

9.14.25 Reading Draft

MAC IN CHEESE

by

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CHARACTERS

CLAIRE

(F, 9) Head of the Prissy Girls

EVELYN

(F, 9) 2nd in command of the Prissy Girls

AMY

(F, 8) Lowest ranking Prissy Girl

MAC

(F, 8) Soft-spoken, semi-religious tomboy with a big heart

LAINE

(F, 9) Out-spoken horse-girl, not popular, smart as heck

BENNY

(M, 8) Big fan of dinosaurs and video games, highly picked on

TEDDY

(M, 7) Everyone's pesky, gullible little brother (and Derek's actual little brother)

FRAN

(F, 9) Athletic, smart, capable, a hard worker to a fault, and girlfriend/boyfriend with Derek

DEREK

(M, 9) The coolest boy in all of 3rd grade. Boyfriend/girlfriend with Fran. Teddy's big brother

PLUTO

(8) Quotes their conspiracy theorist uncle on everything

ALEX

(9) Just wants everyone to get along at the end of the day and hug

IRIS

(8) Doesn't really heard the word "no" outside of school

QUINN

(9) Not the sharpest crayon in the knife drawer

JOEY

(8) If there's a fart joke to make, Joey is there

CHRISTOPHER M.

(9) Chill guy all around, life of the party

CHRISTOPHER R.

(8) A little reserved and quiet

PLACE

A Very Popular Chain Children's Arcade
In Burgon, New Jersey

TIME

Now-ish

Notes:

// indicates that the next line should start

Double dialogue (dialogue side by side) should be said at the same time

[brackets like this] imply that the word shouldn't be said directly, but implied vocally or with a gesture

Speed is your friend! Don't rush through, but these are 3rd graders with thoughts going a mile a minute. Most moments don't need preciousness!

During the kids murmuring and shouting and talking all over each other (especially whenever there's an "etc.") please feel free to improv!

AT RISE:

We are immediately greeted with a heavy dose of nostalgia.

We are in an all-too-familiar arcade/animatronic show/eating establishment. However, it looks a bit just a tiny bit shaken up.

On the left, there is a small jungle gym. Maybe just a platform or two. Perhaps a tunnel. Possibly some monkey bars, as well. But most definitely a large, deep ball pit.

On the right is part of the arcade. Filled with classics like Skee-ball and Basket Hoops, but also maybe some more obscure titles.

And in the middle, the performance stage, with an band full of animatronic animals, including an anthropomorphic mouse, powered-down in the back.

Sleeping, curled up bodies litter all areas of the space. Some sleep with knock-off squishmellows. Others have attempted to use jackets or aprons as blankets. The rest are used to nothing.

It is dawn.

Slowly, as the sun rises, so do they.

As these people begin to wake up themselves, and wake up each other, something becomes very clear to us -- they're children. All around 8-9 years old.

"Good Mornings" and light chatter begin. Some may pull candy out from a hiding spot and share it with one another.

At different points, a few may rush to look out at the window -- no one sees what they're looking for, and they resign to whatever they were doing before.

Eventually, they all start to settle into their friend groups:

PLUTO, ALEX , and IRIS -- the jocks

QUINN and JOEY -- the funny kids

CHRISTOPHER M. and CHRISTOPHER R -- the smart kids

DEREK and FRAN (and kind of TEDDY who wants to join, but doesn't want to be a bother) -- the cool kids

MAC, LAINE, and BENNY -- the weird kids

And

Move

CLAIRE, EVELYN, and AMY -- the "Prissy Girls", who meet in the middle of the stage.

In front of CLAIRE is a cootie catcher, in front of EVELYN is a piece of paper and a pen, in front of AMY is a magic 8 ball.

They give each other a look. Ready to begin.

1.1

The noise of the rest of this world slowly dissipates, as we focus on these three girls.

They all take a deep inhale while placing their hands on top of each other's hands.

A pause.

Then -- a sharp focus.

[This whole sequence should be done quickly with precision]

PRISSY GIRLS

(to the tune of "Down by the Banks")

Down by the banks with the hanky-panky
Where the bullfrog jumps from bank to banky
Saying eeps, ipes, opes, opps
He missed the lilly pad and went Keeerplop!
Teacher told us all to stay
Or a price we have to pay

Pay with tickets -- all we've got
 And worthless tokens by the lot
 Lots of sadness and despair
 Joey pooped his underwear
 Under where do we all hide
 When the evil gets inside
~~Inside~~ this place we now called home
 Evil ~~and~~ mischief do now rome
 Rome was not built in a day
 But it ~~will~~ fall in the same way
 Down by the banks with the hanky-panky
 Where the bullfrog jumps from bank to banky
 Saying eeps, ipes, opes, ~~ops~~
 He missed the Lillypad and went Keeerplop!

The hand slap lands on CLAIRE. EVELYN picks up her pen and paper.

AMY

Three names

CLAIRE

Derek, Joey, Pluto

EVELYN

Three places

CLAIRE

Stage, Ticket Blaster, Shooting hoops.

AMY

Three items

CLAIRE

Crown, Plastic frog, Silly bandz

AMY

GO.

EVELYN vigorously draws a spiral.

CLAIRE

STOP.

EVELYN

One. Two. Three. Four.

A beat.

Now, rapidly, while crossing out an item on every “four”.

EVELYN

One two three four
One two three four
One two three four
One two three four
One two three four
One two three four.

The girls GASP.

A beat.

AMY and CLAIRE begin playing the paddycake-esque game, Concentration 64.

AMY & CLAIRE

Concentration
64
No repeats
Or hesitations

CLAIRE

I will start

AMY

And I will follow

AMY & CLAIRE

Category is

They stop and look to Evelyn:

EVELYN

Kids in class

CLAIRE

Fran

	AMY
Teddy	
	CLAIRE
Quinn	
	AMY
Iris	
	CLAIRE
Pluto	
	AMY
Alex	
	CLAIRE
Christopher M.	
	AMY
Christopher R.	
	CLAIRE
Mac	
	AMY
Laine	
	CLAIRE
Fudgebutt	
	AMY
Ummm...	
	CLAIRE and EVELYN both point at AMY
	CLAIRE & EVELYN
Hesitation.	
	AMY picks up her Magic 8 ball.
	EVELYN
Will it happen now?	
	She shakes the ball.

AMY

My sources say no.

CLAIRE

Will it happen soon?

Shake.

AMY

Signs point to yes

EVELYN

Should someone do something?

Shake.

AMY

Ask again later.

EVELYN

Should someone do something?

Shake.

AMY

Ask again later.

EVELYN

Should someone do --

AMY

Ask again later.

A beat.

Now, as EVELYN and AMY play paddy cake against
CLAIRE's arms -- pushing her back and forth.

~~PRISSY GIRLS~~

~~Pizza Pic Pizza Pic~~

~~Pizza man~~

~~Bake me a pie~~

~~As fast as you can~~

~~Roll it, Pat it~~

Mark it with a T

Put it in the oven for Teach and me.

CLAIRE picks up her cootie catcher.

PRISSY GIRLS

Next Student of the Week

CLAIRE

Go.

EVELYN

Odd number.

AMY

5

CLAIRE

(doing the cootie catcher)

One, two, three, four, five.

EVELYN

Even number.

AMY

2.

CLAIRE

(doing the cootie catcher)

One, two.

EVELYN

Even number.

AMY

2.

CLAIRE opens up the cootie catcher in almost disbelief.

CLAIRE

Mac

EVELYN

Mac

AMY

Mac

PRISSY GIRLS

Mac.

Our focus shifts to MAC and LAINE playing in the ball pit. LAINE's got big glasses, braces, and her hair up in pigtails. MAC's got on pants and a plain t-shirt.

MAC

Ya hear that?

LAINE

What?

MAC

Prissy girls said my name.

MAC looks to them -- they all stare at her.

MAC

HEY! WHY'D YOU SAY MY NAME?

They all giggle to each other.

MAC

Hey!

LAINE

They're just bein' weirdos. You just gotta ignore 'em. They just wanna "creep under your skin".

MAC

What?

LAINE

That's what my dads say. Like, they find whatever makes you sad and they feed off your sadness like werewolves eating dead roadkill and that's how they get big for the moon.

MAC

...Totally.

BENNY pops up from under the balls -- gasping for air.

BENNY

Remember that time the prissy girls said that Laine kissed a horse french style?

LAINE

I DID NOT!

BENNY

I'm just saying what the Prissy Girls said.

BENNY dives back under the balls.

Immediately he pops back up

BENNY

And they said that I am adopted and am actually from another planet and was laid in an egg cause I couldn't be human cause of my forehead. And that they don't understand why Mac's name is Mac because her full name is Macy and Mac sounds like a boy and that she's is too poor to afford any dresses so that's why you wear pants that look like they came from the garbage.

BENNY dives back under the balls.

And immediately pops up again.

BENNY

And that Mac *like likes* girls.

BENNY dives back under the balls.

MAC

What?

BENNY pops back up.

BENNY

I don't believe those things. My mother has shown me the video of my birth to normalize "*the feminine body*" for me so I know I was not hatched out of an egg. Plus my forehead is normal. See.

He knocks on his forehead.

BENNY

Also, our moms go shopping together so I know you don't get your clothes from the garbage. They get them from Costco. So I don't trust anything they say.

MAC

Love ya 100 times 20, Benny!

BENNY

Love ya to the moon and back, Mac! TIME ME.

BENNY plunges back under the balls.

LAINE

Right. But -- um -- if anyone ever says anything mean to your face -- the mean kids -- now I can get 'em with some sweet moves I learned in my ladies defense class that my dads signed me up for so I don't get kidnapped and murdered and become the subject of a 3 star Netflix True Crime documentary. Watch.

LAINE punches the air with all her might.

LAINE

Now imagine how much that'd hurt with car keys in my hand. Or a stiletto! Janet always says to have something sharp on you that's also a household object like a wine opener or a wittling knife for "rustic ladies".

MAC

Wow.

BENNY pops up gasping for air

BENNY

HOW LONG WAS THAT?

MAC

Umm... maybe like...

BENNY

Around 3 minutes right? Cause that would be my current record. And I'm trying to start my training to beat the world record of 24 minutes and 37 seconds, by the time I'm 12 and Budimir Šobat only trained for 3 years and this would give me 4 years of training so I could beat him by like 10 minutes or something. So if that was 3 minutes I'm perfectly on track to achieve my goal in 4 years.

MAC

I think it was about 3 minutes.

LAINE

Definitely in the range of 0 to 5 minutes.

BENNY

NICE.

DEREK and FRAN peer over a window looking outside,
TEDDY trails a little behind.

LAINE

Hey! Derek, Fran -- you see anything?

DEREK

Yeah. We just got some news about the outside.

MAC

Wait -- what's happening?

FRAN

We're not telling the whole class yet.

DEREK

So, you know, Top Secret stuff. Just for the three of you.

FRAN

We saw something out there. It was really big.

DEREK

And really ugly.

BENNY

What is it!?

FRAN

Shh... We don't want to freak everyone out.

LAINE

What'd you see?

FRAN

We just have to stay calm.

BENNY

Oh god, what is it?

DEREK

Okay, Teddy. Tell him.

TEDDY leans in close to BENNY's ear.

TEDDY

It's... YOUR MOM'S BUTT.

TEDDY sticks his tongue in BENNY's ear.

BENNY shrieks.

MAC

Hey! Knock it off!

MAC pushes TEDDY off of BENNY.

DEREK shoves MAC back, kinda hard.

DEREK

Don't touch my brother.

TEDDY

Yeah! And don't touch *my* brother or I'll --

TEDDY tries a karate move and then kinda trips over himself.

DEREK

C'mon.

FRAN

See ya, Fudgebutt and friends.

