at which point it snaps back to the greenhouse.

JO
Okay. The nun clutches her water in hand as--

SHAUN
Sorry, wait. You're the nun?

LAURA
Shaun--

ALEX
I'm the nun, yeah.

Alex meets Shaun's gaze. Shaun guiltily avoids eye contact.

SHAUN
Cool. Keep going.

An even briefer intercut to the inn before Jo is interrupted.

JO
Lastly, the Sub, his skin blue--

MIKE
Who also isn't drinking, by the way.

JO
Why not?

MIKE
Alcohol dries you out. I'm an amphibian.

JO
Guys, if none of you order anything, you're gonna get kicked out of this tavern. At least--

MIKE
It's an inn. Taverns serve ale, inns serve beer. That's the--

LAURA
Look, Lara's on her fourth beer anyway. And she probably tipped the innkeeper enough that--

JO
If she's three beers deep she'll start to take penalties to her rolls.

LAURA
She's a university student abroad. I'm just going for verisimili--

MIKE
Wait, is Pike facing the door?

JO
Do you need me to move him so he--

SHAUN
We're never going to get to the part where I get to kill things, are we?

3. INT. WAPANAK HIGH CLASSROOM

Rowan and a couple soccer players burst into the classroom, wearing hockey masks, brandishing buckets of paint. One of them, overexcited, tosses the paint into the empty room, where it splatters over the floor and desks, during Jo's VO.

JO
(v.o.)
You'll get your chance. These are violent times.

Rowan rips his mask off. The soccer player who tossed his paint lays the can down sheepishly.

ROWAN
What the hell? Shaun said they'd be here.

SOCCER PLAYER
Someone must have tipped them off. They're probably--

ROWAN
Shaun would have told us. Hang on.

He puts his paint down on a desk and pulls out his phone.

4. INT. WAPANAK HIGH GREENHOUSE

Jo is rearranging the tokens on the whiteboard while
Shaun's phone buzzes. He lifts it open and reads a text from Rowan: "you said d-9 right? where are you?" He puts the phone away nervously as Jo resumes her narration, which carries into the next scene as a voiceover.

   JO
   Okay. So Pike, back to the wall, is drinking from a bucket of seawater out of a straw; Lara's kinda drunk; Xela's drinking water and sitting where Pike used to be sitting; Ron's where he was. Your client is still sitting there not-

5. INT. SMILEY'S INN

The characters have rearranged their seats and beverages accordingly; Lara's propping her head up on her hands and her elbows on the table, making faces at Xela.

   SHAUN
   (v.o.)
   So what do we do now?

   JO
   (v.o.)
   Whatever you want.

   SHAUN
   (v.o.)
   That's not helpf--

   MIKE
   (v.o.)
   I take the box.

Pike lunges for the chest awkwardly as Jo speaks.

   JO
   (v.o.)
   Pike TRIES to take the box. Roll for sleight-of-hand.

The faint sound of a die rolling before Mike speaks. As soon as Pike gets his hands around the box, the cloaked figure reaches out, lightning-fast, and pulls it toward him.

   MIKE
   (v.o.)
   Three.

The cloaked figure's voice is gruff but powerful, with a hint of dramatic irony in it.

   CLOAKED FIGURE
   The contents of this chest have value beyond measure. If at any point in your journey you should
look inside the chest; I will know, and you shall not receive payment. If at any point in your journey you should decide to take the chest for yourself, I will know, and you will die painfully. You are to deliver the chest to the location I specify, at which point you will be paid five pounds of gold and given another chest. You will then return that chest to me, here, and receive a further five pounds of gold. Thereupon our agreement will be conc--

LARA
That doesn't sound like much of an adventure. I'm a wizardess, not a postwoman. Why don't you deliver your box yourself?

