

**WE ARE PAGLIACCI**

Written by

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**OPENING MONTAGE - [SONG: "CLOWNS" BY GOLDFRAPP]**

**SEPIA TINTED FOOTAGE - A HISTORY OF CLOWNS**

- 1950s: An Auguste Clown pratfalls into confetti. Children's laughter echoes.
- 1960s: A Columbine Clown dances alone beneath a spotlight, tears shimmering.
- 1970s: A Tramp Clown offers a balloon. Ignored, he sits with a wilted flower.
- 1980s: A Mime struggles in an invisible shrinking box, her smile faltering.
- 2010s: Smartphone footage - clowns stalk woods, porches and playgrounds. Screams. Panic.

**SMASH CUT TO:**

**EXT. BEACH - DAY - PRESENT**

A clown family stands on rocky mounds, gazing out to sea. Their costumes recall each era.

**TITLE: "WE ARE PAGLIACCI"**

**INT./EXT. VOLKSWAGEN - DAY**

RUBY (Columbine clown, matriarch, early to mid 50s), MORDECAI (Auguste clown, patriarch, mid to late 50s) CRAMP (Tramp clown, oldest son, mid 20s) and LOONETTA (Mime, daughter, early 20s) apply and touch up on their painted faces and putting on red noses. Cramp helps his sister.

**EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY - CONTINUOUS**

The family walk in the neighborhood. Cramp pulls a wagon with one hand that contains their supplies and clownish necessities.

Ruby looks around as Mordecai proudly struts in front. Loonetta narrows her head with crossed arms.

**EXT. SUBURBAN HOME FRONT - DAY**

The family gather in front of a house and hold hands with their heads narrowed and eyes closed.

MORDECAI

Oh graceful one above, may our  
rubber chickens never deflate, our  
noses always squeak, and our pies  
land squarely on their mark. In  
your gracious name, Amen.

The clown HONK their noses two times and stop holding hands. Loonetta picks up her cymbals. Holding a sign in one hand, Cramp unties and gets the balloons from the stair rail.

Mordecai gets the fake bouquet of flowers from his jacket and gives it to Cramp.

RUBY

Are you sure this is the place?  
Doesn't seem like it.

MORDECAI

Of course, I'm sure! I checked!

RUBY

(rolls eyes, sighs)  
Let's do this. C'mon, kids.

They nod at one another. Mordecai and the rest of the family get out their kazoos and a radio from their red wagon.

**INT. SUBURBAN HOME LIVING ROOM - DAY - SAME TIME**

An ELDERLY MAN (Caucasian, late 60s) opens the door after it RINGS. The family burst through, accidentally knocking the man into the corner.

MORDECAI

Ladies and gentlemen! Boys and  
girls! Prepare yourselves for magic  
and wonder! Welcome us, the whimsy,  
wacky and magically, magnificent  
Carnevales!

After giving a goofy LAUGH, Mordecai tumbles into the room with a somersault, honking the horn and plays a radio that THUNDERS boastful and larger-than-life carnival music.

Cramp drags his feet into the room, his sad clown makeup accentuated by his slouching posture. He holds up a sign written in marker that reads: "Are you ready to ~~ery~~ laugh?"

Loonetta silently tiptoes in, pretending to pull an invisible rope as if dragging the entire family forward. She picks up and CLAPS her cymbals.

Ruby enters gracefully behind him, attempting to balance elegance and enthusiasm, though her expression is tinged with hesitation.

As soon as they enter the living room, Ruby's flimsy smile disappears.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

(eyes closed)

We're here for the birthday boy!  
Timothy Wake! Happy birthday boy!

RUBY

Uh...Mord.

MORDECAI

*Happy, happy birthday! Happy  
birthday, happy birthday! HAPPY  
BIRTHDAY to the BIRTHDAY BOY!*

CRAMP

Dad.

Loonetta freezes. But Mordecai keeps SINGING. Until...

RUBY

MORDECAI!

Mordecai opens his eyes. His smile falters. Cramp and Loonetta are frozen out of embarrassment. They are facing a family dressed in black.

The family freezes. Ruby's face goes pale as she scans the room.

Her eyes land on the photo of the deceased - a young boy smiling sweetly in a frame adorned with black ribbons and roses.

It reads "In Memory of Timothy Fraser, 2001-2016". The whole family becomes quiet. Mordecai stops the radio.

MOURNER #1

(sarcastic)

Nice. Real nice.

MOURNER #4  
 You're looking for "Timothea  
 Johnson". On the other side.

The clown family turns around, looking back. Cramp puts the fake flower bouquet near the memorial.

Ruby mouths "We're so sorry" to the mourning family.

The room is silent. A baby starts CRYING in the back. Ruby clenches her jaw, grabbing Mordecai's arm.

MORDECAI  
 (shakily chuckles)  
 Whoops.

In a shaky attempt to break the awkward silence, Loonetta CLAPS the cymbals together, which startles the family.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
 No, not now sweetie.

#### **INT./EXT. VOLKSWAGEN - DAY**

Mordecai drives. Ruby stares out the window. In the backseat, Cramp and Loonetta play patty cake.

MORDECAI  
 So about that -

RUBY  
 (slowly turns to him)  
 You said it was the right address!

MORDECAI  
 (Cheerfully)  
 It said "celebration of life."  
 Honest mistake.

He pulls into a lonely bus stop, parks by a payphone.

RUBY  
 It'd help if we actually had phones  
 of our own. We have money.

MORDECAI  
 But at what cost? Don't forget one  
 of Waldo's Codes.

RUBY, MORDECAI  
 "To uphold integrity is to abstain  
 from modernity."

MORDECAI

Exactly. Now to apologize...  
profusely.

RUBY

You will, to be precise.

He chuckles, kisses her, and steps out with a quarter.

Ruby watches him go, then pulls a newspaper from the glove box. Flipping through, she pauses at a listing:

"MUSIC TEACHER WANTED - BULLER ACADEMY - FULL TIME. DECENT PAY."

She lingers, thoughtful.

**INT./EXT. VOLKSWAGEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS - LATER**

On a nearby bench, Cramp sketches in his leather-bound journal. Loonetta yawns beside him and practices miming.

She forms her hand like she's eating an apple—then freezes. Her eyes widen. She actually chews something. She spits it out, stares at her hand.

She throws the invisible apple at Cramp. He's knocked off the bench with a grunt.

Loonetta rushes over, helps him up. He shoves her off with a glare. She blows a raspberry. He scoffs. They both plop back onto the bench in silence.

A beat.

She offers him another invisible apple. He slaps it out of her hand.

They sit in silence again.

**EXT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: DRIVEWAY - DAY**

After parking the car at the driveway, each family member got out the groceries from the back of the car. Mordecai gives Cramp the house keys. The son goes to the door to open it as the rest of the family gets the groceries and other bought items into the house.

Cramp sees a young couple strolling across the street. His attention is grasped as Loonetta tapped his shoulder.

He goes back to the house.

**INT. CLOWNS' FAMILY HOME: DINING TABLE - NIGHT**

At their home, consisting of some circus memorabilia and clownish decor, the family are sat at a rounded table with McDonald's made in elegant gourmet fashion. The Big Macs are decorated on a platter with beef tallow french fries on another platter.

There is a bowl of fruit salad with gummies on its left and a platter of caramel apples. Including glasses of wine. Their entire house is almost vintage; tracing back to the 1950s. Still in their clownish getups, they eat their food with forks and knives. A singular chandelier hovering over them.

Ruby eats gracefully. Cramp has one hand holding his head as he somberly plays with his food. Removing her gloves, Loonetta eats the fries with her hands. Mordecai, with his red nose, observes the family before facing his food.

RUBY  
(looks at Loonetta)  
Loon, don't slouch. And use your  
fork.

The mime sits up straight and continues eating. She uses her fork to eat the fries.

The room becomes quiet apart from the forks and knives.

CRAMP  
Do you think it's a sign?

RUBY  
What sign, honey?

CRAMP  
I thought since Mr. Hughes hasn't  
had us perform on stage lately. I  
just thought...

MORDECAI  
Don't think that way, kiddo! I'm  
sure he's cookin' us something  
fierce! Plus, doing these outdoor  
gigs is good for the exercise!

CRAMP  
Just hope we don't move again.

MORDECAI  
It won't come to that.

Loonetta mimes an extensive question.

RUBY

Afraid not, sweetheart. It's been a long time since they disbanded.

MORDECAI

(looks at his daughter)

They didn't give us a reason why they moved us out. Doesn't mean we have to give up. Just wonder where the others are.

He puts his fork and knife down. He sees the dread on the faces of his family.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

I know we've been morally down with these gigs lately. But it happens. Darnell's still helping us stay afloat as he has done for years. The important thing is that we thrive as a unit. Like the Mansons.

Beat. The family look at each other.

RUBY

(looks at Mordecai)

Mord, you just compared us to the Mansons.

MORDECAI

I know. They're a music band, right?

RUBY

No. They're a cult.

MORDECAI

(curious)

They are?

RUBY

Yeah. Of murderers.

MORDECAI

Ah, okay! So they have a cult following.

RUBY

That's not...No!

(Sighs, shakes her head)

Never mind.



MORDECAI

Anyways, not many people get to do  
what they love for a living.  
Gratitude goes a long way. That's  
why I'm gonna pitch our best act  
first thing tomorrow!

(looks at everyone while  
eating)

So, don't get your heads in the  
dumps, alright?

After looking at one another, they nod at him.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

Now Cramp, let's see that smile.

Cramp hesitates.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

C'mon, buddy! You can do it! Like  
how we practiced.

Cramp tries, but can't. When Mordecai pushes on, Cramp puts  
up a small smile.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

You could do better than that!

Mordecai tickles his son, which gets Cramp to grin  
momentarily.

CRAMP

(chuckles slightly)  
Hate it when you do that.

MORDECAI

Not when you were younger.

CRAMP

Cheater!

Loonetta smiles. So does Ruby.

MORDECAI

(looks at his daughter)  
Loonetta, folks will be so amazed  
by your miming. It's working well.

Loonetta shies away, blushing before she proceeds to eat.

CRAMP

A little too well.

Loonetta sticks her tongue out. Cramp does the same.

Mordecai sees Ruby looking at him with slight seduction in her eyes across the table.

MORDECAI

What?

RUBY

Your optimism knows no bounds. Just remembering you did the same when we met. I'll never forget that.

MORDECAI

Oh? That all you remember?

RUBY

Nah. There's the *other* thing.

MORDECAI

I could say the same about you.

CRAMP

(Groans)

Guys, not at the table.

MORDECAI

Alright, alright.

Mordecai is about to eat, but his red nose suddenly tumbles from his face and into Cramp's plate of fruit salad. Mordecai picks it up and wipes it on his suit.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

(Clears throat)

Sorry, buddy.

Cramp rolls his eyes, eats. The parents stare at one another.

#### **INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT - LATER**

Cramp walks with Loonetta with a big cup of ice cream. They pass their parents' bedroom, hearing muffled MOANS.

CRAMP

How much you bet one of them messes up again?

Loonetta counts twenty fingers and shows him. She mimes popcorn being made.

CRAMP (CONT'D)

(scoffs)

A bit much, but fine. It's a deal.

Loonetta grins. They both make their way, passing the door.

**INT. CLOWN FAMILY HOME: PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT**

A cozy blend of whimsy and weariness. Faded posters of clown acts and old performance photos decorate the walls. The hand-painted harlequin dresser stands proudly beside an unkempt bed—a lived-in shrine to the life they've built.

On the bed, in pajamas, after eating her out, Mordecai hovers over a MOANING Ruby, in her nightgown, between her legs as he kisses her smoothly under the covers.

In a loving yet passionate missionary position, he sticks himself in her and his thrusts gradually get faster, getting Ruby to MOAN more.

They look at each other in the eyes. Her mouth opens as well as Mordecai's as they are reaching climax.

As Ruby's MOANS get higher and louder with each thrust her husband makes, his red nose falls into her mouth. Ruby's eyes widen in shock as she starts COUGHING, sitting up abruptly and hacking.

Mordecai pats her back several times and helps her COUGH it out. It bounces across the carpet.

In alert, Mordecai scans his wife and pats her back again, getting her to COUGH again.

RUBY  
(laughing, coughing)  
For fuck sake, Mordy!

MORDECAI  
(catching breath)  
I'm so sorry! You okay?

Ruby rolls herself back on the bed, catching her breath. She nods.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
(looks at her)  
Did you...

RUBY  
I was about too! Did you?

He freezes. Ruby SIGHS and gets the tissue nearest to her from the dresser. He gives it to Mordecai who wipes himself before facing the ceiling.

They lie still, the afterglow giving way to chuckles—then full-blown laughter.

MORDECAI  
For the record, that's never  
happened before.

RUBY  
(teasing)  
Ha, sure it hasn't.

MORDECAI  
(chuckles)  
I'll let you next time. Promise.

RUBY  
Good. And no more red noses.

MORDECAI  
What?! Why? We could still make it  
work.

RUBY  
Just not when one of us cums.

MORDECAI  
Yeah. Makes sense.

The room is silent after their brief moment of levity. The clock ticking, filling the void. Ruby turns to Mordecai, her smile fading slightly as her thoughts drift to heavier things.

RUBY  
Mordy? What do you think it's like?

MORDECAI  
What do you mean?

RUBY  
I mean...I often wonder if we could  
do this, y'know, without an  
audience? Like tonight.  
(turns to Mordecai)  
You know what I...

Mordecai's eyes are shut. His SNORING commencing and breaking the silence.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
Already!?

Ruby SIGHS and puts her head back on her pillow. Her eyes still wandering around.

She glances at Mordecai, a faint smile tugging at her lips despite the heaviness in her chest. Reaching over, she brushes a strand of hair from his forehead before turning off the bedside lamp.

She gets up and goes to the closet in front of their bed. Opening it, she unveils a closet filled with more clown clothes, props and other essentials.

Including a keepsake where she keeps a list of Waldo's Codes from a society called the Grimaldi Club. Including other mementos like her wedding photo and picture of her father; a ringmaster.

At the left corner was her lap harp case. She looks at it with melancholy and nostalgia.

**EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD: PARK - MORNING**

CRAMP, in a worn tracksuit, sits on a bench after his jog.

Across from him, a GIRL, maybe 20, sits on a bench, arms folded, wiping her face. Clearly upset.

Cramp watches her quietly. Then – he starts making silly faces. Puffing his cheeks. Crossing his eyes. Subtle, goofy expressions.

The girl notices. Smiles and giggles a little through tears.

Suddenly, a car pulls up. A sleek sedan. Her BOYFRIEND steps out, not even greeting her.

The smile drops. She stands, walks to him stiffly, and gets in. They drive off.

Cramp watches them disappear. Alone again.

He pulls out a small balloon from his pocket, inflates it slowly, and ties it into a floppy balloon dog. He sets it aside and sighs.

**INT. CLOWN FAMILY HOME: KITCHEN - DAY**

Old-time show tunes hum from the radio as Ruby flips pancakes at the stove. She flips through a newspaper absently – until a headline grabs her:

"A NEW EPIDEMIC – Creepy Clown Sightings Surge."

Grainy black-and-white photos show masked figures near schools, homes, woods.

One article reports a clown with a knife seen outside an elementary school. Another says clown communities are shutting down.

Ruby frowns, disturbed — then shakes it off and returns to flipping pancakes.

