

CAPTAIN COOK'S EXTRAORDINARY ATLAS

Written by

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TEASER/ACT ONE

In CHURNING BLACKNESS we hear:

THE NARRATOR

*The King of England said of Captain
James Cook: he left nothing
unattempted.*

EXT. A GREAT OCEAN - DAY

WE PULL UP and realize the churning blackness belongs to
flowing waves as WE PULL UP FURTHER to reveal:

The Famed Navigator CAPTAIN JAMES COOK, leaning into the
wind, framed atop the prow of the great sailing vessel THE
ADVENTURE.

THE NARRATOR

*He was the greatest navigator of
his time and with his three ships
The Endeavor, The Adventure and The
Resolution charted more unknown
lands than any man before or since.*

The Adventure sails into a melting sun.

INT. HEADHUNTER'S GRASS HUT - DAY

CAPTAIN COOK sits on the dirt across from a frowning
HEADHUNTER KING. The King's SMILING WIFE (bone through the
nose) offers Cook something to drink in a *human skull cup*.

THE NARRATOR

*On his journeys he encountered all
manner of peoples, customs and
mysteries.*

Cook politely accepts the drink. Sips warily.

INT. CAPTAIN COOK'S STATE ROOM - NIGHT

To the rocking of the ship, CAPTAIN COOK recounts his
experience in a large, leather-bound book.

THE NARRATOR

And he recorded them all.

His script is immaculate, his drawings: magnificent.

EXT. A PRISTINE BEACH - DAY

WE PAN ACROSS white sands and blue water.

THE NARRATOR

*Sadly, Captain Cook's illustrious
career was cut short by a native
spear on the island of Kona.*

(beat)

*The motive and mystery of his death
never fully explained.*

PAN UP TO Captain Cook's blue jacket flapping bloodily, like a flag, atop a warrior's spear that is stuck in the sands.

INT. MUSEUM ROOM - DAY

WE MOVE ACROSS a rich red carpet.

THE NARRATOR

*After his death, Cook's diary,
documenting his famous voyages, was
presented to the National Maritime
Museum by King George VI, where it
is now kept as a unique treasure...*

PAN UP TO the diary, fitted with a golden lock, in a case, within a safe. A GLOVED HAND shuts the safe door.

INT. CAPTAIN COOK'S STATE ROOM - NIGHT

WE MOVE DOWN over the shoulder of a man who 'might' be Captain Cook. He toils over a large leatherbound book.

THE NARRATOR

*Yet to this day rumors persist that
there were in fact...two journals.
It is said that before his death,
Cook compiled an Atlas detailing
his most remarkable discoveries:
Treasures and creatures far too
controversial and terrifying to
share with the public...even the
King...*

WE ARE CLOSE on a MAP entitled **THE LABYRINTH OF THE MINOTAUR**, rich in illustrations and handwritten instructions, as it is glued along a leather seam with other maps, including one that is entitled: **THE LAND OF THE DEAD**.

THE NARRATOR (CONT'D)
*For Captain Cook had discovered
 another world existing beside our
 own, a fantastical world of
 adventure and magic...*

Pages and pages of beautiful, transfixing and elaborate maps
 FLASH by us, faster and faster.

THE NARRATOR (CONT'D)
*But to visit this world you must
 possess...*

A HAND slams shut an enormous tome - its title embossed in
 gold lettering reads: **CAPTAIN COOK'S EXTRAORDINARY ATLAS**

THE NARRATOR (CONT'D)
*Who will be the next great
 Navigator?*

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. DIRT CRAWLSPACE - NIGHT? DAY?

GWEN MALLOY (13, a young Juno-type) crawls army-style through
 a dark, dirt tunnel, a flashlight in her fist. Her light
 probes cobwebbed shadows. A RAT scurries away from the light.
 Gwen doesn't flinch. She shuffles forward...finds something
 in the dirt. It is an old BUFFALO NICKEL. Gwen smiles.

MOTHER'S VOICE (O.S.)
 Gwen?!

GWEN
 (looks up)
 Coming!

INT. BASEMENT - MALLOY HOME - DAY

GWEN writhes out of a tiny crawl space compartment in her
 family's new basement. Boxes are stacked everywhere.

MOTHER'S VOICE (O.S.)
 Gwen?!

GWEN
 (pockets her nickel)
 I'm coming! Relax!

INT. KITCHEN - MALLOY HOUSE - DAY

MARION MALLOY (40s, ex-cheerleader, very conscious of appearances, always trying to make her family less weird) is managing a circus. It is moving day. MOVERS are in and out. Chaos abounds. Marion directs traffic as GWEN enters.

MARION

(to Gwen)

Hello? Little help?

GWEN

I was looking for Jasper and found a really cool crawlspace in the basement. And there was this huge rat and I found--

MARION

You saw a rat?

(yells for her husband)

Phinneas!

(to Gwen)

Stay out of that crawlspace. Is your room unpacked?

GWEN

Mom, I was looking for Jasper.

MARION

Gwen, I've got a million things, will you please?

GWEN

Fiiine.

Gwen EXITS.

A CHUBBY MOVER enters the kitchen with some items.

CHUBBY MOVER

Ma'am?

Marion turns to the mover. He unrolls a leather case of Aztec daggers.

CHUBBY MOVER (CONT'D)

Where would you like me to put the sacrificial ritual knives?

MARION

(closes her eyes, sighs)

Gwen's room.

EXT. MALLOY HOME - DAY

GWEN exits the house and heads to the driveway, where her father PHINNEAS SR. (handsome, intellectual) stands outside the truck trying to direct a dispassionate MOVER.

PHINNEAS SR.

(to mover)

Oh, that box is very fragile, yes,
you'll want to set it down very--

Dispassionate Mover drops the box off the truck. It lands hard. Things shatter inside.

PHINNEAS SR. (CONT'D)

O-kay.

GWEN

Dad, have you seen Jasper?

MARION (O.S.)

(annoyed)

Phinneas!!

PHINNEAS SR.

Now what?

GWEN

I found a rat.

PHINNEAS SR.

A rat?

(to Mover)

Keep up the good work.

Behind Phinneas we here...Drop. Smash. Phinneas winces. Gwen circles around the back of the house - exits.

MARION appears on the doorstep - ready to blow.

MARION

Rats, Phinneas.

Phinneas wraps her up in his arms. She sags, exhausted.

PHINNEAS SR.

Sssh, I know, moving is one of
life's unique tortures. What do you
say to a hot, steaming bath after
the kids are in bed?

MARION

Oh, that sounds good.

PHINNEAS SR.
We just have to make it to 8:30.

MARION
(deep breath)
8:30.

They kiss. Marion trudges back inside.

EXT. GARAGE - MALLOY HOME - DAY

GWEN steps up to the open garage door.

GWEN
(brightens)
There you are!

WE PAN AROUND TO another MOVER (lanky) who is a statue of frozen fear, his mouth open in a silent scream, an enormous BLACK TARANTULA loitering on his neck.

Gwen lightly steps up to the mover, removes JASPER THE TERRIFYING TARANTULA from his perch and walks away.

ON GWEN: As she exits the garage the mover unleashes a high-pitched SHRIEK.

INT. GWEN MALLOY'S ROOM - DAY

GWEN places JASPER into a small terrarium.

CHUBBY MOVER #1 enters Gwen's room carrying a stuffed badger posed to rip your head off.

CHUBBY MOVER #2
(fearful)
Where do you want this?

GWEN
Table's fine.

CHUBBY MOVER #2
(happy to be rid of killer badger)
Where's a sweet kid like you get all this stuff?

GWEN
(examines a map with a magnifying glass)
Ebay.

Chubby Mover #1 exits, shaking his head.

EXT. MALLOY HOME - DAY

A gathering of LOCAL KIDS watch as the MOVERS heft a small, stone SARCOPHAGUS past PHINNEAS QUAYLE MALLOY JUNIOR (9, too smart for his age, just call him Finn).

CHUBBY MOVER #2
(to Finn)
Sister's room?

Finn watches the movers go, then turns to the local kids.

FINN
(shyly, waves)
Hi.

The local kids look at him like he's nuts.

FINN (CONT'D)
(sighs, under his breath)
That didn't take long.

INT. GWEN MALLOY'S ROOM - DAY

GWEN is setting up her arrowhead collection. Every arrowhead has been placed beside the name of the corresponding tribe.

FINN enters.

FINN
You know call me crazy, call me a sad conformist but I'm nine all right? And, yes, I long for just a modest portion of social approval. I admit it. Is that so terrible?

GWEN
What's the matter, Finn?

FINN
You. You're dragging me down already. It's guilt by association. I'm hip. I'm fun. But you poison the friend pool wherever we go.

GWEN
I have friends.

FINN
Tarantulas and dead people.

GWEN
Mom! Finn's in my room again!

MARION (O.S.)

Finn Jr!

FINN

I'm going! Man...

Flustered, Finn exits.

But Gwen stops messing with the arrowheads. She chances a peek outside her bedroom window as the LOCAL KIDS laugh and make comments on her family's stuff as it's unloaded. The girls Gwen's age dress different and act different. We catch a glimpse of Gwen's loneliness in her eyes.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

Later that day, THE MALLOY FAMILY: GWEN, MARION, PHINNEAS SR. and FINN walk the streets of their new neighborhood: Valley Springs, where new home developments encroach on the country.

MARION

How nice that Dean Winters lives on our block.

(squeezes his hand)

My new professor, I'm so proud.

PHINNEAS SR.

Come here, you.

Marion and Phinneas kiss.

Gwen covers Finn's eyes.

GWEN

Seriously, I want to stab my eyes.

PHINNEAS SR.

