

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

"Jessica and the Toymaker"

A graduate project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Fine Arts in Screenwriting

By

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ABSTRACT

"Jessica and the Toymaker"

By

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An quadriplegic 11-year-old girl travels through a mirror to a fantasy world to save her brother from an evil Toymaker who seeks to rule all children through mind-control. After defeating the Toymaker and rescuing her brother, Jessica learns that being paralyzed does not define her, it is the person she is inside.

1. JESSICA AND THE TOYMAKER

INT. CAR - FLASHBACK

JESSICA LAYTON (11) sits behind the passenger seat. Her grass-stained legs dangle, not quite long enough to reach the floor. She playfully kicks the passenger seat-back.

JESSICA

Serve!

A soccer ball pops over the chair from the front seat. SIMON LAYTON (6) looks back, watches as Jessica catches the ball.

PEM WATERS (30) gives her kids an icy glare.

PEM

Hey!

Jess sets the ball next to the little league trophy beside her.

She reaches to the front and mischievously taps Simon on the shoulder. He looks over his left, but Jess is behind his right. He discovers her trick and pokes back. They laugh and play. On the road ahead, Jess sees a car swerve to avoid a pedestrian then head right for them.

JESS

Mom!

Pem turns to the wheel to adjust, but is too late. Jess grabs Simon's hand through the headrest, and watches the two cars make IMPACT.

A fully inflated airbag knocks Pem unconscious. Jess is hurled backwards breaking her connection to Simon. He lurches forward and hits his head on the dash. In the back, the soccer ball jostles around. The windshield crumbles into tiny bits that mingle with the ball in the air before raining on Simon in the front. Jess reaches toward him.

JESS (CONT'D)

Simon.

She blacks out.

EXT. MIDDLE SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY - A YEAR LATER

Jessica, now quadriplegic, rolls across the cement in her motor scooter. She traces the perimeter of the sand box. It contains a swing set and a jungle gym--now completely off limits to her.

On the asphalt, kids play hopscotch, double-Dutch. Feet THUMP the ground as they make contact with the pavement, then roll from heel to toes before springing back into mid-air again.

Nimble fingers grip the handles while wrists propel the rope high into the sky before gravity pulls it back down on the cement with a SMACK.

Jessica admires how carefree the "normal kids" are, how completely unaware of the privilege they have to move freely.

The thought has her seething, when a stray ball bumps her motor scooter. Jess whirls her chair around to face her assailant, a 5TH GRADER who couldn't care less.

JESSICA

Excuse you!

5th Grader shrugs, grabs the runaway ball and walks away. She explodes.

JESSICA (CONT'D)

I said watch it!

5TH GRADER

It was an accident.

JESSICA

Then, say you're sorry.

5TH GRADER

You think cause you can't walk you can boss me around?

5th Grader tosses the ball to his friends to resume their game. Clearly he doesn't know who he's messing with.

Enraged, Jess pulls a lever on her chair, aims for the 5th Grader and floors it! She crashes into him purposefully knocking him down and disrupting the game.

5th grader wipes his bloody lip. Kids gather round.

5TH GRADER (CONT'D)

What the hell is wrong with you, Wheels? Didn't take your crazy pill today?

KIDS

(cheering)

Crazy! Crazy!

A TEACHER makes her way from the far side of the yard toward them. Teacher pulls the injured boy to his feet, and turns attention to Jess, likely the culprit considering recent behavior.

TEACHER

What happened here?

JESSICA

An accident.

TEACHER

I'll bet.

INT. CAR - AFTERNOON

Pem drives. Jess is in the backseat ticked-off.

JESS

How long do I have to do this?

COUNSELOR

Just for a little while.

JESS

I don't want to go. I'm not crazy.

COUNSELOR

I know, but you didn't leave me a whole lot of choice, honey. What do you want Mommy to do?

JESS

Take me home.

COUNSELOR

I will. After the appointment.

JESS

I want to go home now.

Jess uses small neck motions to bang her head against the window.

COUNSELOR

Jessica, you stop that right now.

Jess refuses.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

This is what we have to do. there's no way around it.

JESS

I hate doctors.

COUNSELOR

We're going to this appointment, that's final.

JESSICA

Oh yeah?

Jessica SCREAMS at the top of her lungs.

COUNSELOR

Stop it, Jessie. Stop it right now.

EXT. GROUP HOME

The hospital is a rectangular building with five floors. The east wing is labeled "Children's Hospice."

Pem parks. A NURSE comes out to the car with an empty wheel chair.

Inside the car, Jessica screams, a knot on her head from banging it repeatedly on the glass.

NURSE

Is your daughter autistic?

COUNSELOR

No, she just hates doctors.

The nurse loads Jess into the chair. Jess struggles using her limited movement to retaliate.

NURSE

We can do one of two things, Missy. You can stop this tantrum and I'll wheel you in calmly, or I'll make it stop. Your choice.

Jess spits in her face.

NURSE (CONT'D)

Suit yourself.

The nurse pulls a filled needle from her pocket and releases it into Jessica's arm. She passes out.

INT. CAR - THE PAST - FLASHBACK

In the car glass shards rain down on Jessica and Simon.

INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - FLASHBACK

Bleeding Pem is lifted onto a gurney. Jessica follows it down the hall until she's stopped by emergency room doors.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Jess wakes abruptly on a hospital bed in a semi-dark room. In her hand is a call button. She squeezes it, and a NURSE CASEY (25) answers the call.

JESS

Where am I?

*Jess explores the facility. Looks for the intensive unit where she can find her brother

CASEY

In the children's ward at Fuller Hospital. We're keeping you overnight.

JESS

What about Dr. Birdsong?

CASEY

You'll see her in the morning.

If Jess never saw the doctor, that'd be just fine with her.

JESS

Where's my mom?

CASEY

We sent her home to get some rest.

Jess eyes the clock in the room.

JESS

Quarter til nine.

CASEY

You slept through dinner.

INT. FULLER HOSPITAL - LATER - CONTINUOUS

Casey spoons mashed potatoes from a tray, feeds Jess.

JESS

What's the deal with this place anyway? Heard it was for dead people.

CASEY

We teach kids productive ways to express their emotions so that they can cope with terminal illness.

JESS

Whatever that means.

CASEY

I'm Casey.

INT. FULLER HOSPITAL

Jess follows Casey down the residential corridors in her motor chair. The place has an open and clean floor plan (something a little older instead, not so modern?). White, like most hospitals. Decorative name tags adorn the otherwise plain doors.

CASEY

The kids made these.

JESS

How many are there?

CASEY

One hundred and one.

JESS

They're all dying?

CASEY

Mhmm.

JESS

And, they all live here?

CASEY

Mhmm.

JESS

How long?

CASEY

(nods)

Til they get on their feet, or move on...

JESS

You mean, keel over and die?

Casey's silence confirms that Jess is right.

A mouse-like girl, ELLIE (6), bolts from the door labeled "Kai." She carries a chocolate pudding cup.

CASEY

Ellie, that's not your room. Come back here!

Ellie runs off with the contraband as Casey chases her down the hall.

Jess pulls the lever on her chair, rolls toward the door. She bumps the door open. KAI (8) a blind boy, sits in the dark.

SIMON

She always steals my pudding. Easy target, I guess.

He taps his sunglasses to let Jess know he's blind, then smiles.

*check out this mirror

SIMON (CONT'D)

You must be new here. I'm Kai.

Jess reverses the chair to clear out of the room.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Don't go. I like visitors.

He turns on the light, displays a room full of magnificent clay art. Jess wheels back in to get a better look.

JESS

These are amazing.

The clay has been formed into highly detailed figurines of a landscape--a shack with a lake on one side and a forest on the other. Over the hill, a tiny European town.

JESS (CONT'D)

Is this where you use to live?

SIMON

No. A place I've visited to often.

JESS

What's it called?

SIMON

Ophir.

JESS

It's beautiful.

She wiggles her few working fingers.

JESS (CONT'D)

I could never do anything like this.

SIMON

You will.

SIMON (CONT'D)

I'm especially proud of the shack.

He points. She glides toward it. Marvels at the detailed grooves in the roof shingles.

JESS

You made this? How?

SIMON

I saw it in the mirror.

On the wall opposite Simon is a covered oval. Jess removes the tarp revealing an antique mirror.

JESS

What's that s'posed to mean? You can't even see.

SIMON

I can show you if you want.

JESS

No thanks.

Jess rolls out of the room.

SIMON

Hey, I didn't catch your name.

*Jess meets the awful Warden

INT. FULLER HOSPITAL

Casey and Jess tour the hospital.

DR. HENRIETTA BIRDSONG (60) wheel chair bound, rolls up behind Casey.

BIRDSONG (O.C.)

This must be Jess.

CASEY

Yes, Doctor! This is Jessica Waters. Jess, meet Dr. Henrietta Birdsong, Child Psychologist.

BIRDSONG

We meet at last.

Casey turns to Jess.

CASEY

Don't worry, Jess, she is the best we've got.

Birdsong beckons.

BIRDSONG

Don't be shy.

Jess roles tentatively toward her.

BIRDSONG (O.C.) (CONT'D)

Casey, I'll need to borrow your hands.

Casey nods, follows Birdsong as she wheels herself away.

INT BIRDSONG'S OFFICE

Birdsong sits at her desk. Casey places a stack of picture cards in order. While Pem and Jess sit opposite.

JESS

Is this some kind of test?

COUNSELOR

Just relax, honey.

BIRDSONG

As the picture cards go by, say the first thing that comes to mind.

Casey flashes the picture cards quickly. Each card contains a black blob that has the shape of different animals. The first is a giraffe card.

JESS

(sarcasm)

A panda.

Pem shoots Jess a look that says for her to cut it out. A butterfly-shaped one is next.

JESS (CONT'D)

See-saw.

COUNSELOR

Jess, be serious.

Birdsong silences Pem with a small shake of the head. Casey continues showing cards.

INT. fuller Hospital

Birdsong rolls out with Casey and Jess.

BIRDSONG

Casey, will you introduce Jess to the creative space? Pem and I have a few things to discuss.

INT. FULLER HOSPITAL - CREATIVE SPACE

Casey and Jess approach a gray-blue carpet floor and large windows.

CASEY

This is our creative space. My favorite place.

Jess looks on wide-eyed. Sick children of all ages make arts and crafts. Some are attached to portable IV, some bald with dark lips, some laying on roller beds.

Jess observes the kids paint on canvas, mold colored clay and shade with charcoals. Though the type of art is different-- charcoals, pastels, quilts-- the subject in them all is the same: a shack by a lake.

CASEY (CONT'D)

The kids call it...

JESS

Ophir.

CASEY

Yes, it means land of gold.

Her face is downcast.

SIMON

I can't do anything they're doing.

CASEY

Let me show you.

Casey balances a new canvas onto an easel. She sets a cup of paint brushes on the table near by.

JESS

How am I gonna paint?

CASEY

Like this.

Casey bends down, reaches into the cup and pulls a clean brush out with her mouth.

SIMON

I'm gonna look stupid.

JESS

Can't you see he doesn't want to do it?

CASEY

Not if we both do it.

Jess bends down and clasps her teeth around a small brush.

INT BIRDSONG'S OFFICE

Birdsong rolls toward a chair-less desk. She parks her motor-scooter in its place and indicates for Pem to sit opposite.

*subplot cutaway of birdsong and counselor going over Jess's case file

COUNSELOR

How long have you been...

BIRDSONG

In a chair? Most of my life.

Pem nods, that is what she meant. Pem is awkward in the silence, Harper relieves the tension.

BIRDSONG (CONT'D)

(light-hearted)

Hardest part is getting up in the morning.

COUNSELOR

That's what my daughter says.

BIRDSONG

I have heard about her behavior at school. How's her discipline at home?

COUNSELOR

Not much better. Everything is such a struggle with her and I'm so tired. I hate to limit her with punishments so she just does whatever she pleases.

BIRDSONG

This is common. The child feels helpless so she seeks control.

COUNSELOR

Do you think you can help her?

BIRDSONG

I can provide treatment, but whether the child is receptive to it is up to her.

INT. FULLER HOSPITAL - CREATIVE SPACE

Jess swishes a midnight-blue color over the canvas, mimicking the night sky. Below it, is a painted wooden cottage. (Jess would not be so interested this early; she'd fight Casey on this painting thing tooth and nail).

