

HOW TO SURVIVE ANYTHING

Written by

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INT. HOLLY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Trophies. Ribbons. Medals. Every portion of this girl's room is covered. There are framed photos of a young HOLLY CHU (13) in Tae Kwon Do uniform, holding a tennis racket. Even more photos of Holly with her two loving parents, BARD CHU (40s) and TALLULAH CHU (30s), at the beach, in Tokyo, on a rowboat wearing lifevests, etc.

A clock blinking a red LED 5:59 AM. It blinks 4-3-2-1 times as it finally emits a tiny squeal only to be quenched immediately by Holly's hand. 6:00 AM.

Holly sits up in bed, bright, eyes wide-awake.

INSERT: SEPTEMBER

She opens her curtain, looking out at the creeping morning light. She then looks lovingly to the floor, where we see her big golden retriever KHAN, still sleeping in his hand-made bed, that reads "KHAN" in embroidered patches.

HOLLY

Khan. It's time to get ready now.

Holly takes a pill bottle from beside her bed table and pours out one pill, which she feeds to Khan.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Your medicine, sir.

He licks it up and she slips out of bed gracefully as we go with her through her morning routine. Begin montage:

1. Holly and Khan sit in the tub, Holly practicing French verb conjugations.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Je veux. Tu veux. Il/Elle veut.
Nous voulons. Vous voulez. Ils
veulent. Voulez vous un petit
boisson, Monsieur Khan?

Khan shakes and water goes everywhere, Holly lifts her notebook out of the way.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Mais oui, il veut un petit boisson.
Bien sur!

2. Holly brushes her hair in the bathroom mirror, Khan next to her with a towel over his head. She rehearses lines from Twelfth Night.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
 "Sweet Sir Toby, be patient for tonight. Since the youth of the Count's was today with my lady, she is much out of quiet."

She looks at Khan and makes a "man voice" from him.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
 (Sir Toby voice)
 Possess us, possess us, tell us something of him. (Maria voice again) Marry, sir, sometimes he is a kind of puritan!

3. Holly, fully dressed in her school uniform (plaid skirt, white shirt, navy blue bowtie and kneesocks), french braids her hair into pigtails while reciting a speech for class, speaking directly to the face of ANDY GIBB on a poster of him on her wall.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
 While the Western and the horror film may explore the darker side of human nature, Hollywood musicals tend to accentuate the positive. This is especially true in Singin' in the Rain. The film works on all levels-- as a musical, as a romance, and ultimately as a story.

She polishes her braids off with two ribbons, then looks at the clock. 6:59 AM just turns into 7:00 AM.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
 (to Khan)
 Breakfast.

INT. HOLLY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Holly sits in the center of her small kitchen's dining room table, an empty plate in front of her. Bard brings over a pan full of eggs, potatoes, and veggie sausage and slides them onto her plate. Holly digs in.

HOLLY
 How do your classes look this year, Dad? Any stand outs?

Bard puts the pan in the sink and begins washing.

BARD

One or two characters, definitely.
I don't know why they would allow
freshmen in my upper level course.
They're just glorified high
schoolers. No offense.

HOLLY

None taken.

BARD

You are far from a normal high
schooler, HollyJolly.

HOLLY

I know.

Bard dries the pan.

BARD

Much brighter than at least half of
my grad students, even. Why don't
you come in one day and show them
what you're made of?

HOLLY

I'm pretty booked for the next two
weeks but I could do (thinking)
three Thursdays from now.

He puts the pan down and goes into the fridge for OJ, and
fills Holly's tall glass before filling one of his own.

BARD

Probably better that way. Don't
want to scare them off. They're
trying their best.

They clink glasses before chugging down the OJ.

HOLLY

How's the book going, dad? Any
breakthroughs last night?

Bard deflects.

BARD

No big breakthroughs with a capital
B. The muse. Fickle.

He puts the juice back in the fridge.

BARD (CONT'D)

But you on the other hand have ascended quite high quite quickly in the adolescent ranks, Jolly. I'm very proud of you.

Holly is pleased.

HOLLY

Ms. Boutilier said I wrote the best paper in the entire 9th grade. She also told me not to tell anyone she said that.

Bard zips his mouth and puts the key in his pocket, patting it. Tallulah pops in through the kitchen door. She wears her bicycle-fixing uniform, smock and bandana.

TALLULAH

It's fixed.

Holly stuffs the eggs and co. into a bagel she hollows out, pops up from the table and goes outside.

Tallulah holds a shiny yellow bike that has, like Holly, two ribbons tied on the handlebars and a big wicker basket.

TALLULAH (CONT'D)

Dad and I couldn't be prouder of you, HollyBee. Have a wonderful day.

Bard watches proudly from the door. Holly gives mom a kiss, runs up the steps to give dad a kiss, and slides the bagel sandwich to Khan.

HOLLY

Pour le monsieur.

She ruffles Khan's head. Bard and Tallulah stand together as she leaves but dramatically part ways once Holly bikes away.

EXT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL - DAY

Holly pulls up in front of her big, beautiful, private school: The Everwood School. High schoolers in uniforms chat vibrantly before class, walking around. A shy jock-boy named JJ and a confident art-boy named KARL wait for Holly at the bike rack.

KARL

Holly, how was your labor day?

HOLLY

Hi, Karl.

JJ

I um, I forgot to tell you that I got you a souvenir from my family trip to Montezuma.

JJ pulls a small figure out of his pocket. Presents it.

HOLLY

Thank you, JJ, that's very thoughtful of you.

KARL

Can I look after Khan any of these days?

Holly locks her bike to the rack.

HOLLY

Sorry boys, I can't be late.

JJ/KARL

Of course.

Holly walks by them and up the stairs into school.