(ignores Gwen, arm around Marion)

Interesting fellow, the Dean. Bit of the eccentric, really. You'll like him, Gwen. Terrific book collection. Here we are.

They stop at an OLD MAILBOX in the shape of a sailing vessel with 1861 etched on its side. The tiny mast and sail of the mailbox turn with the blowing wind, causing it to SQUEAK.

GWEN

Cool.

THE MALLOYS turn to look at a creaky old Victorian. By far, the most ghoulish house on an otherwise mild suburban block.

FINN

Creepy.

MARION

Could use a coat of paint.

(brushes lint from his
shoulders)

Finn, remember your three syllable words. Just because you're nine doesn't mean you have to act it.

FINN

Right Mom.

MARION

(to Gwen)

Would it kill you to wear a hair clip?

Marion tries to fuss with Gwen's hair.

GWEN

Stop!

MARION

(to Gwen)

No wandering off to crawl spaces or basements, it's embarrassing.

Marion straightens up, turns to the house.

MARION (CONT'D)

(to Phinneas)

Ready dear?

PHINNEAS SR.

I think so.

Finn HUMS the Addam's Family theme as they walk the steps.

MARION

(admonishing)

Finn.

INT. OLD VICTORIAN - DAY

DEAN WINTERS (70s, wheelchair-bound, a bit spooky) answers the door to his home.

DEAN WINTERS
 The Malloy Family. Come in.
 (shakes hands with
 Phinneas)
 Professor.

PHINNEAS SR.
 Dean Winters, thank you for having
 us.

DEAN WINTERS
 How else to meet your new
 colleagues, hm?

PHINNEAS SR.
 My wife Marion. My son Finn.

FINN
 With felicitous probity I salute
 your diluvian emeritus.

DEAN WINTERS
 (to Marion)
 What'd he say?

MARION
 (pats Finn)
 Don't overdo it, Finn.

PHINNEAS SR.
 And my daughter, Guenivere.

DEAN WINTERS
 (a keen interest)
 Guenivere.

Gwen sort of shrinks back at the attention.

DEAN WINTERS (CONT'D)
 How do you like your new house?

MARION
 (interrupts)
 She loves it. We're so happy here
 in Valley Springs. What a wonderful
 community.

DEAN WINTERS
 (to Marion)
 It is nice. Yes.
 (to Gwen)
 It's very nice to meet you.

GWEN
 (touched, a little creeped
 out)
 Thanks.

DEAN WINTERS
 (pats her arm)
 We'll talk later.
 (to all)
 Come! Join me outside. Phinneas you
 can meet the rest of the English
 Department and their families.

Dean Winters ushers the Malloys to the back.

EXT. BACKYARD - DEAN WINTERS'S HOUSE - DAY

A charming yard. A smattering of COLLEGE PROFESSORS. Tea and biscuits. MARION and PHINNEAS meet his new colleagues.

Because it is her nature, GWEN wanders around the side of the house...

...observed only by DEAN WINTERS, who carries on his conversation but keeps his eyes on Gwen.

EXT. AROUND THE SIDE OF DEAN WINTERS'S HOUSE - DAY

GWEN walks around the side of the house. She notices an open door. She enters.

INT. LIVING ROOM - OLD VICTORIAN - DAY

The inside of the house is warm and mysterious. Slants of sunlight pierce the dusty dark. GWEN stands in front of a small end table. In a tiny vase are flowers. Gwen stares, transfixed. The flower blossoms look exactly like *human eyes*.

Gwen twirls one of the flowers in her hand. Fascinated, Gwen turns to the rest of the room, sees old Nautical charts on the walls. Small models of sailing ships.

There is an ominous CREAKING. Gwen turns to a closet door that opens ever-so-slightly. The wind?

Gwen looks in the closet: old moth-eaten coats, umbrellas and unworn hats, yet behind them - a dim glow. Gwen pushes the coats aside TO REVEAL...

...A STAIRWAY. The stairway is mounted with an electronic chair - obviously for Dean Winters. Gwen thinks it over - looks around - and descends towards the glow.

INT. PARLOR - OLD VICTORIAN - DAY

GWEN enters a large parlor. There are framed charts on the walls from the 17th and 18th centuries. A mounted steering wheel taken from a Spanish galleon. Antique velvet couches.

Adorning the shelves and tabletops are an assortment of curiosities:

Gwen picks up a necklace of colorful beads that appear to be teeth. She leans down and stares at an animal skeleton in a glass case that looks like a hybrid chicken-lizard.

Something crosses frame behind Gwen.

She whirls around. Nothing. Just a curious WHISPERING on the air. Like soft high voices. Gwen looks to the stairs, to the deep shadows of the parlor. No one.

Gwen searches for the sound (when most of us would be running like hell for the door) presses herself to the wall, comes up to...a mirror.

P.O.V. BEHIND GWEN: We hear it BREATHING softly, watching Gwen from the shadows in the corner.

ON GWEN: She looks at her reflection in the mirror. For a brief second her reflection wobbles. Gwen touches the mirror with her finger and it reacts like still water, her reflection dissipates in concentric circles.

As Gwen turns away from the mirror WE SEE a WHITE FACE in the mirror's reflection, watching from the shadows. Gwen doesn't see this.

Gwen follows the sporadic WHISPERS across the room to...

...A CHEST OF DRAWERS. Gwen regards the chest when it SHUDDERS causing Gwen to jump.

Gwen considers...then pulls open one of the drawers. Inside is a large object wrapped in an oil cloth.

Gwen pulls aside the oil cloth revealing a large, leatherbound book with gold lettering which reads:

GWEN
(reads, whispers)
"Captain Cook's Extraordinary
Atlas."

Gwen opens the book, looks around to see that she's not observed. On the inside of the Atlas it reads:

GWEN (CONT'D)

(reads)

"Famous navigators of the
Extraordinary Atlas: Captain James
Cook, March 1775 to February 1779."

Gwen's finger drags down a long list of names written in
immaculate script until she finds the last name:

GWEN (CONT'D)

(reads)

"Tara Lisbon, January 1990 to
February 1996. No further
Navigators recorded."

Utterly curious, she turns to the next page:

GWEN (CONT'D)

"Within this binding..."

Her voice is taken over by our NARRATOR...

THE NARRATOR

*...you will find the whole of my
efforts to chart the special world
beside our own. Woe unto any man
who uses these maps with
indiscretion. For danger and
deception lurk on every page. These
maps represent the only way in -
and most importantly - the only way
out of the special world.*

GWEN

(reads)

"...and always remember the three
rules: wear sensible shoes. Never
travel at night."

THE NARRATOR

*And never, ever, leave anything
behind...for if you leave no mark
nor trail then nothing can follow
you out.*

At this chilling sentence, Gwen looks up at the mirror and
sees a WHITE FACE rise up behind her.

Gwen WHIRLS around.

A PALE, 16-YEAR-OLD-BOY stands in the half-shadows.

PALE BOY

Who are you?

GWEN

Nothing. I didn't see anything.

PALE BOY

No one comes down here.

GWEN

I'm sorry.

Gwen crosses to the door. She looks back. The room is empty. *The boy is gone.* Gwen books up the stairs.

EXT. BACKYARD - DEAN WINTERS'S HOUSE - DAY

GWEN bursts around the corner of the house, freaked, out of breath. MARION looks over, suspicious. Gwen waves. Gwen looks over at DEAN WINTERS who suppresses a smile.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - OLD VICTORIAN - DAY

The MALLOY FAMILY head back down the road as the sun sets.

PHINNEAS SR. (O.S.)

Thought that went well.

MARION (O.S.)

They seem very nice.

GWEN lingers a few steps behind her family. She turns back.

DEAN WINTERS waves from the porch.

DEAN WINTERS

My door is always open!

Scared and exhilarated, Gwen waves back shyly at the Dean. Then jogs ahead to join her family.

CUT TO:

INT. GWEN MALLOY'S ROOM - DAY

It's the following morning. GWEN is in her pajamas. Her mother has laid an outfit on the bed for Gwen's first day at a new school. The outfit is too preppy and perky. Gwen looks at herself in the mirror, lost in thought.

MARION (O.S.)

Gwen! Your eggs are getting cold!

Gwen reaches out and touches the mirror. Nothing. Just a normal mirror.

INT. KITCHEN - MALLOY HOUSE - DAY

MARION returns to the kitchen. FINN eats his eggs.

MARION

(re: Gwen)

What is she doing up there?

PHINNEAS SR. stands in front of the kitchen bar, wearing a suit jacket and tie, stuffing books and papers into a beaten-up-briefcase.

PHINNEAS SR.

(buckles up briefcase)

That should do it. Wish the new Professor luck.

Marion kisses him.

MARION

Don't be nervous, your neck sweats.

PHINNEAS SR.

Right.

As Phinneas exits, GWEN comes down the stairs wearing a T-shirt and the *cut-off sleeves of the purple sweater her mother laid out for her*. The look borders on eclectic-cool but isn't quite.

MARION

(to Gwen)

What happened to the purple sweater I laid out?

GWEN

(holds up her arms)

I'm wearing it.

Marion's mouth drops open. Gwen heads out the front door.

MARION

You look homeless.

(calling after her)

Is that the image you wish to project?

Marion looks at Finn who eats his eggs.

FINN
(sympathetic)
It's a difficult age.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

GWEN stands in front of the Dean Winters's old Victorian mansion. The masts of the sailing-ship-mailbox SQUEAK as a gust blows past Gwen and up the drive to the front door...

...which is OPEN.

INT. OLD VICTORIAN - DAY

GWEN pokes her head inside the house.

GWEN
Hello?

It's quiet. It seems that no one is home.

INT. PARLOR - OLD VICTORIAN - DAY

From the closet stairs, GWEN steps down into the parlor.