CASEY

Good!

In her haste, Jess drools a bit. When she realizes it, the embarrassment stops her. She drops the brush in disgust.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Don't worry. No one saw it but me.

Casey wipes Jess's mouth with a cloth.

CASEY (CONT'D)

Want to see a trick?

Jess nods.

CASEY (CONT'D)

You have to do what I do, OK?

Casey returns the brush. The two look like tiny sparrows pecking for worms as they move their necks backward and forward to make painted dots on the canvas. Jess laughs-- it's fun!

JESS

(brush in mouth)

My neck hurts!

JESS (CONT'D)

He doesn't like it.

CASEY

I know! Keep going.

A small masterpiece is beginning to form in front of Jess.

CASEY (CONT'D)

OK, stop!

The multi-colored dots make the cottage windows appear to explode with light. Jess admires it.

JESS

Wow!

COUNSELOR

See? I told you you could do it.

Jess beams.

CASEY

The ability to create doesn't rest in your hands. It comes from here.

She points to Simon's chest. Jess smiles.

JESS

Pretty cool.

EXT. FULLER HOSPITAL - ROOM - NIGHT

Casey empties the filled bed pan.

JESS

But I was joking!!

COUNSELOR

I don't think Birdsong thought it was funny.

JESS

How long do I have to stay here?!

COUNSELOR

Just until Doctor gives the results tomorrow.

JESS

This sucks.

COUNSELOR

Serves you right.

Pem tucks Jess into bed. Moves to kisses Jess on the cheek. Jess turns her head away.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

Goodnight.

COUNSELOR (CONT'D)

Lights out from 9 PM until 8 AM.

Casey cuts the light out, and both women leave the room.

INT. FULLER HOSPITAL - JESS ROOM - LATER

Simon's eyes pop open. *mirror lights up opens up, a staircase and long medieval hall

She looks at the wall-clock. Midnight. Jess hears the heavy clomp clomp of The Warden's FEET ON LINOLEUM in the hallway outside her closed bedroom door.

Jess watches the feet make shadows under her door as they stop in front of her door and slowly move on. A moment later, a pair of smaller, younger feet go by. Then another. And another.

Jess turns her head away feigning disinterest. But, then she hears GIGGLING.

Elle grabs her drone controller, and turns on the camera. She uses the joystick to roll the tiny motor-car onto the floor and under the door to the hallway.

INT. FULLER HOSPITAL - HALLWAY

The car speeds down the white corridor. It cuts a few corners following VOICES up ahead.

INT. HALLWAY - KAI'S ROOM

A group of children in hospital gowns stand crowd the door until they are pulled inside and the door is shut. The droid motors toward the door slowly to maintain its stealth. It pulls forward just enough to place the camera so it can see under the door.

The children form a single line in front of Kai's mirror. WHISPERING LOUDLY as only children do. They shove each other forward excitedly, and one by one step in front of it, then disappear inside the mirror!

INT. JESS'S BEDROOM

Jess watches the camera footage in shock as Simon takes his turn in front of the mirror. A bright light shines from it, envelopes him and he disappears. Outside her room the familiar CLOMP CLOMP is heard.

INT. HALLWAY

The Warden stalks the halls, headed toward Kai's room.

INT. JESS'S BEDROOM

Fearing that the drone will be found by The Warden, and confiscated, Jess moves the joystick sliding the drone under the door and into Simon's room.

INT. KAI'S ROOM

The drone is met by a trio of wild-looking 4-year-olds. They wear leaves on the outside of their hospital gowns and carry sticks like a tribe of indigenous people. One picks up the droid, inspects it.

INT. JESS'S BEDROOM

Jess watches as one kid picks his nose in front of the camera, then eats his booger.

INT. KAI'S ROOM

Booger kid and the one wearing banana leaves spin the droid's wheels and roll it across the floor to each other. When they hear Nurse's FOOTSTEPS. The trio freeze. Ellie puts her finger to her mouth to silence them. She lifts the bed covers and points. Booger Kid grabs the droid, and climbs into the bed followed by Banana-leaf girl, hiding the droid under the covers. Ellie motions for them to scoot down, and just as the FOOTSTEPS stop under the door outside, Ellie gets in and covers herself. Nurse opens the door, peers inside. The lump in the covers remarkably resembles a ten-year old boy. Nurse scans the room for mischief. She eyes the uncovered mirror but seeing nothing incriminating, reluctantly shuts the door and walks away. The trio (and Jess) breathe a sigh of relief. They uncover the droid.

INT. jess's bedroom

Three pair of feet create a shadow under the door. The knob turns, and the trio surround Jess's bed. Ellie, the leader of the group, aims a toy dart gun at Jess's head, shoots. The foam dart knocks Jess between the eyes.

JESS

Hey! What's that for?

ELLIE

Spies must pay the penalty!

Jess raises her arms in surrender to the best of her ability.

JESS

Understood.

She eyes the droid in Booger Boy's hands.

JESS (CONT'D)

Can I have my car back?

Booger Boy hugs it close. Banana Girl rubs her hands together indicating that payment is required.

ELLIE

What do you have to trade?

Jess looks over at her empty pudding cup Disappointed, then gets an idea.

JESS

I can give you my pudding tomorrow.

Ellie looks to Leaf Girl who accepts. Booger Boy hands Jess the droid. She receives it with gladness. The two shakes on it.

JESS (CONT'D)

How much will it be to get to Ophir?

The trio huddle to discuss. Coming to a consensus, they part. Leaf Girl holds up three fingers. Jess balks.

JESS (CONT'D)

That's a high price!

Leaf Girl places her hands on her hips, gives Jess the evil eye.

JESS (CONT'D)

OK OK. Three pudding cups it is. Plus the one for the droid.

Leaf Girl smiles for the first time showing some missing teeth. The trio hoist Jess into her chair.

INT. Kai's room - MOMENTS LATER

All face the uncovered mirror.

ELLIE

Repeat after me. "Take me to the land of gold,
where I'm young and never grow old."

Jess's voice echoes his as the room melts away.

EXT. OPHIR - lake

Submerged in water, Jess floats up toward the surface. The sky is pale gray and yet the sun shines through.

Jess coughs and sputters. She is wide-eyed, panic-stricken.

SIMON

Help! I can't swim. Jess!

She panics, gasps for air. When she doesn't automatically sink like a stone to the bottom, she realizes--

SIMON (CONT'D)

I can MOVE!!

She wiggles her fingers. Then touches her face with her hands and enjoys the warmth of her hands on her cheeks. Underwater, she stretches her legs, moves her feet a little at first then starts to kick. As if mobility had never left her, she wriggles in the water like a mermaid. The trio pop up to the surface one by one, and Jess swims around them. Booger Boy tosses water at her. A moment passes, then she smiles and laughs for the first time since we've seen her.

Ellie swims toward the shore.

JESS

Where are you going?

STEFAN

You didn't think that's all there was did you?
C'mon!

Jess uses her arms to propel herself. She follows Ellie and the two others.

In the water, a school of multi-colored coy-like fish that swims about her.

Light from the surface illuminates the water revealing a near-invisible chord that drags one fish toward the shore. Jess follows it.

On the bank, Kai reels the fish in.

JESS

Hey, let her go! What'd she ever do to you?

STEFAN

It's a "he" actually. And, I always meant to.

He takes the hookless chord out of the fish's mouth and throws the fish back.

JESS

What is it?

STEFAN

Some kind of really cool fish from some kid's imagination.

JESS

Really?!

Kai nods.

Jess looks around. A thick bunch of fir trees on one side, the lake on the other with a blanket of grass under her feet. She wiggles her toes.

JESS (CONT'D)

Is everything here imaginary?

STEFAN

Yes.

Jess looks at her hands. Considers for a moment the certainty of returning paralysis when she goes back to the real world.

STEFAN (CONT'D)

Come on. I'll show you around.

He extends his hand. She suddenly realizes he's a stranger in a strange place. She doesn't take it.

STEFAN (CONT'D)

Suit yourself.

Jess watches him cross the bank, and disappear over a hill. She follows him, keeping her distance.

HILLTOP

Jess spies a well-lit town in the valley below. Kai walks the dirt path toward it. She cups her hands around her mouth to amplify her voice.

JESS

Where are you going?

STEFAN

To join the others.

JESS

There are others?

STEFAN

Oh yah!

EXT. TOWN

Cobble stone paths and rows of cottages pepper this quaint French-looking town. Kids are everywhere! They rough-house and play games, but there's a harmony to it all that is warm, delightful.

JESS

Who are they?

STEFAN

Patients. From the hospital. When we fall asleep at night, we all come here to play.

Ellie tugs on Jess's shirt.

JESS

Ellie!

ELLIE

Tag, you're it!

The kids disperse. Jess runs like the wind; heart pounding, legs pumping with delight.

She tags a HANS (10) on his back making him "it." The kids SCREAM excitedly.

JESS

Hide!

Jess follows Kai. They duck behind a few barrels. Under the protection of a good hiding place, the game passes them by. They catch their breath.

JESS (CONT'D)

This place is amazing! I want to come here all the time.

KAI

You can come here at night, but you gotta leave by the time that star falls below the mountain.

He points out a green star that shines over a purple mountain in the distance.

JESS

What happens if we don't make it?

KAI

You'll be trapped, Jess.

JESS

That wouldn't be so bad would it?

KAI

I think I'd miss my parents.

JESS

Can't they come here too?

KAI

Only kids come her. Through that water same as you.

Beat.

JESS

Hey, Kai?

KAI

Hmm?

JESS

Can you die here?

KAI

I think so. But don't worry, I'll protect you.

Jess smiles, gets up.

JESS

Bet you can't catch me!

Jess breaks into a run. Kai follows her.

EXT. TOWN/ PATH

Kai chases Jess through the square, up the path toward the lake.

HILLTOP

Jess crests the hill. She smiles, clearly the winner.

JESS

I win!

She looks back for Kai and finds him at the hill's base being hailed by an elaborate white sleigh. A tall ICE WOMAN rises from it.

Kai motions behind him for Jess to lay low. She crouches and watches horrified as the ICE WOMAN touches Kai's face turning his skin blue with cold.

With all his might, he points his finger to the sky.

The green star is just above the mountain's peak. Jess calls down below.

KAI

Go!

EXT. LAKE

Jess reaches the bank and dives into the water to get back home. As if being sucked by a vacuum, she is pulled toward the rocky bottom.

EXT. OPHIR - LAKE - DAWN

Jess is submerged in water like before, but this time the lake is icy. As it begins to freeze solid, it spews Jess out. She lands hard on the bank but, quickly gets up and stamps the lake surface to create a break but it is no use. She's trapped!

EXT LAKE/ FOREST - DREAMWORLD

Underwater, Jess ascends to the lake's surface. She swims toward the bank with all her might. She pulls herself onto the dark sand panting.

EXT HILL

Jess races toward the hill to where she last saw Kai, but there's no sign of him or the sleigh or the Ice Woman. She heads for town.

EXT. TOWN - NIGHT

Jess finds place empty. The lack of kids gives the well-lit town an eery quiet. Jess walks the vacant streets.

JESS

Kai!!

Ellie strolls by, licks a large multi-colored lollipop.

JESS (CONT'D)

Ellie!

Tongue-tied tasting, Ellie just waves.

JESS (CONT'D)

Where is Kai?

Ellie stops, shrugs. Jess eyes the candy.

JESS (CONT'D)

Where'd you get that?

ELLIE

A lady.

JESS

An Ice Lady? Only children come here, Ellie. What's going on?

ELLIE

The lady who gave me candy, she said I can't tell.

Jess shakes Ellie.

JESS

You gotta tell me. What if something happened to him?!

ELLIE

(crying)

You're hurting me.

Jess let's her go, tries to calm down.

ELLIE (CONT'D)

The lady said you'd be upset.

JESS

I'm scared. Please, tell me.

ELLIE

She said if I tell, I won't see my parents again.
Never ever. Can't tell, Jessy. I can never tell.

Ellie leaves her lollipop and runs away. Jess calls after her.

JESS

Wait, Ellie! Come back.

EXT. SHACK

Jess traces the perimeter. Peers inside it's frosted windows. No Kai.

