

THIS IS ABOUT ME!

Written By
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{4th draft, unfinished and unedited}

INT. BARNES AND NOBLE — DAY

2011, small town USA, a massive, peaceful Barnes and Noble. A family walks in, we see EMMA (thirteen, awkward, cute) enter. Her parents, JIM and AMANDA stand beside her, they're excited, but Emma looks annoyed.

Amanda and Jim both speak with Mediterranean/Middle East accents.

JIM
We won't be long.

Amanda hands Emma some money.

AMANDA
Find some way to entertain
yourself.

Jim and Amanda share a quick peck before splitting off and leaving Emma all alone.

SERIES OF SHOTS — EMMA ENTERTAINS HERSELF

A) Emma picks up a notebook she likes, looks at the price, puts it back down.

B) Emma mimics the silly poses of the models on the of romance novel covers.

C) Emma walks into the bathroom, there's a big mysterious puddle.

D) Emma buys a coffee, sips it, spits it back out, she doesn't even like coffee.

E) Emma buys a Frappuccino, she loves it, the sugar makes her buzz.

F) Emma checks the prices on all the stationary, she can't afford any of it.

G) Emma mimes the heroes on the covers of fantasy novels, holding a sword high, using magic powers.

INT. BARNES AND NOBLE — DAY

Emma walks the isles, bored and embarrassed. She's done everything but look at books. She wanders through celebrity autobiographies, everything from Shane Dawson to president Obama.

She keeps her head down, looks back up, she's in the YA section. It's mostly girls on the covers of these novels, it's not something Emma's ever seen before. She's intrigued.

She picks up a dystopian novel, checks the blurb. Emma smiles, she likes the sound of it. Then— She holds it to her chest, maybe she'll buy it.

Jim appears from behind a bookcase, hands in his pockets, disappointed.

JIM

They don't make real sci-fi these days, it's just—

Jim sees the book in Emma's hand.

JIM (CONT'D)

Did you pick something up?

Emma nods. Amanda appears next, five or six novels under her arm.

AMANDA

We done?

(to Emma)

Oh honey you found something! I'm so proud of you! Oh I hope you like it!

Jim, Amanda and Emma check out. Amanda pulls a Barnes and Noble tote out of her handbag and gives it to the cashier. Jim pulls out a Barnes and Noble membership card, they get twenty percent off.

INT. CAR - DAY

Emma sits in the back as the car swerves onto the highway. Amanda's books sit next to Emma, taunting her. Emma opens up her skinny YA novel, think Divergent, Hunger Games, Shatter Me.

We see the inside, the font is nice and big, Emma's pleasantly surprised.

We watch as her eyes follow the text, slowly at first, she speeds up, then—

INT. SCI-FI HANGAR BAY - NIGHT

We're in a room crowded with teens dressed for the prom, but the clothes are just a little too out there to be modern day. Stormtroopers line the walls like chaperones—all armed.

We see the YA HERO, a young woman in a ballgown. She stands, waiting.

INT. TESTING ROOM - DAY

No context, we see the YA Hero again in a jumpsuit this time, she stands in a stark ominous room.

The room begins to fill with water, she panics, her life in danger.

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

A vast courtyard with futuristic elements. The YA Hero is joined by a YA BOY. They're surrounded by dead bodies, blood everywhere. YA Boy holds a gun. He grabs the Hero's shoulders and shakes her violently.

YA BOY
Everything they told you is a lie!

INT. TRAINING GROUND - NIGHT

Our YA Hero trains with a punching bag. The YA Boy shakes his head at her.

YA BOY
You're doing it wrong, let me show
you something called ... a kick.

YA Boy shows our hero a really simple kick, she looks at him like he's a genius.

EXT. BALCONY- NIGHT

YA Hero and YA Boy look out at the night, taking a break from training, rebelling, magic powers, or whatever it is they do in this book.

They share a kiss.

INT. CAR - DAY

Emma closes the book slightly, she doesn't want her parents to see the 'risqué' scene.

INT. TRAINING ROUND - DAY

In the middle of the crowd is our YA Hero. She lifts a car over her head.

YA HERO
I have magic powers!

INT. EMPTY FIELD - NIGHT

Our YA Hero is running for her life, pulling YA Boy along as explosions fire in the background, choppers, helicarriers, fighter jets overhead - tanks, soldiers, hummers coming their way. Just, way too much stuff.

INT. OFFICE - NIGHT

Sci-Fi office for a bad-guy. YA Hero stands over who we're to assume is the villain of the novel. YA Boy stands at the side, here to back her up.

YA BOY
You're so smart and brave for starting the revolution. But the greatest power of all, separate from your super strength, is your compassion.

YA Hero throws down the gun.

YA HERO
(to villain)
I forgive you.

INT. COURTYARD - DAY

A new day has dawned, YA hero and YA Boy walk side by side, they've saved the whole world, or *something* like that. They join hands, then suddenly-

A throwing star from *literally* nowhere hits YA boy in the chest. They both go down. YA Hero cradles her boyfriend as he chokes on his own blood.

She looks around to find the culprit, but sees nothing,
Ninjas got him maybe.

YA HERO

No!

YA BOY

You'll have to find out who killed
me in- in-

YA HERO

In what!? In what!?

She leans in to hear him whisper his final words.

YA BOY

In the next book ...

He dies tragically, our hero screams in anguish.

INT. CAR - DAY

Emma pulls back from the book, exhausted and thrilled. The
car pulls into the drive way, they're home. Jim and Amanda
exchange a look.

AMANDA

Did you read the whole thing?

Emma nods, surprised at herself.

JIM

In two hours?

Emma nods again, then smiles the widest smile she can. Her
life has changed completely.

MONTAGE - EMMA PICKS UP READING

- Emma reads in the shower.
- Emma reads in the car.
- Emma reads in the school cafeteria.
- Emma reads upside down.
- Emma reads while eating.
- Emma alternates between three books.

-- Emma reads while running in gym class.

-- Emma reads in bed.

-- Emma and Jim buy books.

-- Emma reads in class.

INT. EMMA'S BEDROOM - DAY

Emma's bedroom is eclectic, colorful and covered with books. She sits in the middle, alternating between novels, surrounded by empty soda cans and chocolate bars.

Amanda walks in, hauling a heavy box with her, Emma doesn't look up. Amanda takes the room in, frowns.

AMANDA

Delivery.

Emma looks up, excited. She marks her books, and closes them all. Amanda hands over the box—it's more books, almost too heavy for Emma to carry.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Honey?

Amanda closes the door.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Don't you think you should broaden your horizons? You can't read just one genre.

EMMA

YA is a demographic.

AMANDA

Of course, but, and hear me out, I think you should broaden your horizons, maybe just a little?

Emma shrugs, she can't say no. Amanda pulls *To Kill A Mocking Bird* from her pocket and hands it to her daughter. Emma groans.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Try it again.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Emma sits in class, ignoring the lesson, doodling in her notebook. At the head of the class we see MRS. CAVIL (mid sixties, chubby cheeks, big rosy glasses).

The bell rings, the students stand instantly. One by one they hand in book reports. Emma's last in line.

Mrs. Cavil sees the copy of To Kill a Mocking Bird, in the front pocket of Emma's backpack.

MRS. CAVIL

Nice to see you branching out. It's a wonderful novel.

Emma fails to hide her cringe.

MRS. CAVIL (CONT'D)

You don't like it?

Emma shrugs, then spots flyers on Mrs. Cavil's desk for a book fair.

EMMA

Oh cool, a book fair!

Emma grabs the flyer.

MRS. CAVIL

Yes! We're holding a manuscript competition.

EMMA

What's a manuscript?

MRS. CAVIL

An unpublished book. We already have some submissions.

EMMA

Are you entering?

MRS. CAVIL

Oh heavens no, my writing days are well behind me. I'm one of the judges.

(points to the book)

I really hope you give it a chance.

EMMA

Is there an age limit, or like, a genre you can't write?

Mrs. Cavil takes the flyer back.

MRS. CAVIL

No, I have to be honest, the competition is tight. It's mostly writers of a certain age. It's for serious authors.

EMMA

I'm serious.

MRS. CAVIL

Of course you are, I simply want you to understand what's being asked of you.

EMMA

How long does a novel have to be?

MRS. CAVIL

Middle Grade novels are around sixty thousand.

EMMA

Pages!?

MRS. CAVIL

Words.

EMMA

Oh. What if I don't want to write a Middle Grade?

MRS. CAVIL

Adult and YA novels average seventy to a hundred thousand.

EMMA

That's a lot.

MRS. CAVIL

It is.

EMMA

I can do that.

MRS. CAVIL

In one month?

EMMA

What?

INT. SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Emma sits at a large table of kids chatting, though Emma's not a part of any conversation. She pushes the food around on her plate, and holds a book open with the other hand. Two kids turn to her.

GIRL

(to Emma)

Hey, what are you guys studying in math?

EMMA

Algebra. Why?

BOY

Whoa, we really are in the AP class!

GIRL

My mom said our class was the advanced, and yours was ... the normal.

EMMA

Mine's the advanced.

BOY

No, it isn't.

GIRL

We finished algebra months ago.

BOY

You're in the dumb class!

GIRL

Leave her alone, come on.

Emma puts her book down, ready to argue.

EMMA

No, I'm not.

BOY

Yeah. You. Are.

EMMA

No. I'm. Not.

The boy picks up Emma's book.

BOY

You're not smart just cuz you read
all the time. Everyone knows this
crap is girly trash anyway.

Emma gets up, rushes away, leaves her food.

INT. SCHOOL - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emma comes in, she's crying. The room's spinning. She's short
of breath, she's having a panic attack. She hurries into a
stall, starts to gasp.

KATE (O.S.)

You okay in there?

Emma freezes, looks up. Above her looking over the wall we
see KATE (thirteen, hair like a cloud, wide eyes, dungarees).

Kate quickly disappears again, we see her shuffle under the
stall with her backpack, then come to sit beside Emma.

KATE (CONT'D)

Are you okay?

Emma nods, the worst has passed.

KATE (CONT'D)

Good. I'm Kate. You're that girl
that reads a ton.

Emma nods again, then sees a drawing hanging out of Kate's
bag and takes it without asking. It's unique, a blue and pink
color palette.

EMMA

Dude, this is so good. You're so
talented.

Kate quickly takes it back from Emma, and puts it away.

KATE

(embarrassed)

Thank you.

EMMA

Everyone thinks I'm stupid. I mean,
everyone's always thought I was
stupid especially my parents. But
I'm not, you know?

Kate nods, taken aback by the sudden speech.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I'm so sick of it. I'm smart, I can do smart people things. Why do I have to read these boring books to prove it?

A moment of silence passes as Emma waits for Kate to jump in.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Do you read?

KATE

Um. Yes, no. I mean, all the time. I love books and reading, and holding them. Novels. Love them.

EMMA

Top three, go!

KATE

Um. Twilight. Hunger games, and—

EMMA

(interrupting)

I love the part where Peeta gets a robot leg. And the um, the, the, the dogs at the end look like the corpses of the dead tributes. That's so sick. Wanna be friends?

KATE

Yes.

INT. SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Emma and Kate finish their lunch, side by side.

EMMA

I'm going to enter this competition, for writing books. That'll show 'em. Did you know a book has to be at least seventy thousand words long?

KATE

Is that a lot?

EMMA

I think so? Like, most of our book reports are a thousand tops. So, it's like ... seventy book reports.

KATE
That's not impossible.

EMMA
Deadline's in a month.

KATE
Seventy book reports in a month?

EMMA
Totally doable. Let's write a YA
novel together! That way I only
have to write ...

KATE
Thirty five book reports.

EMMA
Sure! It'll be hard, we'll have to
stay up late, and eat lots of
snacks, and come up with a story
and-

KATE
I'm in.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - FOYER - DAY

Kate and Emma walk in. Kate's house is all beige, nothing too personal on display, no toys, books, or food left out. Plenty of twee wooden signs saying stuff like 'live, laugh, love' and 'life is good'.

On the wall are two framed doctorates. Photos of Kate and her brother are taken professionally at a studio, nothing candid.

We see DWAYNE Kate's brother (late teens, gangly, glasses, sweater vest).

DWAYNE
I hear you guys are writing a book?

EMMA
Totally.

DWAYNE
What kind?

EMMA
Dystopian.

DWAYNE

Cool, cool, like Blade Runner? You read a lot of dystopia?

EMMA

Oh sure. Matched, Divergent, Shatter Me, Hunger Games of course.

DWAYNE

Sounds like the kind of thing my girlfriend reads. Never really heard of them.

EMMA

Well I've never heard of Blade Gunner.

DWAYNE

Blade Runner. It's kind of an underrated sci-fi gem.

KATE

Okay?

(to Emma)

My room's first on the right.

EXCITED, Emma dashes upstairs with her laptop. Kate pulls her much taller brother down by the sweater vest.

KATE (CONT'D)

Don't screw this up for me. Don't say weird stuff around her, like Blade Runner, okay? No one likes Blade Runner.

DWAYNE

Lots of people like Blade Runner.

KATE

Yeah, old people. It's dull and Harrison bored is creepy.

DWAYNE

Hey—

KATE

What?

DWAYNE

I'm happy you found a friend.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Emma enters. Kate's bedroom is all pink and fun, she has countless drawings up on the wall Emma can't stop looking at. Kate walks in next.

The two girls lock the door.

They sit down at Kate's desk, and open the laptop.

KATE
So what do we do?

EMMA
We start writing, duh.

Emma opens a google doc, and quickly adds Kate as a collaborator. Emma's hands hover over the keyboard, waiting.

KATE
Should we name it first?

EMMA
How about Verdigris?

KATE
Very cool word.
(beat)
What's a Verdigris?

EMMA
I think it's the green pigment in rust? I think it's why the Statue of Liberty's green. My dad laughed at me once for not knowing what it was, so I looked it up after.

KATE
He laughed at you!?

EMMA
Not literally ... but it felt like he wanted to.

Emma types 'VERDIGRIS' in big capital letters at the top, then she types in 'BY EMMA AND KATE' no last names.

EMMA (CONT'D)
What font should we use?

Emma starts cycling through fonts. We see their names and title in Papyrus. They shake their heads. She changes the font again.

We see it in Chiller. Kate looks scared. Emma changes the font to Baskerville.

KATE
Classy.

EMMA
Too classy.

Emma changes the font to Comic Sans.

KATE
That's the one my mom uses when
making labels.

Emma changes the font to Courier. Their eyes go wide, they've found it.

EMMA
Are we ...

KATE
(finishing her sentence)
Professionals?

Emma readies her hands to write, but she has no ideas.

KATE (CONT'D)
How do we start?

EMMA
I don't know. How do other books
start?

Kate pulls one of Emma's books from her backpack. She flips through the pages—

KATE
The hero looks at herself in the
mirror, and describes her bedroom.

INT. YA BEDROOM - DAY

We see a featureless, white room, a CGI space that hasn't been fully rendered. Emma and Kate pop in like magic, both wearing white hard hats and overalls, they're members of the Verdigris construction crew.

EMMA
I open my eyes, the sun is hot and
orange.

