

"STARRY EYED" Pilot

Written By

Lauren Goodman

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ACT ONE

1

EXT. ACTING STUDIO. DAY.

1

KRISTEN DUNN, early thirties, is ready-ing herself for "her big debut". She applies lipstick and scrutinizes her face for possible stress lines when she realizes that the camera is recording and pointing directly at her.

KRISTEN

(To camera)

Oh, I'm sorry, are we going now?

The camera tilts up-and-down, indicating a nod.

KRISTEN

Sorry, it's just that no one gave me my cue... You know, I just want to look more natural for the camera -- do you think we could start over? I need to get into the zone.

The camera quickly cuts to black and turns back on again, where KRISTEN is flipping her hair and doing some deep yoga breaths, clearly trying too hard.

KRISTEN

Not yet, one more teeny tiny minute.

Once again the camera turns off and turns back on, with a clapboard indicating this is now their 10th take. We zoom in onto KRISTEN's over-eager and now makeup-enhanced face. *It's showtime.*

KRISTEN

Ta-da! This is where the magic happens! Welcome to the acting studio, which is the breeding ground for many A-list celebrities nowadays. (points to the sign) And of course, bares my namesake as it's founder.

(hamming it up)

Let's take a look, shall we?

2

INT. ACTING STUDIO LOBBY. CONTINUOUS ACTION.

2

The camera follows KRISTEN as she waltzes into the building, greeting kids and parents alike with cheer and politeness. She seems to be putting on a performance of her own.

(CONTINUED)

KRISTEN (V.O.)

You know the saying that "a star is born"? I would like to argue that that statement is positively bogus, made up by an idiot falsely led on by the pity of others. When kids first come here, they have no talent, ZERO -- I mean you should see it, absolutely laughable. Only after they go through me do they start to possess any real star quality. And I don't consider that to be cocky in the least.

3 INT. KRISTEN'S OFFICE. TALKING HEAD.

3

In interview style, KRISTEN is sitting down, speaking to the camera.

KRISTEN (CONT'D)

As it is argued in Huckleberry Finn, stars don't just happen, they are made. Even people like... (thinking) Michael Jackson had someone who mentored him. He would have been blubbering on-stage on American Bandstand if somebody hadn't told him to suck it up and look cute.

BACK TO:

4 INT. ACTING STUDIO LOBBY. CONTINUOUS ACTION.

4

KRISTEN is giving a tour to the camera around the lobby area, first signaling to the movie posters aligning the walls. Some posters are obvious spoofs of real movies.

KRISTEN

These are just a few of the productions that my students have starred in. You can tell we are very serious with our craft here.

KRISTEN then walks up next to the front desk where SHARON (early 40s), a small but perky lady, is at a computer, very focused. She must work hard.

KRISTEN

This is Sharon, the studio's receptionist slash main show mom here. Yes, she is one of my student's mothers who graciously

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KRISTEN (cont'd)
works with the parents and guests
to make sure operations run
smoothly. A-Ten-Hut!

SHARON
(promoting her daughter)
My daughter Susanne, Suzi for
short. She's very gifted.
(She then shows off Suzi's
headshot)
I took this picture myself. I take
photos as a side job because the
pay here --

KRISTEN
(interrupting)
So what's up Shar -- Share-Bear?

SHARON
Uh... (looking back-and-forth
between Kristen and camera) Just
your run-of-the-mill stuff...
trying to schedule a celebrity
seminar next month. Nothing too
remarkable.

KRISTEN
We should let you get back to this
celebrity seminar then as I
continue to show them the building.

KRISTEN then starts to exits the lobby into the hallway. As
the camera follows her, it pans back for a quick moment to
see the "hard work" Sharon is doing on her laptop. She is
playing PAC-MAN. She's not very good at it either.

5 INT. STUDIO HALLWAY. CONTINUOUS ACTION.

5

KRISTEN stops in front of a wall that is covered from
head-to-toe in child headshots. If you didn't know she was
an acting coach, you'd think she would be someone who should
seriously be brought in for police questioning.

KRISTEN
This is the Wall of Fame. Students
of mine who have found success in
the industry. Some of the alum are
on Broadway, star in TV shows, won
Grammys'... I like to think of all
of the students as my own children.
You may be think that because I
only display the headshots of the
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KRISTEN (cont'd)
more successful ones it means that
I favor them more. No, like any
proud parent I display the kids'
achievements... all the while
motivating the others ones to do
better.

As KRISTEN continues to lead us down the hall, it looks as
the eyes from the poster are following us. Traveling further
inward, we see the hall filled with parents crowded around
windows watching their small kids in classrooms, a water
cooler, and couches. They're catty and privileged.

KRISTEN
(points to a room)
This is one of our classrooms here.
But I'm not going to take you in
there. That's only Level One
students. The babies! They are
practically learning to walk, so
it's embarrassing for them to be
seen on-camera.

KRISTEN moves towards the back of the building, parents
moving aside watching as she walks through a classroom door,
making her grand entrance. The kids sit clustered in chairs
within one corner of the room.