EXT. FOREST

Jess tromps around the leaf-covered floor cupping her hands over her mouth to amplify her desperate voice.

JESS

Kai!

A RUSTLING noise catches her attention. She moves toward the sound hoping to see him. But is only met by some imaginary version of a ground-squirrel. Jess sinks to the ground in despair.

Hans, the boy from the tag game, pops out from behind a tree trunk. Jess is startled her at first, but is immediately relieved.

JESS (CONT'D)

Hans! I'm looking for Kai.

HANS

It's too late, Jess. She's already got him.

EXT. LAKE

Jess returns to the lake shore. She talks to herself.

JESS

Since this is a dream, I can wake up.

She smacks her cheeks but all that does is make her face sting.

JESS (CONT'D)

Ow!

PELICAN

Ho, there! What are you doing?

JESS

Trying to wake up, now leave me alone.

PELICAN

I was here first.

She ignores him, tries splashing her face with the cool lake water. It doesn't work. The Pelican laughs.

PELICAN (CONT'D)

You aren't very good at this waking up are you?

JESS

Perfect record. I've woken up every morning til now, but this is a very vivid dream.

PELICAN

Can I help?

JESS

No.

PELICAN

Oh, c'mon. I've always wanted to scare someone. How would it be if I scared you awake.

JESS

Is that a real thing?

Pelican shrugs.

PELICAN

Worth a try.

JESS

How's this gonna work?

PELICAN

If I tell you how I'm gonna do it, you won't be surprised. Now, close your eyes and count to eight.

JESS

Eight? Why not use a round number like five or ten?

PELICAN

You want help or not!

Jess closes her eyes and starts counting.

JESS

One, two...

Pelican creeps behind her, draws in a deep breath

JESS (CONT'D)

Three...

PELICAN

BOOM!

Pelican SHOUTS in her ear which startles her a bit. She opens her eyes.

PELICAN (CONT'D)

How'd I do? Are you awake?

JESS

No.

Jess sits on a nearby rock.

JESS (CONT'D)

I don't understand why this is so difficult.

PELICAN

Have you tried retracing your steps?

JESS

That's why I'm here. I thought I figured I'd get home if I just go back the way I came.

Lightbulb.

JESS (CONT'D)

I could go back the way I came! After going through the mirror, I wound up in this lake...

Jess removes her shoes, tosses them on the bank.

JESS (CONT'D)

...so if I get back in the lake, and go through the mirror I should wake up!

PELICAN

That sounds logical.

Jess jumps in the lake water.

JESS

Well, crazy pelican, have a nice life.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

PELICAN

Boy, do you move fast.

He struggles to keep up.

PELICAN (CONT'D)

Usually, friends walk together.

JESS

I agree.

He flutters and glides a bit to close the gap between them.

PELICAN

Did you have a lot of friends back home?

JESS

I did once, but it got complicated. Easier to go it alone.

PELICAN

Really? I find it takes a whole flock to do all that needs doing.

JESS

Fascinating.

She speed walks through the brush. He follows.

PELICAN

You know what you need?

JESS

A bath?

PELICAN

A friend!

JESS

I've got one who really needs my help. And if you'd stop talking and start flapping I'd get there faster.

Pelican closes his beak, tries to be quiet. But after a few moments of awkward silence he can't stand it.

PELICAN

Silence is...

JESS

Golden?

PELICAN

I was gonna say weird. It was never quiet growing up. There were ten of us.

JESS

You could always go back to them.

PELICAN

Nah, they migrated.

JESS

You didn't you go too?

PELICAN

I tried, but couldn't keep up.

He lifts his bum wing. She stops. For a split second, Jess feels compassion for him.

but is not yet ready to make a commitment.

JESS

Listen, I know you're looking for a friend, a family. You can come with me, but I can't offer you all that.

PELICAN

Will you slow down for me?!

JESS

Not even a little bit.

They laugh.

Jess rolls her eyes. There's no getting rid of this bird.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

It's pitch black. Jess and Pelican make camp.

JESS

So, what happens with your family?

PELICAN

They'll be back in the Spring.

JESS

This outside stuff is for the birds.

PELICAN

(pretending to be hurt)

Hey!

JESS

Give me my snoogie and a down pillow.

PELICAN

Hey!

JESS

Sorry.

Jess tries to get comfortable on the cold hard dirt. Lays her head on a rock.

JESS (CONT'D)

How do you get comfortable?

PELICAN

You don't. Eventually you get used to it.

JESS

This whole place is like something out of a story book—no electricity, no A/C.

PELICAN

Ack? What's Ack?

JESS

Central heating and air?

Pelican stares blankly. She gives up.

A cool breeze gives Jess a chill. She scoots close to Pelican.

PELICAN

You like me, you really like me!

JESS

Nah. Just cold.

Pelican doesn't mind her callus response. He snuggles closer. She doesn't stop him.

INT TINKER TOWER - NIGHT

Tinker spies on Jess and Pelican through her telescope.

TINKER

She has help, Simon!

Tinker bangs her fist on a wooden table covered with toy dragons. They roll from the work table and litter the floor.

Simon turns his head slightly at the sound.

TINKER (CONT'D)

What have you got for me?

Simon turns his attention to the work, and is so diligent it's unclear whether or not he's heard her.

He opens one toy dragon's back and places a tiny clock-battery inside. He shuts it, then sets the dragon on the table top.

The toy walks across the table on its own, then stops. It's mouth cranks open and a short-range flame spews from its mouth.

A wide grin reaches the corners of the Tinker's mouth.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Perfect.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Jess has Pelican in her arms like a stuffed animal. His beak is wide open. His snoring is a mix of SNORTS and SQUAWKS.

The dark sky around them is surrounded by red orange halo. Smoke fills the air. Jess inhales. To her it's pleasant.

JESS

Toast...bacon...Mmmm

As the smoke gets thicker, Pelican's forehead wrinkles. He snores, chokes on it.

Pelican's eyes pop open. Terror grows as he takes in the burning thicket around them. He panics--this is the one thing he's afraid of.

Speechless, he flaps his wing over Jess's face, patting her cheek to wake her. It tickles. She swats him away in her sleep.

He perches on Jess's chest, jumps up and down before he finally manages to blurt:

PELICAN

F-fire, Jess. Fire!

She wakes up. Takes it in. They are surrounded by burning vegetation on all sides.

JESS

Oh my god.

A sea of toy dragons flood the camp. They open their mouths on the tent, the food and set fire to everything. Jess kicks dust at some automatons near her feet. She knocks a few over, planting their snouts in the dirt. But more keep coming.

JESS (CONT'D)

We've gotta move.

Pelican tries to salvage some of the food items.

JESS (CONT'D)

Leave it.

Jess grabs a burning blanket, pats out the small fire and wraps it around her.

She stares at the wall of fire.

JESS (CONT'D)

We've gotta go through it. That's all we can do.

Pelican covers his head with his wings.

JESS (CONT'D)

Pelican, we gotta move.

PELICAN

I can't. I can't.

JESS

Yes, you can.

PELICAN

I can hardly look at fire much less go through it.

JESS

I'm not gonna let you die here.

PELICAN

Dying wouldn't be so bad. Just a moment of pain
and then a white light--Ah!

She yanks him by the wing toward the fire.

PELICAN (CONT'D)

It's gonna burn me and I'm gonna be done for!

He flutters around her head hysterical. She reaches to get him under control.

JESS

If you don't stop neither of us'll make it.

His wing fans the flames. They grow to inexorable height.

JESS (CONT'D)

Sorry, for this. You'll thank me later!

She throws the blanket over him.

JESS (CONT'D)

You'll thank me later.

She grabs the blanket-covered Pelican, holds him in the crook of her arm like a football and runs like the wind through the flames.

EXT. CLEARING

After a few painful moments of watching and waiting, Jess emerges from the fire unscathed. She unwraps the blanket. Pelican, a little black with smoke lies motionless, eyes closed.

Jess turns somber. Folds the blanket over him. Her eyes fill. Then, he SPUTTERS and COUGHS.

PELICAN

I expected a white light but it's kind of close and quiet in here.

She unwraps the cover. His head pops out.

PELICAN (CONT'D)

Am I dead?

JESS

Not even a little bit.

Jess brushes away a few tears. He notices.

JESS (CONT'D)

You scared me there, for a minute.

PELICAN

You DO care!

She rolls her eyes, drops her arms letting him flutter to the ground.

PELICAN (CONT'D)

I knew it! I knew you needed a friend. And, I am just the guy. We are friends, right?

It pains her to say it.

JESS

I'll think about it.

PELICAN

YES!

JESS

Make it weird and I'll change my mind.

Pelican reserves his excitement. The two head toward the path leaving the charred brush and glowing embers behind.

EXT MOUNTAIN

JESS

I can't breathe. And the ash is burning my eyes.

JESS (CONT'D)

We should be going down the mountain not up and up. Are you sure this is the right way?

PELICAN

Yah, you have to go up to go down.

JESS

That doesn't make sense. Besides, we've been going up for miles.

PELICAN

And, soon it will go down and we'll be there. You'll see.

Jess shimmies up a tree.

PELICAN (CONT'D)

Why do I get the feeling you don't trust me.

She calls down from a high branch.

JESS

I trust you, but not your sense of direction.

Pelican hops from branch to branch, then perches on her shoulder.

EXT. ABOVE THE CANOPY

JESS

The air is so much clearer up her.

She pulls her head above the trees. They marvel at the opulent city that covers the valley below. A large golden dome sits atop an imposing edifice. It gleams in the sunlight.

JESS (CONT'D)

Is that it?

PELICAN

Yep. Quinby's castle.

JESS

There's not a moment to lose. The sooner I get that scepter, the sooner I get my brother back safe and sound.

She yanks on nearby branches, checking their weight. She pulls the branches and throws them down to the forest floor below.

PELICAN

What are you doing?

JESS

Getting us a faster way off this mountain.

She climbs down with haste.

EXT FOREST FLOOR

She arranges the sturdy branches just so, then measures the burnt blanket from last night up against it. Already, it's taking the shape of a large kite.

PELICAN

Oh no. If there's one thing I hate worse than fire...

EXT. MOUNTAIN CLIFF

PELICAN

... it's flyiiiiing!

Jess and Pelican jump off the cliff-face and descend into the valley below.

Jess and Pelican are coasting pretty good when the blanket rips.

PELICAN (CONT'D)

Jess?!

JESS

Relax, it's just a small tear. That is NOT a problem.

The rip gets bigger. One corner of the the blanket completely detaches from the tree-branch frame. They free-fall!

JESS/ PELICAN

Aaaaaaaaah!

Beneath them, nothing but hard rock to land on.

PELICAN

Who's driving this thing?

Jess works the homemade glider's base like a rudder. They miss the rocks but are blown a little too far over. The glider grazes the side of the mountain. It spins out and wobbles wildly toward the town.

Jess spots a large pile of hey below. The Pelican protests, foreseeing her plan.

PELICAN (CONT'D)

No. NO!

Jess grabs the bird and lets go of the glider.

The glider sinks into the straw-covered roof of a large santhal-style hut nearby while Jess and Pelican tumble safely into the bed of hey below.

EXT. VILLAGE - QUINBY CASTLE

A WOMAN stares at the hole in the roof, she shrieks. Jess and Pelican know this means trouble.

WOMAN

What happened to my roof?!

JESS

We had a small accident...

WOMAN

You two are gonna pay for this!

INT QUINBY'S CASTLE - DUNGEON

The place is dark, full of hard stone and dirty.

PELICAN

Well this just went from bad to worse.

JESS

How was I supposed to know she and the queen were besties?

JESS (CONT'D)

Our plan was get the scepter from the queen, and we're in the queen's palace. Look at the bright side, we couldn't be in any better place.

PELICAN

I could think of a few places I'd prefer over the palace dungeon.

JESS

They'll take us to see her, right?

PELICAN

Yah, to get our heads lopped off. What are we gonna do?

Their conversation subsides as palace guards enter the cell.

INT QUINBY'S CASTLE - HALLWAY

Guards shove Jess and Pelican down the corridor.

JESS

I'll just tell the queen it was an accident. She can be reasonable right?

The guards separate the two prisoners. Pelican gets in a few words of advice as Jess is hauled toward the throne room.