**INT. CLOWNS' FAMILY HOME: LIVING ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS**

On the other side of the kitchen, Cramp and Loonetta sit on the couch blowing and crafting balloon animals. Cramp makes a dog while Loonetta crafts a cat.

The TV plays the 1950s film "Limelight". Cramps eyes at Loonetta's notepad, which is titled "Notes for *Who is Pagliacci?*" He looks at her briefly before looking away.

CRAMP

There's a better way of going about this, you know.

Loonetta turns to him, callousness on her face. She charades a question, which confuses Cramp. She SIGHS, puts down the balloon animal and picks up her notepad, writing and showing the question "*Got a better idea?*"

CRAMP (CONT'D)

I mean you could...  
(shakes head)  
Never mind.

Loonetta gives a sharp nod and continues making her balloon cat.

Carrying his briefcase, with a painted red nose this time, Mordecai comes down the stairs and sees the kids making the balloons.

MORDECAI

They're coming along great, guys!  
(looks at Cramp)  
Buddy, yours could use a little more air.

Cramp SIGHS and deflates his balloon. He takes another and suddenly BURPS, leading Loonetta to accidentally POPPING her balloon animal.

She glares at her brother, who CHUCKLES nervously. He scoots away from her and continues making his balloon animal.

She rolls her eyes and picks up her notepad, writing down notes. Soon, her head darts up when she sees the scene where Charlie Chaplin slaps Claire Bloom.

She almost GIGGLES but holds it back. Cramp sees her.

CRAMP  
That's not funny.

She makes a hand gesture saying *screw you* and face the TV.

**INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: KITCHEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS**

Mordecai goes to the kitchen and picks up a brown bag containing his breakfast. The breakfast Ruby is crafting nearly done with stakes of pancakes on a platter, scrambled eggs, biscuits and bacon strips on three plates.

Mordecai startles Ruby playfully, she turns and share a long kiss. They playfully dance romantically for a bit as they look at each other's eyes. Both of them CHUCKLING softly.

After they stop, Mord sees her eyes wandering around a bit, quickly glancing at the paper.

MORDECAI  
You're alright?

RUBY  
Yeah. It's...I hope it goes well.

MORDECAI  
I'll bring good news. Trust me.

They both embrace. Mordecai makes his way out of the kitchen with his breakfast and briefcase.

MORDECAI (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Bye, kids!

Ruby leans against the wall outside the kitchen and sees her husband leaving the house. Her solemn smile disappears as she stares out at him getting in the car.

**INT. PERFORMANCE ARTS CENTER: MANAGER OFFICE - DAY**

DARNELL HUGHES (Caucasian, mid to late 40s), manager of Darwin Performance Art Center, leans back in his chair, feet propped on his desk. His ANDROID PHONE is in his hand, scrolling.

A big, dumb smile on his face as his back is leaned against his desk chair while his other hand had his office phone held up to his ear, which someone could be faintly heard NAGGING on the other line.

DARNELL  
(whispers quietly)  
Every drop, baby.

CALLER (V.O.)  
What?

DARNELL  
(jolts)  
Oh, nothing, hon! My bad! So what are we're you sayin'?

DARNELL'S WIFE (V.O.)  
Christ! You're just as useless there as you are on bed.

DARNELL  
Yeah, well, I'm still in the game, aren't I?  
(snarling)  
Still planted the flag in that swamp you call a pussy, didn't I?

□DARNELL'S WIFE (V.O.)  
You've always had a thing for the younger ones. I know you.

Darnell pauses just a second too long.

□DARNELL □  
That was years ago. At a party. You know how it goes.

□DARNELL'S WIFE (V.O.)  
□Sure it was. Why can't you be more like that clown you manage?

When he sees Mordecai approaching, he rolls his eyes. He quickly exits his cellphone.

DARNELL  
Okay, sure. Gotta go! Love you!  
Bye!  
(whispers, hangs up phone)  
Fucking bitch.

He sits up straight.



DARNELL (CONT'D)

Mordecai!

MORDECAI

(makes small wave)

Hello Darnell!

DARNELL

Still see you're in your...get up.  
How's the family?

MORDECAI

Ah, they're great! Love 'em, love  
'em, love 'em!

DARNELL

(curious)

And Loonetta?

MORDECAI

Quiet and meek as a mouse! How's  
your missus?

DARNELL

Eh, she's whatever... but Loon. She  
still got that little smile?

(leans back, casually  
nostalgic)

Some girls got that... presence,  
even when they ain't tryin'.

MORDECAI

Eh, not much of a fan of the  
spotlight these days sadly.

DARNELL

Huh. Shame. Anyway, I've been  
meaning to reach you.

MORDECAI

Ah, same here! That's why I came.  
I've got a pitch to bring on the  
best act ever seen!

DARNELL

(nodding)

That's fantastic. But uh...before  
you do, I gotta show you something.

MORDECAI

Oh really?

Mordecai circles to face Darnell, who pulls up a video on his  
phone.

It shows a robed man miming Jesus doing stand-up, flanked by three women and a young man in saint costumes performing slapstick and lewd gags.

Mordecai squints, puzzled. Darnell grins, a bit flushed.

DARNELL  
(half-jokingly)  
Takes me back.

MORDECAI  
Hm?

DARNELL  
(snapping out of it)  
Just sayin'- they've got stage  
presence, ya know?

Darnell scrolls, showing the views: 3 million views.

MORDECAI  
Wow, well that's uh...that's  
interesting.

DARNELL  
They're the Kesslers. They have  
this series on Vimeo with acts like  
these. All from 2013! It's crazy!

MORDECAI  
(cautiously)  
I mean...it looks sort of...messy.  
What are they doing exactly?

DARNELL  
They're improvising! Acting on the  
spot! It's engaging! Avant-garde!

MORDECAI  
Avant what?

DARNELL  
They're funny as fuck! Similar to  
what you do, except, you know...

Mordecai is perplexed. Darnell proceeds to show Mordecai their Instagram, Snapchat, Tiktok and YouTube channel. Each of these accounts had tons of followers.

MORDECAI  
I'm not sure what those are.

DARNELL

(shuts down cellphone)  
Get this, their agent got in  
contact with me and wants us to  
have them perform here! Starting  
tomorrow.

MORDECAI

That sounds amazing!

Darnell CHUCKLES softly before letting out a SIGH.

DARNELL

So...you're probably wondering why  
I had you doing gigs lately.

MORDECAI

I am sincerely sorry about that  
again. I was so sure that it was  
Timothy Wake, not knowing that it's  
actually a wake. Nor knowing that  
Timothea is an actual name -

DARNELL

What are you...no! Don't worry  
about that. It's just...

Mordecai waits for a response. Darnell closes his hands and  
lets out a heavy gust from his mouth. His eyes wander around  
a bit.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

I'm grateful to you for bringing  
life to this place over the years.

MORDECAI

We appreciate it, Darnell. I...I  
cannot thank you enough for having  
us. It was hard finding our place  
here. We're grateful.

DARNELL

Of course. Hell, still remember  
half of Chester came out for your  
tribute to the, what they're  
called, Ringling Bros. The audience  
was huge.

MORDECAI

I know. But...I mean is there  
something wrong? You sound like a  
jaded housewife right now.

DARNELL

Well that's just it...

(whispers)

We're getting fucked. Not in a good way. And with the recent sightings and all...

MORDECAI

Sightings? What sightings?

DARNELL

(sighs)

Jesus, you live under a rock or somethin'?

MORDECAI

No. Just a home at the coast -

DARNELL

These clown sightings, man! And I'm sorry! But with you here, our attendees are running away!

MORDECAI

(fumbling)

Is that why...you don't have us....

DARNELL

Why you think we had that group photo? But not just that.

(earnest)

I brought you on because I thought we'd keep old-school charm alive. But all anyone sees when they see you now are those 4chan freaks running around scaring kids.

MORDECAI

4chan? What's that?

A beat. Darnell leans against his chair and sighs.

DARNELL

Look, either you change up your routine...ditch the get up...or I'll have to cut our contract.

Mordecai tries to keep his smile. But it's an evidential struggle.

MORDECAI

This isn't a *get up*. It's our way of life. You know that.

DARNELL

Your "way of life" isn't paying  
bills no more. Not unless you  
somehow, by some miracle, do  
something different.

(shows video again)

Like this here! They got it!

MORDECAI

(desperate)

I'll do anything. Anything! Don't  
terminate our contract! Please!

Darnell looks away and SIGHS. He lights up a cigarette and  
texts on his phone.

DARNELL

You have a week to pitch somethin'  
I actually give a shit about. I  
have some ties to cut and heights  
to reach.

(glances at Mordecai)

And you're not the first.

Putting his phone back in his pocket. Mordecai gulps.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

Whatever you're planning, go back  
to the drawing board. Prat falls  
aren't cutting it now! Investors  
are looking for blood. And this  
isn't exactly Cirque de Soleil.

Darnell sees the clear desperation on Mordecai's face.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

(rolls eyes and sighs)

Look, I'm tryna help you, but you  
gotta help me! Clowns are supposed  
to be funny, right? So be funny!

Mordecai nods. His eyes are visibly misty, but Darnell,  
wrapped in his bubble, doesn't care to notice.

He dials on the office phone.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

And get a fuckin' iPhone, or  
Android! Seriously! 'Kay? Good.

Mordecai nods faintly. Smile trembling.

**INT./EXT. VOLKSWAGEN - DAY**

Getting out of the building, Mordecai gets into the front.

After closing the door, he puts his face behind his gloved hands. A muffled SHRIEK burst from his lips. He starts to BREATHE slowly and SIGHS. He SCREAMS again.

**INT. CLOWNS' FAMILY HOME: LIVING ROOM - DAY**

At the couch, Ruby is playing a game of Chutes and Ladders with the children. The door CLICKS open, unveiling a somehow traumatized Mordecai.

Ruby stands and approaches him, kissing him on the lips. She notices his quivering face.

RUBY

Hey. You saw Darnell?

MORDECAI

(Nervously)

Yeah. I did. It's just uh...

RUBY

What is it?

Ruby assists him to the chair next to the TV set. He is still puzzling, thinking over and over. The kids lean in engagement.

CRAMP

Dad, what's wrong?

Mordecai looks at his family, scanning across the room.

MORDECAI

(clears throat)

I spoke to Darnell and I...well...I didn't get to present my pitch.

RUBY

You're kiddin'? Why?

MORDECAI

He mentioned something about these *clown sightings*.

Loonetta and Cramp looking at one another weirdly.

CRAMP

(looks back at Mordecai)

Clown sightings?

MORDECAI

Apparently, these idiots are  
scaring good folk in clown masks.

RUBY

Well, what are they? Pranksters?

MORDECAI

I guess.

CRAMP

Communists?

Loonetta gestures her heads as if to ask *What?* to Cramp's  
absurd answer.

MORDECAI

That was my other guess. But either  
way, I'm getting the feeling that  
we may be...if we don't do anything  
new, he'll cut our contract.

The family are startled. Loonetta clutches her collar. Ruby  
covers her mouth. Cramp narrows his head. Mordecai stands and  
paces back and forth.

RUBY

But he can't do that! I mean...did  
he say anything else about this?

MORDECAI

No, he didn't! He just showed me a  
video with these whippersnappers  
the Kesslers. They're supposed to  
make their debut here tomorrow.

Loonetta mimes in question.

CRAMP

That's a good point, sis.

(faces Mordecai)

You don't think this is why the  
they disbanded, do you?

Ruby looks at her husband. All eyes were on him. He is in  
thought, but shakes it off.

MORDECAI

No, that doesn't mean we have to.  
Look, I know it seems bad! But  
we've got through worse. Remember  
one of Waldo's Codes. #24. "Even in  
the dark places..."

RUBY, CRAMP, LOONETTA  
 "...we hold our heads high with  
 smiley faces."

MORDECAI  
 Exactly!  
 (stops pacing)  
 Darnell says that all we gotta do  
 is to improve our act. Do something  
 that would really knock their socks  
 off.

Ruby and the kids look at one another.

RUBY  
 You know, we could...level up.  
 Change things up.

MORDECAI  
 We can. But how do we "level up"  
 without...you know...

RUBY  
 We adapt. You know, add some  
 improvisation of our own. Get  
 someone to film us.

MORDECAI  
 (shakes his head)  
 No, no no! Absolutely not! We're  
 clowns, Ruby! You know we never go  
 off script.

RUBY  
 We've been on *script*. We don't  
 gotta rip it but flip it. You said  
 it yourself, Darnell needs us to  
 improve.  
 (faces the whole family)  
 I say we can add some novelty.  
 Nothing wrong with changes every  
 now and then, right?

Cramp nods. Loonetta simply observes.

MORDECAI  
 What we have is working! It's just  
 needs to be enforced and click with  
 these people, that's all.

RUBY  
 Mord, you can't force out a laugh.  
 They're earned. You know that!



MORDECAI  
 (trying to be positive)  
 I know, honey! But...anything that  
 leads us astray is a betrayal.

RUBY  
 I understand. But we need to do  
 something. These gigs aren't enough  
 to keep the roof on our heads.  
 (sighs)  
 I thought about something, but...

MORDECAI  
 What is it?

Ruby closes her eyes. She SIGHS and shakes her head.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
 There's only one thing we need to  
 do.

**EXT. CLOWNS' FAMILY HOME: BACKYARD - DAY - CONTINUOUS**

Each member is standing behind a stone podium that holds a red brick. In their hands are rubber mallets.

Mordecai is in the middle. He looks to his right and sees Loonetta and Cramp. He looks to his left and sees Ruby. He faces the brick in front of him.

MORDECAI  
 Ready! Lift!

Every member, including himself, lifts the mallet over the bricks.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
 And...smash!

The family lands their hammers on the bricks three to six times until they start to break little by little.

They close their eyes afterwards, almost as if they are meditating. Everything is quiet.

Ruby is the first to open her eyes, scanning and seeing each one opening theirs after.

Mordecai clears his throat. He looks down at the brick.

They repeat the process again. Again, they close their eyes. Only the HOWLING wind and WHOOSHES of the sea are present. Faint CRIES of gulls in the sky.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

Is it working?

There was a silence. They open their eyes. Mordecai observes the family and looks to the sky. Ruby looks down at the brick and the dents she made. He had his answer.

**INT. CLOWN FAMILY HOME: CRAMP'S ROOM - DAY - LATER**

Cramp struggles to juggle in his cluttered room, balls clattering to the floor. Frustrated, he flops onto his bed.

His eyes land on the dresser. He rises, pulls out a worn King James Bible buried beneath books on manhood, philosophy, and old keepsakes.

Locking the door, he settles at his desk, thumb in mouth, flipping to Proverbs 11:17:

"A man who is kind benefits himself, but a cruel man hurts himself."

The verse lingers in his mind. He turns through marked pages—cut-out clippings of happy couples and pin-ups, scribbled questions like *"God loves everyone. Even clowns, right?"* and *"Did Emmett Kelly find salvation?"*

**INT. CLOWN FAMILY HOME: LOONETTA'S ROOM - DAY**

In her neatly arranged, art-covered room, Loonetta types furiously at a manifesto filled with bitterness, rebellion, and allegiance to the Clandestine Insurgent Rebel Clown Army.

She rips the page from the typewriter, stacks it, then collapses face-first onto her bed.

Grabbing a kazoo from the dresser, she blows it like a cigarette. Raises a finger-gun to her temple. Pauses. Sighs.

Noticing white makeup on her fingers, she panic-hyperventilating-until she rushes to her vanity, reapplies the white powder.