CLOAKED FIGURE
The roads are dangerous. You will be traveling very far, by foot or by canoe, so your passage will not be marked. Use assumed names. Never take the chest over the open sea. Never show it to anybody. You will be in--

PIKE
Sounds fun. I'm in. What's the conversion rate from pearls to gold?

LARA
Ten pounds of gold is a lot.

PIKE
Very good. I'm in, then. Where are we going?

CLOAKED FIGURE
The Peace Embassy, on Cape North.

XELA
No.

Everyone turns towards Xela in surprise.

6. INT. WAPANAK HIGH GREENHOUSE

Everyone turns towards Alex in surprise. Shaun looks on in amusement as the two of them speak in character. Jo gets really excited and starts giggling uncontrollably as the conversation heats up.

ALEX
Whatever treasure or... or weapon lies in that chest, I will not
deliver it into the hands of the mainlanders.

LAURA
Woman, watch what you say about my people.

ALEX
Your people killed my people, witch.

LAURA
The war is over. It's called the "Peace Embassy" for a reason. Simple minds like yours--

MIKE
I think we can manage to deliver the package without the assistance of the... nun. I wouldn't presume to--

ALEX
Without my assistance, you might manage, yes. But should I choose to oppose you?

LAURA
You would die so quickly and brutally that even your beloved goddess wouldn't be able to look upon your corpse, you ignorant--

SHAUN
Guys, can we just say yes so we can keep going?

MIKE
But this is the fun part!

SHAUN
You keep saying that. Okay. Ron also threatens Sister Alex and--

ALEX
Xela.

SHAUN
--And agrees to go on the damn adventure. And Shaun goes to take a piss.

He gets up and walks out.

ALEX
Should we wait for him?

LAURA
Bringing him in was a mistake. First village we come to I
MIKE
I was JUST gonna ask if this inn
had any whores in--

JO
We needed a fighter. Anyway, I
thought it might do him some--

LAURA
Back when Brian was running his
D&D campaign, one of his friends
played a sorcerer who always just
wanted to set fires and get his
caracter laid. He didn't even
like fighting.

Everyone is visibly discomfited by the reference to Laura's
brother.

LAURA
Anyway he got so annoying that
Brian kicked him to the curb and
brought me in instead. He let me
play a unicorn princess.

Awkward beat.

LAURA
The point is, I would rather have
a nine year old girl be our
fighter than someone who isn't
going to take this even slightly
seriously.

Another awkward beat.

MIKE
Yeah.

ALEX
So we're waiting for him?

7. EXT. WAPANAK HIGH SOCCER FIELD

ROWAN, GARRET, and the rest of the soccer team are doing
drills on the field while the COACH looks on. Rowan's phone
buzzes on the bleachers. He runs over, picks it up, reads.
Walks over to the Coach, who responds absently, watching
the team.

ROWAN
Hey, Coach.

COACH
Hey, Rowan, you seen Shaun around?
I think I kinda pissed him--
I think Shaun's just pretty beaten up that we didn't do anything to commemorate four months since Brian, you know?

**COACH**

Mmm.

**ROWAN**

You mind if we wrap it up early today, actually? We were gonna do a little memorial over where he crashed.

Coach nods.

**COACH**

Alright, you do what you need to do.

Rowan turns back to the team.

**ROWAN**

Alright, guys, we're done for the day!

He clasps an arm around Garret conspiratorially.

**ROWAN**

Hey, Garret, can you get us some beers?

**GARRET**

Yeah, I got it.

**ROWAN**

Alright, fly like the wind. We'll see you at the park in half an hour.

He watched Garret head towards his car in the parking lot. Then he smiles.

8. INT. WAPANAK HIGH GREENHOUSE

Shaun returns. Everyone seems relieved.

**SHAUN**

What'd I miss?

Jo's speech continues into the next scene as a VO.

**JO**

Nothing. Actually, all your conversations are rendered moot. While you were arguing no one noticed five bandits surround you. One of them slits the mysterious guy's throat from behind.
And so it has come to pass. FIVE BANDITS surround the
table. The INNKEEP is already dead. The FIRST BANDIT slits
the mysterious stranger's throat from behind. Ron stands
and draws his sword as Shaun talks.