PELICAN

She prefers the term “regent,” and don’t talk too much.

INT. QUINBY’S CASTLE - THRONE ROOM

PRINCESS QUINBY ARNATOFF (3) sits on the dais (wrong word?) dressed in gold robes, style and attitude for days. The guard, JAX, dark-skinned, well-built, stands up straight arms outstretched and bows low in the young ruler’s presence.

JAX

Princess Quinby Arnatoff, I present to you the outside.

He gestures to Jess, who bows low despite her chains.

JESS

Let me explain...

Quinby flashes the palm of her hand to silence Jess. Quinby sucks noisily on a lollipop in her mouth.

QUINBY

I will ask the questions. What is your name?

JESS

Jess.

QUINBY

Jess? That’s it, just JESS? What kind of a name is that?!

JESS

Jessica Layton is the whole thing.

QUINBY

Well, that’s better.
And, do you like lollipops?

She sucks the slobber off the candy and pulls it out of her mouth with a POP.

JESS

I like whatever will get me out of these chains, Your
Regen-cy.

Jax brings a katana to Jess's throat for her sarcasm, but Quinby's hand sets him at ease.

QUINBY

Stand down, Jax. She's smart.

In the BG, Pelican breathes a sigh of relief.

QUINBY (CONT'D)

How did you come here, outsider?

JESS

Through a mirror. I followed my brother here, your
majesty.

QUINBY

Then, you put a hole in my auntie's roof.

JESS

That was an accident.

QUINBY

Quiet, outsider! I like you, but you have no rights
here.

PELICAN

Your majesty, please. Let me speak on her behalf. I
know her, and...

With all the attitude of one who's not long left the terrible two's:

QUINBY

Silence!! I want to speak to the smart girl!!

Straightening her crown:

QUINBY (CONT'D)

Now, if you play with me for a week, I will
expunge your debt to my aunt.

JESS

Thank you, majesty, for your kindness and I wish I could...

QUINBY

Am I not fair?

PELICAN

You are more than fair your majesty.

QUINBY

Am I not just?!

Jess looks to Pelican who shakes his head.

PELICAN

Not another word, Jess!

QUINBY

(to Jess)

Get LOST!!

Jax return Jess's shackles. Another guard brings in a paint can and marks her chest with an "x."

JESS

(to Pelican)

What does the "X" stand for?

PELICAN

X-ecution!!

As guards attach chains to shackles, Jess gives it one last try. and drag her from the court.

JESS

We'll all die, your Highness, if I don't get that scepter. My brother followed the Toymaker here.

The guards cower in fear at the mention of him.

JESS (CONT'D)

Your world and my brother's life are at stake if I don't use your scepter to stop it.

Quinby holds the symbols of her royalty high.

QUINBY

It's MY scepter! And, MY crown. Everything you see is MINE. Take her away!

JESS

I don't lie. Ask the Pelican.

Quinby makes a fist to halt the guards. She glares at Guard 2 holding the chained Pelican.

QUINBY

Bring the bird.

Guard 2 does.

QUINBY (CONT'D)

Well?

Pelican bows low.

QUINBY (CONT'D)

Not that! Is she lying or not?!

PELICAN

Your Highness, what she says is true. She visited the Astronomer who sent her here.

QUINBY

He did not send word.

She looks to the guards.

QUINBY (CONT'D)

Am I wrong, did he send word?

GUARDS

No majesty. You are right, majesty.

QUINBY

Then, get her outta here.

PELICAN

Any message may have been intercepted.

QUINBY

By who, your mama?

PELICAN

Excellency, we are in real danger, and you may be too if help us.

JESS

We were ambushed by the Tinker's toys. They set fire to our camp in the forest just outside the city. You'll have seen the smoke.

GUARDS

Yes, majesty. There was smoke.

Quinby climbs the dais and weighs the scepter in her hands, considers for a moment.

INT QUINBY'S CASTLE - DUNGEON - MIDNIGHT

Jess looks for a weak link in her chains while Pelican hangs his beak between the iron bars of their shared cell.

PELICAN

Oh, if my momma could see me now. Your son's a jail bird!

He despairs.

JESS

Don't worry. We won't be in here for long.

She carries her ball and chain over to the side of the cell nearest the PRISON GUARD.

JESS (CONT'D)

Hi, mister.

Prison Guard grunts.

JESS (CONT'D)

Did you hear me? HEY MISTER!!

PRISON GUARD

Sssssh. Look, this is how it works. I don't talk to you and you don't talk to me, got it?

JESS

Just because you're the guard and I'm the prisoner
doesn't mean we can't be
(she chokes on the word)
friends.

PRISON GUARD

I don't make friends with prisoners.

JESS

That must get pretty lonely.

That stings a little, but he responds:

PRISON GUARD

Nah, I'm good.

JESS

Bet you spend a lot of time down here.

PRISON GUARD

Pfft, yah! Twenty hours a day. And we work three
days at a time. And I'm my last day so I am BEAT!

JESS

Oh, man. That sound brutal. Bet you wish you
could just close your eyes for an hour or two...

At this, his eyes droop, get real heavy.

JESS (CONT'D)

(whispers to Pelican)

Bingo!

The guard leans on his sword, nods. Then his eyes shoot open. He straightens.

PRISON GUARD

What do you care about when I work and how I
sleep?

JESS

Just making conversation.

PRISON GUARD

How bout you're gonna be X-ecuted tomorrow morning. How's that for conversation?

Jess observes the gold letter on her chest.

JESS

Yah. This is the last chance I'll have to make a friend before the... end. Would you be my friend?

This affects him, but he doesn't agree to it. Jess sniffles, starts to cry.

PRISON GUARD

(points to Pelican)

Aw, c'mon. Ain't he your friend?

JESS

He was, but since I got him locked up he won't
TALK TO ME ANYMORE!!

She blubbers, continues with her charade.

JESS (CONT'D)

And since you won't talk to me, I'M GONNA
SPEND MY LAST DAY WITHOUT ANY
FRIENDS!!!

He hands her a hankie. She blows, her nose sounds like a TRUMPET.

PRISON GUARD

Listen, kid, don't cry alright. we can't be bosom buddies or nothin.' You know, since you're a criminal and all but..uh..if you want to talk I'll listen for a while.

JESS

Really?!

PRISON GUARD

(he softens)

Yah, sure. Why not?

JESS

Oh boy! I'm a great story teller. Can I tell you a story?

PRISON GUARD

Sure, kid. I'll be here all night anyway.

[She starts into her story. He gets tired.]

JESS

Why don't you sit down.

PRISON GUARD

Nah. I'm more alert standing up.

JESS

Just for a second. I'm almost done.

[she continues on, and on until...]

Jax lays slumped against the wall, fast asleep. SNORING LOUDLY.

Jess lifts her ball and chain. Creeps toward the cell door. She reaches, but it's no use. He's just out of reach.

PELICAN

What are you doing?

JESS

Busting outta here. I have to find that scepter.

PELICAN

Oh no you don't. Can you imagine the trouble we'll be in if we get caught?

JESS

Can't see that I have much to lose. I'm already sentenced to x-ecution.

She points to the golden mark on her chest.

PELICAN

Good point.

JESS

You on the other hand might have a chance if you stay in the unlocked cell after I get out.

PELICAN

Then what are you gonna do, Quinby's not just gonna hand over the scepter.

JESS

Probably not.

Jess tries again.

PELICAN

The proper response is NOT "proceed with my not-so-well thought out plan."

JESS

I have thought about it, and it's simple. Get my hands on the scepter by whatever means necessary.

PELICAN

Whatever means...? You're not gonna steal it, are you?!

JESS

If I have to. Just long enough to save Simon, then I'll bring it back to her. Scouts honor.

Jess puts her head against the bars, struggles with the lock.

PELICAN

Let me help you.

JESS

Nah, I've gotten you into enough trouble as it is. You'll have a better chance of surviving this dump if you let me do it alone.

PELICAN

That's not the way friendship works. You help me and I help you.

JESS

I don't need help. I almost... got it.

She tries again. Hits his belt this time. Makes a NOISE.

Prison Guard opens one eye, looks around the room, then it closes, heavy with sleep.

PELICAN

You can't do this on your own. Let me help you.

JESS

How are you gonna help me? You're locked up too.

She tries to squeeze her free leg through the bars to reach him. Nothing.

Pelican shrugs.

PELICAN

Have it your way.

What does she have to lose?

JESS

I don't know why I'm doing this. Pelican...

PELICAN

Say the magic word!

JESS

Please?

PELICAN

No, "friend."

He is really pushing it. Jess swallows her pride.

JESS

FRIEND Pelican, will you help me?

PELICAN

Why, of course! Here.

He pulls a feather from his back.

JESS

What am I supposed to do with this?

Just then, she spots Prison Guard's bare feet. She pushes the feather through the bars and brushes it along his toes. Toes twitch before he rolls his belly toward the prison bars.

Pelican uses the good wing to reach through. She lifts the keys from his belt and successfully brings the key ring through the bars.

JESS (CONT'D)

It worked!

PELICAN

See, I told ya.

Jess gives him a thumbs up.

She unlocks her cuffed hands first, then hands the keys to Pelican. He unlocks the cell door. Jess emerges from the cell with Pelican on her back. She steps over the sleeping guard and out to freedom.

INT. THRONE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Quinby sits on her throne, head rests on her hand. A MAN and WOMAN WITH SACK argue.

MAN

(points to sack)

She stole from my garden.

WOMAN WITH SACK

It was only to eat, your majesty. But if it is wrong in your sight, I will give it back.

Quinby drags a finger over her own throat--death. Guard paints a gold X on the woman's chest.

WOMAN WITH SACK (CONT'D)

Your Highness, have mercy!

Guards haul Woman With Sack away.

QUINBY

(no sign of remorse)

Next!

MAN

Majesty, no. She can have them. I-i-it is a gift.

QUINBY

Then why complain? Get out!

Man bows profusely, careful not to turn his back on her as he quickly leaves.

Jax approaches with caution.

JAX

Um, Majesty?

QUINBY

What?!

JAX

Death may be a little extreme for stealing a few vegetables, no?

QUINBY

If it is, it's your fault. You made me lose my scepter!

JAX

I do apologize...I'll find you another one.

She rolls her eyes, waves him away.

QUINBY

NEXT!

INT. CORRIDOR

Jax returns to his post. Guards usher a HOODED FIGURE forward.

JAX

Next.

Though the eyes and much of the face are concealed, we recognize the Hooded Figure as Simon. Jax looks him over suspiciously.

JAX (CONT'D)

What case do you have to bring before Princess Quinby?

SIMON

Just a song, Captain.

He pulls the flute from his robes.

JAX

Play it for me first.

SIMON

And spoil the surprise?

JAX

My concern is her safety.

SIMON

Don't worry, Captain. You'll get to enjoy it right along with her.

Jax contemplates the unsavory look of the character.

JAX

I don't recognize your voice. Remove your hood.

SIMON

Please, I wouldn't want to offend the princess.

Simon pulls his hand from his cloak. Jax sees it, reaches for his sword ready for a fight. Simon continues the motion, adjusts the hood a little tighter.

SIMON (CONT'D)

I'm not much to look at, sir. I do wish the Captain would look past this and allow me to play for her Majesty.

He can see Quinby scowling in the next room.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Brighten her day?

Jax relaxes a little, let's him through.

EXT. THRONE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Simon enters the room.

QUINBY

What do you want?

SIMON

To play you a song.

QUINBY

(claps)

Really?! I love music!!

He bows low. Slowly brings the pipe to his lips. Inhales.

Impatient:

QUINBY (CONT'D)

Are you gonna play or not?

He nods, blows into the instrument. An CONTINUOUS SCREECH fills the court and halls. Quinby covers her ears.

QUINBY (CONT'D)

Ugh!

(to Jax)

Didn't you screen him?

JAX

Her Majesty has had enough, citizen.

He continues to blow.

JAX (CONT'D)

Stop, I say!

Quinby jams the throne seat cushion into her ears.

QUINBY

Jax!

Jax uncovers his ears to draw his sword.

As he rushes toward Simon, the note gets HIGHER, LOUDER. Jax and other guards crumple to the floor in pain.

Suddenly, their eyes glaze. The note stops, and they calm down.