GWEN
(doesn't want to get
caught)
Dean Winters?

No answer. She goes to the EXTRAORDINARY ATLAS. Her hands caress the cover. *She starts to open it when the closet door nearest to her CREAKS open.*

Gwen whirls into a table, toppling a lamp which SHATTERS. Panicked, Gwen runs up the stairs with the Atlas.

EXT. OLD VICTORIAN - DAY

...And flies down the porch steps and onto the street. GWEN runs as fast as she can and sees, up ahead...

...the YELLOW SCHOOL BUS pulling away from the stop. She's missed her bus.

GWEN
No, no! Wait!

Gwen races past a navy blue, beat-up, 1970 Chevy Chevelle. Inside the car, A STRANGER (40s?, we don't see his face) watches her. All we can really see are HIS HANDS practicing a magic trick - concealing a coin in his palm.

CUT TO:

INT. ALGEBRA CLASS - VALLEY SPRINGS JUNIOR HIGH - DAY

A full class. STUDENTS are in their seats. Their teacher is British and frosty and writes his name on the board.

TEACHER

Ladies and gentlemen of the seventh
grade, welcome to Algebra I.
My...name...is...

Some students SNICKER when they read his name. The teacher hesitates. Smiles coldly. It doesn't bother him.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

(turns around to face
students)
...Mr. Boots.

His cold eyes dare anyone to smile. No one does. Mr. Boots kind of creeps them out.

The door CREAKS loudly. GWEN's attempt to enter unobserved fails. Every student turns to gawk at the new kid.

MR. BOOTS

(to Gwen)
How nice of you to join us.

GWEN

I'm new...I...I don't know the
school yet.

MR. BOOTS

Stand up when you speak, please,
that's how we do it here.

Ugh. Gwen stands up.

MR. BOOTS (CONT'D)

I have a tradition on the first day
of the new school year to get to
know my students. Why don't we
start with you, Miss...

(checks his notes)

(MORE)

MR. BOOTS (CONT'D)
 Guenivere Malloy, what sort of professional ambitions do you entertain, hm?

GWEN
 My what?

MR. BOOTS
 When you grow up to be a larger, even more irresponsible person I'm curious what sort of wonderful profession you've imagined for yourself? Sometime today, yes?

Gwen swallows. Then...a RUSTLE. Gwen looks down at her bookbag which is MOVING a little. The Atlas? Gwen looks up at Mr. Boots, a touch emboldened.

GWEN
 I want to be the first person to see Macchu Picchu.
 (a bit more courage)
 I want to excavate the first skull of a Tyrannosaurus Rex.
 (boldly)
 I want to be the first to break through the wall into the tomb of King Tutankhamen.

Silence. Gwen looks around, feeling a little exposed. The students stare at her with pity, confusion and irritation. Mr. Boots did not quite expect this answer. His lip curls.

MR. BOOTS
 Yes, well, I see your History teacher has her work cut out. Miss Malloy those things have already happened. Yes, a hundred years ago.

The students SNICKER. This chick's loopy.

MR. BOOTS (CONT'D)
 Apparently, your tardiness goes beyond Algebra I.

GWEN
 I know that. I know they all happened.
 (beat)
 It just sucks is all.

Gwen sits. There are MURMURS of disbelief.

MR. BOOTS

Charming.

Gwen looks down at her book bag at the Extraordinary Atlas peeking out. She is *dying* to see what's inside.

INT. HALLWAY - VALLEY SPRINGS JUNIOR HIGH - DAY

A full hallway of STUDENTS milling about, heading to class. The bell RINGS and doors close. Soon the hallway is empty.

WE SWERVE down the empty hall and UP TO...

...THE GIRLS' RESTROOM.

INT. GIRLS' RESTROOM - VALLEY SPRINGS JUNIOR HIGH - DAY

WE MOVE past the sinks to the door of the last stall.

INT. BATHROOM STALL - GIRLS' RESTROOM - DAY

...where GWEN sits Indian style on the commode - clothed, of course - the Extraordinary Atlas on her lap.

She turns the next page after the Introduction. It is an expertly hand-painted, double-page spread of maps replete with masterful drawings of a variety of...

GWEN

(reads)

"Five things you must know when going on Dragon Safari."

Gwen turns to the next page. *But the page turns back.* Gwen frowns. She turns to the next page but *the page turns back.*

GWEN (CONT'D)

(warms to the idea)

Dragon Safari.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - VALLEY SPRINGS JUNIOR HIGH - DAY

GWEN walks across the wide grassy yard, dodging soccer balls and RACING STUDENTS. She clutches the Atlas to her chest as if it might fly away if she lets go.

THE NARRATOR

"Contrary to popular myth, dragons are quite common and can be found in a variety of different environments."

Suddenly, her path is blocked by a clique of cheerleaders. The Top Blonde - ELIZA STEVENS (preppy, smirky) gives Gwen a dubious look-over.

ELIZA
You're Gwen right?

GWEN
Yeah?

ELIZA
I'm Eliza. My Mom asked me to be nice to you because you're new and I guess we're neighbors.

GWEN
Oh. Thanks.

ELIZA
I propose a trial friendship. I've done it before and it works pretty well. If we like you after the trial period of two weeks then you get to be in our group which is...
(turns to friends)
...like one of the two most popular groups in 7th grade and if we don't like you, there's no messy strings. The trial period expires and we go our separate ways.
(beat, cheerful)
It's like we're taking you for a test drive.

GWEN
(innocently sarcastic)
Do I have to fill out any paperwork or anything?

ELIZA
(confused)
No.

GWEN
Cool. Thanks a lot.

Gwen keeps walking. She circles around the clique.

ELIZA
(to her friends, not impressed)
What was that?

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - VALLEY SPRINGS JUNIOR HIGH - DAY

GWEN has more important things on her mind. She approaches the wire fence marking the border of the school yard and the grounds of the school itself.

THE NARRATOR

The first signs of a local dragon will be a steep, unexplained drop in local wildlife populations...

Gwen looks up from the Atlas and across the street at a TELEPHONE POLE smothered in MISSING PET flyers: dogs, cats, guinea pigs, parrots, etc...

THE NARRATOR (CONT'D)

Maple trees are allergic to dragon scent. Find a dead Maple tree then head in the direction furthest from the tree's last living branch.

Gwen climbs through a hole in the school fence - leaving the school grounds - and walks down the street in the direction pointed out by the finger-like-branch of a dying Maple tree.

THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER curls around the side of the Maple Tree and watches Gwen go. We still don't see his face. He's carrying a duffel bag, checks to see if anyone is watching then goes stalking after Gwen. This doesn't look good.

EXT. A SPARKLY WOOD - DAY

Shafts of sunlight filter through the trees. GWEN walks with the Atlas in her hands.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Dragons prefer to cook their food. Groundhogs and squirrels in particular. An observant Navigator will see the signs of Dragon barbeque all around.

Gwen kneels by A CHARRED GROUNDHOG DEN. She's never really looked for such thing before. With her pen she picks around the burnt leaves and unearths...a tiny ribcage. Yuck. Gwen pushes more leaves aside to reveal a large and unmistakably lizard-like FOOTPRINT.

GWEN

(this might be really happening)

Whoa.

EXT. LOCAL FARM - DAY

A few instructions later, GWEN emerges from a thatch of woods onto the field of a local farm. She consults the Atlas.

THE NARRATOR

*A dragon's lair will always be
close to a source of still water:
ponds, lakes...*

Gwen sees none of this. She sees a farm house. A barn. Some cows. Then...

...Gwen turns completely around to an OLD STONE WELL. She puts the Atlas on the edge of the well and reads:

THE NARRATOR (CONT'D)

*Warning: to avoid death by fire and
fang, a Navigator must present a
valuable tribute to appease the
dragon's natural greed. Diamonds,
rubies or gemstones are preferred.*

GWEN

(eyes go wide)
Where do I get that?

Gwen searches in her book bag for anything of value when the ground begins to RUMBLE.

Gwen turns back to the well.

There is a TERRIBLE, WET, MOVING SOUND from below.

Gwen cannot help herself. She ever-so-slowly peers over the edge of the well. As TWO GLOWING GREEN EYES pop open in the gloom. GWEN freezes.

WE SWING AROUND TO...

...THE STRANGER who bursts from the thatch of woods, throws down his duffel bag and runs at Gwen, waving his arms.

THE STRANGER

Down! Get down!

There is an EAR-SPLITTING SHRIEK from inside the well.

The Stranger tackles Gwen to the ground as FIRE AND SMOKE erupt from the well in an explosion of sound and fury.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. LOCAL FARM - DAY

THE STRANGER (let's call him BISHOP, 40s, Clive Owen meets Indiana Jones) covers GWEN with his body as ash and bits of gravel rain down around them.

When the dust settles, Bishop looks at Gwen.

BISHOP
Are you nuts?

Gwen scuttles out from under Bishop - terrified beyond belief.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
Where you going? Hey!

She grabs the Extraordinary Atlas off the ground and books for the woods.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
Wait--!

Gwen is gone.

Bishop looks around, the coast is clear. He turns to the well and smiles.

EXT. LOCAL FARM - DAY - SOME TIME HAS PASSED

BISHOP tests the strength of a ROPE he's tied to a nearby tree. He leads the rope to the edge of the well.

BISHOP
(looks at his watch,
glances in the hole)
That should do it.

Quite crazily, Bishop hops up onto the well, tests the rope against his weight and *rapells into the darkness*.

INT. BOTTOM OF THE WELL - DAY

BISHOP sets down lightly in three feet of mucky water. He snaps on a pen light and holds it in his teeth. He looks down a set of tunnels branching off to the left and right.

The walls WARBLE with a PURRING RUMBLE. The dragon sleeps.

