

EFFECT

By Samuel Gerkin

A serialized character-centric Romance Drama for Network

Defining Principle:

Every choice we make affects others. Who is choosing what they think is true, and who is choosing what they **want** to be true?

Logline:

In a close-knit small-town community, everyone's choices affect everyone else. A juvenile delinquent, a police officer, a Pastor's daughter, and a Priest must choose wisely as their lives intersect and their town is impacted by their decisions.

Arena:

A small American mountain town where everyone knows everyone.

Franchise:

None

Concept Paragraph:

This show follows the residents of a small town with a diverse population of many different religions and worldviews. Where people of such different belief systems live at such close quarters, they are bound to clash. The residents must learn how to live with one another; and decide whether to live by their minds or by their hearts. A cynical juvenile delinquent and an optimistic Methodist volunteer worker must work together on a fundraiser. Two police officers of different political parties but the same religion are forced to be partners. A teenage daughter keeps a secret from her family. A Baptist Pastor and a Catholic Priest fight for the soul of a strange inventor. And a mysterious stranger works behind the scenes, amplifying the consequences of the town's choices. Their stories collide and converge to make up the story of a town. This is a story of people, our lives, our relationships, our desires, and our beliefs. What sets us apart from our neighbor, and what holds us together?

Every town has a people. Every choice has an effect.

Tone and What This Show Is:

This show is at heart a character study of an ensemble cast of people with very different beliefs. The conflict each episode will primarily be interpersonal – conflict between characters. The emotions of the characters as they deal with conflict between each other and within themselves will lead to sadness, happiness, romance, or humor.

The large cast of characters allow the primary cast to rotate. Though some characters will always be more major than others, everyone will have a turn playing a primary role. The antagonist of one story may become the protagonist of the next. This show is a story of life and how everyone is connected. This show should always make the audience think objectively. They are placed into at least some new character's minds each episode.

This show will tell all sorts of stories involving the conflict most experience in daily life. But it will also tell some stories that will slowly unveil mysteries and secrets behind some of the characters.

In the background, the show has a subtle sci-fi tone. There is a mystery which may come to involve science fiction.

Though some of the characters are police officers, this show will never be a police procedural. These are police officers, not detectives, so they watch over the town and deal with daily crimes- they don't solve mysteries.

This show will never become wholly sci-fi. Though Sci-Fi elements may affect the plot in large ways eventually, the characters will never all be trying to time travel or stop an evil government organization or something. That's not this show. This show will always have it's main focus on the relationships between the characters. Period.

This show will focus on many romance stories, but this show should never be entirely about romance. There will always be friend storylines, family storylines, and stories about relationships with God.

This show will never forget *religion*, the most fundamental heart of every character's beliefs. Even if that heart is that they don't care about religion – then *that* is their religion. This show will not go over seasons without ever revealing what religion a character is, mention it in one episode in the middle of a season, and then forget about it. This show is also about how our religion guides what we do, and how our religion clashes or lives with the religion of our neighbor.

This show will never allow plots to remain separate for long. There won't be a Plot A and A Plot B that don't meet up until the end of the season, like *Heroes* (although season 1 of that show did that pretty well). The plots in every episode will cross over each other a *lot*. This show is all about character's choices affecting each other, and this is how we will show it. Causality in this show will always be a complex web, not a clear A to B to C line.

Visual Style:

Much of this show will be shot almost like a Sci-Fi film, despite its subject matter. Any action the characters take that involves movement will be shot like a Huge-Budget Sci-Fi film, letting the audience feel the profound impact of the character's choices upon the world. But the style will always slow down when the genuine emotion of the scene requires it. Each shot in emotional moments should be designed to make the audience feel *with* the characters, as if they are there. These parts will be completely unlike Wes Anderson, who usually makes the audience feel alienated from the characters. They will also be unlike David Fincher, who sometimes makes the audience feel like an outside observer (albeit a thoroughly happy one).

Audio Style:

The audio style of this show will include some sci-fi elements in the music. Scene transitions should often incorporate sound to give a feeling of momentum, as each choice affects other characters and brings our characters to a new situation. Sound will mostly be realistic in order to immerse the viewers in the world, but the sound designer can always “cheat” if it means giving the audience stronger emotions.

Character Bios

Hope Spencer:

A cheerful, innocent, Christian high school girl who is always out to convert someone. Her complete trust in others can make her gullible. Always optimistic, she thinks she can fix every and any problem. She's about to meet a problem that she can't.

Her faith in people can become a flaw.

She will go to extreme lengths to believe that someone, especially someone close to her, is not doing anything wrong. This makes her gullible and puts her in denial about people who could harm others. It also prevents her from addressing the flaws of people close to her, or maybe even the flaws in her own church. She will not believe if they are corrupt. She will not be disillusioned, even when there is a real harmful illusion.

She sometimes finds herself judging others and seeing them as beneath her because they do not follow the truth above all.

Her views and beliefs:

everything the Methodist church teaches. She believes that those who purport to be Methodist but no longer believe all that the Methodist church teaches are hypocrites even if they don't know it. She doesn't understand why they don't examine their beliefs and see the contradictions inherent in them, but she knows that other people are different than her and that she does not know what it is like to be them, so she is in no place to judge them. Nonetheless, she often finds herself subconsciously or consciously judging them and looking down on them before she catches herself. She always asks forgiveness for this. In a moment of weakness she might let her feelings about this out, though she would immediately regret it.

She's not perfect, but she's someone whose goal is to be perfect in every way.

She loves following the rules.

She loves being nice to everyone; she thrives off it.

She tells everyone all her Methodist views.

She keeps secret her hidden flaws which she feels badly about; judging others and feeling above others because they aren't as virtuous.

Her PRIDE is her greatest flaw.

She believes that she is always right. She is legitimately opened minded, but she is prideful even about that fact in a hidden way.

She never flaunts her pride or acts about others, but she often feels that way.

That is also why she feels called to leadership. She always feels (and often experiences, since not many are perfectionists like she is) that if she wants something done right (as she sees right, at least) she has to do it herself. So she naturally steps up as leader to make sure that things are done right as she sees it.

Her actions and behavior:

She uses extreme niceness to everyone as a tool. At her best, she uses it sincerely. However, when one of her fundamental flaws is challenged, she might ease up on her niceness or begin to use her niceness in a fake manner in order to conceal her flaws from others and herself.

She is devoted to constantly working towards people's conversions. When one of her fundamental flaws is challenged, she might throw herself into her work so she doesn't have to examine it, or ease up on trying to convert others and begin to just agree to let them stay in their beliefs.

She may focus more on converting others when she is challenged herself to get the attention off herself.

What makes her emotional?

- When someone accuses her of doing something (that she didn't do, usually, but sometimes that she did do).
- Her love for God and gratefulness to Him.
- Her love for her family and friends.
- Her sympathy over the suffering of others.

What annoys people about your character?

-Some people think she is stuck up because she doesn't participate in their rebellious activities.

Dean might say, "It's annoying how perfect you are."

She tries to hide that she has feelings of judging others.

She thinks her society is in desperate need of evangelization

She thinks they are ignorant of the Truth, either purposefully or by no fault of their own.

How can she solve the problem of this story in an interesting way, or what flaw will make it more difficult for her to solve the problem of this story?

The problem of this story is that the town is divided.

Her internal judgement of others and inability to understand why they do not believe the truth - her PRIDE will make it hard to unite the town.

AND/OR she might be convinced to break the rules because she can care too much for people.

At the same time, she is the character best suited to bring the town together due to her commitment to the truth.

Dean Valdez:

A cynical, disillusioned, poverty-stricken high school boy who is always breaking the rules- just because he can. His inner conviction that the system is rigged and that everything is pointless is challenged when he meets someone he respects who believes the opposite.

He has a violent temper and is very strong-willed whenever he sees injustice.

He is impulsive and rebellious.

He thrives off breaking the rules.

He struggles with his identity. He believes that people can make up their own identities. He rebels to differentiate himself from others, unaware that he is defining himself as the opposite of whatever he is told. Trying to prove his independence, his identity becomes dependent on what he is told all the same.

Despite his near-constant rebellion, he does hold by a certain code of ethics. He believes that no one should interfere with anyone else's business. He thinks that no one should hurt anyone else. But since he feels that the rich have stolen from the poor, he has no problem hurting the rich.

He is brave but reckless. Though it takes him a long time to begin to trust someone because he is terrified of being betrayed, once someone has earned his trust or if he starts caring for them deeply then he accepts them completely and is willing to die for them to protect them.

He does not trust the police or any authority figure.

What is his contradiction?

He is a rebel who defies authority and doesn't make connections with people easily. However, he can be very kind and even self-sacrificial to those he cares about.

What is his internal conflict?

Why is he a habitual rebel? Why does this define him?

What does he lose if he starts following the rules?

HE IS STRUGGLING TO FIND HIS IDENTITY. His worldview tells him to find his own identity independently of others. He defines himself by doing the opposite of whatever anyone in authority says.

He is also dissatisfied by the injustice in the world, and he feels like adults have failed him by making the world into a terrible, imperfect place. This gives of a feeling of despair, because he believes that this world is the only one we will have. He thinks this world should be a utopia, and it could be if only the adults and the wealthy and powerful weren't messing everything up.

