

TO STAY OR NOT TO STAY

Written by

J.G. Blodgett

WGAW #: 1568853

Jacob G Blodgett
Email: ifonlyoneproductions@yahoo.com
(775)291-3590

FADE IN:

EXT. HOTEL/THEATRE - EVENING

A modest looking theatre at the end of a long stretch of hotel rooms, constructed from adobe and painted white. The words "AMARGOSA OPERA HOUSE" are the set marquee.

A muffled CLASSICAL MELODY of some sort can be heard inside.

INT. THEATRE - CONTINUOUS

The theatre is breathtaking inside. The walls are a complete mural of characters that might have attended an opera in the 16th century. The King and Queen, nobles, bullfighters, lords and maidens adorn the walls in a symphony of colors.

A grand piano sits at the base of the stage on the right. An old wood burning stove to the left.

The ceiling is a mural in itself. A beautiful vanilla sky, with the four winds converging on each other on a golden centerpiece, where angels dance and play antique instruments.

Cherubs flutter about the sky with harps in hand.

The actual audience is not what would be expected for such a venue. Only a few patrons are scattered about the theatre seats, maybe five in all. A sad sight to say the least.

On stage, however, a striking young woman, ABIGAIL CHASE(25), in full on Victorian costume and makeup, plays out her lone role with the fullest of heart, as though she plays for the packed 16th century audience on the walls, and not the few in the seats.

An intense prerecorded ORCHESTRA bellows up to a final CRESCENDO as she makes her final whirls of interpretive dance and comes to a stop, slumped over in perfect pose, center stage.

The meager audience claps a MILD APPLAUSE as Abigail looks up with a disappointed look, quickly hidden by a modest smile of appreciation.

LATER

Abigail steps out on stage, out of costume now, to find the owner and manager of the Amargosa Hotel and Opera House, MIKE CANON(42), average looking gentleman. He sits at the edge of the stage, Abigail joins him.

MIKE

Hey, kid.

Abigail just nods.

MIKE

We've had a good run, haven't we?

ABIGAIL

So it's true then?

Mike gives a sympathetic look.

MIKE

There's just not enough tourism
rolling through anymore.

(beat)

This was our last big show.

Abigail looks to be almost to the point of tears. She composes herself before she speaks.

ABIGAIL

Can I at least get one more season
of my theatre camp in?

Mike nods a sympathetic nod, accompanied by a pat on the leg, before he rises up to leave Abigail alone on stage.

His FOOTSTEPS echo throughout the empty theatre while Abigail looks around at her 16 century audience and takes a deep breath then leaves the theatre herself.

EXT. HOTEL/THEATRE - DAY

The sun is bright and hot. A few tourists MURMURS can be heard over by the cafe at the other end of the hotel.

A rather large passenger van arrives in a small dust cloud and comes to a stop in front of the hotel entrance. The door opens and the theatre camp kids step off one by one.

First and second off are brother and sister, JIM(15) and JANE(15), who look to be attached at the hip, as they stick close together. They both share a look of "OMG".

Third off is JASON(14), a somewhat handsome looking young man with a certain hip-hop attitude, or swagger about him.

Fourth off is MARYANNE(16), a sweet but confident girl with wholesome good looks. She smiles and walks as if she knows where she's going.

And fifth off is ARNOLD(14), a shy and timid young kid, with milky white skin and more than enough freckles to go around.

A few other kids, HARRY(15), CAROL(14) and SUSAN(15), and one CHAPERONE(37), hop off the van last. The chaperone gathers them together then they all usher into the hotel lobby where they are greeted by Abigail.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

The children file into the moderate size lobby. They keep to themselves, each seems unwilling to greet the other.

ABIGAIL

Hello everyone, and welcome to the Amargosa Hotel and Opera House.

(beat)

I am so happy to welcome you all to another season of theatre camp.

(beat)

My name is Abigail Chase, and I will be your instructor.

(beat)

I see we have a lot of new faces this season, and a few familiar ones as well...

She smiles at Maryanne, who smiles back with a small, excited wave then looks at the others with a look of pride, possibly even a little arrogance.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

I know we are all going to have a lot of fun together, and I cannot wait to get to know each and every one of you.

(beat)

Now if you will all follow James here...

JAMES(32), hotel assistant, stands next to Abigail and gives a casual salute.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

He will show you all to the dorms, outback.

Abigail smiles at the children as they file into a hallway and disappear. Her and Maryanne hug and exchange a few muffled words as she passes by.

Just as the children leave the lobby Abigail is distracted by the sound of a car that PULLS up outside. She steps outside to inspect.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

James ushers the kids down a long creepy hallway. They all look around in utter dismay at the cold damp hall. Strange, hand-painted portraits adorn the walls in various places.

JAMES

You know, a lot of famous writers come here, and have come here, to be inspired and write some very famous works.

JASON

(under breath to Jim)
Somehow I doubt that.

He and Jim share a stifled chuckle.

JAMES

Even Red Skelton himself has walked these halls and has stayed in these rooms.

(beat)

Well, one room, to be exact. He always stayed in the same room.

(beat)

It's been painted with various colorful clowns in his honor. Since he was a bit of a clown himself.

James laughs at his own comment then notices that the kids don't care. He stops and turns.

JAMES

Do you guys even know who Red Skelton is?

MARYANNE

I do, James!

JANE

(rolls her eyes)
Who saw that one coming?

Maryanne casts her a look and quiets down.

James leads on.

JAMES

Well, something else that may
interest you all.

James turns quickly on the crew of kids. He startles them a little.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(ominously)

Many of the guests that have stayed
here say, that they have seen
ghosts walk these halls.

A few of the kids look worried. Others, like Jason and Jim,
just blow it off with a "humph" and a shrug.

JAMES (CONT'D)

And behind that mirror over
there...

(points to end of hall)

Are the cold, broken remains of the
lonely miners' cabins.

(beat)

We call them "Spooky Hallow". Many
miners lost their lives in this
very building...

(turns on the kids again)

Many of whom... still remain.

Jason and Jim are still not fazed. They look at each other
and roll their eyes.

EXT. HOTEL/THEATRE - CONTINUOUS

Abigail watches as the car that caught her attention sits
ominously by the cafe. Looks to be a military vehicle, jet
black with military licence plates.

She holds herself and casts a look of contempt as a slight
breeze flutters her hair and lite sun-dress.

Abigail turns to go inside as the DRIVER of the vehicle, a
stiff necked individual with a clean military cut, in full-on
formal military attire, steps out and watches her disappear
into the hotel.

EXT. THEATRE CAMP - MOMENTS LATER

Out behind the Hotel/Theatre is a camp of sorts.

The kids look on in utter disappointment at a run down
looking collection of mock-up old western buildings.

A fire pit. An old mock-up gallows, complete with an ominous hanging tree are the scene.

All the structures look like they are on their last leg, the paint cracked and faded.

A couple of stray cats roam around and MOAN and MEOW for food and/or attention.

Jason drops his bag, his mouth already agape.

JASON

You have got to be kidding me.

Maryanne looks as enthusiastic as ever.

MARYANNE

What? I think it's beautiful. Come on, I'll show you all around.

JAMES

That's right, Maryanne. You kids have fun now.

James leaves them to it.

Maryanne practically skips away.

Jane sarcastically mimics her enthusiastic steps.

The rest of the kids hide their chuckles and follow along.

INT. BOYS DORMS - MOMENTS LATER

Jim, Jason, Arnold and Harry slowly open the doors to a huge room full of unclothed bunk-beds. It looks ridiculous since they are the only four male campers this season.

The inside looks much better than the outside, however, but they still shuffle in with fairly disappointed looks on their faces.

INT. GIRL'S DORMS - MOMENTS LATER

Maryanne bursts in with excitement and claims her usual bunk.

MARYANNE

Come on, sillies.

Jane and the others trail behind, with less enthusiasm.

MARYANNE (CONT'D)

Isn't it just the best?

Jane takes a look around at the bare beds. At least a hundred naked blue mattresses, and only four of them.

JANE

Uh, yeah... the best.

EXT. THEATRE CAMP - MOMENTS LATER

The sun sets and rises on the dorms. A rooster CROWS.

INT. THEATRE - THE NEXT DAY

All the students linger around the stage and speak to each other in small groups.

Arnold kind of hangs by himself.

Jason laughs and shows off with a few dance moves which silences the others for a beat as they watch him pop-n-lock.

ABIGAIL (O.S.)

(from across the theatre)

We have us a dancer this year, huh?

Jason stops, and smiles with false modesty.

JASON

I do what I can, Miss Chase.

Abigail steps up and joins the crowd of kids.

ABIGAIL

Please, all of you, call me Abby.

JASON

Okay, Miss Abby.

Jason flirts a little, Abigail blows it off with a smirk and shake of her head.

ABIGAIL

Easy, stud.

The kids laugh as Jason is taken down a notch.

MARYANNE

So Abby, what are we going to learn this year?

Maryanne speaks loudly enough so all can hear that she has been here before. She proudly smiles and glances around at the others.

JIM

We get it...

The brother and sister finish each other's sentences.

JANE

You've been here before.

This hushes Maryanne and deflates her proud smile, but only a little.

Jason jumps to her defense, as he was just taken down a little too.

JASON

Don't worry about it, girl.

Maryanne smiles.

ABIGAIL

Okay, lets not get off on the wrong foot already.

(beat)

Yes, Maryanne is somewhat of a veteran here, and you can learn a great deal from her.

Abigail winks at Maryanne and her smile comes back a little stronger.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Now, lets go around the room and meet the rest of you, shall we.

(points to Jason)

Lets start with you.

(beat)

Tell us who you are and a little about yourself. And after you have introduced yourself, please finish with a rhyming last name for yourself that you feel best describes who you are.

Jason clears his throat and bounces around as he speaks.

JASON

Hi, my name is Jason, I'm an urban street dancer from Vegas, and I do a little acting as well.

(MORE)

JASON (CONT'D)

Thought I would grace ya'll with my presence this summer, and see how I can improve on the already super talented individual that you see before you.

(beat)

I am, Jason Mayhem.

Jason ends his over-the-top performance of an introduction on a cheesy pose.

JANE

That doesn't even rhyme.

The others give a slight chuckle.

ABIGAIL

There's nothing wrong with a little off-rhyme either.

(smiles and bows)

Very good, Mr. Mayhem, we are glad to have you.

Jason smiles and gives a slight bow back.

Abigail gestures to Maryanne that it is her turn.

MARYANNE

(bubbly)

Hi! My name is Maryanne, and it's true, I have been coming here to train under Abby for, going on five years now.

(beat)

I absolutely adore acting, whether it be theatre, films, school plays, you name it! I am also a painter, and I write a little as well, mostly plays.

(proudly)

My dream is to one day make it to New York to write and direct plays on Broadway.

(beat)

I am Maryanne Can, as in, I can do anything I set my mind to.

Maryanne smiles and looks around to see if anyone is impressed.

The next duo is not. They roll their eyes as they speak their introduction together.

JIM
Hi, I'm Jim...

JANE
And I'm Jane...

JIM
I don't think either of us is
really an actor...

JANE
Or actress...

JIM
But our mom thinks this might be
good for us...

JANE
She says we can each find our own
voice...

JIM/JANE
Although we don't really know what
she means.

JIM
You can call me Jim Grim.

JANE
And you can call me Jane Going
Insane.