FRAN, DEREK, and TEDDY laugh as they leave.

BENNY is on the verge of tears.

BENNY

I don't wanna be here any more.

LAINE

I want to be back in my room. And watch tv. And eat Papa J's spinach & artichoke dip

BENNY

I just wanna drink a tall glass of warm milk and have all my troubles melt away.

MAC

Hey! Hey! No! We're not going to think about any of that right now. Because that will just make us sad little cry babies.

LAINE

Aren't you scared?

MAC

Maybe a little bit, but I've got a wall full of prizes to win and candy to fill up my belly. And, I've got my two bestest friends in the whole wide world here. Teacher just said we gotta stay inside and everything will be OK.

BENNY

But, don't you wanna go home?

Over on the stage, TEDDY stands with a 300 ticket megaphone.

TEDDY

(via megaphone)

EVERYONE, IT IS THE TIME FOR ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM YOUR STUDENT OF THE WEEK. PLEASE MAKE YOUR WAY TO THE STAGE.

MAC

When do you think Student of the Week will change?

LAINE

End of the week.

MAC

But we got here on a Friday. So week's gotta be up, right?

TEDDY

(via megaphone)

ONE MINUTE CLASS.

MAC

Coulda at least happened when it was someone nicer.

BENNY

Most people like him. He's he's tall and good at sports so boys like him. And then all the girls think he's cute and like like him. And he's boyfriend girlfriend with Fran and everyone thinks Fran is good at sports and pretty. So he has a pretty high approval rate.

MAC

All the girls don't like like him. I don't like like him -- Laine doesn't like like him.

LAINE

I don't like like him ... *but he is kinda cute.*

BENNY

If this happened last week, Laine woulda been Student of the Week during all this.

LAINE

If I was Student of the Week, none-a this woulda been happening. We'd all ger to eat whatever we wanted and everyone woulda been so much happier not bein' under tyrannosaurus rule. It would be a rule to be nice to me. And to you guys.

BENNY

I don't think anyone woulda listened to you and you just woulda froke out about it and we'd still be in chaos.

LAINE

Benny!

BENNY

Just speakin' my truth.

TEDDY

CLASS I DO NOT WANT TO GIVE YOU A WARNING.

The kids slowly shuffle over to the stage area where they all sit criss-cross applesauce on the ground.

1.2

On the stage stands TEDDY, standing up a little too straight with a 150 ticket gong. Next to him stands FRAN, a bit more comfortable, wearing a plastic, 220 ticket tiara.

As the kids start settling in, TEDDY rings the gong.

DEREK, the coolest kid in 3rd grade, emerges from the curtains wearing a 300 ticket crown.

The crowd murmurs.

TEDDY
EVERYBODY SHUT UP!! WE HAVE AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT!!!

Everyone starts loudly shushing one another.

	PLUTO		CLAIRE
Shhh!!		Shut up!	

	JOEY		TEDDY
Quiet!		Shut up, guys!	

CHRISTOPHER R.
Listen to Teddy // shut up!

PLUTO
You keep talking so how // are we gonna shut up

CHRISTOPHER R.
Now you're the one //talking!

PLUTO
Now *you're* the one talking!

Everyone's in a fury of trying to shut each other up -- it's louder than it was before.

DEREK and FRAN, in unison, hold out their hands in a "quiet coyote" position.

One by one, the kids raise their hands in a quiet coyote position and stop talking.

DEREK
Good morning, class.

KIDS
Good morning, Derek.

DEREK
Today I want to tell you all a story that will make you think. So, a couple weeks back I was zooming home from school on my razor scooter and picked up some hashbrowns from McDonalds for free cause my cousin's the manager.

And I when I was at McDonalds there was this old lady choking so I did CRP on her and she threw up a nugget and after was so happy that I saved her life and told me her grandson is a WWE wrestler and got me an audition for the league that I *should* be at today, but the only reason I'm not there is because we are here. So, what did this make you think?

CHRISTOPHER M.

That we should be kind to others?

DEREK

What? No. That I am good enough for WWE and I can wrestle you at any moment. Okay, now attendance. Is anybody's attendance buddy missing?

Everyone checks in with their attendance buddy.

BENNY raises his hand.

BENNY

I didn't have an attendance buddy because we had an odd number and mine was Teacher // so she had --

DEREK

I know that, Fudgebutt. You don't have to be so stupid.

FRAN

Next, Teddy, the morning announcements.

TEDDY reads off of something he's scribbled with crayon on a napkin.

TEDDY

There is still electricity. Good. We still have water. Good. We have only 47 stuffed animals now since Claire ripped open a bumblebee squishmellow to see if it had a heart inside it.

CLAIRE

It did not! The bumblebee has no *SOUUUUL*.

TEDDY

Ticket prices have gone up.

KIDS

Boo / What? / That's so lame

TEDDY

IT IS MY TURN TO TALK WE ARE
HOLDING SPACE FOR ME AND MY
VOICE TALKING THANK YOU

TEDDY

Thank you. Now it is Fran's turn to talk.

FRAN

When Teacher left, // we had

JOEY

[fart noise]

The kids laugh and also start making fart noises. Maybe a
few real farts. Maybe one kid actually poops his pants.

DEREK "quiet coyotes" -- the kids follow.

DEREK

Here's the facts. Plain and simple. Teacher left when it was dark out and said she would
be back "soon". It is now light out. Which is more time than "soon".

KIDS

She said she'd be back / Why is she gone? / What happened? / NO RULES

IRIS

But what happened to Teacher?

FRAN.

We don't know --

TEDDY

SHE'S PROBABLY NEVER COMING
BACK, LETS BE REALISTIC HERE
PEOPLE

DEREK

TEDDY!

TEDDY

That's what Dad's always saying to us -- "Let's be realistic, she's probably never coming
back."

DEREK

(embarrassed)

He's not saying that about *Teacher*.

TEDDY

...
OH.

FRAN

Because we don't know --

TEDDY

oh nooooo

FRAN

-- because we don't know what happened to Teacher and don't know when she will be back we gotta make a game plan.

PLUTO

But what's going on out there?

...

JOEY

Probably eaten by // zombies

IRIS

There are NO SUCH THING // as *ZOMBIES!!!*

AMY

The next world war's coming?

CHRISTOPHER M.

I think the air is poison
and that's why we can't go outside

PLUTO

NUCLEAR BOMBS!!!

MAC

Maybe it's some sorta punishment?

CLAIRE

It's obviously
a youtube prank
JINX!!!

EVELYN

a youtube prank.
JINX!!!

BENNY

(in awe)
The second coming of the dinosaurs.
Their time has come!

QUINN

You don't think it's a shooter? Right?

PLUTO

I KEEP TELLING YOU ALL MY UNCLE SAYS WERE ALL IN A SIMULATION HE HAS A POPULAR PODCAST ABOUT IT THAT'S #12 IN AMERICA FOR MEN AGED 12-24.

TEDDY bangs the gong and DEREK gives a *very firm* quiet coyote.

The kids still fight with each other about their theories. Loudly.

FRAN

Pluto -- Bubble.

Pluto puffs up their cheeks -- "catching a bubble in their mouth".

FRAN

Claire -- Bubble. Quinn -- Bubble.

Slowly all the kids put bubbles in their mouths.

It's quiet again.

FRAN.

When I made Bergen County's Junior League Girl's Varsity Volleyball Team, as a 3rd grader on a team made up of 5th and 6th graders, I learned 3 things.

1. Keep your thumb down and hand turned out during your draw and until you start your swing.

2. Never give Carly Myer your locker combo.

And

3. Every successful team needs a clear, strong leader.

Everyone here has been eating good, playing games, and happy since Teacher left.

Because Derek has been such a good Student of the Week, I think we should make him official Substitute Teacher.

Hubbub amongst the kids.

FRAN

Just until Teacher comes back. Or the highschool employee who ran out of here. Or our moms and dads. Or the police. Or the fire department. Or the volunteer weekend firefighters.

TEDDY

If you don't want Derek to be Substitute Teacher, raise your hands --

A few kids begin to raise their hands --

TEDDY

But if you raise your hand it also means that you're a tiny winey baby who poops their pants.

Any kids who had their hands raised, have put them down.

TEDDY

Good! We here-by announce Substitute Teacher Derek! Chuck Save the Teach!

The kids look at each other.

TEDDY

No, I came up with that. Like the British, "God Save the --" It's a fun -- it's a fun thing to say, now you say it after me. *Chuck Save --*

DEREK

Do what my brother says.

DEREK gives TEDDY a thumbs up.

TEDDY nods and restarts.

TEDDY

CHUCK SAVE THE TEACH

KIDS

CHUCK SAVE THE TEACH

DEREK

Teddy will be the official Announcements -- guy.

TEDDY salutes.

DEREK

And because me and Fran are boyfriend/girlfriend, she will be my Teacher's Assistant.

FRAN

Thank you.

FRAN reaches out her hand to hold DEREK's (as boyfriend/girlfriends do).

DEREK holds it for a second.

Awkwardly, they look around, both let go and wipe their hands on their shirts for fear of cooties.

DEREK

I am glad to be your Teacher. You all made the right choice. Leaders need to be strong and tough and won't back down to dumb weirdos who think they know better. We students who are strong, cool, and normal. Not little whiny cry babies or people who poop their pants. You got it?

FRAN

Now! We will run a ship shape class. Organization is KEY. We will have chores so we make sure this place is only "sparkling joy" and isn't a pig sty. And everyone has assigned sleeping areas so me and Teddy will check your area every day for cleanliness! Understood, class?

DEREK

And you get what you get and you don't throw a fit.

IRIS

What if we don't wanna listen to your dumb rules!?

DEREK

Then you go into the ticket blaster.

IRIS

So WHAT? You can't send us to Principal Bourne's office! Or tell my mommy! We don't have to follow any of your rules.

DEREK

So you won't. Rules are only for people in the class.

IRIS

Great!

DEREK

Then leave.

IRIS

... What?

DEREK

This field trip was only for students in the class who got their permission slip signed. If you don't want to be in the class anymore then you're not allowed here.

IRIS

You're not saying...

Everyone looks to the front door that's been lingering this whole time -- no lock, nothing in front of it. Just there.

IRIS

Teacher said the rule is we can't go out the door. So we stay safe.

DEREK shrugs.

DEREK

Rules are only for the class.

IRIS looks to the door, looks to their peers, then hangs their head and walks to the ticket blaster.

IRIS

I just wanted to say that I --

TEDDY closes the door on her. IRIS continues to talk, but we can't hear them at all.

FRAN

Here is the list of sleeping assignments and chores starting immediately.

The kids swarm to read the list. It's clear the better chores went to the more popular kids.

Murmurs throughout the crowd.

FRAN

Meeting ad-jorned.

The kids disperse.

MAC, LAINE, and BENNY join back together.

MAC

What'd you all get?

LAINE

It said gotta shine every single ball in the ball pit and I gotta sleep in the basement?

MAC

Same here!

BENNY

I'm also sleepin' in the basement, but my job just says "toilet"

MAC

So you gotta clean the toilet?

BENNY

I hope so...

TIME PASSES

1.3

2 hours have passed. Or maybe its 4? Or just 10 minutes?
It's hard to know when you can't read a clock.

The kids are all doing their chores which involve cleaning things, restocking prizes, to simply counting tickets.

MAC and LAINE are in the ball pit, cleaning the balls one by one.

LAINE looks over at the prize wall and notices that at the top there's a 5lb bag of jellybeans and a horse head on a stick.

LAINE

Mac. MAC. You see that?

MAC

The jellybeans?

LAINE

No! The hobby horse, Mac. A beautiful, high quality hobby horse. I've been searching for one forever -- I need something more than a broom with a printed out picture of Seabiscut if I ever wanna be taken seriously at The Hoboken Hobby Horse Championships. And I've been working on my prolonged gallop for my free style dressage and I think I've got a good chance this year. That horse would seal the deal. I'm gonna go get it.