He defines himself by being a rebel because he can't figure out who he is otherwise. If he starts following the rules, then he thinks that who he is will just be conforming to what other people think, and he can't see any value in that.

How is he an obstacle to the town uniting?

His rebelliousness, confrontational tendencies, and especially his refusal to forgive and thirst for revenge will create much conflict in this town.

June Martin:

An apathetic, rebellious high school girl who has grown scared to show any of the strong emotions she feels inside. Always self-conscious of keeping her cool, calm, unaffected exterior intact, she isn't honest with anyone, least of all herself.

She doesn't act passively about everything, because to live that way would be impossible for her, since she has strong opinions on the inside. But to keep up her image, she does one of two things: if she doesn't care enough about something, she pretends not to care at all. If she does care enough about something, she is stubborn and strong-willed and doesn't care about other people's opinions.

What is her internal conflict?

Why does she care so much about this external image of apathy?

She doesn't want anyone to see how she really feels because she thinks that if she says what she feels she will be embarrassed. Her flaw is VANITY. She cares too much about what other people think of her to be truthful about herself.

Contradiction:

Her apathetic attitude is always expressed by what she says, but what she does, especially when no one is watching, shows how much she cares.

What flaw of hers is an obstacle to the town uniting?

Her lack of honesty about herself to herself and others prevents her from seeking the truth. So whenever someone challenges her or she comes into conflict with someone, she shuts down and does not try to resolve the situation. Sometimes this means that she pretends not to care about the situation and lets the other person have their way, while resentment grows inside her. Sometimes this means she refuses to have a discussion and stubbornly will not change her mind.

Brian Martin:

Always cracking jokes, this unpopular high school boy is always outthought by his intelligent friends. His comic exterior hides his long struggle with depression from his friends and family. He longs for companionship, but he is terrified that if he reveals his internal struggle no one will ever treat him the same way again.

His goal is to be accepted by everyone. To gain this acceptance, he always tries to be the class clown.

He jokes about his lack of book smarts to hide his embarrassment about it. His friends are nerds and school stuff comes easily to them, but he has trouble sleeping and focusing on homework.

Since joking is his way of coping, he can make people uncomfortable by making jokes at very bad times.

He has lots of trouble following through on his promises because he often spends lots of time worrying about things and dealing with his thoughts

Why does he act like a comedian when he is suffering from depression?

Why does he not tell anyone about his depression?

He struggles with DESPAIR; it has become a monster he cannot control. He thinks too lowly of himself, and thinks others will too if they see the truth about him.

Contradiction:

Outwardly he is a wannabe comedian, but inwardly he struggles with depression.

What flaw of his is an obstacle to the town uniting?

He gets along well with everyone, but by hiding his internal suffering he often makes it worse. When his depression gets bad enough, he can become unable to do the simplest things and loses his ability to be there for others. This separates them from him, making his depression worse, which can become a vicious cycle.

Tyler Davis:

A liberal small-town cop with a big heart. He feels a personal connection to every resident of his town, which often leads him to do what he feels is best instead of what is. He's not afraid to bend a few rules for his town's well being.

Why does he complete his police work by feelings instead of by thinking?

His flaw is that HE DEFINES LOVE AS MAKING PEOPLE HAPPY NOW, NOT DOING WHAT IS BEST FOR THEM.

Contradiction:

His “people first” philosophy disappears completely when the people in question disagree with that philosophy. He can also forget his philosophy when he doesn’t know people personally. Especially when someone he does know is in conflict with them.

How is he an obstacle to the town uniting?

When he bends the rules to help the residents of his town, it can often backfire and only make things worse. For example, he often has let Dean’s crimes slide since he knew that at heart he was a “good kid.” But Tyler’s reluctance to charge Dean with crimes has only fueled Dean’s belief that breaking rules is okay because the rules are meaningless and society is corrupt.

Emily Lanelle:

A conservative big-city detective who always operates by-the-books. She judges people quickly and writes them off even quicker. She’s seen the worst that humans are capable of, and never forgets that everyone is capable of the worst.

Why is she so quick to judge?

Her flaw is JUDGING OTHERS.

Contradiction:

She is harsh to judge others on all sorts of moral issues, but can be lax when judging herself.

How is she an obstacle to the town uniting?

Her haste to judge often results in accusing and even arresting the innocent, who begin to resent her and the police. She also quickly “types” people in the town, assumes that they will always behave the same way, and considers many townspeople (like Dean) lost causes.

Father Lee:

A kind but firm Catholic priest, always ready for a round of witty verbal sparring. As his church falls into financial ruin and the town becomes more and more secular, he struggles to balance making ends meet and serving the community that may no longer want him.

He struggles to understand his mission in a secular society. DISCOURAGEMENT sometimes threatens to overwhelm him, and he sometimes feels the temptation to just give up.

His contradiction:

He preaches about relying on God, but then gets discouraged when he is unable to accomplish everything by himself.

How is he an obstacle to the town uniting?

Father Lee's temptation to give up on this town and leave them to themselves can lead to a fatalist attitude where he may refuse to explain what he believes to those who challenge him. This would make those who challenge him consider him unreasonable and unwilling to debate. They, in turn, might begin to treat him the same way, even if he repents.

Pastor Martin:

A charismatic and energetic Baptist Pastor who strikes up a conversation with everyone he meets. His rousing speeches can stir up crowds, but his family seems to be drifting farther and farther away from him...

His contradiction:

He preaches about the necessity of the family as the foundation for a healthy society, but neglect his own family.

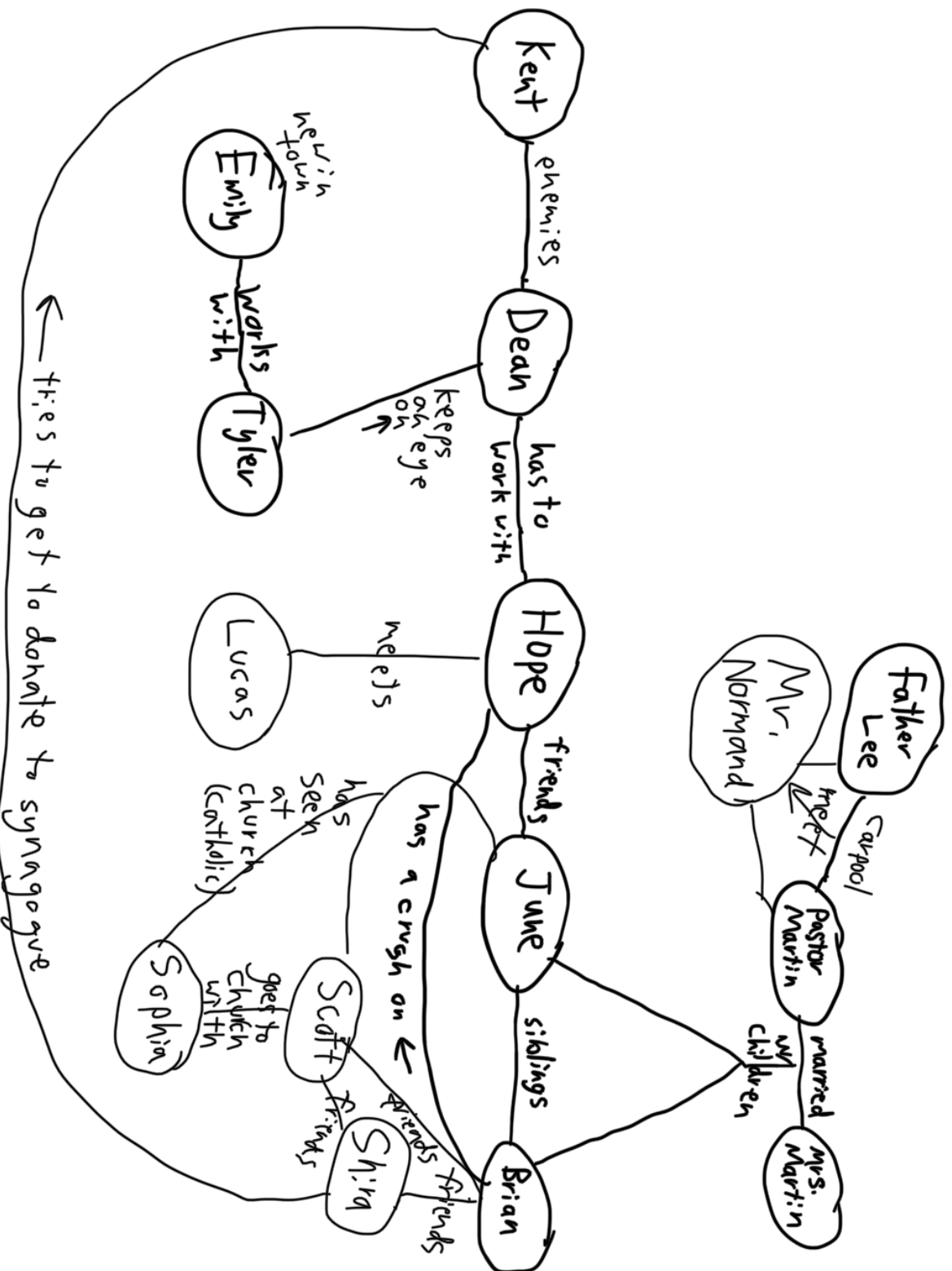
Why does he struggle with this contradiction?