Abigail smiles as Jim and Jane actually stand there and not
acknowledge their clear attached-at-the-hip dynamic.

ABIGAIL
Alright.
(to Arnold)
And how about you, sir.

Arnold shyly raises his head.

ARNOLD
I uh... my name is Arnold.

Abigail sees him struggle and encourages Arnold.

ABIGAIL
It's okay.

ARNOLD
(nods)
I have always liked acting.
(MORE)

ARNOLD (CONT'D)
I'm a big fan of the old black and
white films...

MARYANNE
Oh, me too!

Arnold smiles.

JASON
(draws out the word)
Lame.

Abigail shoots a look that instantly shuts Jason up. Arnold's
smile is gone.

ABIGAIL
Is there anything else, Arnold?

Arnold shakes his head.

ABIGAIL
Can you give us a rhyming last
name, at least?

Arnold shakes his head again.

ARNOLD
I don't know what rhymes with
Arnold.

ABIGAIL
(sympathetically)
Alright then.
(motions to Harry)
Next.

HARRY
I'm Harry. I've never acted before
but I do love to write screenplays,
and watch and critique films.
(beat)
Um, I guess my name would be, Harry
Extraordinary.

Jason gives his approval of Harry's name.

JASON
Nice.

He motions for a fist bump.

Harry delivers the fist bump with enthusiasm.

Abigail motions to the next kid, Susan.

SUSAN

Hi! I'm Susan. I too have never acted but I absolutely adore Bollywood. I just love the song and dance of Bollywood films, and the culture of India in general.

(beat)

My name, is Susie Too-Cutie.

Susan does a little twirl from side to side.

Abigail motions to Carol.

CAROL

Hi, I'm Carol. I have acted a little. Mostly I like to write novels.

(beat)

I guess my name is, Carol... uh... I can't really think of anything that rhymes with my name either.

ABIGAIL

Hmm, that is a hard one. We'll work on yours and Arnold's.

(claps)

Well, lets get started on some more ice-breakers! Everyone on stage please.

Abigail leads the way.

Everyone shuffles on stage with very little interaction between each other.

LATER THAT EVENING

The kids just shuffle out of the theatre while Abigail packs up the last few props.

JASON

(flirtatiously)

Good night, Miss Abby!

ABIGAIL

(blows off the flirt)

Good night, Jason.

As the last student files out a man steps into the theatre. It's the driver from earlier, still dressed in his formal military attire. This is JOHN RUSH(47), Abigail's father. He stands quietly and waits for Abigail to finish up.

Abigail packs the last prop backstage and makes her way across when she stops center stage.

ABIGAIL
(surprised)
Dad?

John smiles meekly and takes a small step forward.

ABIGAIL
What are you doing here?

JOHN
How are you, Abby?

She stares at her father as she slowly steps down the stairs, stage right. The theatre is dead silent except for Abigail's slow, cautious STEPS on the old wood floor. She comes to a stop at a comfortable distance from her father.

John cautiously steps a little closer.

ABIGAIL
I said, what are you doing here?

He stops.

JOHN
I wanted to see you.

He steps a little closer.

ABIGAIL
Well, here I am.

You could hear a feather drop in the silence.

JOHN
I thought maybe we could talk.
(takes a step)
I've been staying at the hotel for
a few days, trying to get up the
nerve to talk to you.

ABIGAIL
I know. I saw you pull up to the
cafe yesterday.

John smirks but says nothing.

ABIGAIL
(steps back)
So talk.

JOHN

I...

John tries to find the words but chokes.

ABIGAIL

Well, you saw me. I have to go.

Abigail storms right passed John.

He reaches for her but doesn't make contact.

JOHN

Abby, wait.

Abigail turns on him.

ABIGAIL

What do you want, John?

JOHN

I want to be back in your life again.

ABIGAIL

Yeah, well, I told you last time we spoke how much I want you in my life.

JOHN

I know, but...

ABIGAIL

Look, I read your letters every time they came, just like I promised the last time we spoke.

(beat)

Aside from that, the last five years of my life have been pretty good without you in it.

Abigail heads for the door.

JOHN

(hint of hope)

You read my letters?

ABIGAIL

(still walking)

Don't read too much in to it. I threw a lot away too.

JOHN

When are you going to forgive me,
Abigail?

Abigail stops but doesn't turn around.

ABIGAIL

(over her shoulder)
I don't know if I can.

She exits the theatre and hits the lights on the way out.

John stands alone in the dark and lowers his head, defeated.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. ABIGAIL'S CABIN - NIGHT

Abigail gets into bed and looks over at a portrait she has framed of her, her mom, and her dad. She scowls at the picture and turns it face down.

INT. THEATRE - MORNING

It's the next day. The kids argue about something on stage while Abigail stands stage left in deep thought.

MARYANNE (O.S.)

You cannot play this particular
part, Jason.

JASON (O.S.)

Please, girl, you don't tell me how
to act. I got skills far beyond...

JIM (O.S.)

You must be joking.

JANE (O.S.)

Has to be joking.

JASON

What do you and rerun know about
it?

The twins give each other a questioned look.

MARYANNE

You're just being difficult!

Abigail snaps out of it at the elevation of banter. She joins the group.

ABIGAIL
 (calmly)
 Hey, hey, you guys! What are you
 arguing about?

MARYANNE
 Jason thinks he can play the part
 of Jessie.

Abigail chuckles a little.

ABIGAIL
 If...

Abigail is distracted when the door to the theatre opens.

She looks over to see John, in more casual clothes today,
 step in.

She scowls at him as he takes a seat at the back.

MARYANNE
 Who's that, Abby?

Abigail composes herself and turns to Maryanne.

ABIGAIL
 No one.
 (to Jason)
 As I was saying, Jason. If you
 would like to play the part of
 Jessie, then you may. Let me get
 your costume.

Abigail walks backstage, shuffles behind the curtain and
 returns with a fancy dress with fluffy, frilly lace accents.

ABIGAIL
 (to Jason)
 Here you go. I think you'll look
 quite beautiful. What do you think,
 Arnold?

Arnold chuckles as do the others.

JASON
 (embarrassed)
 Oh, Jessie with an "i-e".

All laugh a little harder.

JASON (CONT'D)
 Why didn't ya'll just say so.

Abigail smiles and takes the costume backstage. She casts a look over at John as she goes.

He smiles back.

ABIGAIL (O.S.)

I don't want you guys worrying
about lines or parts right now
anyway.

Abigail returns.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

First, we need you all to play nice
together.

Abigail gets ready to teach the kids some techniques for warming up and working together.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Alright, everyone, stand in a
circle please.

Everyone moans and groans as they go.

JASON

Now what are we doing?

ABIGAIL

We are going to try a group
technique, since we do not seem to
want to cooperate today.

MARYANNE

I'm cooperating, Abby.

JANE

(mimics tone)
I'm cooperating, Abby.

Jane holds her hands up and makes obnoxious kissing noises.

ABIGAIL

Jane.

Jane quiets down.

JASON

I just want to spit some lines,
Miss Abby.

ABIGAIL

Well, as soon as I feel you are
ready, then we will.

John patiently observes from the back of the theatre while Abigail and the kids engage in an exercise involving a hula-hoop that is to be worked around the group without breaking hands while they try to keep the momentum up.

John smiles as the circle keeps coming to a stop due to a student's banter. Abigail has to continually shush them.

Over and over, some kid – Jane most of the time – complains, breaks the circle, and drops the hula-hoop.

JOHN'S POV

One thing that John notices is how Arnold shyly gives Maryanne looks of endearment.

John smiles at this recognition.

LATER THAT EVENING

Abigail corrals the kids passed John and out of the theatre, she follows close behind. The kids grumble under their breath as they exit.

Once Abigail is next to John...

JOHN

I can help, you know.

Abigail just casts a look as she walks by, shuts the lights off, and leaves John in the dark again.

INT. CAFE - DAY

John sits with a hot cup of coffee and a mild breakfast. He doesn't eat too quickly, looks to be in thought.

The waitress, BOBBY(34), tops off his coffee.

JOHN

Thank you, ma'am.

As she walks away the bell on the door RINGS and Abigail steps in looking like an angel in the morning light.

Her and John catch eyes immediately and both pause uncomfortably before John resumes to sip his coffee, and Abigail heads for the breakfast bar to get her morning coffee.

The waitress greets Abigail as she approaches.

BOBBY
Morning, Abby. The usual for you?

ABIGAIL
Yes, Bobby, thank you.

Abigail turns and tries not to make eye contact with John as she waits for her order.

John casts a smirk her way whenever they make eye contact. He grabs his utensils and starts to cut his steak and eggs.

It's an uncomfortable scene to say the least.

Bobby comes back with a cup of coffee to go.

BOBBY
Here you go, sweetie.

ABIGAIL
Thank you, Bobby.

Abigail hands her some change and heads for the door. She says nothing to John but nods her head in a slight bow, and casts him a look as she exits the cafe.

John smirks and salute with his fork.

INT. THEATRE - LATER

Abigail tries to teach the kids the same exercise as yesterday, with little success.

ABIGAIL
Alright stop.

The kids break hands and she takes the hula-hoop.

ABIGAIL
Lets try something new. Everyone stay in the circle.
(beat)
Okay. The whole point of this exercise is to teach you guys to play off of each others' energy.
(beat)
I want each of you to clap to your neighbor. When you do, your neighbor will accept your clap with a clap, then pass it on, or give it back. The momentum can change directions at any moment. Go.

The kids turn and clap to their neighbor in turn.

ABIGAIL

Make eye contact when giving and accepting the clap.

The circle starts out fairly well.

ABIGAIL

Good. Keep it up.

When the circle comes to Jason he messes it up.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

You have to learn to receive what is given to you and be prepared to give that energy back. Try again, please.

The circle starts and comes around to Jason again, he messes it up.

JASON

Agghh! This is stupid, Miss Abby.

ABIGAIL

Is it? Why is that, Jason?

JASON

I just don't see how this can help me spit my lines.

Abigail is about to speak.

JOHN (O.S.)

You have no rhythm, kid.

All stop and look to the back of the theatre where John stands in the isle. He motions a "may I" gesture to Abigail.

She reluctantly allows him to approach the stage.

John hops up and joins the group. He stands with his hands behind his back and paces around Jason as he speaks like a drill sergeant.

JASON

Please, old man. I have more rhythm than I know what to do with.

John chuckles.

JOHN

Oh yeah. Then show me, tough guy.

(beat)

Miss Abby here, is trying to show you how to hold a rhythm, or beat to your actions, and have you bounce them off of, or exchange them, with each other.

Jason still looks confused.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Jason right?

He nods.

JOHN (CONT'D)

You're a dancer, yes?

JASON

Best in Vegas.

JOHN

Okay. I bet you rap a little too, don't ya?

John motions with some sarcastic wannabe hip-hop hand movements.

The group laughs a little.

JASON

Yeah. So?

JOHN

So show me. Treat this like one of your raps, son, with some dance moves thrown in.

JASON

I rap and dance alone though.

JOHN

Well not today, hip-hop.

John stops pacing and leans in close to Jason's ear.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Today, you have a crew with you.

Today, you work with a team.

(eases off)

Now, I want you to watch the clap as it goes around. Feel the beat.

Abigail watches John work.

JOHN (CONT'D)

When it comes to you, make eye contact with your partner, accept the beat, then return or pass the beat on.

Jason nods, he seems to get what John says.

John motions to Abigail.