LAINE starts to leave the ball pit.

MAC

Laine! We gotta -- !!

LAINE

I know, but it's --

MAC

I don't want you to get the ticket blaster. Plus, it's way too tall. If you climb it you're gonna make it half way up, fall over and SPLAT.

LAINE

... I'm a *real* good climber.

MAC

You can get it when we're done with this place. Somethin' to remember it by.

LAINE

I guess. ... I want a real horse one day. You know, horses love you no matter what. That's a fact. ... Do you think they'd let us eat a snack?

MAC

I tried earlier. Fran says we gotta save food or else we're gonna run all the way out.

LAINE's been staring at the glowing mouse's eyes

LAINE

I don't think his eyes stop glowin' -- even at night when we turn the lights off.

MAC

Hm?

LAINE

The mouse.

MAC

Oh.

LAINE

So someone's gotta still payin' the electricity bills, then,?

MAC

Or it's just runnin' till it runs out.

...

LAINE

You believe in God, right?

MAC

Yeah.

Somehow, the Prissy Girls (EVELYN, CLAIRE, and AMY) have appeared behind MAC and LAINE.

PRISSY GIRLS

Mac.

MAC jumps -- startled. LAINE gets into a defensive stance.

MAC

AGH!

LAINE

Get back! I know how to break a nose using a tampon!

MAC

What do you want?

PRISSY GIRLS

We have a prediction.

EVELYN

We didn't think it was true

CLAIRE

But we triple checked it

AMY

With M.A.S.H.

EVELYN

The magic 8 ball

CLAIRE

AND the cootie catcher

AMY

And all said that you were gonna be

PRISSY GIRLS

Teacher.

MAC

How does that work? Derek's Teacher.

EVELYN

That's what it says.

AMY

We don't know how things happen.

CLAIRE

Just that they do.

EVELYN

Like we knew Christopher M would bring in cupcakes for his birthday last week.

AMY

We didn't know if his mom was going to make them

CLAIRE

Or if they were gonna get them from ShopRite.

EVELYN

But he brought them.

AMY

(They were from ShopRite).

CLAIRE

But we do think you'd be a good Teacher.

LAINE

Okay then, what about me?

PRISSY GIRLS

What. About. You.

LAINE

You got a vision for me? I'm Mac's best friend. I don't get one too.

EVELYN

We don't give them to everyone.

AMY

It's not like class valentines day cards.

CLAIRE

And somehow Weirdy Lainey still gets none.

PRISSY GIRLS laugh.

LAINÉ

Do one then! Show me how sad my life is. Do a cootie catcher.

PRISSY GIRLS look at each other, they agree -- sure.

CLAIRE presents a cootie catcher.

PRISSY GIRLS

1 through 4

LAINÉ

3.

CLAIRE

(doing the cootie catcher)

One, two, three.

PRISSY GIRLS

Color.

LAINÉ

Blue.

CLAIRE

(doing the cootie catcher)

B-L-U-E.

CLAIRE opens up the tab on the cootie catcher. AMY and EVELYN look over her shoulder. They giggle.

LAINÉ

What? ... WHAT?

CLAIRE

It says you're in terrible danger... of kissing another horse!

PRISSY GIRLS laugh as they walk away.

LAINE

I DIDN'T KISS A -- ! I just like to... I...

MAC

They're just bein' mean! Like you said! Don't let 'em creep under your skin. Hey -- all we need is you and me.

LAINE

Bestest of friends 'til the end of time no matter what?

MAC holds out her pinky. LAINE hooks hers around.

LAINE

Now you gotta kiss it to seal the deal.

MAC

What?

LAINE

You gotta kiss your hand.

LAINE kisses the side of her own hand.

MAC follows and kisses the side of her own hand as well.

BENNY walks over to the ball pit -- just his head and hair have been drenched with water.

He pours half of a giant pixie stick into his mouth.

BENNY

(with his mouth full)

You two kissin'?

LAINE

It's a pinkie swear

MAC

THIS IS JUST NORMAL PINKIE
FRIEND BUSINESS.

BENNY

Yeah, friends kiss all the time. My mom kisses her friend Rob whenever she sees him. And my dad kisses Rob's wife Janeen. And my mom also kisses Janeen. And my dad *also* kisses Rob...

LAINE

What happened to you?

BENNY

Oh I was just cleaning the toilets and then Derek said I didn't do a good enough job and told me to look closer and then put my head in the toilet and then I said that that tactic did not work as I cannot see underwater and then he told me to shut up and dunked my head back under the water.

MAC

Where'd you find that?

BENNY

Someone dropped it in the bathroom! "Every threat's an opportunity!"

BENNY pours more into his mouth.

MAC

Benny -- I don't --

BENNY

Oh. Sorry. You want some?

LAINE

Why is everyone so mean to us always!? Derek is bullying Benny left and right. Prissy girls are always rude. We're the laughing sock of the class and it's only gotten worse since we got in this whole mess. We're miserable and Derek is keeping all the food for him and Teddy and Fran and soon -- soon we're just gonna be --

LAINE begins to cry.

MAC

No, hey -- hey! We're gonna be okay! I'm here. Benny's here. And we -- we've got someone always lookin' out for us. Right?

BENNY

Who's that?

MAC

God.

LAINE

The Mouse.

BENNY

(in awe)

... *Mouse God.*

LAINE

Huh...

LAINE looks up at MAC with puppy dog eyes.

MAC

Well, someone's lookin' out for us.

(a joke, for Laine)

Maybe it's Mouse God. You know what Mouse God's saying right now? It's telling me that we're gonna be okay.

BENNY

I don't think things will get better if we just wait around and do nothin'. We gotta non-violent protest.

BENNY grabs a crayon and writes on the wall.

LAINE

I think we need to tell Derek if he wants to be a fair ruler, he's gotta stop acting like a -- a **poopy head**.

BENNY unveils his masterpiece that says "*DEREK IS MEAN. - BENNY, LAINE, AND MAC*"

BENNY

Just like this!

LAINE

No -- to his face, Benny! Cover that up.

BENNY pouts and hangs a poster over it.

LAINE

If we don't do anything we're just gonna keep bein' hungry and getting bullied until we... *if* we... I don't want that for me. I don't want that for you guys. The three of us. Tonight. Okay?

BENNY

mmmmmm.....

LAINE

I'll draw you a really good picture of a dinosaur.

BENNY

Which dinosaur?

LAINE

Which one you want?

Camarasaurus?
BENNY

Pterodactyl.
LAINE

Ornitholestes.
BENNY

T-Rex.
LAINE

... Two T-Rexes?
BENNY

... Deal.
LAINE

YES.
BENNY

LAINE
(looking into Mac's eyes)
And Mac. I promise that I'll --

MAC
Deal.

LAINE
You didn't know what I was gonna say.

MAC
I know. It just -- you seemed sure about it.

LAINE
Okay. You guys in?

LAINE puts her hand in -- she shares a smile with MAC.
BENNY slams his hand down.

BENNY
HECK YEAH.

MAC puts her hand on top of BENNY's.

TIME PASSES

1.4

It's dark outside. The kids are all fast asleep.

DEREK, TEDDY, and FRAN are the only ones who sleep on the stage -- all spread out far from each other.

LAINE, BENNY, and MAC slowly and quietly sneak onto the stage from a door leading to the basement.

Once they make it onto the stage -- BENNY pretty immediately runs back to the door and we can faintly hear him throwing up.

BENNY, ashamed, slinks back in.

BENNY

I frew up.

MAC

Go wash out your mouth and then go to sleep.

BENNY

But I wanna help! ...And I want my T-Rexes drawing.

LAINE

I'll still do it. Just go back to bed.

BENNY

Alright...

BENNY goes back downstairs.

LAINE

The points that we rehearsed. Alright?

MAC nods.

LAINE pokes DEREK with her shoe to wake him up.

DEREK

Teddy, stop. I'll make pancakes if you give me 5 more minutes.

LAINE

Derek. Wake up.

DEREK remembers where he is.

DEREK

Dude! What the heckie? I was having a really cool dream with... motorcycles. And... manly things.

MAC

We needed to talk to you now // because you won't --

DEREK

You can talk to Fran about that tomorrow.

LAINE

No, we need to talk to *you*. Now. So, listen up, mister!

DEREK

What do you want, Horse Kisser?

LAINE is ready to fight, but composes herself.

LAINE

We wanna stop being bullied. We want it to be fair. Food. Chores. All of it. Isn't that right, Mac?

MAC nods a bit too aggressively.

LAINE

Stop calling me Horse Kisser. And -- and Benny Fudgebutt. And whatever you call Mac behind her back. You've been keeping all the food. Making us do all the work. It's not fair. It should be even stevens and it's odds bobs.

...

DEREK

Get in the ticket blaster for 5 minutes.

MAC

Derek -- Teacher, she didn't mean // what she --

LAINE

I'm not gonna.

DEREK

An hour.

LAINE

No.

MAC

Laine.

DEREK

A day.

LAINE

No.

DEREK

Then I'll just wake everyone up and we'll make you go outside.

LAINE

Go ahead // then --

MAC

We'll go! Laine, c'mon.

MAC grabs LAINE's arm, pulling her.

LAINE

Mac -- let go! I'm not // going to --

DEREK

Listen to your lesbo friend.

LAINE stops fighting, an idea.

LAINE

... Okay. You win. Lead the way.

DEREK walks them over to the ticket blaster and opens the door.

DEREK

I don't get why you're both just so dumb and weird. You literally don't have to be. You can be a girl and just wear dresses like normal and stop obsessing about horses so freakin' much. Then, no one would wanna bully you cause then you'd be normal. Not like pretty or whatever, but normal.

LAINE is about to step in.

LAINE

Teacher, can I say two things.

MAC

Laine // let's just --

DEREK

I wanna hear what you have to say.

LAINE

First, thank you for the advice.

DEREK

I do what I can.

LAINE

And secondly, I wanna tell you that I'm sorry.

DEREK

Tell me what are you sorry for.

LAINE

For this.

LAINE takes off one of her scrunchies and flings it towards DEREK's face.

It startles DEREK, giving LAINE a chance to kick him in the chest.

He stumbles back into the ticket blaster and LAINE shuts and locks it.

He screams at them -- but it's sound proof. No one can hear him.

MAC

Laine. What did you do?

LAINE

"Ladies Defense Class Session 5: Hair Accessories are a Girl's Best Weapon."

MAC

When he gets out -- when he gets out Laine, he's gonna make us go outside. If he was gonna punish us just for being mean to him.

MAC in a daze, backs into the control panel of the ticket blaster -- accidentally pressing the "ON" button. Nor she or LAINE notice.

DEREK starts banging on the glass -- screaming. No one notices.

LAINE

We'll say he's lying.

MAC

Who are they going to believe, Laine? They don't like us! You said it yourself!

LAINE

Um... then... I don't know. Um... I don't know.

MAC

3rd grade is like chess, Laine! Everyone's out to getcha. You gotta always be thinkin' 5 steps ahead.

LAINE starts panicking and hyperventilating.

MAC

Hey, you're okay. It's going to be okay.

In the middle of yelling, a ticket flies into DEREK's esophagus -- he begins choking on it. The girls still don't notice

MAC

Just breathe with me. My mama always say all you need to do is breathe. Okay? Breathe in.... And out.... In... and out. You're doing so good.

As MAC and LAINE breathe together -- DEREK tries to get their attention again. Still choking.

MAC

And we can figure this out. We can hide in the attic. Grab some food and then seal off the hatch so they don't find us maybe? And can play horses and mermaids and house. And then Teacher will be back in so soon and everything will be okay. And we'll talk to her.