Her breathing calms. She stares at herself in the mirror, mask restored.

**INT. CLOWN FAMILY HOME: LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Ruby comes down the stairs and sees Mordecai practicing his chair act in the living room while inhaling helium from a balloon.

He stops to write down on his journal filled with ideas for acts and clown gags. She leans against the wall, silently observing before coming down. Mordecai turns and takes notice.

MORDECAI  
(slightly high-pitched)  
Hey, pumpkin.

RUBY  
How's it going?

Moving his chair around, Mordecai sets it down. He leans in against it.

MORDECAI  
Well ask you expect. And you?

Ruby narrows her head a bit. She looks up to him and sits on the couch. Mordecai sees her and stops. He sits on the chair, facing her.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
(normal)  
What is it?

RUBY  
I was...I had ideas for out act.

MORDECAI  
Of course. Anything.

Ruby ponders and lets out a SIGH.

RUBY  
(facing Mordecai)  
I thought about adding music. Maybe with my harp. Something simple but poetic. Maybe absurd too... like it's all inspired by that camping trip.

MORDECAI  
(smirking)  
Really? Like the one where I got chased by bees just to make tea for Cramp when he was sick?

The two CHUCKLE about the whole thing.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
And Loonetta being born after?

RUBY  
(softly)  
That one. Trying hard to set up the  
tent that flew across the river.

MORDECAI  
And that Aphrodite's Child song  
playing on the radio.

The couple laughs.

RUBY  
You know them but not the Mansons.  
Unbelievable.

MORDECAI  
I don't care about all that fiddle-  
fuff. But..your idea's great. We'll  
work it out.

RUBY  
(nodding)  
For sure. It was so beautiful.

MORDECAI  
It was. I need to know that song,  
though.

RUBY  
I'm sure we'll find it.

MORDECAI  
Yeah. Seemed scary at first glance  
but it was peaceful that day.  
Especially with you. We should do  
it again.

Ruby nods.

RUBY  
Who knows, we could even travel.

MORDECAI  
Yeah. Imagine somewhere in Europe.  
Or Japan. Never been on a plane.

Ruby nods. She then looks away a bit.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
Seems like something else.

He gently holds her by her chin and makes her face him.

RUBY

(beat)

I...I thought about putting the kids in school at some point.

MORDECAI

(taken aback)

Like public schools? Private schools?

RUBY

Either one works.

MORDECAI

(scratches his chin)

What brought this on?

Ruby adjusts herself nervously. She holds Mordecai's hand.

RUBY

(shrugs)

I thought it'd be necessary for them. To do other things besides...

MORDECAI

Besides this, right?

RUBY

It's not like they're abandoning it.

MORDECAI

Yeah. We could send them to school. But what good would that do, Ruby?

RUBY

What do you mean what good? Lots.

MORDECAI

Not from what I observed or read. Broken dreams, careless teachers and faculties.

(stands up from chair)

Why send them somewhere that doesn't teach them what they could learn on their own? They're smart.

As Mordecai makes his way to the kitchen, Ruby watches him. He makes himself ice cream over the counter.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

Anything that jeopardizes this is betrayal, be it church - unless it's a clown church - or some nine to five. Including "school".

Ruby goes to meet him.

RUBY

Funny. Here I was thinking with those great values you had, you'd agree to this.

MORDECAI

Maybe back before the Kesslers were a threat. But now? No. This world doesn't want dreamers - just cogs.

RUBY

I get it, but...

MORDECAI

Do you?

RUBY

(Irritated)

Yes, but what about being amongst their peers? Giving them choices.

MORDECAI

We could find other clown communities. That's how we met.

RUBY

Mord, I'm serious. They need range. Cramp feels lonely all the time. Loonetta's writing a politicized manifesto, for goodness sake.

MORDECAI

Your point?

RUBY

It's not normal.

MORDECAI

So going to a place to be bullied is any better?

RUBY

No, of course not!

MORDECAI

Look, Loon's an artist! Cramp –  
he's just thoughtful. Like all the  
tramp clowns before him!

RUBY

I'm just saying that they need  
other outlets. This can't be their  
only means of some escape.

MORDECAI

(offended)

This isn't some *escape*! It's our  
heritage! Have you forgotten that?

RUBY

No, you idiot, I just...

Ruby SIGHS and shakes her head. Both of them stare at one  
another, a bit of hostility arising before it settles down.

MORDECAI

(sighs)

I'm sorry, but they're not going!

Mordecai walks past her. Ruby wraps herself with her arms,  
feeling utterly defeated. And useless.

#### **INT. CLOWNS' FAMILY HOME: PARENTS' BEDROOM**

On the bed, Ruby looks over to Mordecai and sees him deep  
asleep. She gets up from the bed and approaches to her desk.

Going through the drawer, she stumbles across five photos  
with Darnell. One with the whole family with Darnell. The  
remaining four had each family member. Underneath the  
pictures, she takes out a piece of paper.

An article ripped out from the newspaper. It showed the  
listing she saw before. She turns to her sleeping husband  
once more.

#### **INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: BASEMENT - DAY**

The basement is dimly lit, decorated with faded circus  
posters and tokens of clown iconography.

Mordecai is dusting the corners of the room with Loonetta  
clearing the stairs. Cramp sweeps with the broom while Ruby  
vacuums the rugs.

Faint drizzles are hutting the windowpane. Ruby briefly looks at her husband.

MORDECAI

(looks at Cramp and  
Loonetta)

How would you guys feel about  
getting a pet?

CRAMP

(confused, but flattered)  
Why?

MORDECAI

Just as an reward for...all of what  
you've done this far. I know it  
hasn't been easy. Especially with  
this news. But I'm very proud.

CRAMP

(looks at Loonetta, then  
to his dad)

Thanks, Dad. But Loon's allergic to  
dogs. And cats. Remember?

Loonetta faces her father and nods.

MORDECAI

(fumbling)

We don't gotta get those. How  
about, I don't know, a monkey? Or  
an owl? Or a monkey dressed as a  
owl? Or mouse?

Loonetta mimes in contemplation and proceeds to mime an owl.

CRAMP

Is that even possible?

MORDECAI

In most states here, they own owls.  
It's all a matter of getting a  
special license.

Loonetta mimes a monkey in question.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

I don't think so. That's why I miss  
the circus.

The conversation from Ruby's perspective becomes fainter.  
Their TALKING is drowned out by the vacuum.



Her eyes narrowed down to the floor. She closes her eyes a bit. Takes a deep BREATH.

She sharply opens her eyes. The noise abruptly stops.

RUBY  
I think we should do it.

Mord, Cramp and Loonetta face her.

MORDECAI  
Get a turtle?

RUBY  
What? No. I meant that we  
should...you know, attend their  
performance. The Kesslers.

Mordecai SCOFFS and lets out an uncomfortable LAUGH.

MORDECAI  
(facing his children)  
Kids, your mother is gosh darn  
hilarious! Isn't she?  
(Gulps)  
Right?

Loonetta shakes her head.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
(faces Ruby)  
Why would we do that!?

Ruby stares at him dead on.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
(dropping duster)  
WELL!?

RUBY  
(sharply facing the kids)  
Kids, what is Waldo's Code #37?

CRAMP, LOONETTA  
(Loonetta mimes the  
saying)  
"When your act is getting stale,  
tailor til its life prevails."

Looking to Mordecai, Ruby gestures her hand to the children.

MORDECAI

I mean, yes. But what good would it do going there!? What are we gonna learn from them? Act like idiots?

Ruby observes him and the family.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

(sighs as he realizes the irony)

Look, what we do is with grace. As far as I know, they're our enemies!

RUBY

Oh don't be melodramatic! We could see who they are for ourselves. See if they're funny. There, if we're lucky, we convince Darnell to give us a chance to do our act.

Mordecai looks down, pondering heavily.

CRAMP

(turns to his father)

It's not a bad idea, Dad.

RUBY

(facing Mordecai)

Honey, we gotta humble ourselves a little. Let's just see what's up.

Mordecai SIGHS grimly with oncoming weight.

MORDECAI

(groans)

Fine.

Ruby SIGHS in relief.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

But only to see Darnell afterwards. We leave right after. Deal?

RUBY

Deal.

They resume cleaning. Mordecai's shoulders are weighed down as he sloppily dusts with reluctance in his mind.

**INT. PERFORMANCE ARTS CENTER: THEATER - NIGHT**

The seats are flooded with people facing the stage. MURMURS and WHISPERS are spreading across the seats with anticipation.

Arriving, the clown family sits all the way in the back, giving them a wide view. Another family sees them and moves away.

Mordecai sees Loonetta with a bucket of popcorn. Loonetta turns to him and shrugs before facing the stage. On his right, he turns to Cramp.

MORDECAI

Why did you buy her popcorn?

CRAMP

(shrugs)

We made a deal?

MORDECAI

what deal?

Cramp shrugs and sits. Mordecai rolls his eyes and SIGHS. He crosses his arms and faces the stage.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

That should be *us* behind those curtains! Like before!

RUBY

Will you give it a rest? Besides, there's no way they could be *THAT* funny.

The crowd CHEERS and CLAPS emerged. The Kesslers—an avant-garde group of three women and one man dressed in sleek, minimalist outfits—take center stage under a spotlight. Their presence oozes confidence and modernity.

SAM KESSLER

(shouting  
enthusiastically)

Hello! Hello! Alright!

(normal)

I want to give thanks to Darnell Hughes and the Darwin Performance Arts Center for giving us this opportunity! We are so happy to be here! I'm Sam...and these are Grant, Mani and Crystal!

(MORE)

SAM KESSLER (CONT'D)

So without further ado, give us a suggestion — anything! Any word at all!

AUDIENCE MEMBER

Pineapple!

GRANT KESSLER

Nah, that's fine. Not hungry!

The crowd LAUGHS.

SAM KESSLER

Anything else?!

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

Flesh light!

CRYSTAL KESSLER

Woo! There's kids here! Anything else! Something "innocent"?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 3

A necklace!

KELLY KESSLER (MAN)

Great! Necklace. We can work with that. Here we go!

The Kesslers leap into an exaggerated, surreal skit about a necklace becoming sentient and almost plays out like a twisted version of Pinocchio, only it gets into different scenarios. The audience erupts in laughter.

The clowns, however, are less impressed. Well, maybe except Ruby whose face shifts from envy and admiration. Mordecai SCOFFS with his arms crossed. Cramp palms his face. Loonetta still eats her popcorn.

Ruby's gaze softens as she notices the excitement on the faces of the audience around her. People are engaged, LAUGHING, connecting. She SIGHS deeply.

Mordecai GROANS audibly, drawing stares from nearby audience members.

The skit ends, and the audience applauds wildly. The Kesslers bow dramatically and immediately transition into another skit, this time about a malfunctioning robot maid. The crowd eats it up.

The Kesslers finish their set with an absurd dance number involving streamers and interpretive gestures. The audience gives a standing ovation.

The clowns stay seated, uncomfortably CLAPPING with forced smiles.

GRANT KESSLER  
 (as the applause dies  
 down)  
 Thank you! Don't forget to follow  
 us on YouTube, TikTok, Instagram!

KELLY KESSLER  
 Have a goodnight, everyone!

The remaining crowd CHEERS again.

CRAMP  
 (to Mordecai)  
 What's a You...Tube?

**EXT. PERFORMANCE ARTS CENTER: THEATER FRONT - NIGHT**

The theater empties into a quiet hum of chatter and shuffling footsteps. The Carnevale clowns drift among the crowd, their colorful costumes drawing curious, judgmental glances.

Loonetta lingers behind Cramp, shrinking into his shadow.

DARNELL  
 Mordecai! Ruby! What a surprise.  
 Didn't expect you here!  
 (gesturing grandly)  
 These are the folks I told you  
 about.

The KESSLERS, young and overly eager, step forward and shake hands with exaggerated enthusiasm.

SAM KESSLER  
 (to Mordecai)  
 We are so excited to be here. We've  
 heard so much about you!

MORDECAI  
 That so?

MANI KESSLER  
 (grinning)  
 Oh yeah, big fans. Classic stuff.

CRAMP  
 You guys don't look alike. Why do  
 you even share the same surname?

The Kesslers fall quiet. CRYSTAL KESSLER snaps a selfie with the clowns in the background and immediately starts texting.

CRYSTAL KESSLER  
(to Mordecai)  
Did anyone ever tell that you look  
like Krusty the Clown?

MORDECAI  
We don't know who that is.  
(turns to Darnell)  
Darnell, wondering if you hear  
about -

DARNELL  
Why don't you folks take a long  
breather? You've earned it.  
Anyways, gonna get ourselves  
drinks! See you 'round.

He winks at Loonetta with a grin, which disgusts her.

Darnell cheers with the Kesslers as they were going to their cars, leaving the family to stand awkwardly.

As they step into their car, Ruby pauses, looking up at the center and Darnell celebrating with the Kesslers.

Mordecai looks at his family from his driver's seat. Cramp and Loonetta, visibly weighed with discouragement and humiliation. Loonetta eats her popcorn miserably.

He turns to his wife, who's head is also down. He fumes as he stares back at the center.

#### **EXT. CLOWNS' FAMILY HOME: BACKYARD - DAY**

The family stands before their podiums and bricks once again. Their hands carrying mallets. Mordecai observes his family before facing the brick. They all lift their mallets.

They smash the bricks several times before closing their eyes. Their slams ECHO across the coast. The winds WHISTLE in the air. The gulls faintly CRY once again.

They sharply open their eyes, wandering with their heads turning constantly as if there are looking for something.

**INT. CLOWNS' FAMILY HOME: LIVING ROOM**

Ruby sits with her kids on the couch, visibly YAWNING. Mordecai paces in front of them with his hands behind his back. Cramp rubs his eyes.

MORDECAI

(to Cramp)

Cramp, don't rub your eyes!

CRAMP

(startled)

Oh, sorry!

Mordecai stops pacing. Cramp sucks on his thumb.

MORDECAI

Okay, the people clearly love them!

They seem...erratic.

(snaps fingers)

I got it! They're doped up!

RUBY

Really? Doped up?

MORDECAI

Yeah. That could be the only explanation! But we're better than that!

RUBY

Are we? How do you compete with

that? Let alone make a living?

(sighs)

Let's face it, Mord. Darnell's done with us.

Mordecai paces again, scratching his chin. He glances at Ruby.

**INT. CLOWNS' FAMILY HOME: BASEMENT - DAY**

The family gather around a large circular rug that dominates the floors.

Mordecai stands at the center, holding a caramel apple skewered on a juggling pin. His clown makeup is freshly applied, but there's a somber reverence in his demeanor.

Ruby, Cramp, and Loonetta sit in a semicircle around him. Each of them holds their own caramel apple, the glossy sheen of the caramel reflecting the dim light.

A faint, sweet yet earthy smell permeates the room. A large papier-mâché mask of a clown god, with exaggerated features and a haunting grin, looms over them from the wall.

MORDECAI

(solemnly)

We gather here to invoke our  
ancestors, the sacred essence of  
our lineage. We cleanse ourselves  
of doubt and become one.

Loonetta mimes clapping sarcastically but quickly stops when Mordecai shoots her a stern look. Ruby adjusts her Columbine hat, her face a mix of skepticism and weary acceptance.

He raises his caramel apple high, the caramel dripping slightly onto his hand. The family follows suit, albeit reluctantly.