INT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL - DAY

Begin montage (a song like Andy Gibb's "I Just Want to Be Your Everything" plays):

1. Holly as class secretary of student council.
2. Holly as president of East Asian Studies, showing Korean history on a powerpoint.
3. Holly as president of Heartwork (crafts for the community), showing how to weave place mats.

INT. HOLLY'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

4. Bard and Tallulah sit on opposite sides of the room in a strained silence. Bard sips on a tumbler full of brandy and ice.

EXT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL - DAY

5. Holly as Track and Field co-captain, gracefully mounting a high jump bar.

6. Holly as Girl's Tennis captain, walks with a group of other tennis girls past the boys tennis team, with team captain JJ at the helm carrying two coolers of water.

She gives JJ a wave and he drops the coolers, while staring after her in awe. The rest of the boys tennis team scrambles in their tiny shorts to keep the coolers from rolling downhill.

INT. HOLLY'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

7. Holly does her homework on the floor while Tallulah plays piano and Bard sips on some vodka and scribbles in a notebook. Tallulah and Bard make strained eye contact before looking away, which Holly does not see.

INT. HOLLY'S KITCHEN - DAY

8. Holly eats a beautiful Bard breakfast while Tallulah bakes a bundt, on the opposite side of the kitchen.

INT. HOLLY'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

9. Bard faces the window holding an empty glass as Tallulah sits at the kitchen table in strained silence.

EXT. HOLLY'S NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

10. Holly walks Khan through her neighborhood.

INT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

11. Holly in her art history class, crushing the game.

INT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL THEATER - DAY

12. Holly fences in a school theater production. Karl and JJ applaud her enthusiastically in the audience.

EXT. PLANO MATTERS RETIREMENT HOME - DAY

13. Holly delivers the weaved place mats to the local retirement home.

INT. BARD AND TALLULAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

14. Bard sits on the bed with his face in his hands as Tallulah packs a suitcase.

END MONTAGE.

INT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

INSERT: OCTOBER

Holly, in Medieval costume for some school event, verbally tutors a group of girls who are also in Medieval costume, who furiously take notes as they listen.

HOLLY

The difference between the Rococo artistic movement and the Baroque movement is actually quite simple. Rococo was ornate and used light colors, asymmetrical designs, curves, and gold.

Holly is interrupted by her art history teacher, MS. WENDY BOUTILIER (30s).

MS. BOUTILIER

Ms. Chu, my office, please.

HOLLY

Yes, Ms. Boutilier. (to girls)
Playful, witty, apolitical themes.

The girls scribble. Holly follows Ms. Boutilier.

INT. MS. BOUTILIER'S OFFICE - DAY

A shared office. Ms. Boutilier's side is covered with art postcards and trinkets.

She hands Holly a pamphlet.

Holly looks at the cover: "Center for Talented Youth, Oxford"

MS. BOUTILIER

It's a pre-college summer program in Oxford for talented youth. They have an art history program that I went to when I was your age. I encourage you to apply, I think you'd be a shoe-in.

HOLLY

Thank you.

MS. BOUTILIER

Think about it. You have time.

HOLLY

I will. Thanks, Ms. Boutilier.

EXT. HOLLY'S HOME - DAY

Holly stands in front of the door to the kitchen, looking down at the pamphlet. She looks up, hopeful, takes a breath and opens the door, revealing...

INT. HOLLY'S KITCHEN - DAY

Bard and Tallulah standing by the sink. There's a strange tension, to which Holly is oblivious.

HOLLY

Mom, Dad, there's something...

BARD

Why don't you sit down real quick, Hollygirl.

HOLLY

Um, okay, sure. So today, Ms. Boutilier...

Bard comes to the table and sits down next to Holly. Tallulah remains standing by the sink.

BARD

Mama and I have something to tell you.

HOLLY

What? What is it?

Bard prepares.

BARD

Holly, your mother and I, we're, taking a break, from each other, for a while.

HOLLY

What do you mean?

Bard looks to Tallulah, who can't bring herself to speak.

BARD

Well, Mommy and Daddy have realized that we might be better if we're not together all the time.

HOLLY

(realizing)

Are you getting a divorce?

Holly darkens, crumples the pamphlet. Tallulah flies in, sits down on the other side of Holly. Bard stands up and goes to the sink.

TALLULAH

It's not a divorce, Hollybee. Not yet. Daddy and I are trying something called a trial separation.

HOLLY

Trial separation.

TALLULAH

It gives us a little time to figure things out, look at things in a different perspective, before making any big decisions.

HOLLY

(brightening a little)

Trial separation. So it's not permanent.

TALLULAH

Right.

HOLLY

So you could get back together.

TALLULAH

(lying)

Maybe. Maybe.

BARD

Ha! Don't lie to the kid. Mother Darling will be staying with her new boyfriend.

Tallulah is pained. She stands.

TALLULAH

(to Bard)

This is not what we talked about.

HOLLY
New... boyfriend?

Bard turns around and fixes himself a drink during this.

TALLULAH
He is a friend. Just a friend. He is helping me by letting me stay with him while your father and I try to figure everything out.

HOLLY
Who is it?

TALLULAH
Um, do you remember my friend, Ken? Nishimura?

ENTER FLASHBACK:

INT. HOLLY'S KITCHEN

Holly does homework while Tallulah bakes. KEN NISHIMURA (40s), a muscular and handsome ex-Air Force pilot, comes in holding a basket with flowers and flour, bread. Holly barely acknowledges he's there.

Ken hands the bouquet to Tallulah.

KEN
Flowers for a flower. And the flour you asked for.

Ken laughs like a geek, Tallulah grins and accepts the flowers.

Ken walks over and ruffles Holly's hair, making it a mess.

KEN (CONT'D)
Hey there, kiddo! How's the homework?

Holly barely looks at him.

HOLLY
(annoyed)
Fine.

END FLASHBACK.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Ken Nishimura... that guy? The one that came with the flowers?