And -- and maybe we'll get detention. *BUT* maybe we won't. And we're in 3rd grade so colleges won't even be lookin' at it yet. And it'll be okay, you know?

DEREK slowly slides down the tube -- using the little energy he has left to try to bang on the tube.

MAC

No matter what, we got each other. You and me, Lainey. Bestest of friends 'til the end of time no matter what.

MAC holds out her pinkie. LAINE wraps hers around.

MAC and LAINE kiss their own hands, as DEREK's head flops to the side.

They smile at each other, and then look to the ticket blaster to finally see DEREK, slumped over, dead.

A long beat.

They look back at each other.

LAINE and MAC run.

TIME PASSES

1.5

There is a mouse-themed blanket that has been taped over the ticket blaster, concealing the body inside.

FRAN stands on the stage -- in somewhat of a daze.

TEDDY sits next to her, sipping a box of apple juice -- blank faced.

The rest of the kids sit as an audience, they all quietly chatter to each other.

MAC

I think we should say something.

LAINE

Don't say anything. I've got this Mac. We're playin' chess now. Trust me.

FRAN steps forward -- the room goes quiet on its own.

She attempts to speak, but instead cries and runs off.

JOEY

... So does anyone know what the heck happened?

CHRISTOPHER R.

I think he just wanted to play and got
stuck and fell asleep

PLUTO

The government hacked the chip in his
brain // that he got from --

BENNY

He's just taking a nap, right?

CLAIRE

The government can't hack brain chips //
Pluto

QUINN

He was probably just trying to get warm
cause tubes are warm, you know?

PLUTO

MY UNCLE SAYS THEY'VE HAD THE
TECHNOLOGY SINCE THE REGAN
ADMINISTRATION

TEDDY

(matter-of-fact)

He's dead.

The room falls silent.

TEDDY

(matter-of-fact)

He got stuck in the tube. Choked on something -- a ticket probably. There was a bruise on his neck when I found him this morning and that's a sign from most choking victims. Now he is dead and his body will decompose and go back become worm food. Because that's what happens when you die.

MAC

Teddy... are you okay?

TEDDY

Yeah. There's nothing to really do. He's dead.

TEDDY shrugs, slurps his apple juice, and goes to play an
arcade game.

CHRISTOPHER M.

But what *happened*?

IRIS

Teddy just said, stupid-head!

CHRISTOPHER M.

I know but like -- *WHY* was he in the ticket blaster?

LAINE

He coulda just wanted a quiet place to think

MAC

Or, like, originally, those were made to have a fun time in, you know?

BENNY

Derek never liked it though. That's why he used it // as punishment.

CLAIRE

Plus, you can't press the button that make the tickets go WOOSH from the inside.
Someone's gotta push it from // the outside

IRIS

SOMEONE MUST'VE SHOVED HIM IN

QUINN

Or at least pushed the button.

LAINE

Maybe it went off on its own?

CHRISTOPHER R.

No, but in science Teacher taught us about Newton's 3rd Law of Motion.

LAINE

Do you believe that?

CHRISTOPHER R.

Teacher told us it was true. We spent a whole week on learning it.

LAINE

Teacher told us a lot of things, didn't she? Teacher told us that we shouldn't run or else we would hurt our knees and ankles. Teacher told us that we couldn't just eat laughy taffy for lunch or we'd turn into a laughy taffy. Teacher told us our mommies or daddies were gonna pick us up after the field trip at 2:30 not 3:00 because it was an early day. We've all been runnin' around. Has anyone broken their knee?

Murmurs.

LAINE

We've been eating laughy taffy. Has anyone here turned into one yet?

More murmurs.

LAINE

Was anybody picked up by their mommy or daddy? ... Teacher told us she'd be back "soon" and where is she now?

EVELYN

Something probably happened to her and she didn't know // that --

LAINE

Exactly! She didn't know. Teacher doesn't know everything. Teacher has been wrong about a lotta stuff.

IRIS

Teacher would never lie to us.

LAINE

No, she wouldn't! She told us what she -- from the bottom of her heart -- thought was true. But she's wrong! People who love us can be wrong. Even if they don't know it. But that means we have to be super sleuths and figure out what is true. And what is best. We're all just in the 3rd grade, so we know a heck-of-a-lot, but we don't know as much as like 5th graders. Or 6th graders. But there's someone who does.

LAINE points up -- to the neon glowing Mouse sign

LAINE

The Mouse.

KIDS

What? / She's joking / What is horse kisser saying? / I don't get it / etc.

LAINE

A lot of our mommies and daddies tell us about someone watchin' over us. Someone who makes sure our bellies are full. Someone who makes sure we get enough sleep. Someone who makes sure we're happy and healthy. Someone who *can't* tell us a lie. Even if they wanted to. Who has been watchin' all of us while we sleep here? Who has been makin' sure the power is on? Who makes sure the water bill is paid so there's water in the sinks and toilets? The Mouse has never stopped glowing. Making sure we are all okay.

TEDDY

Then what about Derek?

LAINE

That... is a great question. Derek... was a sacrifice. The Mouse knew that, to keep the rest of us alive and okay, The Mouse needed a lot of power. And that it could only come from someone who was a leader and good at sports and nice to look at and loved by the class. So, The Mouse took Derek, to save the rest of us?

TEDDY

So... he was kinda a hero?

LAINE

Yes!

QUINN

How do you know that?

CHRISTOPHER R.

Did The Mouse tell you?

LAINE

No. But, The Mouse talks to Mac. Right, Mac?

All eyes on MAC.

MAC

Uh... I --

LAINE

You told me before, The Mouse said we were gonna be okay?

MAC

Um... Yeah. Yeah. That's what The Mouse said.

EVELYN

Why should we believe any of this?

CHRISTOPHER M.

You could all be big fibbers.

LAINE

Then why else did this any of this happen? Especially to us?

The kids murmur, but no one with a strong enough opinion to say something outright.

LAINE

Why would we be stuck here, with no Teacher, no grown ups, no TV, no food, no pets, no nothin' !? Just for random? A co-winkie-dink? No rhyme or reason? Everything is pointless? Or it's The Mouse. Tryin' to teach us. I dunno about you all, but I think, the best chance we got is listening to what The Mouse has to say.

The kids murmur again -- Laine's got a point. No one takes immediate action until:

TEDDY stands, makes direct eye contact with MAC

Then he bows to the neon sign.

All the kids (except for MAC and LAINE) follow suit.

LAINE

Mac, what is The Mouse saying now?

MAC closes her eyes and listens.

MAC

Um -- The Mouse says that it knows we're all scared. The Mouse knows that we feel tired and sad and alone. But that we can be okay. That we can overcome. That we will be kind to each other. That we will care for each other. That we will make it through this. The Mouse says we've got a lot of work to do.

LAINE smiles at MAC -- MAC smiles back, even bigger.

TIME PASSES

1.6

Additions are slowly being added to the area.

Most noticeably -- all the windows are now covered up with towels, wrapping paper, and tarps.

Poorly hand-drawn posters of The Mouse, as well as a couple of Mac herself are hung.

A booth of a table has somehow been dragged onto the stage to make a throne for Mac and Laine.

Food wrappers everywhere -- the kids have been, and maybe currently are, eating.

It may not be noticeable at first glance, but somehow everyone just looks more... cohesive? Alike? The same?

Everyone is split off into groups.

CHRISTOPHER M. & CHRISTOPHER R. are part way through building some sort of sculpture.

CHRISTOPHER R.
(holding up two ball pit balls)
What do you think? For the eyes?

CHRISTOPHER M.
Mmm... I think the green really captures The Mouse's all knowing presence.

CHRISTOPHER R.
You're so right.

Focus shifts to The PRISSY girls who are in a sewing circle.

AMY
And I heard that Alex didn't even thank The Mouse after washing his hands.

EVELYN
Well I just heard that Alex doesn't wash his hands

CLAIRE
I don't think *any* of the boys wash their hands.

PRISSY GIRLS
EWWWWWWW

Focus shifts to JOEY and PLUTO who are playing an arcade game as ALEX watches.

JOEY
Hey -- stop it! You're sniping all the high point zombies!

PLUTO

Maybe you should just get to them faster.

JOEY shoves PLUTO. PLUTO shoves back.

ALEX

Hey -- HEY. What Would The Mouse do?

JOEY

(sheepishly)
...I'm sorry that I got mad
about zombies and pushing you

PLUTO

(sheepishly)
SORRY I pushed you
and stole the zombies.

ALEX

And, now, *hug*.

They do.

Focus shifts to TEDDY who is currently leading BENNY,
IRIS, and QUINN in an equivalent of a bible study.

TEDDY

So, we can see this not only in The Book Of Mouse, which is everything The Mouse told Mac, but also as the center point in Cheeselandia -- the "Ticket Blaster". Evil. And you unscramble those letters, you get the words "backstreet tilt". What was Derek's favorite game?

IRIS

Coin pusher?

TEDDY

No.

QUINN

Shootin' hoops.

TEDDY

No.

QUINN

But he played shootin' hoops a lot.

TEDDY

But it wasn't his favorite.

QUINN

He'd sometimes play like 5 or 6 times a day.

IRIS

Oh yeah, I remember that.

TEDDY

BUT IT WASN'T HIS FAVORITE. His favorite was the game "Tilt". And where is tilt?

BENNY

On the wall.

TEDDY

On the *backstreet* of the arcade. My brother was tempted by evil. And The Mouse knew the only way to save my brother's soul, was to put him in the Ticket Blaster.

BENNY

Woah.

IRIS

That's craaaazy.

TEDDY

The Book of Mouse warns us that there is evil lurkin' around every corner. Trying to tempt all of us into not believing. So, LOOK OUT.

Focus shifts to LAINE sitting on her throne surrounded by prized and luxury.

CLAIRE jaunts up to LAINE.

AMY and EVELYN stare from afar.

LAINE

(fearful)

What do you want?

CLAIRE

We just wanted to give you this. It's a dress. We worked real hard on it.

CLAIRE hands LAINE a dress sewn out of cut out faces from stuffed animals.

LAINE

Why did you do this? What's wrong with it? Did you write something mean on it? Or is it covered in like // poop or --

CLAIRE

No! Me and Amy and Evelyn wanted to say thank you. For saving us and teaching us about The Mouse.

LAINE

Oh.

CLAIRE

We didn't realize that you guys are kinda cool too. So... we're kinda sorry for sayin... the stuff about kissing a horse.

AMY

SORRY LAINE.

EVELYN

WE KNOW YOU PROBABLY DON'T FRENCH KISS HORSES

AMY

WE JUST MAKE FUN OF WHATEVER YOU'RE SENSITIVE ABOUT

EVELYN

LIKE YOUR LOVE FOR HORSES

AMY

AND THAT YOU HAVEN'T KISSED ANYONE YET.

LAINE

... Thank you.

CLAIRE goes back and joins AMY and EVELYN.

LAINE goes behind the curtain to change.

TEDDY bounces up to MAC.

He does a very flourish-y, royal bow to MAC.

TEDDY

Your all-great highness-ness-ness

MAC

Teddy, you don't have to --

TEDDY

"May you be a kid today"

MAC

What?

TEDDY

It's a thing I think we should start saying, as a greeting. Like the commercials for this place. "May you be a kid today" and then you would say "And also you".

MAC

Sure. What's going on?

TEDDY

I wanted to ask you some more questions about The Book of Mouse.

MAC

I just scribbled that up last night -- I don't know that // it's --

TEDDY

On page 4, line 3 it says that The Mouse decides if someone is good or bad. How does it do that?

MAC

Well, um, The Mouse looks at what you do. If you help others. If you pick up trash off the street. If you share your snack. And if you do, you're good!