ABIGAIL

Okay. Let's try again.

The kids start again. Jason watches intently as the clap comes around.

JOHN

Feel the beat, son. Beat. Beat. Beat...

Jason starts to rock a little to the rhythm as the clap comes around. The clap comes to Arnold, who is next to him, and he successfully takes the clap and returns it.

All let out a small cheer.

JOHN

Hey. Focus now. Keep that beat.

Jason rocks a little harder to the beat.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Beat. Beat. Beat...

It comes around to Jason and he again successfully accepts the clap and passes it on.

Another cheer swells.

JOHN

Now add a stomp this time, Jason!

Abigail starts to rock to the beat as well.

The clap comes around to Jason and he accepts the clap, then gives a clap-stomp-clap.

Arnold skillfully returns the clap-stomp-clap and Jason passes it on.

A louder cheer.

They all get into the beat of the claps and stomps until a rhythmic tune is almost noticeable. The clap-stomp-clap starts to go faster until it becomes too much for anyone and Maryanne fumbles it up.

They all stop and laugh and congratulate one another.

Abigail manages a smile for John.

LATER

Abigail and John stand off to the side while the kids speak amongst themselves.

ABIGAIL

You did good up there.

JOHN

The old man still has some skills,
huh?

Abigail shies away a little.

JOHN

Look, Abby. I can help you out with
these kids. You're obviously
shorthanded.

Abigail ponders this for a moment. She looks to the group of kids then back to John.

ABIGAIL

Fine. But I don't want you telling
them your my father.

(coldly)

You're the guest instructor, that's
all.

(beat)

And try to draw on your acting, not
your military training.

John goes to argue.

Abigail points sternly and John's hands go back in surrender.

Abigail turns to head back to the stage.

JOHN

Whatever you say, kiddo.

She turns on John.

ABIGAIL
And don't call me that.

John puts his hands up in surrender again.

The two of them make their way back to the stage.

ABIGAIL
Okay everyone. Gather round.

All the kids come to attention.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
I think it's time you all
officially meet the new assistant
instructor.

A murmur amongst the kids.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
He was just hanging back for a few
days and observing you all so he
could get a feel for your strengths
and weaknesses.
(beat)
Boys and girls, meet...

MARYANNE
Johnny Rush!

Abigail looks surprised. John smiles.

ABIGAIL
You know him, Maryanne?

MARYANNE
Are you kidding me! He's Johnny
Rush!
(to John)
My mom is a huge fan! She has every
film you've ever been in! I
practically grew up watching you
act!

John smiles proudly while Maryanne gushes over him.

Abigail shakes her head and scowls at his arrogance.

ABIGAIL
Well, then, why don't you fill the
rest of the class in, Maryanne.

Maryanne gets all giddy.

MARYANNE

Okay! Everyone, this, is Johnny
Rush...

JOHN

John. Please, call me John.

MARYANNE

(blushes)

Okay.

(giggles)

John.

(to all)

John is a huge movie star!

Some of the kids give some oohs and awes.

JOHN

I don't know about huge.

Abigail rolls her eyes at John's false modesty.

MARYANNE

Please! You were *it*! My mom says
you still are, and that you will
return to film one day!

(to all)

John was a total teenage heartthrob
in the eighties, and then went on
to make some great films in the
nineties as well!

(gets all mushy)

But then...

(turns to John)

John felt a call to duty after the
attacks on America on 9/11.

(bats eyes at John)

And he's been fighting for us ever
since.

Maryanne slowly steps a little too closely into John's
personal space.

MARYANNE (CONT'D)

You're a hero, Mr. Rush.

John is visibly uncomfortable with Maryanne's gushing all
over him.

JOHN

Uh... okay. I think that about sums
it up.

JASON
 (skeptically)
 How did you meet Mr. Big-Time movie
 star, American hero, Miss Abby?

Abigail is caught off guard for a sec.

ABIGAIL
 Uh, my mom...

She barely gets the words out.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
 She was a big fan as well. She
 worked in the industry for a small
 part of her life.
 (beat)
 And, she got me a part in a small
 movie that John was in.

John nods in agreement.

JIM
 So what do you know about theatre?

JANE
 Yeah. About theatre?

John is now caught a little off guard.

JOHN
 Well, that's a good question. I
 guess not too much. But I do know a
 little about acting, specifically
 method acting. And your amazing
 instructor here...
 (motions to Abby)
 Will handle the technical acting,
 and theatre side of things...

John stops as he sees Maryanne still gushes over him. He also notices that Arnold notices Maryanne as well, and is clearly saddened by her girl-crush on him.

JOHN
 Okay.
 (clap)
 Should we get started then, Miss
 Abigail?

ABIGAIL
 Yes, lets.

Abigail moves in on the kids to corral them into the next exercise.

INT. GIRL'S DORMS - NIGHT

Maryanne falls on her bunk and hugs her pillow.

MARYANNE

Oh boy! Can you believe it?!
(dreamy-eyed)
Johnny Rush, at our camp!

Jane rolls her eyes.

JANE

Big whoop.

MARYANNE

Ugh! Are you crazy? He's an
absolute dream.

SUSAN

He is kind of cute.

CAROL

Cute? Gross. He's old enough to be
your grandpa.

Jane jumps up to impersonate John.

JANE

Oooo. I'm Mr. Johnny Rush. Oh. I'm
Mr. Hollywood.

Maryanne pouts and "humphs" at this.

Jane then mimics Maryanne's fit while the other girls giggle.

INT. BOYS DORMS - CONTINUOUS

The kids all laugh about something. Each sits on their own bed.

JASON

So what do you guys think about Mr.
G.I. Joe, American acting hero?

He straightens up and casts a debonair smile.

All the boys laugh.

JIM
He seems pretty cool.

JASON
Please. Guy thinks he's all that. I
got more acting skill in this
little pinky than he does in his
whole body.

Harry hangs over the top bunk.

HARRY
Or maybe you're just jealous
because of how your girlfriend acts
around him.

Arnold and Harry share a chuckle.

JASON
Who, Maryanne? She's not my
girlfriend... yet.

Arnold brightens up at the mention of Maryanne then looks
worried at the mention of her being "Jason's girlfriend".

ARNOLD
(to Jason)
You like Maryanne?

Jason looks at Arnold, a little shocked.

JASON
(teasingly)
Why, Arnie. You think she could
like you?

Jason laughs obnoxiously.

Arnold lowers his head, defeated.

JIM
Easy on the kid, Jason.

JASON
I'm just kiddin, Arnie.

Jason rubs his hair in a patronizing manor.

Arnold, frustrated, pushes his hand away.

JOHN (O.S.)
Bet you think that's pretty funny,
don't you?

Jason and the others freeze at the recognition of John's voice.

They all look over to see John coming out of the bathrooms, he wipes his hands with a hand towel.

JASON

Holy crap, man. How long you been in there.

John hardens his look.

JOHN

Long enough.
(steps forward)
Atten-hut!

They all straighten up as John advances on Jason and stands toe-to-toe with him.

Jason trembles in his pj's.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Bet you *all*, think you're pretty funny, don't you?

John quickly turns and punks the other kids as well. He then eyes Jason again and leans in too close for comfort.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I got you in my sights, hip-hop.
(to all)
I could *crush*, each, and every one of you with the heel of my boot, with the greatest of ease.

John starts to tremble with unwarranted rage.

The kids shake in their pj's in unison.

The tension in the room can almost be seen, until...

JOHN (CONT'D)

(quickly eases up)
But I won't.
(laughs)
That was your first lesson in method acting. Now you know what it's like to really be scared.
(laughs)
You should have seen your faces.

John laughs proudly as he heads for the exit.

JOHN (CONT'D)

(laughing)

I want you guys to draw on this if you ever have to act scared, or shocked.

(eyeballs them again)

You get the picture.

He hardens his look at the frightened kids one last time then laughs all the way out the door.

The kids all just stand their stunned, speechless.

EXT. DORMS - MORNING

The sun is bright in the sky. The rooster crows.

INT. THEATRE - THE NEXT DAY

Jason sits at a desk with a puzzle in front of him while Maryanne stands beside him, and Abigail speaks about technique.

ABIGAIL

Now class, you see how Jason was able to return his lines to Maryanne while still completing his puzzle?

Kids nod.

ABIGAIL

You can get up now, Jason.

Jason and Maryanne walk off.

ABIGAIL

Lets give them a round of applause everyone.

The kids do so as Maryanne and Jason walk off stage together.

JOHN

Way to find the beat, hip-hop.

John, dressed in tan fatigues and a tan shirt, leans over the stage and holds out his fist.

Jason, still a little scared from last night, gives a mild fist bump.

ABIGAIL

Next, please.

Jim and Jane are next.

Jim sits in front of the puzzle.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Now remember kids, the point of this exercise is to show you how to work with props while still delivering your lines with skill and purpose.

(beat)

Alright. Begin please.

Jane sighs then begins with little enthusiasm.

JANE

Do you really think that Jasper will make good on his promise?

JIM

He says he will.

JANE

He says a lot of things. This is our father's name at stake here.

JIM

Yeah well...

Jim and Jane exchange lines with little emotion, and he even does the puzzle just fine.

ABIGAIL

With emotion, please.

JIM

Yeah well, Jasper is a man of his word.

JANE

A man of his word. Please...

ABIGAIL

Stop. We already know you guys can work well together. But you both sound exactly the same. We need to find out who you both are here.

(beat)

Jane, you are worried that Jasper may not pay his half of a very important debt.

(MORE)

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

You're worried about losing your house, and frustrated that Jim doesn't share your concerns.

(beat)

Jim, Jasper is your best friend. You're offended that Jane questions his honor...

John admires Abigail as she passionately teaches the kids.

ABIGAIL

Group phrases of the dialogue into beats, and try to think about what each character is trying to achieve in each beat. What are they feeling? What are they trying to express?

JOHN

Jim, what do you...

They all look to John.

Abigail casts him a look and cuts him off. He raises his hands in surrender.

ABIGAIL

(graciously)

Thank you, John, I can take this one.

(to Jim and Jane)

I want you guys to learn a little about technique here. Not only do I want you to group dialogue into beats, but I want you to assign each beat an action.

JANE

An action?

ABIGAIL

Yes, a slight turn of the head at the recognition of something said.

(beat)

A step taken while pausing for drama.

(beat)

A puzzle piece placed in a certain manner, in response to a line of dialogue.

Jim ponders for a moment as he looks at the puzzle.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
Not only that, but draw on
something from your own life.
(to Jim)
The way you feel about your sister
perhaps.
(to Jane)
Or the way you feel about your
brother...

John interrupts.

JOHN
Sounds like a little method acting
to me.

Abigail turns on John but maintains her composure.

ABIGAIL
Just because they draw on a little
emotion that they are familiar
with, does not mean that they are
method acting.

John raises his hands in surrender again.

Abigail turns her attention back to Jim and Jane.

ABIGAIL
So, Jim, can you think of something
about your sister that... bugs you
a little?

Jim ponders again.

JIM
Well...

Jane looks at Jim with eager anticipation.

JIM (CONT'D)
She always, makes fun of my
friends.

Jane quickly retorts.

JANE
Your friends are idiots.

JIM
Yeah, well, you're always sticking
your nose in my business.

JANE
I'm just looking out for you,
little brother!

Abigail cuts in.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
Okay, okay.

Jim and Jane pout.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
Now use those emotions, and be
conscious of your beats and
actions.