Simon removes his hood. Smiles. He strides to the throne and pats Quinby's head. She shrinks and becomes a handheld porcelain doll.

He toots a couple short notes and she walks right off the chair toward him.

SIMON

Stop.

She halts at his feet.

SIMON (CONT'D)

Simon says, "This way!"

He toots one long and two short notes and the whole company shrinks and follows him.

EXT QUINBY KINGDOM

Simon dances and plays the flute. Small toys from all over draw toward him like magnet. They follow him out of the city like a row of chicks with a mother hen.

INT QUINBY CASTLE - HALLWAY

Jess and Pelican walk down a long corridor full of rooms.

PELICAN

This is doomed to fail. Any one of these rooms could be hers. Which do you want to try first.

At the end of the hall, one room is flanked by two guards.

JESS

That one.

PELICAN

How do we ditch the guards?

JESS

Was gonna let you handle that... friend.

INT QUINBY'S CASTLE - HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Pelican flutters passed the guards, Squawks noisily.

PELICAN

The Outsider, she escaped the dungeon. I tried to stop her but she broke my wing.

He flutters toward the ground. He sputters, squawks, really milking it.

PELICAN (CONT'D)

She went that way!

Pelican points them in the wrong direction. Guards rush toward it, but DOOR GUARD hesitates in front of the royal bed chamber. Guard 2 orders him on.

GUARD 2

Go!

Door Guard and Guard 2 run down the hall.

INT. QUINBY'S CASTLE - ROYAL NURSERY

Jess sneaks into the room, and quietly shuts the door. The room is dark. On an end table, a star-pendant lantern bathes the room in a soft low-glow. Jess picks it up, holds it high to help her see. The room is huge. Jess marvels at its opulence.

Delicate chiffon hangs from the ceiling and gold cushions adorn the room. Precious stones have been set into the walls and a mosaic of colored glass covers the floors.

A mechanical music box with exposed metal gears plays a calming melody.

In the royal crib, Jess finds Quinby asleep clutching the scepter.

Jess lowers the lantern to not wake the princess, and tries gently to lift the scepter from her grasp. It doesn't budge.

Jess stalks around the room. Jess passes the lantern over piles of toys and dolls. She stops on an Arabian stick-pony. Jess pulls it, carries it to the crib. She holds it up to the scepter--indeed both objects are of similar size and shape.

Jess sets the lantern down and with care and dexterity, she twists the jeweled heirloom out of Quinby's hands then replaces it with the pony's golden stick-handle but Quinby stirs!

Jess freezes, holds her breath to see if she'll be found out. She relaxes when Quinby's thumb goes into her mouth, and the smooth cadence of heavy slumber returns.

Soldier's FOOTSTEPS outside the room break the silence.

INT. QUINBY'S CASTLE - CAPTAIN'S BEDROOM

A simple room. Neat. Just the essentials. Jax wakes immediately on Guard 2's entry, holds a sword to his throat. Then relaxes when he comes to.

GUARD 2

Trouble, sir. The outsider's escaped.

JAX

How'd you hear of it?

GUARD 2

From some bird with a wonky wing.

Guard 2 mimics Pelican's one-winged flight.

JAX

Idiot! The bird's WITH the girl.

GUARD 2

We'll find 'em, boss.

Jax fastens his utility belt over his night gown.

JAX

The princess, is she safe?

No response.

Jax grabs Guard 2 in his white-knuckled fists.

JAX (CONT'D)

(like he's talking to an idiot)

Did-you-post-a-guard-outside-the-royal-bed
chamber-soldier?!

Guard 2 shakes his head, no.

Jax shoves him, pulls Guard 2's sword from its sheath and heads for the corridor.

INT. QUINBY CASTLE - HALLWAY

Jess emerges quietly from Quinby's nursery, and closes the door with care. Admires the scepter proudly. Pelican flutters frantically down the hallway.

PELICAN

Jess, we got companyyy!

At the end of the hall Jax has both swords drawn and a whole army behind him.

Jess scrambles down the hall and around the corner behind Pelican.

NURSERY DOOR

A hoard of guards rush passed.

GUARDS (O.C.)

Aaaaaaargh!

The Sleeping Guard from the Dungeon lags behind. As he reaches the door, Quinby opens it, smacking him in the face. Sends him to the floor.

INT. QUINBY'S CASTLE - THRONE ROOM

Jess follows Pelican passed the empty moonlit room.

PELICAN

There's a servant's entrance through the kitchen.
We can get out there.

INT. QUINBY'S CASTLE - KITCHEN

Pelican flutters through the open doorway right into a KITCHEN SERVANT with a butcher knife. She swings.

PELICAN

Aaaah!

Pelican maneuvers, heads back to the hall.

INT. INT QUINBY CASTLE - THRONE ROOM

Pelican flaps his wing hard just an arm's reach from the knife-weilding Kitchen Servant.

PELICAN

Kitchen's blocked.

Jess hurries ahead of him, goes back the way they came.

INT. QUINBY'S CASTLE - THRONE ROOM

Jess leads Pelican back into the large room, they catch their breath.

PELICAN

(Re: the crazy with the knife)

I think we lost her.

Up ahead, Jax and the guards have caught up with them.

JESS

Save you breath and ruuuun!

Guards fan into the room, Jess hops onto the dais.

JESS (CONT'D)

There's gotta be a ruler's entrance, special
passageway...something.

Just then, the throne arms expand and Quinby rises from an opening in the royal seat.
Quinby eyes the scepter.

QUINBY

That's MINE!!

JESS

Does it have your name on it?

QUINBY

Actually, it does.

Jess inspects the handle. Finds her name.

JESS

Sure enough!

QUINBY

(to guards)

Get her!

Guards immediately rush the dais. Jess pulls gold chord hanging from a curtain, Quinby retracts into the seat.

While going down:

QUINBY (CONT'D)

No fair!

Jax swings swords at the Pelican fluttering wildly over his head.

Jess sees it. She charges through the line of guards, swings the scepter at Pelican's assailant. The tip lands hard on Jax's jaw, knocks teeth out.

Pelican puts his wing over his heart, touched.

JESS

Which way?

PELICAN

The draw bridge!

Jess follows Pelican down the hall...

EXT GARDEN

Through a maze...

EXT QUINBY CASTLE - COURTYARD

To the CLOSED drawbridge.

JESS

Great.

PELICAN

No way we're getting out of this one.

Jess feels along the stone wall.

PELICAN (CONT'D)

I may as well say my goodbyes now. Goodbye
Aunt Polly, Uncle Egret. Nice knowing you, cousin
Robin. Goodbye Mom...

Jess finds a deep indentation in the stone. Inside is a cross-shaped hole. She examines the cross-shaped tip on the scepter--it should be a perfect fit. She shoves the scepter in but something's wrong.

JESS

I can't reach. Stop your crying and help me.

Pelican flutters back a few feet and flies at her with all his might. He pushes her back with his beak. The scepter clicks into place. Jess turns it with a CLICK.

The turnstiles on either side of the gate rotate counter-clockwise. Chains loosen forcing the huge drawbridge down over a dried up moat.

Guards fill the courtyard. Jax follows, carrying Quinby. He sets her down.

QUINBY

Close the gate!

Guards push the turnstiles, but it is too late.

Quinby watches Jess and Pelican cross the bridge to safety.

Defeated, she SCREAMS, throws a tantrum.

QUINBY (CONT'D)

I hate her Jax. I HATE the smart-girl. And her dumb
bird!

EXT. DIRT ROAD

Jess and Pelican jog. Jess looks back, Quinby's Kingdom now small in the distance. She slows to a walk.

JESS

We did it! I can't believe it.

She high-fives him.

PELICAN

Yes, we did.

JESS

I was like look, I got it. And you were like, shut up we gotta move. And then it was like...

In her joy, Jess recounts their narrow escape. Pelican assumes a regal air.

PELICAN

(mimics Quinby)

I'm the ruler, ME! Everything is miiiiine!

Jess swings the scepter as if she's going to lop off Pelicans head. He ducks playfully, reaches for the scepter, but she fakes him out with Jordan-like skills. They rough-house. They tire themselves out, gasp for breath.

JESS

Never thought I'd say this, but I really needed you.

PELICAN

Hey!

JESS

Sorry, that was s'posed to come out sweet. If it makes you feel any better, I'm hard on myself too.

PELICAN

You have no reason to be. You're great, Jess.

She sobers.

JESS

If I were, my brother wouldn't be under the mind-control of an evil Toymaker.

PELICAN

That's not your fault.

JESS

Then, who's is it?

Her tone is grave.

JESS (CONT'D)

If I lose him, I don't know what I'll do. he's the only one who treated me normal. Like just his big sister.

PELICAN

We'll get him back, Jess. I know we will.

She wants to believe him.

JESS

We can try, right?

Pelican lightens the mood.

PELICAN

Did you say WEEEEEEEE?

JESS

Oh no! I DID!

Pelican taps her shoulder with one wing, distracts her. Takes the scepter.

PELICAN

You know, if you BELIEVE you can, you just might be right.

The talk about her brother hits close to home. He sees it.

PELICAN (CONT'D)

Want a hug?

JESS

No.

She shrugs off the sweet moment, back in strong-mode again. Pelican places the scepter in her open palms.

PELICAN

What do you think it does, anyway?

JESS

Besides look cool?

She rolls it in her hands.

JESS (CONT'D)

In girls scouts, we used to play a game when we discovered an “unidentifiable object.”

PELICAN

How do you play?

JESS

Until you find out what it really is, you make it up.
Like this.

She places the scepter top in front of her mouth, uses it like a microphone.

JESS (CONT'D)

It's a magic object that makes you sing like a pro. I don't know, you next. This scepter is a...

He thinks about it.

PELICAN

A really cool...spoon! That makes any pot of runny soup turn into a deliciously thick stew.

He turns the scepter on it's head and stirs with it.

JESS

You got it!

He tosses it to Jess. She catches it, in the crook of her arm.

JESS (CONT'D)

It's a football that glows in the dark, and creates a defensive force-field around anyone holding it.

She charges Pelican. He fakes whiplash and falls as if hit by an unseen force. He really milks it.

She laughs out loud for the first time in a long time.

EXT. LAKE

Jess does a deep dive. A mirror glistens on the lake floor. She swims toward it losing all her remaining air. Jess touches the mirror's face but instead of traveling through it, the mirror turns her hand to ice. Jess stomps on it and her feet are encased in a heavy ice-block holding her fast to the bottom. She tries to swim with the one free arm, but can't. She picks up a sea urchin from the lake floor and squeezes it. The water around them becomes an inky black.

EXT. LAKE

Pelican bathes on the surface, but when he sees the water darken below he knows she's in trouble. The Pelican notices a dirty pile of rope on a bobbing boat that's tied to the dock. He scoops the rope in his beak, he let's it down for Jess to grab onto.

UNDERWATER

The Pelican's rope is just out of reach. Jess swims hard to drag the ice block just enough to tighten her hand around the rope. She tugs twice.

EXT LAKE - SURFACE

The Pelican flaps his wings and pulls hard against the weight of the girl and the ice.

UNDERWATER

Jess works her arm to help propel her to the surface.

EXT LAKE - SURFACE

Jess and Pelican work together to get Jess to the bank.

BANK

Once on the sand, they find rest from exhaustion.

PELICAN

(panting)

Well, if that wasn't the worst scare I've ever had.

JESS

Me too.

She shivers. The gentle waves lap against Jess's ice-trapped feet.

PELICAN

We're not out of the woods yet.

He takes flight.

JESS

Where are you going?

PELICAN

To find help.

EXT. VILLAGE

Jess climbs out of her pile, dusts herself off. Pelican preens his feathers.

JESS

Not bad for my first time landing a glider.

PELICAN

Not bad?! I'm gonna be picking out nettles for a week.

JESS

Well, you can't say you never flew.

Jess mimics his "flying" during the free-fall. She can't stop laughing. Pelican gives up and laughs to.

JESS (CONT'D)

Pelican, where are we?

He looks around at the sand and water.

PELICAN

I'd say we're at the beach.

SHILOH (V.O.)

Well, duh!

Jess turns to face Shiloh (10) keen-eyed, impish.

SHILOH

Some bird you got there.

JESS

Hey, only I can make fun of the bird.

Shiloh extends his hand to shake.