Bishop rolls up his rumpled jacket sleeves and thrusts his hands into the mucky water. He feels around a few moments then pulls his arms free.

He's got two fistfuls of mud *teeming with DIAMONDS and PRECIOUS STONES*. Bishop quickly stuffs the treasure into a small satchel.

CUT TO:

INT. MARION MALLOY'S CAR - DAY

MARION drives up to the front of Valley Springs Junior High where GWEN waits with PRINCIPAL ARMSTRONG (40s, African-American, no Bullshit), SHERIFF DENNIS (30s, sensitive) and MR. BOOTS.

MARION
(to herself)
Oh God. Police.

EXT. FRONT STEPS OF VALLEY SPRINGS JUNIOR HIGH - DAY

MARION circles around her car, shakes hands with PRINCIPAL ARMSTRONG.

MARION
I am mortified. Marion Malloy.

PRINCIPAL ARMSTRONG
Shelly Armstrong, Principal of Valley Springs. This is Sheriff Dennis.

SHERIFF DENNIS
Ma'am.

PRINCIPAL ARMSTRONG
Yes, an exciting first day for Gwen here. Pretty much shut down the entire school going missing like that.

MARION
This will never happen again, I swear to you.
(tense)
Swear to Principal Armstrong, Gwen.

Gwen just turns to observe Mr. Boots's pale hand resting on her shoulder.

GWEN
Swear.

PRINCIPAL ARMSTRONG
Well God help you if there is a next time, young lady.
(MORE)

PRINCIPAL ARMSTRONG (CONT'D)

Second strike is one week
suspension. Third strike gets you
expelled. I don't need this
heartburn.

MARION

Of course you don't. Gwen. Car.

Gwen heads to the car. Mr. Boots sees Gwen's bag at his feet.

MR. BOOTS

Miss Malloy.

Gwen turns. Mr. Boots holds her bag like it's a dirty tissue.

MR. BOOTS (CONT'D)

Don't forget this.

Gwen runs back for her book bag which falls open. THE
EXTRAORDINARY ATLAS falls onto the sidewalk.

Gwen runs to grab it but Mr. Boots picks it up first.

MR. BOOTS (CONT'D)

(pause, amazed)

My, my.

Mr. Boots lifts the cover *but it SLAMS shut on him*. No one
really sees this except Gwen and Mr. Boots.

GWEN

(scared he'll keep it)

I borrowed it from Dean Winters. I
have to give it back tonight.

MARION

(from the car)

Gwen! Now!

Gwen grabs the Atlas. Mr. Boots hesitates - doesn't want to
let it go. But Principal Armstrong and the Sheriff are
watching, so he releases it - with effort. Gwen runs back to
the car. *Mr. Boots's eyes gleam.*

INT. MARION MALLOY'S CAR - DAY

MARION seethes as she drives. GWEN sits in the back.

MARION

Amazing. Totally amazing. Your
first day, Gwen?! What the hell
were you doing?!

GWEN
You wouldn't understand.

MARION
Try me!

GWEN
(matter-of-fact)
I found a dragon at a local farm.

MARION
Are you making fun of me?!

GWEN
No!

MARION
I have put up with your weird hobbies and your stuffed badger collecting but no more! I knew it was unhealthy. I told your oblivious father but he defended you but this is it.

GWEN
What are you going to do?

MARION
There will be normalcy! You will be a normal twelve-year-old girl with normal interests!

GWEN
You can't take my stuff.

MARION
I can't? Watch me. Because you are this close...
(shows with fingers)
...this close to Boot Camp or Outward Bound or one of those places where they don't have toilets!

GWEN
Really? I can go to Outward Bound?

MARION
(crying real tears of frustration)
Why would you want to go to Outward Bound? What is wrong with you?

GWEN
Mom, I'm sorry, I--

Gwen shuts it. She looks ashamed and guilty.

CUT TO:

INT. GWEN MALLOY'S ROOM - NIGHT

MARION throws her stuff into boxes: arrowheads, skulls, maps, etc... She starts to take Jasper's terrarium but is just too creeped out by it.

GWEN
You can't do this! They're mine!

MARION
It's for your own good.

PHINNEAS SR. and FINN watch from the doorway.

PHINNEAS SR.
(this is going too far)
Marion...

MARION
Don't start. Your daughter was looking for *dragons* at school. *Dragons*, Phinneas. Remember those kids who played those role-playing-games and murdered those farmers? It was a miniseries. Tom Hanks was in it.

PHINNEAS SR.
Gwen's not going to murder any farmers!

GWEN
This is so unfair!

Marion exits.

PHINNEAS SR.
I'll talk to your mother. We'll work this out.

Phinneas Sr. exits. Finn lingers.

FINN
Forgive my Darwinian thinking: but something tells me I may scam an X-Box from your misfortune.
(MORE)

FINN (CONT'D)

Mom needs hope. And all I have to be is just a little less crazy than you.

GWEN

At least I don't still sleep with my Foo-Foo Blanky.

FINN

(flushes red)

Foo-Foo Blanky is therapeutic. High IQ children need touchstones to their babyhood. Read a book!

Finn exits, flustered.

Gwen pulls out her bookbag from under her bed. She slides the Atlas onto her bed.

GWEN

(protective)

I'm keeping you.

Gwen caresses the Atlas. If it was a cat it would purr. Gwen lovingly turns the pages until she stops.

Under the heading FAMOUS NAVIGATORS OF THE EXTRAORDINARY ATLAS and beside the name **Tara Lisbon**, it no longer reads "**No Further Navigators recorded.**" Instead, it reads: **GWEN MALLOY November 2008 to ?**. Gwen blinks.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Wow.

(pause)

That's crazy.

Gwen stares at her name in the Extraordinary Atlas as we...

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. OLD VICTORIAN - NIGHT

GWEN stands in the driveway of Dean Winters's house. She holds a lamp and the Extraordinary Atlas. The house looms over her like a evil grinning face. Gwen takes a deep breath. She's scared to death...

...but she has to get to the bottom of this.

She walks up the gravel drive to the porch steps, passing the blue Chevy Chevelle we saw earlier.

She lifts her foot to the first step when she hears RAISED VOICES and the front door suddenly OPENS.

EXT. SIDE OF THE OLD VICTORIAN - NIGHT

GWEN presses herself to the wall around the side of the house as an ARGUMENT breaks out on the porch between DEAN WINTERS and BISHOP. We watch Gwen but see GLIMPSES of Bishop pacing.

BISHOP (O.S.)

You set me up.

DEAN WINTERS (O.S.)

I kept my end of the bargain.

BISHOP (O.S.)

Yes, the gems were there. But I never promised to play angel to some loopy kid--

DEAN WINTERS (O.S.)

There's more that connects you to that girl than you realize.

BISHOP (O.S.)

What do you mean?

DEAN WINTERS (O.S.)

I mean take responsibility for something for once in your life!

(pause)

A long time ago you could've been the Navigator...a great one...but it's always been about you, hasn't it?

BISHOP (O.S.)

In case you're not keeping score
you don't exactly have the best
track record in keeping Navigators
alive. You made this bed, Davis,
you sleep in it.

DEAN WINTERS (O.S.)

Bishop!

Gwen hears Bishop STOMP down the stairs. He gets into his car
and peels out of the driveway.

Gwen hears a CLICK above her head. She looks up to a window
on the second floor of the house and sees...

...THE PALE FACE OF THE 16-YEAR-OLD-BOY. He is watching her.
Gwen jolts as--

DEAN WINTERS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I know you're there, Guenivere.

Gwen reacts, doesn't know what to do.

DEAN WINTERS (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Come along now.

Gwen steps into the light beside the porch. Dean Winters
folds his arms, stares down at her from the porch.

DEAN WINTERS (CONT'D)

Out with it. What did you hear?

GWEN

Nothing. Honest.

DEAN WINTERS

I liar and a thief. An inauspicious
beginning, I'd say.

GWEN

I'm sorry I broke your lamp.

Gwen holds up her mother's lamp.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Please don't fire my Dad.

Dean Winters furrows his brow, turns and wheels himself into
the house. Gwen follows.

INT. PARLOR - OLD VICTORIAN - NIGHT

The electronic chair-elevator sets down in the parlor. DEAN WINTERS pulls himself into a waiting wheelchair and wheels about the room of curiosities.

GWEN follows him.

GWEN

And I'm sorry I stole your book.

Gwen places the Atlas on the table.

DEAN WINTERS

That Atlas doesn't belong to me.

(pause)

It belongs to you.

GWEN

(thrilled)

Really?

Gwen looks down at the Atlas.

GWEN (CONT'D)

(to Dean Winters)

So it was you. You wrote my name inside.

DEAN WINTERS

I've done no such thing.

GWEN

Well, if you didn't, then who?

Dean Winters's eyes drift to the Atlas.

GWEN (CONT'D)

(looks at the Atlas)

But that's impossible.

(to Dean Winters)

The Atlas wrote my name?

DEAN WINTERS

Do you know what that means?

GWEN

That I'm...a Navigator?

DEAN WINTERS

Not 'A' Navigator, 'The' Navigator.
The Chief Exploration Officer for
the Extraordinary Atlas.

(MORE)

DEAN WINTERS (CONT'D)

That Atlas is filled with maps and each map leads you to a portal to a special world and you are now its sole protector. Is that so complicated?

GWEN

But...you don't even know who I am.

DEAN WINTERS

Well, the Atlas wouldn't say such a thing were it not true. So tell me: did anything unusual happen today at school?

GWEN

I don't know...
(awkward)
I sort of found a dragon.

DEAN WINTERS

That would qualify.

GWEN

But the Atlas wouldn't let me turn the page. Like it wanted me to go on a Dragon Safari.