He always finds himself choosing whether to devote time to his church or his family, and his church almost always wins out because he thinks that he is helping more people through his church. He doesn't realize the urgency of his duty to his family. His life is UNBALANCED.

How is he an obstacle to the town uniting?

He tries to unite his family in the same way he unites his church- by preaching. What rouses his Sunday services is the same old speech for his family. His words have lost their emotional impact through repetition. Also, his devotion to his church often steals time he could be spending with his family, making them feel more and more unloved and separated from him.

Character Map:



EFFECT

Written by

Samuel Gerkin

samuelgerkin@gmail.com
602-620-4762

ACT ONE

EXT. KENT'S HOUSE - NIGHT

An incredibly ornate building with large, glass windows surrounded by the forest. It's hard to decide whether to call this place a house or a mansion. A fence surrounds it.

A dripping black line is sprayed across the largest window.

DEAN VALDEZ (17), Hispanic, in old plain clothes, shakes his can of black spray paint, touches up one last detail, and steps back onto a wide second-story ledge to admire his work.

"MY DAD is A THIEF" is emblazoned across the window.

A door closes softly, but Dean hears it. He whips around to see a police car parked in the road in front of the house.

Dean books it, sprinting across the ledge. He hears the policeman jump the fence to get into the yard.

POLICEMAN

Stop!

Dean slides around the corner of the building, hearing the Policeman's feet pounding the pavement behind him.

Dean reaches the back edge of the roof and throws a rock of the edge, which CRACKS a pot on the back porch. He doubles back, adeptly clambering over the tilted roof.

He's about to slide down the front side when a BLUE LIGHT flashes in his face.

Blinded, he slips and slides back down the roof-

-and lands in the backyard with a flashlight in his face. He scrambles up, trying to run away.

POLICEMAN

End of the road. Hands over your head.

Dean holds his hands over his head and turns around.

DEAN

Believe me, this guy had it coming.

The Policeman is TYLER (25), Black, who looks uncomfortable holding a gun. He lowers it.

TYLER

Dean?

DEAN

Hey, Tyler.

TYLER

Man, what's wrong with you? You said you were done with this kind of thing.

DEAN

You know who this guy is.

TYLER

I'm not talking about this guy, Dean, I'm talking about you. You want to end up in jail? You want to get broke paying fines?

DEAN

I'm already broke.

TYLER

And you think adding fines to your plate will help any?

Dean glares at him.

TYLER

I'm not letting you off the hook this time. You're going to do some community service.

DEAN

You think Kent Bradford will let me get off with community service? His lawyers will try to get me the death penalty.

TYLER

I'm not reporting you. You're going to do some community service of your own free will. Or I *will* report you.

Dean doesn't believe him.

TYLER (CONT'D)

There's a fundraiser tomorrow for the town hall to be renovated. You're going to be there, helping.

DEAN

You think I'm going to work with those-

TYLER

I'm serious. Get out of here. This is the last time I'm covering for you.

Dean starts walks past Tyler.

DEAN

The police station buy you guys new equipment?

TYLER

What?

DEAN

I would've gotten away if you hadn't blinded me with that bright blue flashlight.

Dean doesn't wait for an answer and heads towards a beaten-up old pickup truck hidden in the trees.

Tyler looks confused. He turns his flashlight on and off. It's yellow.

EXT. FOREST

A blue-tinged leaf floats to the ground in a dark forest.

INT./EXT. MR. NORMAND'S PORCH - DAY

A door opens, bringing light to a dark house. On the porch is HOPE SPENCER (17), bright-eyed and always smiling.

HOPE

Hi! My name is Hope! May I ask if you go to church anywhere?

MR. NORMAND (56), Hispanic, dressed in mismatched clothing, looks at Hope blankly.

MR. NORMAND

Church? I do not.

HOPE

Then maybe you'd like to come to my church sometime?

Hope offers Mr. Normand a card.

HOPE
It's called the West United
Methodist Church. It's a really
great community!

MR. NORMAND
(distracted)
I'm afraid not. I'm really terribly
busy.

He closes the door without taking the card.

Hope is unfazed.

INT./EXT. LUCAS' PORCH - DAY

The door opens to Hope's cheerful knock.

HOPE
Hi! My name is Hope! May I ask if
you go to church anywhere?

LUCAS (34), Black, smiles. He is putting a tie on.

LUCAS
Yes, I go to Fountain Baptist
Church. Afraid I'll be late for
work if we talk any more,
unfortunately. Have a nice day!

HOPE
You too!

INT./EXT. AIKO'S PORCH - DAY

The door opens slowly.

HOPE
Hi! My name is Hope! Do you go to
church anywhere?

AIKO (16), Asian, looks frightened. She slams the door.

Hope's smile is still just as genuine as before.

EXT./INT. JUNE'S PORCH - DAY

The door is thrown open. Hope smiles.

JUNE (16), White, always looks like she doesn't care, stands inside.

JUNE
Hang on, almost ready. Just be
minute.

She ducks back into the house.

Hope waits on the porch.

BRIAN (16), White, often wearing a comical grin, walks up to the door from inside and doesn't notice Hope yet.

BRIAN
June, not leaving the front door
open is like rule number one in the
not-getting-murdered handbook.

He starts to close the door and notices Hope.

BRIAN
Oh, uh. Crap, sorry 'bout that.

HOPE
No worries!

BRIAN
Umm, why don't you come inside
while you're waiting? Welcome to
our . . . humble home.

He awkwardly gestures inside just as June steps outside.

JUNE
Ready.

BRIAN
Well, hey, we're all going to the
same place, why don't we walk
together?

He smiles at Hope.

JUNE
You're not ready yet. We're not
going to wait for you.

HOPE
I should really get there early;
they need my help getting things
started.

BRIAN
Oh, okay. Maybe I'll catch up then.
See ya!

JUNE
Bye.

HOPE
See you later!

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

June and Hope walk on the sidewalk. June looks at the ground.

HOPE
What's wrong?

JUNE
Not looking forward to today.

HOPE
Why not? You're going to love it!

JUNE
My dad planned this fundraiser as a
big family event.

HOPE
Fundraisers make great family
events!

JUNE
Maybe, but my dad makes family
events not fun.

HOPE
You don't get along with your dad?

JUNE
He's fine. He's just never around.
He always says he will be, then
doesn't show.

HOPE
But he set this up himself! Don't
worry, he'll be there today.

JUNE
Maybe.

They pass by a house. Through the window-

INT. SHIRA'S HOUSE - DAY

HALLWAY

SHIRA AARONS (16), White, walks down the hallway, her head buried in a book- the Talmud, to be exact. She walks into the

KITCHEN

She nearly slips on a liquid on the floor and comes to a sudden stop.

She looks up from her book.

What appears to be a HOMELESS MAN (age indistinguishable, but really 17), wearing a dirty bathrobe, lies on the floor, passed out and clutching a beer bottle, which has spilled on the floor. His long hair is draped over his face.

An open door to the backyard is on the other side of the kitchen. The automatic sprinklers are going off and spraying water into the kitchen through the door.

Shira gets over her initial shock, and her eyes soften with sympathy.

She walks up to the man, still somewhat warily.

SHIRA

Hey.

He doesn't stir.

SHIRA

Hey!

He jolts awake, his eyes darting around blearily.

SHIRA

This isn't your house. You're trespassing.

(a beat)

But it's alright. I know you didn't mean to.

He starts to sit up.

SHIRA

(suddenly scared)

I'm . . . filming you, so don't hurt me or anything.

She takes out her phone and starts filming, significantly after she says so.

The man covers his face and stumbles out the open door.

She closes the door behind him, locks it, and looks at the mess he's left.

Beer and water from the sprinklers is all over the floor.

She sigh and pulls out her phone.

She types Brian: "I'm going to be pretty late. Sorry."

She presses send.

INT. TYLER'S APARTMENT - DAY

BEEP BEEP BEEP. An old alarm blares until Tyler turns it off.

Tyler lies in a ratty old bed fully clothed. He sits up slowly and rubs his eyes.

LATER

Tyler brushes his teeth, listening to a happy tune.

LATER

Tyler eats three eggs and toast. Well prepared.

LATER

Tyler puts on his police uniform. He turns the music off. His expression hardens.

LATER

Tyler gets into the police car parked in his apartment complex's driveway.

INT. POLICE OFFICE - POLICE CHIEF'S OFFICE - DAY

Tyler strolls in. CHIEF ANDREWS (61), experienced and hardened by a lifetime of policing, sits at a small desk.

TYLER

You called, Chief?

CHIEF

Yes. Yes, I did. Davis, your arrest rate has been getting lower and lower.

TYLER

We're having arrest quotas now? You want me to arrest on suspicion to meet a *quota*, sir?

CHIEF

Your arrest rate adjusted for amount of crimes. We've been having the same amount of crimes in this town, and you're letting more and more of them go unsolved.