Mordecai closes his eyes.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

(reverently)

Guide our hands, steady our noses,  
inflate our hearts with helium's  
joy.

Cramp tries to speak to his mother.

RUBY

(to Cramp in whisper)

Let him have this, sweetheart.

Cramp reluctantly remains in his place.

Mordecai begins to chant, a rhythmic, nonsensical mantra filled with exaggerated vocal sounds.

The family reluctantly joins in, though Cramp's chanting is halfhearted, and Loonetta mimes the words rather than speaking. Mordecai twirls his juggling pin, signaling the next phase.

Mordecai raises the caramel apple again. He opens his eyes.

MORDECAI

Let us consume this sacred fruit  
from Kachina, who has graced us  
with benevolence, valor and wisdom.  
Let its essence awaken the Holy  
Ghost of the Fool within.



They each bite into their caramel apples. Ruby hesitates, eyeing the apple with suspicion before taking a small, careful nibble.

Cramp takes a nervous bite, while Loonetta chomps down dramatically, rolling her eyes as if mocking the ritual.

RUBY  
(chewing, wincing)  
How would this help us, hon?

MORDECAI  
You'll know... once it settles in.  
You'll never be the same.

He puts his hands in a prayerful position.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
(whispers)  
So let it be home. Let it be home.

Ruby chews reluctantly and sees the kids chewing as well. Slowly but surely, it doesn't necessarily set in.

However, a series of things transpire.

The room starts to shift and morph. Ruby starts to HUM the "Mattinata" out of nowhere. Cramp vomits blood. Loonetta starts having a convulsion whilst Mordecai holds her head speaking in tongues. All of this happens at once.

The last phase has Cramp picking up a rubber chicken and dancing awkwardly yet energetically with the family CHANTING out incoherent vocal sounds around him.

Loonetta mimes conducting an invisible orchestra.

Then the obscure sound of an audience LAUGHING uncontrollably came from nowhere. Mordecai's words ECHO through the whole ordeal as everything from the first phase comes back; "Let it be home."

The laughter and energy build to a crescendo.

#### **BEGIN RUBY'S FANTASY**

-- Ruby, dazed and confused, sits with her family in a circle in the woods as the Kesslers dance around them while their LAUGHTER echoes.

-- The Kesslers mimic the clowns' brick ritual only they had one mallet in one hand and a brick in the other.

-- She turns to her left, closes her eyes and sees herself on an empty stage. The Kesslers are at the other end watching.

-- The Kesslers sing Mattinata in a cappella.

-- She receives something in her hand out of nowhere that unveils a jack of diamonds card.

-- When she stands, she finds herself in the woods at night with her family and a piñata hovering over them.

-- They turn to her.

-- Mordecai approaches her and whispers "Let it be home."

-- She hits the piñata and it spills out blood, guts and playing cards. Stop motion of flowers growing.

It stops.

#### **ENDING RUBY'S FANTASY**

#### **CLOWNS' FAMILY HOME: BASEMENT - DAY**

For a brief moment, everyone is sat at their place. Peaceful yet unsure.

MORDECAI

(Beat)

(smiling at the family)

So...who's ready to make the world  
laugh again?

#### **EXT. STRIP MALL - DAY**

In front of a couple of people, Ruby performs her harp solo with Cramp and Loonetta doing an interpretive dance. A cross between Marcel Marceau and Loie Fuller.

Mordecai tries to join in, but constantly shoves in with his chair act. The second time got him to be pushed by Cramp. The third time he does it, Ruby GROANS and starts chasing him around the parking lot. The people LAUGH.

One of them, amongst the crowd, takes out his phone to record Ruby now strangling Mordecai. The kids try getting the parents off from one another.

**EXT. SUBURBAN HOME BACKYARD - DAY - LATER**

Cramp leads a melancholic yoga class in front of a group of girls and boys. One of them being the birthday girl TIMOTHEA JOHNSON (early 20s, red haired, average height, Caucasian).

All of them sit on floor mats.

He sways, dramatically stretching his arms to the sky. The kids clumsily mimic him.

The children exhale in exaggerated huffs. Cramp places his hands together in a prayer position, eyes closed in faux serenity. His fingers twitch.

He drops into a squat and leans forward on his hands, attempting the yoga pose. The kids follow suit, giggling as they wobble.

Then — Cramp's arms give out. His body crumples forward. A sickening POP echoes through the backyard.

Cramp suddenly lets out a blood coiling scream, which startles everyone.

His face contorts in pure agony. He clutches his shoulder, rolling onto his back, eyes bulging. His SCREAM warps into an cacophony of SHRIEKS, GRUNTS, and guttural SOBS.

The children stare, frozen in a mix of horror and confusion. After Cramp stops, the Birthday Girl timidly raises her hand.

TIMOTHEA JOHNSON

...Was that supposed to happen?

Cramp, face red, GROANS through clenched teeth. He SIGHS, clearly still under the influence.

CRAMP

Yes.

Ruby, Mordecai and Loonetta clap for him in awe. But the youth and parents are visibly perplexed and confused.

Although there is one little girl genuinely clapping with joy.

FATHER

(whispers to wife)

I told you we should've gotten  
Insane Clown Posse.

**EXT. STRIP MALL - NIGHT - LATER**

In front of a group of young men with girls, Loonetta performs a mime act that almost spoofs Charlie Chaplin. Dancing and miming with both grace and humor, she amazes some and bores others.

Mordecai, Ruby and Cramp sat back and watched, still dazed and under influence. Loonetta tries to keep her balance, barely holding it together.

After she finishes, one of them flings a burnt cigarette near her shoes, garnering LAUGHS and some complaints from the girls. Loonetta forces a smile and takes out a balloon from her back pocket. She blows it up and takes out a marker from her other pocket, drawing the same man's face.

She approaches the man with it, showcasing it with a grin before POPPING it loudly in front of his face. She proceeds to walk away before suddenly falling flat on her face.

**EXT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: DRIVEWAY - NIGHT - LATER**

Each family member vomits violently in a garbage bin in front of their house.

**INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: DINING TABLE - NIGHT - LATER**

The family sits around the table, plates of spaghetti and meatballs untouched before them.

Mordecai sits at the head of the table. Ruby sits opposite him. Her eyes heavy with exhaustion. Cramp and Loonetta are on either side, staring at their plates.

No one speaks. The only sounds are the faint clink of silverware against plates and the occasional squeak of Mordecai's oversized shoes whenever he shifts in his chair.

MORDECAI

(trying to stay optimistic, forcing a smile)

We brought smiles to their faces.  
That counts for something, right?

Cramp and Loonetta glare at him.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

(earnest)

Okay...so it didn't work how I imagined.

(MORE)

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

But this is just a setback. We'll brainstorm, and come up with something that -

The kids sharply stand from their chairs and storm out the dining room with their unfinished plates.

RUBY

HEY! No eating in your roo-

Ruby leans back and palms her face. She SIGHS behind her hand. The sound of doors slamming ECHOES through the house.

Mordecai sits back in his chair, his face falling. He looks to Ruby, searching for reassurance, but she avoids his gaze.

MORDECAI

(softly, to Ruby)  
They'll come around. They're just...  
frustrated. We all are.

Ruby finally looks up at him, her expression unreadable but her eyes tired. She picks up her fork and takes a small bite of spaghetti, chewing slowly.

Mordecai leans forward, reaching for her hand, but she pulls away, instead folding her arms on the table. Mordecai narrows his eyes.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

(pleading)  
We will get through this. You'll  
see.

Ruby says nothing.

Mordecai is at a loss for words. He slumps back in his chair, staring at his untouched plate. Ruby looks at him, her expression softening just a little, but she doesn't say anything.

**INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - LATER**

Mordecai snores on the couch. Ruby, still awake, flips through channels until she stops on a news segment about creepy clown sightings, causing fear and disbanding clown communities. Professionals express their concerns.

Ruby shuts off the TV with a slam of the remote, her eyes lingering on the job ad in her pocket. She glances at Mordecai, then stands up, determined.

**INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: CRAMP'S ROOM - NIGHT**

Ruby enters quietly, seeing Cramp asleep at his desk, his journal open beside him. She glances at the pages, tempted to peek, but her hand hesitates. With a soft breath, she gently closes the journal, respecting his privacy.

She pulls the blanket over him, brushing a lock of hair from his forehead, and places a tender kiss on his head.

Turning off the desk lamp, she lingers for a moment, watching him sleep before silently slipping out of the room.

**INT. CLOWNS' FAMILY HOME: LOONETTA'S ROOM - NIGHT**

The only light in the room comes from a desk lamp, casting harsh shadows against the wallpapered walls.

Loonetta sits at her desk, her back to the door. Her makeup is streaked, her posture slouched. She stares at her typewriter. A crumpled paper lies at her feet—one of many.

She rips out the current page, balls it, and tosses it aside with a frustrated sigh. She inserts a new sheet and sits back for a moment, pouting faintly. She scratches at her temple—tired, worn.

She then types the following: "Maybe life would be fun if no one else is around. Never seen and never heard."

She starts to mime holding and loading a pistol, shooting at imaginary bystanders. She stops miming and stares into space.

Her face is unreadable. The routine of it all—choreographed violence. The mime of a mind breaking.

Then — stillness. The door creaks open behind her.

Loonetta freezes. Wipes her face quickly. Her fingers drum the table, and she quickly puts on a tight smile before Ruby can fully see.

Ruby walks in. She catches the edge of a tear Loonetta missed.

RUBY

You're okay, Loony?

Loonetta turns, smile plastered like her makeup. She shrugs lightly. Doesn't speak. She gestures vaguely — *I'm fine*.

Ruby sits on the edge of the bed, watching her. Loonetta mime hands lift briefly — *Don't worry about it. Really*.

RUBY (CONT'D)

(gently)

You don't have to fake it with me.  
I know when you're hurting. Just –  
promise you'll tell me when it gets  
too heavy, alright?

A beat.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Don't worry about those phonies. Or  
the Kesslers. We'll show' em. We  
have each other.

Loonetta nods. Ruby leans in and kisses her forehead.

Ruby lingers for a moment – uncertain, protective – then  
leaves quietly, closing the door behind her.

Loonetta's smile fades. She turns back to the typewriter. She  
types again. She stares at the words.

Then – softly – she mimes again. Not playful this time. Grim.  
She reloads the invisible pistol. A single bang. Then  
silence.

Her breath trembles. Her shoulders quake.

**EXT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: DRIVEWAY - DAY**

Ruby, dressed in professional attire but still painted,  
places the harp and music sheets in the passenger seat. She  
closes the door and walks toward Mordecai at the front door.

MORDECAI

Are you sure you need your stand?

RUBY

If I'm performing, might as well  
bring it – just in case I'm  
standing all day.

MORDECAI

Right. And they only need you?

RUBY

For now. Solo act, if you will.

Mordecai pauses, then nods.

MORDECAI

Well, let me know how it goes.  
Okay?

They share a quick kiss. Ruby gets into the driver's seat, forcing a smile. Mordecai hesitates before approaching the car.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

Rube.

Ruby turns to him.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

I'm...I'm trying, you know.

RUBY

(faintly smiling)

I know. I believe you.

With a heavy sigh, Ruby drives off. Mordecai watches her go, waving as she leaves.

#### **INT. BULLER ACADEMY OF ARTS: AUDITION ROOM - DAY**

The room is cavernous but eerily quiet.

Ruby's visibly nervous, clutching her sheet music in trembling hands. In the front row, a panel of three judges sits behind a long table.

The head judge, DR. WARREN HOLLIS, a stiff, older man in a tweed blazer, leans back in his chair with a skeptical frown. Beside him, MS. LYNNE, a younger, kind-eyed woman, flips through Ruby's résumé. The third judge, MR. TYSON, a middle-aged man with a bored expression, taps his pen impatiently.

RUBY

Um...my name is Ruby. Ruby Carnevale.

MR. TYSON

Is it a stage name or...

RUBY

(chuckles nervously)

It my...uh....

(clears throat)

Anyway, for this performance, I will play Clair de Lune.

DR. HOLLIS

(flatly)

You may proceed.

Ruby nods, takes a deep breath, and sets up the music stand before sitting down on the stool.



After taking out the lap harp from the case, she has it hover over it for a moment. She begins to play "Clair de Lune". The first notes are soft, tender, and hauntingly beautiful.

Her fingers moves with precision, and her expression transforms — this is Ruby in her element, pouring her soul into the music.

The judges exchange glances as the performance continues. Even the jaded Mr. Tyson seems drawn in, his pen stilled. As the final note lingers, the room falls into a heavy silence.

Ruby's face crumbles. Her eyes moistening briefly from nostalgia.

MR. TYSON

Thank you, Ms. Carnevale.

Ruby nods somberly.

MS. LYNN

That was one of the best renditions  
I've heard in a while.

MR. TYSON

Yes. I can't help but agree.

Dr. Hollis, however, remains unmoved. He clears his throat, shattering the moment.

DR. HOLLIS

In a technical sense, yes. But  
unless this is the Twilight Zone,  
may I address the elephant in the  
room?

Ruby stiffens, her fingers still resting on the strings.

DR. HOLLIS (CONT'D)

What's with the makeup?

RUBY

(nervously)

It's a tradition in my family.  
We're professional clowns.

MR. TYSON

(to Hollis)

They've been around. For some time.

DR. HOLLIS

Right. It's just that...given the recent hysteria, I find it tone-deaf that you'd come here like this. That's all.

RUBY

(hurt)

I never wanted to scare anyone. It's just...it's who I am.

DR. HOLLIS

Oh, so some sort of coping mechanism.

RUBY

(hiding her pain)

It's not like that.

MS. LYNN

(interjecting, gently)

Sir, her performance -

DR. HOLLIS

(cutting her off)

Her performance is irrelevant if she walks into a classroom looking like a discount Harley Quinn. Or a certain 70's serial killer.

Ruby's face flushes, but she stays quiet. The very reference of that "killer" makes her squirm a bit. Dr. Hollis leans back.

RUBY

I'd appreciate it if...if you didn't...

DR. HOLLIS

Didn't what?

Ruby shakes her head.

DR. HOLLIS (CONT'D)

And let's not forget your little act at the strip mall.

RUBY

(perplexed, hurt)

You mean...

Dr. Hollis nods.

DR. HOLLIS

Yep. But from your articulate language and your acute movements, I assume you're very well educated.

RUBY

I am.

DR. HOLLIS

Sure. So tell me. Why would our school hire someone married to a man with clear unchecked issues and has kids acting like buffoons for a living? I'm just sayin'.

(scoffs)

If you ask me, think you could all use a psychiatrist.

The words hit Ruby like a slap. Her jaw tightens, and her hands ball into fists. She stands abruptly. She walks up to the table, invading Hollis' space.

The judges are stunned into silence.

RUBY

We've spent our lives bringing joy to this shitty world! What have you done with yours, exactly? You failed at some point in your life and that suddenly makes you gatekeeper? You base your "facts" about us based on crap spewed on your platforms riddled with faceless imps who can't see the forest for the trees? Who encourage kids to take glee in giving up on themselves or follow these losers online? And we need a psychiatrist? How dare you? You wanna dismiss me, compare me, fine! But keep my family's name out of your mouth! At least I have one! Do you!?

A pause.

RUBY (CONT'D)

DO YOU?!

DR. HOLLIS

No, but -

RUBY

Exactly! You don't know anything about us. You don't know our story!  
(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)

And you don't know what we've been through! So why don't you FUCK off and get YOURSELF a psychiatrist!?