DEAN WINTERS

Ah.

GWEN

(realizes)
Was that a test?

DEAN WINTERS

And you passed with flying colors.

Gwen quietly glows. Her finger traces circles on the Atlas.

GWEN

So...what exactly does a Navigator do?

DEAN WINTERS

Excellent question.
(beat)
You see Guenivere, a very long time ago the two worlds were one.

Dean Winters gestures to an ancient schemata framed on the wall: The Universe According to the Greeks and Romans. (or *Imagini degli Dei degli Antichi* - if you want to get specific.)

DEAN WINTERS (CONT'D)

Magic was everywhere: in the water,
in the forests, in the skies.

Gwen's eyes travel across the Dean's wall of maps of constellations and zodiacal symbols that show worlds that correspond to his words.

DEAN WINTERS (CONT'D)

But men fear what they cannot
control. And fear gives way to
hate. And hate, well...

Gwen's eyes pass over 13th century engravings of witches burning at the stake.

DEAN WINTERS (CONT'D)

Hate and fear broke the one world
in half. And so it was, for
countless centuries, that a secret
world existed beside our own,
hidden away from men and their
fear.

(beat)

Until Captain Cook re-discovered
this world and charted it in the
maps of the Extraordinary Atlas.
But in so doing, Cook risked
exposing it to the greedy and the
ignorant and those thirsty for
power. In the wrong hands the
Extraordinary Atlas could be a
powerful tool for destruction. Cook
knew he could not protect the Atlas
and its secrets forever. Another
Great Navigator would have to take
his place. And so it has been for
three hundred years. When a
Navigator falls the Atlas chooses
another and then another to keep
the Atlas safe and to further
Cook's mission to protect the
secret world.

Gwen swallows as she looks down at the Atlas.

GWEN

That's a lot of responsibility.

DEAN WINTERS

Tell me Guenivere have you ever felt...different...like you didn't belong...like you were born in the wrong place, in the wrong century, even?

GWEN

(heartfelt)

Yes.

DEAN WINTERS

That you don't connect with your peers and all around you was something just beyond your reach waiting to be found? Like a voice in your head beckoning you on?

GWEN

(can't believe this)

Yes.

DEAN WINTERS

Yes. I know a Navigator when I see one. I've trained more than a few.

(pause)

It was the Atlas calling to you. Calling you home.

Gwen's brain explodes with questions.

GWEN

But how did it know me? What was--?

Dean Winters holds up a hand.

DEAN WINTERS

We walk before we run, yes?

(pause)

There are things you're not ready to hear. Things that may upset you or make you frightened. This is natural. But you're not in this alone. I will help you. The Atlas will help you.

GWEN

The Atlas?

DEAN WINTERS

Anyone can use the maps. But the Atlas only truly speaks to the Navigator. You'll see.

GWEN

Can I tell my parents?

DEAN WINTERS

I would wait. I'm not sure they're ready.

GWEN

What about the boy upstairs?

DEAN WINTERS

What boy?

GWEN

The boy that lives here. I saw him the first day I came here. And he saw me through the window tonight.

DEAN WINTERS

There's no...boy here.

(ashen)

What did he look like?

Gwen walks to a PHOTO of the BOY on the wall. This is obviously Dean Winters's son. What is quite strange, though, in the photo the boy is the same age as we see him now but Dean Winters is *thirty years younger*.

GWEN

Like him.

Dean Winters ages before her eyes. He struggles with emotion.

DEAN WINTERS

(pause)

The Atlas will...show you things the rest of us...cannot see.

GWEN

Have I said something wrong?

DEAN WINTERS

No, I'm tired. Just tired.

(pause)

That's enough for tonight. Leave the Atlas here. Safer here.

GWEN

Dean Winters?

DEAN WINTERS
 (weakening)
 Please, Gwen. I really...really
 must rest. Save your questions.

Gwen hesitates. Dean Winters stares at the photo of the boy, lost in thought. Quietly, Gwen heads up the stairs.

SMASHCUT TO:

INT. GWEN MALLOY'S ROOM - NIGHT

A CRACK of thunder jolts GWEN from her sleep. LIGHTNING illuminates her room. Gwen questions if she dreamt it all when...

...TIC. The pane of her bedroom window cracks.

Gwen looks out her window and sees DEAN WINTERS'S DEAD SON standing in her yard, pale and still in the rain and the wind. He beckons to her.

Gwen is afraid. But there's something about the expression on the boy's face. She lifts her window and climbs onto the Birch tree branch.

EXT. OLD VICTORIAN - NIGHT

GWEN braces against the cold rain - dressed only in her pajamas - runs up the porch steps and looks inside.

She sees DEAN WINTERS facedown on the floor, his wheelchair upturned. His fist is clutched around the phone.

INT. OLD VICTORIAN - NIGHT

GWEN races into the house. She turns DEAN WINTERS over.

GWEN
 Dean Winters!

DEAN WINTERS
 ...you're not alone...
 Guenivere...I'm sorry...

Dean Winters is dead. THUNDER CRACKS and GLASS SHATTERS.

Gwen looks up as the SHADOW OF A MAN falls across the far wall. *The killer is still in the house.*

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

INT. DINING ROOM - OLD VICTORIAN - NIGHT

A flash of LIGHTNING is followed by a CRACK of thunder. The shadow on the wall is gone.

GWEN races for the front door but hears more GLASS SHATTER.

Gwen whirls around and hides against the wall. She hears the Killer shut the front door.

She can see THE KILLER in the reflection of the window across the room. He wears a BROWN OVERCOAT. She cannot see his face.

THE KILLER
(whispers, hissing)
Where is the Atlas?

The Killer turns back towards the kitchen. Gwen reacts with horror when she sees that beneath the Killer's overcoat - trailing behind him - *is a long reptilian tail.*

Gwen bolts across the dining room and quickly opens the closet door and shuts it behind her.

INT. PARLOR - OLD VICTORIAN - NIGHT

GWEN races down the steps into the parlor. She snatches the EXTRAORDINARY ATLAS from the table as she hears the closet door upstairs CREAK OPEN.

THE KILLER (O.S.)
(whispers, hissing)
Where is it?

It's coming down the stairs.

Gwen looks left, then right. No where to go. She backs up into the shadows as A WHITE HAND grabs her wrist.

Gwen SCREAMS and spins around right into DEAN WINTERS'S SON. He puts his finger to his lips and shows Gwen a removable panel in the back wall that leads to a crawl space. He does not follow her.

INT. CORRIDOR - OLD VICTORIAN - NIGHT

GWEN kicks through a vent screen in the hallway by the front door. She wriggles free and runs for the door as...

...THE KILLER lunges in her path. Gwen SCREAMS and runs for the stairway to the second floor.

INT. SECOND FLOOR - OLD VICTORIAN - NIGHT

GWEN runs blindly through unused rooms, smacking into dead-ends. She finds herself back in the hallway as...

DEAN WINTERS'S SON

Here.

She sees DEAN WINTERS'S SON standing at the end of the hall, waving her towards a doorway. *How'd he get upstairs?*

Gwen runs for it but...

...THE KILLER bursts into the hallway, cutting off her path.

Gwen backs up into another bedroom as CAR HEADLIGHTS shine in the windows.

Gwen races to the window and sees BISHOP'S CHEVY skid to a stop in the driveway. BISHOP gets out of the car.

Gwen has to decide between two evils. She chooses the guy without the snake tail.

She throws open the window.

GWEN

Help!!

THE KILLER (O.S.)

Where is it?!

Bishop runs beneath the window.

BISHOP

Gwen! I'll catch you!

Gwen doesn't have time to think. The Killer races at her.

Gwen climbs up onto the ledge, holds the Extraordinary Atlas to her chest and plunges...

...twenty-five-feet into Bishop's arms. Above them is a WAIL of anger as they jump into the car and peel out of the drive.

CUT TO:

INT. BISHOP'S CAR - NIGHT

There in the middle of a mini-mall parking lot in the middle of the night. BISHOP taps his steering wheel as GWEN shivers like a wet rat.

GWEN
(re: Bishop's tapping)
Can you stop doing that?
(beat)
It's annoying.

Bishop looks at her.

BISHOP
(can't believe her)
Sure. No problem.

Bishop goes back to staring out the window.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
(mutters)
What a freakin' mess.

GWEN
You can bring me home now.

Without a word, Bishop puts the car in drive. They pull out of the parking lot and onto abandoned streets (it's 3am.)

BISHOP
(irritated)
You're welcome.

GWEN
Sorry.
(guiltily)
Thanks.

BISHOP
Right, whatever. Listen, I don't know you, you don't know me, let's keep it that way. Just leave me the Atlas. That way you're out of danger and I'm off the hook. Okay?

GWEN
No way.

BISHOP
Kid, I'm not playing around.

GWEN
I'm the Navigator.

BISHOP
No, you're dragon food without me showing up. And tonight: God only knows. The Navigator, it's a myth.
(MORE)

BISHOP (CONT'D)

A big dream. All you are is a kid.
A normal kid. The Dean was wrong.

GWEN

You just want the Atlas so you can
get rich. I heard you. You're like
a treasure hunter or something.
Don't act like this is for my own
good. All you care about is
yourself.

BISHOP

Where do you get off talking--?

GWEN

(holds up the Atlas)
Dean Winters died for this! I can't
just give it up!

Gwen wipes away tears, embarrassed.

BISHOP

Come on, don't cry--

GWEN

I'm not!

BISHOP

Okay, you're not.
(doesn't really know how
to deal with her)
You want some Twinkies or
something?

GWEN

Do I look like I want some
Twinkies?

BISHOP

I'm just trying to help.

GWEN

(shudders)
What was that thing?