TYLER

Sir-

CHIEF

I don't care about your motives, Tyler, be they conscious or not. The point is, something has to change.

TYLER

I need this job, sir. I-

CHIEF

I'm assigning you a partner, Davis.

Up walks EMILY LANELLE (28), White, crisp and cool in uniform and manner. Was she always in the room?

EMILY

Due respect, Chief, but I work best alone.

CHIEF

I'm the one to decide that, Lanelle.

TYLER

You brought in an out-of-towner?

CHIEF

Please!

The chief starts to cough.

It lets up, and he sighs.

CHIEF

Officer Davis, meet Officer Lanelle, your new partner.

It's hard to decide who is more revolted - Tyler or Emily.

EXT. FOREST STREET - DAY

A mid-size family car drives down a forested road.

In the front seat sits PASTOR MARTIN (46), White - charismatic, sociable, and passionate about his church.

A cross hangs from his rear-view mirror and a HOLY BIBLE full of multicolored bookmarks is on the dashboard.

He sees another car parked on the side of the road ahead.

As he gets closer, he sees that the other car is SMOKING.

It's a old, beat up, brown car with scratched paint. Standing at the open hood, looking contemplative, is FATHER LEON (54), Hispanic, wearing a black suit and a Roman collar.

Pastor Martin pulls up behind Father Leon's car.

PASTOR MARTIN

Hello there! Need some help?

Father Leon looks up, seemingly surprised, as if he had not noticed the Pastor pull up his car.

FATHER LEON

Help? Yes, yes I do. You wouldn't happen to be an exceedingly fast mechanic, would you?

PASTOR MARTIN

I'm afraid not, but I can bring you to one if you want.

FATHER LEON

That wouldn't do, unfortunately. I'm going to be very late to something very important.

PASTOR MARTIN

Where are you headed? Maybe I could give you a ride.

FATHER LEON

To the fundraiser at the hall.

PASTOR MARTIN

Me too! That works great, then! I really can't be late to that either.

The Pastor heads back to his car.

PASTOR MARTIN

Hop in.

Father Leon smiles and walks over.

FATHER LEON

This is very kind of you. It just goes to show, even though a day may seem to be going badly at first, the Lord always has a better plan in mind.

Pastor Martin and Father Leon get into the car. Father Leon notices the cross and the Bible.

FATHER LEON

You are a man of faith, yourself, I see.

PASTOR MARTIN

A Baptist Pastor, actually.

Just as Pastor Martin begins to pull back onto the road, a man runs out of the forest and BANGS on the windshield.

Pastor Martin brakes and the car jerks to a stop. The man is Mr. Normand, one of those Hope invited to church.

MR. NORMAND

You have to help me.

We pull back to show the rural part of town.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

- Street - Hope and June walk down the sidewalk. Brian catches up to them. We pull back to show half of the suburbs.

- June's House - June mops up beer. We pull back to show the other half of the suburbs.

- Dean's Trailer - Dean opens the door. Tyler and Emily stand on his front porch. We pull back to the poor part of town.

Each of these shots merge into a shot of the entire town.

END MONTAGE

TITLES

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. HALL - DAY

Hope, June, and Brian walk up to the hall, a large rectangular building in a state of disrepair.

TYLER
Hope Spencer!

Hope stops and gestures that June and Brian should head inside without her.

Tyler walks over to Hope from his police car, Dean following reluctantly.

HOPE
Hello, Officer Davis! How are you doing today?

TYLER
Doing well. I'd like you to meet Dean Valdez. He will be helping you out today. Dean, this is Hope Spencer. She runs the volunteer club at your school.

Hope holds out her hand.

HOPE
It's great to meet you!

Dean reluctantly shakes her hand briefly.

DEAN
Hi.

TYLER
Please make sure he stays busy. Let me know if he causes any trouble.

Dean kicks a rock. He is angry and embarrassed.

HOPE
Um, okay. Sure, no problem.

TYLER
(to Dean)
Have fun.

Tyler smiles at Dean, good-humored, and walks back to his police car.

HOPE
I'm really glad your helping us out
today! Follow me and I'll find you
something to do.

DEAN
Sure, whatever.

INT. TYLER'S CAR - DAY

Tyler gets in.

DEAN
All done. Sorry about that, just a
personal errand.

Emily looks at him suspiciously.

EMILY
What exactly-

Tyler picks up the radio.

TYLER
10-8.

INT. HALL - DAY

The hall looks even worse inside than it does outside.

June and Brian walk through the door.

BRIAN
So, hey. I want to ask you
something.

JUNE
What?

BRIAN
Does Hope ever . . . talk about
me?

June looks thoroughly weirded out.

BRIAN
June?

June ignores him as they walk up to MRS. MARTIN (41), White,
who looks tired but controlled.

JUNE
Hi, mom.

MRS. MARTIN
Hi, sweetie.

BRIAN
(resigned)
Howdy.

JUNE
Dad's not here yet?

MRS. MARTIN
He's on his way.

Brian looks around and spots SCOTT (16), White, who is thin and often seems nervous. Scott is standing next to SOPHIA (16), Hispanic, who looks calm, reassuring, and clear-headed as she listens to Scott ramble on about something he seems to find worrying.

BRIAN
(shouting across the room)
Scott! My man!

Scott looks unhappy about the attention this calls to him.

Sophia, her attention turned towards Brian by his shout, notices June standing near him.

She points to June and says something to Scott. Scott looks confused, but then nods, understanding.

Sophia and Scott start walking towards June; looking at her, not Brian.

June looks panicked.

JUNE
Excuse me, mom. I need to go to the bathroom.

She speed-walks away.

Sophia and Scott see her leave and stop mid-way across the room.

Brian walks up to Scott. He looks at Sophia.

BRIAN
'Sup, Scott. Who's this?

SCOTT
This is Sophia. She goes to my church.

BRIAN
(to Sophia)
Brian. I think you're one of those
faces I see in the school hallways.

Brian holds up his hand for a high five.

Sophia doesn't know what to make of this.

BRIAN
No on the introductory high five?
Ah well, thought it could've become
a fad.

Sophia smiles.

SOPHIA
Just weird enough that it's funny.
Or the other way around.

She start to think, then immediately dismisses it.

SOPHIA
You two are friends at school,
right? I've seen you hanging out at
lunch with- Shira, is it?

SCOTT
Yep. Speaking of which, where is
Shira?

BRIAN
Said she was going to be late.

Hope and Dean walk in the door near them.

DEAN
So this is the hall. What a dump.

HOPE
That's what we're hoping to fix
with this fundraiser!

Hope grabs a chair from a stack against the wall and stands
up on it.

HOPE
Hi, everyone! Thank you so much for
joining us and helping out! I'll
give everyone their jobs in a
moment. For now, introduce yourself
to someone new! Thanks again!

Dean tries to wander towards a corner with no people in it.

HOPE
Hang on, Dean. I need your help
right now if you're able.

DEAN
What is it?

HOPE
Can you help me carry something?
Over here.

She walks towards a door to a back room. Dean follows.

DEAN
What is this place for, anyway? Why
do we care how it looks?

HOPE
It's used for a lot of town
activities. Most importantly, we
distribute food to the poor and
homeless here every Saturday.

DEAN
(sarcastic)
Isn't that sweet.

HOPE
(not picking up on the
sarcasm)
Thanks!

They head through the door into-

INT. HALL - STORAGE ROOM - DAY

Piled high with various odds and ends - chairs, tables,
decorations for various events.

At the back of the room is a cheap safe-
-hanging open. Broken.

Hope gasps.

DEAN
What?

HOPE
The painting!

Dean notices the broken safe for the first time.

DEAN
Someone stole a painting?

HOPE
This will ruin the fundraiser!

Hope sinks to her knees.

DEAN
If it's so valuable, why is it in a
cheap safe in an old public
building?

HOPE
Because it's not valuable! It's a
silly painting of the founder of
the town signing a document for the
land he used to build the town.
It's painted by an unknown artist.
It's worthless!

Hope stands up and begins pacing.

HOPE
The only people who care about it
at all are some of the rich
residents of this town who enjoy
looking at it from time to time at
posh social gatherings!

DEAN
And this fundraiser was going to be
one of those social gatherings?

HOPE
Our best donors won't come if we
don't have this painting.

DEAN
(suddenly awkward)
Well. Sorry.

Hope starts to cry.

Dean becomes very uncomfortable.

DEAN
Look. If I were to, um . . . maybe
know some of the people who might
have some idea who stole this
painting, would that help at all?

Hope jumps up and stops crying.

HOPE
You think you might be able to help
find the painting?

DEAN
Yeah. I don't know, maybe.

Hope grabs his arm and runs out of the room.

INT. HALL - DAY

Hope looks around for a moment, spots June trying to look
inconspicuous against a back wall, and runs up to her.

HOPE
June! I need you to lead the
fundraiser prep while I'm gone.

JUNE
No!

HOPE
And before you say no, I want to
say how important this is. I really
need your help, and I'm asking you
as a friend.

JUNE
I can't, Hope.

HOPE
Thank you so much!

Hope turns to the room.

HOPE
Everyone, I'll be gone for a while,
but June will be taking my place
while I'm gone.

