ESCAPE FANTASIES

Pilot

By Matthew Amylon
CAST OF CHARACTERS

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

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.


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


MRS PANCOST—White, female, 40s. Cheery in the face of immense stress.

Her DAUGHTER—White, female, 4. Adorable.

Several WAPANAK HIGH STUDENTS

Several SOCCER PLAYERS

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

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

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

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

Several ISLANDERS
Several PANOPLY SOLDIERS
Several SUBS
Three PANOPLY ADMIRALS
Several ISLAND LEADERS
A SUB KING
Several MONKS
Several NUNS
An INNKEEP
Five BANDITS
Two PISTOL SHRIMP
A SQUID
Several DRAGONS
A CRAB
TEASER

1. EXT. NINE ISLANDS

Several large PANOPLY warships funnel into a canal between two tropical islands. Their crews regimented, uniformed, largely Caucasian. Holding the line are smaller ships crewed by a loose alliance of distinct native cultures.

Chaos breaks out battle breaks out and Jo begins her voiceover.

JO
(V.O.)
The Panoply, the great continental empire whose citizens worship all gods but fear none, suffered their first major military defeat when they attempted to assimilate the Nine Islands and their nameless Goddess.

The voiceover proceeds as an ISLANDER, tattooed with tentacles, stands on a skiff beside one of the warships. Arrows hit the deck around him as he slashes open his own stomach with a knife, mouthing chants.

Tentacles spill out of the hole he has cut as he falls into the water. Giant tentacles rise 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 bloodstained, leaps off the warship as the tentacles crush it. He hits the water and sinks.

Two SUBS—lithe, amphibious men—grab him by each arm and drag him onto a canoe, where he stares up at the sky, coughing up water.

2. INT. TEMPLE OF THE GODDESS

An opulent native temple. Three PANOPLY ADMIRALS avoid eye contact with a hodgepodge of ISLANDER LEADERS and sign a document as Jo continues her voiceover, which continues into the next scene.

JO
(V.O.)
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. Both the school's paint scheme and the graffiti coating it are hideous. JO RUSHCLIFFE, female, holding a binder, her posture perfect, knocks.

4. INT. WASKIEWICZ' OFFICE

CASSANDRA WASKIEWICZ, female, late forties, prim, drinks tea, stares at a computer. Her office cramped. Wall calendar, motivational posters, minifridge. She twitches at the knock.

JO enters of her own accord. Waves. Waskiewicz smiles.

WASKIEWICZ

Morning, Jo. Shouldn't you be in homeroom?

Jo sits down, clears space on Waskiewicz' desk, places the binder there..

JO

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

She flips open the binder, showing hundreds of sheets of high-gloss paper, upon the first of which reads CREATIVE ROLEPLAYING SOCIETY -- PROSPECTUS AND MANUAL. Waskiewicz reads.

5. EXT. WAPANAK HIGH

The school's ugliness extends to the exterior. SHAUN NAPPA, sixteen, athletic, locks a 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, plague, and unrest.

6. INT. WAPANAK HIGH LOBBY

Shaun walks into the crowded lobby. The COACH, 30s, overly friendly, sees and intercepts him.

He and Shaun dance a bit while they talk as Shaun tries to get pass.

COACH

Shaun! Am I gonna see you at
practice today? Playoffs are--

SHAUN
I work Wednesdays, Coach. We--

COACH
Last I heard you were gonna reschedule.

SHAUN
I tried. Didn't work. I'm good for--

COACH
Shaun, if your boss isn't willing to be flexible with you on this, why are you still working there? You see yourself--

SHAUN
I need the money more than I need the practice, Coach. You know I'm--

COACH
Shaun, you're sixteen and don't have a car. How much money d'you really need?

He grabs Shaun's shoulder.

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--

Shaun pushes past if he speaks.

SHAUN
Coach. I gotta get to homeroom.

7. INT. WASKIEWICZ' OFFICE

As she speaks Waskiewicz thumbs through the binder. We see maps, charts, scripted dialogue.

WASKIEWICZ
My husband used to play DUNGEONS & DRAGONS in the '80s. I thought it was all 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, Jo? 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, it can't be used against me. This all looks impressive, 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 friendship--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, stares at the back of the neck of her boyfriend, GARRETT, 17, attractive and earnest.