6

INT. STUDIO CLASSROOM A. CONTINUOUS ACTION.

6

KRISTEN
Hello guys. Everyone I would like
to introduce you to the camera crew
who will be following around for
some time. Camera crew meet the
master students. Master students
meet camera crew.
(To students)
Try not to talk to them. We are
going to go on about business as
usual. Just a day-in-the-life
here... Okay, so attendance. Well,
first we have Suzi whom you guys
should know of.

It's the girl from the receptionist's headshot. She's small
like her mom, but can't help from being cheeky when a camera
is around. In fact, SUZI stands up boldly and says:

SUZI
Present!

(CONTINUED)

KRISTEN

Next is Taylor, Devin, Bryce...

As Kristen rattles off names, the students say "Here", signaling their presence.

KRISTEN

... Nolan...

NOLAN is chilling is the front of the class, the most casual in the situation.

NOLAN

Yup.

KRISTEN

... AJ...

Like SUZI, this boy stands up from his chair. Unlike everyone else, he's more dressed up for class, wearing a preppy outfit. He has the sort of spoiled demeanor that makes him the guy you love to make fun of.

AJ

Here!

Kristen continues to call off names.

KRISTEN

... and finally Melissa...

One of the older girls raises her hand, not wanting the attention the camera has on her. MELISSA is selfconscious, but she has a down-to-earth presence.

KRISTEN

(To Melissa)

There you are.

(Then to class)

For this week's intensive lesson, we are going back to basics with our Emotional Recalls. Everyone must of think of a memory where you have experienced intense emotions and apply it to a scene I assign to you.

QUICK CUT TO:

7

INT. EMPTY STUDIO ROOM. *TALKING HEAD.*

7

SUZI is now sitting, speaking directly to camera. From this point forward, we'll refer to this as simply TALKING HEAD.

SUZI

Crying on cue? Oh yeah, I've nailed it down a long time ago.

(As Suzi begins to unlock phone)

When I was on "Toddlers and Tiaras", we use to do this thing a lot. Although I mostly won all the pageants, because I wasn't a main character, they staged it to look like one of the leads won and I lost, so I was asked to cry many times. Naturally, I became a whiz.

SUZI shows the camera her phone. The camera zooms in on a photo taken from "Toddlers and Tiaras", where a mini beauty queen is being crowned. We can spot a younger SUZI in the background, mascara running down her face, an ugly cry from her defeat.

SUZI

(pointing to herself)

See. There. And before they started recording, I was watching Nemo's mom is brutall being killed by a barracuda. Just like that: waterworks.

BACK TO:

8

INT. STUDIO CLASSROOM A.

8

KRISTEN walks towards a filing cabinet where many of the scripts are kept. She searches through the files for some time before picking some out and handing them to the actors.

9

AJ'S TALKING HEAD

9

AJ

"E.T." The part where Elliot is saying goodbye to the E.T. My dad made me what it years ago, but I remember it to be a real tearjerker.

(in alien voice)

E.T. phone home...

AJ nervously chuckles before an unsettling silence.

10

NOLAN'S TALKING HEAD

10

NOLAN

I have a scene from "Good Will Hunting" playing Matt Damon's character. I love that movie. (pause) Did you know that him and Ben Affleck wrote and starred in it together? That's what I want to do -- pull a Damon... or even a Sylvester Stallone. Write an amazing script that get picked up from nowhere, negotiate with a studio so that I, myself, gets to star in it, and suddenly it wins Best Picture or Best Screenplay. But, I don't win Best Actor yet. 5 years later, I win it for another roll. Thus, my humble beginnings. That's my 10 year plan... or maybe 5 if I start writing now.

BACK TO:

11

INT. STUDIO CLASSROOM A.

11

KRISTEN

(intimidatingly)

You will have the next few days in the studio to rehearse with one another. Of course, you will all need some individual time to collect your thoughts. But remember, emotion. You will be pushed to dive deep into your saddest memories and place yourself inside your character's shoes. I expect perfection. Start working.

And with that, KRISTEN glares at her students judgmentally before exiting the classroom in a fashion that is just as dramatic as the way she entered. You can practically see the sweat dripping from the actors.

KRISTEN (V.O.)

That is how it's done. Scare them so that way they perform. I'm not a Paula, I'm a Simon. No one remembers Paula, she's just "the nice one".

12 KRISTEN'S TALKING HEAD

12

KRISTEN

She's doesn't have Randy swagger,
she's not a diva like Mariah Carey,
she doesn't even have Ellen's edge
of judging a singing show even
though she doesn't sing. Everyone
favors Simon because he gets booed
all of the time, yet he happens to
be the most famous. There's a
reason.

KRISTEN does a SIMON COWELL impression.

KRISTEN

Secretly, he's America's sweetheart
even though he's British. Maybe we
like him more because he's not
American.

BACK TO:

13 INT. STUDIO CLASSROOM A.

13

There is a long awkward pause, as no one knows what to do
when KRISTEN is gone. So much for direction. Finally, SUZI,
the de facto leader, speaks up.

SUZI

Let's all get to work people!