Hope runs away, dragging Dean with her.

JUNE
No. NO!

HOPE
I know you'll do great! I believe
in you!

She runs out the door with Dean in tow.

June slowly turns to face the room.

JUNE

Okay.

The entire room is staring at her. She turns red.

JUNE

Um, everyone on the left make
decorations or whatever, and
everyone on the right set up, uh .
. . chairs or something. I don't
care.

No one moves for a second.

But then they all relax and start to get to work.

INT. TYLER'S CAR - DAY

Tyler and Emily sit in the front seat of Tyler's car as he
drives.

TYLER

So, that's the town pub, best place
for a drink after work.

Emily is bored of this tour.

TYLER

That's my favorite coffee place.
It's got a great-

Emily reaches over and flips a switch between them.

The siren BLIPS.

TYLER

What do you think you're doing?

EMILY

My job.

Tyler doesn't understand. Emily points out the front.

EMILY

She was speeding.

A car is pulling over in front of them.

INT./EXT. SHIRA'S CAR - DAY

Shira looks worriedly up at Tyler and Emily, who walk towards
her window.

Emily steps up to the window and flashes her badge.

EMILY

Officer Emily Lanelle. I need your license, vehicle registration, and insurance card.

SHIRA

I'm so sorry! I know I was speeding. I was late to a fundraiser, but I should have been more careful. It won't happen again.

EMILY

License, registration, and insurance.

Shira reaches into her pocket and gets out her wallet.

Emily watches her like a hawk.

TYLER

Emily, we don't need to see those.

EMILY

Yes, we do.

TYLER

I know who she is. This is Shira Arons.

Emily is about to say something in reply, but-

TYLER

I know her history, too. This is her first violation.

EMILY

(to Shira)

You'll be receiving a tic-

TYLER

(talks over Emily)

A warning. You're free to go. Drive safe.

Shira looks uncertainly at Emily.

Emily glares at Tyler, but steps away from Shira's car with him.

SHIRA

Thank you so much! I will!

Shira pulls away.

EMILY

How are people in this town going to respect me if you contradict me like that?

TYLER

Right, I'm sorry I contradicted you, but please don't give unfair tickets.

EMILY

How is she supposed to learn her lesson if she doesn't experience the consequences of her actions?

TYLER

The warning was consequence enough.

EMILY

You're not going to contradict me again.

She walks back to the car.

EXT. TRAILER PARK PUB - DAY

Dean and Hope pull up in an Dean's old, beat-up, rusty truck.

DEAN

Stay in the car, please. I'll let you know if I find out anything.

HOPE

A pub? You're too young to drink.

DEAN

Yeah. I'm also too young to be working two jobs to pay my rent.

He gets out.

DEAN

Stay in the car.

He heads inside.

Hope watches him, sad and worried.

She sees a scary-looking bearded homeless man. He looks slightly crazy.

This is LUCAS (65), Black, wearing pants with large holes torn in the knees. Those are the best-looking of his clothes.

He turns towards her.

INT. TRAILER PARK PUB - DAY

Dean walks in and looks around briefly.

A group of people at a table in the corner wave him over.

One of them is TOM (38), White. He's dressed cheaply, but cleanly, and has an intelligent look in his eye.

TOM

Hey, Dean! How's your day been?

DEAN

Hey, guys. I'm looking for information. Anyone heard about someone stealing a painting from the hall?

They all guffaw uproariously.

DEAN

What's the joke, guys?

TOM

Kent Bradford walked in here two nights ago around . . . say, Five in the AM; said he was hiring someone to do some thieving. Expected us to jump at the opportunity to work for such a great man, I guess. Idiot.

They all laugh again.

DEAN

Thanks. You guys have helped a lot.

EXT. TRAILER PARK PUB - DAY

Dean walks out and sees-

Hope engaged in a dialogue with Lucas near his truck.

LUCAS

I'm part of the National Baptist Convention, myself. God is the most important thing in my life.

HOPE

I agree completely! The Father created us, the Son died to save us, and the Holy Spirit came down to dwell within us. He's given us so much! We should give our whole lives to Him!

LUCAS

"You are not far from the kingdom of heaven," friend.

They laugh together.

Dean looks annoyed.

DEAN

Come on, Hope. Time to go.

HOPE

Alright, bye, Lucas! Call me anytime if you want to talk about the faith!

LUCAS

Of course! It was great to meet you, Hope.

Hope and Dean get in the car.

Dean looks at Hope incredulously.

HOPE

What?

DEAN

Nothing.

He starts the car and starts driving away.

HOPE

Are the people in there your friends?

DEAN

Nah. I don't have friends.

HOPE

Why not?

DEAN

Not worth the risk.

Hope mulls that over for a moment.

HOPE
(somber)
Did you find any information?

DEAN
Yes. In fact, I think I know who
stole the painting.

HOPE
You do?? We should call the police!

DEAN
I don't have proof, really. We're
going to have to figure this out
ourselves.

HOPE
Ourselves? What do you mean?

Dean, determined, keeps driving.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. FOREST HIGHWAY - DAY

Pastor Martin's car drives down the highway in the opposite direction.

INT. PASTOR MARTIN'S CAR - DAY

Mr. Normand sits in the backseat of Pastor Martin's car. Pastor Martin and Father Leon are in the front seats. They exchange a glance.

Pastor Martin clears his throat.

PASTOR MARTIN
So, Mr. Norman-

MR. NORMAND
Normand. Arnold Normand.

PASTOR MARTIN
Arnold-

MR. NORMAND
Call me Normand, please.

PASTOR MARTIN
Mr. Normand, can you be a little more specific, now, on what you need our help with?

MR. NORMAND
Yes, I suppose we're far enough away from the town now.

FATHER LEON
Do you believe someone is watching you, Mr. Normand?

MR. NORMAND
First, I need help with a spiritual matter.

PASTOR MARTIN
Of course.

MR. NORMAND
I've done something terrible.
Something horribly, gravely wrong.
I need to- make my peace with God.

FATHER LEON

There's only one way to do that.
First, you must repent - truly,
honestly, and firmly intend to
never do this thing again.

MR. NORMAND

I wouldn't dream of it.

PASTOR MARTIN

And second, you must confess your
sins to God. He is faithful and
will always forgive you.

FATHER LEON

I'm afraid the good Pastor and I
disagree on this point. You must
confess your sin to a priest, who
stands as an advocate of God.

Pastor Martin begins to shake his head.

FATHER LEON

When someone sins, they do not only
hurt God, but their fellow man as
well, no matter what the nature of
the sin. By confessing to a priest,
you confess to God and man.

PASTOR MARTIN

Only the Lord Jesus can stand as a
mediator before God.

FATHER LEON

Indeed, and when someone confesses
their sins, it is Jesus Himself who
forgives - the priest is only a
representative of Christ.

PASTOR MARTIN

Since the New Testament, every
Christian can have a direct
relationship with God. No one
should be in between. We are all
priests in a sense.

FATHER LEON

In a sense.

PASTOR MARTIN

We should always have a personal
relationship with God, and this
includes in confessing our sins.

MR. NORMAND
I know what I want to do.

Pastor Martin and Father Leon wait in silence.

MR. NORMAND
I will confess my sin to God
directly.

INT. HALL - DAY

Brian and Scott are working on a poster for the fundraiser.
Sophia is directing some other volunteers on where to put
posters a little ways away.

Shira runs in the door. She glances around, and then comes up
to Brian and Scott.

SCOTT
Oh, hey Shira.

SHIRA
Hi, guys! So sorry I'm late! I have
the most ridiculous story.

BRIAN
Your calculator broke, so you had
to buy a new one?

SHIRA
What? No.
(beat)
Is that what you think my idea of a
ridiculous story would be?

She doesn't wait for an answer.

SHIRA
Anyway, a drunk homeless man broke
into my house last night.

SCOTT
What?

BRIAN
No way. I don't believe you.

SHIRA
I have evidence. Watch this.

She pulls out her phone and plays the video she took earlier.

SCOTT
Shira.

BRIAN
That's no homeless man . . .

SCOTT
That's Kent Bradford!

SHIRA
What? No.

She looks at the video again.

SHIRA
Is it?

BRIAN
That's him, alright.

SHIRA
Wow.

SCOTT
Crazy.

Scott and Brian get back to working on the poster.

SHIRA
Wait, I'm not done talking about
this!

Scott and Brian look up at Shira, confused.

SHIRA
I was late because of him! I had to
clean up my whole kitchen because
of him! I thought I was doing a
favor for a homeless man, but I was
doing a favor for Kent Bradford.

BRIAN
What, may I ask, are you saying,
exactly?

SHIRA
I'm going to go ask him for a favor
back.

SCOTT
You're going to blackmail him? You
can't!

SHIRA

What? No! That would be wrong. I'm going to ask for a free-will gift, a donation to my synagogue.

She considers for a moment.

SHIRA

And I'm going to protest in front of his house until he gives in.

SCOTT

What about the fundraiser?

SHIRA

You boys have gotten on just fine without my help so far, I'm sure you'll be fine.

She heads out.

Scott and Brian look at each other, befuddled.