BISHOP

You said it had a tail?

GWEN

Like a crocodile.

BISHOP

Naga. Shapeshifters. They live
underground.

(MORE)

BISHOP (CONT'D)
 Usually travel in pairs.
 (beat)
 You're sure there was only one in
 the house?

GWEN
 I'm sure.
 (beat)
 How'd they get here? I mean...if
 the Atlas...

BISHOP
 You read the three rules, right?
 Rule number three: never, ever,
 leave anything behind? Well, the
 Naga must've followed someone out.
 Things have crossed over before. It
 happens.
 (pause)
 Gwen that Atlas has caused a lot of
 pain. I can't get dragged back into
 all of this. There's things I need
 to deal with, grown up things. You
 know, I owe some money. There's a
 few folks looking for me. *I'm not
 someone you can depend on.*

GWEN
 (false bravado)
 That's okay. I can take care of
 myself.

Bishop looks at her for a long beat. Shakes his head.

GWEN (CONT'D)
 What?

BISHOP
 Nothing. You just remind me of
 someone.
 (pause)
 I've known Navigators, Gwen. You
 don't want the job.

Bishop pulls up just short of Gwen's house.

GWEN
 Well, like you said: it's not your
 problem. So don't worry about it.

Bishop just stares as Gwen exits the car.

CUT TO:

INT. GWEN MALLOY'S ROOM - NIGHT

GWEN climbs into her window and shuts it behind her - locks it before curling up on the bed. She looks out to see she wasn't followed. She's terrified.

INT. GWEN'S CLOSET - NIGHT

GWEN closes the closet door - locks it. She huddles with the Atlas clutched in her arms.

GWEN

(whispers)

Dean Winters I don't know if I can do this. I don't want that thing to hurt my family.

(pause)

If it comes here I'll just...I'll just give it the Atlas.

Gwen drops the Atlas on the floor as though relinquishing it. The Atlas falls open to a new page. Snakelike humanoids. A map shows a latticework of underground tunnels.

GWEN (CONT'D)

(reads)

"The terror underground...Naga, ancient proto-humanoids...missing link...infesting the Earth's interior...thousands of miles of tunnels... take human shape..."

Gwen slams the Atlas shut.

GWEN (CONT'D)

Thanks. Like I wasn't scared enough.

The lights in the closet flicker. Gwen looks around. Again, the lights flicker. She looks down at the Atlas.

GWEN (CONT'D)

(to Atlas)

Did you--?

Something pulses beneath the cover of the Atlas. Gwen backs away at first. Then the Atlas flops open again. Gwen YIPES. It is the Naga page. But certain words are glowing.

GWEN (CONT'D)

(reads page)

Natural enemies of the Naga...
Dwarven Kings...

(MORE)

GWEN (CONT'D)
 Giant Cave Spiders... Bridge
 Trolls.
 (beat)
 Bridge Trolls?

Curious, Gwen turns page after page until she finds a set of illustrations of various **TROLL BRIDGES**.

GWEN (CONT'D)
 (realization)
 You want me to find a troll...to
 get rid of the Naga.
 (pause)
 Am I supposed to just call one up?

Discouraged, Gwen rubs her eyes. She's tired. A long night.

CUT TO:

INT. GWEN'S CLOSET - DAY - FOLLOWING MORNING

KNOCKING wakes GWEN who's fallen asleep in the closet.

MARION (O.S.)
 Gwen? Are you up?

Gwen's had about two hours sleep. She sees the Extraordinary Atlas open by her feet. She stuffs her notes in the Troll page, gathers up the Atlas and exits the closet.

INT. GWEN MALLOY'S ROOM - DAY - SAME

GWEN hustles the Extraordinary Atlas under her bed.

GWEN
 Coming!

Gwen opens the door to MARION. She looks happy.

MARION
 Eliza Stevens' mother just called.
 Eliza's signing you up for
 cheerleader tryouts.

GWEN
 (baffled)
 Why?

MARION
 You're a natural. You just have to
 let that part of you out. I'm proud
 of you. Honey, my ten years
 cheerleading were the best of my
 life.

(MORE)

MARION (CONT'D)
 (off Gwen's expression)
 What?

GWEN
 Nothing...if you want that. Okay,
 Mom.

MARION
 (smiles)
 Things are looking up around here.

CUT TO:

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - VALLEY SPRINGS JUNIOR HIGH - DAY

Cheerleader tryouts. GWEN stands with a few unpromising cheerleader candidates while ELIZA STEVENS and her POSSE put every ounce of vigor and passion into their kick-hop-bouncing-YELLS. Pom-poms flying. It's like combat training.

THE COACH (Mary Hart on steroids) urges them on.

COACH MARY HART
 Keep smiling! Even if your leg's
 broken keep smiling!

WE PAN OVER TO GWEN who is slowly backing away from these crazy people. She leaves her pom-poms on the bench and wanders towards the school buildings hoping not to be seen.

EXT. SCHOOLYARD - VALLEY SPRINGS JUNIOR HIGH - DAY

GWEN turns the corner of one of the buildings and stops.

MR. BOOTS sits beneath a tree, a stack of tests beside him. He unwraps a turkey sandwich from a plastic baggy. Mr. Boots HUMS to himself as he marks the papers with his red pen.

Gwen's face softens. Perhaps she's misjudged him.

A CARDINAL hops down from a tree and near Mr. Boots's foot.

MR. BOOTS
 (whispers)
 Well hello.

Mr. Boots tosses crumbs from his sandwich to the Cardinal. The little bird hops closer to catch the crumbs.

The Cardinal hops onto Mr. Boot's leg.

Mr. Boots snatches the cardinal and stuffs it into his mouth.

Gwen GASPS.

Mr. Boots whirls around, cardinal tail feathers sticking out of his mouth. He sees Gwen tearing off around the corner.

INT. HALLWAY - VALLEY SPRINGS JUNIOR HIGH - DAY

GWEN bursts through the school doors. The halls are empty. Students and teachers have gone home.

Gwen tests the classroom doors. She finds one that isn't locked and slips inside.

INT. CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM - DAY

GWEN presses to the wall beside the door, out of breath. The lights are off. She hears FOOTSTEPS.

Then...a SHADOW appears in the glass of the classroom door.

Gwen's eyes go to the door handle - UNLOCKED. Gwen reaches out her hand...

CLOSE ON: The doorknob slowly turns.

ON GWEN'S FINGERS as they turn the lock just in time. The doorknob shakes. Someone tries to get in.

There is a breath-held pause...as the shadow moves on. Gwen slides down the wall to the floor, clutches her knees.

CUT TO:

INT. MALLOY HOME - DAY

MARION returns home from picking up FINN.

MARION
(old cheer song)
*Rev it up 2,3,4, let's get this
place a-jumpin'!*

Finn runs up the stairs.

MARION (CONT'D)
Stay out of your sister's room!

ON FINN: As he runs straight into his sister's room.

CUT TO:

INT. CHEAP MOTEL BATHROOM - DAY

Under a bare bulb, Bishop looks at his stubbly face. He's on his cell phone.

VOICE ON PHONE
Do you actually have the Atlas,
Bishop?

BISHOP
(a bit nervous)
No...but I can get it.

VOICE ON PHONE
(sighs)
Why don't you just tell us where it
is and we--

BISHOP
(interrupts)
No! No, it's my way or no deal.

VOICE ON PHONE
As you like.

BISHOP
And you call off the dogs?

VOICE ON PHONE
If it is the one, true Atlas I can
assure you The Institute will
forgive all past sins.
(pause)
But disappoint us again...and the
gloves come off, Bishop.

Bishop hangs up the phone...stares at himself in the mirror.
He doesn't like what he sees.

CUT TO:

EXT. MALLOY HOME - LATER THAT DAY

GWEN crosses the lawn of her house, exhausted. Hours have
passed. She puts her key in the front door but the front door
opens. Gwen looks up.

MR. BOOTS stares back at her.

MR. BOOTS
Hello Gwen.

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

EXT. MALLOY HOME - SUNSET

GWEN is frozen. MR. BOOTS smiles.

MARION (O.S.)
We can't thank you enough.

MARION comes up behind Mr. Boots.

MARION (CONT'D)
(sees Gwen)
Young lady, you have a wonderful
teacher. Mr. Boots has offered to
tutor you - for free - to catch you
up. Because you're a new student.
Isn't that nice?

Gwen opens her mouth to speak, no sound comes out.

MR. BOOTS
She's overwhelmed.
(to Marion)
Tomorrow morning then? Nine-thirty?

MARION
Yes, tomorrow's Saturday that
should be fine.

MR. BOOTS
Splendid.
(to Gwen)
I think all Gwen needs is a little
special attention.

MARION
Don't forget this.

Marion helps Mr. Boots into his coat (*the same coat as the night of the murder*).

Terrified, Gwen pushes past Mr. Boots and into the house.

MARION (CONT'D)
Gwen!

INT. GWEN MALLOY'S ROOM - SUNSET

GWEN bursts into her room and digs under her bed. She searches, frantic. The Atlas is gone. Gwen looks at a crumpled up baby blanket - incriminating evidence.

GWEN
(whispers)
Foo-Foo-Blanky.

INT. FINN'S ROOM - SUNSET

GWEN throws open the door to Finn's room. Finn is gone.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MALLOY HOME - SUNSET

GWEN races downstairs nearly runs into MARION.

GWEN
Where's Finn?

MARION
What kind of manners--?

GWEN
Where's Finn?! It's going to be
night soon!

PHINNEAS SR. enters the house. He looks haggard.

MARION
(confused)
He was outside. Isn't he in his
room?
(sees Phinneas)
Phinneas, hi dear. Is Finn in the
front yard.

Gwen races out the back door.