A bed pops in, white and featureless. Under the covers is a blank life sized mannequin with super long equally white hair.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I'm warm under my sheets. I sit up.

The mannequin sits up.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I look around my bedroom, I see—

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

EMMA

What should she see?

The two girls stare off into space, then look around Kate's room and start to list things.

INT. YA BEDROOM - DAY

EMMA

I see a poster, a desk, a drink from the night before, and the sweet gentle rays of the sun streaming through my curtains that hang over my french windows that are cracked and weathered with age and time and wear and pain, the kind of pain only I understand, no one else, especially not my parents.

The window pops in.

KATE

We already mentioned the sun. Also, It's a dystopia. She has french windows?

EMMA

Maybe it's a fancy dystopia. We don't have time to edit.

Emma clears her throat.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Fine, but also the window was really cracked and ruined, and looking at it reminded me of my miserable life that I didn't like at all. Also, flying cars.

Emma looks to Kate, satisfied. Kate nods in agreement, what a good fix.

EMMA (CONT'D)

What's next?

KATE

How about ... what kind of paintings she has on the wall?

EMMA

On my wall I had two pink-

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Kate's room is littered with soda and snacks. Both girls are barely awake, the clock says one in the morning.

EMMA

How much have we written?

KATE

Like, five thousand words.

EMMA

On just the bedroom? Damn we're good.

INT. YA BEDROOM - DAY

The room has a derelict 2000s does 60s look to it, futuristic, but rusted. The mannequin stands at one of three mirrors. The room is cluttered with toys, clothes, furniture, drinks, paintings and food.

Emma and Kate stand in the corner, thoughtful.

EMMA

In the mirror, I see long brown hair, a thin nose and hollow cheeks.

The mannequin's blank face is gone in an instant, replaced by CRYSTAL, she looks like an older Emma that's grown into her features, glamorous and cool. Her skin's a little too smooth, pimples gone, wearing easy to spot 'natural' makeup.

Emma has a moment, something about Crystal empowers her.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

EMMA

How much left before seventy thousand? Five thousand words, that's only like ...

KATE

Sixty five thousand.

EMMA

Right, sixty five thousand left! Wait what? That's ...

Emma holds up her phone and starts counting the days left in the month.

KATE

We have twenty six days left. We wrote five thousand words today. So ... If we write five thousand words every day, including weekends, for twenty six days, we'd have one hundred and thirty thousand words.

EMMA

Whoa, really? This is gonna be so easy.

EXT. KATE'S HOUSE - PORCH - NIGHT

Kate stands at the door, Emma is on the porch with her bag and laptop in hand. Kate's street is clean and well lit, plenty of big houses around.

KATE

Are we really gonna do this? Enter this competition?

EMMA

I mean, I wasn't sure, but it's like, super easy.

KATE

I know, right!

EMMA

Why does it take these people
literal years to write a novel? Do
other people just suck at writing
books or something?

KATE

I think so?

They pinky swear with big smiles.

EMMA

One month.

KATE (CONT'D)

One month.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Emma sits in the back of class, trying to hide her face as
Mrs. Cavil starts handing out slim strips of paper. Kate sits
at the front eager.

MRS. CAVIL

Today's spelling test is on R
words. R words. Take out your
spelling books.

The kids take out their spelling books. Mrs. Cavil walks the
aisles, inspecting. Emma sinks lower in her chair.

Mrs. Cavil looks over at Emma's desk, doesn't see a spelling
book, and stops.

MRS. CAVIL (CONT'D)

Young lady, where is your book?

EMMA

I don't have it.

MRS. CAVIL

You were specifically instructed to
bring it today.

EMMA

When!?

MRS. CAVIL

Don't raise your voice at me!

Emma flinches and sinks lower.

MRS. CAVIL (CONT'D)

We do this every Tuesday. You know
this, and yet, time and time again,
you lie to me.

(MORE)

MRS. CAVIL (CONT'D)

(Emma tries not to cry)

You know you're supposed to bring
it in!

Emma starts to cry. The classroom is deathly silent. Mrs.
Cavil is so wrapped up in herself, she hasn't noticed.

EMMA

I forgot.

MRS. CAVIL

Do you think I can't tell when
you're lying!?

Emma starts gasping for air, still Mrs. Cavil doesn't notice.

KATE

Mrs. Cavil, please, you're
upsetting her!

Mrs. Cavil finally *really* looks at Emma, she's gasping for
sobs. Mrs. Cavil pulls Emma from her seat and wraps her arms
around her in a hug.

The moment of comfort is more a willing Emma to be quiet,
rather than soothing her fears.

Emma's tears only get stronger, she can feel the insincerity
in Mrs. Cavil's touch and it only makes her panic more.

INT. SCHOOL - NURSES OFFICE - DAY

Emma sits on a sofa with a sick bucket. Mrs. Cavil and the
SCHOOL NURSE stand over her, watching.

SCHOOL NURSE

Panic attack.

MRS. CAVIL

She's thirteen ...

Emma settles back, she doesn't need the sick bucket, she's
not sure why anyone gave it to her.

SCHOOL NURSE

What did you say to her?

MRS. CAVIL

My lord, nothing. She just started
shaking.

SCHOOL NURSE

Strange. All I can do is call her
parents again.

EMMA

Please don't.

Emma puts the bucket down, and stands.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I'll go back to class.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Bright and early at the weekend. Kate and Emma are setting up
Kate's desk. They have snacks and drinks prepared. Emma sits
down, ready to write.

KATE

You want a pen? My parents found
out we were doing this writing
stuff, and bought me ... so many
pens.

EMMA

Huh? Why?

KATE

They think I'm gonna be a writer or
something. It's all they talk about
now. They do this all the time,
suddenly I'm destined to be a
novelist.

Kate dumps a case full of pens onto her bed, the steady
stream keeps going like a clown's handkerchief. When it stops
there's a mountain.

KATE (CONT'D)

It feels like if I don't become a
writer they'll be mad. Want one?

Emma nods, her hand hovers over the pile, indecisive,
excited, and picks a pink one with a pom pom. Emma puts it
behind her ear. Kate gasps.

KATE (CONT'D)

You look like a novelist.

EMMA

I know. Now ... shall we begin?

EXT. PALACE - THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

Golden throne room, flying cars outside, think Flash Gordon. Crystal stands in a crowd of teens. Death troopers in unnecessarily scary uniforms surround the courtyard.

To the sound of Sci-fi laser trumpets, Mrs. Cavil enters dressed as a space empress, massive crown, flashy dress and cape.

Mrs. Cavil sits on the throne, her face is projected above as a hologram.

MRS. CAVIL

Today marks the anniversary of the intellectual tournament!

The crowd cheers.

MRS. CAVIL (CONT'D)

Any and all freezers will be rooted out! Glory to the establishment!

We see Emma and Kate stand at the side of the stage in their overalls, watching.

KATE

What's a freezer?

EMMA

They're these people that freeze up. They just lock up, like goats, you know?

The sci-fi trumpets sound again, a palanquin makes it's way through the teens towards the throne, someone important inside.

MRS. CAVIL

Please welcome your eighty seventh annual senior in charge man of executive vice synergy puzzle games.

KATE

That title's a little long.

EMMA

Ugh fine, he can be the, um, the game- no- the puzzle master.

KATE

Perfect.

Emma nods, and Mrs. Cavil takes the line again.

MRS. CAVIL

Please welcome your puzzle master!

The palanquin stops beside the throne. A smug man with stark white hair steps out and waves to the people.

KATE

Can the puzzle master be a teen boy too?

EMMA

What? Why?

KATE

Well, if most of the characters are teens that maximizes kissing potential.

EMMA

I love it! But, why would a teen boy be the game master, I mean, puzzle master?

KATE

Maybe he's like a prodigy or something?

Emma nods, then pulls a megaphone out of her butt.

EMMA

Reset!

A winch comes down from above like the hand of god, grapples the puzzle master, and starts slowly pulling him up and off screen. Everyone watches, impassive. When he's gone—

A new palanquin makes it's way down the aisles of teens.

The palanquin stops at the throne. A smug teen boy with grey hair steps out and waves to the people.

KATE

So, why is the freezing so bad?

EMMA

Because they lock up.

KATE

Okay, but like, why do they hate that?

Emma pulls up her megaphone again.

EMMA
Hang tight guys!

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

EMMA
Maybe there's like, a war with
another country or something and
they don't want their soldiers to
freeze up?

KATE
Okay, what about ... Have you ever
seen Robot Jocks?

Emma shakes her head.

KATE (CONT'D)
It's this old movie about war being
replaced with giant robots
fighting, so, what if they replaced
war with puzzle rooms?

EMMA
That's sick.

EXT. PALACE - THRONE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Crystal stands amongst the other teens, worried. The white
haired boy comes to stand beside Mrs. Cavil.

GREY HAIRED BOY
The participants have already been
chosen!

The grey haired boy looks to Emma, holding his breath waiting
for his line.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

EMMA
Jaldie. Jendi? Ji- Geh- Jorianna?
Go delvi? Jivienta? Jor- Jag-
Jelvie? Jelvie!

EXT. PALACE - THRONE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

GREY HAIRED BOY
Jelvie Gallivillius Montage!

KATE
Her name is Jelvie Gallivillius
Montage?

Emma nods.

KATE (CONT'D)
That's so cool.

We see JELVIE, skinny, meek, but like the entire cast, still glamorous. She walks through the crowd and comes to stand beside the grey haired boy, terrified.

Grey Haired Boy is about to call the next name.

EMMA
Time out!

All the actors pause, Emma and Kate huddle.

EMMA (CONT'D)
What should the hero's name be?

KATE
I've always wanted to be called
Crystal?

EMMA
Crystal? How about, Crystal
Sardothean?

KATE
Whoa, cool. How'd you come up with
that.

EMMA
Just popped into my head.

Emma signals for the scene to start again. The actors jump back into action.

GREY HAired BOY
Crystal Sardothean!

Crystal looks up, she wasn't expecting to hear her name. Two death troopers come for her. She panics, stumbles back. Maybe she should run? The crowd parts to make it easier for the troopers.

They grab her, and drag her to the grey haired boy.

The crowd stays quiet. No one stops them. Crystal and Jelvie stand side by side.

GREY HAIRED BOY (CONT'D)

With these two new recruits this marks the brand new start of a new season of games to begin the selection process to find the next genius to solve the puzzle rooms and keep the city safe from something or whatever. So let's give it up for them, and the establishment, and—

EMMA

(interrupting)

Get to the end!

GREY HAIRED BOY

All imposters will be rooted out!

Crystal and Jelvie are turned away and pushed behind stage.

INT. PALACE — HALLWAYS — CONTINUOUS

Crystal and Jelvie stand side by side, they look each other up and down, taking each other in.

They Grey Haired Boy marches towards them, tugging both of them along, troopers behind them. They're lead through a crowd of people who steal glances like they're celebrities.

GREY HAIRED BOY

Okay girls, you're not gonna get a lot of time to think about this, but I need you two focused.

Crystal and Jelvie say nothing. The scene holds.

KATE (O.S.)

Is she gonna say anything?

Kate walks on adjusting her hard hat, Emma dashes in behind her.

EMMA

Who? Crystal Sardothean? No, she's *traumatized*.

KATE

I see.

The actors look over for permission to keep going, Emma and Kate give them a thumbs up.

EMMA

It's great stuff, keep doing what
your doing.

The Grey Haired Boy leads them further down the hallway, and
out.

EXT. PALACE - LANDING PAD - CONTINUOUS

The three of them emerge into an empty field. A chopper
waiting for them, ready to go.

KATE (V.O.)

Aren't we in like, in the future?

We see the chopper become a grey boxy space ship.

KATE (V.O.)

Better. Can it be pink?

The space ship becomes shiny and pink.

Crystal, Jelvie and the Grey Haired Boy all climb in. The
ship ascends. Crystal looks out the window, distraught, maybe
even sheds a single tear.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Lunch time, the two girls have a plate of pizza bagels
between them.

EMMA

(eating)

So, like, what do you think so far?

KATE

We're fifteen thousand words in.

EMMA

Why'd you keep mentioning word
count?

KATE

I looked it up, it's how authors
measure book lengths by
demographic.

EMMA

Whatever nerd.

Emma grabs another pizza bagel.

EMMA (CONT'D)

(eating)

Okay, fine, how far through the
book is fifteen thousand?

Kate shrugs. Emma leans back into the laptop. She selects the entire text and beefs up the font size, the margin, and spacing until it looks like the inside of a YA Novel.

EMMA (CONT'D)

It comes to fifty-five pages. Sick,
This book is gonna be so long.

KATE

Does this book have, you know, a
love interest?

Emma turns round, intrigued.

KATE (CONT'D)

It's just, most books have one, and
I don't think we do.

Emma stares at Kate, blank.

KATE (CONT'D)

But we don't have to if you're not
into that sort of thing-

EMMA

(interrupting)

Kate, you beautiful genius! We're
missing a cute boy!

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Dark high-tech corridors, definitely belonging to bad guys. Jelvie and Crystal are lead down the hall by the Grey Haired Boy. We pass death troopers and other teens in the same boat.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - FOOD HALL - CONTINUOUS

They walk through the food hall, we see Tron lines, floating lunch tables, and robots delivering food. The walls are covered with propaganda about 'freezers', and encouraging faux intellectualism.

KID

Oh, robot! I require a slice of
apple pie!

LUNCH ROBOT
FIRING FOOD LASER!

A lunch robot fires a violent laser, when it stops we see a slice of apple pie on a plate

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - GROTTY DORM - CONTINUOUS

The girls are brought to a dorm room with bunk beds. It's grotty, rusted, incredibly bare, like a prison.

KATE (V.O.)
Whoa, whoa, whoa, this is no fun.
It's all grey and stuff.

EMMA (V.O.)
It's gritty and realistic! Don't
you want to be taken seriously?

KATE (V.O.)
Emma, it's gross.

EMMA (V.O.)
Ugh, fine.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - DORM - CONTINUOUS

The girls are brought to a new dorm room with bunk beds, other teens already getting settled in. It's sleek and high tech, walking the line between fantasy and sci-fi.

EMMA (V.O.)
Better?

KATE (V.O.)
Yes! Are we getting to the cute
boy?

EMMA (V.O.)
Patience.

Grey Haired Boy walks out.

Jelvie and Crystal take in the room and the people they're sharing with. We see a glamorous girl, a specky nerd, a jock, basic characters that will be present in the book as it goes on.

Jelvie and Crystal settle onto their bunks.

The Grey Haired Boy walks in again.

GREY HAired BOY
This is your training mentor.

Emma and Kate walk in with another blank mannequin on an upright gurney.

Emma and Kate prop his head up, it topples over. They adjust him again, he stays in place. Kate and Emma shoot everyone a thumbs up, and quickly jog back out.

GREY HAired BOY (CONT'D)
This is the man that'll train the
six of you.

The head of the mannequin flops to the side.

EMMA (V.O.)
He was blonde, with blue eyes.

A blonde wig falls onto the mannequin, a pair of very human blue eyes appear on the blank plastic face.