EXT. KENT'S HOUSE - DAY

Dean and Hope drive as close as they can, stopping at the closed gate in front of the driveway.

Dean's graffiti is still there: "MY DAD IS A THIEF."

Hope looks at the graffiti sadly.

HOPE

That's terrible. Who would do that?

Dean glares at nothing in particular.

DEAN

Come on, let's get this painting.

He gets out of the car, and presses an intercom button on a wall near the gate.

DEAN

Kent.

Hope gets out of the car too. They get no answer.

DEAN

I know you're here, Kent. I can see your unnecessarily expensive car in the garage.

They wait for a few more moments.

The garage door begins to open. Smoothly. No creaking here.

They see a dark figure wearing a violet satin dressing gown.

Out of the garage saunters KENT BRADFORD (17) himself. He is indeed the man Shira thought was homeless.

But now, no one could make that mistake. He's wearing the most expensive everything. A gold watch. Shoes designed only for a specific type of leisure.

KENT

Dean Valdez. What exactly was the mental issue that led you to stink up my property today?

Dean looks up at the graffiti.

DEAN

I like what you've done with the place. Gotta say it's accurate.

Kent lunges at Dean. A warning. He's midway between the fence and his garage now.

KENT

Get off my property before I exercise my legal right to shoot trespassers on sight.

HOPE

Dean! Shut up!

Kent seems to notice Hope's presence for this first time.

KENT

Good thing you've got your girlfriend to reign you in.

Dean sputters, but-

HOPE

We just want back the painting you stole.

Kent pauses for a moment, but then looks dismissively at her.

KENT

I didn't steal anything.

DEAN

We know you did. So cut the crap
and give it back.

KENT

I said I didn't steal anything. On
the other hand, I have a healthy
guess who vandalized my property
last night.

Kent glares at Dean. By now, he's walked right up to the
fence.

DEAN

You mean... your father's property?

Kent reaches through the fence and grabs Dean's lapel.

Dean is about to fight back when-

WHOOOP WHOOOP. A police siren goes off.

Kent lets go of Dean immediately.

DEAN

What is it with police and this
place?

HOPE

I called them.

The police car stops and Tyler and Emily get out.

DEAN

Why?

HOPE

That's what you do when a crime has
been committed! Call the police!
Not handle it yourself like a
suicidal vigilante!

Tyler and Emily run up.

EMILY

We received reports of a robbery in
progress.

Hope points at Kent.

HOPE

This man stole a painting from the
town hall. Search his house and
you'll definitely find it.

EMILY
We would need a warrant to search.

KENT
(smirking at Hope)
Don't you love rules and
regulations?

TYLER
(to Hope)
Do you have any evidence?

HOPE
Yes! Dean-

DEAN
There isn't any evidence.

HOPE
But you said-

DEAN
There isn't any evidence. I just
know Kent stole it.

Kent shakes his head in mock innocence.

EMILY
If there's no evidence, then we're
done here.

She begins to walk away.

TYLER
Well, I'm not done here. If Dean
says Kent stole something, I
believe him. We need to look into
it.

Emily whirls on him.

EMILY
Are you aware that any evidence
found without a warrant cannot be
presented in court?

TYLER
I'm not saying we search the place.
But we're not just walking away.

Tyler walks up to Emily and they step aside.

TYLER
We're here to serve and protect,

not harass and ignore. You're so caught up your own head that all you can process is your own cold-hearted cruelty. All your rules are meaningless if you don't give a crap about the people they're *for*.

EMILY

I don't care about your personal beliefs, or whatever personal connections you think you've formed in this town. There is only one right way to do things, and when you break the rules everything goes to shit.

Emily walks back to the car.

Tyler watches her go, and then-

TYLER

(to Hope, resignedly)
Let me know if you find out anything else.

Tyler follows Emily to the car.

INT. HALL - DAY

June is accosted by three people at once.

SOPHIA

How about we set up refreshments at a table on that side of the room?

JUNE

Yeah, whatever works.

MAN

Where do I put this poster?

JUNE

Somewhere over there is fine.

SCOTT

I have to go to the bathroom, is that alright?

JUNE

Seriously? Go!

Brian walks up to her.

JUNE

Where's dad? He would be the one leading this stupid thing if he were here. This is another great "family" event.

BRIAN

Yeah. Hey, do you remember my question earlier, about Hope? Namely, the does-she-ever talk-about-me one?

June sees Mrs. Martin walking over, AND Sophia and Scott walking over again for more questions.

June runs over to her mother.

JUNE

Mom, you and Brian go work on the chair setup over there. Now!

June runs over to Sophia and Scott to answer their questions far away from Mrs. Martin and Brian.

INT. DEAN'S TRUCK - DAY

Dean and Hope drive in silence.

HOPE

Did you really graffiti Kent's window?

DEAN

Why did you call the cops? I had it under control, and you ruined everything.

HOPE

Because I thought it was the right thing to do! It's a good thing I did, or you probably would have gotten into a fistfight with Kent; how would that solve anything?

DEAN

I would've figured it out. Now, thanks to you, we're probably never going to see that painting again.

Hope looks sad.

A beat.

DEAN
Hey, I'm sorry, alright?

Dean's phone goes off.

DEAN
(about the phone)
Sorry.

He picks up the phone - an old flip-phone.

DEAN
Hello?

KENT
Dean. Maybe we should have a sort
of truce.

DEAN
(skeptical)
Really.

HOPE
Who is it?

KENT
I'll offer you a deal. Just
graffiti "Poor" on your shirt and
wear it to school Monday, and I'll
give you back the painting. Or
don't, and I'll destroy it. You
have one hour to decide.

DEAN
That's no decision. Forget it.

KENT
I'll be waiting. One hour.

Dean hangs up.

HOPE
Who was it?

DEAN
Nothing. Personal.

Hope looks disappointed.

HOPE
Oh.

A beat.

HOPE
I guess we should head back to the fundraiser.

EXT. MR. NORMAND'S LAB - DAY

A small farm shack. Pastor Martin pulls up the car.

PASTOR MARTIN
And I accept the eternal life that comes only through You.

MR. NORMAND
And I accept the eternal life that comes only through You.
(a beat)
Thank you, Pastor.

Father Leon looks at Mr. Normand sadly as Mr. Normand gets out and leads Father Leon and Pastor Martin down a trapdoor into a basement.

MR. NORMAND
Right this way, right this way.

FATHER LEON
(quietly, to Pastor Martin)
Perhaps one of us had better stay up here, for safety.

Pastor Martin signals and Father Leon stays above.

Pastor Martin and Mr. Normand head down the stairs.

INT. FARM BASEMENT - DAY

It is dark down here. Mr. Normand turns on a few bare light bulbs hanging from the ceiling.

This place is stacked with various mechanical and electronic equipment seemingly obtained from the local dump.

A large table sits in the center of the room, lit by the only lamp in the room. It's empty.

MR. NORMAND
What happened? Where is it? Where is it?

Mr. Normand begins to look around frantically. Under the table, through the junk stacked in the corners.

PASTOR MARTIN

What are you looking for? Maybe I can help.

MR. NORMAND

I . . . Well, course, I'm looking for . . . well, it's not exactly public knowledge, but it looks vaguely like . . .

PASTOR MARTIN

I'm afraid I can't help if I don't know what it looks like.

MR. NORMAND

What . . . was it? How could I forget, just like that? This is my life's work . . . This was my life's work . . . what was it?

Mr. Normand finally settles on something.

MR. NORMAND

It was stolen! Yes, surely it was stolen!

(at first comforting, the
idea becomes scary)

Oh no, no no. What would they do with . . . with it. This is horrible, terrible. It was something very, very important. Was it powerful? I think, yes, maybe it was . . .

PASTOR MARTIN

Friend, you seem very confused about this. Are you sure . . . it wasn't a dream you had, or something you imagined? Dreams can seem quite real at the time . . .

Mr. Normand suddenly pushes Pastor Martin against the wall.

MR. NORMAND

NO! No, it wasn't a dream! I worked on this for so long, so many years, this is my life's work . . .

He starts wandering the room again.

MR. NORMAND

so many memories . . . it couldn't have been a dream, that makes no sense . . .

PASTOR MARTIN
(calling up to Father
Martin)
We should get help, if something
was stolen.

MR. NORMAND
No, no, no one can know, this is
very, very important and very
secret . . .

EXT. MR. NORMAND'S LAB - DAY

Father Leon gets the message and calls the police.

EXT. KENT'S HOUSE - DAY

Shira pulls up to the front gate. She gets out and presses an
intercom button on a wall near the gate.

SHIRA
Hi, it's Shira.
(beat)
Um, from this morning. You broke
into my house.

The gate opens.

Shira walks up to the front door, which opens before she gets
there. Kent waits for her, looking tired.

KENT
So. You figured out who I was.

SHIRA
Yes, I did. I thought, since I did
you a favor, you could do me a
favor.

KENT
And if I refuse you'll post that
video online, right?

He gets out a check book.

KENT
How much do you want?

SHIRA
Wait, no! This isn't blackmail! But
I'd like a donation to my
synagogue.

KENT
Synagogue? You Muslim or something?

SHIRA
Jewish.