The actors start getting up, spreading to their private
corners of the room and hallways outside rooms, amid all of
the mothers.

14 INT. STUDIO BREAK ROOM. SAME DAY.

14

MELISSA is huddled around a table by a coffee machine
carefully looking her lines. She's analyzes the paper as if
it was a novel she's suppose to annotate in school,
scribbling marks, highlighting phrases, and writing in the
margins.

15 MELISSA'S TALKING HEAD

15

MELISSA

I'm really excited for this. I'm
doing a scene from "The Sisterhood
of the Traveling Pants", where
Carmen is calling her dad, and I'm
recalling a time when I was bullied
in elementary school -- the cruelty

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA (cont'd)
of a fourth grade power-struggle
that started it all.

CUT TO:

16 INT. STUDIO CLASSROOM A. SAME DAY.

16

Meanwhile, the students are also looking over their lines, some in groups of two or three, making small talk. AJ and SUZI are separately looking at their scripts near each other.

AJ
Suzi, I'm ready to go through my
script, I need you to read the
other role.

SUZI
You've memorized it that quickly?

AJ
Yea, I have an eidetic memory.

SUZI
So you've only read it like once or
twice?

AJ
A bunch more than that obviously.

SUZI
Not really an eidetic memory then.

AJ
Yes, it is.

SUZI
No. It's not.

AJ
Yes.

SUZI
Uh, no.

AJ
(letting her win)
Go over this with me, okay?

He hands her his script, and starts to get into character.

(CONTINUED)

AJ
3,2,1, Go.

SUZI
(imitating E.T.)
Come.

AJ
Stay.

Suzi (E.T.) lifts her finger to her lips.

SUZI
Ouch.

AJ (Elliot) does the same.

AJ
Ouch.

AJ then is trying to work himself up, thinking sad memories to evoke tears. You can tell he's struggling. Instead of looking like he's about to cry, he looks weirdly intense.

SUZI
(interrupting)
What are you doing?

AJ
(feeling relief at being interrupted)
Acting.

SUZI
(as matter-of-fact)
You're not suppose to be acting.
You are suppose to be feeling.
People who "act" aren't artists.

AJ
Aren't you so high and mighty.

SUZI
I'm simply saying that acting isn't pretending, it's a craft. What were recalling anyways?

AJ
Sad memories, I can't pinpoint it down to one.

(CONTINUED)

SUZI

Have you never had anything
terrible happen to you?

AJ

No. Some crappy things have
happened like being rejected for a
Ben-10 remake, but overall, I've
had a happy upbringing. Do you
think a Wikihow tutorial will help?

SUZI

What is wrong with you?

17

SUZI'S TALKING HEAD

17

SUZI

Wikihow? Step one: cry. Step
two:... I can't think of anything
else since it's pretty
self-explanatory... I'm surrounded
by amateurs.

CUT TO:

18

INT. NOLAN'S ROOM. AFTERNOON.

18

NOLAN'S room is disorganized as you expect: bed unmade, a
hanging calendar from 2 years ago that's never made it to
the trash, socks strewn on the floor, birthday card and
scripts in a pile on his desk, and most notably, movie
posters covering his walls. Yup, a total movie geek. He sits
his desk, half procrastinating, half looking at the script.

NOLAN (V.O.)

Most of my creative process is at
home. Sure I look over it at the
studio. But, when I'm alone without
distractions is when I can really
dive deep into my character --

NOLAN'S MOM (O.S.)

(calling upstairs)

Nolan!

NOLAN

(calling down)

What!?

NOLAN'S MOM (O.S.)

(she doesn't seem to hear the
first time and calls again)

Nolan!

(CONTINUED)

NOLAN
(annoyed)
WHAT?!

NOLAN'S MOM (O.S.)
I wanted to let you know that later
this week, I'm going out with
friends later this week, so you'll
have to watch your sisters.

NOLAN
OK.

NOLAN'S MOM (O.S.)
Nolan!

NOLAN
WHAT.

NOLAN'S MOM (O.S.)
Dinner will be ready in ten.

Nolan bangs his head on the table.

SMASH TO:

19 INT. MELISSA'S LIVING ROOM. NIGHT.

19

MELISSA and her MOM (40s) are on the couch, cuddled up with
blankets with a full bowl of popcorn, lighted only by the
screen they are watching. It's "Marley & Me", where Owen
Wilson and Jennifer Aniston's characters are buying Marley
from a breeder. They are whispering, but we can hear them.

MELISSA'S MOM
People are actually going to watch
this on television? How is watching
us watching a movie entertainment?
(eyeing the camera)

MELISSA
(whispering)
Yeah, it's so annoying. They are
everywhere. I feel like I'm on Big
Brother.

MELISSA'S MOM
At least you could watch this all
back years from now and look back
at all of the fun adventures you've
had. Embrace the opportunity!

She waves amicably to the camera. MELISSA slaps her hand
down.

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

Stop quoting a cereal box. It's not fun. It's stalking. (looking directly at the camera)

MELISSA'S MOM

Well, I'll get out of your way, good luck with your movie, let me know if you cry. You do know what happens in the end, right?