SHILOH

Shiloh.

JESS

Jess. And this is...

He notes the natural bag under the bird's bill.

SHILOH

Pelican?

PELICAN

That's Mr. Pelican to you.

SHILOH

You guys lost?

PELICAN

(lies)

No, just... in between destinations.

SHILOH

Right. Where are you headed?

JESS

Wouldn't you like to know.

SHILOH

What, is it some kind of secret?

Jess exchanges looks with Pelican. Pelican shakes his beak. He doesn't trust this dude.

JESS

We don't talk to strangers.

SHILOH

C'mon, we just met.

Jess hesitates.

SHILOH (CONT'D)

Fine. I know where I'm goin.'

He strolls off.

Pelican's tummy rumbles. he groans pitifully.

PELICAN

Aw.

Jess calls out to Shiloh.

JESS

Fine! We will let you help us...if you'll let us eat some of your fish.

Shiloh smiles. It's a deal.

EXT. BEACH - AN HOUR LATER

Shiloh roasts fish on a spit over a small fire. Jess eats greedily while Pelican pecks at a raw filet.

JESS

Mmm. This is SO good. Better than back home.

SHILOH

Yeah? Where's home?

JESS

Another world, if you can believe that.

SHILOH

Really?!

PELICAN

Jess!

Pelican looks alarmed at Jessica's familial conversation.

JESS

It's alright. We're friends.

SHILOH

Yeah, friends.

JESS

We're trying to get to Agra's Cave.

SHILOH

Agra's Cave! That's over the mountain and way beyond my area of expertise. But, a friend of mine who lives nearby, she could show you.

She lets out a LOUD BELCH, pats her belly.

JESS

Lead the way.

EXT. WOODS - DUSK

Shiloh leads the way through the dense trees. Pelican follows him, and Jess tromps through the brush in the rear.

A small, fat bird flies overhead, HOOTS. Pelican hangs back, hovers close to Jess.

PELICAN

This is pretty deep into the woods.

She nods in agreement.

JESS

Feels like we're going off course. I'll say something if we don't stop soon.

Shiloh sees them gathering. He reassures them.

SHILOH

It's just up ahead.

INT. OLD WOMAN'S HOUSE - HEARTH

Jess sits in an easy chair with a quilt wrapped around her. Her feet rest in a pan while an Old Woman tends the fire. Old woman pulls a kettle from the hearth, and pours the warm water into the foot pan. Pelican looks on from the open window.

PELICAN

She gave us quite a scare. Most unusual for the lake to turn cold like that.

OLD WOMAN

What were you doing clear at the bottom of the lake?

JESS

I came in through the mirror, so I thought if I went back through it, I'd wake up from this dream I'm having, but it turned my feet to ice!

OLD WOMAN

Ah! Well, dreams are funny things. You don't always know what you're gonna get.

JESS

You got that right! There aren't supposed to be adults here, and look at you!

The old woman laughs.

OLD WOMAN

That's right.

PELICAN

You mean, I'm not a real bird? I feel like a real bird.

He pats down his bird-body looking for evidence that he's counterfeit. He pinches his belly, then rubs out the sting.

PELICAN (CONT'D)

Ow! That felt real.

JESS

(to Old Woman)

So you agree with me that this whole place is a dream?!

OLD WOMAN

Sure! And, the best way to wake up from a dream is to go to sleep in the dream world then wake up on the other side.

JESS

I knew that old Astronomer wasn't right!

OLD WOMAN

You visited the Astronomer? What an old coot!

JESS

Duh! Hey wait, since this is a dream I can have whatever I want right? It's not like there are rules in a dream.

OLD WOMAN

You can have whatever you dream up.

Jess turns serious for a moment.

JESS

I'd like to see my brother.

OLD WOMAN

There are two of you?

JESS

Yes, but he's in a coma. I haven't been able to talk to him in a year.

PELICAN

I don't think your brother is in here, Jess.

OLD WOMAN

It's a dream, Jess. You can see whoever you like,
Jessica.

JESS

Yah, It's a dream, dimwit!

PELICAN

I knew enough to save your life.

JESS

And, you've done that, now disappear. That's what
dream-creatures do when they're no longer needed.

Hurt, the Pelican flies away.

OLD WOMAN

I know! We'll invite your brother over for dinner.

INT OLD WOMAN'S HOUSE - DINNER TABLE - LATER

The cottage has a wooden table that seats six. Jess sets the table while the Old Woman stirs a pot on the stove in BG. She takes the spoon with her out of the room.

LIVING ROOM

The Old Woman pulls a book labeled "incantations" from a dusty book shelf. She shakes the spoon and it becomes a wand.

JESS (O.S.)

Grandma!

OLD WOMAN

(shouts back)

Just grabbing my cookbook, dear.

The Old Woman taps the label with her wand and it changes to "cookbook." She scuttles back into the other room.

DINNER TABLE

Jess sits at the table upright, and watches the Old Woman scuttle back into the room.

JESS

Is he here yet?

OLD WOMAN

Patience! We wouldn't want him to arrive before his special dinner's ready.

Jess slumps in the chair.

OLD WOMAN (CONT'D)

Why don't you take the bird out of the oven.

She does, and sets it on the table.

STOVE

The Old Woman is bent over a pot with the "cookbook" open.

CLOSE ON: "To Make a Tree, you must keep your subject still for 30 seconds."

OLD WOMAN

I've got to watch this gravy so it doesn't burn. Why don't you say grace.

Jess clasps her hands, while the Old Woman sets a timer. She waves her wand. As Jess opens her eyes, her brother appears.

Jess stares open mouthed as Simon takes a seat at the table.

JESS

Simon! It's really you. I have a million and one things to tell you and a million more to ask you!

She hugs him. She's so excited she does not notice that he didn't hug back.

JESS (CONT'D)

Oh, Simon. I'm so sorry about the accident. And for calling you a chicken when you didn't want to sit in the front. That seat should've been mine, Simon.

Simon stares blankly in her general direction. She shakes him.

JESS (CONT'D)

Simon? Don't you want to talk to me?

She looks to Old Woman.

JESS (CONT'D)

Why won't he speak to me? What did you do, Old Woman?

OLD WOMAN

Gave you just what you wanted so I could get what I wanted. Harper will pay a handsome reward for you!

On the stove, the timer DINGS. The Old Woman waves her wand and shouts a magic word.

Jess's torso stretches, covers over with bark and her arms sprout leaves. Her toes become thick roots that cover the dining room floor and curl along the ground. Her strong branches bust through the old roof shingles and tear apart the weak wooden floors. Within moments, Jess is fully transformed into a big, oak tree right in the middle of the house!

EXT OLD WOMAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Jess-tree looks up at the sky. The monster constellation is visible in the sky. More of it's body showing now. The sun above Rapha's head has moved away. Without it, the Invalid no longer looks powerful but vulnerable before the monster's open-mouth.

She sighs.

EXT OLD WOMAN'S HOUSE - ROOF - DAY

Even closed, Jess's eyes can see the light of both of Ophir's suns. She pries them open. TAP TAP TAP. A squirrel bangs a nut hard against Jess's trunk. She pries her eyes open. Stunned to see a pair of eyes gawking, the squirrel's eyes widen before it places the nut in it's mouth and scampers away.

Jess squints at the brightness of Ophir's two suns shining in the sky. Through the massive hole in the roof that Jess's growing trunk made last night, she spies the Old Woman pilfering in the kitchen below.

INT. OLD WOMAN'S HOUSE

Old Woman prunes Jess-tree while talking into her wand as if using a phone.

OLD WOMAN

I got her here, it's your job to move her!

EXT ROOF

Jess's eyes scan for help. A SQUAWK overhead stretches

<Jess goes to visit a Wise Woman who teaches Jess how to use the scepter, and gives helpful advice. Jess and Pelican use the power of scepter to transport quickly to Tinker Town, the Toymaker's Village>

INT. ASTRONOMER'S GLOWWORM CAVE

Jess enters the cave-mouth. Inside is pitch black, until what looks like a bunch of stars on the cave wall begin to glow. Jess marvels at them, leans in to get a closer look. One crawls out of a small hole. It looks like a cross between a snail and caterpillar. The Astronomer, an intelligent child with long life, watches her discretely.

JESS

(to herself)

Slugs?

ASTRONOMER

It's a worm, actually.

She makes a face. That can't be right.

JESS

It doesn't look like a worm.

ASTRONOMER

But it is.

JESS

I was looking for the astronomer.

ASTRONOMER

Are you STILL looking for him?

Annoyed at the cheeky question.

JESS

Yes, that's why I'm here. Do you know him?

ASTRONOMER

Less and less every day I'm afraid. He's becoming rather unpredictable in his old age, you know.

She couldn't care less.

JESS

Well, can you point me in the right direction or should I just show myself out?

ASTRONOMER

I can introduce you, but first a game of slight of hand.

He fans a deck of cards before her.

ASTRONOMER (CONT'D)

Pick one card.

JESS

Let me guess, any card?

ASTRONOMER

That's right.

Unimpressed, she pulls one.

ASTRONOMER (CONT'D)

Now look at it, but don't tell me what it is.

Jess looks at it half-heartedly then notices the picture move--a mermaid with dives from a rock into an ocean. She shakes her head to clear it.

ASTRONOMER (CONT'D)

Now watch this.

He shuffles the deck, and puts in front of her to cut it. She does.

ASTRONOMER (CONT'D)

Now pick a card.

She does, and low and behold it's the same one--the mermaid card from before.

ASTRONOMER (CONT'D)

Magic!

JESS

I bet your whole deck is full of mermaids.

She smacks the deck forcing the cards onto the floor. All of the belly-side up cards are mermaids.

Astronomer holds out his hand to proceed with introductions.

ASTRONOMER

My real name is Phoebus, known to most as the Astronomer.

JESS

I pictured some old guy.

PHOEBUS

I am an old guy.

JESS

At the ripe age of eight?

PHOEBUS

I'll be eight hundred next month. Outer appearance shows no signs of aging in this world.

JESS

Ah. So what's the deal with this place anyway? What is it.

PHOEBUS

A parallel universe.

JESS

I knew it wasn't real.

PHOEBUS

It is a very real that exists alongside your world and in many ways influences it.

(MORE)

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

The two worlds are connected you see. What happens here happens there and vice versa.

JESS

How come I've never heard of Ophir before?

PHOEBUS

That's a question for Someone stronger and older than me.

JESS

Listen, I'm looking for a friend of mine. His name's Kai. He's gone missing and I was told you could help me find him.

PHOEBUS

I can tell you where he is, but I cannot find him for you.

With a wave of his hand, an image appears in the air.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

When you entered our world this afternoon, evil walked in after you.

In the image, Nurse Harper passes through the mirror behind Jess changing from a crabby adult in Kai's hospital room to a cute kid on the river bank in Ophir.

They watch as Harper befriends Kai at the river bank, then deceives him with a mind-trick. Reason gone, Kai follows her like a lap-dog.

JESS

What's happened?

PHOEBUS

She has done what she does best--controlled his mind.

She turns Kai into an animal and forces him to carry her to a castle far away.

JESS

Where is she taking him?

PHOEBUS

To Verglas castle, ten thousand miles away. Across the mountains of Nordey and the Forest of Din. The journey is long and arduous and you will suffer loss, but take heart--you are destined to win.

JESS

I'm destined?! I'm not even sure if I believe this is a real place.

PHOEBUS

Course you do! You're here aren't you?

Beat.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

I know it's a lot all at once, but it is all true and believing it is simple. All you have to do is choose to.

JESS

What if I choose to not to believe. What will happen to Kai

PHOEBUS

He will die.

JESS

DIE?! And, it'd be all my fault cause I let Harper in here.

PHOEBUS

Evil is always lurking.

JESS

You have powers, right? Can't you just turn back time and give me like a do-over?

PHOEBUS

You don't let yourself be tricked, that's unusual in one so young. And will be necessary in defeating Harper.

JESS

How'd you know about her?

PHOEBUS

She followed you through the mirror and has infected Ophir with evil. Our world is already beginning to suffer.

He waves his hand and images play in mid-air like a movie. Back in the hospital room, the mirror is all lit up. Harper steps into it after Jess and is transformed from adult into a little girl (8).

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

Like me, though the outside has changed, her insides remain the same.