SHAWN
(v.o.)
FINALLY I get to kill someth--

JO
(v.o.)
It's Pike's turn first.

As Mike and Jo talks, Pike flips backwards out of his
chair, does a handspring off of the SECOND BANDIT's
shoulders and launches into the air, grabbing the rafters
of the inn. All in slo-mo.

MIKE
(v.o.)
Alright, I flip out of my chair,
do a handspring off the bandit's
shoulders, and jump into the
rafters.

JO
(v.o.)
Roll for it.

Again, a faint rolling noise.

MIKE
(v.o.)
Eighteen.

JO
(v.o.)
It's done.

Slow-motion dissolves. All of the following happens at
once, within the span of a few seconds:

Ron spins and clashes swords with the THIRD BANDIT. Xela
teleports away from the table in a flash of light and
reappears across the room, surrounded in a glowing shield;
the FOURTH BANDIT'S axe hits harmlessly into the chair
she'd occupied. The SECOND BANDIT clumsily falls over after
Pike launches off of him; Pike cuts the chandelier and it
falls on the FOURTH BANDIT, crushing and immolating her.
The FIFTH BANDIT grabs Lara from behind, and she steps on
his foot, breaks a mug over his head, materializes and
icicle in her hand, and stabs it at his eye; he raises his
arm to shield himself and gets an icicle through his palm
for the trouble. The FIRST BANDIT cups her hands under the
CLOAKED FIGURE'S throat and drinks the blood she collects.
The wings of a bat explode out of her back, she grows six-
inch-long claws and shrieks inhumanly.
(v.o.)
Shaun's turn.

10. INT. WAPANAK HIGH GREENHOUSE

Shaun has apparently completely lost interest. He looks up as though surprised.

SHAUN
Finally. It's been, what, fifteen minutes since I got to go?

LAURA
Only five seconds game time. Everything--

JO
It'll go faster once we work up a rhythm.

SHAUN
Okay, I, uh, I try and stab the guy again.

JO
Roll it.

11. EXT. WAPANAK HIGH GREENHOUSE

Rowan, laying on the grass, watches Shaun through his binoculars. A few other soccer players crowd around him.

ROWAN
I don't know how he's subjecting himself to this.

SOCCER PLAYER
Are they playing SETTLERS OF CATAN? I've always wanted to--

ROWAN
Shut up. Savor this moment with me.

He puts away the binoculars and puts on his mask.

ROWAN
See, the difference between us and them is that we don't NEED to play pretend. What we're about to do is way cooler than anything they can make up in their little game.

12. INT. SMILEY'S INN

A few rounds later in the encounter. Gravity is upside-down. Everyone's fighting on the inn ceiling, ducking under the rafters. Broken bottles, furniture, and barrels are everywhere. The mysterious chest is lying in a corner,
The FIRST BANDIT is flying around on its batwings, wielding two crossbows. PIKE and RON are wrestling with the THIRD BANDIT. LARA is manipulating a giant snake made of fire, which battles with a loosely human-shaped cloud of black smoke emanating from the SECOND BANDIT's mouth. Xela sits cross-legged, floating a couple feet in the air, whispering to herself in meditation.

The FIRST BANDIT shoots two arrows into Ron's back; he keels over.

    JO
    (v.o.)
    Ron's in shock. He's dying.

As Alex speaks, Xela raises her hand, Shaun glows briefly, the arrows fall out and he rises gasping to his feet.

    ALEX
    (v.o.)
    No he's not.

    JO
    (v.o.)
    No he's not.

Pike gets the leg up on the THIRD BANDIT and breaks his neck between his ankles as Mike and Jo speak.

    MIKE
    (v.o.)
    Pike snaps the bandit's neck with his ankles.

