

TRUE BELIEVERS

PILOT

**COLD OPENING:**

INT. Comic Book Store - Day

Ben (Mid-20s. Cool. Loud. A wannabe ladies-man) stares right at us from behind the till. There's passion in his eyes. Big speech time-

BEN

Do you know about the  
craftsmanship of the comic book?  
When I was like way younger, the  
images were mind-blowing. Like-

He makes that mind-blowing gesture with big explosion noises.

BEN (CONT'D)

It all inspired me to draw like  
all of the great comic book  
illustrators. So I drew, and  
drew, and drew. But that isn't  
enough though, is it? So what  
would be the next step into  
being in the business? To be  
with the people! That's what!  
Through the people, we learn, we  
improve, and we flourish through  
the people! Because without them  
buying comic books, there won't  
be a next generation to inspire!  
Is there anything else I can do  
for you sir?

The CUSTOMER IN THE DINOSAUR SHIRT gives Ben a confused look after being given the speech.

DINOSAUR CUSTOMER

No, that's it. Cool speech  
though.

TITLE CARD - TRUE BELIEVERS

INT. Comic Book Store - Day - Some Time Later

The store, spacious and retro-looking, is empty. Ben, by the till, is bored to death because of it. He has to do something for the sake of his sanity.

BEN

JESS!

BAM! Jess (mid-20s. Peppy. Super-nerdy. The actual ladies-man) springs out from the door near the till

JESS

(rushes to Ben)

What!? What!? What is it?

BEN

Talk to me! Please!

JESS

Ben! I thought this was an emergency.

BEN

It **is** an emergency. I'm bored out of my mind here!

JESS

How? It's always quiet about now.

BEN

Yes, but that doesn't make me any less bored. Does it?

JESS

You just want to tell me about your date tonight, don't you?

BEN

I got a date tonight!

They high five.

JESS

So, who's your next victim then?

BEN

Susan. She's very nice. Big Marvel fan. Err, Likes a weekly jog.

JESS

Mate, you just described a quatre of the nerdy woman population.

BEN

Is this based on a general consensus or your love life?

JESS

I don't have to answer that.

Ben gives her a cheeky smirk.

JESS (CONT'D)

Anything else?

BEN

Yes. She thinks Mask of the Phantasm is the best Batman movie, so score!

JESS

Ooh, she's a keeper alright. When are you seeing her?

BEN

After work, at about eight-ish.

JESS

Nice.

BEN

So, what are your plans for tonight then?

JESS

Helping Michele move boxes for one of her business friends.

BEN

What? Why?

JESS

Because she's my sister.

BEN

But she hates you.

JESS

That's not true. She just hates  
that I work here.

BEN

It might as well be the same  
thing.

JESS

Well, when you suddenly find  
yourself helping a sibling with  
whatever, we can compare notes.

BEN

As soon as that happens when I'm  
like 54, we'll compare notes.

JESS

Deal.

They fist bump.

JESS

Right. If you need me, I'll be  
at the back doing the admin.

BEN

I thought Ross the Boss is doing  
admin.

JESS

Last minute change.

BEN

I don't remember. Is doing admin  
in your contract?

JESS

Do you really want to argue with  
him about it?

They both look towards the door labelled "Manager". A chill  
suddenly filled the air, and fear entered Ben and Jess's  
hearts.

BEN

(trying to sound chill)

I'm sure he has his reasons.

They then went back to work.

END OF ACT 1

INT. Flat - Late Afternoon/Early Evening

We see a spacious, luxurious flat with windows for walls. One that a banker or stockbroker would own.

Barbara, 36 and sharp-looking, happens to be that stockbroker.

BARBARA

If you can put these here by the kitchen, that would be fabulous.

MICHELE (Also mid-30s and Jess's big sister) and Jess, enter the room with big, heavy-looking boxes, and did as commanded.

BARBARA

Now if you excuse me, I must see what happened to Mike and Brin about the chaise lounge. Ta-ta!

She leaves the flat with a swagger in her walk.

JESS

So, if Barbara's super rich, how come she got us to move her things?

MICHELE

Believe me or not, this is how she catches-up with friends face-to-face these days.

JESS

If that's the case, then how does she treat her parents?