A couple rows down, MIKE GILLESPIE, 17, overweight, manic, savors a breakfast sandwich. An elderly MATH TEACHER thumbs through a paperback.

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

The homeroom teacher gestures and the class rises. Laura lipsynchs the pledge; Mike shouts it in a proud baritone; everyone else mumbles. 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 glance in Laura's direction at the mention of
"family" before turning to face the flag silently.

Laura groans. Garret reaches back, takes her hand in his.

GARRET
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
(uncomfortable)
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?
Shouldn't I get a say as to when
we can move on?

9. INT. WASKIEWICZ' OFFICE

Waskiewicz puts down the intercom mic.

WASKIEWICZ
(distressed)
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
Well, Jo, you should prepare yourself for the possibility that no one will show up anyway.

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

WASKIEWICZ
You and Mike. Of course. If I agree to this will you go to class?

JO
Absolutely, if that's what--

WASKIEWICZ
Congratulations on your club. Now go learn something.

She hands Jo the binder.

JO
Thanks!

10. INT. WAPANAK HIGH HALLWAY

JO emerges into a half-empty hallway. Pulls out her phone.

ALEX WASKIEWICZ, 15, timid, well-dressed, smiles at her as she walks by.

SHAUN walks by, swings his leg out, trips Alex. Alex hits the floor, his nose bleeding. A couple people laugh. Jo grimaces, 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

MIKE's smartphone buzzes. The text from Jo reads "We're on. Initiate ad campaign."

During V.O. he puts his phone away, grabs his backpack,
stands on his 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?

Nearly everyone except the teacher looks up.

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

He overturns the backpack. Dozens of condoms spill out,
scattering improbably about the room.

Students grab at them, spilling out of chairs, knocking
over desks. LAURA, amused, still seated, watches GARRET
snatch several condoms out of the air.

Mike cackles. The chaos rouses the teacher.

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

_MIKE_
Straight away, ma'am.

Mike salutes as he speaks.

_MIKE_
_(to classmates)_
Thank you and you're welcome!

He blows kisses on the way out the door as the bell rings.
The students rush out, tripping over condoms.
Garret takes Laura by the arm and hands her a condom.

_GARRET_
Mike is my 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:
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, pockets the condom.

12. INT. WAPANAK HIGH HALLWAY

Alex rises to his feet, picks up his backpack by the wrong end. His stuff spills everywhere. He sighs.

Mike jogs through the hallway triumphantly. 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
What a dick!

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

MIKE
Hey, Alex. You al--

ALEX
I'm fine.

Jo watches. Mike helps Alex to his feet; 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 chortle.

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...

(spits the word)
that CRAP. Sit down.

Alex sits, reading the inscription on the condom under the desk.

Mike tries to slip out the door. Waskiewicz points at 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
Mo,. I fell. Can I have a Kleenex?

Mrs. Waskiewicz passes him a box of tissues as she speaks. He struggles to manage the nosebleed.

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 ain't no 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 old? I can't help if--

JO barges in.

JO
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. Deliberate 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
(pleased with herself)
I'm not going to 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!

ACT ONE

1. EXT. SMILEY'S INN--NIGHT

Laughing, music, light emanate from inside. During the VO a CLOAKED FIGURE stands before the door, nails up a proclamation. 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 binders). Over the VO Laura approaches her and holds up a condom.

JO
(v.o.)
To faithfully follow the path laid before you takes either intense conviction or extreme apathy.

LAURA
I'm in.

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

LAURA
Yeah.

JO
Why?

LAURA
I mean if you're gonna be like that--

JO
No, no, it's just--

LAURA
You think all tabletop players are like you see on the TV, plus you, 'cause you're a special snowflake. 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
Which Alex?

JO
Waskiewicz.

LAURA
Ugh. You know, Shaun might get kicked off the soccer team over Alex ratting him out this morning.

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 his house. Rusty chopper in driveway. A 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, 40s, unshaven and lethargic, sits on the couch, watching football. The house is filthy.

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.

PAUL
School, then.

Shaun makes finger-quotes as he talks.

SHAUN
(tries to act gruff)
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.

SHAUN
I got it.