KATE (V.O.)
No, dark hair.

A black wig drops on over the blonde one. He's wearing two wigs.

KATE (V.O.)
Can he have a weird haircut? Like a
mohawk?

A mohawk drops.

EMMA (V.O.)
No!

The mohawk pops out of existence.

KATE (V.O.)
Shouldn't we describe other things
besides his hair and eye color?

We hear Emma typing furiously. We see the whole mannequin warp into a handsome actor.

KATE (V.O.)
No. He's boring.

The mannequin changes into a different actor, then another one, and another.

The cast start to look around, bored.

We hear a scuffle from off screen, the sound of an office chair moving, Kate's at the keyboard now. The mannequin morphs into a Korean pop-star.

Emma stomps into the room.

EMMA

Who the heck is that?

Kate comes in after her, holding the laptop.

KATE

He's a Korean pop star!

Emma takes the laptop, and hits backspace over and over. Some of the mannequins features blink out, leaving only ghoulish mismatched features.

EMMA

How about ...

We see the features of another actor try to push out the ones from before. Kate pushes her way onto the keyboard again. Both girls are typing at the same time.

The cast step back, scared the mannequin's going to explode.

As they type, new features melt into the mannequins face. Emma pushes back, deletes some things, adds some things.

The cast cringe, the mannequin slowly becomes a horrifying melting candle of features.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kate and Emma share the desk chair, both hands over the keyboard. They stop and narrow their eyes at the page.

EMMA

Maybe we should come back to this?

KATE

We can do this another time.

KATE (CONT'D)

Why would a bunch of teens get picked for this?

EMMA

I don't know, let's use anime logic. Maybe there's a goop the players need that doesn't work on adults.

KATE
Sure, whatever.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN/LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Kate's parents sit on their white sofa watching TV, happily cuddling. Kate comes jumping down the stairs to grab a snack.

KATE'S MOTHER KATE'S FATHER
Katie! How's the book going? Are you having fun?

KATE
So much!

Kate grabs a pack of gross rice cakes.

KATE (CONT'D)
We're already twenty thousand words
in!

KATE'S FATHER
Is that good?

KATE
Maybe.

KATE'S MOTHER
Well, we're proud of you.

KATE'S FATHER
Who knows darling, maybe this is
your thing?

KATE'S MOTHER
A writer! You're going to be a
writer! Do you need a new laptop!?

KATE'S FATHER
You know your grandfather was a
writer too. Runs in the family

Kate's mother and father share a look of awe, they love their daughter very much. Kate's terrified, she doesn't want to let her parents down, and it seems like they really want this for her.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Emma skips in, laptop under her arm. Her parents sit at the table looking at documents.

EMMA

Hey guys!

Amanda looks up with a gentle smile.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Kate and I have been writing this book—

AMANDA

(interrupting)

Honey, before you do that.

Amanda pats a chair beside her. Emma sits down. Jim drops a letter in front of her, it's from school. Emma frowns.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Your teacher called us, apparently you had a hard time in English the other day.

Her father puts his hands over hers.

JIM

Honey. It seems like you've been distracted.

Emma looks to the ground.

AMANDA

Maybe with all the reading?

EMMA

You wanted me to read.

AMANDA

Yes, but—

EMMA

(interrupting)

But what?

JIM

Don't raise your voice. We're concerned.

Emma stands. Emma stomps away. Her parents frown, but don't stop her.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Emma slams her door and slumps onto her bed. She finds a comfortable position and opens up her laptop to write.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - TRAINING ROOM - NIGHT

Exercise room, after hours, tons of weird equipment, low lit. Crystal punches a bag, not that this has anything to do with intellectual tournaments.

Every punch Crystal throws is awful, but she seems to be really into it.

Our messy melted mannequin of features shambles in like a zombie. Crystal doesn't think anything of it.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emma's hands hover the keyboard. She swallows. She's making a choice, one she feels a little odd about. She looks around the room in case anyone's watching, and begins to type.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - TRAINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The mannequin tries to speak but it comes out as a series of screeches. We hear Emma typing.

The mannequin pops out, replaced by Dwayne in his real world clothes. He looks around confused.

His slightly fuzzy hair gets smoothed out. His late teens acne disappears, glasses go, and Emma finds him a flattering 'in universe' suit of armour.

INT./EXT. SPACESHIP - DAY

The day after. Crystal, Jelvie, Dwayne and the other recruits sit as the spaceship soars through a blank white space. The background picks up more character as they fly, slowly morphing into a sleek, futuristic city.

We hear Emma writing about how it looks, until the ship comes in for a landing.

EXT. TESTING HALL - COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

They all step out into a large abstract garden, complete with hedge mazes. At the end of a long path is a single door. Crystal and Jelvie hold hands. The Grey Haired Boy steps out, and motions them all in. They follow.

INT. TESTING HALL - LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

They all walk through a grand hall with a great many people watching from the balconies.

GREY HAIREd BOY
You know the rules, stick to them,
and for the sake of the
establishment, win.

A death trooper for each trainee pulls them apart, and drags them in different directions. The two girls share a glance before they can't see each other anymore.

INT. TESTING HALL - PUZZLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Crystal walks into a dark, slim room. The door locks behind her.

GREY HAIREd BOY (O.S.)
In just a second you'll see the
game begin. Your only goal is to
best your opponent. Understand?

Crystal nods.

AID (O.S.)
Greetings.

Crystal looks around for the voice, but can't find the origin.

AID (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'm Aid, an artificial
intelligence. I'll be with you
every step of the way.
Opponent found. Commencing game.

The room darkens, we lose sight of Crystal. The lights come up again, we see half a chess board attached to the wall, and a chair.

AID (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Please sit.

Crystal pulls out the chair, sits, stares at the wall the chess board is attached to. It's a screen, the other half of the board on the other side. We wait a moment—

The black pawn moves on its own.

CRYSTAL
What's happening?

AID (O.S.)
Your opponent has moved their
piece.

CRYSTAL
And, what happens if I lose the
match?

AID (O.S.)
You die, and planet Lambda is
turned over to the winner.

CRYSTAL
How many people live on Lambda?

AID (O.S.)
Three billion.

Crystal reaches out, her hands stops over the pieces, waits,
takes a breath. She bites the bullet, and chooses to mirror
her opponents move.

The game progresses beyond the use of pawns, into the pieces
she doesn't know how to move as well. The match gets more
complicated. Things aren't going well, but they might still
be even.

Crystal's hand seizes up, she can't move it.

AID (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Are you well?

CRYSTAL
I'm fine!

She grips her hand and draws it back. She tries to use her
other hand, it seizes up as well.

Crystal tries to stand, her leg freezes too.

GREY HAIRED BOY (O.S.)
Contestant?

CRYSTAL
I said I'm fine!

We see a stillness move it's way up her arm to her neck.
She's about to topple over, as frozen as ice. Dwayne appears,
grabs her, drags her back out of the room.

Crystal's eyes flutter closed, she's out cold.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Emma sits on her bed, she's exhausted, surrounded by soda cans and twizzlers, fingers decorated in Cheeto dust. Her back's in bad shape, her eyes wide open and red from concentration.

She cracks her back, looks to her en-suite bathroom. She needs to go.

Emma focuses on the keyboard instead.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - MEDICAL - NIGHT

The medical bay is empty save for Crystal, Dwayne, and a medical robot. Dwayne stands over Crystal, watching carefully.

Crystal's eyes open.

CRYSTAL

I must have passed out.

They both know that's not what happened. She experienced 'the freezing'. Crystal tries to get out of bed. Dwayne steps around her.

DWAYNE

I won't let them hurt you.

Crystal looks up, surprised. DWAYNE'S GIRLFRIEND walks in, she knows everything they do.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

(without feeling)

This is my girlfriend.

DWAYNE'S GIRLFRIEND

The freezing is nothing to be ashamed of.

CRYSTAL

I never freeze.

Dwayne's girlfriend crouches down, trying to be reassuring.

DWAYNE'S GIRLFRIEND

Things are changing in the galaxy.
Keep your head down in the games,
okay?

DWAYNE

Consider this a one off, we can't
help you again.

Crystal nods. Dwayne and his girlfriend leave. Crystal sighs all dramatic, she looks out the window, ready to monologue about her complicated, very edgy life.

CRYSTAL (V.O.)

Is it truly the truth? Am I a
freezer? Me? My life is so tragic,
and hard, and tough, but I'm so
cool and smart. I'm sure, I'll find
a way out of this. Or die trying!

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - DORM - NIGHT

Crystal tosses and turns in bed, she can't sleep. She's sandwiched in a three person bunk. The room's strangely quiet, no one snoring, but everyone asleep, or pretending.

She stops moving, coming to terms with staying awake. She lays her head back. Maybe if she can hold off 'the freezing' everything really will be okay?

We hear a noise. Crystal's eyes go wide. There's a yelp that's quickly silenced.

Crystal's about to sit up, then thinks better. She stays as stiff as a board. We hear a scuffle, a protest then-

Nothing.

A moment passes, Crystal waits in her bed. We hear feet shuffling out. A bit of light sneaks through the crack in the door as it creaks open, then closes just as carefully.

The sound of a Mac error notification cuts through the intense scene. It plays over and over.

Crystal looks up at the sky, trying to find the source of the noise.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emma's slumped over her keyboard, asleep, her finger on a single letter, laptop beeping an error message over and over. The sun starts to rise behind her.

INT. SCHOOL - OUTSIDE PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - DAY

Emma, Amanda and Jim stand outside the principal's office.
Mrs. Cavil walks by, stops.

MRS. CAVIL

Emma, how's the book coming along?

EMMA

Fine. I'm twenty thousand words in.

MRS. CAVIL

(annoyed)

Already? That's, fast.

EMMA

It's at the end of the month, I
gotta hustle.

MRS. CAVIL

That's true, but don't rush
yourself. It's for polished
manuscripts. You don't have to
enter.

EMMA

But I want to?

The PRINCIPAL walks up. Mrs. Cavil leaves as the principal
ushers Emma and her parents into his office.

INT. SCHOOL - PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Emma sits in a stark grey room. Jim and Amanda sit by her
side. The principal sits down, gathering himself, busy but
making time for Emma and her parents.

PRINCIPAL

Mr and Mrs—

AMANDA

(interrupting)

Ms. I'm not a Mrs.

EMMA

Mom.

PRINCIPAL

Right well, I apologize. I'm sure
you're wondering why we're here.

Both Emma's parents stare blankly at the principle. They expect nothing but good news, and don't have the time for anything else.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Yes well, um, the thing is, a few days ago I was told that, in the middle of an English test Emma blacked out. So to speak.

Amanda raises an eyebrow.

PRINCIPAL (CONT'D)

Mrs. Cavil thought Emma was having an anxiety induced panic attack.

JIM

(antagonistic)

And what makes her think that?

PRINCIPAL

Well um ...

He looks over his desk for a mess of post-it notes, each about different kids and what they're going through. Eventually—

He picks up the one he wrote about Emma.

PRINCIPLE

It says she started to cry, she was gasping, then told the nurse she was dizzy, like the room was spinning. These are all symptoms of panic attack.

Emma retreats further into her chair.

PRINCIPAL

Have you ever talked to your daughter about anxiety and panic disorders?

JIM

She sounds like she's sick to me. Dizziness, gasping.

AMANDA

I agree with Jim. Sounds like she has the flu.

PRINCIPLE

I bring up panic disorders because Mrs. Cavil said this is actually the third time this has happened.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

It's a shame we didn't catch it earlier. She said she was feeling off this morning.

JIM

We'll keep a closer eye on her.

The principal wants to keep going, then he sees the clock. He nods, and lets them go. Amanda and Jim rush Emma out the door. The principal scrunches up the note he had on Emma, and throws it out.

He picks up the post-it-note for the next troubled kid.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

After school, Emma and Kate are already deep into a writing session.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - LUNCH ROOM - DAY

Crystal and Jelvie eat lunch in a bustling cafeteria with lunch robots firing destructive food lasers in the background.

CRYSTAL

Dear friend of mine, please tell me, how did your puzzle go?

JELVIE

It went well, I am very good at puzzle solving, girl.

CRYSTAL

As am I.

Emma and Kate sit side by side at a near by lunch table. With her laptop in front of her, Emma types rapidly while Crystal looks off into the distance.

CRYSTAL (V.O.)

My life is so hard, and tough, but I am doing my best. It is just that no one understands *me*, and how hard it is *being* me. Why are people not paying enough attention to me and picking up on the little nuances of my mannerisms and specific emotions? Not even my best friend understands me and my PAIN. What am I going to do?

The typing stops. Crystal looks back to Jelvie.

JELVIE

The food here is bad, girl.

CRYSTAL

It's awful isn't it. I miss my mother's cooking.

KATE

Why does she keep saying girl?

EMMA

It's character voice. Mrs. Cavil mentioned it the other day in class. Certain characters have ticks and quirks, like real people.

KATE

Her quirk is saying girl?

Emma shhhhh's Kate.

JELVIE

I also miss things from home, girl.

CRYSTAL

I wish my little sister was here, I am worried about how she will do without me to take care of her and the rest of the family because I'm so responsible. You could even say I'm mega under appreciated, and that they don't deserve me. But I won't say that because I'm nice.

JELVIE

Agreed, I am also the primary provider for the family I come from ... girl.

KATE

This is kind of boring, no offense.

EMMA

It's character building.

KATE

Can't you make it more interesting?

EMMA

Like how?

Kate pulls out a walkie talkie and speaks into it.

KATE

Can we get pyrotechnics on set?

A jumbled mess of sounds replies through her walkie.

KATE (CONT'D)

Thank you!

Kate and Emma sit back. Explosions start popping off in the background.

JELVIE

Yeah, I know it's been tough for
you and for me, and for our
families ...

(whispering)

Girllllllllllllllllllll.

People start diving out of the way of the fire. We see some action rolls.

CRYSTAL

Indeed. I hope that you've been
handling it well, I have to admit,
though I'm deeply ashamed, I have
been having nightmares.

KATE

Edgy.

A fight breaks out in the background. Crystal and Jelvie pay no attention.

CRYSTAL

It's really hard for me, because no
one truly appreciates me.

KATE

Can we beef up the explosions!?

The explosions get even bigger.

JELVIE

Except for me, girl.

CRYSTAL

Not even you.

JELVIE

I'm so sorry.

(beat)

Girl.

CRYSTAL

It's okay, we all have flaws.

Masked knights with laser guns and swords appear. They rush through the cafeteria. Crystal and Jelvie stand, alarmed.

A bag of popcorn appears in Kate and Emma's hands.

KATE

Oh, even edgier! What's happening?

The knights catch Crystal and Jelvie, everyone's on the floor, their hands over their heads.

EMMA

Um, I think they're rebels?

KATE

You think? You wrote it.

EMMA

Fine. They're rebels.

KATE

Rebels against what?

EMMA

The establishment, there's always a resistance, right?

KATE

What are they resisting?

EMMA

I don't know I haven't figured that out yet, jeez!

The two girls stare at each other while things get more hectic. Some of the teens try to escape. A fist fight breaks out.