PHINNEAS SR.
(dazed)
I didn't see him.

MARION
(to Phinneas)
What's wrong?

PHINNEAS SR.
Dean Winters was found dead last
night.

MARION
(stunned)
What?

EXT. BACKYARD - MALLOY HOME - SUNSET

GWEN searches all over the backyard. The sky is purple with approaching night.

GWEN

Finn!

She darts through the hedge and into the neighbor's yard.

EXT. NEIGHBOR'S YARD - SUNSET/NIGHT

GWEN's panic rises. A dog BARKS at her as she runs through a neighbor's yard.

GWEN

Finn!!

EXT. STREET - SUNSET/NIGHT

GWEN jogs into the street. The wind MOANS in the swaying trees. The street is empty.

GWEN

(whispers)

Oh God. Never travel at night.
Never travel at night.

(screams)

Finn!!

Then...

FINN (O.S.)

Gwennie!!

Gwen whirls around to FINN booking down the street, the Extraordinary Atlas under his arm.

Gwen rushes up to meet him and snatches him into a hug.

GWEN

What were you thinking?!

She looks at Finn. Tears streak his cheeks.

FINN

(re: Atlas)

What the hell is this thing?!

GWEN

Where did you go?!

Panting from fear and exhaustion, Finn opens the Extraordinary Atlas to the page in question. Gwen's notes fall onto the street.

GWEN (CONT'D)
 (reads it, eyes wide)
 Troll Bridge?! Why did you go to a
 Troll Bridge!?

FINN
 I didn't think it was real!

GWEN
 Finn...you didn't leave anything
 behind, did you?

FINN
 N-no. Wait. No. This is all I
 brought.

Gwen looks down at Finn's feet. Uh-oh. Finn looks down.

FINN (CONT'D)
 Oh man.

Finn is only wearing one sneaker. Gwen's look says it all.

CUT TO:

INT. GWEN MALLOY'S ROOM - NIGHT - LATER

The middle of the night. The room shows signs of an abandoned vigil: flashlights, Chip's Ahoy, paint-pellet-gun. It's clear they got bored and fell asleep. GWEN stirs. Finn shakes her.

FINN
 (hisses)
 Wake up!

GWEN
 What?

FINN
 (whispers)
 I heard something.

Gwen listens. They wait. Listen some more.

GWEN
 (whispers)
 I don't hear any--

SKRUUNCH! Something downstairs. Sounds like someone eating potato chips. Aggressively.

Gwen sits up in bed.

FINN

Did you hear? Did you hear?

GWEN

Sssh!

Gwen listens. Strains. Then a BANG of dishes followed by a SCRATCHING sound.

INT. HALLWAY - MALLOY HOME - NIGHT

GWEN and FINN ease onto the small staircase to the downstairs and stop by the wall.

Gwen and Finn start to peer around the corner when they realize SOMETHING ENORMOUS and HEAVY BREATHING is only inches away from them.

Gwen yanks Finn back. They press to the wall - terrified. They hear RUSTLING and SNORTING sounds.

Gwen and Finn try again - poke their heads around the corner to see.

WE PAN ACROSS the tiles of the kitchen floor splattered with chicken bones, a half-eaten carton of milk, a broken bowl of pasta salad, chewed fruit, half-devoured frozen vegetables...

...the refrigerator door is open and blocks our view.

WE PAN DOWN TO SEE two enormous, warted, feet with heinous hook-like toenails standing in front of the refrigerator.

ON GWEN AND FINN: As she slaps a hand over Finn's mouth to contain his CRY of terror.

INT. STAIRWELL - MALLOY HOME - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

GWEN hurriedly tapes a compact mirror to one of Finn's hockey sticks. FINN barrages her with questions.

FINN

Why do parents say 'no monsters?'
Wake up in the middle of the night,
"no monsters, Finn, no monsters,"
when clearly...

(hisses)

There are monsters!

GWEN
(tries to stay cool)
Finn, you're raving.

FINN
(whispers)
I'm tired of the lies!

Gwen creeps down the stairs to the basement and the door to the garage. She angles the hockey stick with the mirror through a crack in the door.

WHAT GWEN SEES: In the dim light we see fleeting glimpses of a BULKY CREATURE in rags flinging clothes, bags of charcoal, car tires and soccer balls into a pile. The creature then settles on top of the pile. *Looks like he's staying.*

ON GWEN AND FINN: They observe in the mirror.

FINN (CONT'D)
(holds back tears)
Is it gonna eat Mom?

GWEN
No...not Mom.
(thinking this through)
This might work. Nice job, Finn.

FINN
(looks at Gwen)
Nice job?

END ACT FIVE

ACT SIX

INT. LIVING ROOM - MALLOY HOME - DAY

The following morning, MARION and PHINNEAS are showered and dressed and watched closely by FINN and GWEN who are wired and sleepless. Finn swigs coffee from a mug.

MARION

Finn are you drinking coffee?

FINN

Why would I go in the garage?

Gwen flashes Finn a look. He sips his coffee, not handling this well.

MARION

(confused)

I asked if you were drinking coffee.

PHINNEAS SR.

(looks at his watch)

We should go.

MARION

(to Finn)

No more coffee.

FINN

(jumps up)

I want to come!

PHINNEAS SR.

Son, I don't think it's appropriate. Some of the Lit Staff are meeting over at Dean Winters's house. It might upset you.

FINN

How else am I supposed to learn about the harsh realities of life if you keep shielding me from them? Bertolt Brecht wrote: "Do not fear death so much, but rather the inadequate life."

Marion, Phinneas and Gwen just stare at Finn.

MARION

(shakes her head)

Whatever. Fine.

MR. BOOTS
Good morning, Miss Malloy.

Gwen stands there, unsure of what to do. Mr. Boots acts very normal even pleasant.

MR. BOOTS (CONT'D)
May I enter?

Gwen takes a deep breath and steps back into the house. Mr. Boots enters and shuts the door behind him.

He looks around the quiet house.

MR. BOOTS (CONT'D)
(casual)
Parents sleeping?

GWEN
They're not here.

Mr. Boots blinks, not expecting this. Covers it up quickly.

MR. BOOTS
(indicates living room)
Shall we?

INT. LIVING ROOM - MALLOY HOME - DAY

MR. BOOTS lays a work sheet on the counter. GWEN sits at the counter, her eyes go to the napkin concealing the knife.

Mr. Boots sits across from her, opens his textbook.

MR. BOOTS
Judging from your quiz scores your ignorance of Basic Algebra appears total. So, we'll start at the beginning, yes?
(beat)
Algebra is based on the concept of unknown values called variables.
(points to worksheet)
Observe this simple equation: blank + 16 = 30. The known value 14 is missing. So, one might ask...

Mr. Boots looks over his textbook at Gwen. His eyes are yellow and slitted.

MR. BOOTS (CONT'D)
Where is it?

Mr. Boots SNATCHES Gwen by the wrist. Gwen grabs the knife hidden under the napkin and SLASHES his arm.

MR. BOOTS (CONT'D)
(clutches his bleeding
arm)

Agh!

Gwen races into the hallway. She hears Mr. Boots's chair topple.

Gwen chances a look into the kitchen and sees...

...the tip of a CROCODILIAN TAIL slide through the doorway to the dining room. Where is he? Gwen squeezes the knife in her hands.

GWEN
It's in the garage! Down the
stairs!

MR. BOOTS (O.S.)
Is it now?

Gwen's eyes go to the open stairway door.

GWEN
I don't want it! Just take it!

MR. BOOTS (O.S.)
Hardly worth the trouble, I know.

Gwen peeks out from her hiding place. She catches a glimpse of the tail slithering into the living room. He's getting closer.

GWEN
Dean Winters was wrong! I'm not the
Navigator! I never wanted to be!
Just take it and go!

MR. BOOTS (O.S.)
*I confess to being surprised by the
choice. You're such an average
girl. A dose of moxie, perhaps, but
plainly unexceptional.*

Gwen hears SHUFFLING closer to her. She looks around for her escape route.

MR. BOOTS (O.S.) (CONT'D)
*One would expect an inspired choice
of Navigator given the legend of
your predecessor and the twelve
long years since her...*

(pause)
*Of course. Of course, how could I
not see it before?*

Gwen holds the knife as a SHADOW she cannot see falls across the wall.

MR. BOOTS (CONT'D)
*The Atlas wasn't the only thing
Dean Winters kept secret all those
years.*

GWEN
(she's listening now)
What do you mean?

MR. BOOTS (O.S.)
*Oh, how splendid. How obvious to me
now. You are an inspired choice.*

Gwen frowns. What is he talking about? She leans around the corner - sees the shadow looming on the wall...

...as a HAND bursts through the wall beside Gwen's face and grabs her throat.

Gwen SCREAMS, tears away and stumbles into the hallway.

MR. BOOTS staggers towards her, crocodile tail sweeping behind him, eyes gleaming yellow, sharp teeth bared.

MR. BOOTS (CONT'D)
*And you don't even know it, do you?
Spirited away, Baby Guenivere,
growing up in hiding, a dirty
little secret.*

GWEN
*(even more freaked out -
if that's possible)*
I don't know what you're talking
about. I said the Atlas was in the
garage! Just take it and go!

Mr. Boots lunges at Gwen. She slashes with the knife but he disarms her with ease, whirls her around and holds her, sharp nails at her neck.

MR. BOOTS

You first.

INT. STAIRWELL TO BASEMENT - MALLOY HOME - DAY

MR. BOOTS forces GWEN down the stairs. She struggles against him but he holds her tight.

MR. BOOTS

*What little surprise is waiting
down here, eh?*

GWEN

No-nothing, I swear!

MR. BOOTS

*Cunning little brat, you are. We'll
see, won't we?*

GWEN

I swear! Please!

