ESCAPE FANTASIES

Pilot

By Matthew Amylon
CAST OF CHARACTERS

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

CASSANDRA WASKIEWICZ—White, 50s, 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—Black, 17, male. Genuine and comfortingly normal.

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
Eed
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.

A chaotic battle breaks out as 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--seventeen, perfect
posture, rational and uncompromising--holding a binder,
knocks.

4. INT. WASKIEWICZ' OFFICE

CASSANDRA WASKIEWICZ:0--50s, prim, a conflicted
politician/matriarch/educatrix--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. Oughtn'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, angry and insecure--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 DRAGONS & DUNGEONS in the '80s. I thought it was all computer 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, is it? Wait, don't tell me: does your game encourage children to become lifelong learners both inside and out of the classroom? I wrote that mission statement, Jo. You've put a lot of thought into this, but I'm not sure I want to allot school funds to 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. It's time for morning announcements.

8. INT. WAPANAK HIGH CLASSROOM

LAURA FONG--sixteen, effortlessly cool, compassionate but defensive--sits half-asleep, stares at the back of the neck of her boyfriend, GARRETT--17, earnest, comfortably average.

A couple rows down, MIKE GILLESPIE--17, overweight, manic, wears irony as armor--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

Fibber.

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
Frankly, Jo, I wouldn't anticipate
terribly high turnout in any case.

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

WASKIEWICZ
You and Mike. I might have known.
If I agree to this, will you go to
your class?

JO
Absolutely, if that's what--

WASKIEWICZ
Well, congratulations on your
club. Now go learn something.

She hands Jo the binder.

JO
Thanks, Cass!

10. INT. WAPANAK HIGH HALLWAY

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

ALEX WASKIEWICZ--15, well-dressed, timid, bright,
sightful--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 PRESENT:
THE WAPANAK HIGH CREATIVE ROLEPLAYING SOCIETY

INAUGURAL MEETING 2:30 PM, DECEMBER 27TH, IN ROOM D-9

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 all--

     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, have you ever tried standing up to bullies?

     ALEX
     It's no big deal. 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, might you stop by my office? I've prepared 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
Good day, 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
Quiet. Who did this?

ALEX
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'll be attending to you shortly. 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 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. Someone did THIS to my son and you're siding with him against me, because--what? Because I'm an authority figure? 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. Please.

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. 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
Hey, Jo.

JO
Laura. Something wrong?

LAURA
I'm in.

JO
You're in? As in the game?

LAURA
Yep.

JO
...Why?

LAURA
I mean if that's the way it's
gonna--

JO
No, no, it's just--
LAURA
Sorry for not being a pimply virgin boy. 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. I'm glad to have you. We're making Alex's character at lunch.
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
(without missing a beat)
Well, Shaun could stand to be taken down a peg.

3. EXT. NAPPA HOUSEHOLD

Shaun parks his bike out in front of his house during the V.O., which carries into the next scene slightly. Rusty chopper in driveway. A pit bull on a chain barks at him. He lets the bike fall on the grass.

JO
(v.o.)
The world is glutted with old souls, clinging to comfort and vice, the call of the future drowned out by the clamoring of the past.

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
(smiling wickedly)
Yeah. Her kid tripped over my foot.

PAUL
Principal sends her own kid to that school? If I were her I'd--

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

PAUL
(awkwardly)
Anyway, fridge is damn near empty.

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

PAUL
Naaaaah, 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 crushed under the weight of 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:

   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 idiotic. 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. Didn't want me in detention for the first meeting of her club.

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

   LAURA
   Jo, it was none of your business.

   JO
   I didn't think--

   LAURA
   You need to tell the soccer team it was you, so Alex doesn't get--

   ALEX
   It's no big deal, I'll just--

Laura shushes him.

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

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
For now. First thing 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
Booooooriiiiiiiiiiiiiiing.

LAURA
I've never been comfortable with games deciding your abilities through your race.

ALEX
What's wrong with humans?

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

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
His name's Pike. I used to live
with my 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, started making my living 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, guy, 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, 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
TL;DR I'm a badass. I can do this thing with my dagger where--

LAURA
You're a thief. Boring. I play wizards. There are wizards, right?

JO
Character creation is a point-buy system. You have 110 points to spend on skills and spells. Spells are under the green tab.

Laura flips to the green tab and encounters a phone-book-looking checklist of spells. She grins evilly, pulls out a highlighter and starts marking things off. Jo turns to Alex.

JO
Alright, Alex, rogue and mage 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
(blushing)
I guess so.

ALEX
So how'd I 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. MOUTAINSIDE

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 violence and sin. 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
(to Jo)
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
Hey, Laura. What's up?