Holly notices Tallulah's floral suitcase, packed to the brim, sitting on the floor.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
I don't understand.

Bard angrily turns to Tallulah.

BARD
You brought him here?

Tallulah looks to the glass in his hand.

TALLULAH
You promised you wouldn't. Tonight.
At least.

Bard shrugs his shoulders and drains the tumbler.

TALLULAH (CONT'D)
(to Holly)
Ken and I have talked about it and,
we, if you'd like, we would love if
you came to live with us too.

HOLLY
I don't want to. I'm staying here
with Dad.

Bard sits down by Holly.

BARD
We're selling the house, Jolly.

Holly is silent.

BARD (CONT'D)
Dad's moving to Willow Bend, the
apartment complex, by the
University. It's not the most...
sizeable space, but will be closer
to Dad's work, but, um, one thing
is, no pets allowed.

A punch to Holly's gut. She looks to the kitchen entryway to see Khan sitting there patiently.

HOLLY
We're selling the house? When?

TALLULAH
Khan can come with Mama.

Holly looks at Khan, then desperately to her dad, then looks at her mom. Her fear turns to anger.

HOLLY
I'm staying with Dad.

BARD
But Holly, Dad's new place is limited regarding space. It will be a tight squeeze.

HOLLY
I don't care.

BARD
And Khan, boy, Khan will sure miss you a ton. Maybe it's best that...

HOLLY
I can visit him.

Tallulah approaches Holly.

TALLULAH
You can come whenever you like, bee. We'd be happy to have you. You could even sleepover if you...

Holly turns away violently.

HOLLY
I don't want to see you. You cheated on Dad.

TALLULAH
That's not true. Ken is just a friend.

HOLLY
Does Dad want to break up? It's just you, isn't it. Why are you doing this?

Bard stays silent. Tallulah is an island.

TALLULAH
Your father and I have talked about this, Holly.

She reaches out to touch her, which Holly avoids.

HOLLY
Don't touch me!

Tallulah takes a breath and picks up her suitcase off the floor.

TALLULAH
Mommy's off, then.

Holly ignores her.

BARD
Holly, your mother is leaving.

HOLLY
Then let her leave.

Tallulah looks at Holly, almost walks over to give her a kiss but keeps herself in check, and walks out the kitchen door.

BEGIN SAD, SLOW MONTAGE:

1. INT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Holly sits at her desk during class, totally absent.

2. INT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL STUDENT COUNCIL - DAY

Holly sits through a Student Council meeting, totally absent.

3. EXT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL TENNIS COURTS - DAY

Holly misses a tennis ball on the courts, losing her match. After the game, she sees her opponent run happily into the arms of her mother and father. Holly, alone, slumps her racket bag on and walks off solo.

4. INT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Holly gets a test back : a big C- written in red on the top.

5. EXT. HOLLY'S HOUSE - DAY

Holly walks her bike home, revealing a FOR SALE sign in front of her house that now has a large SOLD sticker on it.

Holly comes into the quiet home.

HOLLY
Khan?

He doesn't come. She looks around, walking into the...

KITCHEN

Back in the kitchen she finally notices there's a plate with a post-it on it saying:

"Hollygirl- Khan went to Mother's today. Be home later."

She lifts the plate to see bland looking grilled chicken and bland looking green beans. She recovers it and walks to her...

BEDROOM

which is all packed up in boxes, and sits in the middle of her bed, looking into her lap.

INT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL THEATER - DAY

Holly continues to look into her lap, as we hear her name being called comes into range.

DIRECTOR SVENSON O.S.

Holly. (louder) Holly. (louder)

Holly?

Zoom out to see she is standing on the theater's stage, the whole cast and crew staring at her expectantly. Director Svenson wearing a small neckscarf looks to his assistant director, MITCHELL, a chubby boy who dons an identical neckscarf, who shakes his head in exasperation.

HOLLY

I'm sorry. Line?

Karl and JJ, sitting in the audience, look at each other concerned for their girl.

LATER

The cast and crew packs up, ready to head home. Holly packs up slowly. Mitchell intentionally nudges her on his snooty way out.

JJ, seeing this as he and Karl get out of their seats, prepares for retribution, but Karl holds him back.

She walks out the theatre doors. JJ and Karl follow her out.

KARL

Holly.

She ignores them. Karl runs up to her side.

KARL (CONT'D)

We all have days like these. Don't
be too hard on yourself.

Holly would rather do anything to talk to these guys right
now in what seems like The Neverending Hallway.

HOLLY

Thanks, Karl.

KARL

JJ and I weren't sure you'd be here
today, we couldn't find your bike
on the rack outside.

HOLLY

Well that's because I take the bus
now.

KARL

The bus? That's new. But it
couldn't be from your house...

HOLLY

That's none of your business.

She walks off but Karl grabs her hand to stop her.

KARL

Holly.

HOLLY

Let go.

KARL

JJ and I have noticed...

HOLLY

(rage building)
Let go of me, Karl.

KARL

That you've been kind of...

Holly, in a trained Tae Kwon Do flash, pins Karl against the
locker room. JJ watches in shock.

HOLLY

When a girl asks you to let go, you
let her go, okay?

Holly shoves him into the locker and continues down the hallway. Karl, paralyzed by fear, remains pinned to the locker.

KARL
(to JJ)
I'm fine, I'm fine.

Holly walks out the hallway doors and the door slams shut.

INT. BUS - NIGHT

Holly sits on the bus alone back to Bard's looking a little ashamed but mostly very sad and lost and lonely.

EXT. BARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Sad looking apartment complex. Holly walks up the front steps and unlocks the door.

INT. BARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Later that night, Holly unpacks her last things into a tiny room in the new apartment, lit by spare yellow lights. The entire apartment is yellowed and brown, somehow. She picks up a photo of her and her parents, happy, wearing hats, and places it face down. She straightens a frame with a photo of Khan.