Mr. Boots holds Gwen in front of him as he throws open the door to the garage and shoves Gwen through, following behind.

INT. GARAGE - MALLOY HOME - DAY

GWEN stumbles through the doorway with MR. BOOTS. We see their eyes react to the MONSTROUS GROWLING THING that rises up in the foreground.

MR. BOOTS

(stunned)
Sweet God.

Gwen elbows Mr. Boots in the gut, turns and scratches his eyes--

MR. BOOTS (CONT'D)

(cups his eyes)
Nyaaahh!

Gwen races to the door and SLAMS it...

...on MR. BOOTS'S arm which blocks it from closing.

GWEN

(tries to force it closed)
No!

Mr. Boots is far stronger and flings the door open. Gwen flies into the shelves.

Mr. Boots wraps his clawed hands around Gwen's neck as...

...POW! A baseball bat connects with the back of Mr. Boots's skull. Mr. Boots slumps on top of Gwen as...

...BISHOP pulls her to her feet.

GWEN (CONT'D)
(through tears)
Bishop!

BISHOP
Are you hurt?

Gwen shakes her head as Mr. Boots lurches to his feet. He SNARLS but Bishop takes him by the collar, spins him into the wall, wrenches him forward and up to the garage door.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
(to Mr. Boots)
This is for Tara.

Bishop headbutts Mr. Boots who falls backward into the garage. Bishop SLAMS the door and throws his body against it as we hear Mr. Boots SCREAM bloody murder and then UNBELIEVABLE RENDING SOUNDS that SQUISH and RIP.

And then...quiet. Followed by a BURP.

Bishop takes Gwen into his arms and holds her as she CRIES.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
Sssh. Okay. It's okay now. It's
okay. I won't leave you again.

Gwen pulls away, steadies herself. Snuffles.

GWEN
So...you'll help me get the troll
out of the garage?

Bishop pinches the bridge of his nose. Sighs.

CUT TO:

EXT. DRIVEWAY - MALLOY HOME - DAY

GWEN directs BISHOP, who backs a U-Haul down the driveway where it stops in front of the garage doors. Bishop climbs out of the cab, opens the back door and pulls out the ramp.

GWEN

Hurry up, my parents'll be back any
mintue.

BISHOP

This is certifiable.

Gwen reaches in a brown paper bag and drops candy: jolly ranchers, caramels and chocolate hearts, on the ground and up the ramp and throws the rest of the bag into the U-Haul.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

What is all this?

Gwen picks up the Extraordinary Atlas and indicates the Troll Bridge page.

GWEN

Trolls have a sweet tooth.

BISHOP

Well pardon me, Miss Navigator.

Gwen half-grins even though it's been a very long day so far. Bishop leans down to pull open the garage door.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

Back up.

With a heave, Bishop yanks open the garage door. We don't see what he sees. We just hear it BREATHING.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

(to Troll)

Wow...you're ugly.

ON BISHOP: WE HEAR wet GROWLS and SQUISHING FOOTSTEPS.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

(watches Troll as it takes
the candy up the ramp)

That's right...that's right.

Suddenly, Bishop SLAMS down the U-haul door as something RAMS it from the inside.

Bishop climbs into the driver's seat. Gwen races over to him.

GWEN

Take him to a bridge as far away
from people as you can get.

BISHOP
Yeah, it's not like I had any plans
today or anything.

GWEN
Thanks Bishop.

Gwen glances over and sees MARION, PHINNEAS and FINN down the street, returning home.

GWEN (CONT'D)
Go! Go!

Bishop lays on the gas and peels out of there, troll in tow.

Gwen races back to the garage. She looks inside, covers her nose for the smell. What is she going to--?

MARION (O.S.)
Gwen?

Gwen turns to her parents and little brother.

GWEN
Hi!

MARION
What are you doing out--
(beat)
What's that smell?

Despite Gwen's attempts to block, Phinneas Sr. enters the garage.

PHINNEAS SR.
What in the hell...?!
(covers his mouth)
...happened?!

When Marion sees the gross carnage the Troll inflicted she claps a hand over her mouth and GASPS.

Finn looks like a deer in the headlights.

GWEN
I should've told you.

Marion and Phinneas Sr. whirl around.

PHINNEAS SR.
(shocked, mortified)
Told us what?

GWEN
 I've been keeping a raccoon in the
 crawlspace.
 (beat)
 And an iguana.

PHINNEAS SR.
 You're joking.

GWEN
 They got out and must've really not
 liked each other.
 (beat)
 The raccoon ate the iguana.

Finn frowns. Does this story add up?

MARION
 (flustered)
 Raccoons eat iguanas?

GWEN
 (chuckles)
 Who knew?

PHINNEAS SR.
 (bewildered)
 You're grounded.

GWEN
 (smiles)
 Okay. Thanks. Come on Finn!

Finn goes along, eager to avoid questioning. Marion and
 Phinneas Sr. just look around, still confused.

CUT TO:

INT. GWEN MALLOY'S ROOM - NIGHT

GWEN looks at herself in the mirror holding the Extraordinary
 Atlas. This is a girl with a lot on her mind. She resolves to
 do something.

INT. LIVING ROOM - MALLOY HOME - NIGHT

MARION reads the newspaper. PHINNEAS grades essays as GWEN
 enters. She stands in front of both parents until they look
 up at her.

MARION
 Yes?

GWEN

Who am I?

There is a long pause. Marion and Phinneas Sr. look at each other then back at Gwen.

PHINNEAS SR.

What's wrong, Sprite?

GWEN

Can you answer the question,
please?

MARION

You're Gwen Malloy.

GWEN

Am I your daughter?

MARION

Of course you're our daughter.

Marion looks at Phinneas. So does Gwen. There is a look on her father's face.

GWEN

(to her father)
What?

MARION

(under her breath to
Phinneas)
No, Phinneas.

GWEN

(to Phinneas Sr.)
What? Say it.

MARION

Your father and I need a minute.

GWEN

No. Say it.
(pause)
Who am I?
(pause)
Am I your daughter?

Phinneas Sr. reaches over and takes Marion's hand.

PHINNEAS SR.

(gently, to Marion)
Yes.

Marion's eyes well with tears. This is her Achilles Heel. This is why she and Gwen fight. Tears stream down her cheeks.

After a moment...she nods. Phinneas and Marion holds hands.

Gwen looks back and forth between them.

PHINNEAS SR. (CONT'D)

(to Gwen)

Don't ever be afraid of what makes you different, Sprite. Ever.

GWEN

Just say it.

PHINNEAS SR.

Gwen, sweetheart. We are your parents always. Always, always.

(pause)

But we are not your biological parents.

Gwen just blinks - stunned.

PHINNEAS SR. (CONT'D)

Your mother and I couldn't have children. Or so we thought. We were on lists. Adoption lists.

(pause)

It was a phone call. In the middle of the night. A beautiful baby left at the hospital. Born on the stroke of midnight of the Leap Year. Our miracle.

Phinneas stands up, takes Gwen by the hand.

INT. PHINNEAS SR.'S OFFICE - MALLOY HOME - NIGHT

PHINNEAS digs deep into the back of a drawer in his desk that has always been locked. He frees something. He opens his hand to reveal a small, leather pouch. MARION stands in the doorway.

PHINNEAS SR.

This pouch...was tied to your swaddle blankets when they found you in the hospital waiting room.

Phinneas hands Gwen the pouch. Gwen unties the top and tips it. TWELVE SMOOTH STONES fall into her hand. Each stone is marked with a symbol.

PHINNEAS SR. (CONT'D)

Those symbols are runes. But what they're for and what they mean...is a mystery.

(pause)

The search you've felt. Deep inside. It's real.

Gwen stares at the rune stones in her hand.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARKING LOT - VALLEY SPRINGS JUNIOR HIGH - DAY

BISHOP leans on his car, sipping his coffee, in the distance a school bell RINGS.

We see GWEN headed for the bus. She looks up, spots Bishop, and walks over to the parking lot.

BISHOP

You okay?

Gwen pulls the pouch from her coat pocket and holds it up.

GWEN

Can the Atlas help me find my real parents, Bishop?

Bishop thinks about this, then reaches over and pulls the Atlas from Gwen's bookbag. He opens it to a page entitled:

GWEN (CONT'D)

(reads)

Captain Cook's Ten Trials? The Navigating Companion.

(to Bishop)

What is this?

BISHOP

That...is homework. The Atlas chose you, Gwen, but you're not a full Navigator, not yet. Not until you've passed the Ten Trials.

(beat)

And now that the Atlas has resurfaced...expect more visits from that world...and ours.

(pause)

You sure you want this?

GWEN
(scared but exhilarated)
More than anything.

Bishop looks at the pouch of runes. His eyes betray nothing. He just nods and walks her to the school bus...

...as WE PAN ACROSS the schoolyard to where ELIZA STEVENS stands beneath a tree watching Gwen go.

ELIZA'S MOM (O.S.)
Eliza! Come on!

Eliza runs over to where her MOTHER (40s, healthy, beautiful) waits in the family Mercedes.

VERY CLOSE ON ELIZA THROUGH THE CAR WINDOW. We're right up on Eliza's picture perfect face. Rosy cheeks. Shining blue eyes. She's still watching Gwen.

SUPER TIGHT ON ELIZA'S EYES as a *nictitating membrane* slides across her pupils...the way a lizard blinks.

ELIZA'S MOM (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Don't stare.

Eliza turns to her Mother who's beautiful eyes are now *yellow and slitted* just like Mr. Boots's.

A Raptor-like RATTLE rolls in their Naga throats. Some form of sub-human communication.

WIDE AS: The Mercedes curls out of the school parking lot.

END PILOT