MELISSA

Yeah, yeah.

MELISSA'S MOM

Just be prepared with tissues. (forgetting) Wow, Jennifer Aniston's so good in this.

(realizing MELISSA is staring at her)

Okay, I'm leaving!

FADE TO:

20 INT. MELISSA'S LIVING ROOM. SOME TIME LATER. 20

MELISSA'S in the same spot, watching intently. The popcorn bowl only has kernels in it now, meaning time has elapsed. Owen Wilson is crying on-screen as Marley is being put down. Marley's puppy cries echo across the room as the camera close-ups onto MELISSA'S face. No tears at all. NOT EVEN A HINT.

21 MELISSA'S TALKING HEAD 21

MELISSA

It must be you guys, right? That's why I couldn't cry, because the camera kept staring with the evil eye, looking for some reaction. In reality, cameras and people don't just watch and wait for you to cry in a scene.

(long pause as she thinks back on what she just said before realizing)

Damn it.

22 INT. STUDIO CLASSROOM A. NEXT DAY.

22

It's morning time as Kristen checks-in on her little soldiers. MELISSA is especially anxious, as you see with a shaky water she's holding, NOLAN is texting on his phone, SUZI and NOLAN are still bantering about the scene from the day before.

KRISTEN enters the room, once again in dramatic flair. Her hair and makeup are even more on-point than yesterday. Once again, she gives a performance.

KRISTEN
So how are we doing so far?

AJ
Great!

KRISTEN
Okay, let's see what we have so far.

AJ
What?

KRISTEN
Come get up here and give it your best shot.

AJ
I might need a little more --

KRISTEN
In fact, everyone let's rehearse in front of each other right now. Sounds good?

Oh boy. This is not going to end well. We see a montage of the students performing their scenes, with KRISTEN reading the other roles. Some of them are conjuring visible tears, while others are well... at least they're trying. Each of them receives a look from Kristen, a look from which you just know what she's thinking. A look that could either bring you riches or haunt your dreams.

KRISTEN
Overall, that was... interesting.
(pause) Actually, I'm not going to sugarcoat it. Some of the scenes you did were bad. BAD. But that's okay because I am going to HELP YOU. Close your eyes.

The entire class shuts their eyes.

(CONTINUED)

KRISTEN

Now, think back to a time you were most happy. Remember the joy, the exhilaration you felt. Maybe it was eating ice cream or getting a bike for Christmas.

You can see the some of the students smiling, deep in thought.

KRISTEN

Now, imagine that happy thing was just taken away from you. Your ice cream gone because it fell on the concrete. Somebody just pushed you off of your new bike and broke your arm. Open your eyes.

The students open their eyes, confused.

KRISTEN

That is the start of what you will feel as you do these scenes. But your reactions will be ten times stronger. You will first experience the shock of what happened. Then, it will barrel into grief and a river of tears.

(then cheerily)

Now, ruin all of your best memories for your scene. Bye!

She exits the class, leaving the actors dumbfounded. We see the parents through the window puzzled just as much. What just happened?

CUT TO:

23

INT. STUDIO CLASSROOM B. LATER THAT DAY.

23

We are in a different classroom now, but students are continuing to practice in front of one another. MELISSA and NOLAN are chatting.

MELISSA

I don't know how to cry anymore. I was a robot. Not even when the little kids, now grown up, buried Marley. Who doesn't cry when a dog dies?

(CONTINUED)

NOLAN

You. (beat) You need to find your triggers. What was your emotional recall?

MELISSA

When I was bullied in elementary school. I used it before, but now it doesn't make me sad anymore. My tear ducts are dried up. It's a drought.

NOLAN

Find something else that makes you sad. Visit homeless shelters, cemeteries, even pounds -- if you still want to make the dead dog thing work -- and then apply that feeling to your character.

MELISSA

That's easier said than done.

As MELISSA and NOLAN continue to talk, SUZI overhears this suggestion and scribbles something down. We watch as she starts talking with AJ, and follow them as they both walk out the room and talk to SHARON.

24

SUZI'S TALKING HEAD

24

SUZI

I remember one time Melissa talked about how her Grandma lives in an old-folks home nearby. She's still alive, so she can't use her as a source, but little does Mel realize that an elderly house is filled with tons of sappy sob stories. So we could go in there as helpers and maybe hear a few. It's a gold mine.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

25

EXT. ELDERLY HOME PARKING LOT. AFTERNOON.

25

SUZI, AJ, and SHARON get out of car ready to go inside. The camera is following them, but SHARON blocks the camera once they get to the front door.

(CONTINUED)

SHARON
(to camera)
Wait here. I got this.

26 INT. ELDERLY HOME LOBBY. CONTINUOUS ACTION.

26

We watch through a window as SUZI, AJ, and SHARON walk inside as elderly people can be seen watching TV, eating, playing cards. It's boring, stuffy, and smells like a mix of dental floss and feet. A NURSE stands behind a desk in the center of the room, clearly looking like she does not want to be there. As the motley crew strides in, she eyes the spectacle. This is best thing she's seen all day.