Jess is about to leave to get another box when—

MICHELE

I found a course on classic literature the other day—

JESS

[annoyed and interrupts]

Please not this again!

MICHELE

Jess, I don't like the idea of that brilliant mind of yours being stuck in that shop with Ben bloody Harroth.

JESS

What's wrong with Ben?

MICHELE

What's **right** with Ben?

JESS

Hey! Ben is good, well-educated, and pretty awesome guy, and you can't prove me otherwise!

CUT TO:

INT. Restaurant - Continuous

BEN

...and that is why Stan Lee is an absolute hack.

We see a proud Ben with his date, SUSAN - pretty, short-haired, and disinterested in comics.

SUSAN

Wow. That's interesting [not really].

BEN

I'm just glad that Jack Kirby and Company got more recognition for their contribution.

They then proceed to eating their fancy-looking dinner in the fancy-looking restaurant they're in.

SUSAN

So how does working in a comic book shop help with your art exactly?

BEN

Well, what better way to look at the great illustrative works of the last two centuries? Like Tarantino at a video rental shop, you know?

Susan just smiles and nods, as if she knows what he's saying.

SUSAN

Okay, but how does it help with your drawing. I mean, who inspires you to better?

BEN

Oh, well that's easy peasy. There's... um...

Pauses to think. Confidence starts weaning.

BEN (CONT'D)

Well, there's-no. His stuff is rather messy (bites lip).

He looks at Susan. He gives nervous smile.

She looks unimpressed. Bad sign. Quick! Say something!

BEN (CONT'D)

So, why's Mask of the Phantasm your favourite Batman movie?

CUT TO:

INT. Flat - Continuous

MICHELE

I can't believe you're doing this. After everything I've done for you, you can't do the **one** thing I ask you to do!

JESS

I told you I didn't even want to do it. Why do you have to make a massive deal about it?

MICHELE

You really want me to give you the list? How I was the only one that supported you after you came out to Mum and Dad.

Jess starts to look down at her feet, knowing too well of all of it.

MICHELE (CONT'D)

All those times I've arrange these social events for you after all of your mates started going to uni or move to bloomin' Newcastle and so forth. I even helped you choose the uni and degree you should have stuck studying--

JESS

And that's why I went in the first place, Michele! How else could I thank you for all of that?! And I really tried, seriously. I just couldn't carry on in the end. It's just not for me.

MICHELE

You should have finished the degree **for me**.

CUT TO:

INT. Restaurant - Continuous

BEN

Well juggling with that and the job isn't exactly easy.

SUSAN

Then ditch the drawing stuff then. It's careless and unstable anyway.

BEN

Well, you're one to talk with your cosy high-end job and your lack of financial insecurity. At least I'm finally trying to do something that I love here.

SUSAN

And how's that working?

Ben's look's he's been punched in the gut.

CUT TO:

INT. Flat - Continuous

JESS

It's not that I haven't tried finding something. I've been looking at a bunch of online courses, workshops.

MICHELE

What kind of courses?

JESS

Well... there's this-

MICHELE

Do you even know what you're doing?! I just don't know why you can't get a picture of what you want in life. To be completely honest with you, helping you is just exhausting.

Silence. Jess feels small, unable to defend herself.

CUT TO:

INT. Restaurant - Continuous

SUSAN

It seems like I had you all wrong. I should probably go.

BEN

What about the movie?

SUSAN

I've already seen it on Netflix.  
I only agreed because every  
other guy is massive asshole.  
Based on this though, you're not  
as different.

Ben is hurt by this. Tries his best to keep cool, but is  
failing.

SUSAN (CONT'D)

Whatever it is that you need to  
do, just-

We see a split screen of Michele and Susan as they both say:

MICHELE AND SUSAN

Get your act together!

We then move back to-

INT. Flat - Continuous

MICHELE

I'm just going to see what's  
happening with Barbara.

Michele exits the flat, leaving Jess alone, pathetic and small  
in the giant flat.

CUT TO:

INT. Restaurant - Continuous

Susan leaves a very sad Ben, staring at an empty plate.  
The WAITER then comes in towards him.

WAITER

How's everything so far then?

BEN

My date thought I was a loser.