    JO
    (v.o.)
    Yes he does.

    MIKE
    (v.o.)
    Hell, yes.

The First Bandit grabs Xela by the shoulder and picks her up; her fiery snake dissolves and the cloud of blackness begins to spread through the room. Shaun runs up and hacks the First Bandit's wing off during the VO.

    SHAUN
    (v.o.)
    Can I cut that one's wing off?

    JO
    (v.o.)
    Apparently you can.

He finishes it off as Lara rolls to her feet. The cloud of smoke threatens to engulf both Lara and Ron when Xela raises her other hand and a wind blows through the inn, dispersing the cloud. Lara snaps her fingers and a tiny
Black hole appears, sucking the last bandit into a singularity. As Jo narrates, gravity inverts again and everyone returns to the floor in a heap, only Pike landing with any degree of grace.

JO
(v.o.)
At the bandit mage dies, gravity returns to normal.

Pike starts running from corpse to corpse as Mike talks. Lara pulls to her feet, takes out a small knife, and kneels over the winged bandit. Xela mournfully surveys the carnage. Ron stands and looks out the window.

MIKE
(v.o.)
I check to see if the bodies have any cash on them.

LAURA
(v.o.)
Lara takes their eyes for later.

XELA
I'm going to perform their last rites. I need some candles and--

Ron ducks out of the way as a soccer ball bursts through the window, bounces against the wall and rolls around. Everyone stares at it.

13. INT. WAPANAK HIGH GREENHOUSE

Jo, Alex, Shaun, Laura, and Mike stare at the soccer ball that rolls over their whiteboard, knocking aside their tokens. There's a few seconds' silence.

MIKE
What--

Several more soccer balls all fly through the greenhouse windows, shattering the glass. They knock over the plants and batter the characters. Glass dust and dirt are everywhere. Mike shield Jo. Shaun gets down on his stomach. Laura catches a ball and uses it as a shield. Alex gets hit, breaking his glasses, knocking him to the ground, bleeding out his temple. Intercut to outside, where several masked soccer players in a line draw from a crate full of soccer balls, coordinating their kicks in volleys like medieval archers. Jo looks at Shaun, enraged. Shaun avoids eye contact.

ACT FOUR

1. INT. WAPANAK HIGH GREENHOUSE

The dust settles during the voiceover. JO coughs. MIKE jumps out a gaping hole in the glass. LAURA stands over Alex, worried. Shaun is gone.
(v.o.)
There are those who would deny the presence of evil in the world. Others consider evil to be a necessary product of balance and refinement.

LAURA
Alex? Look at me. Can you hear me?

JO
Shaun's gone.

LAURA
I think he's concussed.

JO
He must have told them where we were. Do you think--

LAURA
Mike! Get in here! Alex is hurt!

Mike reenters, cutting his arm against the glass.

MIKE
Ow. God, those scoundrels. Those fiends. Those mother--

LAURA
This is serious. I think we should get him to a doctor. Can you--

MIKE
In five minutes. Those blackguards are getting a--

JO
I'll tell his mom.

She pulls out her phone and leaves as Laura and Mike argue. His eyes move about dimly.

LAURA
I don't care about payback right now, okay, Mike? Can we at least--

MIKE
Look, Laura, it's a concussion, okay? What, didn't he have a trampoline as a kid? Just give him a--

ALEX
I'll be fine.

LAURA
You're still bleeding. He's still bleeding!
MIKE
Fine. Alex, you think you can make it to the car?

2. INT. WAPANAK HIGH HALLWAY

Jo walks down a hallway alone, composing a text to Waskiewicz. It reads: "Alex got hit by a". She looks down and notices a trail of dirty footprints leading down a hall. She closes her phone and follows them.

3. EXT. WAPANAK HIGH PARKING LOT

During the VO, Laura sits down next to Alex in the car and closes the door as Mike starts the engine. He pulls out of the parking lot.