5. INT. WAPANAK HIGH CAFETERIA
Alex grips his bag lunch, scanning the crowded cafeteria, during the VO. He sees Jo, Mike and Laura sitting together. Mike waves.

JO
(v.o.)
Those who ignore destiny's call are often crushed under the burden of complacency and mundanity. And those who refuse to hunt become the easiest prey.

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

SOCCKER 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 guiltily. Laura notices 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.

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--

ALEX
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
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, makes a protracted fart noise.

Mike
Boooooriiiiiiiiiiiiiiing.

Laura
I've never been comfortable with 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, indicating the entirety of the cafeteria.

Mike
Why would anyone ever want to be human?

Laura
What's your character?

Mike
He's a Sub. A, um, a fish-man guy.

He opens up a binder. His speech continues into the next scene as a voiceover.

Mike
So yeah, my name's Pike. I used to live with his peeps in a big coral reef city, called, um--

6. EXT. POLYPHONY STADIUM

PIKE, 20s, gilled, blue skin, webbed hands, sly, twitchy, darts through the crowd, picks pockets, cuts purses, retrieving handfuls of pearls, while the VO continues.

JO
(v.o.)
It's called Polyphonia.

MIKE
(v.o.)
Right. So, I grew up poor, big fish, little pond, all that, and decided to make a life for myself on the streets.

7. INT. POLYPHONIAN KING'S CHAMBERS

Over the VO Pike steals into a lavishly-decorated underwater bedroom. An aged SUB KING sleeps on an anemone bed. Beside the bed rests a pearl-inlaid crown. Pike considers it.

MIKE
(v.o.)
So I became a master thief kinda fish ninja thing, but got too ambitious, and tried to steal this king's crown.

Pike lifts up the crown. A bubble resembling the head of sleeping king forms within it.

The head screams, awakening the king, who backs away.

At the same time the door opens and the room floods. Two SUB GUARDS enter, wielding pistol shrimp. They fire at Pike.

Pike covers his ears, dropping the crown. He regains his composure, pulls a small squid from his belt, and squeezes it, flooding the room in ink.

8. EXT. OCEAN--DAY

Pike surfaces, stares up at the sun, looks to the island on the horizon. As Mike narrates he looks at the crown in his hand, then begins to swim. The narration continues into the next scene as Mike's speech.

MIKE
(v.o.)
So now I'm the ocean's most wanted man, and I'm on the lam in the Islands of Whatever, trying to find somewhere to pawn this crown.

9. INT. WAPANAK HIGH CAFETERIA

As before. Mike shuts the binder.
MIKE
Basically I'm a badass. I can do this thing with my dagger where--

LAURA
Thief-types are boring. I usually 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 snorts.

JO
I guess so.

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

Jo closes her eyes, 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. The monastery is a combination castle and cathedral atop an island mountain.

Camera cuts to the courtyard, where dozens of MONKS sit in 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 you in this moment.

He offers a fist. Alex stares at it, 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.

    JO
    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 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.
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 convent's steeple.

It hacks up an oil-coated bezoar, catching it in its teeth.

The dragon's rider lights the bezoar with his spear. The dragon flings it into the courtyard, where it explodes.

As more bezoars fall around her, Xela raises her staff. A shield of light coats her and those around her, protecting them.

13. EXT. MOUNTAIN SIDE

As Jo narrates, Xela makes her way down a mountain face. She stops, looks at the village below. 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 thinks 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.

Jo turns to Mike. Mike nods. Jo shrugs.

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
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. She 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 didn't snitch. I'm not trying to hurt anyone, Laura, but I'm in a lot of trouble here. Tell Rushcliffe--

The intercut here signifies 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 good 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. Just tomorrow's session. Tell him.

Another short time jump.

SHAUN
What, like Dungeons & Dragons?

And another.

LAURA
He's in.

Another table hosts soccer players, including GARRET.
Laura hands the phone to ROWAN, 18, lean and hungry look.

LAURA
Shaun needs to talk to you.

Rowan grabs the phone.

ROWAN
Speak.

SHAUN
Turns out the Waskiewicz kid didn't snitch on me. Lay off him.

ROWAN
If that's what you want.

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.

        ROWAN
        Yeah, thanks for clearing that up.

        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?

        ROWAN
        Absolutely. So you'll be missing
        practice again?

        SHAUN
        Yeah.