SHARON
Hi m'am, I'm here to sign these two
kids in as helpers for the day.

Is she serious? A couple of kids with designer clothes offering to *help*?

NURSE
(to kids) You two are volunteers?

AJ
Yeah, I volunteer all the time. I
love old people. They're so full of
wisdom, and stories --

SUZI
Stop talking.

AJ
K.

SHARON
This is a good opportunity for them
to give back to their community,
especially to the ones who paved
the way.

NURSE
Well, okay then. So I assume you
have had some experience in a
nursing home before?

SUZI
Yeah, like he said we've done this
before many times... So, when can
we start to hang out with all of
these cool people?

SUZI gestures an old man who is snoring in a rocking chair nearby, drooling.

(CONTINUED)

NURSE

You are going to be training today, we can work you up to more direct interaction with the residents as the day progresses.

SHARON

Awesome. Oh, by the way there are some people who are following them around for a while, and I just wanted to make sure they're allowed to film in here if they give out all of the able to record forms and what-not.

SHARON points to the camera eavesdropping in through the window. Ohhh, now the NURSE gets it. Of course, people don't really do charity out of the kindness of their hearts. It's all to be famous.

NURSE

(hesitant)

As long as the residents are okay with it...

SHARON

Excellent! (to camera) Don't be shy, come on in!

The camera follows cautiously inside.

SHARON

(Announcing herself)

ATTENTION, ATTENTION EVERYONE!

None of the OLD PEOPLE turn their gaze to SHARON. Many still have their hearing aids in, confused as if they heard something, but brush it off and get back to their activities. The old man from earlier is still snoring despite his close proximity. What a crowd.

SHARON

You all have a rare opportunity to be on T.V. Imagine telling your grandkids that you are famous! So if the camera points your way, ACT NATURAL.

Still, no one is paying attention. SUZI and AJ are, understandably, embarrassed. The NURSE rolls her eyes, both annoyed and amused at the display.

(CONTINUED)

SHARON

I will be coming around with releases and pens. (holding up papers) PLEASE DON'T SUE US. You will lose because you signed this. Thank you for your cooperation.

(To SUZI)

Now, make me proud and find a story that makes you cry, honey!

CUT TO:

27

INT. NOLAN'S ROOM. AFTERNOON.

27

NOLAN is in his room practicing his lines. It surprisingly looks pretty good. You can see the tears forming in his eyes with each line he speaks, really diving deep into his character. The waterworks are *almost* there when his two sisters, MORGAN and LANA, burst into the room.

MORGAN

Can you make us Mac-n-cheese? I'm hungry.

LANA

No, order us pizza!

They start bickering as Nolan interrupts:

NOLAN

Why are you asking me? Go ask Mom if you want something.

MORGAN

She's gone. Meaning you're in charge.

LANA

(mischievously)

Meaning you have to do what we want all night, or you'll get in trouble.

Great. Now NOLAN really is close to tears.

CUT TO:

28

INT. ACTING STUDIO LOBBY. AFTERNOON.

28

The work day is almost done. KRISTEN and SHARON are lounging around on laptops, eating a late lunch.

KRISTEN

What did we charge for our last guest seminar? Sharon, show me the money!

SHARON

I think maybe \$300-ish. Considering 30 people for each of the three sessions, that's a lot of moo-lah, if you know what I'm saying.

KRISTEN

Hmmmm... let's make this one \$350, not including the extra practice sessions before.

SHARON

Ok. I'll type it in, I just need to finish writing this email.

Of course, SHARON isn't writing an email. She is still playing Pac-Man. Meanwhile KRISTEN is lost in thought.

KRISTEN

How do you make a kid cry? (beat)
Sharon, how do you Suzi cry?

SHARON

(distracted)

What?... Usually, she does something wrong, and I to yell at her, and the tears just flow right out.

KRISTEN

Yeah... (contemplating) I could do that -- scream at children -- but is that over the line?

SHARON

(not even listening)

It's a good idea.

KRISTEN

See, I think so too. But some parents are just so annoying, they'll complain. What else can you do to make a kid cry?

(CONTINUED)

At that moment, SHARON gets a text. She momentarily pauses her very important game to check her phone.

SHARON

Crap. I have to pick up Suzi and that boy from the old folks home because they got kicked out.

KRISTEN

Hmmmm... old folks. Interesting concept...

CUT TO:

29 EXT. ELDERLY HOME PARKING LOT. *TALKING HEAD*. 29

SUZI and AJ sit on the curb waiting for SHARON to pick them up.

SUZI AND AJ'S TALKING HEAD

SUZI

If it weren't for AJ, I would be hearing a tragic story about the Vietnam War right now. Instead, AJ freaked out and now we're here.

AJ

I did not freak out. Okay, here is what actually happened...

SMASH TO:

30 INT. ELDERLY HOME. FLASHBACK. 30

AJ and SUZI are helping out: folding towels, mopping floors, picking up boxes, giving food out.

AJ (V.O.)

I was helping out exactly like I said would. I delivered jello, I cleaned, I folded --

SUZI (V.O.)

(interrupting sarcastically)
Congratulations, Want a trophy?