Abigail looks at Jim and Jane, who are both full of emotion.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
Please begin.

Jim starts his puzzle with a hint of anger and purpose.

JANE
(angrily)
Do you think your *friend*, Jasper
will really make good on his
promise?

Jane paces the floor, clearly taking her actions into account
to help express her emotions.

JIM
(matter-of-factly)
He says he will.

JANE
He says a lot of things.

Jane turns on Jim, again showing a lot of emotion in her
actions.

JANE (CONT'D)
And this is your father's name at
stake here!

Abigail smiles while she observes.

Jim, too, clearly thinks about his actions, as he stops his
puzzle for a moment to make eye contact with Jane.

JIM
Yeah well, Jasper's a man of his
word.

(MORE)

JIM (CONT'D)
(goes back to puzzle)
I think you should have a little
more faith in people.

Jane is thrown for a second by the added line, and matter-of-fact tone in Jim's voice. She tries to speak but nothing comes out at first. She advances on Jim.

JANE
Faith! Maybe I'd have a little more
faith if I thought Jasper had even
a little faith in himself.

JIM
You're one to talk about someone's
lack of faith.

Jane takes a long dramatic pause and a step back.

JANE
How could you say that to me?

Jim looks up and he and Jane lock eyes.

All hang on their words and await the next line.

Jim and Jane breathe heavily for a beat then burst out in laughter.

Everyone joins in.

ABIGAIL
(claps)
Very good!

All join in the applause.

Abigail gives John a look as if to say, "See... technical acting."

He returns a look and directs his claps to her.

LATER

Arnold sits by himself on the edge of the stage and eats his lunch. He watches as Jason and Maryanne chat and laugh about something.

Abigail suddenly scoots up next to him.

ABIGAIL
Hey, Arnold. What's up?

ARNOLD

Nothing.

ABIGAIL

Seems like more than nothing to me.

Arnold looks over at Maryanne and Jason again.

Abigail just observes as he has ignored her question. She smiles.

ABIGAIL

You should go talk to her.

ARNOLD

Humph. She doesn't even know I exist.

ABIGAIL

Sure she does. And if she knew how you felt about her she may even want to know more about you.

ARNOLD

I guess so.

ABIGAIL

Oh, I know so.

Arnold shrugs his shoulders.

ARNOLD

I wouldn't even know what to say to her.

ABIGAIL

Just be yourself.

ARNOLD

Myself.

(smirks)

She'll think I'm a nerd.

ABIGAIL

I should hope so! Nerd is the new cool now. Besides, you are a brilliant actor, she'll respond to that.

ARNOLD

But she likes Jason, and he's a better actor than I am.

John enters the scene.

JOHN
You don't really believe that do
you?

Arnold shrugs his shoulders again.

JOHN
Jason's just a pretty face, kid.

ABIGAIL
(slightly appalled)
John.

JOHN
(to Abigail)
What. It's true.
(to Arnold)
Look, Jason's got some skills, but
what he mainly has going for him is
what we in Hollywood used to call,
"A look". His acting skills don't
even compare to yours.

Abigail manages a smile and shakes her head.

ABIGAIL
Arnold. I've seen you act, and you
are very talented.

Arnold starts to brighten up.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
You just keep being yourself on
stage, and Maryanne will take
notice.

Arnold smiles while Abigail gives him a sympathetic nudge.

ABIGAIL
Now go practice some lines with
Susan.

Arnold hops off stage and walks off a little prouder.

John takes a seat next to Abigail.

JOHN
Kid's got it bad.

ABIGAIL
Yeah.

JOHN

You know, I wasn't much older than him when I started crushing on your mom.

ABIGAIL

(politely)

Please don't.

JOHN

Don't what?

ABIGAIL

Look, I know that mom loved you. She made it very clear to me. And she wanted me to know that you still loved her, even though you weren't there.

JOHN

I did love her...

ABIGAIL

Dad, please. I'm just not ready yet.

Abigail dismisses herself with a broken smile.

John doesn't try to stop her.

JOHN

(under his breath)

At least she's calling me dad again.

John walks off set.

EXT. DORMS - NIGHT

All the girls are out in black clad, with flashlights in hand.

The boys exit their dorms in black clad as well, flashlights in hand.

MARYANNE

I don't think we should be doing this, you guys.

JANE

Stop being such a baby, Maryanne.

JIM
Easy, Jane.

JASON
Look, that bellhop said this place
was haunted. I wanna see some
ghosts.

Jason raises his flashlight under his chin, casting his face
in a horror movie lighting.

JASON (CONT'D)
You guys aren't scared, are ya?

The others look at each other with worry in their eyes.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Flashlights dance around on the floor at the end of the hall
just before the kids all peek around the corner in "Scooby-
Doo" fashion.

At the other end of the hall James makes his nightly rounds.

When he is out of sight Jason motions for the others to
follow him.

They all tip-toe to a door a few feet away from the mirror at
the end of the hall. They observe a lock on the door.

MARYANNE
See, it's locked. Can we go now?

HARRY
Not so fast.

Harry turns to the others and slyly reveals a key.

MARYANNE
Where did you get that?

JASON
He swiped it from the front desk
earlier.

Some of the kids share a giggle while others disapprove.

Harry unlocks the door and the kids shuffle into the area
known as "Spooky Hallow".

INT. GIRL'S DORMS - MOMENTS LATER

Abigail enters to check on the girls. She, of course, finds the dorms empty.

INT. BOY'S DORMS - MOMENTS LATER

She finds the same scene in the boy's dorm.

INT. HOTEL HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Abigail knocks on John's hotel room.

John opens the door to find a panicked Abigail.

JOHN
What's the matter?

ABIGAIL
The kids are gone! They're not in their dorms.

Abigail looks around, somewhat in a panic.

John comforts her.

JOHN
It's okay. We'll find them.

John stops and ponders for a beat, then smiles as he sees the door to the old miners' ruins unlocked.

ABIGAIL
What?

JOHN
I think I know where they are.

John points to the door and they share a look of relief.

JOHN
You wanna help me teach the little sneaks a lesson?

They share a smile.

INT. SPOOKY HALLOW - LATER

The kids slowly creep through the old broken down halls of the miners' dorms. They stick close together as they go.

SUSAN
(trembling)
You think people really died in
here?

HARRY
(looks around in
wonderment)
Absolutely.

A cat jumps and runs passed the kids path with a loud meow
and the kids all jump with a start in unison.

SUSAN
Can we just go, please?

Maryanne, who walks next to Arnold, instinctively moves a
little closer to him. When they bump together they shy away a
little and share a scared laugh.

The group continues on.

JASON
One of the guests was telling me
about this one miner that died
here, known as,
(turns on the others)
The Boss Man.

They all stop with a start.

A loud BANG scares them all, even Jason. The girls let out a
slight scream as they all look around frantically with their
flashlights.

JASON
What was that?

JIM
What's the matter J-dawg? You
scared?

Jason tries to hide his fear.

JASON
Who me? Please.

Jim takes the lead now, the others stay close and follow he
and Jason.

JIM
Is anyone there? Come out and play.

JANE
That's not funny, Jimmy.

A sudden creepy FEMALE LAUGHTER echoes through the adobe halls and the kids tighten their group.

JIM
(chuckles)
Holy crap.

Another OMINOUS VOICE suddenly breaks the dead silence.

OMINOUS VOICE
(drawn out whisper)
Get out...

The FEMALE LAUGHTER echoes again.

The kids to turn and point their flashlights down the hall where they briefly catch a glimpse of a figure, in a fluffy period dress, sweep across from one room to another.

The kids SCREAM together and turn to run back the way they came.

FEMALE GHOST
(teasing ominous tone)
Where are you going, children?

The kids look back to see the Female Ghost is coming after them now. She staggers quickly towards them.

They SCREAM again and quicken their pace.

The female ghost SCREECHES and CACKLES. She chases the children at an alarming pace now.

Just as the fright level is at its highest, John jumps out of one of the rooms and scares the living daylights out of the children.

JOHN
AAAGGGGHHHHH!!!

The children all stop dead in their tracks and freeze with fear. The girls all SCREAM and cling to the boy next to them.

Maryanne holds tight to Arnold and buries her head in his protecting arms.

Abigail, the Female Ghost, dressed in one of the frilly costumes from the theatre, catches up and she and John share a good laugh.

ABIGAIL

Boo!

The kids take a moment to take it all in, still too scared to move. They eventually lighten up as their instructors laugh away.

Maryanne and Arnold notice that they are too close for comfort and quickly shy away and laugh it off.

ARNOLD

(softly)

Are you okay?

Maryanne nods.

MARYANNE

Yes, thank you.

They manage to share a smile through their fear.

SUSAN

(to John and Abigail)

That was not funny!

JIM

(laughing now)

It was kind of funny.

JOHN

You should have seen the looks on your faces.

John steps next to Abigail as their laughs start to slow.

ABIGAIL

Serves you right, sneaking out like that. You guys scared me much worse than we scared you.

JASON

Yeah, I doubt that.

Abigail slips a chuckle at Jason's being scared.

SUSAN

(whining)

Can we just go back now?

ABIGAIL

(smiles)

Yes. All of you get to bed. We have a lot of work to do tomorrow.

The kids shuffle out.

John nudges Abigail with a smile. She nudges him back as they follow the kids out of Spooky Hallow.

INT. THEATRE - THE NEXT DAY

Arnold enters the theatre last as all the others are already on stage. He observes them as they perform some strange new exercise.

ABIGAIL
Come up her please, Arnold.

Arnold makes his way on stage.

ABIGAIL
I want you to stand in the middle
of the circle.

Arnold cautiously makes his way between Jim and Susan and stands in the middle of the circle.

The whole group seems to be going through the same motions. First they pat their heads. Then they swing their legs. Each seems to mimic what the other is doing but just a beat behind one another.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
Arnold, this game is called Who's
the Chief.

ARNOLD
So you want me to guess who is
starting the actions?

ABIGAIL
Very good. This should be easy for
you.

Arnold smiles shyly and starts to look around and observe the players around him.

He turns just as Harry starts out a motion and quickly picks him out.

ARNOLD
(points to Harry)
You're the chief.

The group stops and shares a laugh.

ABIGAIL

Very good, Arnold. Now what did we learn from this exercise, class?

CAROL

Um, how to act and react.

MARYANNE

And how to work as a team!

Jane mimics Maryanne's excitement.

ABIGAIL

Yes! Both great answers. Now, lets do another exercise that teaches you how to act and react.

MOMENTS LATER

Abigail and John, who are on either side of Jason now, show the kids how to play.

ABIGAIL

This game is called Hi-Ya!

(beat)

John and I are going to pretend to karate chop Jason in the stomach. He will then react by hunching over...

John and Abigail do so, and Jason reacts accordingly.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Jason will then stand and "Hi-Ya", with two hands together, a karate chop to someone else across the circle. That person will have to react by raising his hands together...

Jason does as he is instructed and launches a chop to Jim, who raises his hands above his head.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

Now the two people next to Jim will do as John and I did, and so-on and so-forth.

(beat)

Sound easy enough?

The kids all nod.

ABIGAIL
Good. Lets begin.

The kids start the game. Everyone works very well together now.

Abigail smiles as she starts to see the team working together as a group.

She watches as the kids laugh when they mess up, and as her father John plays and laughs with them.

A look of peace and calm comes over Abigail as all seems to be going right in her life.