        ROWAN
        Alright, see you when I see you.

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

        JO
        See? No harm done. Everything's going to work out.

ACT TWO

1. INT. WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL MY LIFE

An empty beige-laden suburban cafe. SHAUN sits behind a register in doing homework.

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.

        JO
        (v.o.)
        The northern continent has a god
        for every iota of their society.
        Their entire existence is suffused
        with divinity, robbing the
        divinity of all its value.

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
I didn't realize Rushcliffe was assigning homework. That wasn't part of the deal. Stop that. Sit down.

Shaun puts the pennies back in the dish, puts two quarters from his own pocket in the register. As he talks, Mike puts a condom in the tip jar, sits at a table, opens up the binder, pulls out a pen.

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!

SHAUN
What, humans? I don't--

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. You'd be both--

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

MIKE
Pike.

SHAUN
Okay, then, Paun. 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, 4-ish.

As Shaun and Pancost talk, Mike plays peek-a-boo with the daughter.

SHAUN
Hey Mrs. Pancost.

PANCOST
Afternoon, Shaun.

SHAUN
Usual?

PANCOST
That'd be lovely.

She pays exact change and then drops a couple ones in the tip jar, pretending not to notice the condom.

SHAUN
That'll be just a minute.

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

DAUGHTER
Tanks, 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; Alex sits in the passenger's seat. He stares out 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 Nappa will have to miss the first week. Are you sure you--

ALEX
Shaun'll be back tomorrow. I got Jo to promise to admit that she just threw out Shaun's name so that she could pull Mike out of detention. You--

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. You know she used to split
her babysitting money with me so I could buy pizza and she could run off to Mike 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. They both break 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 two 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 epilepsy so I started--

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
What's it to you?

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

MIKE
Can we get back to your character?

4. INT. GARRET'S CAR--AFTERNOON

GARRET and LAURA are 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; he grabs her wrist and sits up.

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

LAURA (confused by the interrupted foreplay)
It's not a board game. It's more, like, a collaborative story. Or 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
Point. No, it's really exciting, though. Look.

5. INT. PANOPLY LIBRARY

A lantern-lit library within a castle. Shelves reaching to
the ceiling. LARA, 20s, manicured and monocled, sits
reading in a circle of books.

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, naked, sits with a GOAT in a runic circle of stones.
As Laura narrates, she slits the goat's throat.

As the goat bleeds out, a BEING OF FIRE arises before her.

The being touches Lara's forehead, and disappears inside
her. Her eyes turn red and she looks up at the moon.

LAURA
So Lara got an ego 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, eyes still red, stands on the deck of a ship as it
approaches an island. 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
    Excuse me?

    GARRET
    Just skip it. Trust me.

    LAURA
    Why? Is this about Shaun? Are you going to--

    GARRET
    You can just start next time.

    LAURA
    Garret. What's Rowan planning on doing to Jo?

9. EXT. WAPANAK HIGH SCHOOL

Shaun stands out by the bike rack. Jo exits the school and approaches him during the V.O.

    JO
    (v.o.)
    The laws of the Goddess are fair, but to the ordinary, the weak, to those who suffer, she can be very cruel.

    JO
    You're in. Go to homeroom.

Shaun sighs in 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. They awkwardly shake hands as they talk.

SHAUN
Thanks for helping me out with this.

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

SHAUN
Greenhouse? We aren't meeting in D-9?

JO
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. Each has a mug of ale. A chandelier provides light.

An INNKEEP cleans glasses and minds his own business.
Everyone stares each other down waiting for the figure to speak as Jo narrates.

JO
(v.o.)
The man before you has said nothing for almost three minutes. You grow bored of him and survey one another instead. There’s the knight, longsword hanging at his hip, his eyes cold, full of memory. The red-eyed mainlander sits and smiles as though she knows something the others don’t. The nun stares her down, staff clutched in one hand as she sips her ale with the other. Lastly--

2. INT. WAPANAK HIGH GREENHOUSE--EARLY AFTERNOON

Tables stacked with potted plants. JO, MIKE, ALEX, LAURA and SHAUN sit cross-legged on the floor. Papers, binders, pens, markers, dice everywhere. A scale map of the inn inscribed on a whiteboard in dry-erase marker.