AJ (V.O.)

As I was saying, I was doing everything I was asked to. But then these tasks started getting *uncomfortable*.

(CONTINUED)

AJ is wheeling an ELDERLY MAN down a hallway when he runs into the NURSE, who is carrying a tray of different medicine bottles.

AJ

Where do you want me to take him?

NURSE

The washroom. He's had his medicine, but a sponge bath should make him feel better.

AJ

Excuse me? A sponge bath?

NURSE

Did I stutter?

AJ

Somebody else is giving him this sponge bath, right?

NURSE

You said that you've done this many times.

Meanwhile, the ELDERLY MAN is starting to look a little green. SUZI happens to be down the hallway, about to walk by.

AJ

When we both said experience, we -- well, I meant experience in face-to-face conversation. I'm more of a people-person than a hard laborer --

And just as he says it, the ELDERLY MAN throws up onto the floor. Although it mostly lands on the floor, a few specks end up on AJ's shoes. *Oh hell no.*

AJ

(flipping out)

My Ralph Lauren's!

Right in the moment SUZI is passing by, AJ accidentally pushes SUZI, who in turn slips and slides across the throw-up into the NURSE. *That's when chaos ensues.* The medicine tray flies into the air, releasing all of the pills from their perspective containers. A rainbow of different colored pills go every which way as they cascade to the tiled floor, some landing in the throw-up. A look of absolute horror spreads across AJ's face as the reaction from the NURSE says it all.

(CONTINUED)

BACK TO:

31 EXT. ELDERLY HOME PARKING LOT. TALKING HEAD. 31

SUZI AND AJ'S TALKING HEAD

AJ

Personally, I like to think of us being kicked out as a team effort. Sure, I refused to give a sponge bath and may have pushed Suzi, but her falling into the tray was her own doing.

SUZI

(mocking)

My Ralph Lauren's!

An awkward silence. You can cut the tension with a knife.

CUT TO:

32 INT. NOLAN'S HOME. NIGHT. 32

NOLAN also isn't having the easiest time helping out. He's working tooth-and-nail cooking macaroni, playing monopoly, and cleaning up after his sisters. In between each task, he is trying to find time for practice his scene but to no avail.

It's later in the night and his sisters are immersed in a watching of "Frozen". On the couch, NOLAN is now able to finally practice. He begins quietly reading his lines, but the distraction of "Let It Go" begin to cloud his mind. The blanket is just so *warm and cozy*. NOLAN falls asleep as "Frozen" echoes through the room.

Tomorrow, should be an interesting day of class.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

33 INT. STUDIO CLASSROOM A. NEXT DAY. 33

It's filming day, and everyone is *on edge*. They stare at the door and their fellow actors as competitors all vying for Kristen's attention. The camera zooms in on MELISSA, who is visibly shaking with nerves.

34 MELISSA'S TALKING HEAD

34

MELISSA

On a scale of 1 to 10, how would I rate my confidence? Hmmmm.... well last night after class I went on a tour of all of the saddest places I could think of: funeral home, homeless shelter, hospital, dog pound... and still no tears. What kind of a sick person do you have to be to not even shed ONE tear?! (beat) Hitler... You have to be Hitler. I'm a monster. (beat) Is 1 the lowest level of confidence or is it 10?

BACK TO:

35 INT. STUDIO CLASSROOM A.

35

Class is about to start and *almost* everyone is there. However, one chair in the front is empty: AJ. NOLAN notices.

NOLAN

(to Suzi)

Hey, where is he?

SUZI

Probably chickening out... or washing his shoes.

CUT TO:

36 INT. STUDIO RESTROOM. MEANWHILE.

36

The camera eavesdrops through a slightly open restroom door as it watches AJ applying *something suspicious* into his eyes as he stands in front of a mirror. He blinks rapidly a few times before hiding the bottle in his pocket, and walks proudly out of restroom. As AJ strolls out, seemingly now at peace, he stops dead in his tracks, realizing the camera watching him. *Busted*.

37 AJ'S TALKING HEAD

37

AJ

(chuckling nervously)

I wasn't trying to make myself cry. My contacts were acting up; I was simply putting on solution. (long beat) I also happen to have pink eye --

CUT TO:

38

INT. STUDIO CLASSROOM A.

38

AJ finally walks in and makes his way towards a chair. Something seems to be bothering his eyes, and tears start to form. He takes his seat and the entire class just gawks at him wondering what's wrong.

MELISSA
(whispering to AJ)
Are you okay?

AJ
Yeah, just getting into character.
I like to start early.

MELISSA
Oh...

Now, MELISSA is even more jittery than before, if that's possible.

KRISTEN walks into the classroom, this time without a grand entrance, sits in her director's chair, and is checking her phone, not even seeming to notice or care about her students' presence. There is *absolute silence*. You can hear a pin drop as the kids just gawk at each other and at their teacher. Somehow, KRISTEN'S entrance is *more intimidating* than before. After a while, KRISTEN breaks the silence.

KRISTEN
Who wants to go first?