TEDDY

And the first thing on page 1 is that if you do good things, good things happen to you. And if you do bad things bad things happen. And, I was thinkin'. Like if you do both good things and bad things then both will happen, right?

MAC

Right.

TEDDY

And -- and Derek. I know at school he said a lot of mean things and stole a lot of peoples toys and pushed some people sometimes. But at home, he always made us quesadillas when Dad wouldn't And got us to the bus in the morning. And knows how to lock the door from the inside. And picks the bedtime stories we read. And now a bad thing happened to Derek. So... I just wanted to make sure that The Mouse knew. Incase The Mouse didn't know and just, wanted to undo some stuff maybe.

MAC

Um. The Mouse knew -- The Mouse knows everything. ... Derek was different. Cause The Mouse knew how good Derek was. And that's why he was sacrifice. Cause Derek was so strong. And The Mouse needed to be stronger. And the only way we would all be okay was to use Derek's strength.

TEDDY

So, Derek helps The Mouse take care of us?

MAC

Uh... Yeah. Yeah.

TEDDY

Woah. ... And you can talk to The Mouse. So you can talk to Derek. Can you just tell him that -- I love him and I miss him and thank you for helping The Mouse.

MAC nods her head.

TEDDY

Thank you, Your Highnessnessness Mac.

MAC

Teddy, you can just call me Mac.

TEDDY

Thank you, Mac. I love you.

TEDDY envelopes MAC in a giant hug.

MAC

I love you too, Teddy.

TEDDY runs back down to his bible study group.

BENNY runs up to MAC.

BENNY

Am I allowed to enter?

MAC

Benny! Hi! I feel like I haven't seen you in forever.

BENNY

Yeah. After you started talkin' with The Mouse you and Laine's popularity scores have hit sky high.

MAC

Not a lot of time to play when you have to run a whole sobriety.

LAINE reenters over by the arcade -- somehow with a complete make over: Dress made by prissy girls, hair down, maybe she found some makeup at the prize counter.

FRAN notices her.

FRAN

Laine!

LAINE turns back and sees FRAN.

FRAN

People are not doing the chores or keeping their stuff or napping in the spaces I assigned them. ... So, can you make sure they do them?

LAINE

Why?

FRAN

Cause -- that's how we keep fair and organized.

LAINE

That's not what The Mouse has been saying.

Focus now splits between MAC/BENNY and
LAINE/FRAN

MAC

What've you been up to?

BENNY

So far I've been practicing in the ball pit a lot. Went to Teddy's "The Book of Mouse" book club. I found a flashlight and when it was dark I went into the back room, uncovered the paper on the window and did morse code for S.O.S. for awhile.

MAC

What?

LAINE

The Mouse knows that the assignments were chosen by popularity status and The Mouse thinks that's not fair. We're just makin' sure everyone helps out with everything.

FRAN

Nobody's gonna listen to that.

LAINE

I think everyone's doing a A+ gold star job already.

MAC

Benny -- you can't do that!

BENNY

That's the number one survival thing to do. Signal help. Bear Grylls says that making three fires in a triangular shape is usually the most helpful, but we're inside and plus I have never started a fire in Scouts successfully.

MAC

We don't know who's out there -- could be like robbers and kidnappers and snakes.

BENNY

If we don't signal that we're here --

(Bear Grylls British Accent)

We could be dead in the water, mate.

FRAN

You can't give everyone a gold star, then gold stars don't mean anything anymore.

LAINE

So?

FRAN

SO. Then people won't try their best every time or give 100%. And then we can't tell who is good at things and who is bad.

LAINE

Well, Fran, The Mouse loves everyone. If you're tall or short. Big or small. Like cheese puffs or don't like cheese puffs. Even if the only thing you're good at is volleyball and being a meanie pants, The Mouse still loves you.

LAINE smirks and skips away.

MAC

Teacher will be back any second now. So there's no // need to --

BENNY

We also gotta report a body.

MAC

What?

BENNY

That's what they do on TV. Whoever sees the body calls 911 and so Mariska Hargitay gets there and cop-i-gandas all around until they put the guy in prison.

MAC

There's not even a bad guy to arrest, Benny. It was an accident -- It was The Mouse!

BENNY

I was thinkin' about that too. Cause it's not possible to lock yourself inside the ticket blaster

MAC

Impossible things happen all the time! Benny, you just gotta relax. It's all // going to --

LAINE skips up to the two. MAC suddenly becomes transfixed with her.

LAINE

What's goin' on here?

BENNY

I was just saying // things seem a little --

MAC

Wow. Laine. You -- The dress looks really *really* // amazing.

LAINE

Thanks! I think I look like Princess Annika from "Barbie and the Magic of Pegasus" which is the Barbie movie where she's an ice-skater and then gets an evil curse and everyones frozen and she has to marry that guy // or else she --

BENNY

Is this important in the slightest, right now?

LAINE

Yes, Benny, it is. Why are you here?

BENNY

I just wanted to talk to Mac about how // I think there --

LAINE

Well, Mac and I need to prepare for an announcement. So, you can talk to her later.

BENNY

Can I help?

MAC looks to LAINE

MAC

I bet // you could

LAINE

Sorry, Benny, this is just for me and Mac.

BENNY

Oh. Okay.

BENNY just stands there.

BENNY

Did you know in the video game Five Nights at Freddy's you're actually there for 7 nights and not 5.

LAINE

Benny.

BENNY

Yeah.

LAINE

Mac and I gotta talk just me and her.

BENNY

So I should --

LAINE nods.

BENNY gives two thumbs up and heads off.

MAC

You look --
Yeah! Yeah.

LAINE

You ready for the speech, Mac-a-doodle-do?

LAINE hands MAC a piece of paper.

TEDDY takes center stage, pulls out a kazoo and kazoos.

Everyone quickly and quietly gathers around.

TEDDY

May you be a kid today!

KIDS

And you be one too!

TEDDY

Announcements! There is still electricity. Good. We still have water. Good. We have 23 stuffed animals left. No more tickets are being used. Every good must equal a service. We share and care with each other. Food is for all. Sleep wherever is comfiest to you. Big thanks to The Mouse. Now, presenting, our highnessnessness, The Prophet Mac!

Everyone cheers as MAC takes the stage.

MAC

Students of The Mouse! I come to you today with a message. Firstly, The Mouse tells me that it is so very proud of you all for all the work you have done. Secondly, we will be having a special activity soon! It is a Ball-tism. We will dunk you one by one into the ball pit and this will show your commitment and love to the class and The Mouse. And afterwards, if everyone is on their bestest behavior and stays in the green zone, we get to have a pizza party!

Huge cheers from the class.

TEDDY

Let's say "Thank you Mac and Laine" on the count of 3. 1, 2, 3.

KIDS

(enthusiastically)

THANK YOU MAC AND LAINE.

MAC

That is all. Big thanks to The Mouse!

KIDS

Big thanks to The Mouse!

The kids disperse -- giddy, joyful.

LAINE

I think they really like us. Really, truly, Mac. The whole class. No one's called me Horse Kisser in forever. Just Laine or "your highnessnessness" or "pretty" -- Mac, did I tell you - - Alex and Christopher R. said I looked really pretty in the dress. And then Joey told me that I was the prettiest girl in the whole class and the whole *grade*. And Joey is #4 on the Prissy Girls list of cute boys in the class. And I think he might ask me to be boyfriend/girlfriend.

MAC

Oh.

LAINE

I'd say "no-way Jose" cause I gotta focus on all this, you know? But it'd be nice to be flattered.

MAC

Well, I think anyone would be lucky to even have a chance to be boyfriend/girlfriend with you.

LAINE

Uno reverse, switcheroo, right back to you!

MAC

Really?

LAINE

Totally! You are so smart and pretty and a bombshell at every villa! Whoever you're boyfriend/girlfriend with one day will be the luckiest duck at the carnival game.

A moment. Tension?

LAINE

Quack Quack.

MAC

Quack Quack.

TIME PASSES

1.7

Everyone is fast asleep scattered throughout the area. Resources are a bit more equal now. No one is without at least a blanket or a squishmellow.

Aside from the occasional snore and and the consistent hum from the generator in the basement, all is quiet.

MAC sits on top of the jungle gym. She looks over at a sleeping Laine for a moment.

Then, closes her eyes to talk to The Mouse.

BENNY climbs up the side of the jungle gym and joins
MAC, without her noticing.

BENNY

I can't sleep either.

MAC

AH! Oh // my --

BENNY

I can't sleep without my melatonin. My mommy gives me 100mg every night. And then I'm asleep. Light's out. No dreams. I just appear in the next day. It's nice. It's like time travel. Do you think time travel's been invented yet? Or like, in the future? Like are there time travelers among us and they have to lie about being time travelers or else the spacetime continuum would unfold? I couldn't do that. I'm not a good liar. I'd have to tell everyone that I was a time traveler and then maybe they wouldn't believe me and then I wouldn't have to lie. ... Your face looks sad. Why does your face look sad?

MAC

I'm not sad. I'm just... um...

BENNY

I'm homesick too. But just think how excited our parents are gonna be when they see us. My mommy said that I had to clean up my room when I got home from school the other day and then I never came home and I bet she will have missed me so much that she wont make me clean up my room when I get home. At least not right away. And the hugs -- my mommy and daddy, like, when I come home from school they're usually still busy selling plants and have adult conversations that are not for 8 year old ears. So, I just kinda do one of these [self hugs]. But when I'm away at Granny and Poppop's for a weekend, mommy comes to the door and bends down and gives me a big squeeze hug. So I can only imagine after *this*! You know?

MAC

Oh. I dunno. My dad doesn't really do that. But he doesn't do it with Chase or Lucas or Morgan either.

BENNY

I've seen your mommy give you lots of big hugs when we had

MAC

Yeah, but she's been gone for awhile. And Dad says she still needs more time to get better before she can come back.

BENNY

Oh. Well, Laine's always huggin' ya. It looks nice. Having a person who loves you like that.

MAC

I don't think // Laine loves --

BENNY

Like a best friend, I mean.

MAC

... Benny, you're my best friend. We've been best friends since Mommy & Me.

BENNY

Yeah. I know. But, it's different now. Like, you being a prophet and me being a filthy peasant. You're kinda different around her. We used to hang out you and me all the time and now the two of you have private meetings about The Mouse. It's you and Laine on the swing set. You and Laine in the sandbox. You and Laine playing house -- and -- and I tell you that I'll be the baby and then you and Laine say you don't want kids and then I offer to be the dog and then Laine says she's allergic and that doesn't even make sense cause I'm not even a real dog. ... Mac, can I share an observation?

MAC

...Sure.

BENNY

You like like Laine. You practice prolonged eye contact with her and mirror her movements. Your face glows red when she calls you smart or pretty. All are scientific signs of like liking someone. And it's okay cause girls can like girls and boys can like boys and that is perfectly natural and often found in nature like with penguins, bonobos, and the lesser horseshoe bat. ... I'm right, right?

MAC

Um. I -- I don't know. I like being around her. I don't even know if I wanna like... *I sometimes think about kissing but i don't even know if i want to kiss her because kissing anyone is gross but if she wanted to kiss me that's fine i think but i really just kind of want to* -- I just... I'd like to hold her hand. Or for her to hold my hand. With, like fingers [intertwined]... I'd do anything for her to just hold my hand. ... But I don't know if she -- Or everyone would think we're a power couple and vote us off the island. And they would focus on *that* more than The Mouse // and everything --

BENNY

Maybe you can tell her when Teacher comes back. So you don't have to worry about everyone else.

MAC

...Yeah.

...

...

...

MAC

I should probably go // back to sleep --

BENNY

I've been having nightmares, Mac. About Derek. I guess they're less like nightmares and more like memories on repeat? Do you have that ever? I keep seein' him slumped over in the tube how I found him. And -- he was a bully to me and you and everyone. And I didn't like him, but he was a person. And then he was just a body. It was him but it also wasn't.