JO
(v.o.)
Those who deny the evil natures of others are in danger of failing to perceive the evil within themselves.

ALEX
Really, guys, you can just take me home if we're done playing for--

LAURA
We'll just go in and out of the emergency room, okay, sweetie? Jo's gonna get your mom and she'll take you home fr--

ALEX
Can you not patronize me for--

MIKE
Those CURS!

He points out the window. Laura looks and sees a car pulling out of the parking lot a bit ahead of them, turning onto a main road.

MIKE
That's Rowan's car. They're heading to Grissom Park.

LAURA
Who c--

MIKE
Because that's where they always hang. They're going the long way. I know a short--

LAURA
Mike!
Give me two minutes!

ALEX
Mike, you don't need to--

MIKE
Two minutes!

Mike guns the accelerator. The car peels out of the parking lot and runs a stop light at full speed, going a different direction than Rowan's car.

4. INT. ROWAN'S CAR

Rowan drives. Five other soccer players are crowded into the car. Rowan's phone buzzes. He picks it up.

ROWAN
Did I get you?

SHAUNSHAUN
What the hell was that?

ROWAN
You looked bored. I broke up the monotony. You should be thanking--

SHAUN
Yo, Waskiewicz is hurt pretty bad! And this is all going to come back on me once Rushcliffe figures out what--

ROWAN
Relax. Come down to Grissom. Garret brought beer. We're gonna do a bonfire. Nothing's gonna--

A knock on the bathroom door.

JO
(offscreen)
Shaun.

SHAUN
Dammit.

He snaps the phone shut.

ROWAN
Shaun?

He closes his phone then turns toward the backseat.

ROWAN
I don't know what's with that guy late--

SOCCER PLAYER
He turns to see Mike's car heading towards him at full speed.

ROWAN

Holy--

5. EXT. WAPANAK ROAD

The voiceover carries through this scene into the next. Rowan swerves. Mike's car keeps going straight, missing him narrowly.

JO

(v.o)
The triumph of good over evil is one of faith, not of power. Good believes in evil more than evil believes in good.

6. INT. MIKE'S CAR

Laura screams and closes her eyes. Mike is laughing maniacally.

LAURA

What the hell what the hell what the hell--

MIKE

That was SO worth it! Okay, NOW to the emergency room.

7. EXT. WAPANAK ROAD

Mike pulls a rapid u-turn.

8. INT. ROWAN'S CAR

Rowan sees the U-Turn in his rear-view mirror.

ROWAN

Gillespie's coming around for more.

SOCCER PLAYER

He's crazy!

ROWAN

He's got a death wish. Wouldn't you if you were Mike Gillespie?

9. EXT. GRISSOM PARK

Garret sits on a picnic table with a case of beer and sees Rowan pass by on the road, going very fast. On the other side of the street is a cross leaning against a tree, surrounded by flowers and empty--on the cross reads BRIAN FONG--5/26/12. Garret waves as he yells.
Hey!

10. INT. ROWAN'S CAR

Rowan continues to watch the rear-view mirror.

SOCcer player
Rowan, you missed our stop.

Rowan
I'm just trying to get us some distance.

11. EXT. WAPANAK ROAD

Rowan's car stops and does a U-Turn.

12. INT. MIKE'S CAR

Mike notices the U-Turn.

MIKE
Oh, you want some more, huh?

Laura is on the verge of tears. She forcibly buckles Alex's seatbelt as she talks.

LAURA
Mike. Please.

MIKE
Hey. HE'S coming at ME this time.

He slams on the accelerator. Laura cowers.

Multiple cuts follow of Rowan and Mike staring each other down as their cars approach. Laura, weeping, reaches forward and pulls on the emergency brake. The car makes a CLUNK noise and keeps going. Mike slaps her away.