The room falls silent again, Ruby BREATHING heavily. Dr. Hollis raises an eyebrow, unimpressed and unfazed.

Ms. Lynn looks visibly uncomfortable, while Mr. Tyson seems more intrigued than anything.

MS. LYNN

(shook, softly)

I...I think we can all agree, Miss Carnevale, that you're very talented. But this position requires professionalism. With you...in this...

MR. TYSON

It's not a good look for our community right now. I'm sure you understand.

Ruby looks at the panel, her heart sinking. Her eyes misty. Dr. Hollis leans forward, his tone dripping with finality.

DR. HOLLIS

We could hire you. Apparently, out of others, you stand out. Nevertheless, it's your call; lose the makeup, or the job.

Ruby's eyes start to brim with tears.

RUBY

(scoffs nervously, hiding sorrow)

It's...It's not that simple.

DR. HOLLIS

Nothing ever is. So, I ask again; the makeup...or the job?

Ruby stares at them, her mind racing. She is frozen.

**EXT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: DRIVEWAY - DAY**

Ruby drives the car to the driveway. After she parks, she sits in utter silence. She turns and sees her harp case. Her breathing quickens as she pulls out the instrument, her eyes fixating on it like it's mocking her.

She steps out the car with the music sheets.

She slams the harp against the music stand. The crash ECHOES, scattering sheets across the pavement. Still gripping the instrument, Ruby raises it again and slams it down, SCREAMING.

Mordecai comes outside and rushes to her.

MORDECAI

Ruby, hey! Hey! What are you doing!?

Her breaths come in heaving gasps as she looks at the shattered remains of the harp in her hands. Slowly, she sinks to her knees, surrounded by broken wood and torn sheet music.

Ruby buries her face in her hands, her body wracked with SOBS. Mordecai hugs her until she stops.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

Ruby? What happened!?

Ruby stiffens, hastily wiping at her tears. She doesn't turn around, instead hurriedly gathering the broken pieces of the harp as though trying to hide the evidence.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

(his voice soft)

Ruby, talk to me. Ruby.

She snatches herself off of him.

Mordecai recoils slightly. He reaches out again, but Ruby steps back, her shoulders slumping. She sees the kids looking through the window on the left side of the house, enhancing her embarrassment. Her face smeared with tears.

RUBY

(voice breaking)

Just leave me alone.

She turns and walks into the house, leaving Mordecai standing among the broken pieces near the car. He looks down at the debris, his face heavy with guilt and uncertainty.

**INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: PARENTS' BEDROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS**

Cramp and Loonetta back away from the window. Both of them slide down the wall, slumping to the carpet.

CRAMP

(turns to his sister)

What do you think we should do?

Loonetta turns and narrows her head. Deep in thought, and irritation, she looks up in newly found determination.

She stands and storms out from the room.

CRAMP (CONT'D)

Hey, where are you going?

**EXT. MAILBOX STAND - DAY - LATER**

Loonetta is no longer in her mime attire. Though her face was painted with white gloves, she is donning a hoodie with baggy jeans and wearing sunglasses. In her right hand was an envelope with the address to the White House.

She opens and flips through the pages of her manifesto. She looks back and forth, as if she were sending plans made for the government.

She prepares to put the envelope inside, but stops. She turns back and observes the streets. Her eyes are halted at a local gun store.

**INT. GUN STORE - DAY - CONTINUOUS**

Loonetta enters the store. Her eyes fraught with both wonder...and fear. Pistols, shotguns, semi autos, bolt actions and lever actions are all showcased.

Her eyes invested at a Daniel Defense rifle. She darts her eyes at the floor, looking back and forth.

Loonetta's head turns and sees the GUN STORE OWNER coming out from the other side of the store.

GUN STORE OWNER

Like what you see, sweetheart?

She freezes, unsure of what to say or think. Given how she couldn't say anything. The man approaches.

She looks around.

GUN STORE OWNER (CONT'D)

Looking for anything specific?

Loonetta stiffens. The air grows heavy. Her hand clenches into a fist.

GUN STORE OWNER (CONT'D)  
(concerned)  
You're alright? You lost?

Her heartbeat spikes. The walls feel too close. The Owner's gaze is a searchlight, dissecting her.

She turns and bolts.

**EXT. CLOWNS' FAMILY HOME: BACKYARD - DAY**

The young mime stares at the burning fire pit, blowing off embers by the wind.

She looks at her enveloped manifesto and furiously throws it into the fire, which blooms the flames even more.

**INT. CLOWNS' FAMILY HOME: BATHROOM - DAY - LATER**

Cramp sits in a half-full tub, face painted, body bare – the clown persona doesn't reach below the neck. A journal rests on his knees, open to a page scrawled with verses.

He writes:

"Do clowns go to Heaven?" "Are clowns meant to be alone?"

He glances at the Bible, opened to Genesis 28:13.

*"I am the Lord, the God of your father Abraham and the God of Isaac. I will give you and your descendants the land on which you are lying."*

Cramp stares at the words. Then shuts the Bible gently.

He picks up the journal again – a pencil sketch of a young woman gazes back at him.

He hesitates, attempts to feel something – anything – but stops. A quiet, frustrated sigh. He tosses the journal aside. Water ripples as he sinks deeper into the tub, eyes fixed on the ceiling, lost in thought.

**INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Mordecai paces across the carpet in front of a spiritual drained Loonetta, Cramp and Ruby. Ruby, still visibly upset, sits with her eyes narrowed. Not at all paying attention.

MORDECAI

(chipper)

Guys, I have an idea of how we  
could get us back on the stage.

Loonetta mockingly mimes about wooing someone.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

Exactly, sweetie! I have thoughts  
about doing an act regarding our  
camping trip. It was your lovely  
mother's idea.

(picks up scripts from the  
coffee table)

And I have the pitch right here.

Mordecai has three of them passed down to his family.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

And get this...I thought of  
something we could do in the  
future. We can establish the  
Grimaldi Club from the ground up!

RUBY

Really?

MORDECAI

Yeah! We just need to save some  
funds, get an agent, find other  
clowns and BOOM! The Carnevaless are  
on top of the bill once again!

He mimics an audience ROARING in applause. He claps.

Ruby nods somberly. She looks at her wristwatch and gets up.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

Somewhere you need to be?

RUBY

Yeah. Shopping.

MORDECAI

At this hour?

RUBY

I just need to get a few things.

Cramp hurriedly stands up.

CRAMP

Mom, do you think...I can come with  
you?



The whole family is silent. But Ruby, nonetheless, nods.

RUBY

Of course, Cramp. Thank you.

Cramp smiles at her as she smiles back. She gets the car keys from the counter and kisses Mord.

RUBY (CONT'D)

We'll be back soon.

After she and Cramp leave the house, it was Mordecai and Loonetta. He looks at her somberly and gives her a smile. He goes to sit with her.

MORDECAI

This sorta reminds me of the night you came. Don't know why.

Loonetta's head tilts slightly, curious but wary. She doesn't respond, of course, but her eyes flicker toward him.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

It was just like this. Only outdoors. A cool night, fire crackling. Well, it wasn't a campfire - anymore. It was a hospital lobby after I was stung by bees.

Loonetta CHUCKLES softly through miming. Mordecai CHUCKLES along.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

Your brother being sick didn't help. I could still hear your mom screaming. We were so nervous, wondering if you'll come out. And you did. No crying, no fuss. You just stared. Like you were already sizing us up, figuring out if we were worth your time.

Loonetta glances at him now, her eyes meeting his for a moment. She tilts her head as if to say, *And?*

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

(grinning wider)  
I thought, "She's definitely one of us." Even before, you knew how to say so much without a single word.

She gives those words some thought, looking away from her father for a bit.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
(finding something else to say)  
Your mom told me you are writing some sort of manifesto. Is that true?

After hesitance, she nods.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
You did?

She proceeds miming people mocking, LAUGHING or SCREAMING and shakes her head.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
Oh, so this is about people.

After a pause, she nods before turning to him. She begins miming her explanation: fists pounding her chest, then pointing outward to mimic people yelling or mocking.

She cradles her arms, imitating someone being vulnerable, then mimics laughter – a cruel, mocking kind of laughter – before crossing her arms tightly over her chest, closing herself off.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
You think they'll always hurt you.

Loonetta nods, her eyes darting to the floor. She then mimes her darkest acts: pretending to have a rifle and shooting everyone in sight and mimicking people dying, devastating Mordecai. But his aura comes down to understanding.

She SIGHS and darts her eyes at the floor.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
I get it. It's normal.  
(earnestly)  
People are cruel. But there are kind people too. It's a walking contradiction. I've seen both sides and felt how you felt.

She tilts her head like she is asking *Really?*

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
Oh absolutely! But I saw how it did no good. There are fake clowns who tarnished what we are.  
(MORE)

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

I didn't want that for myself. For us. We're supposed to reflect a joy lost in a world that's too afraid or proud to be silly. Everything innocent lost in this web of mean-spiritedness.

(leans in to her with a smile)

You're an ambassador for ethic buffoonery that combat it. You should honor that.

She shrugs.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

Oh come on, now. You are! You've got a gift that is unexplainable in the best way. But if you shut out completely....or act on that ideation....

He pauses, searching for the right words.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

...you miss out on those who wish to see it. The ones who'll see you. Some people can surprise you, Loon.

Loonetta ponders. She SIGHS and looks away a bit. She takes her sketchbook and writes *But what if they don't?*

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

Then you hold on to those who do. It doesn't have to be the whole world. The truth of the matter is that not everyone's worthy of the love you have.

Loonetta ponders on that.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

Putting yourself out there is scary. It's hard. Especially these days. But...you realize that you owe it to yourself to express your voice. Just like others. I share your sentiment there, sweetie.

Loonetta doesn't respond immediately. She then turns to Mordecai and gestures a scenario.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
(curious)  
T-This has something to do with  
Darnell? Our Darnell?

She nods.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
Really?  
(scoots closer)  
Did he...did he do something?

Loonetta hesitates. With no other option, she gets her notepad and then sketches a figure of a man with long, claw-like hands reaching out. She underlines the hands repeatedly, almost tearing the page.

She mimics someone who whispers something in their ear in an intimate yet uncomfortable fashion. She grabs her sketchbook and writes furiously: "You know why I like you? You're everything my wife should be: seen but not heard."

Mordecai's face falls as he begins to piece it together.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
(shook, hurt)  
He said that to you?

Loonetta lips begin to tremble. She mimics someone patting her shoulder, then quickly slides her hands to her hips, a look of disgust flashing across her face.

Mordecai's fists clench as he realizes what she's saying.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
(trembling anger)  
When?

Loonetta mimes taking a photo, pointing to herself.

Mordecai pauses and remembers.

His jaw tightens, and he looks away, struggling to control his emotions.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
(softly)  
Loon, w-why on Earth didn't you  
tell us?

Loonetta grabs the sketchbook again and scribbles: "I did not want us to lose our jobs." She flips to another page and writes: "But it never stops in my head."

Mordecai reads the words, his face crumpling. He reaches, but Loonetta shrinks away, clutching the notepad to her chest.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

N-No amount of it is worth what you went through.

(composing himself)

We'll figure it out. I promise.  
Okay?

Loonetta shakes her head and scribbles one last note: "Please don't tell anyone. They'll hate me forever."

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

(voice breaking)

Don't ever say that! We love you.  
We're supposed to protect you.

Loonetta stares at him, her eyes wide, then slowly sets the sketchbook aside. For the first time, she lets him pull her into a hug, her small frame trembling against his.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry, Loon. I'm so sorry.

She doesn't respond, but her breathing steadies as she clings to him. She quivers, shakes, tears come down her face. Her breath trembles and shoulders quake, which gets Mordecai to embrace her more.

They sit in silence, the warmth of the living room wrapping around them like a fragile shield. Mordecai opens his misty eyes and sees something at the corner of the couch.

After kissing her, he picks it up. A folded piece of paper.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

I'll be back, hon.

Loonetta nods. Mordecai gets to the kitchen.

#### **INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: KITCHEN - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

There, Mordecai unfolds the paper, revealing it to be a torn out newspaper job ad. It was on the same day that Ruby "performed" for her solo act.

His face contorts briefly but he takes a deep breath and tamps it down.

**EXT. STRIP MALL - NIGHT**

Ruby and Cramp leave one of the stores with groceries. With one thumb in his mouth, Cramp turns constantly, seeing some people keeping their distance from them. Some laughing, but not in the best way.

Nonetheless, he remains his focus. Cramp removes his thumb.

As they near their car, a familiar voice stops them in their tracks.

DARNELL

If it isn't my favorite clowns!

Ruby freezes, her face tightening. Cramp glances at her nervously as they turn to see Darnell, their manager, stepping out of a high-end clothing store with a smug grin. He's dressed casually with a shopping bag in hand.

RUBY

We're your favorite?

DARNELL

Always.

Cramp shuffles awkwardly, avoiding eye contact. Ruby tightened herself.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

(chuckling)

Relax, Ruby. I'm just out here  
enjoying a little retail therapy.  
Gotta get away from the house.  
Looks like you had the same idea.

He eyes the bag full of fruits and snacks in Cramp's hand, smirking.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

Still a big eater, huh Cramp? After  
all these years.

Cramp shrinks under his gaze but doesn't respond. Ruby steps slightly in front of him, her protective instincts kicking in.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

Seeing any girls or...

RUBY

What do you want, Darnell?

DARNELL

(to Ruby)

Okay. Straight to the point, then.

He shifts his weight, glancing around the parking lot. Then, he steps closer, lowering his voice slightly.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

I meant to speak this directly to your husband. But since your here, I could tell you so you could pass it on.

RUBY

About what?

DARNELL

About getting you back on stage. Like old times. Despite what's going on.

Ruby's expression hardens, but Darnell continues, undeterred.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

I felt kinda like shit letting you off like that. So I thought -

RUBY

(cutting him off)

Wait, so you did cut our contract?

DARNELL

(pauses)

Yes. Only to found out what else to do with ya. So I thought this; you doing a grand performance with them.

RUBY

(perplexed)

The Kesslers?

Darnell nods.

RUBY (CONT'D)

T-They want us to perform with them?

CRAMP

Why?

DARNELL

Picture this; set on a camping trip with the sightings as a backdrop.

(MORE)

DARNELL (CONT'D)

They would be dumb campers and  
you...are the evil clowns. A battle  
of hilarity ensues. Your slapstick  
with their improv, BOOM! Instant  
hit!

Cramp's face twists in confusion and discomfort. Ruby's jaw  
tightens, her eyes narrowing.

RUBY

So they'll have us play as these  
"evil clowns"?

DARNELL

Yep. Play as you are, but you  
know...evil.

CRAMP

You want us to...parody ourselves?

DARNELL

Oh, don't tell me you're too proud  
to laugh at yourselves. It's just  
an act. That's all.

CRAMP

I dunno. It sounds kinda stupid.

DARNELL

That's the point. Started out as a  
joke, but I saw the potential. Draw  
in kids and Instagrammed tweens and  
adults alike. I thought of you  
instantly.

He steps closer, his tone shifting to something persuasive.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

I mean this is your only shot.

Ruby exchanges a look with Cramp.

RUBY

And if we say no?

DARNELL

Stay where you were before we met.

Ruby looks down and crosses her arms. Darnell approaches.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

I'm tryna find a reason to restore  
us. So think of it as a second  
chance at redemption.