Crystal stands, and a full on martial arts showdown takes place between her and the rebels. Enraptured, Kate and Emma watch. The girls start laughing, they're having an honestly great time.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE — BEDROOM — CONTINUOUS

The girls are laughing their butts off, eating pizza bagels, sipping on soda, Emma at the keys. The laughter slows, Kate's face turns serious.

KATE

Can I tell you something? And before you say anything, I'm really, really sorry.

Emma raises an eyebrow, just like her mother.

KATE (CONT'D)

I lied about reading a lot. Okay, well like, not completely. I read.

EMMA

Okay?

KATE

I panicked! I was home schooled for a really long time!

EMMA

I know.

KATE

And I've been at school since the beginning of the year ...

EMMA

Yup.

KATE

I hadn't made any friends. So, when you were all like, oh are you a reader? And I really wanted to be friends with you, so I said I was, and it wasn't exactly a lie, I know what happens in a lot of the books you talk about. But like, they're not for me, you know. But I still want us to be friends, and I like writing this book with you! Also, the testing is just bad.

EMMA

Okay.

Emma shrugs. Kate deflates, she's not sure what to make of Emma's calm. Shouldn't she be angry?

EMMA (CONT'D)

You were like, super worried about this, huh?

Kate nods.

EMMA (CONT'D)

You should have told me earlier, because I've been making a ton of references you definitely don't get. But it's fine.

KATE

Really?

EMMA

Sure.

KATE

My parents always really want me to pick up a hobby, and I thought this would get them off my back, but now they're obsessed with it.

EMMA

You draw.

KATE

That doesn't count.

EMMA

Says who?

KATE

Dad. I showed him a picture of mine, and he said the perspective was off.

Kate tears up a little, her father's opinion means a lot to her, and his lack of enthusiasm hurt.

EMMA

Douche!

KATE

Emma!

Kate looks around the room as though it's bugged. Emma smiles in defiance of Kate's parents. Slowly, Kate's tears give way to a smile.

KATE (CONT'D)

You can't say that about my dad.

EMMA

I can say whatever I like. I'm a rebel.

Emma gets up on the chair.

EMMA (CONT'D)

If your dad says anything you don't like ever again, I'll kick him in the special parts!

KATE

(Laughing)

Emma! Stop!

Emma starts to laugh with Kate.

EMMA

Right in the bits! Watch out Kate's dad!

The two of them keep laughing, Emma falls off the chair, which only makes the girls laugh harder.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

Emma rushes in, laptop under her arm. Jim and Amanda sit at the dinner table again. Emma zooms past them without saying anything.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Emma slams her door closed, jumps on her bed and opens up her laptop. We watch her as she reads the last passage, and smiles. She really loves her silly creation.

She makes a couple clicks on the google doc, types in Mrs. Cavil's email. She sends off a doc invitation to her, along with a quick message asking for some feedback, and boasts how far through the word count she is.

Happy, she opens an app and watches some TV on her laptop.

Time passes, Emma hears a ping from her phone. She has an email. It's from Mrs. Cavil. Emma brightens, pauses what she's watching, and moves over to her email tab.

We see glimpses of lines. POOR USE OF VOICE, MESSY PROSE, WEAK ANALOGY, JUMBLED PLOTTING, MAKES NO SENSE, SILLY, WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY? SELF INSERT.

Emma tries to stay strong, but it's too harsh. She closes her laptop, and falls back, crying. She throws a pillow across the room, then screams into her sheets.

She takes a moment, sits up, crosses her arms.

EMMA

What does she know?

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

The weekend, bright sunny day. Both our girls lounge in Kate's bedroom. Kate's ecstatic, Emma seems pretty happy too, but Mrs. Cavil's words are still weighing on her mind.

Kate stares at Emma, she can tell something's wrong.

KATE

I have something to show you!

Emma looks up. Kate opens a drawer and pulls out some papers.

She comes to stand in front of a confused Emma, and Kate reveals some drawings she's made, same pink and blue style she loves, it's uniquely hers.

We see a drawing of a young woman in a jumpsuit in action. The limbs are muddled, perspective off, but shows a lot of promise.

KATE (CONT'D)

This is Crystal.

Emma's eyes go wide, Kate's not sure what to make of it, so she moves onto the next picture. We see a closer image.

KATE (CONT'D)

This is the Grey Haired Boy, I know we never came up with a name for him, so I just kept calling him that.

She flips to the next picture. We see another young woman.

KATE (CONT'D)

This is Jelvie.

Emma stares, so Kate moves on again, to her final picture. We expect to see the love interest, instead Kate reveals a picture of Jelvie and Crystal eating lunch.

To Kate, the book is about the two girls.

EMMA

You drew fan art of our book?

Kate flops a little, still not sure how to read Emma's reaction. She nods cautiously.

EMMA (CONT'D)

That. Is. Awesome!

Emma jumps up, and snatches them, taking a look.

EMMA (CONT'D)

This is what makes our book so much better than everyone else's ever. You can actually see the stuff! This is so cool!

KATE

Really? I wasn't sure you'd like it.

Emma raises her eyebrow again.

KATE (CONT'D)

Well, it's just, sometimes people complain about my color palette. When I was really small I didn't have a lot of colors and I was too embarrassed to ask for more pencils so I just used what I had. Sometimes in art class Mr. Hunter tells me to branch out. Keeps telling me no-one has bright blue skin. I know they don't. I just like the way it looks.

EMMA

It's your style? Weirdo. He needs to shut the heck up.

That makes Kate giggle.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I like your drawings! Especially if you do more of the book!

INT. PUZZLE ROOM - NIGHT

Crystal stands in the puzzle room. The lights come up and we see a screen taking up a whole wall.

On it we see a deck of cards being moved around as though there's a hand controlling them but we see no person.

A few cards are moved across an invisible table towards Crystal. The Cards flip up to show themselves to her.

CRYSTAL

What game is this?

AID (O.S.)

Poker.

Crystal takes a closer look at the video game-like set up. Another set of cards is tossed in the opposite direction. We're shown an outline of her opponent.

CRYSTAL

How do you play poker?

A list of instructions come up on the screen. Her eyes gloss over them. We see a selection of words.

"UNLESS" "IF THAT HAPPENS" "WHEN THE PLAYER" "THEN TAKE"
"RAISE"

We see how much money Crystal has flash up on screen. It forces a certain amount into the pot.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

I don't-

The screen plays out THE RIVER, this confuses Crystal even more.

AID (O.S.)

Betting round one.

CRYSTAL

What?

Her opponent puts more than the usual into the pot.

AID (O.S.)

Your opponent has raised.

CRYSTAL

They've raised?

QUICK FLASH:

DWAYNE

I can't help you every time,
consider this a one off.

END OF QUICK FLASH

Crystal closes her eyes, takes a deep breath. We watch as she slowly but surely ignores the time limit in favor of finding her peace and calm.

CRYSTAL

Display time limit.

The time limit flashes up, she has an hour and a half to play the game, plenty, but still nerve wracking.

INT. KATE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Emma looks down at the screen and pauses for a moment, something about what her hero has done is effecting her.

She's proud of crystal for preventing 'the freeze'.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Emma's room, no one inside. It's bright and sunny. We hear a vacuum outside in the hall. It stops. The door swings open.

Amanda stands at the entrance, moves in, sighs at the mess and piles of books. She grabs Emma's trash and throws it into a large black bag.

She picks a book off a pile. Maybe she's been too harsh on Emma, she is, ultimately glad she's reading. Then—

She sees a pile of papers, it's weird, out of place, too tall to be homework. She sets the book down and walks over. It's a manuscript.

Amanda picks it up, and starts to read. A moment passes, she turns the page. She sits down, and continues to read the next page.

Amanda looks up, searches Emma's desk for a pen. Grabs one, and begins to correct it.

EXT. KATE'S HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

Kate and Emma walk out, as excited as ever.

EMMA

See ya tomorrow!

Emma dashes down the road with a wave.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Emma walks into the kitchen. Her mothers sits with the manuscript. Emma catches sight of it, her buzz disappears immediately.

EMMA

What are you doing?

AMANDA

I know this is snooping but—

AMANDA (CONT'D)

I've started correcting it, and—

We see words underlined, highlighted, notes written, things crossed out, new words written.

EMMA

Mom!

Emma rushes over, takes the manuscript. Amanda sighs, not bothering to stop her.

AMANDA

All I did was correct some spelling, and some bad grammar, made some suggestions where your sentence structure is off. English is a tricky language.

She lifts a particular page she's kept with her.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

There was a part of your story.

EMMA

It's a novel!

Emma snatches the page.

AMANDA

Your NOVEL that, well, honey, there's no easy way to say this, but, did you ... panic in class?
(Emma says nothing.)
It's okay if you did.

EMMA

I'm not stupid!

AMANDA

No one said you were.

EMMA

I can see it on your face!

AMANDA

Do not yell at me young lady. If this is how you want to work out your feelings—

EMMA

(interrupting)
It's not about me!

AMANDA

You don't have to be embarrassed.

EMMA

It's about a girl named Crystal!

Emma's mother sits back, trying to be hands off, not saying anything Emma won't like, it's patronizing instead of trusting.

EMMA (CONT'D)

You don't believe me!

Amanda stays silent, letting Emma tie herself in knots.

EMMA (CONT'D)

It's not!

Amanda puts her hands in her lap.

EMMA (CONT'D)

You're the worst!

Emma runs away.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

She slams her door behind her, holds for a moment, trying not to cry. It's too embarrassing having something so personal exposed.

She dashes over to her recently emptied bin and dumps the entire manuscript in it. She drops onto her desk chair and opens her laptop.

She glares at the screen and we watch as she begins an angry mass deletion of Verdigris.

INT. SCHOOL - CAFETERIA - DAY

Kate and Emma sit side by side.

EMMA

We should re write it.

KATE

What?

EMMA

The book. Yeah that's what we'll do.

KATE

But we're nearly done.

EMMA

Yeah, but it sucks. The plot makes no sense, let's re do it.

KATE

Um, okay. Why?

EMMA

That's what we'll do. After school,
Micky d's.

INT. MC DONALDS - DAY

Kate and Emma set up their laptop in the corner of a really nice, clean, New England themed Mc Donalds.

KATE

So, what are we changing in the story?

EMMA

I've made it so Jelvie is the one that freezes, and Crystal's dad is a higher up in the establishment.

KATE

Oh, okay? Can we be here if we don't order anything?

EMMA

It's not Starbucks.

Kate stands.

KATE

I'm gonna order a milkshake just in case they kick us out.

EMMA

You don't need to— Ohhhh, get me one! Please. If you don't mind I mean.

KATE

I was gonna anyway.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - TRAINING ROOM - NIGHT

Crystal and Dwayne train with a punching bag.

DWAYNE

You've got a way to go.

CRYSTAL

I didn't go to training until last year. This is what my parents want for me.

They look over at Jelvie who's training by playing boggle with a robot.

DWAYNE

You'll have to tell her the truth eventually.

CRYSTAL

I can't yet, I don't want to risk it. She's the only friend I've had since I got out. I just want my parents off my back, and ... to focus on my art.

DWAYNE

Punch with your wrist.

Dwayne displays a strike where he strikes wrist first. Crystal stares, that's obviously a bad idea.

EMMA (V.O.)

Do it.

Crystal shrugs and strikes the punching bag with her wrist.

CRYSTAL

Ow.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - DORM - NIGHT

Crystal lays in bed, again, she can't sleep.

CRYSTAL (V.O.)

The truth was that no one understood me, and no one ever would—

We hear a noise, different from last time, coming from outside the door.

Crystal sits up. She waits, hears more rushing. She knocks on the bunk above her. Jelvie sits up.

JELVIE

What's happening?

Crystal shushes her. Both of them stop and listen to the sounds coming and going from behind the door. Cautiously, Crystal stands, the noises halt.

Both girls rush to the door. Light floods in.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

We see rebel knights. They two girls rush down the hall. There's a fight in every room. The girls stop at the room they know belongs to Dwayne. He, and his girlfriend are in a scuffle.

A few rebel knights come for Crystal and Jelvie. The girls pull off some ridiculous moves. Crystal punches a man twice her size across the room.

One rebel knight throws a grenade at Crystal, it sticks to her back, she pulls it off, confused, then throws it across the room. The grenade ignites.

CRYSTAL

The bombs are sticky, watch out!

Jelvie flips a guy like he's as light as a feather. Someone does that silly spinny Black Widow move. One of the girls snaps a guys neck like turning a bottle top.

Dwayne stumbles out of his room, bloody and beaten, his girlfriend beside him. The masked men gather around the four of them. The girls start pulling out some truly outrageous attacks. Jumps, flips, high kicks, body slams.

INT. MC DONALDS - CONTINUOUS

Kate and Emma sit side by side, sipping their drinks. Emma's typing away.

KATE

What's the love interests name?

Emma stops typing, squints.

EMMA

Uh ... Ricky.

KATE

Huh. He seems, *familiar*.

EMMA

Really? Weird. Anyway, back to the book.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Just when it looks like the whole room's been dealt with, a knight throws another grenade.

It catches on Dwayne's girlfriend. Jelvie moves to save her, but Crystal holds her back.

CRYSTAL

No, it's too late for her now.

GIRLFRIEND

Help!

Jelvie relents, it truly is too late. Dwayne rushes forward, Crystal holds him back too.

His girlfriend makes no moves towards them.

CRYSTAL

She's already dead.

Dwayne sobs, there's nothing he can do now. His girlfriend goes up in flames, just all of her, covered in fire, in an instant.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

So tragic.

Dwayne's girlfriend doesn't scream, but she does slowly lay herself down on the ground in the position of someone dead, flames still consuming her body.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

Dwayne's girlfriend will never be forgotten.

Dwayne leans on Crystal to cry his eyes out.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

Truly. She was the bravest of all of us.

JELVIE

Help!

Dwayne and Crystal turn to see Jelvie being dragged away by the rebel knights. We watch them run after her.

EXT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - COURTYARD - NIGHT

Jelvie is dragged, still screaming for help. Crystal and Dwayne watch as Jelvie is thrown into a spaceship.

CRYSTAL

Damn it, if she wasn't so weak and pathetic, freezing in the puzzle rooms, in a way I never did.

DWAYNE

You would never freeze.

CRYSTAL

I know, but my best friend, she's
so nervous and meek.

Crystal grips Dwayne's shoulders.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

We can't let them take her!

DWAYNE

(being shaken by Crystal)
There's no way to follow.

CRYSTAL

That's not true.

Dwayne grips her shoulders back, both of them dramatically
shaking each other.

DWAYNE

No, Crystal don't!

CRYSTAL

I have to, for my best friend!

INT. TESTING HALL - HALLWAY - DAY

Crystal is lead down the hall by death troopers, she puts a
finger to her ear, speaking to someone on the other end.

DWAYNE (O.S.)

Can you hear me?

CRYSTAL

Confirmed.

DWAYNE (O.S.)

It'll be tough.

CRYSTAL

Of course, because I've never
frozen. Only losers freeze up,
that's why we have to go save my
best friend that, you, of course,
don't see in a romantic context.