13. EXT. GRISSOM PARK

Jo's narration begins as the cars approach on either side of the shot. Finally Mike swerves, after which Rowan swerves in the opposite direction. Mike clips the side of Brian's cross as he pulls to a stop on the roadside. Laura runs out of the car and throws up on some flowers, kneeling before the cross.

JO
Or perhaps the triumph of evil over good stems from its wholeness, its adaptability. Evil can consume anything while remaining itself;

Garret runs over as he shouts:

GARRET
14. INT. ROWAN'S CAR

Rowan screams in triumph and high-fives his nervous shotgun passenger.

    ROWAN
    Show Gillespie to mess with the best.

15. EXT. GRISSOM PARK

Mike gets out of the car, seeming genuinely sorry.

    MIKE
    Laura--

    GARRET
    Gillespie. Don't. I'll take her home.

    MIKE
    I didn't think--

    GARRET
    What the hell is wrong with you? This isn't one of your games.

16. INT. MIKE'S CAR

Mike slams the door, starts the ignition and turns to Alex as he talks.

    MIKE
    You okay?

    ALEX
    I stopped bleeding.

    MIKE
    Well, your mom's expecting you at the emergency room anyway. You wanna--

    ALEX
    Whatever. Let's go.

    MIKE
    Don't fall asleep.

    ALEX
    I won't.

17. EXT. WAPANAK ROAD

Mike's car drives off through the forested road. It's getting dark.

18. INT. WAPANAK HIGH BATHROOM
Jo is sitting on a counter by a sink. Shaun stands opposite her.

JO
So there are two ways this can proceed. One--

SHAUN
Is Alex okay?

JO
They're taking him to the hospital but I don't think it's serious. A concussion, maybe.

SHAUN
Dammit. I didn't know they were going to do that. I just--

JO
You didn't care what they were going to do. You didn't even hate me. You just--

SHAUN
You're the one who blackmailed me into joining your stupid game in the first place! You don't actually give a--

JO
Two ways. One: I tell Waskiewicz what happened and I leave your name out of it. You were right here with us, you got hurt too, whatever. Two: I tell her that you led them to us. And cause we can't proanyone else was involved, you--

SHAUN
Look, I'll keep going with the game, okay? It's pretty fun, whatever. I--

JO
No. Shut up. I never told you your character's backstory, did I?

SHAUN
My characters'--what?

Jo closes her eyes. Her speech continues into the next scene as a voiceover.

JO
Ron signed up to fight as soon as the war started. He had a wife. He told her he was going to defend his homeland against the invaders.
RON and several other islanders are being heralded onto an Islander junk by a military officer. A soldier stands by with a pile of swords, shoving one into each of their hands in turn. Ron holds his sword, testing the weight of it, watching the sunlight reflect off it.

20. EXT. A SHIP AT SEA

The same as act one, scene one, from a different perspective. During the VO Ron hops up onto a Panoply warship, briefly spars with and cuts down two PANOPLY SOLDIERS who are defending the deck.

    JO
    (v.o.)
    And he did defend his homeland.
    For three years.

Another soldier runs up to Ron, swinging a sword, and Ron guts him. During the voiceover, Ron looks down at the soldier to see ALEX in Panoply uniform. He grimaces. Alex coughs up blood and dies.

    JO
    (v.o.)
    The last person Ron killed in the war was a fifteen-year-old boy.

The scene begins to mirror act 1 scene 1 exactly as giant tentacles rise up and begin to crush the ship. Jo's voiceover continues as Ron leaps off of the warship as the tentacles begin to pull it under. He lands on the water and sinks like a stone. Two SUBS grab him by each arm and haul him to the surface. They drag him onto a canoe, where he stares up at the sky, coughing up water.

    JO
    (v.o.)
    Ron realized that he had never been fighting for his homeland or to defend any ideal. He was fighting simply to fight, to satiate a primal need to cause pain and death.

21. INT. RON'S HOUSE

During Jo's VO the door to a darkened cottage opens, shedding light on the empty interior. Ron stands in the doorway. He walks inside, but finds no one. He begins to cry.