She comes out to the living room. Bard sits in his Big Brown Chair, looking like a ghost. She decides not to talk to him and goes back into her room.

She opens up one of her textbooks but immediately loses focus. She gets back up to go to the living room.

HOLLY
How were classes today?

Bard does not respond.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Dad?

BARD
(snapping out)
Hm?

HOLLY
Um, how were your classes... today?

BARD

Good, good. Same fare. Not much to report.

HOLLY

Good. Okay.

Holly turns around to go back to her room but then turns back to Bard.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

(trying to connect)

Did that one guy talk about his, um, "increasingly fragile white masculinity" in class again?

BARD

Hm? Oh, Jonah? Curious fellow, that one. Intelligent young man with no sense of self.

HOLLY

Yeah. Have you, um, have you talked to mom at all?

BARD

She doesn't want to talk to Daddy for a while.

HOLLY

Well that's unfair of her.

BARD

I never loved your mother for being fair.

HOLLY

But you loved her. And she broke your heart.

Bard shrugs. She turns around again to her room. Turns back for one more try.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Shall I get us some dinner?

BARD

Sure, sure, JollyBee, whatever you want. Good idea.

HOLLY

Okay then, I'll be back in a few!

She smiles, encouraged by his minor praise and throws on her coat on the rack before heading out the door, looking at a Bard who has returned to his trance in his chair before closing it.

INT. INDIA'S RESTAURANT - NIGHT

An incredibly dimly lit restaurant. Cheap Halloween decorations clash with its lavish traditional Indian decor in the almost empty absolutely dining hall.

Holly orders at the bar.

HOLLY

One order of alu samosa, one chana masala, one mushroom korma, and...
I'll have a mango lassi, please.

SUDEEP

\$28.89, miss.

Holly hands him a twenty and a ten dollar bill.

SUDEEP (CONT'D)

15-20 minutes. Have a seat.

Holly gets her change and mango lassi before scanning the empty joint and selecting a small chair on the wall. She sits and opens her lassi, watching a Bollywood program that plays on the restaurant's TV:

SUPRIYA (TV)

(in a beautiful sari)
Radesh, you came!

RADESH (TV)

(in army fatigues)
Of course. I'm sorry I had to lie to you, Supriya. I love you.

They embrace.

SUPRIYA (TV)

I love you too, Radesh.

A glint in Supriya's eye.

SUPRIYA (CONT'D)

But I love my country more.

She stabs him in the stomach and he crumples onto the floor. Men and women join Supriya as she sheathes her knife and they begin an animated, gleeful dance routine.

Holly nods and takes sips of her lassi.

Suddenly the program changes to a commercial.

TV:

A rugged, beautiful Indian man machetes some foliage that was obscuring the camera, revealing his face. It's India's favorite Bollywood star: DIVYA SINGH.

DIVYA SINGH

When the wilderness calls, what do
you do?

Funny transitional cut to Divya on top of a large grassy hill.

DIVYA SINGH (CONT'D)

Easy. You answer!

He rolls down the hill.

Holly takes sips of her lassi.

TV:

Another transitional cut to Divya's head. Extreme close up.

DIVYA SINGH (CONT'D)

Have you ever been stuck in a tough
situation, with nowhere to go and
no one to turn to?

Camera zooms out to reveal Divya is in quicksand, his head all that's above the sand. He struggles...

Transitional cut to him fully emerged, standing next to the sand pit, triumphant.

Another transitional cut to Divya walking through a forest.

DIVYA SINGH (CONT'D)

Life can be full of unexpected
surprises.

There is a bush on fire.

DIVYA SINGH (CONT'D)

Shouldn't you be prepared for them?

He douses it with a large fireproof blanket before seeing some berries next to him, smelling them, and eating them.

Transitional shot to Divya walking in a crowded market.

DIVYA SINGH (CONT'D)
 My name is Divya Singh. Survival is
 my passion, but you may know me
 from one of my many widely popular
 programs: Maman Jun...

An excerpt of Divya taking care of an elderly woman on her deathbed.

DIVYA SINGH (CONT'D)
 My Friend Raja...

An excerpt of Divya as a police officer, about to get shot, but a brown labrador retriever, RAJA, barks and alerts his master to shoot the bad guy first. Raja runs into Divya's arms.

COP DIVYA SINGH
 Thank you, Raja.

DIVYA SINGH
 Or the smash hit, Warrior Jhatka.

The same scene we just saw on TV, of Supriya stabbing Radesh, replays.

DIVYA SINGH (TV V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Sometimes, it is the ones you are
 closest to that can hurt you the
 most, like Supriya did to Radesh in
 Warrior Jhatka.

As Radesh crumples to the ground, subtitles appear on the screen in big, red letters.

"DON'T LET THIS BE YOU !!!"

DIVYA SINGH (CONT'D)
 Protect yourself from life's
 surprises.

"DON'T LET THIS BE YOU !!!" over Radesh's crumpled body appears again.

DIVYA SINGH (CONT'D)
 Prepare yourself for anything with
 my new book, Survival of the
 Fittest by me, Divya Singh.

The book spins onto the screen.

DIVYA SINGH (CONT'D)
And of course, my friend Raja!

A "Raja Approved" sticker smacks itself onto the cover with a "woof" sound.

DIVYA SINGH (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Available now.

What is Holly's reaction to this bizarre infomercial? She is absolutely enthralled, speechless, mango lassi still in hand as her mouth hangs partly open.

Sudeep walks over to her table with her bag of food.

SUDEEP
I've been calling you. Order ready.

HOLLY
Thank you.

She grabs the bag and dashes out of there.

INT. BARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Holly rushes in, setting the table for her father.

HOLLY
Dad, I'm sorry but is it okay if I take a plate to my room? I actually have more homework than I realized.