DWAYNE (O.S.)

Ew.

CRYSTAL

Good.

INT. TESTING HALL - PUZZLE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Crystal walks in. We see the room go dark, and flash back up again. We don't see the game this time, it's not important. She sits down to play, does what she's supposed to do for a while. then-

Takes a deep breath, she pretends her hand is freezing. Then her shoulders lock. Her legs lock. Eventually- she falls over, completely frozen, the screen flashes up with the sign FAILURE.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - CRYSTAL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Crystal sleeps in a room to herself, canvas and paint left in the corners. Crystal lays in bed, the door out cracks open, a bit of orange light floods into the room. She keeps her eyes closed.

She stays silent, unmoving, pretending to be asleep. We hear footsteps creep closer.

They grab Crystal, she struggles, they put a cloth to her mouth and a bag over her head.

EXT. SCHOOL - FRONT - DAY

Kate stands by her parents car, packing her stuff in the back. Dwayne waits by the side as Kate and her parents talk. Emma comes up.

DWAYNE

You're coming with us?

EMMA

Yeah, we're gonna get straight to writing.

DWAYNE

Thought you were close to done?

EMMA

No, we're re writing it.

DWAYNE

Okay. Oh, mom and dad got you this. They got one for Kate too. Already signed her up.

Dwayne hands Emma a pamphlet for a teen writers summer camp. Emma isn't sure what to think.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

The girls walk in like always. Emma places the laptop on Kate's desk and opens it.

KATE
How much more?

EMMA
Fifteen thousand.

KATE
What happens if the story's not
done when we hit seventy?

That hadn't occurred to Emma. It's true, not much of the story has actually happened yet.

EMMA
Um, I guess, we just have to try to
wrap it up as fast as we can, I
mean we have a deadline.

KATE
That's true but can we fit like,
all the last bits into fifteen
thousand words? We did spend ten
just describing her bedroom.

EMMA
We'll be fine! Snacks?

KATE
Please!

Emma rushes out. Kate sits at the desk. We see that Emma's given Kate a list of pictures to draw. Kate's done a few, but it's clear it's not fun for her if she's being given a brief.

Kate sighs, and follows Emma.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Kate looks down from the railing, she sees Emma talking to Dwayne. We don't hear what they're saying.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kate walks back in, slumps onto her bed, and looks at the list of the drawings she's been given. How much of the book has she actually been allowed to write?

Emma rushes back in with little sausages on a plate.

EMMA

Lets' go, go, go!

KATE

Why can't I do some writing?

EMMA

What, you do lots of the writing?

KATE

I'm not sure I do.

EMMA

What's happening?

KATE

You come round here and you keep giving me stuff to draw ...

EMMA

You like drawing.

KATE

I don't work for you.

EMMA

Okay?

KATE

You're editing it when I'm not around, writing whole new sections. Did you forget we share the doc file? Do you even want me here?

EMMA

Of course I do, but it sounds like you don't like my writing.

KATE

That's not what I said.

EMMA

You think it's bad. You think my writing is bad.

KATE

That's not what I said.

EMMA

Look, I know I'm not a genius,
okay?

KATE

That's not what I'm saying, you're
not listening.

EMMA

I know it's not perfect, but I'm
trying, okay? So just cut me some
slack, I've never done this before,
I'm trying—

KATE

(interrupting)

You're here to see my brother!

EMMA

What?

KATE

You always talk to him.

EMMA

No I don't!

KATE

I know the guy in the book is him,
it's weird and creepy, but I let it
go.

EMMA

No he isn't. You keep trying to
take over scenes!

KATE

What?

EMMA

You keep making these little
suggestions every time I write
something, the first time it was
fine, then it just kept happening,
you second guess every decision I
make.

KATE

That's because they're stupid!

EMMA
I'm not stupid!

KATE
That's not what I said!

Emma grabs her laptop, closes it, puts it under her arms.

KATE (CONT'D)
You're using me! Look at this stuff? I'm not a factory!

EMMA
Fine, you don't have to do it anymore.

KATE
Good, because I don't want to, and stop talking to my brother!

EMMA
Keep your voice down!

KATE
I don't care!

EMMA
I'm leaving.

Emma stomps to the door, and slams it shut.

KATE
Good!

EMMA (O.S.)
Good!

Kate slumps onto her bed.

INT. INTERROGATION ROOM - NIGHT

A bag is taken off Crystal's head. She's held to a chair with laser cuffs. Death troopers stand around her in a dank, stark, scary room.

CRYSTAL (V.O.)
Where was I? There was no way to know. Had my time finally come? Was this truly when my life ended. What a cruel life it had been ...

Mrs. Cavil stands in a new ridiculous outfit, adjusting her Flash Gordon headdress. Crystal struggles in her chair.

MRS. CAVIL

Well, well, well, well, well, well,
well, well, well, well, well. If it
isn't the imposter. Pretending to
freeze when we both know you don't.

CRYSTAL

Where is she?

MRS. CAVIL

Who? Your little friend? She's
dead.

Crystal struggles more, Mrs. Cavil goes for an evil laugh.

MRS. CAVIL (CONT'D)

You didn't seriously think this was
war, did you? There are no other
planets! The games determine who
is, and is not, a freezer. This
planet was built on innovation,
hard work, and intelligence,
freezers are everything we work
against. Now you know the truth, I
can't let you live!

Emma walks in with her construction clothing. Mrs. Cavil and
Crystal look over like they're taking notes from a director.

EMMA

I've just realized there's a
problem here.

MRS. CAVIL

What? I mean, I think it's going
great.

Crystal nods from her laser bindings.

EMMA

Yeah, no, it's awesome, but like,
why would she tell her all this
stuff? You know? If you already
know Crystal was faking why would
you kidnap her at all? Why not just
let her go? Also, why is any of
this happening? Why do you hate
freezers so much?

Emma looks to her characters for answers. Mrs. Cavil shrugs.

CRYSTAL

You're the writer figure it out!

EMMA

But it's hard! Ugh. Okay, plot change, what if your parents were the bad guys? Like what if they were in charge of the games, and you could stop them at any time, but you can't because you're too scared of them? Also I've decided to change 'freezers' to 'Doonpurs'.
Ok? Action!

Emma rushes out again. The scene starts from the beginning.

CRYSTAL

I won't let you hurt the Doonpurs!

MRS. CAVIL

Ah, but they are less because they're not as smart as we are, canonically you have an IQ of three hundred, or something.

CRYSTAL

That's because I'm very smart.

MRS. CAVIL

Like me, we are alike you an I! Be my successor!

CRYSTAL

Never!

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Emma sits in bed surrounded by food, and empty bottles. She stares at the screen in pitch black darkness.

She burps, long, loud, gross.

EMMA

Whatever.

She keeps writing.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Kate sits at her desk, happily drawing something that Emma didn't request.

KATE'S MOTHER (O.S.)

Emma's here!

Kate desperately tries to finish, then dashes away.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

Dwayne sits on the sofa, absorbed in something on his laptop.
Emma stands awkwardly at the side, waiting for Kate.

EMMA

What ya watching?

He hands her an ear bud. Emma leans down, and puts it in.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Is this a rap about sonic the
hedgehog?

DWAYNE

Metal sonic actually.

EMMA

Oh, sorry.

DWAYNE

Sonic has some really interesting
lore. People just don't pay
attention.

EMMA

Cool.

DWAYNE

It is. There's this really good rap
about Piraka. I'll send it to you
if you want.

Emma nods.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Piraka's a Bionicle.

EMMA

No, I know. I knew that.

DWAYNE

A Bionicle is a kind of lego.

EMMA

Yeah. Of course.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Kate rushes down the steps, but stops halfway. We see Emma talking to Dwayne. Kate frowns, moves up and out of sight, she takes a deep breath, then—

She stomps down the steps loudly so everyone can hear her approach.

Emma leaves Dwayne and rushes up the stairs with Kate.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The two girls rush in, and Emma places her laptop in the same spot she always does.

EMMA

Kate. I'm sorry about yesterday. I over reacted.

KATE

No, I'm sorry! I overreacted too.

EMMA

Can we keep writing?

KATE

Yes! I wanna know what happens next.

EMMA

Great, because I added some stuff!

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - CRYSTAL'S ROOM - NIGHT

Crystal stands in her fancy sci-fi bedroom scattered with canvas and oil paint. She's just finished a painting, steps back, looks at it, but isn't happy. She wipes her hands clean as Dwayne enters.

DWAYNE

You don't have to keep doing this.

CRYSTAL

Doing what?

DWAYNE

The games, you and I both know you could leave at any time.

CRYSTAL

I have to stay, for Jelvie.

DWAYNE

It's not for Jelvie, you're doing this because you're too scared to face your parents.

Kate and Emma sit in their uniforms on a sofa in the back, watching.

KATE

Her parents are in charge now?
Since when?

EMMA

I changed some stuff. I thought she had more agency if her parents were government officials. She could leave whenever she wanted, but she'd have to talk to her mom and dad.

KATE

And the paintings?

EMMA

(shrugging)
I don't know, it just came to me.

DWAYNE

(points to a painting.)
The perspective's off.

CRYSTAL

You son of a bitch—

Crystal and Dwayne start furiously kissing. Emma nods slowly, enjoying herself, Kate tries to look anywhere else.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emma types furiously, Kate stands over her shoulder.

KATE

You're describing this in a lot of detail.

Emma keeps typing while she talks.

EMMA

Yeah, I've done some kissing.

KATE

Are they gonna do the other stuff too?

EMMA

What other stuff?

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - CRYSTAL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Dwayne pushes Crystal up against the wall, and quickly breaks the kiss.

DWAYNE

That was good kissing we did, but
now I have to go.

CRYSTAL

Do you wanna do the bit that comes
after kissing?

DWAYNE

No.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Crystal and Dwayne walk side by side in conversation until something explodes in the background.

DWAYNE

The rebels are attacking again,
quick!

Dwayne grabs Crystal and runs.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - MOM & DAD'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Dwayne and Crystal rush in. Kate's mom and dad stand in wizard robes beside a large window showing the rings of a planet.

KATE'S DAD

Crystal? What's happening?

Dwayne takes Crystal's shoulders.

DWAYNE

You have to tell your parents to
call it off! You can do it, I know
you can. They're not as scary as
you think. You just have to tell
them how you feel and—

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

KATE
What's this?

EMMA
It's the book, duh.

KATE
Don't do that.

EMMA
Do what?

KATE
The dumb voice!

EMMA
I'm not dumb.

KATE
That's not what I- Ugh, you're so
frustrating. You're not dumb,
you're playing dumb!

EMMA
How so?

KATE
It's me.

EMMA
Clearly.

KATE
The book! You changed it, after we
talked, you changed it!

EMMA
Yeah, self inserts are cheap, we
all know that.

KATE
First of all, no, they're not! You
were writing about something that
meant something to you, that's not
cheap, and it never will be-

EMMA
(interrupting)
Hey-

KATE

(interrupting)

I'm not done! Second, you haven't made up a new character, you've just made Crystal me! You're using things I told you.

EMMA

I don't know about that.

KATE

The line, there's a line here, the perspective's off. I said that, I told you my dad said that!

EMMA

That's coincidence. Self obsessed much?

KATE

I hate you!

The two girls stare at each other.

KATE (CONT'D)

I didn't mean that.

EMMA

Sounded like you did.

KATE

I didn't, I just mean, you can be— Can't you see you're writing about me now? You're using my life.

EMMA

I'm not, but even if I was, like, what's the problem?

KATE

You're doing it again.

EMMA

Doing what?

KATE

The voice! You start talking like that every time you feel threatened, you pretend to be dumb because your terrified that's what people think of you. So you just commit yourself to it.

EMMA

I do not!

KATE

Yes, yes, you do!

EMMA

Oh yeah? Well at least I'm not so desperate for a friend I lied to someone about reading the same books, at least I didn't agree to write a whole novel with them when I don't even like writing because I'm too scared to just talk to my parents!

KATE

You're such a jerk!

EMMA

Yeah? Well I'm a jerk that wrote a novel!

KATE

Great, you're a smart jerk!

Kate closes Emma's laptop and hands it back to her.

KATE (CONT'D)

Oh, and by the way, you can't finish something you keep going back to change!

EMMA

I will finish it!

KATE

Oh yeah?

EMMA

Yeah, I'll enter it, win, and then—

KATE

(interrupting)

Then what? What? Everyone will finally like you?

Kate crosses her arms, maybe that went too far. But she lifts her chin, she's not taking it back. Emma takes one more glance, and slams the door behind her.

Kate stares at the door for a moment, half expecting Emma to come back through, but she doesn't.

Kate sits back down at her desk, her eye catches all the stuff her parents bought her.

She grabs the stationary in a fit of rage and throws it out the window.

INT/EXT. EMMA'S CAR - DAY

Early morning. Emma sits in the car with Amanda, the car comes to a stop outside of school. Amanda stares at Emma as she reaches for the handle all solemn and sad.

AMANDA
Wanna talk about it?

EMMA
Not really.

Amanda sits back. Emma looks over her shoulder, waiting for her to insist she talk about it. Emma's too stubborn so she opens the door. Amanda reaches for her.

AMANDA
What's wrong?

EMMA
I said I don't wanna talk about it.

AMANDA
Honey—

EMMA
(interrupting)
Kate doesn't wanna be my friend anymore.

Emma sits back in the seat

AMANDA
What happened?

EMMA
She says I made the book about her.

AMANDA
The book again?

EMMA
Yes, the book again, I've been working hard on it!

AMANDA

Okay, okay, she says you made the
book about her?

Emma nods.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

Did you?

Emma jumps out of the car, slams the door behind her. Amanda
doesn't stop her. We watch as she drives away.

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Emma walks through the halls, focused on her feet. We see
other students glued to their phones, more so than usual.
Emma looks up, she slows, what are they all looking at?

She shakes her head, and walks into class instead.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emma slumps into her usual seat. The teacher isn't here yet,
but the room's full.

We see Kate across the room, staring out the window—the other
kids watch at her. Emma tries to let it go, but her curiosity
gets the better of her, she leans over to a classmate.

EMMA

Hey, what's going on?

SCHOOL GIRL looks up from her phone, only briefly.

SCHOOL GIRL

Huh? What?

EMMA

What are you looking at, is
everyone looking at the same thing?
What is it?

Kate shoots the rest of the class a glare, but it only makes
some of the other girls giggle. The school girl leans over,
showing her phone to Emma, she scrolls down a really long
way.

SCHOOL GIRL

It's a book some loser posted on
Wattpad. It's Hilarious.

Emma takes the phone by force and begins to read. We see the title of the story: VERDIGRIS.

SCHOOL GIRL (CONT'D)

I mean, lots of losers post crap on Wattpad, but this is special.

Emma swallows, hands back the phone.

SCHOOL GIRL (CONT'D)

This one's local.

EMMA

How come?

School Girl scrolls up, by the posters name is the state they live in.

SCHOOL GIRL

Besides, it's totally about that home school freak.

Emma looks, back, she understands why everyone's looking at her now. Emma gets up—

The teacher walks in.

TEACHER

Sit down.