In the "movie", Harper meets Kai by the lake and performs a mind-trick on him. Kai goes on all fours and paws her leg like a dog. Harper picks up a stick and throws it. Kai chases it and brings it back. Just then, a tail grows from his back side. Harper pats his head as if to say "good-boy."

JESS

What happened?

PHOEBUS

She's hidden his soul by controlling his mind. The longer he lives under it, the more lost his soul will be.

JESS

Well, can't you undo it?

PHOEBUS

It's not for me to do. When you came here this afternoon, I saw a shift in our stars. It is your destiny.

He pulls a handful of sand from a special box and throws it in the air. The cave dome and glow worms become Ophir's night sky with planets and clouds and stars. He waves his hand and they rotate.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

This is what our sky looked like before you got here. See that group of stars taking over our sky?

He points to a group of eight stars that hover quite close over the land.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

That's our constellation Rapha. It's been moving closer to us over the past few days, but it hit it's closest this afternoon.

JESS

So?

PHOEBUS

The name Rapha means Invalid.

JESS

And, you think that's me?

PHOEBUS

Yes. From the moment you passed through the mirror our sun began to rise in the constellation, Rapha. The Light is with you!

The movie and the sky "play" at the same time showing Jess stepping out of the mirror just as their sun rises through the constellation and rests at its head.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

The Light is with you for the quest ahead!

JESS

What quest?

He tells her about Harper following her into Ophir and what Harper did to Kai. How he is lost to mind-control and that his essence, his very life, everything that Jess knows about him will be gone if she doesn't do something. Can't he fix it? No, it is her calling alone.

PHOEBUS

Watch this.

The sky shows Rapha with the sun shining brilliantly above her head,

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

The moment Harper entered our world, this came into view.

The picture moves slightly and a monster with a gaping mouth open to devour Rapha inches across the sky.

JESS

Is that a constellation too?

PHOEBUS

(nods)

It is Ohanzee, the representation of all that is evil.

JESS

Why does it look like I'm about to die?

PHOEBUS

I will not hide from you that the cost will be very great. But be at peace, the Light is with you to save the boy and Light always dispels darkness. Now, you haven't much time. The longer Kai lives under Harper's control, the more lost his soul will become.

JESS

How can I believe all this? This morning I did not even think this place was real.

PHOEBUS

Doesn't a tree exist before you encounter it?

She contemplates this.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

I know this is a lot of information all at once, but it is all true and believing is simple. You need only to choose to.

JESS

Choose to believe that it is my destiny to fight some battle that is written in your sky to save a boy I just met from Harper's evil plot to control his mind?

PHOEBUS

(Claps his hands)
You've got it!

JESS

I'm sorry. This sounds like a really cool story. Let me know how it ends.

PHOEBUS

I will tell you how it ends. Our worlds are connected, you remember? From here Harper will invade the minds of all the children in the hospital, then spread into your city. She will pick on the sick and the weak. Do not think she won't pass into your brother's mind erasing all you once loved about him--his smile, his personality, the way he laughed and hated peas.

Jess covers her ears.

JESS

You're not real. I made you up. This is all a dream!

Jess runs out of the cave.

INT. OPERATING TABLE - REAL WORLD

Jess wakes up on an operating table, all is clinical-white. Machines and medical personnel surround her.

JESS

I can't move my legs. I can't move my legs!

NURSE

She's in shock!

NURSE pats Jess to calm her, but Jess struggles harder. Despite her immobility, Jess gives the Nurse a hard time. Birdsong preps a needle.

BIRDSONG

Hold her down.

Nurse straps Jess to the bed bars.

JESS

Dr. Birdsong! Tell her to let me go!

BIRDSONG

I'm sorry, Jessy. You SAW.

Birdsong approaches the gurney with a filled syringe.

JESS

I won't say anything to anyone. Just tell me where he is.

BIRDSONG

I can't do that.

Birdsong's injects Jess with a white serum.

NURSE

I need you to count backwards from ten.

Groggy, Jess fights the serum.

JESS

Where's Kai? Where did you take him?

INT. TINKER TOWN - COTTAGE CELLAR

SIMON

You said we'd play a game.

TINKER

Work first always, then play.

Simon steps into the machine.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Can't have you slouching.

He stands straightens up, hands at his sides. Tinker crosses her arms, indicating he follow her example. He does. He looks like a mummy in a sarcophagus.

SIMON

You said we'd play a game.

TINKER

Just a few more minutes and we will.

SIMON

You said that before.

TINKER

I meant it.

Tinker tightens the leather straps, and pulls on a lever. The human-pod slides from a standing to a table-top position.

TINKER (CONT'D)

That's a long face for this momentous occasion.
You're the first person to test this invention of mine.

SIMON

Looks weird. What's it do?

TINKER

Ever got tired of people bossing you around?

SIMON

All the time!

TINKER

When the transformation is complete, you'll be able to tell everyone what to do.

Simon lays on his back facing the ceiling. She pulls the lever. The human-pod reclines backward to a table-top position.

She places a visor over his eyes.

SIMON

Wait. I can't see.

She locks it into place. He struggles.

SIMON (CONT'D)

I don't like this. Take it off!

TINKER

If I turn it off, you'll miss the game.

Tinker reaches the panel, turns a dial way up. All needles move to the red zone. The machine WHIRS. He SCREAMS.

The WHIRRING slows, needles decrease from red to a blue line and down to black. Simon relaxes until only his face twitches with discomfort. Then, it turns suddenly placid.

Tinker unbuckles Simon's arms. She removes the visor revealing Simon's new stone-cold, milky-eyed glare.

She hands him a flute.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Ever played Simon Says?

INT TINKER TOWER - NIGHT

Tinker spies on Jess and Pelican through her telescope.

TINKER

She has help, Simon!

Tinker bangs her fist on a wooden table covered with toy dragons. They roll from the work table and litter the floor.

Simon turns his head slightly at the sound.

TINKER (CONT'D)

What have you got for me?

Simon turns his attention to the work, and is so diligent it's unclear whether or not he's heard her.

He opens one toy dragon's back and places a tiny clock-battery inside. He shuts it, then sets the dragon on the table top.

The toy walks across the table on its own, then stops. It's mouth cranks open and a short-range flame spews from its mouth.

A wide grin reaches the corners of the Tinker's mouth.

TINKER (CONT'D)

Perfect.

EXT THE DUNES - NIGHT

Jess, Shiloh and Pelican land in this God-forsaken place. Nothing but sand on every side. Pelican perches on Shiloh's shoulder. With the star as their guide, Jess leads them through the shifty sand to Tinker Town.

EXT TINKER TOWN - NEXT DAY

Wind-whipped and sun-scorched, Jess, Shiloh and Pelican reach the town. It sits like a junk yard oasis in the middle of the desert. The place is littered with worn and rusty mechanical parts.

Pelican perches on an old jack-in-the box laying face-down in a pile of garbage.

JESS

He made all these?

Shiloh nods.

SHILOH

For the princess.

He picks up a doll from the wreckage, pulls its string.

SHILOH (CONT'D)

When I was little this was one of my favorites.

DOLL

Welcome to Tinker Toooooown.

The last word is stretched, robotic. All around them are old wind-up toys and wooden blocks, painted porcelain doll remains with beautiful garments.

JESS

He must've been very good.

SHILOH

He was.

PELICAN (O.C.)

Jess...

In front of them stands a sharp-edged, modern-looking edifice. A plume of thick, smoke rises from its top.

SHILOH

Looks like fire, but nobody's running.

Jessica's eyes narrow as she recognizes it.

JESS

That's not fire, it's steam. He's running a factory.

PELICAN

A flac-tory?

JESS

It's a place in my world where you can make the same object over and over.

PELICAN

Like the time we needed ten pairs of the same shoe for all my brothers and sisters?

JESS

I'm talking hundreds.

PELICAN

One hundred shoes!!

SHILOH

Or, toys.

PELICAN

What would he do with all that?

JESS

There's a way we can find out.

Pelican sees where this is going.

PELICAN

I don't wanna go!

Shiloh grabs Pelican. They follow Jess to the factory.

EXT. TOYMAKER FACTORY

Jess slinks around the side of the building, drops down behind a dumpster. She slowly lifts up, peers through an open window. She slinks in through a side door, followed by Pelican who's mouth drops open at the sight.

Brainwashed Jax, Quinby and all her royal subjects sweat as they work the line of a long conveyer belt. Pelican and Shiloh watch, mouth agape.

PELICAN

This is a factory?!

Jess nods. Puts a finger to her mouth to shush him. Jess moves stealthily along the factory walls.

SHILOH

(whispers)

Where are you going?

Jess sees an open hanger.

JESS

They must keep that open for ventilation.

She creeps toward it. The others join her.

INT. FACTORY

The dry heat outside is nothing compared to the humid, stickiness inside the factory.

Shiloh pulls at his clothes to let in some air. Pelican uses a wing to fan himself and Jess. The three crouch behind a pile of parts.

A flute-like note SOUNDS. They watch as production stops at once. In the silence, Pelican's mouth-breathing is too loud. Jess looks. Taking the cue, Shiloh closes Pelican's beak.

Worker's heads turn in unison toward a pair of 1980's speakers on the walls. They wait. The speakers blurt two staccato notes and attention returns to the assembly line. A flurry of eighth notes fills the room. The conveyor belt speeds up, and production resumes double-time.

In one corner of the large room, sand is fed into a kiln, toy dragons blow fire inside of it and out pops a rectangular slate of glass. Sweat pours from the brainwashed workers as they cut and smooth wood for frames.

JESS

They're making mirrors!

Sure enough, at the end of the line, slates of glass are fitted into frames and stacked onto wagons in large heaps. Brainwashed workers drag the heavy wagons into another room.

SHILOH

Wait, Jess.

Shiloh grabs for her but it is too late. Jess leaves the parts pile hiding place, and follows the wagons.

INT. ROOM OF MIRRORS

A vast Great Room with vaulted ceilings and many curtain-covered windows. Above two winding staircases, mirrors crowd the stone walls.

Wagon-pullers hand off their mirrors to other workers who unload them. In one corner of the room, Simon points to HAMMER AND NAILS WORKER to mount mirrors onto the floor.

JESS

Simon!

She runs to him. He sees her, but there is no recognition in his eyes. He balls up his fist. Brainwashed Workers with mirrors close in around Jess creating a carnival fun-house.

Simon's reflection appears in the mirrors.

JESS (CONT'D)

I know you, Simon. You've got to remember.

Jess moves bravely toward his reflection, but it disappears. Jess calls out knowing he is close and can hear her.

JESS (CONT'D)

You love bananas, and hate peas. There's a scar over your right eye because when you were little, you cut it with the scissors.

In a corner of the room where Jess cannot see, Simon touches his brow.

JESS (CONT'D)

And, you like to play games, but you always beat me because you're smart, Simon. You're the smartest kid I know.

Simon appears in front of one of the mirrors around her. Jess runs to him, but she reaches hard glass--it's just his reflection. Simon laughs.

Jess faces her toughest memory, hopes uttering it will save him.

JESS (CONT'D)

There was an accident and I couldn't save you, but I love you, Simon. I love you.

Simon waves his hand and the mirrors are removed. Jess hugs him.

JESS (CONT'D)

I knew you'd remember.

His expression softens, and for a moment we think she's reached him. Then, his face quickly hardens and we know that it has not worked. He snaps, summons Brainwashed Jax.

Brainwashed Jax arrives with Brainwashed Guards in tow. They carry a captured Shiloh and protesting Pelican into the room.

JAX

Look what we found!

Simon grins.

SIMON

Cuff them.

Jess watches Brainwashed Guards shackle her friends. Immobilized with grief, Jess does not fight when they cuff her too.

INT. MACHINE ROOM

A metal monster of a machine sits in the center of the room, Toymaker attaches Quinby's scepter to it.

SIMON

Master...

TOYMAKER

Not now, Simon, I'm busy.

Simon enters the room. Brainwashed Guards drag Jess into the room, drop her at Toymaker's feet.

TOYMAKER (CONT'D)

Aw, did sister join the party?

JESS

Let him go! You have what you want.

TOYMAKER

Not quite.

He whistles. Brainwashed Workers appear, wheel the scepter-machine out of the room.