EXT. SOMEWHERE AROUND CAMP - DAY

All the kids step up in unison, in full on paint-ball gear, and paint-ball guns in hand. They look at each other then scatter in a hurry.

John and Abigail step up and smile at the sight of the kids playing together.

John is fully suited in military camouflage.

JOHN
I want you all to remember the pain of these paint-balls so you can use it later.

ABIGAIL
And try to have fun please.

JOHN
And Jason, remember, I got you in my sights...

John is blasted right in the chest with a paint-ball.

Abigail laughs and they run for cover.

The kids all head for different hiding places amongst some debris that is scattered about in the desert.

Maryanne stands by herself and complains.

MARYANNE
I don't know about this, guys. I...

She is interrupted by a paint-ball to her chest. She looks around to find Arnold shrugging his shoulders with a smile.

She smiles playfully and chases after him.

Arnold bolts for cover.

Jason and Jim have teamed up and use hand signals to coordinate their next move. They nod in agreement and are about to make their move when Susan and Jane ambush them and unload a barrage of paint bullets.

JASON/JIM

Agh! Agh! Alright, you got us!

The two girls high five and move on for the next kill.

Abigail sees John hiding and starts to sneak up on him. She is about ten feet away when she steps on a twig and John turns on her. They both open fire on each other and laugh.

The whole crew has a blast as they paint each other silly.

FADE OUT.

EXT. CAMPFIRE PIT - NIGHT

All the kids sit around a warm campfire back at camp. Abigail and John have joined them.

They roast marshmallows and play the celebrity game around the circle.

MARYANNE

Umm... Alec Baldwin.

JASON

Billy-Bob Thornton.

ABIGAIL

T... T... Ooh! Ted Turner!

Oohs from the group.

JIM

Right back in your face, Jason.

JASON

Alright. Alright. Taylor Swift.

Jane gives him a look.

JANE

Really.

JASON

What?

JANE

(laughs)

Nothing. Suzanne Sarandon.

Oohs from the group.

JASON

Awe, come on, man!

JOHN

Come on, Jason. You got this.

Jason thinks for a long beat then gets an excited look and says proudly...

JASON

Steve Zahn.

A deep ooh from the group.

JASON

Now you gotta come with a "Z", Miss Abby. Yeah. What.

Jason dances in his seat.

All wait with anticipation of Abigail's "Z" name.

ABIGAIL

I... I... I got nothing.

All laugh and murmur, then quiet down.

JANE

So, Abby. What film did you and John work on together?

ABIGAIL

I'm sorry?

JANE

You said you guys worked on a small film together. What was it?

Abigail looks at John then back to Jane across the fire.

ABIGAIL

Well, the movie never made it to the big screen.

(beat)

(MORE)

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
In fact, it never finished
production.

MARYANNE
Well what was it about?

ABIGAIL
(smiles)
Um... It was a rather sad film,
about a little girl who hardly saw
her father.
(beat)
The father left to go serve his
country after the attacks on 9/11.
He felt it was his duty.
(beat)
He wrote often and came by to visit
on the important holidays...

John smiles and looks down at the recognition of their life
story.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
But it wasn't enough for the little
girl. She felt he should be there
all the time.

JOHN
If I remember the role of the mom
correctly, she understood why daddy
was gone, and they maintained a
healthy relationship, regardless of
the distance.

ABIGAIL
That's true, and mommy loved daddy
very much.

All the kids beam with anticipation.

JOHN
And daddy loved mommy very much.

ABIGAIL
But... the little girl's character
was too little to understand all of
this. And no matter how much mommy
tried to help her understand, all
she knew was that daddy was never
there.
(beat)
Not for her school plays, concerts,
or much of anything else.

John gazes at Abigail sincerely.

JOHN

I think he wanted to be though.

Pause.

ABIGAIL

(smiles)

As the story went on, mommy became very sick, and daddy was not able to come home to care for her. He eventually made it home in the very end... and he held her hand till her last breath.

(beat)

But the damage was done, and the little girl was grown now, and sadly, she wanted nothing to do with her father.

(smiles)

She just couldn't forgive him for not being there.

The kids all hang on their every word.

John and Abigail hold sincere gazes on one another for a long pause until Arnold breaks the silence.

ARNOLD

Then what happened?

JANE

Yeah, how did it end?

Abigail breaks her gaze.

ABIGAIL

(chokes up)

Um... The production broke up. We never finished the film.

(smiles)

The producers said it was too soon for a drama about 9/11.

Awes of disappointment from the kids.

John looks down as well, then back up to the kids.

JOHN
(smiles sincerely)
I like to think it all worked out
in the end though.

John smiles at Abigail and she returns the gesture.

MARYANNE
(sighs)
I do love a good tragedy.

All share a chuckle.

INT. CAFE - LATER

It's late in the night. Only one table is occupied.

Abigail and John have coffee in the lonely cafe.

JOHN
There's no way to get a loan, or
some kind of extension?

ABIGAIL
No.
(beat)
Mike says the debt is too much. If
I had the money I'd buy it myself.

John ponders for a beat.

JOHN
Did you tell the kids yet?

She shakes her head.

ABIGAIL
I just wanted them to have fun this
summer.
(beat)
Didn't want to burden them with the
theatre closing, especially not
Maryanne.

They share a sad laugh.

JOHN
I think they deserve to know.

ABIGAIL
Yeah, I know.

John reaches over and grabs her hand.

JOHN
We'll tell them tomorrow, together.

Abigail smiles.

INT. ABIGAIL'S CABIN - LATER

Abigail, dressed in a nice pair of pj's, hops into bed. She reaches over and flips the family portrait up again and straightens it nicely on the table. She admires her family before she CLICKS the light off.

INT. THEATRE - DAY

All the kids are just below the stage. They chat amongst themselves and joke around.

Abigail and John enter together and approach the stage.

JOHN
Come on, kids. Gather round.

ABIGAIL
We have something we need to tell
you.

Abigail looks to her father for support. He nods an assuring nod.

ABIGAIL
This... is our last year of theatre
camp.

An uneasy murmur amongst the kids as they look to one another for an answer.

MARYANNE
Why?

Maryanne starts to tear up.

ABIGAIL
(pulls Maryanne close)
Oh, sweetie. There's just not
enough money. Not enough tourists
rolling through town anymore.

ARNOLD
What can we do?

JASON
Yeah, Miss Abby. What can we do?

ABIGAIL

Oh, you guys. I'm afraid there's nothing we can do. There's just too much debt. Mike told me the other day.

(beat)

This is our last show.

Abigail starts to choke up a little but stays strong for the kids.

JIM/JANE

No.

Jim and Jane look at each other.

JIM

We can raise money.

JANE

Yeah. We can have a fund raiser.

ABIGAIL

You guys...

MARYANNE

Their right, Abby. We can save the theatre.

JOHN

Guys. Guys. This is years of debt that has piled up.

MARYANNE

We have to try.

No one answers that and there is silence for a long beat.

All the kids look to Abigail and John, who exchange looks, then answer.

ABIAGIL

Okay.

The kids cheer.

ABIGAIL

What do we do first?

Arnold pulls out his cell phone.

ARNOLD

We text.

Arnold smiles and they all agree with nods and smiles of their own.

SERIES OF SHOTS - BRINGING IN TOURISTS

All the kids are lined up in a row on the edge of the stage. They vigorously text at lighting speed to anyone and everyone that may be able to help.

ARNOLD (V.O.)
We'll start with our families and friends of the family.

JOHN (V.O.)
(drill sergeant tone)
Well alright then! You guys text like your lives depend on it! Susan, Carol, write down the numbers as they sound off!

Various texts come through on faceless peoples' phones saying "SAVE THE AMARGOSA OPERA HOUSE!!," "WE NEED YOUR HELP!!," and "HELP!! SAVE A PIECE OF HISTORY!!"

Abigail and John watch the kids as they try with all their hearts to save the Hotel/Theatre.

Maryanne sounds off.

MARYANNE
I have five people willing to book rooms for a week straight!

Jason sounds off.

JASON
I got three!

Jim and Jane, who share a phone, sound off.

JIM/JANE
We just got a thousand dollar donation! And a family of six booked for two weeks!

Arnold sounds off.

ARNOLD
My parents say they will come out from Pahrump twice a month for your performances, Abby!

Abby smiles sympathetically.

HARRY

My dad says he will donate ten
thousand dollars!

All the kids cheer.

The kids keep sending out the texts and sounding off with donations and bookings, while Carol and Susan jot down the numbers.

INT. MIKE CANNON'S OFFICE - EVENING

A modest little office with a few pieces of furniture, including a desk.

Mike is hard at work on his laptop when the kids burst in, followed by Abigail and John.

Mike looks at Abigail while the kids all try to talk at once. Abigail shrugs her shoulders.

MIKE

Alright! Alright!

JOHN

Atten-hut!

The kids quickly hush and stand at attention.

MIKE (CONT'D)

What's this all about?

John shakes his head and throws his hands up as the kids try to talk all at once again.

Abigail giggles at her father.

MIKE (CONT'D)

One at a time, please!

The kids calm down.

MARYANNE

We know about the theatre closing.

Arnold steps up next to Maryanne.

ARNOLD

And we want to save it.

Maryanne and Arnold exchange a smile.

Susan steps up with the numbers and hands the paper to Mike.

The kids wait and beam with anticipation and pride while Mike goes over the information. He turns through a few pages of promissory donations and bookings.

MIKE

This is impressive.

The kids start to get excited.

MIKE (CONT'D)

But sadly, it's still not enough.

The kids are deflated. They begin to ramble at once.

MIKE

You guys. Hey.

They quiet down again.

MIKE (CONT'D)

What you've done here is very impressive. And it looks like you have raised close to twenty thousand dollars here.

(beat)

That's amazing!

(beat)

But, unfortunately, that's only a fraction of what we need to save the theatre.

ARNOLD

But this is just a few hours of networking.

MARYANNE

We can raise more.

ALL KIDS

Yeah. Yeah. Let us try.

Mike calms the kids down again.

MIKE

It just won't be enough.

(beat)

Besides, I've already sold the property.

ALL KIDS

What?

MARYANNE

To who?

MIKE

It's not important. I had to. They plan to take over after the last show.

ARNOLD

What will they do with it.

MIKE

(ashamed)

They plan to tear it down. Turn it into a resort of some kind.

(beat)

I'm so sorry, kids. I'm sorry, Abby.

All the kids are silenced with despair.

Abigail holds the ones closest to her. John gets the rest.

JOHN

Come on, guys. You did all you could.

Abigail gives Mike a sympathetic look as they exit the office. He returns it.

INT. THEATRE - MOMENTS LATER

All the kids enter with heads down and scatter into the theatre seats.

Abigail and John take seats ahead of everyone.

ABIGAIL

That was really awesome what you guys did.

JASON

We didn't *do* anything.

JOHN

Hey. Come on now. You guys raised a lot of money in a short amount of time.

The kids shrug.

ABIGAIL

But most importantly, you guys did it together.

JASON

I guess.

MARYANNE

Maybe I can write letters to congress. They can save the theatre. Declare it a historic landmark or something.

No one gets too excited at the suggestion.

ABIGAIL

Of course, Maryanne.

A long silence.

SUSAN

So what do we do now?

Another long pause.

ARNOLD

Well, if this is the last show.
(stands)
I say we make it the best show anyone has ever seen.

Maryanne admires Arnold's action and responds with an endearing smile.