Emma sits back down. She watches Kate across the room. Kate looks like she's barely holding back tears.

Class starts, Emma's stuck for now.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

Class ends, all the students rush out. Kate comes out first, defensive, shields up. Other kids won't leave her alone.

Emma rushes out behind her.

EMMA

Kate!

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Emma pushes through all the people, she can't find her. We see a glimpse of Kate, she moves out a door, and into the school yard.

Emma follows.

EXT. SCHOOL - YARD - CONTINUOUS

Emma rushes out, no one's here, not even Kate. Emma takes cautious steps, where's Kate? Emma's sure she saw her come this way.

We hear a sob. Emma moves towards it. We hear another, they're coming from behind a dumpster.

Emma moves round the corner. We see Kate huddled on the ground crying her eyes out.

KATE
Leave me alone!

EMMA
I'm so sorry.

Kate jumps to her feet.

KATE
You jerk!

She shoves Emma.

KATE (CONT'D)
Why would you post that?

She shoves Emma again

KATE (CONT'D)
I told you it sounded like it was about me!

EMMA
I didn't post it!

Kate shoves her too hard this time.

EMMA (CONT'D)
I just said I didn't!

Emma shoves her back. Kate falls over.

EMMA (CONT'D)
I'm sorry.

Emma reaches down to help her up, Kate stands on her own.

KATE
For posting the book?

EMMA
I didn't post it.

KATE
Shut up, stop lying.

EMMA
I didn't mean for this to happen.

KATE
Stay away from me, and stay away
from my brother.

Kate stomps past her, leaving Emma all alone in the school yard.

INT. SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

Emma walks back in, she moves slowly down the hall, thinking. She stops in front of three kids loitering between classes, reading Verdigris on their phones.

SCHOOL BOY
This is the part where she talks
about how she looks for a long
time.

EMMA
Maybe it's important to the story!

They all look up.

EMMA (CONT'D)
I just, I mean, maybe it's
important to understand the hero's
state of mind, and how she sees
herself.

The kids think about that for a second.

SCHOOL BOY
Nah.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - NIGHT

Kate's mother sits at the breakfast bar, reading the paper. Dwayne walks in, looks round the room.

KATE'S MOTHER
What are you looking for?

DWAYNE
The small idiot.

KATE'S MOTHER

Don't call her that. She's in her room.

DWAYNE

Again?

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kate sits on her bed, near the end of a crying fit. Dwayne opens the door slowly.

DWAYNE

Hey idiot.

He stops, his smile fades when he sees Kate wiping away tears, sitting in the corner. He comes in quickly, closes the door behind him, fearful his parents might make things worse if they knew.

He moves over and kneels down beside Kate. Dwayne might be an idiot, but he's a good brother.

Kate relaxes with him there.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Is it period time?

Kate can't help it, she snorts.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Don't laugh, mom says it could happen any minute now.

That makes Kate laugh. She holds her phone out to him. He takes it, scrolls down. It's text.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Is this the book?

KATE

It's about me. She made it about me. She posted it for everyone to read, and it's about me, it's got all this personal stuff in it.

DWAYNE

How'd you know that?

He keeps reading.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

Okay, so she acts like you.

He keeps reading.

DWAYNE (CONT'D)

And she talks like you, and she's good at art. That's not enough—

KATE

(interrupting)

Keep going.

DWAYNE

Are the villains mom and dad?

KATE

She thinks I'm a coward! She thinks I just follow other people around, and do what they want.

DWAYNE

Okay? Screw her?

Kate cries a little bit more. Dwayne waits awkwardly, he's trying his best, but his emotional skills are lacking.

KATE

But ... What if she's right?

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

The sun's setting. Emma slumps in with her backpack. Amanda, Jim and Dwayne sit at the breakfast table, they look angry.

Emma stops, sits beside them without prompting.

AMANDA

I knew you were writing a book.

EMMA

Okay?

DWAYNE

Yeah to make fun of my sister!

Jim reaches out to calm Dwayne, Dwayne sits back.

JIM

You can't write stories about other people and then post them to the internet.

EMMA

I didn't—

JIM
(interrupting)
In what world, did you think this
would be okay?

EMMA
I didn't do anything!

JIM
Who else would have posted this?

EMMA
I don't know.

DWAYNE
It has me in it!

Emma tries to hide her face behind her hand.

AMANDA
That's enough.
(to Emma)
Dwayne here brought to our
attention that you wrote him into
it.

Emma tries to hide in her chair.

DWAYNE
And my girlfriend.

AMANDA
And his girlfriend, who
incidentally—

Amanda looks down at her phone, looking at a part of the
book.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
—explodes?

EMMA
She catches fire! It was a fire
bomb made by the rebels who are
actually establishment spies
created to make the masses *think*
they have allies, but really
everyone is against them!

There's truth in Emma's words.

JIM
We are your allies.

Emma looks away.

AMANDA

No more book writing. It's messing
up your head.

Emma stands. Dwayne gives Emma a smug look.

JIM

At least for a while, and no
touching this project ever again.

AMANDA

You'll apologize to Kate.

EMMA

Already did.

AMANDA

Do it again, and Dwayne.

EMMA

Sorry Dwayne.

DWAYNE

What was that?

Jim nudges Dwayne.

EMMA

I'm sorry!

Amanda holds her her hand.

AMANDA

Laptop.

Emma gasps. Not her laptop! She can't ask for something so
precious.

EMMA

What about my school work?

AMANDA

You can do it like we did in the
good old days—

JIM

(finishing her sentence)
Pen and paper.

EMMA

I'll spell everything wrong!

JIM

Sounds like a good lesson.

Emma fidgets, trying not to throw a tantrum.

AMANDA

Laptop. Now.

Emma waits, reaches into her bag, pulls out her chunky 2010 laptop. She passes it over. Both she and her mother hold on to it.

Emma won't let it go.

JIM

I swear to god young lady!

EMMA

Fine! Gosh!

She lets it go.

We watch it get slowly placed in a box like a coffin, never to be seen again.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Happy?

DWAYNE

Very.

Jim slaps Dwayne on the shoulder this time.

JIM

You're a guest in our home.

DWAYNE

She murdered my girlfriend.

AMANDA

In a book. Now, grab a homemade chocolate chip cookie, and get out.

DWAYNE

Uh, yes, ma'am.

Dwayne picks up his school bag, grabs a cookie off the counter and shuffles out.

Emma stands with her bag.

AMANDA

No more writing this crap.

EMMA

It's not crap.

AMANDA

Yes it is. It's self indulgent nonsense, and this is what selfishness gets you.

EMMA

I didn't post it!

JIM

Even if you didn't, you still wrote it.

EMMA

It's not a big deal!

JIM

It was to Kate.

(to Amanda)

That's her name right?

Amanda nods.

JIM (CONT'D)

You hurt her feelings, and this Dwayne as well. I've read passages Emma.

Emma covers her face with her hands in shame.

JIM (CONT'D)

You wrote about her home life.

Jim waits for reply, but Emma says nothing.

JIM (CONT'D)

Go to your room.

EMMA

I was going anyway!

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emma slams her door and jumps on her bed, screaming into her pillows. She takes a moment, turns around. Normally, this is when she'd pull out her laptop and write ...

Emma closes her eyes. We see flickers of the book, the characters, but Emma can't hold onto the visuals in her head.

She opens her eyes again, screams, sits up. She puts a pillow over her eyes.

We see flickers again, longer this time, but still, they don't stay.

Emma turns the lights off, and lays on the bed again. The visuals stay even longer, we hear echoes of the characters voices.

Emma plays really loud rain sound on her phone. She lays back again, closes her eyes in the dark and listens to the rain. She relaxes.

We see flashes of characters, their voices come through clearer and clearer until-

INT./EXT. BACK OF SPACESHIP - NIGHT

Crystal and Jelvie sit beside one another in laser cuffs, a robot at the helm of the ship, deadly empty black space outside the windows.

Crystal's asleep, Jelvie wide awake. The ship jolts like hitting turbulence, Crystal jolts awake. She looks around, terrified, unsure.

JELVIE

Nice of you to join us.

CRYSTAL

Jelvie!

JELVIE

Don't, Jelvie me. We're only in this mess because of you.

CRYSTAL

What? I came to rescue you.

JELVIE

Oh please, if it wasn't for you and your freezing I never would have been taken-

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Emma opens her eyes. That didn't go the way she wanted. Why aren't they doing what she wants?

She closes her eyes again.

INT./EXT. BACK OF SPACESHIP - NIGHT

Crystal and Jelvie sit beside one another in laser cuffs, a robot at the helm of the ship, deadly empty black space outside the windows.

Crystal's asleep, Jelvie wide awake. The ship jolts like hitting turbulence, Crystal wakes. She looks around, terrified, unsure.

JELVIE

Oh thank god you're awake!

CRYSTAL

Jelvie!

The two girls shuffle to one another and do the best imitation of a hug they can while restrained.

JELVIE

I'm so glad you're okay.

CRYSTAL

Indeed, truly our friendship can weather any storm.

Crystal waits, then frowns.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

(to Emma)

Are you sure about this?

Jelvie points to herself in question, Crystal shakes her head and looks upward to god.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

I mean, I know you feel bad and everything but if we're being honest here Jelvie wasn't in much of the book, and now we're best friends? Why?

The spaceship slows, then stops. The girls look around.

Emma stands beside them, arms crossed, annoyed.

EMMA

What was that?

CRYSTAL

We never hung out. It's not natural.

(to Jelvie)

No offense.

JELVIE

None taken, it would have been nice to have more screen time.

CRYSTAL

Right, but you didn't get any, that's the point. This book has been about sticking it to the man, and kissing cute boys, no shame in that.

EMMA

It's not about anything!

CRYSTAL

Maybe you didn't intend it to be, but it is.

EMMA

What? You're like, a made up person. What are you talking about?

CRYSTAL

I'm snarky, pretty, brave, I have a cute boyfriend, maybe two if I play my cards right, and I have a loyal life long friend. I'm not just made up, I'm an idealized version of you.

EMMA

So?

Crystal points between her and Jelvie.

CRYSTAL

So, at the end of it all, why is it about me and her?

Emma doesn't answer.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

Look, I'm older and wiser.

EMMA

You're seventeen.

CRYSTAL

Are you kidding? This actor is at least twenty five. I'm telling you, even the stupidest crap is about something. So why can't this stupid crap be about something?

Emma thinks on that for a second, then glares at Crystal.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - LOBBY - NIGHT

The place is mostly empty, only a few death troopers line the walls. Jelvie and Crystal walk side by side, confused. They've been dropped into a new narrative without being briefed.

We see two dentist like chairs covered in scary Tron lines. Mrs. Cavil stands over them, swirling her cloak.

MRS. CAVIL

Welcome to your execution.

Jelvie and Crystal are strapped in, held in place. Crystal struggles against the restraints.

CRYSTAL

This isn't how it ends. We have to fight the regime and stuff, punch some guys, get a gun, blow some stuff up.

JELVIE

Agreed! I don't want to die!

EMMA (O.S.)

I'm trying something different. What if this story was tragic? You know? Real sad?

The death troopers come round with big needles filled with green fizzy liquid. The needles move closer to both Jelvie and Crystal's skin.

CRYSTAL

This is when America leaves Maxon!

The men stop, the needles halt then draw back.

EMMA (O.S.)

What?

CRYSTAL

You know the part in The Selection where America leaves the competition? You couldn't read it for a whole week! You were too scared it wouldn't have a happy ending! Then you did, and it all worked out. Don't give up!

EMMA (O.S.)
Kill them!

The needles pierce Crystal and Jelvie's skin.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Emma cuts it all off, opens her eyes, nothing about what she just imagined felt right.

SERIES OF SHOTS: THE GIRLS ARE SAD

- Kate wakes up, gets ready for school.
- Emma wakes up, gets ready for school.
- Kate finds her lunch on the kitchen counter with a note from her parents.
- Emma silently gets in the car with her mother.
- Kate walks through the halls of the school alone.
- Emma walks through the halls of the school alone.
- Emma gets lunch alone.
- Kate searches for a chair, Emma offers, Kate turns the other way.
- Kate gets lunch alone.
- Kate wakes up, gets ready for school.
- Emma wakes up, gets ready for school.
- Kate finds her lunch on the kitchen counter with a note from her parents.
- Emma silently gets in the car with her mother.
- Emma gets lunch alone.
- Kate eats lunch alone.
- Kate wakes up, gets ready for school.
- Emma wakes up, gets ready for school.
- Kate walks the halls alone.
- Emma walks the halls alone.

-- Kate eats her lunch in the girls toilet.
-- Emma eats her lunch alone in the corner.
-- Kate wakes up.
-- Emma wakes up.
-- Kate eats alone.
-- Emma eats alone.
-- Kate wakes up.
-- Emma wakes up.
-- Kate eats alone.
-- Emma eats alone.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Emma stomps into her room, drops the bag, jumps onto her bed, and screams into the pillows. She turns round, tries to hold back her tears, then looks over.

We see the calendar on her wall, a week left until the deadline. Emma jumps up, rips the calendar to shreds.

INT. SCHOOL - CLASSROOM - DAY

The middle of class, Emma and her classmates sit, Mrs. Cavil at the head, her laptop open on her desk. The bell rings, everyone stands.

MRS. CAVIL

Emma, come see me.

Emma slumps over to her teacher while she watches Kate leave.

MRS. CAVIL (CONT'D)

Stay here for a minute.

Mrs. Cavil leaves, Emma is left standing alone in the empty classroom.

Emma shifts on her feet. When is Mrs. Cavil coming back?

Emma rolls her eyes, drops her bag and sits in Mrs. Cavil's chair to wait. Then she sees Mrs. Cavil's open tabs. A few of them make her laugh, then she sees that one of them is Wattpad.

Emma moves the cursor, opens Wattpad, it's her book.

Emma clicks on the posters profile, DANEELSGIRL42. It's Mrs. Cavil's account.

Emma gets out her phone, opens up her book on google docs, it takes time to load, the manuscript is pretty long. Emma looks back at the door, Mrs. Cavil could come back at any moment.

The book loads. Emma checks the doc's list of collaborators. Mrs. Cavil is on it, Emma never removed her.

MRS. CAVIL (CONT'D)
Comfortable?

Emma looks up. Mrs. Cavil stands over her, closing the door.

EMMA
You posted my book!

MRS. CAVIL
Calm yourself, child.

EMMA
You ruined my life!

MRS. CAVIL
I helped you. You were going to submit that thing.

EMMA
So?

MRS. CAVIL
So? It's awful.

Mrs. Cavil, rounds the corner as Emma breaks into tears, she embraces her.

MRS. CAVIL (CONT'D)
I'm trying to help.

Emma looks disturbed by the hug, waiting for it to end.

MRS. CAVIL (CONT'D)
When I was your age I didn't have anyone to steer me in the right direction. I want it to be good.

Mrs. Cavil lets go of Emma.

EMMA

What if I just want to have fun?
You ruined everything. Kate won't
talk to me.

MRS. CAVIL

You did that yourself.

Mrs. Cavil takes her chair back, pushing herself into the
desk, looking at her screen rather than Emma.