Ruby pulls Cramp slightly behind her, glaring at Darnell.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

(chuckles)

I'm no monster. You don't gotta protect Cramp. He's a big guy.

RUBY

(firmly)

We'll discuss this with Mordecai.

DARNELL

(smirking)

Sure, take your time. But don't take too long. It's tomorrow night.

He steps back, adjusting the strap of his shopping bag.

As insecurity ensues on his face, he faces Ruby.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

Y'know... I used to have someone like Mord. Loyal to a fault. I messed that up. You're lucky.

Before leaving, he turns around.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

Give my regards to Loonetta, ya? She always did light up a room.

He winks and walks off, his footsteps echoing in the parking lot. Ruby and Cramp stand in silence for a moment, watching him go.

CRAMP

(softly)

What do you think, Mom?

She glances at him, her expression softening as she notices the tension in his shoulders. She faces the front, completely out of focus. Seeing his mother leaning against the wheel with her fingers rubbing her forehead, Cramp tries to find something to say.

CRAMP (CONT'D)

Mom, I was...I was wonderi-

RUBY

(sharply)

Cramp! Just...

(sighs)

I'm so sorry.

(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)

Just...let's just go home. You  
could say what you want when we get  
back. Okay?

Cramp shrinks himself at the passenger seat, sheathing in shame. Ruby, heavy with guilt for snapping at her son and the weight of Darnell's proposition hanging heavy in the air, starts the car.

**INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Ruby and Cramp step through the front door, grocery bags in hand. The soft creak of the door echoes in the quiet house. Loonetta sits on the living room couch, scribbling in her notepad.

Mordecai emerges from the kitchen, his expression tense but composed.

RUBY

Mord. Hey. Are you-

MORDECAI

(to Cramp)

Take you sister and yourself  
upstairs.

CRAMP

(confused)

But, wh -

MORDECAI

(firmly, but not unkindly)

Please, son.

Cramp glances at Ruby, who nods subtly. He sets the grocery bags down and gestures for Loonetta to follow him. She looks up, puzzled, but complies, taking her books with her and holding his hand.

Once they're out of earshot, Mordecai turns to Ruby. She places the remaining bags on the counter, her body already bracing for the conversation.

RUBY

(concerned)

Mord? What's this about?

Mordecai pulls the folded job ad out of his pocket and places it on the counter between them.

MORDECAI  
(raises eyebrows  
mockingly)  
Solo act, huh?

Ruby exhales sharply, setting the paper down.

RUBY  
Look, just let me explain -

MORDECAI  
You know, it would've been fine -  
amazingly a-okay - if you'd just  
told me face to face that you were  
too good for this!

RUBY  
I never said I'm too good for this!

MORDECAI  
Seems that way.

RUBY  
Mord, it doesn't matter. Okay? What  
else do you want me to say? I got  
rejected, so just leave it.

MORDECAI  
Oh I don't know. Maybe -  
(mocking Ruby's voice)  
"Hey Mord, this thing's gettin'  
quite dull for me. I'm too proud  
for this."  
(normal voice)  
That would've suffice! But no!

RUBY  
(exhales)  
It's not what you think.

MORDECAI  
(slightly raising voice)  
Then what is, Ruby!? HUH!? A music  
teaching job?! Behind our backs?!

RUBY  
It's not behind your-

MORDECAI  
(softly)  
Why did you lie to me!?

RUBY  
(avoiding eye contact)  
I...I just...

MORDECAI  
YOU JUST WHAT!?

RUBY  
Look, I'm sorry! Alright?! It was  
stupid! Really stupid!

MORDECAI  
You had thoughts to leave like it's  
nothing! To become some faculty's  
pet...only to be rejected and break  
your harp for nothing?

RUBY  
(angrily slams the  
counter)  
It's not nothing! It's my life!  
I've spent years putting it aside  
for us - for you!

Mordecai's face softens briefly, but the tension remains.

MORDECAI  
(quietly, hurt)  
I thought this was your dream too.

RUBY  
(exhales)  
It still is. But we're running dry!  
This wasn't just about my dreams! I  
needed something to keep the lights  
on! For all we know, God forbid, we  
could be victims of eminent domain  
just for being here!

Mordecai sucks on his teeth.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
Meaning that we have to move again!

MORDECAI  
(snarling)  
So you give up? Just like that?

Ruby hesitates, then blurts out without thinking.

RUBY  
(blurting)  
At the strip, Darnell offered us  
something. But-

Mordecai freezes.

MORDECAI  
(turning slowly)  
What?

RUBY  
(realizing her slip)  
Mord, just listen—

MORDECAI  
(stepping closer)  
What? What did he offer?

RUBY  
(pleading)  
It's not worth it. He wants us to  
be some parody of ourselves. I was  
gonna tell you, but—

Mordecai doesn't wait for her to finish. He storms to the  
phone on the wall and picks up the receiver.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
Mordecai! Stop!

MORDECAI  
(ignoring her)  
You wanted us to evolve? We're  
evolving!

Ruby rushes to him, trying to pull the phone from his hands,  
but he pushes her away gently but firmly.

RUBY  
Don't do this! Please! This is a  
bad idea!

Mordecai dials the number with shaking hands.

MORDECAI  
(into the phone)  
Darnell? It's Mordecai. We'll do  
it.

Ruby steps back, her face crumpling as she watches the  
decision unfold.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
(listening, then curtly)  
Yeah. We'll figure it out. I'll  
like to talk to you afterwards.

He slams the phone back into its cradle. The noise ECHOING. The room falls silent, save for Ruby's ragged breathing.

Mordecai turns to her, his expression a mixture of anger, guilt and hurt.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
(quietly, bitterly)  
This crap about our kids going to  
school, it wasn't about them! It  
was about you!

Ruby's jaw drops, stunned. Tears well in her eyes as she struggles to find words, but none come. Mordecai walks past her, heading toward the hallway.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
(quietly, without looking  
back)  
I thought you were better than  
that.

Ruby stands there, frozen, as the weight of his words sinks in. The paper with the job ad flutters to the ground, landing at her feet.

**INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Ruby enters, exhausted. Mordecai sits on the bed, his head down. He glances up, his expression cold but sad. Ruby flinches. She opens her mouth to speak but falters, eyes on the bed. Mordecai climbs under the covers. Ruby, holding back tears, nods and turns to leave, her footsteps echoing down the stairs.

**INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Ruby sits on the couch, wrapped in a blanket, staring at the dark window. She hears Mordecai settle upstairs, pulls the blanket tighter, and curls into a ball, trying to sleep.

**INT. CLOWNS' FAMILY HOME - MORNING**

Mordecai and Ruby sit apart, quietly applying their macabre makeup. Ruby glances at him, her expression somber.

**INT. CRAMP'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

Cramp applies his makeup in front of the mirror, lost in thought.

**INT. CLOWNS' FAMILY HOME - LATER**

Loonetta selects a darkened mime outfit, her eyes distant and misty.

**INT. PERFORMANCE ARTS CENTER: BACKSTAGE - EVENING**

The family enters the backstage, their faces painted with grotesque features akin to the band Kiss. Their costumes are a twisted parody of their usual attire, with darkened colors, torn fabric, and splashes of fake blood. Each family member drained.

Darnell stands at the center of the room. The Kesslers—dressed as exaggerated summer camp counselors—stand off to the side, CHATTING amongst themselves. They barely acknowledge the clowns.

DARNELL  
(clapping his hands)  
The Scary Arlekinos!

He hums the song "Arlekino" by Alla Pugacheva.

Mordecai forces a tight smile, nodding as if on autopilot. Ruby crosses her arms, her body language closed off. Cramp and Loonetta hang back, exchanging wary glances.

DARNELL (CONT'D)  
I trust that you're well prepared.  
This is it! Your rite of passage.

Some of the Kesslers glance at the family, their expressions smug and condescending. One of them WHISPERS something to her colleague and LAUGHS. Loonetta notices and clenches her fists.

One of them approaches. Only as a dare. Sam.

SAM KESSLER  
(approaching Ruby)  
Just wanna say it's awesome to  
finally share the stage with you  
guys! For the record, I've always  
loved clowns!

GRANT KESSLER  
No you don't.

SAM KESSLER  
(teasingly)  
Yes I did! I did!

She goes back to her troupe, mingling with them.

RUBY  
(flatly to Darnell)  
We know the drill. Let's just get  
it over with.

Darnell hesitates, sensing the tension but deciding to brush it off. Kelly rejoins with her troupe. Mordecai approaches Darnell.

MORDECAI  
So Darnell, about what I asked.  
It's about Loo-

DARNELL  
(frantic)  
Yeah, yeah sure. We'll get to that.

MORDECAI  
You don't understand! I really need  
to talk wi-

DARNELL  
Fucking hell, Mord! Just shut the  
hell up for a minute!

Darnell hears the announcer.

DARNELL (CONT'D)  
(turns to family)  
Alright, then. Showtime. Welcome  
back. Don't fuck it up.

# **INT. PERFORMANCE ARTS CENTER - STAGE - NIGHT**

A faux woodland scene—cardboard trees, a fake fire, and painted logs.

The Kesslers are in the middle of their skit: bumbling camp counselors telling spooky stories, full of loud punchlines and over-the-top delivery.

The audience eats it up — uproarious laughter, clapping like seals. Suddenly — BLACKOUT.

Then: Ominous music. Smoke machines hiss. Blood-red lighting creeps in.

Enter: The Carnevales.

Ruby leads, porcelain-faced and menacing, turning a music box that plays a broken lullaby. Cramp lurches behind, his sad clown makeup smeared into something funereal.



Loonetta mimes through the shadows, jerky and twitching. Mordecai drags a massive foam mallet, eyes burning behind his painted sneer.

They descend upon the Kessler "campers" in exaggerated, almost violent slapstick: Ruby "strangles" one with a ribbon, Mordecai swings his mallet with theatrical rage. Cramp chants mock Latin while tickling someone to the floor. Loonetta revs a mime-chainsaw, knocking over a prop tree.

The audience roars. It's eerie and electric. Then—

A beat drops: "The Blacker the Berry" by Kendrick Lamar BLARES from a Beats Pill held by one of the Kesslers. Disco lights flicker. A Kessler starts a smug choreographed dance.

The Carnevales freeze for a good moment.

Cramp twitches, clearly triggered. Loonetta mimics stabbing the air to kill the beat. Ruby falters, her expression vacant. Mordecai tries to recover with a slow mallet swing, but just spins awkwardly.

Their menace unravels. The Kesslers overtake the stage with smug dancing and viral energy.

The Carnevales retreat. Their act ends — not with applause, but overwhelmed silence. Then, as they return for bows.

They bow next to the Kesslers, smiling through the humiliation. Behind the greasepaint, their pride is shattered.

#### **INT. PERFORMANCE ARTS CENTER: BACKSTAGE - LATER**

The applause still echoes faintly as the family stumbles backstage, furiously rubbing the inside of their ears and scratching their bodies. The Kesslers pass them, exchanging smug grins and high-fives.

Ruby sits down heavily on a chair, her hands trembling. Mordecai stares at the floor, his shoulders hunched.

After they were left alone, Mordecai stands sharply and leans against the nearest desk. He slammed his fist against the table. Cramp and Loonetta furiously rubbing out their ears with their fingers.

Loonetta nods miserably, still trying to rub out her ears as if there was water. She looks up at Mordecai, her exhaustion giving way to frustration.

MORDECAI

(softly, but trembling  
anger)

This has to be the worst thing I've  
ever done in my entire life!

RUBY

What did you expect, Mord?

Mordecai's head jerks up, his eyes blazing as he turns to  
Ruby.

MORDECAI

I'm sorry, what did I expect? I  
didn't expect us to look  
like...whatever that was out there!

RUBY

We already know what they think of  
us!

MORDECAI

(pointing at her)

This is your fault! Are you proud  
of yourself!? This is what you call  
"evolution"!?

RUBY

Of course I'm not!

MORDECAI

What else are you hiding?! I'm sure  
you knew about these sightings too!

RUBY

(defensive)

Don't pin this on me! I told you  
that this was a bad idea! You're  
the one who couldn't see the  
writing on the wall!

MORDECAI

You're the one turning on  
everything we've built together!  
You're selfish!

RUBY

I'm selfish! Really?! Then tell me,  
when was the last time you talked  
to your kids besides what they do!?

MORDECAI

Don't do this!

RUBY

When was the last time you spoke to  
your son as a son? Your daughter as  
your daughter? When was the last  
time you've said anything to them  
without the word "clown" in it?!

Mordecai slams his hand against the wall, startling everyone.

MORDECAI

I've tried very, very, very hard to  
be a good father! A good husband!  
But you -

RUBY

(cutting him off)  
Yeah, hence the word "tried"! But  
you never actually "made" the  
effort to do something besides  
this! You talk as if this is fate!

MORDECAI

Because this is all there is! This  
is what we do! It protects us!

RUBY

Protect us from what!?

MORDECAI

From this! ALL OF THIS!

RUBY

Well, it's hurting us! So what  
now!?

Those words were starting to set in Mordecai's heart.

RUBY (CONT'D)

If you really care about our kids,  
Cramp wouldn't hate himself!  
Loonetta would love people! They  
would realize that it's okay to  
live without greasepaint! It's okay  
to make mistakes without having it  
be a fucking spectacle for everyone  
to see!

Ruby steps closer to Mordecai. Cramp holds Loonetta's hand as  
he saw her CRYING silently.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Because you refuse to see the full  
picture!

(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)

You're trying to reanimate a corpse  
that should've died years ago! And  
I'm selfish...for wanting something  
normal for us?

(softly, voice breaking)  
For once?

Mordecai's shoulders slump, the fight draining out of him.  
Her words were stinging him badly.

RUBY (CONT'D)

You let them humiliate us! You—

She cuts herself off, glancing at Loonetta, who looks up from  
the floor, her eyes wide and wary. Ruby swallows hard, her  
voice lowering. She looks at Cramp, who darts his eyes  
around.

Mordecai looks at Cramp and Loonetta, who sit silently, their  
faces heavy with sadness. Loonetta's face wet with tears.

MORDECAI

(quietly)

I...I thought. I...

Ruby shakes her head, tears brimming with anger and hurt in  
her eyes.

Mordecai looks at his family, each of them broken. Especially  
with the glance towards his kids, particularly Loonetta whom  
he felt like he betrayed after their previous exchange.

Without another word, he turns and walks away, exiting the  
room.

The room falls into silence, the distant hum of the crowd  
outside the only sound. Ruby sinks into a chair, burying her  
face in her hands. Cramp and Loonetta exchange a look, both  
too shaken to speak.

The sound of APPLAUSE from the stage feels like a cruel  
mockery, ECHOING in their ears.

#### **INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: KITCHEN - AFTERNOON**

Ruby is on the phone, twirling the phone wire nervously.

RUBY

He's six foot. Wig, greasepaint,  
checkered outfit. Auguste clown.

A pause as she receives from the other line.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
 No, he hasn't shown up! That's what  
 I'm trying to tell you!

She begins pacing left and right as she receives more from  
 the other line. She SIGHS.

**EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD: PARK - DAY - ONE WEEK LATER**

Ruby goes through the empty park, using her horn. She HONKS  
 and HONKS. They echo through the area.

She looks around, desperation in her eyes. Her eyes catch on  
 an unpleasant sight; a person in a clown mask. An evil clown  
 mask. A grotesque face painted in vivid red, black, and  
 white, grinning unnervingly, with hollow eyes staring through  
 slits.