MAC

It's, um, it's very very sad.

BENNY

From everything The Mouse has told you, I don't understand why The Mouse would need a sacrifice.

MAC

Then, maybe I got it wrong and, you know, maybe it was just an accident.

BENNY

But why was he there at night? With no one watching? And -- AND he would've had to hit the button and then run really really fast to lock himself inside before the tickets went everywhere. I don't think you could do it yourself. The ticket blaster needs to lock fully before you can turn it on // so someone had --

MAC

Well, there's nothing to do about it now. "The Mouse, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference." My mama taught me that. No fuss over things that can't change.

BENNY

Mac, Derek is dead. Like forever dead. He won't ever get to go to play basketball again. Or go to the 4th grade. Or see his parents.

MAC

He's okay. He's being taken care of. Derek's with The Mouse now.

BENNY

What if he isn't? I think people gotta know. Sobriety can't run without Law and Order SVU on the streets.

A beat.

BENNY

Mac. ... I'm your Best Friend. You can tell me.

MAC

Tell you what?

BENNY

We'll explain to everyone it was an accident.

MAC

You think I did it?

BENNY

I know it had to be Laine and you. I've thought about all possible possibilities and it is the only one that makes a lick of sense. We can figure it out. You don't become prophet anymore and you and Laine can lay low with me and we can go back to normal. Tell me and then I won't tell anyone else. I promise. Best Friend Secret Rules. It's gonna be okay.

MAC

I'm going to sleep. Goodnight, Benny.

BENNY

Love ya to the moon and back, Mac.

MAC ignores him, climbs down the jungle gym and goes back to sleep next to LAINE.

BENNY sits and watches.

TIME PASSES

1.8

We're in the middle of the "Ball-tism".

The kids are lined up at the ball pit in a single file line.

LAINE and TEDDY watch from the side.

MAC stands in the middle of the ball pit.

Suddenly, IRIS pops up out of the ball pit.

IRIS

THE CHEESE IS WITHIN ME!

Everyone cheers as IRIS exits the ball pit.

TEDDY

This is honestly better than 5th birthday party -- and we even rented chickens for that one.

MAC

Alex?

ALEX hops in the ball pit.

MAC

Alex, is The Mouse your favorite in the whole wide world?

ALEX

Uhhh....

LAINE

(calling out)

Everyone who's in the class must have The Mouse be their favorite!

ALEX

Oh, then, yep. Yes. Yeah.

MAC

Repeat after me.

ALEX

Repeat after me.

MAC

No not yet.

ALEX

No not yet.

MAC

Never mind.

ALEX

Never mind.

MAC

I agree that I love The Mouse

ALEX

I agree that I love The Mouse

MAC

And know that The Mouse always wants what's best for us always

ALEX

And know that The Mouse always wants what's best for us always

MAC

And will always tell Mac what that is who will tell me

ALEX

And will always tell Mac what that is who will tell me

MAC

And I will listen

ALEX

And I will listen.

MAC

Good!

LAINE

(to Teddy)

Is everyone here?

TEDDY

Umm... Someone's missing. They're probably just poopin.

MAC

Now, in the name of The Mouse, the Teacher, and all of Cheeselandia, I ball-tize you as a student of The Mouse!

MAC dunks ALEX's head under the balls and they quickly emerge back up, elated.

ALEX

LET'S GOOOOOO.

ALEX exits the ball pit.

MAC

Christopher R. it is your turn!

As CHRISTOPHER R. starts to get into the ball pit -- BENNY runs in.

MAC

Benny. Are you here to get ball-tized?

BENNY

Mac. Last chance. Just come clean.

LAINE

Benny! It is not your turn!

MAC

I don't know what you're --

BENNY

(pronouncing murdered as "moy-doyed", like 50s style)

DEREK WAS *MURDERED*.

KIDS

What? / No. / "Moy-doyed"? What's that? / He means murdered. He's just stupid. / I forgot about him / That's crazy / etc.

LAINE

The Mouse said that it was his time to go.

BENNY

So, The Mouse did it.

LAINE

Yes, that's what we've said.

BENNY

And The Mouse isn't something we can see or hear or touch.

MAC

(sotto)

Benny.

BENNY

Then how was the ticket blaster locked from the outside? Why was the button stuck? There's no way he could've done it himself. It would've been impossible.

IRIS

But -- The Mouse can do anything.

BENNY

Why do you think that? When I bet we could dust for fingerprints! I learned on Mythbusters, all we gotta get is get some baby powder and a brush and clear tape --

JOEY

The Mouse doesn't have fingerprints. We are all The Mouse's fingerprints.

BENNY

That's what I'm talkin' about! If The Mouse doesn't have finger prints and we *find* fingerprints -- Cause... The night before, me Mac, and Laine went to go and talk to Derek about how he was being a do-do head and I had to go to back to bed cause I frew up too much potty sugar. They were mad at Derek. We only started talkin' about The Mouse afterwards. And ever since then Mac has been cold and a little bit of a meany pants and tellin' me that The Mouse says *this* and The Mouse says *that* and the only person I'm hearin' say that is Laine! So... I think punishment must be served.

...

LAINE

So, you don't trust The Mouse's word?

BENNY

You, me and Mac went to go to talk to Derek. I frew up potty sugar and went back to bed. The next morning he was dead. Yes or no?

...

MAC

What I --

No.

LAINE

LAINE

Mac and I were fast asleep that night. I do remember you waking us up because you had to go throw up from eating gross bathroom candy. But we didn't leave the basement. Isn't that right, Mac?

BENNY

Mac?

MAC

I don't -- um --

TEDDY

So, you don't believe Derek was a sacrifice for The Mouse.

BENNY

No.

TEDDY

So, you're saying Mac and Laine made my brother dead?

BENNY

I think // that --

TEDDY

Mac and Laine who tuck me in at night? And read me stories? Who showed me the way of The Mouse? Who love me like a brother? ... Do you think The Mouse is even real?

BENNY

I don't know! I don't have a lot of evidence for or against it yet. But either way, I don't think The Mouse killed Derek.

The kids murmur.

CHRISTOPHER M.

You don't think The Mouse does
anything?

QUINN

The Mouse // loves us!

FRAN

Maybe we should listen --

EVELYN

Fudgebutt does it again!

ALEX

The Mouse takes // care of us!

IRIS

Ungrateful!

TEDDY gasps.

TEDDY

He's been possessed. Like poison cheese in mouse traps.

BENNY

What!?! No!

TEDDY

It's okay, Benny! We're gonna save you! You just need to be ball-tized.

BENNY

No! Mac, just --

BENNY reaches for MAC, but LAINE pulls her back out of the ball pit by the shoulder.

TEDDY

Everyone!

Kids come rushing to the ball pit, trying to pin BENNY down -- all grabbing onto him.

BENNY

They did it! You guys have to believe me. Mac. Mac, my Best Friend. Mac, tell everyone the truth. Please, Mac!

The kids successfully knock BENNY down into the ball pit.

TEDDY

In the name of The Mouse
The Teacher
and all of Cheeselandia,
I ball-tize you as a student

BENNY

MAC, PLEASE
TELL THEM TO STOP
TELL THE THE TRUTH

TEDDY gets a good grip on BENNY's shirt

TEDDY

of The Mouse!

BENNY

MAC, JUST DO *SOMETHING*

MAC looks on in absolute horror -- she's about to say something when LAINE gently holds her hand -- fingers intertwined.

MAC looks at LAINE and smiles as BENNY's head is plunged underneath the ball pit one final time.

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2

DARKNESS.

The only thing illuminating the space are the glowing eyes of the animatronic mouse.

2.1

As the lights rise, we are once again greeted with a heavy dose of nostalgia -- but it's become a bit... shaken up.

The jungle gym has been graffitied on with sharpies and paint -- with the worst/funniest words they can think of (i.e. "stupid", "poop", etc.). There's some sort of barrier or sign warning people to not go into the ball pit.

The arcade looks worse for wear. Most games have been toppled over, smashed in, or gutted to make forts.

Food wrappers scattered everywhere.

Everyone is now wearing over-sized employee uniforms that were found in the back closet.

They all sit scattered throughout the space, with their eyes closed, chanting.

Their chants would be closest equated to speaking in tongues -- but we can make out words like "The Mouse", "cheese", "ticket", etc.

The chants build and build, getting louder and more intense, until MAC and LAINE steps onstage -- in full royal garb. MAC wears a robe made from the furs/skins of some of the animatronics. LAINE dons a dress of tickets all sewn together. Both wear the finest crowns tickets can buy.

It goes silent.

MAC

The Mouse says...

All ears perk up.

MAC

PIZZA PARTY!

The kids cheer!

LAINE

You are all making The Mouse proud! Now, prepare for the party.

They all immediately begin decorating.

Oddly organized chaos for a group of 3rd graders.

They all chatter amongst each other in different as they decorate.

CLAIRE

What toppings do you think The Mouse gets on pizza?

ALEX

Do you think The Mouse eats?

JOEY

Maybe The Mouse is fed by the love that we give from eating pizza.

EVELYN

Well Mac said that The Mouse *has* to eat and that's what The Mouse turns into electricity.

PLUTO

So we do run on love.

AMY

That's so beautiful!

Nods in agreement all around.

They continue as we shift our focus to:

FRAN, lost in thought, semi-watches as TEDDY tries to hang a banner.

TEDDY

Higher?

FRAN
Yeah.

TEDDY
Higher still?

FRAN
Yeah.

TEDDY
Just tell me when to stop.

TEDDY keeps going higher as FRAN gets distracted by looking at the covering over the ticket blaster.

TEDDY
I CANNOT REACH ANY HIGHER.

FRAN
Do you remember Mac and Laine that night?

TEDDY
What are you talkin' about?

FRAN
The night Derek... I thought I saw them that night. For a little. First I thought, maybe I dreamt it, you know. But I remember hearin' like someone tryin' to tell Derek off. And with what Benny said --

TEDDY
But, remember, Benny was lying, because he was possessed by evil, because he was weak. The Mouse will settle your nerves soon.

FRAN
Sure.

TEDDY
Higher?

FRAN
Lower.

TEDDY
WHAT?

They continue as we shift our focus to:

CHRISTOPHER R. is crying in a corner -- LAINE notices

LAINE

Are you okay, Christopher R.?

CHRISTOPHER R.

I miss my mommy.

LAINE

Aw. I'm sorry about that, Christopher R. But you know, crying won't solve anything. What if you go mop the bathroom? Take your mind off of it.

CHRISTOPHER R.

I don't think that would help.

LAINE

Well, The Mouse was just telling Mac that busy bodies empty busy minds.

CHRISTOPHER R.

Umm...

LAINE

Are you saying... Mac is wrong? That *I'm* wrong?

CHRISTOPHER R.

No, I --

LAINE

Or that *The Mouse* is wrong?

CHRISTOPHER R.

NO! No. I just --

LAINE

You can always tell The Mouse that it's something you don't wanna do. I don't know how The Mouse will feel about // it...

CHRISTOPHER R.

It'll make me feel better. It will. I'll go. Thanks for the advice, Laine.

CHRISTOPHER R. runs off to go clean the bathroom.

MAC has been staring at the ball pit, blankly this whole time.

LAINE

Mac Attack, you doin' okay?

MAC

Yeah! Yeah. Just, uh...

LAINE

He was goin' nutso bananas, Mac. They tried to save his soul.

MAC

Yeah. But still --

LAINE

We gotta be strong. You and me. Bestest of friends 'til the end of time no matter what.

Another pinkie swear, kissing their own hands.

LAINE

Are you ready?

MAC nods.

LAINE

Ah-hem!