MRS. CAVIL (CONT'D)

You wrote about Kate's life.

EMMA

I didn't mean to.

MRS. CAVIL

Perhaps. Now, I have to grade some
papers.

EMMA

But—

MRS. CAVIL

(interrupting)
We'll speak again later.

EMMA

I sent it to you for advice, not
humiliation.

MRS. CAVIL

Do you want detention?

Emma grabs her bag and stomps out. Mrs. Cavil returns to her
laptop, furiously typing something with her chin raised.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

After school, Emma lays on her bed, hands joined over her
stomach. She turns the lights off, plays rain sound on her
phone, jumps back on the bed, and closes her eyes.

INT./EXT. BACK OF SPACESHIP - NIGHT

Crystal and Jelvie sit beside one another in laser cuffs, a
robot at the helm of the ship, a night sky and city can be
seen outside the windows.

Crystal's asleep, Jelvie wide awake. The ship jolts like hitting turbulence, Crystal wakes. She looks around, terrified, unsure.

JELVIE

Oh thank god you're awake!

CRYSTAL

Jelvie!

The two girls shuffle over to one another and do the best imitation of hugging they can.

JELVIE

I'm so glad you're okay.

CRYSTAL

Indeed, truly our friendship can weather anything.

JELVIE

If we go, we go together.

(whispering)

Is she making us do this *again*?

Crystal nods. The spaceship sets down, the back opens. Death troopers pull Crystal and Jelvie down from the truck.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - LOBBY - NIGHT

The place is stark, only a few death troopers line the walls, it's all secret. Jelvie and Crystal walk side by side, pushed along by the death troopers.

Crystal nods to Jelvie. Crystal swings her fist behind her, knocks out a guard. Jelvie does the same. They both steal ray guns. There's a stand off.

For the first time the action feels different, more grounded. Crystal and Jelvie fire, run out of laser ammo, start throwing punches, they even take a couple hits.

This time when Jelvie and Crystal beat up men twice their size it feels harder, and more earned.

More troopers appear from the entrance to subdue them. The two girls start running in the opposite direction.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The girls keep running. Two death troopers appear. We see the same realistic, heavy action as they take them out. Crystal grabs a ray gun and keeps running.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - MRS. CAVIL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Crystal and Jelvie skid in, and see Mrs. Cavil waiting for them. The door slams shut. The walls are covered in cameras endless feeds to everywhere, Mrs. Cavil sees everything.

MRS. CAVIL

How nice of you to join me.

Crystal raises her ray gun at Mrs. Cavil.

CRYSTAL

Call them off.

MRS. CAVIL

No.

CRYSTAL

I'll shoot.

Mrs. Cavil shrugs. Crystal puts both hands on the ray gun, willing herself to do it. And then— she does.

The laser bolt hits Mrs. Cavil right in the chest, she falls, really chewing the scenery.

EMMA (O.S.)

No.

The scene rewinds to before Crystal fired the ray gun.

Crystal puts both hands on the gun again, pulls the trigger. It clicks, nothing happens ...

MRS. CAVIL

You're out.

Mrs. Cavil sits, Crystal tosses the ray gun away.

JELVIE

(whispering)

She's editing? She doesn't have the laptop, is this even canon?

Crystal quiets Jelvie.

CRYSTAL

Let us go.

MRS. CAVIL

Why would I do that?

CRYSTAL

Because we're—

MRS. CAVIL

(interrupting)

You're not special. You have no skills, no magic powers, no special gene, you're not related to anyone important, you don't lead a revolution. For a lead in an action thriller you're not very thrilling.

CRYSTAL

Maybe I'm supposed to be relatable.

EMMA (O.S.)

Stick to the script!

Mrs. Cavil, Crystal, and Jelvie wait to get their lines. They keep waiting. We watch. They just stand there, twiddling their thumbs and clearing their throats.

JELVIE

You okay up there?

EMMA (O.S.)

I can't think of an ending!

Emma pops in.

EMMA (CONT'D)

First I thought it could go all tragic, then I thought you guys could escape, then I thought you could kill Mrs. Cavil, I mean—whatever I called her.

MRS. CAVIL

That hurt by the way. I feel everything.

EMMA

(interrupting)

Then I thought, maybe they take over, or maybe they talk her down?

CRYSTAL

If you don't mind me chiming in?

Emma shrugs.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

You can't write an ending if you
don't know what the story's about.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emma and Crystal lay side by side on her bed looking up at
the ceiling.

EMMA

What if I don't want it to be about
anything?

CRYSTAL

Too bad, it will. It can be
something small, you know?

Crystal points to Emma's copy of SHATTER ME by TAHIR MAFI on
Emma's beside table.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)

What's that one about?

Emma thinks.

EMMA

The way young women are trained to
doubt themselves.

CRYSTAL

Interesting, interesting. And that
one?

Crystal points to THE HUNGER GAMES by SUZANNE COLLINS.

EMMA

The horrors of fascism and
unchecked power.

CRYSTAL

And that one?

Crystal points to THE SELECTION by KEIRA CASS

EMMA

The importance of love in all its
imperfections.

CRYSTAL

A little bit of heart won't ruin
the fun. And for the love of god,
fix the book, I have to live in it.

Emma looks at the calendar in her bin.

Emma turns her bedroom lights back on, pulls her calendar out
of the bin, and pieces it together with tape. She puts it
back up. Crystal joins her.

She still has a few more days to pull this off, and damn it,
she's going to try.

EMMA

I'm gonna need my laptop.

CRYSTAL

Where is it?

EMMA

My parents bedroom.

CRYSTAL

No! You can't go in there. It's the
middle of the night! You're crazy!

EMMA

I don't have a choice.

Emma marches to her bedroom door, she's going to war.

CRYSTAL

I'll wait for you.

EMMA

Oh, hell no! You're coming with me.

CRYSTAL

Damn it!

Emma opens her bedroom door carefully, Crystal behind her,
the coast is clear.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Emma and Crystal tip toe down the hall.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Emma and Crystal action roll through the kitchen. They press
themselves against the wall.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - PARENT'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emma's parents are fast asleep in bed, her laptop on the dressing table. The door creeps open. Emma and Crystal sneak in. Jim's phone rings with an old fashioned song in his native language. Emma and Crystal freeze, pressing themselves to the floor.

Jim slaps the music off, and readjusts in bed to hold Amanda closer. Emma reaches up for her laptop, slowly slipping it from the table.

Crystal hurries back to the door, gives Emma a thumbs up. Emma hurries over to her, and sneaks back out.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Emma places the laptop on the floor, and does another action roll across the kitchen—

Then dashes back for the laptop.

Crystal walks.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Emma sits at her desk, opens her laptop. Crystal stands behind her.

EMMA

What if my parents find out?

CRYSTAL

Return the laptop the morning, and steal it back every night, easy.

EMMA

That's insane. I love it!

Emma's hands hover over the keyboard.

EMMA (CONT'D)

What do I do now?

CRYSTAL

You fix it.

EMMA

Okay, but how?

CRYSTAL

I don't know, google it.

Emma opens a safari tab and googles 'How do I fix a book?'.

EMMA

No, this is all for repairing
hardbacks.

Emma searches 'How do I write a good novel?'. She scrolls
down.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Make checklists of details, Develop
good habits? What does any of that
mean? Build a relationship with an
editor, what? Don't stress your
first draft? Too late.

CRYSTAL

Okay, this isn't for you. Google
something else.

Emma searches 'How do I write a good novel, beginners'. She
scrolls down.

EMMA

Ugh! This is all advice on work
ethic!

CRYSTAL

Keep your voice down. Try
searching, how to structure a plot?

Emma searches 'how to plot a novel'. She opens an article. We
see the phrases, PREMISE, CENTRAL CONFLICT, ANTAGONIST,
CHARACTER ARC, MORAL ARGUMENT, THIRD ACT, SUBPLOT.

Emma stares at her screen, Crystal's gone. Emma sits at her
desk like it's the end of 2001: A Space Odyssey.

A big smile takes over her face.

MONTAGE: EMMA TRAINS

- Emma puts on a sweat band.
- Emma reads an article on story structure.
- Emma bites into a chocolate bar.
- Emma drops index cards and colored pens onto her bed.
- Emma writes her plot down on the cards.

-- Emma re-arranges the plot cards, not sure where each scene goes.

-- She guzzles a mug of coffee, spits it back out. Coffee still sucks.

-- Emma reads another article, she takes in the words THREE ACT STRUCTURE.

-- Emma writes on her laptop comically fast, slamming her elbows and forehead into the keyboard.

-- Emma cracks her back in pain.

-- Emma reads another article, she takes in the words FOUR ACT STRUCTURE. She tilts her head, confused.

-- Emma raises her arm like a dumbbell, we see a coffee mug, she takes a swig. Emma raises her other arm like a dumbbell, we see a cola can, she takes a swig.

-- We see a card labeled DWAYNE get thrown out, she salutes his passing like a loyal soldier.

-- Emma writes, eyes red, back aching, she's vibrating, surrounded by coffee, chocolate and soda.

-- Emma reads another article, she takes in the words DON'T BOTHER WITH STRUCTURE. She looks ready to throttle someone.

-- Emma moves her index cards around again, the last four cards are blank. How does it end?

-- Emma jogs on the spot.

-- Emma writes down, WHAT IS THIS ABOUT?, And sticks it next to the other cards.

-- Emma does sit ups.

-- Emma reads an article, she takes in the words KEEP IT SIMPLE.

-- Emma does star jumps.

-- Emma, writes down, WHY CAN'T I HAVE FUN?

-- Emma deletes large sections of the book.

-- Emma fills in her last four cards.

-- Emma falls asleep on her bed in full Rocky Balboa cosplay, laptop still open. Finally done.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Emma walks with a hard copy of the fixed novel. She sees Kate waiting, she walks up to her. Kate frowns. They say nothing to each other.

Emma holds out the manuscript. Kate shakes her head she doesn't understand, and she's not willing to break the silence first.

EMMA
I fixed the book!

KATE
Great?

EMMA
I fixed it for you. I'm sorry. I know I already said that.

Emma pulls the manuscript back.

EMMA (CONT'D)
The best thing this book got me was a friendship with you. It was about fun, the book I mean, in the end. And I miss being friends with you. Did I say sorry? Sorry. I'm just gonna be totally honest here, I really hope you forgive me.

Emma holds out the manuscript again.

KATE
You want me to read it?

EMMA
I wrote it for you, again. I wrote it again for you. It's new. Not all of it, a good chunk though.

KATE
Just email it.

EMMA
I can't, my stupid parents took my stupid laptop.

Kate takes the manuscript. Emma smiles and walks away awkwardly.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - PORCH - DAY

School bag over one shoulder, manuscript poking out, Kate pulls out the house keys and let's herself in.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Kate closes the door behind her. She waits to hear if anyone is home, but the house is quiet. She frowns and keeps moving.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kate walks in, drops the manuscript on her desk. She thinks a minute, then opens it up, and starts reading.

INT. CRYSTAL'S BEDROOM - DAY

We see Crystal, her room is already populated, more bare bones, not so much crap in it. She walks out.

INT. JELVIE'S BEDROOM - DAY

A different room, posher, cleaner, but stark, futuristic and empty. We see Jelvie.

EXT. PALACE - COURTYARD - DAY

Crystal and Jelvie meet up.

CRYSTAL
Ready?

JELVIE
As I'll ever be.

CRYSTAL
I've got your back.

EXT. PALACE - THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

Golden throne room, flying cars outside, think Flash Gordon. Crystal stands in a crowd of teens. Death troopers in unnecessarily scary uniforms surround the courtyard.

To the sound of Sci-fi laser trumpets, Mrs. Cavil enters dressed as a space empress, massive crown, flashy dress, cape.

Mrs. Cavil sits on the throne and her face is projected above her as a hologram.

MRS. CAVIL

Today marks the anniversary of the
intellectual tournament!

The crowd cheers.

A palanquin makes it's way through the crowd, it stops at the throne. A young man steps out of the carriage. We watch as Grey Haired Boy ascends to stand beside Mrs. Cavil.

GREY HAIRED BOY

Two have already been chosen!
Crystal Sardothean, and Jelvie
Montage!

The two girls join hands as the crowd parts for them. Grey Haired Boy watches stoically.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

KATE

Why did we never give this guy a
name? I mean, I like him.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - HALLWAY - NIGHT

We see a much more fantastical set than last time. Jelvie and Crystal are lead down the hall by the Grey Haired Boy. We pass a few personnel and a couple of other teens who seem to be in the same boat.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - FOOD HALL - CONTINUOUS

They walk through the food-hall, a massive room with propaganda on the walls, floating tables, and robots.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - DORM ROOM

The girls walk into a room with several bunk beds, the style of the room's changed from the last time we saw it. It's more stylized, more pink, more girly, more fun.

We see a glamorous teen girl, a specky nerd, a jock, basic characters that will be present as the book goes on.

GREY HAired BOY
I'll be your mentor. I'll prepare
the six of you, for the games.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

KATE
No love interest this time?

INT. TESTING HALL - PUZZLE ROOM - DAY

Crystal is lead into the puzzle room. The door locks behind her.

GREY HAired BOY (O.S.)
In just a second the game will
begin. You'll have a half hour to
win. Understand?

Crystal nods.

The room darkens, we lose sight of her. The light comes up again.

AID (O.S.)
Opponent found. Commencing game.

The room shifts and changes before our eyes. We see a chess board, and a chair. Crystal sits down, she moves the first piece.

The game progresses beyond the use of pawns, into the pieces she doesn't know how to move as well. Things aren't going well, but they might still be evenly matched.

Crystal's hand freezes, she can't move it

AID (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Something wrong contestant?

CRYSTAL
No, I'm fine!

She grips her hand and draws it back. She tries to stand but her leg is frozen.

GREY HAired BOY (O.S.)
Contestant?

CRYSTAL
I said i'm fine!

We see a stillness move it's way up her arm and to her neck. The door opens all of a sudden. The Grey Haired Boy grabs her, and drags her out.

INT. TESTING HALL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Death troopers come rushing down the hall towards them, Grey Haired Boy holds her up as her joints loosen, covering for her.

GUARD

We received a notice of a-

GREY HAIREd BOY

(interrupting)

Malfunction.

They look to Crystal, Crystal nods. They let it go, and keep walking down the hall to the other puzzle rooms.

GREY HAIREd BOY (CONT'D)

I won't let them hurt you.

Crystal looks back, surprised.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kate gasps, the Grey Haired Boy is the new love interest.

KATE

Yes! Justice for the Grey Haired Boy!

INT. TESTING HALL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

GREY HAIREd BOY

The freezing is nothing to be ashamed of.

CRYSTAL

I don't freeze.

GREY HAIREd BOY

Things are changing, keep your head down in the games. Hold it off if you can. I can't help you every time.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - BUNKS - NIGHT

Crystal tosses and turns in bed, she can't sleep. The room is strangely quiet, no one snoring, but everyone fast asleep.

She stops moving. We hear a noise, a scrape. Crystal's eyes go wide. There's a yelp that's quickly silenced. Fabric hits her mouth, rope gets pulled around her legs.