Jason stands next to Arnold.

JAOSN

Yeah. Lets go out with a bang, ya'll!

All get a hint of excitement and join in.

JIM

Yeah...

JANE

Lets do it!

John and Abigail exchange looks of hope.

SUSAN

Count me in.

HARRY

You'll need your best actor for this one.

Jason shoves Harry jokingly.

All the kids laugh, talk, exchange hugs, and get excited about the thought of one last blowout performance. After a moment they calm down and sit to brainstorm about ideas for the final show.

JIM

So what play do we do?

SUSAN

How about something from Shakespeare?

JASON

Nah.

ABIGAIL

Shakespeare's great. And there's nothing like the classics, but maybe do something more your style. I want you guys to do something you will really enjoy.

MARYANNE

So something modern then?

Maryanne goes into deep thought.

JANE

Well, they take Shakespearean plays and modernize them on Broadway all the time.

ABIGAIL

True.

JOHN

I think you're heading in the right direction with the whole modernization thing...

JASON

But Shakespeare? Lets do something fresh, and cool. Something smooth.

ABIGAIL

Are you trying to say that Shakespeare's not smooth?

Maryanne continues to think deeply as everyone argues about Shakespeare.

SUSAN

He had women falling at his feet, I assure you.

JASON

Look, whatever. I just think we should go a little more modern than that.

JIM

We learned all kinds of plays in class.

JASON

That's boring. We gotta go big. Those plays are just for learning techniques.

JANE

Well what's your big idea?

JASON

I don't know. I'm just sayin.

Maryanne still says nothing but a look of realization comes over her face just as the other kids start to argue all at once.

MARYANNE

Hey. Hey. HEY!!

Everyone stops dead silent at Maryanne yelling.

MARYANNE

I got it.

She smiles big and gets all bright-eyed.

MOMENTS LATER

All are gathered around Maryanne's laptop at the edge of the stage. She has uploaded a movie preview on YouTube for all to see. A title screen pops up and it's "Straight Deuces starring Johnny Rush".

John gets all embarrassed and modest as the kids look at the screen then at him with big cheesy grins.

Abigail smiles at him teasingly.

He points as to say "stop it".

Everyone looks back to the screen where a young John is shown in a montage of poker playing, having an argument with his on screen girlfriend, and various other shots.

The preview comes to an end and all look to John.

JOHN

Seriously?

MARYANNE

Of course, seriously! My mom says it is your best film ever! Probably because it was your last film before you joined the military. She was heart-broken you know, although she admired your patriotism.

JOHN

I...

MARYANNE

Look, there is something in it for everyone. There's a cool, smooth talking bad boy for Jason.

Jason straightens his collar in an cocky manner.

MARYANNE (CONT'D)

There's his love interest. A very interesting and elusive, not to mention beautiful, young lady that will, of course, be played by me.

Jane and Susan role their eyes together.

MARYANNE (CONT'D)

There's the love interest's best girlfriend. A very strong minded character, that can be played by Jane.

Jane blushes a little.

MARYANNE (CONT'D)

The lead man's best friend, and third part of the love triangle. A Less confident but highly intelligent guy that can be played by Arnold.

Arnold doesn't seem to know how to react to the nomination, probably since he was portrayed as "less confident" and basically nerdy.

MARYANNE (CONT'D)

And a whole slew of other characters, and poker players that the lead competes against. Jim can play the leads arch rival card player. And Johnny Rush...

All look to John.

MARYANNE (CONT'D)

Johnny Rush can play the voice of reason, that once told his very character why he should swallow his pride and go and get the girl. It's perfect...

(overly dramatic)

Once he received wisdom, and now he will pass that wisdom on.

Jane roles her eyes again and makes a silent gag motion to Susan, who silently laughs and repeats and exaggerates the gag gesture, with mimicking vomit as well.

Arnold looks defeated again at seeing Maryanne gush over Johnny Rush.

John smiles and laughs Maryanne's girl crush moment off.

JOHN

Okay.

(beat)

You guys really want to do this?

All the kids start in with excited "yeahs" and "yesees".

MARYANNE

Harry can write the adapted play and Abby can direct it. Please, Abby? Can we?

All the kids join in and beg Abigail.

ABIGAIL

(smiles at John)

I think it sounds like a great idea.

All cheer in response.

John shakes his head with a smirk at Abigail.

ABIGAIL

How quickly can you write the script for us, Harry?

HARRY

Give me a couple of days.

ABIGAIL

Okay. In the meantime, we only have a few weeks left, so you all need to brush up on your pair acting techniques.

(to Maryanne)

Especially you and Jason.

Jason casts a debonair smile and nods his head at Maryanne, then winks at a defeated Arnold.

ABIGAIL

It's late now. We'll start first thing in the morning.

An excited mood amongst the crowd of players as they shuffle out of the theatre.

John and Abigail bring up the back. John smiles and wraps his arm around Abigail. She smiles back and rests her head in his welcoming embrace.

MONTAGE - WRITING AND REHEARSING

-- Harry writes vigorously on his own laptop with Carol's help. They laugh and high five.

-- Maryanne writes on her laptop, "Dear Congressman Chambers,"

-- Arnold and John practice acting techniques together in the theatre.

-- Abigail teaches a small group of the kids about group acting as they sit at a poker table on the stage.

-- John gives Jason an awesome leather jacket, similar to the one his character wore in "Straight Deuces".

-- Harry runs into the theatre with the finished script and excitedly hands out copies.

-- Abigail and the others finish reading the script and Abigail tells Harry how much he loves it. She kisses him on the head and he blushes and nearly faints.

-- Jason and Arnold rehearse one of their scenes. It's a heated scene where they argue over the love interest.

-- Arnold watches while Jason and Maryanne rehearse a romantic scene. John watches Arnold with a sympathetic look.

-- Maryanne types away on her laptop.

-- Arnold and Maryanne rehearse a romantic scene. Jason doesn't seem to mind at all. Maryanne seems to hang on Arnold's every delivered line.

-- Maryanne mails a letter to congress.

-- John tries to cheer Arnold up while he watches Jason and Maryanne rehearse another romantic scene.

-- John and Jason rehearse the reenactment of the bar scene where the lead gets some wisdom from the bartender.

Arnold and Maryanne rehearse another scene. Looks to be an intense argument where Arnold shines as an actor.

-- Another group scene around the poker table is directed by Abigail. Jim rises up and slams his cards down then stomps away. Abigail yells cut, and all clap as Jim comes back and takes a couple of bows. They gather round Jim and pat him on the back and laugh and chatter congratulations on a good performance.

END MONTAGE.

John approaches Abigail while the kids congratulate each other on a good rehearsal.

JOHN

I think it's going to be a great show.

ABIGAIL

Yeah.

(beat)

We couldn't have done it without you, you know?

JOHN

Nah.

ABIGAIL

No really. Thank you, dad.

(beat)

For everything.

John smiles proudly.

JOHN

Say, how's about you and I have some dinner tonight? I know a great spot.

Abigail smiles quizzically.

ABIGAIL

Okay.

John escorts her back to the stage.

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

John leads Abigail into the theatre with her eyes closed. Both are dressed in some fine clothes, John in formal military attire, and Abigail in a stunning evening gown.

ABIGAIL

What are we doing? I know we're in the theatre.

JOHN

Just hang on. No peeking.

They step a few feet closer to the stage then John stops her.

ABIGAIL

Now?

JOHN

Now.

Abigail opens her eyes to a beautiful candlelight dinner for two, center stage. Flowers adorn the stage around the table. A soft classical melody chimes in over the PA.

Abigail looks on with surprised and glossy eyes. She casts a look of endearment at her father.

Arnold comes out from behind the stage dressed in fine waiter's attire, a handkerchief draped over his right arm, and a bottle of red wine in the other. He stands straight and proud at attention next to the table.

Abigail lovingly laughs at the sight.

ABIGAIL

(to John)

What have you been up to?

John shrugs his shoulders modestly. He then escorts his daughter toward the stage.

As they approach, stage right, Jason comes out from behind the backstage curtain and offers his hand to Abigail to help her up the stairs.

JASON

Miss Abby.

ABIGAIL

Why thank you, kind sir.

Abigail accepts the gesture and is escorted up the stairs by Jason, then John follows and takes over.

As they approach the table Jim and Harry run out and grab both chairs – with heads down in dramatic fashion – and pull them out for their guests.

ABIGAIL

Thank you, gentlemen.

They bow and back off the stage in bowed positions.

Abigail giggles as she nods her approval to John.

He offers a handsome smile in return.

Jane promptly enters, also finely dressed, with a pen and waiter's pad. She's not as enthusiastic as the others but is still a good sport.

JANE

May I offer you both something to drink?

JOHN

What would you recommend?

Jane sighs.

JANE

(motions to Arnold)

We have a nice Cabernet Sauvignon.

Arnold displays the bottle of wine and leans in.

ARNOLD

(whispers)

It's grape juice.

ABIGAIL

(smiles and giggles)

That sounds lovely, Monsieur Arnold.

John motions to Arnold.

He pours two glasses then bows off stage.

JANE

Are you ready to order?

ABIGAIL
What's on the menu tonight?

JANE
Chicken.

Abigail pretends to think about her order.

ABIGAIL
Mmm, I think I'll have the chicken.

JOHN
Same here.

JANE
(playful sarcasm)
Great.

John casts Jane a look and she smirks and sarcastically bows off stage.

Abigail stifles a laugh.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Jane and Arnold bring out the meals.

Abigail and John enjoy a nice meal, laugh together ever so often, and exchange endearing looks.

Maryanne comes out and asks if everything is okay then exits stage left.

BACK TO SCENE

Father and daughter finish their meals and wipe their faces with cloth napkins.

ABIGAIL
So do you still work?

JOHN
Do I still act, you mean?

Abigail nods.

Harry and Carol come out and collect the plates.

ABIGAIL
(to kids)
Thank you.

JOHN

I do small gigs here and there. But I haven't worked on a big shoot for some time now.

ABIGAIL

Well, I'm sure Maryanne and her mom are right. Someone's just waiting for the right time to give you an Oscar worthy role.

JOHN

Nah. I've peaked. Reached my prime.

ABIGAIL

It can happen. So many actors have gone on to play a great role after what the media considers to be, "their prime".

John smiles.

JOHN

Well I'm not going to say I wouldn't mind a big role.

(beat)

Maybe I'll try a little theatre.

They share a smile.

ABIGAIL

I think you'd be a good player.

JOHN

Yeah well.

Silent pause.

ABIGAIL

(sincerely)

I'm glad you're hear.

JOHN

Me too.

ABIGAIL

It means a lot to the kids.

She reaches across and takes his hand.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

It means a lot to me.

John smiles and gently squeezes her hand.

JOHN

Me too.

They exchange looks of love and gratitude at long awaited father and daughter moment.

INT. JOHN'S HOTEL ROOM - MORNING

John sleeps soundly as his phone rings off the hook. He starts to stir in his bed then rolls over and sleepily picks up the phone.

JOHN

(groggily)

Hello?

The voice comes in over the phone.

VOICE OVER PHONE

Capt. John Rush?

John sits up at attention.

JOHN

Yes, sir.

VOICE OVER PHONE

Capt. Rush, this is Lieutenant Mackey, I have some news for you.

JOHN

Yes, sir.

VOICE OVER PHONE

I have an application of yours in my hand right now, and I like what I see. To get right to the point, you've been promoted.