Ruby freezes. And then breaks into a mix of what seems like  
 laughter and crying.

RUBY  
 (laughs hysterically)  
 You...you gotta be kidding! You've  
 gotta be kiddin'! You've got to  
 be...

Exhausted from laughter, angered but...a bit afraid, Ruby  
 steps forward.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
 You think you're so scary wearin'  
 that! Don't you?

Her voice trembles with a mix of anger and fear, but she  
 pushes through, staring directly at the masked figure.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
 I'm a mother of two. A wife. You  
 realize how much you fucked us with  
 your bullshit!? DO YOU EVEN CARE!?  
 IS THIS A JOKE TO YOU? TO YOUR  
 SYCOPHANTS?!  
 (voice breaking)  
 THIS IS OUR FUCKING LIFE! YOU  
 RUINED EVERYTHING! And I'm tired!  
 You hear me?! I'M TIRED!

She steps closer, now just a few feet from the figure, her  
 fists clenched at her sides.

RUBY (CONT'D)

You wanna fight? Is that it? Come on! Square up! Clown to clown! TAKE THE MASK OFF! BE A FUCKING MAN! Or woman! I don't care!

The masked figure stands still, silent, not reacting to Ruby's taunts. She glares, waiting for some response. Her breath is heavy, but she doesn't back down.

For a long moment, the figure doesn't move, the tension in the air thick. Ruby's chest heaves with every breath.

Finally, the figure slowly begins to turn away. No words. Just the slow, deliberate movement as they walk away from her. The footsteps echo, fading into the distance.

RUBY (CONT'D)

That's right! Get out of here! You coward! You fake FUCKING CLOWN!

After picking up and throwing a rock at it, she stands there, still angry, her hands trembling. But as the figure vanishes, a heavy sadness settles in her gut.

She exhales deeply, her eyes drifting toward the horizon.

**INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: LAUNDRY ROOM - AFTERNOON**

Ruby puts dirty clown clothes into the washing machine. She finds one of the pockets of a sweater carrying handkerchiefs. She pulls all of them out until the pockets were empty.

She SIGHS, CHUCKLES softly and closes the machine. After putting detergents, she starts the machine.

**INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: KITCHEN - AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS**

Ruby makes a unique gourmet meal of mafaldine with chili and clown nose shaped meatballs with sides of animal crackers, soft pretzels and pound cake. Her face is drained and completely dejected.

She breathes shakily, keeping her composure with the modicum of strength she has left. She turns off the stove.

**INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: DINING TABLE - AFTERNOON**

Ruby eats with Cramp and Loonetta. The air is still. The room is quiet without Mordecai's larger than life voice. Everyone facing their food, their faces crumbling with dejection.

Cramp attempts to slouch but picks himself up.

CRAMP  
This is good, Mom.

RUBY  
Glad you like it.

The dining table is silent with the clings of the forks and knives hitting the plates.

CRAMP  
(looks at his mother)  
What do you think we should do?

RUBY  
I'll figure something out...just as long as your father comes home.  
(eyes darting at the table)  
I can't really think of something on my own without him.

After glancing at his sister, Cramp nods. Ruby puts the utensils down and SIGHS. She faces the children.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
I didn't mean to say those things to him.

CRAMP  
No. Um...you were only speaking your mind. I'm sure he understands. Even if it's hard.

Loonetta nods.

RUBY  
Still, I should've told you about the audition.  
(beat)  
I should've been better for you. I never saw myself as a mom...until your father.  
(to Cramp)  
Until you.  
(to Loonetta)  
And you.

She CHUCKLES softly. Cramp nods with a small smile. She darts her eyes, which are starting to mist.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
(voice breaking)  
I'm proud of you. If I never told  
you, I'm sorry. You didn't ask for  
any of this.

She narrows her head. Cramp and Loonetta glance at one  
another before looking back at their mother.

CRAMP  
(putting his hand on hers)  
We're proud of you too.  
(eyes dart to the table)  
I just wish I did more.

RUBY  
Don't say that. You are. You and  
your sister. It's enough. Okay?

CRAMP  
(hesitantly)  
Okay.

Ruby nods with her eyes a bit misty. She grips his hand and  
Loonetta's before letting them go.

Cramp looks back at the wall phone before looking back at his  
mother.

CRAMP (CONT'D)  
He'll come back, right?

RUBY  
I'm sure. He's a lot of things.  
But...he knows.  
(worried)  
I hope.

All of them sat in silence with their thoughts.

**EXT. CLOWNS' FAMILY HOME: BACKYARD - DAY**

Cramp performs the brick ritual with Loonetta. As Loonetta  
continues, Cramp stops midway and darts his eyes and the  
brick. Loonetta breaks the brick with strong precision and  
fury. She stops midway. Her eyes weaver.

She taps on Cramp's shoulder, getting him to turn before his  
strike.



**INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Ruby, alone on the bed, contemplates and reflects on what they went through.

She goes through the nearest dresser on her left. She takes out a photo album, going through pages and pages of pictures of her and her family. Cramp's birthday. Loonetta's. Their first performances as kids. The camping trip. The beach.

**BEGIN RUBY'S FANTASY**

-- He and his family are at the beach looking out at the ocean holding hands.

-- Mordecai and Ruby are lying on the sand together.

-- Cramp and Loonetta are playing tag.

-- The family watches Ruby play her harp.

**END RUBY'S FANTASY**

She struggles to compose herself as her eyes were on the verge of tears. But she quickly wipes them away and goes through the mail.

**EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT**

Cramp jogs in sweatpants and a hoodie. His movements are slow, methodical—like someone running not for speed, but out of obligation.

He squats, beating on his forehead in frustration. He covers his face, takin shaky breaths. He wanted to scream so bad.

Then, he hears it. A pulsating synth. Ethereal, melancholic.

"Cheree" by Suicide hums through the air, carried by the distant thump of bass.

Cramp slows and stands, wiping sweat from his brow. His eyes land on a house, glowing warm in the dark — a costume party. Through the open windows, figures move in a neon haze, bodies swaying in drunken euphoria.

All of them lost in the music.

Cramp steps forward.

His feet carry him up the driveway, through the open door, into the sea of movement and movement.

**INT. SUBURBAN LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Lights flicker like ghosts on the walls. Cramp finds himself dancing. Not in a routine. Not for a joke. But just because.

For the first time in years, maybe ever, he feels weightless.

Hands reach out, pulling him deeper into the moment, into the music, into life.

The song swells. His heartbeat matches it. And then—

**EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT**

He is still outside.

Still standing on the sidewalk, staring at the house from a distance. The music is faint, barely touching him.

His breath catches in his throat.

He shoves his hands into his pockets, hunching his shoulders against the cold. Then, without looking back, he walks away.

**INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: PARENTS' BEDROOM - NIGHT - LATER**

While going through some letters, Ruby is biting her gloved fingers of her right hand. Fan mails, love letters, bills of all types.

Out of curiosity, she goes to her desk and goes through the pictures with Darnell. She studied the candid photo of him with Loonetta, which has her visibly confused.

Her head darts up when she sees Loonetta appearing in the room with tears and panic on her face.

RUBY  
(getting off the bed)  
Loon, what's wrong?

She mimes herself in panic drinking something and choking. She realizes who she is referring too as soon as Loonetta mimes as a slumping person.

**INT. CLOWNS' FAMILY HOME: BASEMENT - NIGHT**

The basement is dim and cluttered, dusty costumes, and forgotten trinkets from the family's years of performances.

Loonetta moves ahead of Ruby, her mime makeup smeared and streaked with tears. Her movements are frantic but determined. She gestures wildly for Ruby to follow, her gloved hands moving in desperate charades.

RUBY  
(voice trembling)  
Loonetta, slow down—

A single bare bulb flickers above, casting uneven light over the space. Ruby steps cautiously down the wooden stairs, her face lined with worry.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
Cramp? Honey, are you —

She stops mid-sentence when Loonetta points at Cramp.

He is slumped on the cold floor, a plastic bag covering his head reeking with laundry detergent and duck tape wrapped tightly to hold the bag. Her breath catches in her throat as she and Loonetta rushes to his side.

Removing the plastic bag, she shakes him gently but urgently. Loonetta bites her nails in panic.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
(frantic)  
Oh my God, Cramp! Cramp, baby wake up! Come on, baby, wake up!

After a moment, Cramp GASPS and GROANS, his eyes fluttering open. Ruby and Loonetta exhale in relief but still shakes. Ruby's hands trembling. Loonetta pats his back as he COUGHS heavily.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
What... what were you thinking!?

Cramp winces and tries to sit up, but Loonetta steadies him, pulling him into her lap. He doesn't resist, his face pale and hollow. She pulls him into a fierce hug, rocking him slightly. Loonetta kneels beside them, her face contorted with silent anguish.

CRAMP  
(weakly)  
I'm sorry... I... I wanted...to see God. I was...scheduled to see him.

RUBY  
(panicked)  
God? Scheduled? Wh...

She looks around, spotting an open Bible tucked between two old clown props. Ruby picks it up, staring at it in disbelief.

Cramp's eyes dart to the book, fear flashing across his face. He tries to pull away, but Ruby holds him firmly.

His eye dart all over.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
When did you get this?

Cramp's eyes dart around. Fear continuously running through his face.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
You could tell me. It's okay.

Cramp takes a shaky breath.

CRAMP  
A month ago. With my allowance. It started with a dream.

Ruby is silent for a moment, processing. So was Loonetta. Cramp takes a shaky breath, his voice breaking as he continues.

CRAMP (CONT'D)  
I was at the American Dream Mall. You, dad and Loonetta were there. I had a family. Loon had a family of her own too. You were older but smiling, seeing your grandkids.

Loonetta softly smiles at the thought.

CRAMP (CONT'D)  
It was the first that I felt truly content. Then I woke up. It made me ask....if I'm weak for wanting that. If I'm ungrateful. Not a man. So I read for answers. Advice.

Ruby strokes his hair gently, her own eyes welling up with tears.

CRAMP (CONT'D)

(choking up)

I'm...I didn't do much for this family. Or my life. Loon has protected me...but I didn't protect her.

He looks up at her, his expression raw.

CRAMP (CONT'D)

I want him to turn me into someone that isn't...me. So that I can live in that mall forever.

(looks down)

If I weren't here, Loon would be safe. You and Dad wouldn't have lost everything.

Ruby's face crumples, but she forces herself to stay composed. She cups his face in her hands, looking directly into his eyes.

RUBY

Stop that. Right now.

Loonetta's eye welled up.

RUBY (CONT'D)

You listen to me. We didn't lose anything! You're my son. Our son. And what ever happened to your sister here, we're gonna get to the bottom of it. Together.

(tearfully)

You both are the best thing that's ever happened to us.

Cramp's tears spill over as he shakes his head.

RUBY (CONT'D)

(firmly, tearfully)

Yes you are the best! You will never lose us. Never. We need you.

Loonetta acts out a small, sudden jolt as if reliving the shock, then lets it melt from her hands like letting go of a memory. She places both hands gently over her chest. She firmly shakes her head and crosses her arms in an "X." She points softly at Cramp, then gently sweeps her hand away from him, as if brushing blame off his shoulders.

Cramp, knowing what Loonetta says, narrows his head.

CRAMP

I should've done something. I'm  
your older brother. I'm a coward.

Cramp shies away in shame.

RUBY

You don't have to figure it all out  
right now. But know this...

Cramp looks at her, a glimmer of hope breaking through his  
despair.

RUBY (CONT'D)

It's not weak to want better for  
your life. That dream could still  
happen. We'll make it happen. But  
not like this. Okay?

Cramp nods weakly.

Loonetta nods with a sad smile. She embraces him and he  
embraces her back.

Ruby pulls him into a tight embrace, her own tears falling  
silently. They sit like that for a moment before Ruby pulls  
back, wiping his cheeks. Loonetta lies her head on Cramp's  
shoulder, leaning onto him.

Ruby kisses his forehead. Both girls help him stand. Loonetta  
grabs the Bible and tucks it under her arm.

RUBY (CONT'D)

You deserve hope, Cramp. Be strong  
— for yourself. For us.

They help Cramp to his feet and guide him up the stairs, a  
broken family beginning to mend.

**INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: LIVING ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS**

The kids are on the couch with bed covers over their  
shoulders. Ruby comes in, giving each of them hot cups of  
tea. Sitting between them, she cradles them as if there were  
still her infants. Cramp sips his tea.

Ruby takes out the picture of Loonetta with Darnell. She  
turns to see Loonetta, who looks back and forth at the photo.

Ruby's hand trembles slightly, just once. her daughter — her  
baby — now watching her.

She has her coddled in her arm, shielding her. A silent affectionate way of expressing regret for not seeing it sooner.

But as she fixates on the picture, her eyes narrowed at the very sight of Darnell's shit-eating grin by her daughter.

Sorrow turned into sharp determination in her eyes. She turns to Loonetta, who looks up at her.

**INT. CLOWN'S FAMILY HOME: LIVING ROOM - DAY**

Ruby sleeps on the couch with Cramp and Loonetta sleeping on each side of her. She wakes up, witnessing the rays of the sun blooming through the window curtains.

It was a quiet room.

For a moment, she forgets the weight of everything that happened, but reality seeps back in like an unwelcome guest. She glances down at her children, their faces peaceful in their sleep, and her heart aches.

Carefully, she sits up and gently nudges Cramp and Loonetta. Cramp GROANS groggily, rubbing his eyes.

RUBY

How do you feel, Cramp? You're okay?

CRAMP

I think so. Thanks again.

Ruby nods.

RUBY

Loonetta, you're okay too, honey?

Loonetta blinks slowly but nods.

Ruby ponders on something. It lights up in her.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Get yourselves ready when you can.  
(whispers to herself)  
Why didn't I think of this before?

CRAMP

(groans)  
Think of what?

Ruby hesitates, smoothing Loonetta's hair with her hand and Cramp's face.

RUBY  
I know where he is. Your father.

CRAMP  
You do?

She stands and pulls on a sweater, glancing at the clock on the wall.

**EXT. WOODS - DAY**

The sun climbs higher into the sky as Ruby, Cramp, and Loonetta make their way through the woods. The path is quiet except for the sound of their footsteps crunching leaves beneath them. Ruby keeps her eyes fixed ahead, a sense of urgency driving her forward.

CRAMP  
(looking around)  
Isn't this where...?

Ruby nods. Cramp sees Loonetta behind him with wander and confusion on her face. A small grin is curved on his face.

RUBY  
You were inside me when we camped here, Loon. First impressions?

When Ruby turns to Loonetta, she makes a so-so gesture with her hand. Ruby CHUCKLES softly.

She turns and suddenly spots a break in the trees up ahead, the faint glimmer of a river catching her eye. Her pace quickens, and she motions for the kids to follow.

She and the kids takes out their bike horns and make HONKING noises. They do this several times.

Suddenly, after a defining silence, a faint HONK was heard from the distance. It was coming from the north east.

It is leading them to a riverbank.

As they approach the riverbank, Ruby sees a familiar figure sitting on the edge of the water, his head bowed and his shoulders hunched. Mordecai.

Ruby approaches cautiously from the tree line, having spotted him from afar.

Cramp and Loonetta linger in the distance, watching anxiously but staying back as Ruby waves them off with a small gesture. She steps carefully over the rocks.



RUBY (CONT'D)  
(softly)  
Mordecai?