There's a scuffle as death troopers try to take her. Jelvie jumps down to defend her. Death troopers try to take Crystal are all subdued. Jelvie and Crystal embrace.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

KATE

All right, fine. This might be better.

Kate settles in to read more.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - BUNKS - NIGHT

CRYSTAL

It's all a plan to capture freezers!

JELVIE

I won't let anything happen to you. We're in this together.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - MRS. CAVIL'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Crystal holds a ray gun to Mrs. Cavil's head.

CRYSTAL

Why do you care?

MRS. CAVIL

Because people like you put us in danger. We have to compete for our lives in those puzzle rooms. Because—

She takes a moment to chew the scenery.

MRS. CAVIL (CONT'D)

Because I'm one of you! When I froze, I lost my first match, and my home planet was destroyed.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

KATE
I'm still not sure how the puzzle
rooms work, but I'm having fun!

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - MRS. CAVIL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

New Mrs. Cavil knocks the gun out of Crystal's hand. The two have a ridiculous Kung Fu fight scene, plenty of jumping and flipping.

A death trooper kicks in the door and knocks Crystal out.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Kate screeches and turns the page.

INT. SCI-FI PRISON - NIGHT

Crystal stands in a prison. We see the Grey Haired Boy outside her window here to rescue her in a flying car. Crystal climbs out onto the ledge for her Fifth Element moment.

INT. REBEL HQ - MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

Crystal and Grey Haired Boy sit at a desk with a few messy looking rebels as they plan their revolt.

CRYSTAL
We have to go back.

Crystal slams her fists on the table.

CRYSTAL (CONT'D)
They have my best friend!

GREY HAIRED BOY
You're so brave.

The entire table claps.

EXT. REBEL HQ - BALCONY - NIGHT

Crystal and the Grey Haired Boy smooch, no context, they're just kissing.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

KATE
Finally!

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - LOBBY - NIGHT

Crystal and the rebels break in, a massive explosive fight breaks out. There's Kung Fu, fire, laser guns.

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - MRS. CAVIL'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Crystal breaks in, slams the door behind her. Someone sits at a desk with their back turned.

Mrs. Cavil walks in from the side, but, if she's not the person in the chair, then ... who is?

The chair turns, we see an EVIL JELVIE.

MRS. CAVIL
(to Jelvie)
Kill her.

JELVIE
Yes master.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

KATE
No!

INT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - MRS. CAVIL OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Jelvie's won the fight, Crystal's on the ground, but not knocked out.

CRYSTAL
Remember who you are!

Jelvie shakes off the mind control or whatever it was, and turns on Mrs. Cavil.

EXT. ESTABLISHMENT HQ - COURTYARD - NIGHT

Grey Haired Boy and Jelvie stand over Crystal as she lays bloody and beaten on the ground. She has multiple stab wounds, a burn, maybe a pipe lodged in her leg and shoulder.

In the distance we see a spaceship wreckage, and the corpse of some kind of flesh monster we're left to assume Crystal heroically fought single handed.

Jelvie and the Grey Haired Boy look down at Crystal, devastated, these are her final moments.

CRYSTAL

I'm sorry I was such a goober.

GREY HAIREd BOY

Shhh, don't talk.

A medic and his assistant rush over. Crystal coughs up a ton of blood.

JELVIE

Is she gonna make it?

MEDIC

Quick, I need seventy gloobers of microcrotic!

The medic's assistant hands him some green slime, he slaps it all over Crystal's face like skincare. Her friends wait, and watch, praying for her recovery.

Crystal jumps up, healthy as a horse, wounds gone.

MEDIC (CONT'D)

She's going to make a full recovery.

JELVIE

Sick.

GREY HAIREd BOY

Nice.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS.

Kate closes the manuscript, sits back exhausted. She finished it in one sitting, she's not sure what to do with herself now.

KATE

That, was-

She smiles wide, throwing her hands up in the air.

KATE (CONT'D)

Awesome!

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Early morning, Emma slams a couple chocolate bars into her backpack and a bottle of coke. She looks up at her taped together calendar, and crosses off the final day.

Today is the book fair.

EXT. EMMA'S HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

Dew still fresh on the early morning grass. Emma wheels her bike out of a shed, and hops on. She takes a glance at her parents bedroom window, and takes off down the road.

INT. KATE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM/KITCHEN - DAY

Early morning, Kate's parents eat breakfast. Dwayne sloppily eats cereal. Kate stomps in, puts her hands on her hips. They all look over.

KATE

We're going to the book fair!

KATE'S MOTHER

Oh, what changed your mind?

KATE'S FATHER

You're getting back into writing?

KATE

No!

Kate picks up a newspaper on the breakfast table, tosses it across the room. It hits a vase, the vase breaks.

KATE (CONT'D)

Oh god mommy I'm so sorry!

(Dwayne clears his throat.)

I'm not sorry, actually! I'm not going to that summer camp for nerds, it sounds boring!

Dwayne stands, starts clapping.

KATE (CONT'D)

Thank you! Also, stop buying me stuff I don't want or need, I feel bad when I don't use it! You guys are smothering me!

Kate's father stands. Kate swallows, retreats into herself a little.

KATE'S FATHER

Don't talk to your mother like that.

DWAYNE

She's right, you don't listen to her. You put all this pressure on her to be into everything.

Dwayne pulls one of Kate's drawings out of his pocket, he hand sit to his dad.

KATE'S DAD.

What's this?

(to Dwayne)

Did she draw this?

(to Kate)

Did you draw this?

Kate nods.

KATE'S DAD

So, what you want to be an artist?

KATE

Maybe!? I don't know, I haven't decided yet, and I think that's okay!

KATE'S DAD

Stop yelling.

KATE'S MOTHER

Honey, we just want to be encouraging.

Kate fights off tears. This is hard for her. Kate's father kneels, runs a hand down his face.

KATE'S FATHER

You've been eating yourself up about this?

(Kate nods, close to tears.)

I'm proud of you no matter what you do. All I ever thought about growing up was how to make money ... I want you to do something you love. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to put pressure on you. You have to tell me when something's wrong. Use your voice. Okay?

(Kate nods again.)

Okay?

KATE

Okay.

(She wipes her tears
away.)

Can we still go to the book fair?

DWAYNE

Did you and Emma make up?

KATE

Not yet.

Kate's father grabs his keys, his jacket, then heads to the front door.

KATE'S FATHER

We're already late, so we have to
move.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Jim's making breakfast, eggs and bacon, burnt. Amanda comes in, looks around for Emma. She looks to Jim, Jim shrugs.

INT. EMMA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Amanda opens the door, walks in, Jim close behind. They have a look around. Jim stops at the calendar, and see's she's marked today off.

Jim and Amanda exchange a look, and rush out.

EXT. BOOK FAIR - ENTRANCE - DAY

Plenty of people, a stage and stalls are set up just beside a small New England town. The stalls sell everything from self published novels, to handmade jewelry.

Kate, Dwayne and their parents walk in. Kate's mother gets distracted by scented candles, and her father by wood carving. Kate uses the opportunity to wander off.

EXT. BOOK FAIR - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Kate searches the crowds and stalls for Emma. She reaches the stage where a few people set up for the main event.

Kate walks up to Emma who stands by the side with a half eaten corn dog in hand. The two girls smile.

EMMA
What'd ya think?

KATE
Not bad, not bad.

EMMA
I'm really sorry. I uh, I got you a
corn dog.

Kate looks to the half eaten one.

EMMA (CONT'D)
It got cold so I ate it. I went to
go get another one, but it started
to get cold too, I figure it would
go to waste—

KATE
(interrupting)
It's fine. Apology accepted.

EMMA
For the corn dog?

KATE
The book.

EMMA
Seriously?

KATE
You know ... I talked to my
parents, and ... I'm not saying
this makes what you wrote okay, but
weirdly it did help me.

EMMA
Yeah!?

KATE
That doesn't mean you can do it
again! But, thank you.

EMMA
For embarrassing you in front of
the whole school?

KATE
No, for noticing things about me no
one else did.

Emma pulls her into a fierce hug. The audience starts to fill
up, and a few people, including Mrs. Cavil come out on stage.

INT. BOOK FAIR - CAR PARK - CONTINUOUS

Amanda and Jim roll up a little too fast, and park wonky. Amanda gets out angry, stomping into the fair, Jim rushing after her.

EXT. BOOK FAIR - STAGE - CONTINUOUS

Emma and Kate sit in the crowd side by side, giddy and waiting, Mrs. Cavil takes the microphone on stage.

MRS. CAVIL

And now, the main event, the manuscript competition!

Mrs. Cavil pauses for ooohs and ahhhs she doesn't get.

Kate and Emma see Jim and Amanda stomping over, ready to scold them. Emma retreats into herself as her parents pull her into a bear hug. Emma's confused.

Amanda and Jim pull back, their relief turns to anger.

AMANDA

(whispering)

Young lady, how dare you. After everything we said, I, I can't believe—

JIM

(interrupting)

I can't believe you have so little respect for our authority—

KATE

(interrupting)

They're calling the winner.

They all sit, keeping the argument bottled for now.

MRS. CAVIL

Today I'd like to announce the winner of the twenty fifth annual manuscript contest, the winner will be awarded the Meredith writers committee seal of approval, a place on the shelves in Richard's book shop ...

Mrs. Cavil waves to Richard. Richard waves back.

MRS. CAVIL (CONT'D)
... and a fifty dollar gift card to
Applebee's.

Someone hands Mrs. Cavil an envelope.

MRS. CAVIL (CONT'D)
And the winner is ... David Speed.

There's gentle applause. A middle aged man with little hair
and thick sweater walks up on stage. Emma and Kate sit back
with big frowns as Mrs. Cavil hands him a giant Applebee's
gift card.

The two girls are devastated. Jim and Amanda soften. Dwayne
and his parents shuffle in beside them.

KATE'S FATHER
Did we miss it?

Kate nods, solemnly.

KATE'S MOTHER
Oh, I'm sorry.

Kate's parents spot Emma, she waves.

KATE
Emma didn't post the book, Mrs.
Cavil did. She was the only other
person the doc got shared with.

Jim and Amanda glare up at Mrs. Cavil as the applause dies
down, and the winner leaves the stage.

AMANDA
(to Mrs. Cavil)
You did what?

Mrs. Cavil looks down, confused, and then- recognition. Mrs.
Cavil looks away. Amanda walks up to the stage, Jim follows.

AMANDA (CONT'D)
Don't you dare ignore me. Did you
post my daughters hard work to the
world wide web so she could be
ridiculed?

Mrs. Cavil ignores her, and tries to move the show along,
they're picking best pumpkin next.

JIM
Hey, my wife asked you a question!

Emma rushes up behind her parents.

EMMA
(whispering)
Stop it.

Emma starts to panic. Mrs. Cavil crouches down as someone else takes over on stage.

MRS. CAVIL
I was indeed the one that posted
that story, but I assure you I had
nothing but good intentions—

Mrs. Cavil stops, looks to Emma. She's gasping for breath. Everyone watches.

AMANDA
Honey?

Amanda reaches for her daughter realizing too late she's having a panic attack. Emma dashes away.

MRS. CAVIL
No wonder.

JIM
What did you just say?

MRS. CAVIL
I beg your pardon?

AMANDA
My husband asked you a question!

MRS. CAVIL
I said no wonder that poor girl is
always on edge. It's because of
parents like you—

Amanda grabs a big gulp from the person beside her, and throws it in Mrs. Cavil's face.

Mrs. Cavil stands, wipes her face clear, goes over to the judges table and pulls out Emma and Kate's manuscript. She takes the mic, and starts reading Verdigris.

MRS. CAVIL (CONT'D)
The room was so full of stuff.
Light streaming in through broken
french windows with lots of grime
and cobwebs.
(MORE)

MRS. CAVIL (CONT'D)

If only my terrible life wasn't so bad, and I didn't have to sleep on these scratchy sheets of torment like a bad cough.

(Looks up from the book.)

I mean, what does that even mean?

Amanda grabs a hotdog from the person behind her and throws it into Mrs. Cavil's face. Mrs. Cavil looks down, aghast. Kate's mother throws a whoopie pie before Mrs. Cavil can retaliate.

A full on food fight breaks out.

EXT. BOOK FAIR - OUTSKIRTS - CONTINUOUS

We see Emma stumble to the edge of the fair, no people around. She's dizzy, clutching her chest, gasping for air. Her panic reaches it's zenith. Emma closes her eyes.

We see Emma in Crystal's clothes. She's the book version of herself, strong, brave, smart. The moment of escape is all she needs.

Emma takes a deep breath. We wait, watch. Emma tunes everything out, and slowly calms herself. She opens her eyes and seems to settle, back in her normal clothes.

Kate runs over.

KATE

You okay?

EMMA

I am now.

Kate and Emma look over at the stage in the distance, both their parents are pelting the judges with banana cream pie and spaghetti. The two girls hold hands and watch their parents defend their honor.

EMMA (CONT'D)

I'm glad we're friends.

KATE

Me too.

EXT. BOOK FAIR - STAGE - NIGHT

The fair's cleared out, everything's a mess. Emma and Kate's parents sit on a log, their clothes covered in condiments.

Emma and Kate sit beside them. A few local police roam around scolding people and cleaning up.

AMANDA

I didn't mean to discourage you
from writing.

Jim and Amanda watch their daughter. Emma tries to hold it in, but she begins to cry.

EMMA

You guys think I'm stupid.

JIM

What?

No.

AMANDA

They pull her into a hug.

AMANDA (CONT'D)

You're so many things, but you're
not stupid. If your father and I
ever made you feel that way, we
never meant to.

JIM

Ridiculous, how could you think
that? You wrote a whole book. I've
never done that. What's that? Forty
thousand words?

EMMA

Eighty one thousand five hundred
and sixty seven. To be specific.

JIM

There you go.

EMMA

Would you guys mind if I wrote
another one?

AMANDA

Of course not, right Jim?

Jim nods. Emma's relieved.

KATE

Emma? I still want us to be friends
but—

EMMA

(interrupting)

You don't want to write another
book with me, do you?

Kate shakes her head.

KATE
I'm not a writer.

EMMA
I promise to never ask you to draw
stuff for me again.

AMANDA
So what's the next book going to be
about?

EMMA
I don't know yet. I'll figure it
out.

INT. BARNES AND NOBLE — DAY

A young girl and her parents walk in, the place is quiet but well loved by the people that frequent it. The parents are excited, but the kid's not too thrilled. They split off.

The young girl wanders the aisles of books, looks at magazines, toys, notebooks.

We see the thrillers meant for middle aged men, romance novels for older women, the cook books for new parents, and the memoirs for dad's.

She walks past them all, and into the YA section. They have fun interesting covers, colorful, with plenty of young women front and centre, she's surprised.

One in particular catches her eye. The cover's illustrated, pink and blue (Kate's color palette) on it we see Emma's full name, and a picture.

A fully adult Emma smiles back at us, a pink pom pom pen perched in her ear. The young girl picks up the book.

She begins to read.

SMASH CUT TO CREDITS