A hand shoots up into the air. It's SUZI, the little over-achiever. She hands KRISTEN her sides and gets into position.

SUZI
Today, I will be doing a scene from
"My Girl".

KRISTEN presses record on the camcorder. It's showtime. SUZI takes a breath and nods for KRISTEN to begin. KRISTEN reads the other lines from behind the camcorder.

KRISTEN
Hi Vada.

SUZI
Hi.

(CONTINUED)

KRISTEN
What are you doing.

SUZI
Feeding my fish.

KRISTEN
*Is that the fish you won at the
carnival?*

SUZI
Yes.

KRISTEN
*He's getting big. (pause) Vada,
come here and sit down for a
minute.*

SUZI (Vada) sits down next on a couch.

KRISTEN
*Vada, something happened to Thomas
J last night, he stepped on a
beehive.*

SUZI
(carefree)
*I told him not to tease those bees.
Did he get stung?*

KRISTEN (Harry) nods

SUZI
*Maybe I should go over and yell at
him.*

KRISTEN
No sweetheart, you can't.

SUZI
(looking very worried)
Why not?

KRISTEN
He was allergic to bees.

SUZI
(extremely worried)
He's okay isn't he?

KRISTEN
There were just too many of 'em.

(CONTINUED)

Tears begin well to well up in SUZI'S eyes. They flood down her cheeks as she loudly, and dramatically, weeps for a few moments.

KRISTEN stops recording and the classroom erupts into applause. Instantly, SUZI'S sobbing transforms into a dazzling smile. She knows she did good based on KRISTEN'S nodding approval. Now, *that's a professional.*

39 SUZI'S TALKING HEAD

39

SUZI
Nailed it. Beat that, suckers!

CUT TO:

40 INT. STUDIO CLASSROOM A. SAME DAY.

40

NOLAN is at the end of his scene. He's serious, sullen-looking, as a single tear rolls down his face. KRISTEN stops recording.

KRISTEN
Great job, let's give some
applause! I can tell you really
found time to practice.

41 NOLAN'S TALKING HEAD

41

NOLAN
I don't remember anything when I
was up there, it's all black. And
have no clue how I survived. Maybe
it was because of the tearjerking
sisterly-love that Anna and Elsa
shared was so strong it could thaw
ice... That must be it. Today, I
consider myself the luckiest man on
the face of the earth.

CUT TO:

42 INT. STUDIO CLASSROOM A. SAME DAY.

42

KRISTEN
Melissa, show me what you got!

MELISSA
I don't think I'm ready...

KRISTEN
Just give it a go!

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA

Kristen, can I speak to you for a moment?

How embarrassing. MELISSA gets up and walks over to where KRISTEN is sitting. She whispers:

MELISSA

I don't know how to cry anymore.

KRISTEN

Nonsense, everybody cries.

MELISSA

I'm not as emotionally involved in this scene, can I wait till the end?

KRISTEN

Fine, but if this was a movie set, there would be no waiting. You would be getting recast.

MELISSA gulps as she makes her way towards her seat.

KRISTEN

Okay, who is actually ready.

AJ springs up his hand. His face already comically streaming with tears, probably from those eye drops earlier.

AJ

Good to go.

KRISTEN

Impressive, somebody who can jump right into character without a hitch!

43

AJ'S TALKING HEAD

43

Tears still are running profusely down AJ'S face. His eyes are hilariously bloodshot, and he is holding a bunch of tissues.

AJ

My scene went stupendously well. Ms. Kristen and the others saw me in a whole new light today. Maybe I earned a little more of their respect.

AJ sniffles.

CUT TO:

44 INT. STUDIO CLASSROOM A. SAME DAY. 44

A MONTAGE of other students are performing as KRISTEN continually makes glances at MELISSA. *She knows just the trick.*

KRISTEN (V.O.)
When my students fail, I fail, and
I do not fail. Their performances
reflect my reputation as a teacher.
Do I want to be known as the
teacher whose kids can't cry?

As the class applauds another student who just finished their scene, KRISTEN stands up unannounced and walks out of the door.

45 INT. ACTING STUDIO LOBBY. CONTINUOUS ACTION. 45

We follow KRISTEN in the hallway until she finally reaches SHARON's desk in the lobby. KRISTEN has a look of determination.

KRISTEN
(To SHARON)
Do me a favor, in a couple of
minutes come into the class say
that there's phone call, so I can
leave the room.

SHARON
What? I don't understand --

Too late. KRISTEN ignores SHARON as she starts immediately back to class.

46 INT. STUDIO HALLWAY. CONTINUOUS ACTION. 46

SHARON follows KRISTEN through the sea of mothers, STILL gossiping like schoolgirls.

SHARON
But, you're already outside the
class! Can you tell me what's going
--

SHARON's words are cut off by the slamming door of KRISTEN as she enters the classroom.

SHARON stands around awkwardly before going back to her desk.

SMASH TO:

47 INT. STUDIO CLASSROOM A. A COUPLE MINUTES LATER. 47

A LITTLE GIRL is in mid-scene giving theatric performance when a knock on the door is heard.

KRISTEN
(interrupting scene)
Good job! Round of applause!