LAURA
Hey Shaun. I'm putting Jo Rushcliffe on. Talk to her.

SHAUN
Why would I--

Laura tosses the phone to Jo.

JO
Hey, Shaun.

SHAUN
Hey, Jo. I'm talking to you.

Jo looks around. Mike and Laura glare expectantly.

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

SHAUN
You spastic 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. Will you tell Rowan to call off--

SHAUN
If Waskiewicz didn't snitch, he didn't snitch. I don't want anyone to get hurt, but I'm in 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 seeing him.

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

MIKE
So you lied to her, then.

JO
Cass has never caught me lying to her about anything. I don't want to open that door.

(beat)
We still need a fighter. 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, sadistic, suffering privately.

LAURA
Shaun needs to talk to you.

Rowan grabs the phone.

ROWAN
Speak.

SHAUN
Waskiewicz isn't a snitch. Lay off him.

ROWAN
If that's what you want.

SHAUN
It's Jo Rushcliffe. Anyway, both of them are going to be in her board game club tomorrow after school.

Rowan looks sideways at Laura.

ROWAN
Yeah, thanks for clearing that up.

SHAUN
I'll be there too. Make her
suffer, but I can't be involved.

ROWAN
Absolutely. So I won't see you at practice?

SHAUN
Yeah.

Short time jump. 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
What is this, homework? That wasn't part of the deal. Stop that. Sit.

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, golems, unsapients, kitsunes, strays, minha mães, asura--

SHAUN
Can I just be, like, a dude?

MIKE
A human? God, I don't understand you people!

SHAUN
What, humans?

Mike glares, sticks his tongue out, and 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.

SHAUN
I'm sure I'll manage.

MIKE
Look, you can't be Shaun, star soccer player, and Shaun, mass-murdering adventurer. There needs to be a wall.

SHAUN
Sure. What's your guy?
MIKE
Pike.

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

The bell rings. Shaun ducks back behind the counter and talks nervously as MRS. PANCOST, 30s, 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
I like Ron. So, let's talk weapon specializations. Are you--

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)
Do you know who else is in it?

ALEX
Just some people.
(beat, then, spitefully)
Shaun's in it.

WASKIEWICZ
Is he now?
(beat)
Well, he'll be missing the inaugural meeting tomar--

ALEX
He'll be back tomorrow.

WASKIEWICZ
Will he now?

ALEX
Yeah. Jo's gonna tell the truth. She--

WASKIEWICZ
Jo was just looking out for you. She cares for you, you know. Remember when she babysat you? You weren't ever happier than when you--

ALEX
Mom. She split her pay with me. I'd buy pizza. She'd go home to do her homework. We--

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

ALEX
Both. Kids tell grown-ups what they want to hear. I was twelve, I didn't need a babysitter and she--

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--

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. EXT. GRISSOM PARK--AFTERNOON

A park adjunct to a playground. On a tree on the other side of the road is a cross; on the cross reads "BRIAN FONG--5/26/12."

ROWAN, GARRETT, and several other soccer players are drinking beers and grilling burgers, talking inaudibly during the voiceover.

JO
(v.o.)
In a religion where everything is both forbidden and permissible, morality bows to ambition. To make sense of the world, one must rule it.

Rowan sits down on a rock. Garret sits next to him.

GARRETT
Hey, are you good?

ROWAN
Huh? Oh, yeah. Just thinking through this thing with Rushcliffe.

GARRETT
You're going through with that? I mean, Shaun--

ROWAN
Shaun's part of the team, Garret. This right here is what makes us a team. We stand together.

Beat.

GARRETT
Laura's going to be there, I think. She brought it up in--

ROWAN
Well, make her not be there. She'll be--

GARRETT
Dude, I can't order her around. Me and Laura don't--

ROWAN
I told you getting in with her was
a mistake.

GARRET
She's still messed up over Brian.

Beat.

ROWAN
Yeah, well--

GARRET
I know.

ROWAN
Four months and she still gets to be center of the universe just 'cause she was his--

GARRET
She just needs something to take her mind off stuff. And this is--

ROWAN
Didn't she start banging you to "take her mind off stuff"?

GARRET
--This is a pretty okay way to take her mind off stuff that isn't gonna hurt anyone or get us all--

ROWAN
Lucky for you Brian died. What was it, a week after the accident you--

GARRET
That didn't hurt anyone either.

ROWAN
People are gonna get hurt no matter what we do. It's just life.

Beat.

GARRET
I'm gonna skip practice tomorrow, okay?

ROWAN
It's your call.

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.