(beat)

The army has decided to place you as a Commandant in a schoolhouse in D.C.

John's face lights up.

JOHN

That's great! Thank you, sir.

VOICE OVER PHONE

My pleasure, Commandant Rush. We'll need you in D.C. In three days.

John's face drops at the mention of "three days".

VOICE OVER PHONE (CONT'D)

An email has been sent to your
military account with the
particulars of your position.

(beat)

Congratulations, John.

JOHN

(deflated)

Yes... thank you, sir.

John hangs the phone up and ponders the conversation as he gazes out at the theatre.

Abigail just arrives to unlock the doors, followed by a few eager kids.

John lowers his head.

INT. THEATRE - DAY

All the kids and Abby stand gathered around John on stage. Everyone looks pretty downtrodden. He's already told them the news.

JOHN

I'm really sorry, you guys.

No one answers. They are either too sad or too mad.

JOHN

Look, I won't take the job...

ABIGAIL

No...

John looks to Abigail. She fights back tears already.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

You should go.

JASON

Miss Abby!

All the kids join in.

ABIGAIL

(to kids)

No. Hey.

They calm down.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

This is what he does.

John lowers his head.

Abigail quickly leaves before she sheds a tear.

John reaches for her but does not make contact. He's left with a bunch of let down kids.

JASON

Mr. American hero, can save the world, but can't stop breakin' his daughter's heart.

Jason leaves.

Most of the others follow silently. All except Arnold and Maryanne.

Maryanne grabs a quick hug from John then runs out weeping.

Arnold steps closer.

ARNOLD

You're my best friend. One of the only friends I've ever had.

JOHN

Hey. You've made plenty of friends here. These kids respect you, son. You have to see that. You don't need some old man as a friend.

(bends down)

And you're going to get the girl in the end... you'll see.

Arnold nods and walks off with head down.

John turns and watches him leave then turns to look at the stage one last time.

EXT. HOTEL/THEATRE - AFTERNOON

John loads up the last of his gear in the trunk of his car.

Abigail approaches in a lite sundress.

The kids hang back by the theatre entrance.

ABIGAIL

All packed?

JOHN

Yeah.
(beat)
Look, Abby...

ABIGAIL

Please. Don't make this any harder
than it is.

JOHN

Yeah but...

ABIGAIL

John, please.

Abigail starts to tear up. She slowly steps in and kisses her father on the cheek then turns and walks away.

John takes a last look at Abigail as she walks away holding herself. Her lite sundress flutters in the breeze. She looks just as she did the day he arrived.

John takes a last look at Abby and the disappointed kids before he gets into his car and drives off.

Abigail can hold it back no longer and starts to weep uncontrollably.

The kids run to embrace her.

John's car leaves in a cloud of dust.

FADE OUT.

INT. BOYS DORMS - DAY

All the kids are gathered in the boys' dorms, scattered about the bunks. Some lie around and dangle their limbs off the top bunks. Others just sit hunched over. It's a sad sight to see.

Abigail enters and leans against the bunks in the middle of them all. She surveys the damage that John has done.

ABIGAIL

Anyone want to talk about it?

No answer.

ABIGAIL

Look you guys. I'm sad that John left too. But we have a show to do tomorrow.

Still nothing.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)

John's an soldier. That's what he does. We can't hold him back from that.

(beat)

This could be the most important career move of his life.

JASON

Funny, I thought it was more important to be here... with us... with you.

Abigail is visibly taken aback by Jason's last comment.

ABIGAIL

With me?

JASON

Oh stop it, Miss Abby. We know he's your pops.

Abigail surrenders.

ABIGAIL

How did you know?

JANE

We're not stupid.
(matter-of-factly)
The campfire story.

ARNOLD

And we Googled it.

Abigail smiles.

ABIGAIL

Well aren't you guys clever.

This brightens them up for a brief moment.

MARYANNE

I just can't believe he's gone.

Abigail sits next to Maryanne and embraces her.

ABIGAIL

I know... me neither.

She looks around at the kids.

ABIGAIL

Why don't you guys take a break today. You know your lines pretty well. I'm sure you can pull off tomorrow's performance without rehearsals today.

Abigail gets up to leave the kids. She stops at the door.

ABIGAIL

Harry, you think you can play John's part tomorrow night?

Harry silently nods.

ABIGAIL

(smiles sadly)
Okay.

She exits and closes the door.

INT. ABIGAIL'S CABIN - NIGHT

Abigail sadly strolls around her cabin as she gets ready for bed. She sits on the edge of her bed and picks up the family portrait to look at it.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

John lies in a lonely hotel room in a small hotel somewhere. He just lies there and stares up at the ceiling with a troubled look.

ABIGAIL'S CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Abigail sets the portrait down with care, lies down and pulls the covers over herself, then CLICKS the light off.

JOHN'S HOTEL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

John manages a slight smile, probably at some memory of Abigail and the kids, then CLICKS his light off.

INT. THEATRE - MORNING

It's the next day.

Maryanne has arrived at the theatre first. She sits at the grand piano and feathers the keys in a sad, beautiful melody.

Arnold steps in to see Maryanne sitting at the piano.

She seems to glow from the light that flows in through the open theatre entrance.

He admires her for a long beat while he gets up the courage to approach her. He takes a last deep breath and steps up.

ARNOLD

Hi, Maryanne.

Maryanne is startled by Arnold's sudden presence and hits the keys hard.

MARYANNE

Oh. Hi, Arnold.

ARNOLD

May I join you?

Maryanne smiles and nods.

Arnold swallows a lump in his throat and sits.

Arnold clearly tries to think of the right words to say. He watches Maryanne smiles softly as she starts to play the same classical melody with skill and precision.

ARNOLD

Are you nervous about the show tonight?

She shakes her head.

MARYANNE

Not too much.

(beat)

You?

Arnold just gives her a look like, "Are you kidding me?"

MARYANNE

You shouldn't be.

Arnold brightens up a bit.

MARYANNE (CONT'D)

You are quite talented.

Arnold smiles big and returns the compliment with a smooth but subtle line.

ARNOLD

Well, you're not too bad yourself,
you know.

Maryanne smiles bigger and rolls into a crescendo.

Arnold just watches as she skillfully makes the piano sing
then softly comes to a stop with a final high-pitched ting.

ARNOLD

(amazed)
That was beautiful.

Maryanne casts an endearing look.

Arnold quickly breaks eye contact.

Maryanne looks down and gently closes the cover on the piano.

ARNOLD

Maryanne.

MARYANNE

Yes, Arnold?

Maryanne looks to be anxiously anticipating something good,
but sadly, Arnold fails to express what or how he feels.

MARYANNE

Come on. Our parents will be
arriving soon.

Arnold watches as Maryanne gets up and walks off into the
warm morning light that floods through the door. She stops
and turns to face Arnold.

MARYANNE

You coming, silly?

Arnold smiles and gets up to follow.

EXT. HOTEL/THEATRE - DAY

The hotel parking lot is alive with all the parents and other
guests that arrive for the final performance of the theatre
camp.

Busy parents arrive, shuffle out of their cars, luggage in
hand, and head for the lobby.

Parents are united with kids. Hugs and kisses everywhere.
It's total loving chaos.

EXT. THEATRE - EVENING

The sun goes down - it's time for the show.

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

The seats are packed. Those that didn't arrive in time, stand all around the theatre, blocking some of the 16th century audience's view. But the king and all the nobles at the top row still have great seats.

A loud MURMUR amongst the crowd as everyone anticipates a good show.

The stage is set for the first scene and the players are surely backstage in a panic to get ready.

BACKSTAGE

It is an intense scene. These kids are truly professionals. It is not chaos by any means. Instead, each player is already dressed and ready to go, and sits focused, going over lines.

Jim and Jane work together on some last minute exercises to get ready.

Jason calmly paces and reads the script one last time.

Maryanne silently smiles and frowns, and goes through a whole array of silly faces and emotions in what looks to be an exercise of her own creation.

The rest of the other players do their own thing to get ready as well.

Arnold peeks out from behind the curtain at the packed house.

Abigail approaches him from behind.

ABIGAIL

You ready?

Arnold looks to Abigail with a meek smile.

ARNOLD

Yeah. I think so.

ABIGAIL

You're going to be great. You all are.

Arnold takes a last look at the crowd.

ABIGAIL (CONT'D)
Come on, lets go get everyone
ready.

Abigail and Arnold go round up the players.

ABIGAIL
Okay, everyone. This is it. Just
stay calm, remember your lines.
Remember to breathe.
(beat)
And I'm sure if John were here, he
would tell you to use the sadness
of his leaving during the sad
moments.

Everyone manages to enjoy the notion with a few mild chuckles
and smiles.

ABIGAIL
Okay... break a leg.

SERIES OF SHOTS - THE FINAL PERFORMANCE

The play opens on an intense poker scene where Jason's
character has a showdown with his rival then loses
everything he has. The crowd awes and claps as the curtain
closes.

JIM
(cocky tone)
Don't take it so hard, kid.
(beat)
There's always next year.

The next scene is where Jason and Maryanne's character meet
and exchange some witty dialogue.

MARYANNE
So you're a card player, huh?

JASON
(debonair smile)
Yes, ma'am.

The crowd laughs and admires as the two players capture them
with their performances.

A little further into the play Arnold and Maryanne exchange
some dialogue of their own as the second love interest is
introduced.

ARNOLD

I don't know what you see in that
guy.

MARYANNE

Funny.

(smile)

He says the same thing about you.

The crowd is ensnared further into the drama of the story.

Further into the play Jason's character tells Arnold his plan to make it to the World Series of Poker and win the whole thing. Arnold's character asks...

ARNOLD

What about Emily?

And they get into a heated argument to finish the scene.

What is supposed to be John's scene slowly approaches while he sits in his hotel room and bounces a rubber ball against the wall in frustration.

The show goes on at the opera house. Maryanne and Arnold exchange some heated lines of dialogue.

MARYANNE

What can you offer me, Tim?!

Arnold's character tries but fails to express his love for her's.

Later in the play Jason's character says his broken goodbye's to Maryanne's as he heads to Vegas for the biggest poker tournament in the world.

JASON

I'm sorry, Emily.

MARYANNE

Don't make this any harder than it
has to be.

(tears up)

Just go, Vince.

The scene plays out much like the real life scene between John and Abigail.

INT. JOHN'S HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

John sits motionless, now on the edge of his bed. He slowly reaches for the remote control and CLICKS it on for a convenient shock.

The very scene from "Straight Deuces", the one that he is supposed to act out in the play with Abigail and the kids, is about to play out on the TV. John watches more intently than he has probably ever watched one of his own performances.

INSERT: TV

John's character sits in a bar drinking his sorrows away.

A bartender - the VOICE OF REASON - stands by and awaits his cue to deliver his lines.

JOHN'S CHARACTER

I blew it.

VOICE OF REASON

I'm sorry, but didn't you just win the World Series of Poker?

JOHN'S CHARACTER

Came in second. Thanks for reminding me.

VOICE OF REASON

(sarcastically)

Only won one million instead of five, huh?

Bartender shakes his head.

JOHN'S CHARACTER

Funny.

(beat)

I'm not talking about that anyway.

Bartender decides to listens.

JOHN'S CHARACTER (CONT'D)

I blew it with her.

(beat)

She was the best thing that ever happened to me. And I left her for the chance at a big purse.

VOICE OF REASON

So go get her now. Last I checked,
The ladies love a man with a big
pocket book.