Bard stands and walks over to the table.

BARD
Of course, Jolly.

He approaches her to give her a kiss but before he can she darts into her room.

INT. BARD'S APARTMENT, HOLLY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Holly grabs her notebook that says "biology", whipping past a couple pages of biology notes to a blank page, scribbling down the exact things that she just learned from Divya Singh.

We see her laptop open, a search history displaying links to various "survival skills".

EXT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL TRACK - DAY

Holly surreptitiously rushes behind the bleachers as the track team practices, out of sight.

She unfurls a cloth pack that has a compass, a map, an action figurine, matches, some sticks, and a copy of Divya Singh's SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST.

She attempts to start a fire out of the sticks, but has trouble. She looks at the tantalizing matches. She then takes her glasses off and is able to use the lens to concentrate a point of heat that does start a flame.

She notes it down in her new special big red notebook.

EXT. EVERWOOD LAWNS - DAY

Holly walks around looking looking looking and AHA! she finds an acorn! A beautiful acorn. She brings it up to her mouth and bites with her back molars. She keeps trying as she notes it down in her book.

Holly stares at some grass. She takes out a pocket book that has Divya Singh's face on it and reads the "GRASS" section. As Holly reads the page hear a voiceover of him saying...

DIVYA SINGH (V.O.)

The corm (the base) is starchy, but edible and filled with water and carbohydrates. Perfect for a light lunch."

She pockets the book and plucks out some grass, tasting it.

It's terrible and she notes that down in her book.

HOLLY

Sorry, Divya.

EXT. KEN'S PLACE - DAY

Holly knocks on the door tepidly, which her mom answers.

TALLULAH

Holl...

Holly blazes past her straight to Khan, lavishing him with the affection Tallulah wishes she would receive.

TALLULAH (CONT'D)
Khan's really missed you. (beat)
How's school, bean?

HOLLY
Fine.

TALLULAH
And the play?

HOLLY
It's fine.

TALLULAH
(trying to connect)
Is Mrs. Hagood at the Senior Center
still in love with the art teacher?

HOLLY
I wouldn't know.

TALLULAH
And why not?

Holly shrugs. She begins looking at the photos of Ken and his daughter, CAMILLE, around the living room.

HOLLY
Dad's doing well.

TALLULAH
Oh?

HOLLY
Yeah. Really well.

TALLULAH
That's wonderful.

HOLLY
Is it?

TALLULAH
Of course, I wish nothing but
happiness for your father.

HOLLY
Sure. But anyways, his book is
really coming along. It's like he's
been inspired by God. I think he's
close to finishing, actually.

TALLULAH

Holly. Your father has been working on that book for more than ten years.

HOLLY

If he finished the book, would you take him back?

TALLULAH

Holly, that's not... It's just, your father, he has a hard time finishing what he starts. It's just a part of him. It's part of why I had to leave.

HOLLY

At least he doesn't just give up on it and leave it behind.

The awkwardness is broken by the arrival of Ken through the door.

KEN

Lulu they were out of your iridescent luminous sequins so I got you some beads, is that okay...

He sees Holly.

KEN (CONT'D)

Oh, hey there, Kiddo! Your mom told me you'd be coming around. Keeping out of trouble, I trust? Your mom tells me you're the regular Peggy Ashcroft, when's that play of yours?

He ruffles her hair.

KEN (CONT'D)

(to Tallulah)

They only had beads.

TALLULAH

That's fine, thank you.

Ken kisses her cheek and Tallulah looks to see Holly's response. It's not good. Tallulah pushes Ken away.

HOLLY

I'm leaving.

KEN
What, already?

HOLLY
Homework.

KEN
Homework! You couldn't get my kid to do homework unless you paid her off. You know what, you two should meet sometime, she's not home til' late but...

HOLLY
Maybe next time.

KEN
Yeah! Next time, then.

Holly excuses herself out the door.

KEN (CONT'D)
I think that went well!

Tallulah does not agree.

INT. BARD'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Holly comes home and before Bard, going into the bathroom and running the tub.

She goes to his room and opens up his notebook, hopeful to prove mom wrong.

HOLLY
Dad definitely still has a chance.

It's full of banal lists and dumb reminders.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Mother Theresa. Mom's right, Dad's never going to finish his book.

Holly has a bright idea. She rifles through Bard's things before finding her dad's old agents' business cards. There are three of them, but she lingers on that of REGINA "REX" DESARIO. There is a number and a pen note that says "Don't give up" on the back.

She stares at the card and looks at the phone before grabbing it.

She gets up and looks out into the hall, into the living room, into her room, into the bathroom, and finally dials in her number back in Bard's office.

REX (O.S.)

Anchor Books this is Regina Desario Speaking.

HOLLY

(business voice)

Hi Rex. I'm calling on behalf of Bard Chu. If he has a new manuscript in the works would you be willing to give it a read? I know you don't represent him anymore but you were always his favorite agent.

REX (O.S.)

Hi! You must be Denise, his secretary! I tried to get through to you years ago. Has he gotten my emails? Tell him to send me any material he has by Christmas and I can consider it for next year's publication list even without representation. Do you have my email? It's R-E-G-I-N-A at Anchor Books dot com.

Holly hears her dad come home and jumps up from the seat, running to the book case.

HOLLY

Regina at Anchor Books dot com. Great. Thank you for your time, Rex.

REX (O.S.)

Thank you...!

Holly hangs up on her, shoves the phone in the book case, and pretends to read one of the books in his study. He walks in with a tumbler in hand.

BARD

Why, hello, Jolly.

HOLLY

Oh, hi, dad.

BARD

Reading about race wars throughout history? That's not light reading.

Holly actually looks at the cover of the book she frantically grabbed: RACE WARS OF MANKIND.

HOLLY

Yeah, just curious. By the way, you missed a call from Regina?

BARD

Regina?