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 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, actually. Taverns serve wine, inns serve beer. That's the--

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

JO
If she's drunk she'll take penalties to all her--

LAURA
She's a college girl studying abroad. There's no way she isn't--

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 rearranges the tokens on the whiteboard while Shaun's
phone buzzes.

He flips it open and reads a text from Rowan: "you said d-9
right? where are you?"

He puts the phone away 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
three beers deep; 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 scene has altered 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 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.

CLOAKED FIGURE
(melodramatic with a hint of irony)
The contents of this chest have value beyond measure. If, during your journey, you should look inside the chest, I will know, and you will die. Should you decide to take the chest for yourself, I will know, and you will die. You are to deliver the chest to the location I specify, whereupon you will be paid five pounds of gold and given another chest, which you will then return to me, whereupon you will be paid another five pounds of gold, whereupon 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. Show it to nobody. 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 Panoply Peace Embassy, on Cape North.

XELA

No.

Everyone turns towards Xela in surprise.

6. INT. WAPANAK HIGH GREENHOUSE

Everyone turns towards Alex in surprise. Everyone is increasingly amused as the conversation proceeds.

ALEX
Whatever treasure or... or weapon lies in that chest, I will not hand it over to 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 leaves.

ALEX
Should we wait for him?

LAURA
Bringing him in was a mistake. First village we come to I GUARANTEE he interrupts the quest going to look for a brothel.

MIKE
I was JUST gonna ask if this inn had any whores up ins. Why can't a brother--

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 character laid. He didn't even like fighting, 'cause it was too complicated.

Everyone is discomfited by the reference to Brian.

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 while the COACH looks on.

Rowan's phone buzzes. He picks it up, reads.

He walks over to the Coach, who responds absentely, watching the team.

ROWAN
Hey, Coach.

COACH
Hey, Rowan, you seen Shaun around? I think I kinda pissed him--

ROWAN
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 by the crash site.

Coach nods.

COACH
Alright, you do what you need to do.

Rowan turns back to the team.

ROWAN
Alright, boys, we're done for the day!

He clasps an arm around Garret.

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 has returned, to everyone's relief.

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 five bandits surrounded you. You don't notice until one of them kills the mysterious guy..

9. INT. SMILEY'S INN

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.

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

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

As Mike and Jo talk, 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, clashes swords with the THIRD BANDIT.

Xela teleports away from the table, and reappears across the room, surrounded in a glowing shield. The FOURTH BANDIT's axe hits her empty chair.

The SECOND BANDIT clumsily falls over. Pike cuts the chandelier and it falls on the FOURTH BANDIT, crushing and immolating her.

The FIFTH BANDIT grabs Lara from behind. She steps on his foot, breaks a mug over his head, and materializes an icicle in her hand.

She 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. She grows claws, bat wings, fangs, and starts to shriek.

    JO
    (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 lays in the grass, watches Shaun through binoculars. A few other soccer players crowd around.

    ROWAN
    I don't know how he's subjecting himself to this.
SOCCER PLAYER
Are they playing SETTLEERS OF
CATAN? That game's --

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 or amongst the
rafters. Everything is broken or on fire except for the
mysterious chest, lying in a corner.

The FOURTH and FIFTH BANDITS are dead. The FIRST BANDIT is
flying around on its batwings, wielding two crossbows.

PIKE and RON are battling with the THIRD BANDIT.

LARA is controlling a giant snake made of fire. It wrestles
with a cloud of black smoke emanating from the SECOND
BANDIT's mouth.

Xela floats cross-legged in the air, meditating.

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.

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

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

Pike breaks the THIRD BANDIT's 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 lifts Xela into the air by the shoulders. Her snake dissolves and the black cloud begins to spread through the room. Shaun 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.

Ron finishes the FIRST BANDIT off as Lara rolls to her feet. The cloud of smoke threatens to engulf both Lara and Ron.

Xela raises her other hand and a wind blows through the inn, dispersing the cloud.

Lara snaps her fingers and a black hole briefly appears, sucking the last bandit in.

As Jo narrates, gravity inverts again. Everyone returns to the floor in a heap. Pike lands gracefully.

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

Pike starts running from corpse to corpse as Mike talks. Lara kneels over the winged bandit with a small knife.