MIKE
You're probably going to want to invest in a torch and some rope, just for your basic--

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

Beat.

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

MIKE
Nah, I know my place. I'm just the chauffeur. 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
Get me another cappuccino, young man. I'm dry.

Mike rattles his empty cup. Beat.

SHAUN
Three fifty.

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 game thing, right?

   LAURA  
   It's not a board game. It's more  
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.

   LAURA  
   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 from 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 
herself. Her eyes turn red and she looks up at the moon.

   LAURA  
   So Lara tried to summon this demon  
whose name has, like, seven  
syllables and no vowels, so you  
know he's hardcore. But then he  
possessed her so now she's a
super-badass wizard but he’s taking her over so he can reincarnate and end 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 find something that’ll exorcise the guy and her her free.

8. INT. GARRET'S CAR

Garret is cracking up.

    LAURA
    What? Dude, it's so fun! You--

Garret kisses her.

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

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

    GARRET
    But anyway, yeah, uh, you probably shouldn't go tomorrow.

    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. Is that a problem?

    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 clear with Waskiewicz. Go to homeroom.

Shaun sighs in relief.

SHAUN
She's not making me talk to her?

JO
She doesn't want to see your face.

Beat. They awkwardly shake hands as they talk.

SHAUN
Thanks for helping me out with this.

JO
No problem. See you after school in the greenhouse?

SHAUN
I thought we were in D-9. Did--

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, 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--

   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
Really?

MIKE
Alcohol dries you out. I'm a fish.

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
(exasperated)
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 help--
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?

CLAOKED FIGURE
The Panoply Peace Embassy, on Cape North.

XELA
No.

Everyone turns towards Xela in surprise.

XELA
Whatever treasure or... or weapon lies in that chest...

6. INT. WAPANAK HIGH GREENHOUSE

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

ALEX
...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 laid.

Everyone is discomfited by the reference to Brian.

LAURA
He got so annoying that Brian kicked him out and brought me in instead. He let me play a unicorn fairy princess.

Awkward beat.

ALEX
So we're waiting for him?

7. EXT. WAPANAK HIGH SOCCER FIELD

ROWAN, 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 absently, 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, good job today!

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 SETTLEMENTS 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, enraged.

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. Figured 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. We're gonna do a bonfire. Nothing's gonna--
SHAWN
No. You're out of order, Rowan.
You should not be the captain of
this team right now.

ROWAN
And who should? You? You can't
even make it to practice half the-
-
SHAWN
I'll tell all of them about you
and Brian.

Rowan, suddenly terrified, looks over at the others.

ROWAN
I'm in the car right now.

SHAWN
I'll tell the coach. I'll tell
Laura. I'll tell your parents. You
think those kids want a fag
captaining their football team?

ROWAN
Shaun, okay, look, you're upset,
but you're part of the team, okay?
I'll--

A knock on the bathroom door.

JO
(offscreen)
Shaun.

SHAUN
Dammit.

He snaps the phone shut.

ROWAN
Shaun? Shaun?

He closes his phone, turns toward the backseat, laughs
nervously.

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 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

Rowan's car drives right by Brian's cross.

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.

14. INT. ROWAN'S CAR

Rowan screams in triumph.

ROWAN
Show Gillespie to mess with the best.

SOCcer PLAYER
What the hell was that?

Rowan stares him down.

ROWAN
Look, he started it, we finished it. That's why we're us and he's
him.

Beat.

SOCCER PLAYER
Are you crying?

He is. He gives another nervous laugh.

ROWAN
You're lucky I didn't piss myself. Gillespie, man. He's a mad dog.

15. EXT. GRISSOM PARK

Mike gets out of the car, genuinely sorry.

MIKE
Laura--

LAURA
Get away from me.

MIKE
I forgot--

LAURA
Right, because if my brother hadn't just died in a car crash, you playing chicken on the way to the emergency room would have just been _peachy_.

MIKE
You wanna drive the rest of the way there?

LAURA
I'm calling Garret. You're leaving.

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
Alex okay?

JO
They're taking him to the hospital. Concussion, maybe.

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

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

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

JO
Two ways. One: I tell Cass what happened and I leave your name out of it. You got hurt too, whatever. Two: I tell her that you led them to us. You become the scapegoat--

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 get it. Look. Coach said he was gonna kick me off the team unless I quit my job. Waski--Alex is... He's 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 a dick, but I can't get suspended. My dad...

He shrugs. 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. Garret stands by Laura.

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 the Coach.

WASKIEWICZ
I'll do that. This sort of thing shouldn't happen in this town. 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. Garret rolls his eyes.

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.