JOHN'S CHARACTER

Not this lady. She's different.
(beat)
She's something special.

VOICE OF REASON

If you really love this girl, then
go get her, and quit sobbing all
over my bar.

Bartender wipes the bar under John.

JOHN'S CHARACTER

She's better off without me. I've
been running away and leaving
people my whole life.
(beat)
It's what I do best.

John's character cracks some peanuts on the bar.

VOICE OF REASON

Look, guy, it's never too late to
change your ways.
(beat)
And if she truly cares about you,
then I am sure she understands why
you had to leave, and is patiently
waiting for you to come back and
sweep her off her feet.

INSERT: ABIGAIL WATCHES THE PLAY AS A THOUGHT CLEARLY CROSSES
OVER HER FACE.

INSERT: JOHN WATCHES THE TV AS THE WORDS OF THE VOICE OF
REASON RESINATE IN HIS CURRENT SITUATION AS WELL.

BACK TO SCENE

VOICE OF REASON (CONT'D)

But she ain't gonna wait forever,
kid. And she sure as heck isn't in
the bottom of that peanut bowl.

John's character smiles and gets up to leave the bar.

BACK TO REAL LIFE SCENE

A big smile comes over John's face.

John gets up and rushes out of the hotel in the same fashion as his character on TV.

John's car ROARS off in the background as his TV character comes back into the bar, slams down a wad of cash and delivers his cheesy closing line.

JOHN'S CHARACTER
(corny smile)
Keep the change.

Bartender shakes his head and polishes a glass as John's character exits the bar.

INT. THEATRE - LATER

The audience LAUGHS and APPLAUDS as the curtain closes on the scene right before what's supposed to be John's scene.

BACKSTAGE

Abigail rushes the children into a wardrobe change.

ABIGAIL
Hurry now. This is it.
(to Harry)
You all ready?

Harry nods his head confidently.

Abigail smiles then looks to the backstage side entrance, as if she waits for John to come running in just in time for his part. She shakes the notion off.

ABIGAIL
Okay, go get 'em.

She shuffles the kids into position and readies them for the curtain to open.

EXT. ROAD - NIGHT

John speeds down an empty highway as fast as he can.

INT. THEATRE - MOMENTS LATER

The scene already plays out, just as it did on the TV in John's hotel room.

Harry plays the bartender.

Jason plays John's character at the bar. His performance is mediocre and almost comical.

The audience loves the exchange between the two players.

HARRY

So go get her now.

(beat)

The last I checked, The ladies love
a man with a big pocket book.

The crowd LAUGHS.

BACKSTAGE

Abigail watches with a proud smile at the exchanges of dialogue. She notices a sad sight on the other side of the stage.

Arnold stands watching the scene play out, sadly, probably because he knows that Jason's character will get the girl in the end, just like in real life.

Abigail casts a sympathetic look. She starts to tear up. Maybe from Arnold, maybe from John's absence. There's no way to tell.

JOHN (O.S.)

(winded)

How are they doing, kiddo?

Abigail's face lights up and she recognizes the voice, turns, and runs to embrace John.

John picks her up and twirls his baby girl before he sets her down to look at her.

JOHN

I'm so sorry...

ABIGAIL

Don't. I'm fine.

(smiles)

We're fine.

The other kids notice John and rush over with a silent excitement, so as not to disturb the performance that plays out on stage.

JOHN
Hey guys! I'm sorry I missed my spot.
(to Maryanne)
You ready to knock 'em dead?

Maryanne nods with a giddy excitement that is true to form.

JOHN
I know you are.

John, Abigail and the kids step over to watch Harry and Jason finish the scene.

ON STAGE

HARRY
If you really love this girl, then go get her, and quit sobbing all over my bar.

The audience LAUGHS at Harry's dramatically wipes some tears off the bar.

BACKSTAGE

John laughs at the scene as well, then his attention turns to Arnold across the stage. He nudges Abigail to look.

ABIGAIL
(whisper)
He's been like that most of the night.

John looks on thoughtfully until an the expression on his face clearly shows an idea has entered his mind. He grabs Abigail and whispers something in her ear.

Abigail starts to smile at the whispered suggestion. She nods her head in a agreement.

ON STAGE

The scene just finishes up.

HARRY

But she ain't gonna wait forever,
kid.

(beat)

And she sure as heck isn't in the
bottom of that peanut bowl.

Jason smiles and rushes off as the audience LAUGHS. He comes back, slaps the cash on the bar, and delivers the last line.

JASON

Keep the change.

More LAUGHTER accompanied by APPLAUSE as the curtain closes.

BACKSTAGE

Jason, Harry and Arnold all see John and get just as excited as the rest of the kids did.

JASON

Just couldn't stay away, could you
G.I. Joe?

JOHN

No, hip-hop, I guess not. You and
Arnold come her, I have to tell you
something.

John takes Arnold and Jason to the side and whispers his plan in a hurry.

Maryanne gets all worried about what she sees.

MARYANNE

Abby, what's going on?

ABIGAIL

(smiles)

Nothing to worry about.

(beat)

Now I know you are good at improv,
so whatever happens out there, I
want you to just go with it.

Maryanne looks at the boys then back at Abigail.

MARYANNE

(nervously)

Okay.

John finishes his talk with the boys, who start to look very happy about the secret plan.

ON STAGE - MOMENTS LATER

The curtain opens and the final scene is on.

Maryanne sits with some friends – played by Carol and Jane – at a small table outside a mock cafe. They exchange whispered laughter and dialogue.

JANE

So, Emily, why didn't you go with Vince to Vegas?

MARYANNE

Oh, he didn't seem to want me palling around with him.

(beat)

No, I think what we had has come and gone.

CAROL

Don't say that. You guys can't be over.

MARYANNE

I hate to break it to you, but I think we are.

Jason bursts onto the stage.

JASON

Emily!

Maryanne turns and slowly stands in dramatic fashion.

MARYANNE

Vince. What are you doing here?

JASON

I...

Arnold bursts on the stage.

ARNOLD

He was just leaving.

A STIR in the crowd.

IN THE AUDIENCE

A lady, who can only be MARYANNE'S MOM, has a look of surprise on her face.

MARYANNE'S MOM
Wait, that's not right.

BACK ON STAGE

MARYANNE
(chokes for a second)
Tim... I...

Jaosn smiles at Maryanne and bows off stage gracefully.

ARNOLD
Emily, I... I know that I'm not as
successful... or as good looking...
or as smooth as Jimmy.

Maryanne watches in awe as Arnold pours his heart out to her,
in character, and in real life.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)
But I can offer you so much more.
(takes a step closer)
More substance than he can.
(steps closer)
More laughter than he can.
(another step)
More friendship than he can.

Arnold reaches a now trembling Maryanne and takes her hand.
He looks deep into her eyes.

ARNOLD (CONT'D)
I love you, Maryanne.

IN THE AUDIENCE

Maryanne's mom's mouth drops at the sound of her daughter's
actual name.

BACK ON STAGE

Maryanne melts, along with the audience's AWES – she doesn't
know what to say.

MARYANNE
I...

Arnold plants a tender stage kiss before she can say one word
more.

The curtain closes and the audience is dead silent, but only for a moment, then they erupt in an ear-drumming ROAR of APPLAUSE and ear-piercing WHISTLES.

BACK ON STAGE

The curtain closes and Arnold pulls back from Maryanne.

She just stares into his eyes and softly smiles.

He smiles back.

Not a word is spoken between the two as the rest of the cast and crew celebrate in FADED CHEERS behind them.

Abigail and John look on together with fond and sentimental looks at the sight of two young kids in love.

LATER - BACK ON STAGE

All the players have taken the stage now. The crowd APPLAUDS and CHEERS as they join hands and take their final bow, and bow a few more times, for the gracious audience.

Maryanne blows kisses to her fans in true dramatic form.

The players wave their gratitude and smile proudly.

LATER - JUST OFF STAGE

Parents and friends of family all TALK in excited VOICES around the theatre.

Maryanne introduces her mom to Abigail and to Johnny Rush himself.

JOHN

It's a pleasure to meet you, ma'am.

John lifts and kisses her hand like he is Lord Byron.

Maryanne's mom melts and raises the back of her hand to her forehead, in true dramatic fashion just like her daughter, before she takes a seat and fans herself.

JOHN

(to Abigail)

She's Maryanne's mom alright.

Just as John says that Mike eagerly approaches them, accompanied by a distinguished looking gentleman in a full on suit and cowboy hat. This is CONGRESSMAN CHAMBERS(55).

MIKE

Abigail, I'd like you to meet
Congressman Chambers.

Abigail shakes hands with the Congressman.

ABIGAIL

It's a pleasure to meet you, sir.

CHAMBERS

(mild Southern accent)
The pleasure is mine, I assure you.

He smiles a strange little smile.

EXT. HOTEL/THEATRE - DAY

It's the next day, and the kids are loading into their parent's cars.

Maryanne stands by her mom's car with Arnold.

Abigail and John look on as she writes something on a piece of paper then hands it to Arnold. She then leans in and gives him a tender kiss on the cheek before she steps into her mother's car.

Arnold is left holding his cheek with his mouth agape. He looks over to John, who gives him a thumbs up. Arnold gives a dreamy thumbs up and walks off toward his parents' car.

Abigail and John share a laugh at the sight.

Just before she gets into her car, Maryanne's mother smiles coyly at John and motions with her hand for him to call her, then blows a kiss.

Abigail, mouth agape, turns to John.

ABIGAIL

(teasingly)
I think you two would look great
together.

John chuckles.

JOHN

(playfully)
You think so, huh?

They laugh as John shakes his head in embarrassment.

JOHN

So Maryanne's letters to congress
really worked, huh?

ABIGAIL

Yep. She wrote about thirty letters
in two weeks.

JOHN

Thirty letters?!

ABIGAIL

She is one determined young lady.

JOHN

Yes she is.

They share a moment of silent reverence as they watch the
last of the kids leave in various clouds of dust and ZOOMING
cars.

ABIGAIL

So what are you going to do now?

JOHN

I don't know. Think maybe I'll try
my hand at writing and directing
theatre.

He smiles.

ABIGAIL

What about D.C.?

John turns and sincerely addresses his daughter.

JOHN

I've served my country, and did it
gladly. But I think I'll spend some
time with my daughter now.

Abigail nods her approval.

ABIGAIL

I think theatre would suit you just
fine.

She smiles.

INT. THEATRE - NIGHT

The King and Queen, nobles, bullfighters, lords and maidens that adorn the walls watch as a beautiful lone performance plays out on stage.

On stage, Abigail Rush, in full on Victorian costume and makeup, plays out her lone role with the fullest of heart for her 16th century audience.

An intense prerecorded ORCHESTRA bellows up to a final CRESCENDO as she makes her final whirls of interpretive dance and comes to a stop, slumped over in perfect pose.

There is a long silence as she holds her final pose, center stage. Then...

Deafening APPLAUSE fills the theatre, and a packed house is revealed.

Abigail smiles and raises her head to graciously wave to the crowd. She offers a fond smile to one audience member in particular.

IN THE FRONT ROW

John, dressed in a fine suit and tie, stands and delivers the loudest and proudest applause of all the people in the audience. He returns her fond smile and blows a gentle kiss through the air.

Abigail laughs, with tears of joy in her eyes, as she holds her gaze on her father.

FADE TO BLACK.

THE END