HOLLY

What is it?

BARD

I, it's, an old agent of mine. From Anchor. She wants me to send her my material. I haven't heard from her in over 5 years.

HOLLY

Wow, that's great, dad! Better get to working on that book, now, huh?

BARD

I suppose so, eh?

HOLLY

I, I saw Mom today. She asked how you were. I think she misses you.

BARD

Really?

HOLLY

Ken may be brawny but there's absolutely nothing upstairs. Total dud.

BARD

Just as I suspected.

HOLLY

I think she needs someone creative like you, who can actually make something. You should call her. After you write, of course.

BARD

Hm. She always did like the creative type.

HOLLY

Exactly.

Bard is visibly cheery and Holly is delighted. He sits at his desk and brings his notebooks out.

Holly, remembering the tub, runs over and stops it as its about to overflow. She holds up a pair of snorkeling goggles and a timer.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

INT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL - DAY

Q. Holly sprints during track and field way ahead of the other girls, but runs right off of the track. Looking at her timer, she notes the time in her notebook

-Heading of page: Did it get me?

-Bear (avg speed: xx):

-Mountain Lion (avg speed: xx):

-Wild geese (avg speed: xx) :

Holly writes YES by "Bear" and "Mountain Lion" and a MAYBE, IF HUNGRY by "Wild geese" before putting the book down and sprinting back onto the track.

INT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL CLASSROOM -DAY

Holly reads a book about medicinal herbs and plants and scribbles her way through art history. Ms. Boutilier tries to grab her attention but Holly doesn't even acknowledge her, head in notebook.

Ms. Boutilier walks to her office and picks up her phone while looking through the school directory.

INT. KEN'S PLACE - DAY

Tallulah is on the phone with Ms. Boutilier.

TALLULAH

I see, I see. Holly's been going through an adjustment at home. Right. Sure. Thank you for letting me know, Ms. Boutilier.

Tallulah's concern for her kid is interrupted by the entrance of CAMILLE (15), a pampered girl spoiled by her father's full attentions and affections.

TALLULAH (CONT'D)
Hi there, Camille.

CAMILLE
Hi.

TALLULAH
Good day at school?

Camille pauses to think.

CAMILLE
(cryptic)
Yeah.....

TALLULAH
I like your lipstick, that's a very nice color.

CAMILLE
Have you seen my hair straightener?

TALLULAH
I haven't.

Camille walks off. Tallulah recalls a conversation she had with Holly in her mind.

TALLULAH (V.O.)
Good day at school, bean?

HOLLY (V.O.)
Absolutely unbelievable. Maureen Saddlemeier started crying in Student Council. And you'll never BELIEVE this but Mrs. Hagood is in love with the new art teacher at the Senior Center. He's only 34.

TALLULAH (V.O.)
Love has no age, bean.

HOLLY (V.O.)
(laughs)
Ewww, mom!

After a moment, Tallulah looks at her watch.

EXT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL TENNIS COURTS - DUSK

The girls tennis team practices. Tallulah, in trench coat and sunglasses looks around for her kid. She sees Holly on the sidelines scribbling in a big red notebook.

Tallulah is so confused.

A group of tennis girls walks up to her and Holly brushes them off. They walk off, then Holly takes out a patch of grass and sticks it in her mouth. Tallulah doesn't even know what to think at this point.

INT. KEN'S PLACE - NIGHT

Ken and Camille pound chicken when Tallulah enters.

KEN

Hey Lu, where've ya been?

TALLULAH

Nowhere.

KEN

Well, Camille and I are cooking up what's to be the most savory chicken parmesan west of the Mississppi, isn't that right, Milly-bug?

CAMILLE

Sure.

TALLULAH

I'm not hungry.

Ken comes over to Tallulah, still holding the meat tenderizer.

KEN

You okay, Lulu? Something wrong? You wanna go play the piano? We had it tuned for you.

TALLULAH

No, no, that's alright. I...I've just been thinking. About Holly.

Ken gives her a big hug.

KEN

Well of course you have, Lu. She's your kid.

(MORE)

KEN (CONT'D)

And you haven't gotten to see her much since the move. Hey! Why don't we have a family lunch with the girls. It would be great if they met one another, I think they'd really get along. What do you think, bug?

CAMILLE

Sure.

KEN

Great! What do you think? Good idea?

TALLULAH

Good idea.

Tallulah walks upstairs, leaving Ken and his meat tenderizer. He goes back to pounding the chicken with Camille.

INT. FRENCH CAFE - DAY

Ken's "family lunch" is taking place. Holly is being totally impolite, scribbling in her survival journal, taking the pH of their water, throwing various foods to the nearby birds on the patio to see what they eat while everyone else silently eats their entrees. Awkward.

KEN

Great food here.

TALLULAH

Yes, really delicious.

KEN

Your food okay, bug?

CAMILLE

It's good.

KEN

Mine's great. Really great.

Beat.

KEN (CONT'D)

(clearing throat)

So, Holly. Your mom tells me you're working on a book.

HOLLY

Yup.

KEN
Survival and whatnot.

HOLLY
Uh huh.

KEN
Camille and I were in Indian Princesses, back in the day, do you remember that Camille?

CAMILLE
A little.

KEN
Real fun. Fishing, canoeing, father-daughter bonding. Though I guess it would be called *Native American Princesses* now. Well, they discontinued the program so I guess everybody wins. Except Mr. Kessler who had a heart attack on one of our campouts, had to keep it from the girls and everything.

Holly smiles tensely. Then throws more food to the birds.

CAMILLE
Can you stop?

HOLLY
Why?

CAMILLE
Firstly, it's weird. Secondly, I don't like having birds around when I'm eating. They're creepy.

HOLLY
They're birds.

CAMILLE
My dad is paying for this lunch.

HOLLY
He's your dad, not mine.