He doesn't respond, his eyes fixed on the water. Ruby hesitates, then moves closer, sitting on a smaller rock beside him. For a moment, neither of them speaks. The sound of the river fills the silence.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
W-We...we were worried sick about  
you.

Mordecai exhales shakily, his voice low and broken.

MORDECAI  
This is the one place where I'm not  
mistaken for...those...

RUBY  
Yeah. It's well hidden.

Ruby looks at him, her heart aching at his visible pain.

MORDECAI  
I couldn't come back. Not after  
what happened.

RUBY  
I'm sorry for everything. The  
things I said.

Shaking his head, Mordecai finally turns to her, his eyes red and wet with unshed tears. His greasepaint slowly debilitating and design wearing off.

MORDECAI  
You were right, Rube. About  
everything.

Ruby's brows knit together, unsure of how to respond. He continues, his voice trembling.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
I should be sorry.

Ruby is still unsure how to respond.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
Part of me never really grew up. Or  
recovered.

He swallows hard, his voice breaking.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

I...I thought that I couldn't be  
like him. But I was.

Ruby tilts her head slightly, sensing this is something he's  
rarely spoken about.

RUBY

Mord...

Mordecai looks back at the water, the weight of memories  
pulling his shoulders down.

MORDECAI

I mean he was a clown! A circus  
clown! I strived to be just like  
him.

(he pauses, his voice  
darkening)

But that was at the circus.

He swallows hard, his fists tightening on his knees.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

He got away with what he did  
to..... I should've wanted nothing  
to do with clowns. Or art. Or life.

RUBY

(sadly, trembling)

Mordecai...I...I had no...

He looks at her, tears brimming in his eyes.

MORDECAI

Yet, that image of him in  
greasepaint haunts me every day.  
Every day. And I thought if I had a  
family, I'd erase his shadow for  
good.

He stares at the ripples of the river.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

I would make them see that clowns  
weren't anything to be feared. Or  
twisted. Or conditional. The  
Grimaldi Club showed that. They  
showed me what's possible.

(trembling)

But...I'm still just that fucking  
idiot little boy lost than he was  
before. Becoming his...

Ruby moves closer, cupping his face gently and forcing him to look at her.

RUBY

Mordecai, you're not your father.  
What you gave wasn't just Waldo's  
Codes. Nor the Grimaldi Club. You  
gave us love. Hope.

Mordecai shakes his head, his tears finally falling.

RUBY (CONT'D)

It saved Cramp that day. It saved  
me. That's what you gave us.

MORDECAI

But did I? Really? I held on to a  
corpse I thought I could revive.  
And worse of all, I dragged you  
into it.

(chokes up)

Our kids. My babies. They needed a  
father and I sent them out to  
wolves like my dad. I failed.

Ruby wipes his tears away, her touch tender.

RUBY

You didn't fail. We lost our way,  
that's all. We're still here. We  
could still make it. What we  
do...isn't exclusive to red noses  
or pratfalls. It was always there.  
And no one can take that away from  
us. No one will hurt you like that  
ever again.

Mordecai closes his eyes, her words breaking through his  
despair. For a moment, they sit in silence, the weight of  
their shared pain beginning to lift.

From the tree line, Cramp and Loonetta step forward  
hesitantly. Mordecai notices them, his face softening with a  
mixture of shame and longing.

Ruby gives him an encouraging nod, and he rises slowly, his  
movements hesitant. Cramp and Loonetta stop a few feet away,  
unsure of what to say. Mordecai looks at them, his voice raw  
with emotion.

MORDECAI

I'm so, so sorry. For everything.  
You deserve a better father.

Cramp steps forward first.

CRAMP

We wouldn't trade you for the  
world. We're in this. Together.

Mordecai's lips tremble as he nods, overwhelmed. Loonetta follows, her eyes glistening with unshed tears.

She approaches first. She wraps her arms around him – silent but firm. Mordecai stiffens... then breaks, clutching her as if she's the only thing keeping him together.

Cramp joins in.

Overwhelmed, he pulls both of them into a tight embrace. Ruby joins them, wrapping her arms around her family. For the first time in what feels like forever, they feel whole.

The four of them stand there on the riverbank, holding onto each other as the sun rises higher, bathing them in golden light.

#### **INT./EXT. VOLKSWAGEN - DAY - CONTINUOUS**

On an empty road away from the woods, Ruby is at the driver's seat with Mordecai at the passenger's seat. She is applying make up, covering all of his skin.

RUBY

It's a miracle you survived without  
your makeup desk. Or food.

MORDECAI

I can hardly believe myself. You  
would think that I wouldn't.

They CHUCKLE softly. Ruby adds final touches to his colorful eye designs.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

Okay, I survived on McDonald's.  
Couldn't say no to the Dollar Menu.

Ruby nods and chuckles softly. She puts her kit back into her purse after adding touches; putting back his normal design. He is Mordecai once again.

RUBY

Good as new. A real Auguste.

Cramp and Loonetta looks at them both with soft smiles.

MORDECAI

(softly)

Thank you. Thanks for everything.

They share a quick kiss on the lips. Ruby fastens her seatbelt and starts the car.

Mordecai looks over to Cramp, which gets the tramp clown's attention.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

Your mother told me what happened.

CRAMP

(narrows head, softly)

I'm alright. I'm...sorry.

MORDECAI

Don't be. I'm really sorry. I'm just glad you're okay.

The two hold each other's gloved hands, gripping. After letting go, and rubbing Loonetta's head, he sits back down.

RUBY

Also, I found out that song's name.

MORDECAI

You did?

She nods. Mordecai darts his eyes to the floor. Ruby knits her brows by the sight of him.

RUBY

What's wrong?

MORDECAI

(beat)

I was wondering if you were to cook something up.

RUBY

Of course. I'll batch up a great meal when we arrive.

MORDECAI

I appreciate it. But...not like that.

RUBY

(confused)

What do you...

Mordecai WHISPERS into her right ear. The kids lean in on what he was whispering.

He sat back. Ruby is still trying to let it sink in.

RUBY (CONT'D)

But...are you sure, Mord? This will cost everything.

MORDECAI

I know. But it has to be done.

RUBY

I...

MORDECAI

(dead serious)

Ruby. We have to do this.

The kids looked at one another suspicious and unease. Ruby, still unsure what to think or say, proceeds to get the car started. She looks at him. They nod in assurance.

#### **INT. PERFORMANCE ARTS CENTER: MANAGER OFFICE - DAY**

Darnell lounges in his sleek leather chair, scrolling through his phone looking at mime pin ups and social media as if he doesn't have a care in the world. The door swings open, and the clown family files in.

Darnell glances up, his usual smug grin appearing.

DARNELL

Well well... the circus comes to town! Mordecai! Been a while - thought you'd ghosted me.

Mordecai steps forward, his expression serious but calm.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

Whatever, you're here. I actually was in the midst of planning to talk about booking you for -

MORDECAI

(cutting him off)

We're here to say goodbye. Effective immediately.

DARNELL

(confused)

Goodbye?

Mordecai nods. Darnell scoffs, leaning back in his chair.

DARNELL (CONT'D)  
Alright, I'll bite. What's this  
about? What's going on?

RUBY  
You've humiliated us for years and  
we didn't see it.

DARNELL  
Humiliated you?

RUBY  
Yes!

DARNELL  
You got your limelight back,  
everyone loves ya again, now you  
wanna quit? Isn't this what you  
wanted? Just as before? I don't get  
it. You should be thanking me.

MORDECAI  
Yeah...because we're meant to be  
"seen but not heard", right?

DARNELL  
(confused)  
What?

MORDECAI  
Isn't it what you said to my  
daughter? On our photoshoot.

DARNELL  
Did I? Huh. Oookay, but I don't ...

Darnell frowns. The family subtly fans out. Cramp locks the door behind them. Loonetta draws the blinds. Light dims. The temperature drops.

CRAMP  
(steadily)  
We know what you did.

DARNELL  
(scoffs)  
What are you..did what?

Darnell's smirk falters. He sits up straighter, his eyes darting nervously between them.

Without a word, Loonetta reaches into her bag and pulls out the shot of Darnell and her. Her expression in the photo is frozen in discomfort while his hand rests suspiciously low on her back.

Darnell glances at the photo, his face tightening. He leans back, putting it all together.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

Ar-Are you...

MORDECAI

Lying to us, using us, putting us  
on that stage to make fun of us,  
that can be relatively forgivable.

(points at photo)

This is low. Even for you.

DARNELL

(chuckling nervously)

That's... that's ridiculous! That?!

It was friendly!

(looks at Cramp)

Cramp, you believe me, right?

CRAMP

(firmly)

Fuck you.

DARNELL

(looks at Loonetta)

Loon, come on! You don't believe  
this shit, do ya?

Loonetta just stares with venom and pain in her eyes.

DARNELL (CONT'D)

(half-defensive, half-  
patronizing)

Look! This is all a big  
misunderstanding. I mean - you're  
clowns.

RUBY

So it gives you permission to prey  
on our daughter?

DARNELL

(bewildered)

Prey? This is a joke, right?

Darnell turns to Loonetta, who shakes her head.



The air is thick with tension – no one moves fast, but everything feels like it might explode. A single sudden gesture and this could all turn violent.

Mordecai reaches into his coat – slow, deliberate. Darnell flinches. His fingers twitch toward the drawer.

MORDECAI

You said you wanted us to be funny.  
Well, here's your punchline.

The pie from Mordecai smashes into Darnell's face with chilling precision. He stumbles back, gasping.

Ruby and Cramp each reveal their own pies. Loonetta holds hers like a blade.

They strike, one after another – controlled, merciless. The sound is wet and brutal.

DARNELL

(shouting, flailing)  
WHAT THE FUCK?!

Loonetta CHUCKLES silently along with Cramp. Ruby dumps the rest of the photos on his desk.

The family steps back, watching Darnell sputter and wipe cream off his face.

RUBY

(cheerfully)  
Consider this our parting gift. For showing us that we're better off without you. So...thanks.

Mordecai steps forward one last time.

MORDECAI

(leans in slightly)  
Good luck explaining this to your new troupe. And your wife. She always did light up a room.

Mordecai places his red nose on Darnell's.

The family turns and walks out, leaving Darnell humiliated and covered in pie. As they exit, Loonetta pauses at the door, glancing back at him.

She blows and flips the bird with a cheeky wink, stunning him. The family leaves the office, the door swinging shut behind them. Darnell grabs the nose from his face and throws it across the room.

One of the Kesslers stumbles across to see him, but is stunned by the sight.

SAM KESSLER

Woah! The hell happened here?

Darnell can't answer. He just sits there — humiliated. Broken. Pie-covered. Alone.

**EXT. PERFORMANCE ARTS CENTER: THEATER - DAY**

The family steps into the sunlight, their collective mood lighter despite the intensity of the confrontation. They get into the car LAUGHING hysterically.

Mordecai and Ruby share a deep kiss.

RUBY

So proud of ya! That was incredible!

MORDECAI

(chuckling)

Yeah! That felt...great!

CRAMP

Now that was funny!

MORDECAI

I'm gonna miss that nose, though.

Loonetta gives a small mime bow, and Cramp finally cracks a smile.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

I can only imagine your face, Loon!

Loonetta nods and kisses her dad on his cheek. Touched, Mordecai starts the car and drive off.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)

Oh, regarding your phones, I draw the line on this social media.

Loonetta tilts her head as to say "What!?"

CRAMP

Why!?

MORDECAI

I've observed what it does and given what you went through, that's the last thing you need right now.

The kids looked at their mother. Ruby shrugs.

RUBY  
Your father's not wrong here, guys.  
Sorry.

The kids nod reluctantly.

Cramp then takes out his Bible for a second, only to realize that his father takes a glance when putting the car in reverse. He freezes. Mordecai nods and smiles.

Cramp smiles. Mordecai smiles back and has the car go onto the road. He turns to Ruby who smiles softly at him.

Mordecai nods somberly. His expression becomes neutral.

#### **EXT. BOARDWALK - SUNSET**

The clown family walks the quiet boardwalk, their costumes rumpled, makeup smudged. The sun bleeds gold and pink into the sea. Cramp clutches his Bible. Loonetta hugs a sketchpad.

Mordecai lingers behind with Ruby, whose harlequin dress flutters in the breeze. They stop at a bench overlooking the horizon. Silence.

They all sit.

A BYSTANDER jogs by, slows, then does a double take.

BYSTANDER  
(scoffs)  
Freaks!

He chuckles to himself and keeps jogging.

Loonetta's eyes narrow, but her face stays still. She looks to Cramp, who gives her a knowing nod.

She mimes picking up something heavy. Tosses it toward the man's back with perfect timing.

He trips over nothing. Stumbles. Almost falls.

BYSTANDER (CONT'D)  
(confused, offscreen)  
What the fuck-

He glances back, spooked, and hurries away without a word.

Loonetta shrugs innocently, doodling in her sketchpad again.

Cramp suppresses a grin. Ruby sighs and shakes her head with a smile, amused despite herself.

Loonetta sketches a superhero clown. Mordecai gently taps Ruby's shoulder. From behind his sportscoat, he reveals – her restored harp.

MORDECAI

Had it rebuilt. While I was gone.

RUBY

Mordecai...this...thank you.

She touches it like it's a relic. Her fingers pluck a few strings – notes rise gently into the air. She leans in, kisses him.

Afterwards, Mordecai stares at the horizon, his face lined with guilt and weariness. Ruby sits beside him, her hand resting gently on his, though he hardly notices.

MORDECAI

I should've seen it. Who he was. I endangered you and the kids. And for what?

RUBY

You didn't know.

Ruby squeezes his hand, her voice gentle but firm. She puts her harp down.

RUBY (CONT'D)

You're not the only one who was lost, Mord. But we're free now.

Mordecai nods, his eyes filled with something between regret and understanding.

MORDECAI

I guess.

CRAMP

What do you think will happen? Get into another center?

The question hangs in the air. Loonetta flips open her sketchpad, doodling absentmindedly. Ruby places a hand on Cramp's shoulder.

RUBY

We don't know, sweetie.

Cramp looks at her and nods.

MORDECAI  
Does it matter?

The family turns to him in surprise. Mordecai exhales.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
I thought their laughs would define  
us. But they don't. They never did.

He looks down at his gloved hands.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
I don't see a sunset. Only a  
sunrise. We can be anything. Do  
anything. Go anywhere.

With a quiet resolve, he holds on to the railing. He turns to  
his family.

MORDECAI (CONT'D)  
(smiling)  
All of us.

He eyes at his wife and reaches out his hand.

Ruby watches him and then his hand. She holds his hand and  
they both walk towards the rail. Loonetta mimes in question;  
writing "*So what happens now*" on her sketchpad.

Ruby takes a deep BREATH, her voice steady but tender.

RUBY  
We live. We'll always be clowns.  
Just not for a show. Not anymore.

Loonetta lowers her pad, thoughtful. Mordecai nods at Cramp,  
who fumbles with his phone. Music plays: "Spring, Summer,  
Winter and Fall" by Aphrodite's Child.

Ruby and Mordecai begin to slow dance. Loonetta smiles,  
sketchpad forgotten.

#### **EXT. ROCKY MOUNDS - TIMELESS**

The boardwalk melts away. Now, they dance atop dreamlike  
mounds in a boundless sea. Slow, weightless steps. The tide  
swirls but never touches them.

Cramp and Loonetta watch, silent. A wave crashes—Ruby twirls.

The sun disappears behind infinity.