KENT
Wait, you said this *isn't*
blackmail?

SHIRA
Yes.

KENT
Then why would I ever-

SHIRA
I had to clean up after you. It's
only fair.

Kent squints at her.

SHIRA
It's not like you're hard pressed
for cash, you know? It's not a big
deal for you, but it could mean a
lot to our synagogue.

KENT
Yeah . . . no. No thanks, or
whatever.

Kent closes the door in Shira's face.

SHIRA
I really don't think this is fair.

She gets no answer.

SHIRA
I'm going to stay here and protest
until you give in, so . . . you
might as well just give in now.

Kent opens the door again. Shira looks hopeful, but-

KENT
Just protest off my property
please.

Kent shoos her back and back and back until she is outside
the fence. He won't even notice her out here.

SHIRA
(half-heartedly chanting)
Um, give a donation! Give a
donation!

Kent rolls his eyes as he walks back up to his front porch
and goes inside.

Shira stops chanting. He obviously can't hear her.

She gets an idea and turns on the intercom.

SHIRA
Give a donation! Give a donation!

KENT
You know I can just mute this,
right?

Shira stops again.

SHIRA
Well, I'm not leaving until you
give in.

There is no answer.

INT. FARM BASEMENT - DAY

Tyler and Emily now stand with Father Leon, Pastor Martin,
and Mr. Normand.

Tyler and Emily avoid looking at each other.

EMILY
So you think there was a robbery?

MR. NORMAND
I won't get me to say anything. You
could be one of them.

EMILY
"Them." Who exactly are "they"?

Mr. Normand doesn't answer. He's still searching the
basement.

TYLER
Mr. Normand, can't you at least
tell us what was stolen?

MR. NORMAND
I don't . . . I don't remember. I
don't . . .

He trails off.

Tyler and Emily share a look.

EMILY
(to Father Leon and Pastor
Martin)
Can we talk outside?

EXT. MR. NORMAND'S LAB - DAY

Emily, Tyler, Pastor Martin, and Father Leon stand outside.

EMILY
There's not much we can do. We
don't have any evidence a crime was
committed and he's not cooperating.

TYLER
I'm afraid that's right. It doesn't
seem like he's a risk to himself or
others.

PASTOR MARTIN
Well, thank you for trying, anyway.

Emily starts to walk away.

FATHER LEON
Will he be alright?

EMILY
Does he have any family?

TYLER
No, he doesn't.

EMILY
I'm sorry, but we need to get back
to work.

Emily walks back to the car.

TYLER
Do you guys think you could ask
someone to check on him every so
often?

EMILY

Davis!

TYLER

I'm sorry, I have to go.

Tyler walks up to Emily angrily.

TYLER

Who's undermining who now?

EMILY

We've done all we can do, which is nothing. We don't have time to stop and chat. We need to get back to town in case any real emergencies come up.

TYLER

Part of the job is being a good part of the community.

EMILY

Do you want me to report you for wasting time on duty?

Father Leon and Pastor Martin open up the trapdoor.

PASTOR MARTIN

I'm very sorry, but we have to go.
I wish you the best of luck finding what you've lost.

FATHER LEON

Is it alright if we send someone to visit you sometime later?

INT. FARM BASEMENT - DAY

Mr. Normand keep searching.

MR. NORMAND

I'm not crazy. I just can't
remember . . . I can't find it . .
. I can't find it . . .

He collapses on the ground.

Behind a cupboard lies a scientific diagram of a small DEVICE. It's shaped something like the hand guard of a medieval sword, but it's designed like an iPhone.

It's trapped where no one can see.

INT. DEAN'S TRUCK - DAY

Dean and Hope arrive in the fundraiser parking lot.

DEAN

I'm sure you'll be able to pull something together.

HOPE

I mean, we can still put on a great party, but without our wealthiest guests, we won't get anywhere near enough donations to renovate the hall.

Hope sits up straighter.

HOPE

You're right, though. We shouldn't give up.

(beat)

I just don't have a plan yet.

She thinks.

HOPE

Do you have any ideas, Dean?

DEAN

You know what? Fine. I don't even care about this fundraiser or anything, but fine. I know how to get the stupid painting back.

Hope perks up.

HOPE

You do?

INT. KENT'S HOUSE - DAY

Stunning architecture, but the furniture is arranged by haphazardly, by utility, and things are left wherever they were used last.

Kent's phone, the latest and greatest smartphone, rings.

Kent picks it up.

KENT

Reconsider?

DEAN

Yeah. I did. But we need that painting tonight; the fundraiser is tomorrow. It can't wait until Monday.

KENT

No public embarrassment on your part, no painting on my part.

Dean sighs.

DEAN

Look, there's a lot of people at the fundraiser.

A tense beat.

KENT

HahaHA, you're actually doing this!

DEAN

Only if you bring the painting with you. I need to see it.

KENT

Fine. In 30 minutes. Can't wait to watch you squirm.

Kent hangs up and grabs his jacket.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

EXT. KENT'S HOUSE - DAY

Shira is still standing outside, kind of awkwardly.

She sees Kent's garage open - he drives out a ridiculously expensive red sports car.

SHIRA
Donate, please!

Kent opens the gate and drives right past her.

SHIRA
(shouting after him)
I thought you had a heart!

He probably doesn't even hear her.

SHIRA
Okay. I'm done. This was a stupid
idea, anyway.

She angrily gets in her car.

INT. POLICE OFFICE - POLICE CHIEF'S OFFICE - DAY

Tyler and Emily storm in at the same time and talk over each other.

TYLER
Chief, I can't work with her. She
doesn't care about the people
involved in anything we do. She
doesn't know this town and she
doesn't want to. You have to assign
us to separate parts of the town,
or different cars at least.

EMILY
(simultaneously)
You have to split us up. Or fire
one of us, I don't care. But no
matter what, we cannot work
together. This man has no respect
for the law, and has no business
being the one working to protect
it.

The police chief waves his hands, interrupting them both.

CHIEF

Guys. GUYS. Please, shut up for a minute.

He waits for them to quiet down.

CHIEF

Believe it or not, I don't make decisions completely arbitrarily. I assigned you two together for a reason. I know you've got opposite mentalities. But I know there's a good cop inside each of you. And I'm hoping that you'll rub off on each other and both end up better because of it.

They both open their mouths to protest.

CHIEF

And that decision is final. You're dismissed.

Emily tries to speak again.

CHIEF

You're DISMISSED.

INT. TYLER'S CAR - DAY

Tyler and Emily silently get into their seats.

They just sit there for while, not speaking.

Then Emily takes out the radio.

EMILY

10-8.

And Tyler pulls back out onto the road.

EXT. HALL - DAY

Now everyone is decorating the outside of the building.

Brian walks up to June, who looks very stressed.

BRIAN

Hey, is this bad a time?

June doesn't answer - she sees Scott and Sophia walking towards her mom. They're about to talk.

BRIAN

Because I was really hoping maybe
you could answer my question, you
know, about Hope-

JUNE

She doesn't like you, and she
probably never will, because you're
a loser, alright? Now leave me
alone!

Brian looks really hurt. He walks away quickly.

June knows she's gone too far. She is about to say something
to stop Brian, but-

SOPHIA

Hi, Mrs. Martin, I'm Sophia, and
this is Scott.

June, panicked, runs over to join Sophia, Scott, and Mrs.
Martin.

JUNE

Mom, mom! I need you to work on
something over there really
quickly, right now!

MRS. MARTIN

Honey, I'm dead tired. You've been
working me like a dog this whole
time; just let me relax and talk
for a second, please.

Mrs. Martin turns to Sophia and Scott.

MRS. MARTIN

I already know Scott, he's friends
with my son Brian; but it's nice to
meet you, Sophia. Do you know my
daughter?

SOPHIA

Sort of. I've seen her at-

June signals wildly behind her mom.

SOPHIA

At-

MRS. MARTIN

Hmm?

Sophia gets the picture.

SOPHIA
At school, Mrs. Martin.

Scott looks confused. He still doesn't get it.

SCOTT
I mean, yeah, but I but what we
were just talking about was-

Sophia steps on Scott's foot.

SCOTT
Ow! What?

Sophia glares at him.

SCOTT
Uhm, what? Use your words.

SOPHIA
(turning to Mrs. Martin)
It was really nice to meet you.
Hope to talk to you again sometime!

MRS. MARTIN
You too, thank you!

Sophia drags Scott away, who still doesn't know what's going on.

EXT. HALL - PARKING LOT - DAY

On the other side of the hall from all the volunteers decorating, Hope and Dean stand in the parking lot.

HOPE
Really, you don't have to do this,
Dean.

DEAN
Don't worry about me.

Hope hugs him.

HOPE
Thank you so much.

Dean is surprised. He tries to wave it off.

DEAN
Yeah, yeah. Anyway.

They break apart as they see Kent's sports car drive up.

Kent parks and holds up the painting in the window.

It's pretty unremarkable. Like a bad "Declaration of Independence" painting, except instead of the founding fathers, it's a guy with a funny mustache.

DEAN

I hope this is worth all this effort.

HOPE

It will be!

Dean and Hope walk around to the crowded side of the hall. Kent follows.