Everyone looks to LAINE.

...

LAINE

PIZZAS!

TEDDY throws little gummy pizzas into the crowd.

The kids scatter to grab them.

After the kids grab their pizzas, they all find a seat on the long table that they've put on the stage, right in front of the mouse animatronic.

Murmurs and hubbub.

LAINE clinks her plastic cup and stands.

LAINE

This is a pizza party is for many porpoises, but especially to celebrate our new holiday -- Cheeseaversary. To celebrate our time being The Mouse's students!

The crowd cheers.

LAINE

We would like to thank The Mouse for all The Mouse helps us. We would like to thank you all for your Ball-tism commitment to The Mouse. And most importantly, to celebrate the prophet, Mac.

The kids cheer.

LAINE

Mac has followed The Word of The Mouse and has made Cheeslandia an autotopia! Where would we be without her? What would we do?

KIDS

Speech! Speech! Speech! Speech!

MAC steps up to speak. It falls quiet.

MAC

It is a honor to be chosen by The Mouse to speak to you all. The Mouse tells me not about how special I am. But how special you all are. Any class could have randomly ended up here, in this conundrum. But it was us. Not on accident. But chosen. For our strength. Our kindness. And how we believe. ... And even though things may not go the way we want them to go. Or the way we think they should go. The Mouse does what is best for us and we will see that at the end. If we just listen to The Mouse... we must be okay.

The crowd cheers.

LAINE

Now, line up to say nice things about our prophet!

A line forms.

ALEX

Mac you are smart and pretty thank you.

AMY

I like that you can talk to The Mouse and also you are good at braiding hair.

PLUTO

Um, Mac you're really cool and nice and you wore an astronaut costume to school last halloween and I thought that was cool even though my uncle says that astronauts have never landed on the moon.

QUINN

You are really nice to us and you once helped me // tie my shoe

BENNY (O.S.)

Mac gave me her sandwich once when mine got stolen.

MAC looks around for BENNY -- he's nowhere. It seems like no one else heard him, but MAC.

IRIS

I like that Mac doesn't // make anyone go in the ticket blaster

BENNY (O.S.)

Mac would always let me sleep in the big bed for sleepovers and she // would sleep on the trundle.

EVELYN

Mac's mom always packed // really good snacks for lunch

BENNY (O.S.)

Mac really liked listening to all my cool dinosaur facts.

MAC

(to LAINE)

Who's doing that?

LAINE

Doing what?

CLAIRE

I think Mac is actually kind of cool // cause she makes us not feel bad when when we mess up

BENNY (O.S.)

The Alvarezsaurids dinosaurs all only had one *stout* claw!

MAC

That! It sounds like Benny.

LAINE

I don't hear anything.

JOEY

Mac makes sure that we all have candy and candy that we like too // not just orange or purple flavors

BENNY (O.S.)

Diplodocus's had tails that they could use like a whip // like Indiana Jones.

MAC

The -- the dinosaur facts.

CHRISTOPHER R.

I think Mac has very kind eyes. The eyes are "the window into the souls"// and Mac's soul is nice.

LAINE

I think you're just stressin' out. Take a big deep breath.

LAINE guides MAC through a big breath.

LAINE

Is that better?

MAC

Yeah. Yeah I'm good.

TEDDY stands.

As he does, the animatronic mouse begins to power-up.
Only MAC sees this.

TEDDY

Mac made things okay when they were very not okay. And that makes me feel really good and safe.

The animatronic opens it's mouth -- it's Benny's voice.

TEDDY

I miss Derek more than anything
but if it was what The Mouse wanted
I am glad we've got Mac

BENNY ANIMATRONIC

Did you know the brontosaurus
Isn't the original brontosaurus
Because they had the wrong head

MAC
STOP! STOP IT! I'M SORRY. I'M SORRY!!!

LAINÉ
Mac! Hey! It's okay.
What's going on?

BENNY ANIMATRONIC
You can tell how
old a dinosaur is

MAC
He's -- he's The Mouse

BENNY ANIMATRONIC
from rings on their bones

LAINÉ
What are you talking about?

BENNY ANIMATRONIC
The oldest T-Rex was 28

FRAN
Is Mac alright?

BENNY ANIMATRONIC
Scientists think --

LAINÉ
Mac's fine. She's fine.

BENNY ANIMATRONIC
-- the Archaeopteryx could fly

TEDDY
Mac, are you talking to The Mouse?
What's The Mouse saying?

BENNY ANIMATRONIC
Penguins are legally dinosaurs

LAINÉ
Mac tell everyone you're fine.

MAC
How can penguins be legally dinosaurs? // That makes no sense!

LAINÉ
RECESS. It's time for recess everyone! 15 minutes and then back to the pizza party!

KIDS
Ooookay / Now I get to finish skee-ball / But I haven't finished my pizza / That was
weeeird / Awkwardddd

The kids begin to disperse. TEDDY begins to walk away
when FRAN pulls him back. They stay close by.

After everyone appears to be out of earshot

LAINÉ
What's going on?

MAC

It's Benny. Benny's talking.

LAINE

Benny's gone, Mac.

MAC

He's the mouse. Not *THE* Mouse. But the -- the robot. It was moving.

LAINE

The mouse robot?

MAC nods her head.

LAINE

Like 5 Nights at Freddys style?

MAC

I think -- I think it's... *Benny*. It sounds like Benny and it's saying all these cool dinosaur facts --

LAINE

Mac, I don't think...

MAC

And maybe, you know, his soul didn't find its way up to -- or down to -- it got trapped *inside of...* it's *him*.

LAINE

Mac. Focus. Okay? You gotta listen. It's gonna be okay. I didn't hear anything. Didn't even see it movin'.

The animatronic starts moving again.

MAC

It's moving right now! Laine!

BENNY ANIMATRONIC

I was just a body.

LAINE

It's not doing anything!

BENNY ANIMATRONIC

I'll never get to play basketball

MAC

I didn't do anything!
You know I didn't!

BENNY ANIMATRONIC

Or see my parents again
Or go to the fourth grade

LAINE

I need you to breathe, okay?
I'm your best friend
I'd never do anything to hurt you
I'm telling you the truth. It's not moving.

BENNY ANIMATRONIC

I'm your best friend
I'd never do anything to hurt you

LAINE grabs MAC's hand -- fingers intertwined.

BENNY ANIMATRONIC

Love ya to the moon and back, Mac.

Kids are starting to look over and listen. LAINE notices this.

MAC

I'M SORRY! I LOVE YOU AND I KNOW YOU LOVED ME AND I SHOULD'VE DONE SOMETHING! IF I DID SOMETHING YOU WOULDN'T HAVE --

LAINE kisses MAC.

A very long, intense peck on the lips.

MAC is so shocked it almost startles her out of her panic.

The animatronic stops moving.

The kids all look on, in shock and awe.

After a long moment, LAINE pulls away.

A beat, as LAINE and MAC notice the entire classroom has been staring at them.

LAINE

What are you guys staring at? ... Are we hurtin' you?

KIDS

No / Nope. / Nah / Nooooo / etc.

LAINE

And are we hurtin' each other?

KIDS

No / I don't think so / Nada / etc.

LAINE

Then, The Mouse says, "Mind your own dang beeswax!"

The kids all nod to each other -- makes sense to them -- and go back to playing.

LAINE

Are you okay?

MAC, still in shock, nods.

LAINE

Benny's no longer here. Not as a boy. Not as the mouse. You've just got a "active imagination".

MAC

Uh-huh.

LAINE

It's a doggy dog world, Mac. And the doggy dogs are out to fight. We didn't even really do anything. Not with Benny. Not with Derek, even. You know? Just focus on you and I and The Mouse and it'll all be okay.

MAC looks at the animatronic -- it's powered down now.

LAINE

... Okay?

MAC

Okay.

...

LAINE grabs MAC's hand again and intertwines fingers.

LAINE

You wanna go play skee-ball?

MAC

Are we --
Yeah. Yeah.

LAINE and MAC walk over to skeeball.

FRAN comes out of where she was hiding. She's not sure what it all means exactly, but she heard it all.

TIME PASSES

INTERLUDE

The environment keeps shifting.

Murals of MAC and LAINE begin to appear.

Food wrappers pile up even higher.

Stomachs quietly begin to gurgle.

TIME PASSES

2.2

MAC sits in a circle with THE PRISSY GIRLS who are very excited to have MAC in their presence.

MAC

So?

CLAIRE

We're happy to help, Mac.

EVELYN

But we don't know why you need us.

AMY

I'm sure The Mouse could tell you all this and more.

MAC

I, uh, don't want to bother The Mouse with personal things, you know?

PRISSY GIRLS

Totally.

MAC

I just -- Everything is going good. You know, and I just -- want to make sure everything stays like how it is.

CLAIRE

Did you want to ask about The Mouse, boyfriend/girlfriends, family, or all 3?

MAC

Uh, I'll do all 3.

AMY

We can do a game of MASH and then // maybe --

CLAIRE shushes AMY.

CLAIRE

Evelyn. Get out the stuff.

EVELYN

But -- we've been saving those for --

CLAIRE

Only the best for Mac.

EVELYN pulls out 3 fortune cookies from her pockets, mixing them around and then giving them to MAC.

CLAIRE

First, The Mouse.

MAC slowly opens one.

CLAIRE

(reading it)

"Beware of bears"

EVELYN

Second, boyfriend/girlfriend

MAC opens another one.

EVELYN

(reading it)

"We hope you enjoyed your meal from Lucky Duck Place. Please rate us 5 stars. Come back soon."

CLAIRE

Flip it around.

EVELYN

Oh.

“A special someone will fall hard and fast for you”

AMY

And last, family. Choose carefully.

CLAIRE and EVELYN give her a look.

AMY

Cause there's only one. ... It was funny...

MAC opens the last one.

AMY

(reading it)

“Education is the key to unlock the golden door of freedom - George Washington Carver”

MAC

What the heck do all these mean?

The PRISSY GIRLS shrug.

CLAIRE

We just got the fortunes. We dunno what they mean.

EVELYN

And enjoy the cookies Mac.

AMY

It's the last food we got.

The PRISSY GIRLS leave as MAC looks out onto the rest of the kids.

Our focus shifts to TEDDY and FRAN.

TEDDY, sitting in the arcade next to three teddy bears -- with his nose shoved in The Book of Mouse, rereading it while FRAN stands over him.

FRAN

I looked.

TEDDY

Everywhere?

FRAN

Yes. I -- what's with the stuffies?

TEDDY

I got them off the prize wall. They're my new family. We've got my dad. My mom right next to him. And then Derek's right here. Happy family time.

FRAN

Right... I didn't find anything, Teddy.

TEDDY

You look in the super high up cabinets in the kitchen?

FRAN

Yes.

TEDDY

In the tubes?

FRAN

Yes.

TEDDY

Did you check the back right corner of the purple tube? Joey spilled a packet of Skittles back there and I don't think he found all of them.

FRAN

There's no more food.

TEDDY

We still got a whole bag of laughy taffy. And a bunch of dum dums. And a half a jar of pizza sauce in the fridge -- but the sauce is for emergencies only.

FRAN

And after that?

TEDDY

I'm sure The Mouse will tell Mac // what --

FRAN

Why do you believe her, Teddy!? This is Laine and Mac we're talkin' about. The girls who play horses at recess. And snort laugh. And are so so so annoying!

TEDDY

But, Mac and Laine are actually really nice to me and let me help out with things and --

FRAN

They just want you to think that! Look at what I found.

FRAN rips a piece of paper off the wall -- it uncovers where Benny previously wrote "DEREK IS MEAN - BENNY, LAINE, AND MAC"

TEDDY

What?

FRAN

That doesn't look very nice to me. I've been doing the math // and --

TEDDY

Oh, and you're in the tiger math group too.