KRISTEN immediately opens the door and ushers SHARON in, who looks at the camera with a certain degree of uncomfortableness.

SHARON
Uhhh... There's a phone call for
you.

KRISTEN
Better not keep that waiting then!

Once again, KRISTEN leaves the class. This time though, we stay inside the class as a long moment of staring passes before KRISTEN finally enters the room. However, now she is somber. Something's up.

KRISTEN
Melissa, I'm afraid I just received
a call from your parents. It seems
like your grandmother has passed
away.

MELISSA
(beat)
Excuse me?

KRISTEN
It's a euphemism. By passed away, I
mean died, or pushing up daises.

MELISSA
(In shock)
No, no, she can't be dead. I was
with her last week.

KRISTEN
So sorry for your loss.

Shock finally begins to sink in for MELISSA and it soon progresses from a quiet cry then erupts into loud weeping. She is clearly in distress and filled with grief. Surrounding her is a variety of comforting students, shocked students, and students who have no idea what is going on.

(CONTINUED)

However, according to KRISTEN the plan is working.

KRISTEN

Perfect! Melissa get up there and
do your scene!

A mix of despair and disorientation is seen from MELISSA.
KRISTEN pulls MELISSA out of her chair into the the main
area, before quickly pressing record on the camcorder.

KRISTEN

Action!

MELISSA

Huh?

KRISTEN

Feel the emotion. And action!

MELISSA

(stumbles) *That I'm angry with you,
Dad. This entire thing. About you,
and Lydia and the kids... It's my
fault. I should have told you about
them before, and I'm sorry. Yeah,
you should've warned me, but it's
more than that. It's the fact that
you've found yourself this new
family... and I feel like some
outsider who doesn't even belong to
you anymore. It's like you traded
me and Mom in for something that
you thought was better... and I
wanna know why. Are you ashamed of
me? Are you embarrassed? Just tell
me, Dad, what did I do wrong? Why
did you leave? Why did you have to
go? And then tell me that we were
gonna be closer? But that never
happened. Dad, why does Paul visit
his alcoholic dad every month...
but you only visit me twice a year?
And I know... You just seem so
happy about being Paul and Krista's
dad... but you never even had the
time to be mine.*

KRISTEN stops recording on the camera. MELISSA is still
bawling.

KRISTEN

Beautiful!

(CONTINUED)

MELISSA
I'm confused.

KRISTEN
Your grandma is alive and well.
See, now you can look back on this
lesson and remember that feeling of
losing someone you love. Doesn't
that feel great?!

MELISSA
(sobbing)
NO!

Awkward. Now, KRISTEN feels guilty and the students are
beside themselves with surprise.

MELISSA
Can I go to the restroom?

KRISTEN
Sure.

MELISSA runs out of the class in tears. Outside, the mothers
watch with their jaws dropped. *Now they're silent.*

48 KRISTEN'S TALKING HEAD

48

KRISTEN
Honestly didn't think it would be
over the line. Cutting close to the
edge? Maybe. But I didn't expect
such a huge reaction from people.
There are so many directors who
scream and throw things at kids to
make them cry, and I get all the
slack? In fact, my approach to be
the most humane.

49 MONTAGE OF KIDS PERFORMING AND LEAVING CLASS

49

KRISTEN (V.O.)
I am a Simon. Sure, I'm tough and
hard on children. But I push them
to the best of their ability, which
is better than coddling from moms.
Why constantly be told you're
awesome when you haven't earned it?
And that's what I think these kids
realize.

50 KRISTEN'S TALKING HEAD

50

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
I do not fail. I do not know the
definition of failure. There is
only improvement and success in my
book. Failure is meant for the
losers of the world: O.J. Simpson,
Soviet Union, Store-brand Oreos.

CUT TO:

51 INT. ACTING STUDIO LOBBY. LATER THAT DAY.

51

After class, SUZI comes to the receptionist desk, ready to
go home with her mom, whom is packed up.

SUZI
Can we go now?

SHARON
Yes, just one second...

SHARON finally manages to collect all of the dots on
PAC-MAN. *It has been a day well spent.*

SUZI and SHARON walk out the studio together.

CUT TO:

52 EXT. ACTING STUDIO. DAY.

52

AJ, NOLAN, and MELISSA walk out of the building at the end
of a class day. AJ, of course, still crying. NOLAN leaves
feeling accomplished. Finally, MELISSA walks out with a hint
of smile, proud that she did her scene.

KRISTEN (V.O.)
Stars aren't born, they are
created. It takes time and
pressure, but eventually they shine
bright and beautiful...

53 KRISTEN'S TALKING HEAD

53

KRISTEN (CONT'D)
Wow, that was deep! Can we use that
as a soundbite?

AND WITH THAT WE...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

34.

TAG

FADE IN:

54

INT. STUDIO CLASSROOM A.

54

We are watching back snippets of the scenes the students just acted through the camcorder. It is a MONTAGE of children crying hysterically, theatrically saying dialogue, and taking dramatic pauses.

After all, what's a little more tears to top it off?

FADE TO BLACK.