WAITER

I'm sorry to hear that. Would  
the dessert menu help in some  
way?

BEN

That would be great, actually.  
Thanks.

The Waiter cleared the table and left a saddened Ben.

END OF ACT 2

FADE TO:

INT. Comic Book Store - The Next Day

The customer, BADGER (mid-late-40s. Tired-looking. Dapper. Possibly lonely) blabbers on dully to poor Ben.

BADGER

-and so, I thought maybe try moving the hosepipe, but Darren wouldn't have it really.

BEN

Uh-huh.

BADGER

Always the smug one, Darren. Thinks he's king of the country an all that jazz.

BEN

Mm-hmm.

BADGER

Well, next thing you know it, the hosepipe was just causing all of this anarchy; water everywhere, clients soaked, food ruined. And that's basically how the company ended barbeque Mondays.

BEN

Great story there (it wasn't). So that'll-

BADGER

(interrupting) So I ended up complaining about that whole fiasco to the higher-ups...

NO! Ben doesn't know how much he can handle this!

Jess enters the store. It's like the greatest breath of fresh air.

JESS

Morning.

BEN

Oh, thank God!

(turns to Badger) No offense.

BADGER

No, I'm used to it. It's like when I was at this conference at Winchester—

JESS

Yes, that's good to know Badger. Is there anything else?

BADGER

No, not really?

Without Badger clocking it in, Jess escorts him to the door.

JESS

Give the boys at the record store my love then, hope you have a good day.

BADGER

Shouldn't I pay for [BREAK]

BADGER (CONT'D)

the comics before I go?

JESS

I'll put it on your tab for next time, alright mate?

BADGER

Oh, right then. See you soon then Jess.

JESS

Bye.

Badger leaves the store, and Jess walks to the till. She seems fed up.

BEN

Hey, someone's got their claws out today. You alright?

JESS

Yeah, fine. All Michele had to do now is for her to make me finish uni at gunpoint and we'd call it a perfect day.

BEN

That bad?

JESS

Peachy. What about you?

BEN

Yeah, it didn't work out in the end.

JESS

You did the Stan Lee rant, didn't you?

BEN

Yeah, but that wasn't it. She said that I have a "careless and unstable career" as an artist.

JESS

She sounds like a dick.

BEN

No!

Jess just looks at him.

BEN (CONT'D)

Yeah. Well, I have a job. Got a website in progress. Next thing Marvel may be ringing my phone as we speak.

JESS

How is the website going, by the way?

Ben collapses on the till, moaning.

BEN

I just don't have anything  
that's finished! Self-promotion  
is so hard!

JESS

Ben.

BEN

Yes?

JESS

Give me your secret notebook.

Ben grabs a clipboard under the desk and gives it to Jess. She  
flips a file to reveal an impressive sketch on the back.

JESS

This is great stuff Ben. I mean,  
there's no reason as to **why** you  
can't post them anyway.

Jess waits for a response. Nothing.

JESS (CONT'D)

Tell you what, you use some  
social media account from  
wherever, and you can use that  
to post your sketches while you  
use your website for the real  
deal here.

BEN

You really think that would work?

JESS

What wouldn't?

BEN

Alright, I'll give it a go.  
Thanks Jess.

JESS

Just helping out a friend is all.

BEN

What about you and Michele? Are you going to be alright?

JESS

Yeah, we'll be fine. I know she's just looking out for me. I just need to sort out what I want to do.

BEN

Do you know what it is yet?

JESS

Not really. Do you think that's bad?

BEN

I don't think so. [BREAK]

BEN (CONT'D)

I'm confident you'll find something.

JESS

Thanks Ben.

Ben lifts his hand for a high five.

BEN

High five for small steps?

JESS

For small steps.

They both high five. Ben is over the moon.

BEN

Yeah! Well, I got to go and do that admin!

JESS

Righto, mate.

Ben goes to the backroom and leaves Jess by the till.

A CUSTOMER then walks into the shop to the till.

JESS

Hi there. How can I help you?

HELPED CUSTOMER

Yeah, I need some help finding  
some comics.

JESS

What kind are you looking for?

They bring out a list, and comedically rolls down the floor.  
All that Jess could say, in a restrained tone..

JESS

Oh, boy..

THE END.