TOYMAKER (CONT'D)

(claps hands)

This is exciting. The whole family's here for the unveiling of my latest invention. If you don't enjoy it, I know I will!

Toymaker and his robes rustle out of the room. When no one follows, he pauses annoyed.

TOYMAKER (CONT'D)

Idiots! Bring the girl!

Brainwashed Guards lift Jess off the floor, shove her forward. Simon follows Toymaker.

INT. ROOM OF MIRRORS

Guards tie Jess to the metal machine, chain her heavily.

TOYMAKER

You've got the best seat in the house!

Simon pulls a lever in the floor and all rows of curtains pull back. Sunshine pours in from the windows.

TOYMAKER (CONT'D)

Let there be light!

While Simon feeds coal into the machine, Toy maker examines Jessy's chains. Locks eyes with her.

TOYMAKER (CONT'D)

Come to my town and try to undo a plan that's years in the making?

JESS

What happened to you? How could someone who made toys for children become so cruel?

TOYMAKER

You thought I made toys for the children?! I made toys for ME. I loved being the toymaker, the one the king and queen went to for the best gadgets money could buy for their spoiled brat, Quinby.

JESS

Then, you deserved what you got!

TOYMAKER

Yes! After they let me go, I realized that too. I deserve a bigger, better stage to play on. If you control the kids, you control the parents; you control the parents, you control the world. Or--in this case--BOTH worlds!

Jess sees the depth of Toy maker's depravity.

TOYMAKER (CONT'D)

What an unfortunate turn of events. It's a shame you chose the wrong side. You have such grit.

JESS
Please, don't do this.

TOYMAKER
But it will be SO fun!

Toymaker checks himself out in one of the many mirrors. Gets himself camera-ready.

TOYMAKER (CONT'D)
It's showtime!

He hits his well-lit mark in front of the large machine. Simon powers the machine. It stutters then WHIRS. A wave of power surges from the machine and light beam shoots out of the scepter. It catapults Toymaker into the real world on the mirror's other side.

INT. TV STATION - VANITY MIRROR - DAY

On the set of a kid's show, a puppet looks into a five foot old-Hollywood-style mirror surrounded by globe shaped bulbs.

FEMALE PUPPET
Mirror, mirror on the wall who is the fairest...

The mirror's glass shimmers and disappears. The shocked Female Puppet looks to the camera for help.

The TV PRODUCER points an index finger to the camera's top and the "LIVE" sign lit up in red.

TV PRODUCER
(whispers)
We're still on the air.

TV Producer rotates an index finger in a circle signaling the puppet to improvise. Female Puppet picks up her line.

FEMALE PUPPET
Who is the fairest...?

Toymaker steps out of the mirror onto the set.

TOYMAKER
I am!

Female Puppet faints.

Below the raised set, the PUPPETEER walks off the job. TV Producer tries to stop it.

TV PRODUCER

C'mon.

PUPPETEER

I don't get paid enough.

CAMERAMAN

You want me to keep rolling?

TV PRODUCER

Yes, we've gotta a show to produce.

On set, the Toymaker grins. His invention actually worked!

TV PRODUCER (CONT'D)

Listen, I don't know who you are, but you gotta do something.

An ASSISTANT slides a lav onto Toymaker's medieval robes, and discretely backs away as Toymaker turns to camera.

TOYMAKER

I thought you'd never ask.

INT. GROUP HOME - TV ROOM

A bunch of GROUP HOME KIDS sit cross-legged in front of the TV for their afternoon program. The camera zooms in on the Toymaker's miserable face.

Ellie pulls on Casey's skirt, points to the screen. Casey's eyes widen.

CASEY

What in the world?

On the TV, Toymaker pulls out a kaleidoscope. He presses it onto the glass.

TOYMAKER

Hello boys and girls. Let me introduce you to my new toy.

INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - CHINA

CHINESE KIDS in uniforms eat at long tables, their eyes glued to the wall-mounted TV's. As kids watch Toymaker's kaleidoscope on TV, their pupils transform to match its colors and shapes. Like zombies, they get up from the table in unison.

INT SCHOOL BATHROOMS

Glass mirrors set into the pastel-colored tiles shimmer and open up like windows into the Fantasy World. Boys and girls walk through.

INT. DANCE STUDIO

BRAINWASHED BALLET KIDS step from the shiny wooden floor into the large mirrored walls all around them.

INT. GROUP HOME - VARIOUS BEDROOMS

Brainwashed Group Home Kids crowd the mirror-windows, and walk through two-by-two.

INT. FANTASY WORLD - ROOM OF MIRRORS

Brainwashed Ballet Kids, Chinese Kids and a bunch of OTHER BRAINWASHED KIDS from all over the world step out of the mirrors on the wall and file down the winding staircases.

Jess is horrified when Brainwashed Group Home Kids come up from the mounted floor mirrors and fill the room.

JESS

No...

The 5th Grader she punched on the school yard files down the staircase with kaleidoscope-eyes too. Jess recognizes him.

JESS (CONT'D)

I wouldn't wish this on my worst enemy...

The machine sputters and complains. Steam blows out of its top putting Jess in real danger.

SHILOH

That thing's gonna blow.

PELICAN

You've gotta get out of there.

It bulges and shakes. Steam blows onto Jess's face, Hot water drips from her chains. She calls out in front of her.

JESS

Simon! Help me!

SHILOH

He's gone, Jess.

JESS

I've got to try.

Jess pulls with all her might against her bonds. She stretches toward Simon, reaches his shoulder from behind.

INT CAR - FLASHBACK

Through the windshield, Jess can see the large semi skidding in their direction. Stunned silent, she puts her hand on Simon's shoulder to warn him.

INT. ROOM OF MIRRORS

With her hand on Simon's shoulder, Jess cries out:

JESS

Simon!

His eyes return to normal, and his consciousness returns.

SIMON

Jess?!

JESS

(overjoyed)

Yes! It's me.

He clutches her hands, then notices the chains on them.

JESS (CONT'D)

I need your help.

He sees the shaking machine. He turns down the boiler, and unlocks her chains.

The two embrace for the first time in a long time.

JESS (CONT'D)

I thought I lost you.

SIMON

You nearly did.

SHILOH

Hey guys, we still got a lunatic Toymaker on the loose.

Simon looks around. The room is packed with KIDS FROM ALL NATIONS.

SIMON

Woah! Who's in charge here?

JESS

You are.

SIMON

Right.

Simon surveys the machine, problem-solves.

SIMON (CONT'D)

If I reconfigure the set up, we should be able to suck the Toymaker back through the mirror and trap him.

He eyes the scepter pointed high. Jess sees where his mind's going. She bends down, gives him a leg-up.

JESS

How do we get him close enough for it to work?

SHILOH

Easy. We just need a little bait.

All eyes fall on the muzzled Pelican.

PELICAN

(mumbles)

No way! Nu-uh!

INT. REAL WORLD - TV STATION

Pelican pops out of the set-mirror. He SQUAWKS and flutters into the TV frame. TV Producer swats at him with a paper.

TV PRODUCER

Pfft. Buzz off you impudent bird!

Toymaker looks on in alarm.

TOYMAKER

How did you get free? Simon!

Pelican flies hard, aims with all his might to fly back through the mirror. Toymaker follows.

TV PRODUCER

Not again!

INT. FANTASY WORLD - ROOM OF MIRRORS

Simon is positioned on top of the machine with Jess under it. Pelican comes through the mirror panting.

PELICAN

He's right behind me!

SHILOH

(to Simon/Jess)

Get ready.

Just as Toymaker comes through the mirror...

SHILOH (CONT'D)

Now!

Together, Jess and Simon yank the scepter from the machine. All the mirrors return to glass.

Simon snaps his fingers. Brainwashed Jax and Brainwashed Guards grab Toymaker and carry him out of the room.

INT. FACTORY - CONVEYER BELT

Brainwashed Jax and Brainwashed Guards strap Toymaker onto the mechanical belt. All Brainwashed Workers stop, stare.

A flurry of eighth notes SOUNDS through the speakers. The belt starts up and Brainwashed Workers cover Toymaker with sand.

As the belt carries him toward the kiln, Toymaker cries out:

TOYMAKER

No! Noooo.

Brainwashed Quinby notices a problem with the process, turns the temperature WAY up. Toymaker SCREAMS inside the hot oven.

JESS

He's burning alive, Simon. Make it stop!

Simon quickly raises the flute from his chest and blows two staccato notes. Brainwashed workers stop, but it is too late.

When Jess opens the oven, she finds the Toymaker stuck in a thick ball of beautifully colored blown glass.

Suddenly, the eyes of all the workers return to normal. The room erupts in cheers and thunderous applause.

INT. ROOM OF MIRRORS

Shiloh and Pelican slide the scepter back into the machine. Simon powers it up, and a light beam shines forth.

Jess slides her crystal prism in front of the scepter's rays. The refracted light bathes the room in rainbow colors that wash over the kids restoring their eyes and minds.

Simon repositions some gears. He aims the scepter high. It blasts a blue light-ray that bounces from top-most mirror onto all the others. All glass panes shimmer. One by one, the kids step into the mirrors and return to the real world.

INT. SCHOOL BATHROOMS - CHINA

A CHINESE REPORTER smiles into camera. When the bathroom mirrors shimmer, camera turns from her to the walls. Chinese Reporter is delighted when Chinese Kids step out of the mirrors and onto the bathroom tile.

INT. MIRRORS IN VARIOUS LOCATIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Kids Of All Nations come back through the mirrors, received by parents, family with open arms.

EXT. THE DUNES - DAY

Quinby, Shiloh, Simon and Pelican stand around the scepter-machine. Phoebus, the Astronomer, bends down to face Jess.

PHOEBUS

It's a brave thing you did, Jessica. I knew you could do it.

She smiles. Removes the crystal from her neck and gives it back to him. He puts up his hand.

PHOEBUS (CONT'D)

Keep it. You never know when you'll need it.

Jess hugs him, moves on to Quinby.

QUINBY

I hereby lift the X-ecution previously assigned to you and you friend.

Pelican is grateful.

QUINBY (CONT'D)

And welcome you to return to Quinby Castle whenever you like.

Jess bows low.

JESS

Thank you, Highness.

QUINBY

And, you better come back too. To the artwork in
my new palace.

Jax rolls the beautiful blown-glass sculpture that houses the dead Toymaker. He loads it into the star-boat full of Quinby's subjects.

Jess approaches Shiloh. He slicks his hair back with a sweaty hand, uncomfortable with goodbyes.

SHILOH

When you come back, I'll take you fishing.

JESS

Sounds like a date.

Was that out loud?

JESS (CONT'D)

Plan, I meant plan.

Red in the face, Jess moves on to Pelican.

JESS (CONT'D)

I can't imagine saying goodbye to you.

He envelopes her in his feathers.

JESS (CONT'D)

You're my best friend in the whole world.

They share a tearful embrace.

QUINBY

Alright already! You want to go home or not?!

Jess takes Simon's hand.

SIMON

Ready?

JESS

Ready.

Shiloh lays a mirror down on the hot sand. Phoebus pulls the lever, aims the scepter-machine toward the mirror.

QUINBY

It's my scepter. Let me do it!

Phoebus stands aside to let the little princess drive. She powers up the machine and fires.

INT. GROUP HOME - TV ROOM

The mirror shimmers. SWAT pull their guns and aim for the mirror. Elle pulls away from Casey's grasp in front of the guns. She peers through the mirror. Simon and Jessy come through. They step onto the worn carpet holding hands. Elle embraces Jess. The rest of the liberated and recently returned Group Home Kids gather around Jess and Simon in a big group hug.

CASEY

Jess, there's someone here to see you.

Casey gestures to a WOMAN (40) on the side of the room. The kids part, and Jessy sees her:

JESS

MOM!

She and Simon run to her like only kids can.

MOM

Oh, my babies!

She lifts Simon and kisses Jess.

MOM (CONT'D)

I'm here to take you home, but...

She eyes the happy, huggy Group Home Kids.

MOM (CONT'D)

...you can stay another night with your friends if
you like.

That's enough adventure.

SIMON/ JESS

NO!

Mom is taken aback by their over-eager reaction.

JESS

(softer)

Mom, let's go home.

Mom hugs her babies, and walks them out.

THE END