Holly goes back to scribbling. Camille hates this, Ken looks to Tallulah, but Tallulah can only see her sullen and withdrawn girl. Holly suddenly looks up, happy and animated.

HOLLY (CONT'D)
Mom, can you remind me how you and Dad met again?

TALLULAH

Holly.

HOLLY

I think I remember but might have some details confused. You were playing piano for the Dallas Symphony Orchestra and he was assigned by the morning news to write a piece about your showcase, or was he not working for them yet?

Ken looks a little uncomfortable, just seeing how on edge Tallulah is. Camille has her arms crossed and reclines in her chair.

TALLULAH

He was.

HOLLY

Right, right. And when he was interviewing you, you realized that he was the author of your favorite book and the rest is history. Fate.

Holly throws a bread crust at the birds and gets back to scribbling.

INT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL - DAY

INSERT: OCTOBER 14TH

In mid-October, good-hearted loserboy NATHAN ODENKIRK (14) arrives at Everwood. He walks to the student office and enters, facing the cheerful office director, JAMIE (40s), who is busy doing an x-treme sudoku.

NATHAN

(hesitates)

Um, hello...

JAMIE

Oh hello there, sweetie! What can I do you for?

NATHAN

I'm, I'm new.

JAMIE

You must be (looks at a packet on his desk and reads it) N. Odenkirk?

NATHAN

Nathan.

JAMIE

Wonderful!

Jamie hands him the packet.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Here are a couple of forms we still need your parents to fill out for you.

Jamie goes into his filing cabinet and pulls out another sheet.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Here is your class schedule.

He hands it to Nathan.

JAMIE (CONT'D)

Have a great first day, my man. I'm here if you need anything. (points to his desk nameplate). Jamie. Anything.

NATHAN

Thank you...

Jamie points to his nameplate.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

...Jamie.

JAMIE

Go get em, stud!

NATHAN

I'll try.

Nathan exits the office and closes the door. He peeps back in it's window to see Jamie giving him two enthusiastic thumbs ups. Nathan musters up as enthusiastic a thumbs up as he can.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

1. Nathan sits alone in a corner in his Latin class
2. Nathan sits alone in a corner in his Chemistry class, Holly in the other corner
3. Nathan sits alone eating a bagel while other kids socialize in the Elliot Center

4. Nathan sits alone in a corner in Algebra II
5. Nathan sits alone in a corner eating his sad sandwich next to a table of boys and girls dressed like Sherlock Holmes

INT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL HALLWAY. DAY.

Nathan walks down the hallway looking at his class schedule. You can see he's lost some pep in his step.

NATHAN'S POV: Class schedule.

His eyes hover over "Art History" then "403". He then looks to the number next to the door in front of him, which says "403". In the corner is a note: "Shine bright!! -Jamie".

Nathan reaches for the door handle and almost turns it but lets his hand rest there, entering a quick flashback.

FLASHBACK:

We see Nathan in his living room, bright and lived-in, playing Dungeons & Dragons with 4 of his old friends. They laugh and jest and play characters.

His mother, JOAN (30s), enters, beautiful and kind, hold a tray with fresh lemonade and cupcakes with frosting chickens on them. She sets it on the table and the boys dig in.

NATHAN

Thanks, mom.

She gives her Nathan a kiss on the head.

JOAN

Love you, bud.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL CLASSROOM -DAY

Nathan opens the door and stares into another sea of faces who look at him with half-interest. He takes a few deep breaths.

MS. BOUTILIER

Ah!

Ms. Boutilier walks over to him. He smiles politely.

MS. BOUTILIER (CONT'D)

Are you Nathan?

Nathan nods.

MS. BOUTILIER (CONT'D)
 Class, we have a new student. This is Nathan. Since he's coming in during the middle of the trimester I expect you'll help him fill in what he's missed.

Ms. Boutilier looks around.

MS. BOUTILIER (CONT'D)
 Why don't you sit in the back, next to Holly.

Nathan spots the empty desk and walks to it.

MS. BOUTILIER (CONT'D)
 Nathan, we've been covering the Art Nouveau movement. Chapter 13 in the text.

NATHAN
 Thank you.

Nathan puts his bag down, looking at Holly, who is frantically scribbling in her journal. He sits at his desk trying to pay attention to the lecture, but very distracted by his deskmate.

MS. BOUTILIER
 Art Nouveau was the first major artistic stylistic movement in which mass-produced graphics, as opposed to traditional forms of printmaking, played a key role. A key influence was the Paris-based Czech artist...

HOLLY
 (to herself, without looking up)
 Alphonse Mucha.

MS. BOUTILIER
 Alphonse Mucha.

Nathan looks at Holly in shock. He peers over to look at her notebook, it's filled with poor drawings of bandaged wounds. He's confused.

MS. BOUTILIER (CONT'D)
 Leading to the Art Nouveau style to initially be named...

HOLLY
 (in French)
 Style Mucha.

MS. BOUTILIER
 Yes, Karina.

KARINA
 Style (anglicized)... Mucha?

MS. BOUTILIER
 Yes. His lithographed poster
 appeared on the streets of Paris as
 an advertisement for the play
 Gismonda by Victorien Sardou on...

HOLLY
 (to herself)
 January 1, 1895.

MS. BOUTILIER
 New year's day, 1895.

Nathan peeks over, Holly in the middle of drawing a
 cartoonishly bloody scene of a man attempting a tourniquet.

EXT. EVERWOOD SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

The class comes flooding out of the door. Nathan walks
 methodically slow, glancing over his shoulder. Holly comes
 out last, slowly, still drawing in her book. She walks down
 the hallway as Nathan follows her.

NATHAN
 Holly, right?

Holly doesn't look up.

HOLLY
 Mm.

NATHAN
 You're um, really good at art
 history.

HOLLY
 Thank you.

NATHAN
 What are you working on?