EXT. HALL - DAY

Hope and Dean join the crowd of volunteers working on things.

A few people wave to Hope, but they don't draw too much attention.

They see Kent emerge from the side of the hall, he sees them and walks towards them, smirking.

HOPE

Wait! Where's your graffitied shirt?

DEAN

I won't be needing that.

HOPE

What do you mean?

As Kent steps into the crowd, Dean ducks off into the other side of the crowd. Kent loses sight of him. He frowns.

HOPE

Dean? What are you doing?

Just then, Pastor Martin and Father Leon arrive.

Most people turn to greet them.

But June runs out of the crowd and confronts Pastor Martin.

JUNE

Dad! Where were you?

PASTOR MARTIN
June, I had to attend to something
very important.

JUNE
The fundraiser's almost over, dad.
It seems like you always have
something more important than your
family.

They're beginning to draw a crowd.

PASTOR MARTIN
Please, June.

JUNE
Did you know that I had to lead
this thing while you were off doing
who know's what?

PASTOR MARTIN
Really? That's great!

JUNE
You should've been here to lead it!
I've had enough, dad! I've had
enough empty promises.

PASTOR MARTIN
I had to be there for someone who
needed help!

JUNE
We need you too, dad. But I've had
enough of trying to please you when
you don't even bother to show up
most of the time!

Everyone is looking at them now.

And the crowd is walking closer to them-

Exposing Dean as he tries to sneak away.

But Kent is still in the crowd, and can't see him. Until-

He runs into Shira.

SHIRA
Kent?!

KENT
Are you following me or something?

SHIRA

No! I was supposed to be at this fundraiser all day. And you know what, I'm done trying to beg. You're never going to give any money because you have no compassion.

KENT

Yeah. So you're giving me this emotional speech because...?

SHIRA

I'm not emotional! *You're* emotional!

Shira pushes him a bit, making him step out of the crowd-

And making him spot Dean about to sneak around the corner.

Kent spots him, still with no graffitied shirt, guesses what he's trying to do, and runs after him.

As he's running, Kent dials 911.

JUNE

You know what?

She looks at Scott, Sophia, and Mrs. Martin, who are watching, concerned.

JUNE

I'm not even part of your church anymore, dad.

Pastor Martin processes this.

JUNE

I'm part of his.

June points to Father Leon, who until this time has been quietly looking at the ground.

Pastor Martin can't believe what he's hearing.

EXT. HALL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Dean and Kent bolt through the parking lot.

Dean grabs a rock as he runs.

Dean is gunning for Kent's car. Kent does his best to keep up-

But Dean has a head start. He gets to Kent's car.

Just as Hope runs around the side of building, looking distressed-

HOPE
Dean, stop!

Dean SMASHES the windshield with the rock.

KENT
Nooooo!

Dean grabs the painting from the front seat-

But Kent tackles him off the hood and onto the pavement.

Kent punches Dean in the face.

WHOOOP WHOOOP. Police sirens chirp.

TYLER
Hey! HEY! Get off him!

EMILY
Stop!

Kent punches Dean one more time before backing off.

Dean's nose is bloody.

A MOMENT LATER

Both Kent and Dean are snapped into handcuffs.

Hope stands nearby, distraught.

EMILY
Get in.

TYLER
We can't put them both in the back.
They'd kill each other.

EMILY
Fine. I'll take Kent first. Wait
here with Dean.

She pushes Dean into the backseat and gets in herself.

Kent's eyes swear revenge on Dean as Emily drives him away.

TYLER

You couldn't stay out of trouble
for just one day, could you?

Dean is silent.

TYLER

Hope.

Hope steps closer.

HOPE

(weakly)

Yes?

TYLER

I think this belongs to you.

He hands her the painting.

Dean smiles at her. He's proud.

But her eyes show repulsion and distrust.

HOPE

You expect me to be happy about
this?

DEAN

Yeah, kinda. I just sacrificed a
ton to get you your stupid painting
back. You're not even going to
thank me?

HOPE

You went behind my back, planned to
break into Kent's car, and you
expect me to be happy because you
succeeded?

DEAN

Ask forgiveness, not permission.

Hope flinches. That is against everything she stands for.

HOPE

I thought you were worth the risk.

She walks away.

INT. HALL - DAY

Brian walks in. It's empty now, everyone's outside. It's very well decorated.

Brian paces back and forth.

BRIAN

Why do you have to always get like this?

He hits his head against his hands.

BRIAN

It doesn't matter. It's stupid.

He turns around.

BRIAN

I just can't-

BRIAN

Stop stop stop stop stop. Don't get like this. I always have to ruin everything.

He turns wildly, walking by the door, and nearly bumps into Hope, who is just walking in.

BRIAN

Oh- sorry.

He notices who he just bumped into.

Hope can't hold it in any longer. She starts to cry.

Brian just stands there for a second. Then-

BRIAN

Are you alright? I don't think I've ever seen you not smiling.

Hope smiles through her tears.

HOPE

The same for you. You're always laughing and making jokes.

BRIAN

A joke-a-minute keeps the- I didn't really know how I was going to finish that. something "in it?"

Hope laughs softly.

Brian is kind of embarrassed. He's about to try to walk out the door-

When Hope pulls him into a hug.

HOPE
We'll smile again tomorrow.

Brian doesn't know what to say.

So he puts his arms around her, too.

And they just stand there together.

EXT. HALL - DAY

The crowd has dispersed again.

SCOTT
(to Sophia)
So *that's* why you didn't want me to
tell her mom we'd seen her at mass.

Sophia looks at him, like, "you idiot."

Shira walks up to them.

SCOTT
How was your crazy donation request
. . . mission.

SHIRA
Stupid.

SCOTT
I could've told you that in the
first place.

SOPHIA
Your what now?

Brian joins them slowly.

They look at him.

SCOTT
Where'd you go?

BRIAN
Did you guys hear those sirens? I
went and got arrested for grand
theft auto, but then I escaped.

SHIRA
(uninterested)
Oh. Cool.

ELSEWHERE IN THE CROWD

June stands by Father Leon.

JUNE
I . . . don't know why I just did
that.

FATHER LEON
You might be too harsh to your
father. But telling the truth is
always better keeping a secret.

June looks worried.

FATHER LEON
It's true, you're in for some
difficult times. Difficult
conversations. But you will get
through it. Pray for help, and the
Lord will give you strength.

June doesn't look very encouraged.

FATHER LEON
In the end, he won't blame you for
following what you think is true.

Hope walks up, wiping away the last of her tears before
anyone sees.

HOPE
June! You did amazing, just like I
told you!

JUNE
Not really.

HOPE
Yes you did! Look at the hall! It
looks beautiful!

JUNE
It looks alright.

But June smiles to herself. She is proud of the work she's
done.

But then June notices something. She's dumbfounded.

JUNE
Hope. Look.

Hope turns to see what she's pointing to.

So does Father Leon.

More and more people in the crowd turn towards the hall.

They begin to back away.

INT. TYLER'S CAR - DAY

Emily is driving back from the station. She already dropped off Kent.

At a stoplight, she reaches up and pulls down the mirror. A small cross on a chain hangs down.

Emily looks at her wrist. With her hand raised up, her sleeve is pulled back slightly, showing the same metal cross on a bracelet.

The light turns green. Emily puts the mirror back up and drives on, thinking.

But then she turns a corner and catches sight of the hall for the first time.

The entire hall is UP IN FLAMES.

Emily brakes at the curb and stares at the fiery furnace.

EXT. HALL - PARKING LOT - DAY

Tyler and Dean back away from the towering flames, stunned.

EXT. HALL - DAY

Pastor Martin and Mrs. Martin search for their kids frantically in the crowd. Hope, June, and Father Leon; Shira, Brian, Scott, and Sophia all stare at the fire.

A STRANGER in a brown trench coat steps out from behind the flaming building.

He holds in his hand THE DEVICE from the drawing on Mr. Normand's floor.

END OF ACT FOUR

FADE TO BLACK

Potential Episode 2 Concept Paragraphs:

- A. Dean struggles financially with the penalties he incurred by breaking into Kent's car receives help from Hope, who forgives him, though he thinks she should forgive him. They try to understand each other better as they figure out how Dean will pay his fines on top of his rent. They meet Lisa, an intelligent girl, and Scott's crush, who helps them figure out their situation.
- B. Kent's father comes to town to deal with the hall fire. June, in trouble because she announced she was Catholic, and Kent, in trouble because he attacked Dean, deal with conflict with their fathers and get to know each other better.
- C. Father Leon's past comes back to haunt him when he realizes that he knows the STRANGER who many town residents suspect set the hall fire. Tyler and Emily deal with another out-of-towner, a detective investigating the hall fire, who starts to gain interest in Father Leon's past.
- D. Brian meets the shy Aiko, who deals with an external disability, when they are paired together for a project. The two begin to bond.

Tunes Fitting this Show:

“Void” by Matt Maher gives a good feeling of the search for truth, but the lyrics are more on the nose than this show will be.

“Here with Me” by Dido – the sort of sci-fi style fits the show, but the lyrics do not.

“Staring at It” by Safety Suit gets across the emotional angst of some of the romantic relationships on the show.