    JO
    (v.o.)
    By the time he returned home, his wife was dead, killed by a plague spread from the mainland.
During the VO, Ron, stepping into the inn, catches sight of the EXTRAORDINARY INDIVIDUALS SOUGHT flier. He reads thoughtfully.

**JO**

(v.o.)
With nothing to do and nowhere to go, he searched far and wide for something to kill. And he--

23. INT. WAPANAK HIGH MENS' ROOM

As before. Shaun looks like he might be either bored or ashamed.

**SHAUN**

I think I get the point. Look. The Coach said he was gonna kick me off the team unless I quit my job. Waski--Alex is... he feels good to hurt. Partly cause he's Waskiewicz' kid, but, I dunno, he just looks so weak, I just get mad when I look at him, you know?

He meets Jo's eyes. Jo shrugs.

**SHAUN**

This is just all so stupid. Look, I know I'm kind of a dick, but I can't get suspended over this and I don't think I deserve to.

Jo thinks for a few seconds.

**JO**

Okay. When you see Cass, this is EXACTLY what you're going to say:

24. INT. ALEX'S HOSPITAL ROOM

The whiteboard and gaming materials have all been arranged around ALEX's bed. He's bandaged up and looks more-or-less fine. JO has gotten herself the nice bedside armchair, while LAURA and MIKE are sitting in cheap folding chairs, avoiding each other's eyes. Laura has coffee; she looked frazzled, but okay. There's another chair for SHAUN, but he's standing to speak to WASKIEWICZ, who has just entered. Shaun is not a very good liar.

**SHAUN**

I don't know who it was exactly, but it doesn't really matter. The point is, it could have been any one of them. That's why I'm quitting the soccer team. I love the game, but I don't want that to turn me into the sort of person
CAST OF CHARACTERS

JOSEPHINE “JO” RUSHCLIFFE—White, 17, female. Intelligent, unempathetic, and manipulative.

RON—Pacific Islander, 30s, male. Gruff and violent, but not without honor.

CASSANDRA WASKIEWICZ—White, late 40s, female. Prim and usually soft-spoken. Fiercely maternal.

SHAUN NAPPA—White, 16, male. Angry and insecure.

COACH BALDWIN—Black, 30s, male. Friendly but not compassionate.

LAURA FONG—Hmong, 16, female. Cool and insightful. Deeply distressed below the surface.

GARRET—White, 17, male. Nice, earnest, and simple-minded.

MIKE GILLESPIE—White, 17, male. Overweight, overbearing, and manic.

MATH TEACHER—White, 60s, female. Apathetic and embittered.


A CLOAKED FIGURE—?????, ??, male? Finds great joy in his own mystery and in the promise of adventure.

PAUL NAPPA—White, 40s, male. Drinker and gambler. Has given up on hope and self-respect.

PIKE—Blue-skinned amphibian, 40s, male. Quick-witted, sticky-fingered.

XELA—Pacific Islander, female, 30s. Unyielding and unafraid in her faith and convictions.


MRS PANCOST—White, female, 40s. Cheery in the face of immense stress.
(regarding the box)
He said if we opened it, he'd know.

PIKE
Yes, well, it doesn't matter now what he knows.

XELA
I confess I'm curious. What manner of--

RON
Open it up, then. Carefully.

Shot from inside the chest as everyone stands around. Lara unlatches it and opens it slowly during the VO. Then everyone stares into it, confused.

JO
(v.o.)
The decision to open the box, in conjunction with the ordeal they had passed together, would bind the four strangers together irrevocably.

26. INT. HOSPITAL ROOM

Jo opens her eyes and stares about the room, grinning in triumph.

JO
It's a crab.

27. INT. SMILEY'S INN

A crab stares up from inside the chest, clicking its claws adorably. Everyone looks at it. Pike raises his hand.

PIKE
I'm keeping it.

Cut to end credits.