HOLLY
 Proper wound care techniques.

NATHAN
Um, if you don't have rope handy,
you can use a belt.

Holly looks up and stops.

HOLLY
What?

NATHAN
For a tourniquet. I saw your
drawings. In class.

Nathan lifts up his shirt.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
I always wear a belt just in case.

HOLLY
A belt, interesting. Good, good.

She writes that down and keeps walking. Nathan hesitates but decides to keep trying with her.

NATHAN
I draw too.

Nathan reaches into his bag and grabs his sketchbook, opening it and flipping through it.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
They're not much but...

Nathan opens his sketchbook and displays the pages to Holly. We see they are intricately, wonderfully drawn fantasy characters and fantasy landscapes. Holly stops to look at them. She grabs his book and flips through them herself.

NATHAN (CONT'D)
And on the last page, I even, I
drew some stitching techniques, if
you're interested.

Holly flips to the last page, nods approvingly.

HOLLY
These are great.

NATHAN
Really?

HOLLY
Really. Walk with me.

She hands it back to him with a smile.

EXT. PLANO SUBURBS - DAY

Nathan and Holly walk home from school together. He is very excited to have potentially made a new friend. Holly walks her bike alongside Nathan.

NATHAN

You want me to illustrate your survival guide?

HOLLY

Yeah. Wilderness, woundcare, medicine, the whole gamut. I only started a few weeks ago but it's going really well. I was following one written by Bollywood Super Star Divya Singh, but it's pretty clear that he's a better actor than a survivalist.

Nathan nods, listening very deeply.

HOLLY (CONT'D)

Plus, most of his tips don't even have to do with survival. They're actually mostly acting tips and how to format a resume and take a headshot. So I'm working on my own thing that teaches you how to survive here. In Texas.

NATHAN

That's awesome.

HOLLY

It is?

NATHAN

Yeah. I was in boyscouts for years. It was always my favorite part. Besides the s'mores. What type of medicine?

HOLLY

Right now I have entries on feverfew, Johnny jump-up, lemonbalm, and...

NATHAN

St. John's Wart?

HOLLY

Yes!

NATHAN

I used to grow some back home. In Newark. With my mom. Maybe we could grow some at my house?

HOLLY

Awesome! Yes!

NATHAN

Cool! I live right down the block!

Holly's brightness cools off.

HOLLY

Sorry, I can't today. Maybe tomorrow?

NATHAN

What are you doing? I'm free for the rest of the night so we could do it after dinner too?

HOLLY

I'm going to my mom's house. My dog, Khan, is staying there, or else I'd never go. Never. I try to see him at least 3x a week. He's my best friend.

NATHAN

I see.

HOLLY

Yeah.

NATHAN

What if Khan stayed at my house?

HOLLY

What?

NATHAN

I'm sure my dad wouldn't mind! And that way you could see him whenever? It's just an idea.

HOLLY

Really? Really??

NATHAN

Yeah! I can just give him a call.
He loves dogs.

INT. PLANO FLORIST - DAY

Holly takes Nathan to her mom's work. Nathan is on the phone with his dad in the corner while Holly talks to her mom, who wears gloves and an apron and cuts stems off of daffodils.

MR. ODENKIRK (O.S.)

Nate, you know how I feel about
dogs.

NATHAN

I know dad, but she's my first and
well, only friend at school and I
think she needs help. Please, dad.

MR. ODENKIRK (O.S.)

Okay, bud. But he doesn't come
upstairs.

NATHAN

Dad! Thank you. You won't regret
this. Thank you!

Nathan hangs up, revved.

TALLULAH

You want Khan to stay at this boy's
house?

HOLLY

Yes. How many times do I need to
say it? There's nothing you can do
about it. I'm taking him.

TALLULAH

Are his mother and father are okay
with that? I'm sorry but I can't
imagine...

Holly turns to look at Nathan, who gives her a triumphant
thumbs up. She nods back to him.

HOLLY

Yup! A-okay!

TALLULAH

I don't know Holly, I don't really
feel comfortable...

HOLLY

Well, I don't really feel comfortable having to hang out with Ken every time I want to see Khan. My. Dog.

Tallulah places her shears down and thinks.

TALLULAH

Nathan.

Nathan scrambles over.

TALLULAH (CONT'D)

Hello, I'm Holly's mother.

Nathan extends his hand for a shake.

NATHAN

Nice to meet you, Mrs. Chu.

Tallulah removes a glove and shakes his hand.

TALLULAH

If I know my daughter, I know she can go to *far* lengths to achieve her goals...

HOLLY

You don't know me.

Nathan takes this in.

NATHAN

Rest assured, Mrs. Chu, Holly would really be doing *me* a favor by letting me have Khan for a while. It's hard being a new student at a new school in a new home, I really wouldn't mind the company.

Holly looks impressed by Nathan's panache.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

Holly's been a great friend to me, she really reached out on my first day, I'd be totally lost without her. I'm in her debt. She's a true friend.

Tallulah looks at the two of them, happy that Holly seems to have found a friend.

TALLULAH

Well. Only if your mother and father are willing, I'd hate to think we'd be burdening them with the care of another thing after you all just got here.

NATHAN

My dad can't wait. He loves dogs.

TALLULAH

And your mother?

NATHAN

Um. Um. Well, she...

Nathan puts on his brave face, looking Tallulah in the eye.

NATHAN (CONT'D)

She passed away three months ago.
From breast cancer.

Tallulah is flooded with empathy and love for the brave kid. Holly looks at Nathan curiously at this new news.

TALLULAH

Well. You two take good care of him, now.

NATHAN

Yes ma'am.

Holly looks at Nathan with new eyes. Nathan looks a little shaken, but overall, triumphant.

EXT. PLANO SUBURBS - DAY

In a burst, Holly, Nathan, and a happy Khan on a leash explode from Ken's side door and run down the street.