Xela mournfully surveys the carnage.

Ron 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 same soccer ball as it rolls to a stop amongst them. There's a few seconds' silence.

MIKE

What--

Several more soccer balls all fly through the greenhouse windows, shattering the glass, knocking over the potted plants.

Mike shields Jo. Shaun gets down on his stomach. Laura uses a ball as a shield.

Alex gets hit, breaking his glasses, knocking him to the ground. He starts bleeding out his temple.

Intercut to outside, where several masked soccer players kick soccer balls in coordinated volleys.

Jo stares at Shaun in a rage.

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.

JO

(v.o.)
There are those who would deny the presence of evil in the world. Others consider evil to be part of a necessary process 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. Alex's 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 calms down.

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".

She looks down and notices a trail of dirty footprints leading down a hall.

She closes her phone and follows the trail.

3. EXT. WAPANAK HIGH PARKING LOT

During the VO, Laura joins Alex in the car as Mike starts the engine and begins to pull 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? 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 another car pulling out.

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!

MIKE
Give me two minutes!

ALEX
Mike, you don't need to--

MIKE
Two minutes!

Mike floors it. The car runs a stop light at full speed.

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?

Scene intercuts with INT. WAPANAK HIGH MENS' ROOM. Shaun sits in a stall.
SHAUN
What the hell was that?

ROWAN
You looked bored. I thought you'd be grateful that--

SHAUN
Dude, Waskiewicz is hurt pretty bad! And this is all going to come back on me once Rushcliffe puts two and two--

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, turns toward the backseat.

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

SOCCER PLAYER
Yo, watch out!

He sees 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 manically.

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; on the
cross reads BRIAN FONG—5/26/12.

Garret sees Rowan drive past at full speed; he waves as he
yells.

GARRET
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, on the verge of tears, 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 each other. Mike swerves. 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; good has a weaker stomach.

Garret runs over as he shouts:

**GARRET**

Hey! Laura!

14. **INT. ROWAN'S CAR**

Rowan screams in triumph.

**ROWAN**

Show Gillespie to mess with the best.

15. **EXT. GRISSOM PARK**

Mike gets out of the car, 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 work out. 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 prove anyone else was involved, you--

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

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

SHAUN
My character's--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.

19. EXT. NINE ISLANDS VILLAGE HARBOR--MORNING

RON and several other islanders are being heralded onto an Islander junk by an officer.

A soldier hands each of them a sword as they board. Ron stares at his sword.

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.

He 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. He hits the water and sinks.

Two SUBS grab him by each arm and haul him onto a ship.

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 the house opens; Ron stands in the doorway. He walks inside, but finds no one. He begins to weep.

JO
(v.o.)
By the time he returned home, his wife was dead, killed by a plague spread from the mainland.

22. EXT. SMILEY'S INN

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
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... 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 don't deserve to get suspended over this.

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 fine.

Everyone sits around in chairs; Mike and Laura avoid eye contact.

There's another chair for SHAUN, but he's standing to speak to WASKIEWICZ, who has just entered.

**SHAUN**
(terrible liar)
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 who would do that kind of thing.

**WASKIEWICZ**
(doubtful)
That's... very brave of you, Shaun. I'm proud of all of you for reacting so quickly and responsibly. Now you're sure you didn't see any faces?

**MIKE**
They were wearing masks.

**LAURA**
Sorry.
JO
Try asking Coach Baldwin.

WASKIEWICZ
I'll do that. I don't know why these sorts of things are happening in Wapanak all of a sudden. I think it's because people are still trying to process what happened to your brother--

She smiles at Laura, who turns away.

WASKIEWICZ
--Do you think I should call an assembly about it? Somebody should--

ALEX
Mom. If you don't mind. We have a game to finish.

25. INT. SMILEY'S INN

During Jo's VO, Pike dribbles one of several soccer balls scattered around.

Lara goes over to the chest. Ron approaches Xela.

JO
(v.o.)
In the wake of battle there's a momentary surge of elation, then a dim awareness of death. What remains when all else fails is a sense of camaraderie with those who have survived.

RON
I believe I owe you a life debt, Sister.

XELA
Just "Xela," please. And it is to the Goddess that--

LARA
(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.

Everyone stands around the chest. Lara opens it slowly during the VO. 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.