FRAN

-- and I think what Benny's said. I don't know why he would lied. He never wanted to be popular or be Teacher. I'm not saying that The Mouse is real. Or that The Mouse isn't. I don't think that matters right now. But -- how do we know Mac is the prophet? We could be listenin' to someone who has no good reason to be leading. What *proof* do we have?

TEDDY

Well, we don't have proof. That's why Mac says trust is so important!

FRAN

Why do you trust her?

TEDDY

Because... She... If I didn't then -- why else would Derek have...

FRAN

Why did the chicken cross the road?

TEDDY

To get to the other side? Is this a joke? What?

FRAN

How do you know that?

TEDDY

That's the -- that's the joke, right?

FRAN

But why? ... I don't know. I don't think you really do either. Maybe to get somewhere. Maybe not. We don't really know ever. But it's easier for our brains to have an answer.

FRAN looks to the ticket blaster.

FRAN

Sometimes life is koo-koo bananas and there's no reason for things. And maybe when people are confused, that's when it's easiest to spike the ball near weaker players.

TEDDY

But...

TEDDY stares at the glowing eyes on the Mouse animatronic -- they flicker for a moment.

He rests down "The Book of Mouse".

TIME PASSES

INTERLUDE

The space becomes messier.

Kids are quicker to anger. Pushing and shoving.

Most arcade games have been broken.

2.3

LAINE and MAC sit on top of the jungle gym -- the fortunes are spread out in front of them.

MAC and LAINE are holding hands.

LAINE

You believe this?

MAC

I mean, they were right about me being Teacher, kinda. And Christopher R. 's cupcakes.

LAINE

But I haven't kissed a horse, so they're not totally right.

MAC

I think they were just teasin' with that one. Just things to be aware of.

LAINE

Bears?

MAC

Black Bears are native if go camping up north. And, we dunno what's happening [out there]. Bear-pocolypse, maybe. Or maybe it's a metaphor or simile.

LAINE

Huh. Maybe. Oh, Mac-ee. You got something on your face.

MAC

Where?

LAINE

There.

MAC

Here?

LAINE

No. I'll get it.

LAINE caresses MAC's face, wiping off some dirt.

A tender moment.

LAINE

Got it.

MAC braces for maybe something to happen again when --

ALEX yells to the two from the bottom of the jungle gym.

ALEX

MAC? I'VE GOT A QUESTION.

MAC

ONE SECOND, ALEX!

ALEX
IS IT TRUE THERE'S NO MORE FOOD?

MAC
What?

LAINE
Who told you that?

ALEX
Teddy did. He's been tellin' everyone we need to find a way to get more food.

PLUTO
We were thinking if we went outside using the buddy system // then --

LAINE
Absolutely not!

PLUTO
But... buddy system.

LAINE
Anything could be out there. You wanna get sucked up by a tornado, or stung by a thousand bees, or run over by a truck? Stayin' in here.

ALEX
But how are we gonna get food then?

PLUTO
We can keep sustaining ourselves on the fiber in tickets. My uncle proved it during a youtube // challenge with

ALEX
No one cares about your Uncle's podcast.

PLUTO
2.3 million people do weekly, so...

LAINE
We will announce news of more food soon! So no more yappin about it! Capeesh?

ALEX & PLUTO
Ca-poodle!

ALEX and PLUTO run off.

LAINE

What does Teddy think he's doing? Tellin' people? We told him -- we told him that food numbers are for our listening ears only! And he's running around tellin' everyone. And now Alex and Pluto want to go outside? That's the one thing we can't do. That's the one thing that no one wants to do and now they're asking for it? Do they want to just make us mad?

MAC

I think they're just hungry, Laine.

LAINE

Yeah, I'm hungry too. But I know the rules and out there we could -- I'm not riskin' it out there. We're safer in here. They're safer in here.

MAC

I mean, I don't wanna go. But, if we let them get food -- and just to get food and come right back and not have them talk to nothing or no one -- we can keep this going how it is.

LAINE

If we let them out and they come back -- they're the special ones Mac. Alex and Pluto are now the ones who can see outside. They will be the ones who bring the food and everyone will chant their names and -- and paint pictures of them and make them outfits and give them hugs.

MAC

But then, we'll all have food. And we can keep hanging out and playing. We don't have to go home.

LAINE

But then no one will listen to us here anymore either.

MAC

... Okay. But, we got each other and that's all we need. Bestest of friends // 'til the end of --

LAINE

That's not all we need.

MAC

What?

L A I N E

I love you lots Mac-Donalds, but you're just one person. Everyone in class loves me, now. I can't give that up.

M A C

So, would you choose the entire class being your friend or just me being your friend?

L A I N E

That's sneaky, Mac. You're trying to make me feel bad.

M A C

That's not an answer.

L A I N E

I dunno. Maybe.

M A C

When did you hang out with them instead of me?

M A C

That's not fair. When you're girlfriend/girlfriend with someone -- you like hanging out with them the most. Even when there's no one else to hang out with it doesn't super matter. Because you got that person. So I don't get it.

L A I N E

...We're not girlfriend/girlfriend.

M A C

Yeah ... I know we aren't like [officially] but, c'mon Lainey -- We've been holding hands all the time. Fingers like this [intertwined]!

L A I N E

That's just holdin' hands Mac. Anyone can do it with anyone.

M A C

We share secrets and there was some smudge on my face and we play house a bunch and you're the mom and I'm the dad.

L A I N E

Yeah.

MAC

And you kissed me! You kissed me, Laine. Smack on the lips. In front of everybody! Didn't give a care in the world who saw what! And I always thought kissing was kinda gross but then you did it and was ... nice. And I thought...

LAINE

You were wiggling out and yellin' real loud and everyone was worried and I tried holdin' your hand and it was the only thing I could think of to calm you down.

MAC

So. You don't...

LAINE

I dunno, Mac. Maybe I might if I had time to think about it and figure out if I could like like girls or [you]. But I've got more important stuff right now.

MAC

Makin' sure everyone loves you is more important than making sure I do?

LAINE

I know you'll always love me.

...

MAC

Maybe I won't. Maybe I'll realize that -- that you're kinda mean sometimes. And bossy. And that -- that you hurt people. You hurt a lot of people.

LAINE

For me and you, Mac.

MAC

Yeah, and -- and maybe I don't want that.

...

LAINE

I'm getting hungry. I gotta go look for food. For everyone. And me. You go handle the stuff with Teddy.

LAINE climbs down and leaves MAC speechless.

The mouse's eyes flicker.

TIME PASSES

2.4

TEDDY sits with IRIS, as he scribbles things into his notebook.

TEDDY's three teddy bears have not left his side.

IRIS

My mama always said this was healthier too. Less sugar. It's not as tasty, but it makes more.

TEDDY

That's a really smart, idea, Iris! I think this could help us a whole lot.

IRIS

Really? I tried to tell Mac and Laine my idea but they said I was just bein' a silly goose.

TEDDY

I think you're closer to a smarty goose.

MAC enters.

MAC

Iris, I need to talk to Teddy right now.

IRIS

Oh. Um. Okay. See you later, Teddy.

IRIS scampers away.

TEDDY

Iris was telling me if we put water in the juices it means that we can make the juices last longer.

MAC

Why are you telling people that we're out of food?

TEDDY

Cause we almost are. And we gotta prepare ourselves.

MAC

You coulda just talked to me and Laine about it and we woulda told The Mouse and coulda done something sooner. Everyone else coulda minded their own beeswax.

TEDDY

Will The Mouse bring us food if you ask?

MAC

Yes. I'm sure.

TEDDY

Then ask right now.

MAC

Teddy -- that's not --

TEDDY

Prove that The Mouse will do what you ask.

MAC is taken aback.

TEDDY

I want to help people. Let me help them.

Before MAC can say anything, she notices TEDDY's stuffed animals.

MAC

Are those bears?

TEDDY

Those are my stuffies.

MAC, in a maddening daze, storms over to the stuffed bears.

MAC

You're trying to stop me. You want to be prophet.

TEDDY

What are you talking about?

MAC

The Prissy Girls said --

TEDDY

I'm just trying to be a helper, Mac.

MAC

I need to make everything right.

MAC picks up one of the teddy bears.

TEDDY

What are you doing? Mac? Wait -- no. I'm sorry. I --

MAC rips the head off of the teddy bear.

TEDDY

NO

MAC rips the head off of the next teddy bear as TEDDY cries.

TEDDY picks up the final bear -- MAC grabs its head. A struggle back and forth until the bear rips apart.

Stuffing is everywhere. MAC looks at her hands -- she gets scared of herself.

FRAN hears this and runs over. TEDDY's a mess.

FRAN

Mac! What are you doing? Stop it!

MAC

You're telling everyone there's no food. You're sendin' everyone into crazy town. Actions have consequences.

FRAN

You're acting psycho, Mac.

MAC

I am doing everything to make our sobriety the best it can be.

TEDDY

Did "The Mouse" tell you that you needed to destroy my stuffies to do that?

MAC

...No.

(beat)

Stay in your assigned seating.

MAC leaves, leaving carnage in her wake.

TEDDY

Every time I try to help, something gets taken away from me. And now...

FRAN

There's nothin' to loose.

TEDDY and FRAN look at each other.

The mouse's eyes flicker.

All of the lights flicker.

TIME PASSES

INTERLUDE

The air conditioner has broken.

Light bulbs have been flickering.

Mice have chewed through the chords of some of the games.

Anything that has fallen down has not been picked back up.

TIME PASSES

2.5

Everyone is scattered about the space.

Kids in huddles chat with one another -- even though they haven't eaten too much, energy has spiked a bit.

QUINN

So, it'll be like another Ball-tism, you think?

IRIS

Nah, it's gotta be different because we already did that.

CHRISTOPHER R.

Maybe it's like a wedding? To like, The Mouse?

ALEX

Or like a birthday party?

CHRISTOPHER M.

My last birthday party theme was hits of the 70s and we played Abba.

LAINE walks out of the kitchen, shaky -- wearing an ill-fitting apron.

She tries making her way to her throne without talking to anyone.

JOEY

Laine! What's the next celebration gonna be?

LAINE quickly scrunches up the apron to cover her neck down.

LAINE

What?

EVELYN

Mac said there's gonna be a party soon. But didn't say why.

PLUTO

I'm tellin' you guys. It's gonna be a food dance. Like a rain dance, but for food that falls from the sky like in "Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs". Based on true events by the way.

AMY

Yeah, we're all gettin' a little hungry.

LAINE

I'm sure. Of course. I -- I am too.

ALEX

But The Mouse loves us and will swoop in and save the day like always.

LAINE nods as she begins to hyperventilate.

CLAIRE

Why are you wearing an apron?

LAINE

It's um -- new style I think. I'm trying to "make it work". Something new.

CLAIRE

It doesn't really go with your // outfit --

LAINE

The Mouse told me to wear it. Are you going against The Mouse?

CLAIRE

N -- no. No.

LAINE

Everyone trying to guess the things we put together as a surprise for you all and now throwin' shade and saying my outfit looks bad when I work day and night to make sure you are all happy and safe and listening to The Mouse's word.

CLAIRE

Laine! I didn't mean it.

(to the Prissy Girls)

Tell her.

AMY

Claire always just says that she corrects fashion because it's the right thing to do

EVELYN

She just wants you to look so beautiful always and nothing else!

LAINE

We all love you so much. And you should think about how grateful you all should be to us. For how much we do. I would like apology letters from everyone to not just me and Mac, but also to The Mouse.

KIDS

We're so sorry / We didn't mean it / We'll go right now / etc.

The kids disperse into the tunnels and behind curtains.

LAINE runs over to MAC, who's sitting on her throne.

MAC

Oh, um, hi -- I, um, I wanted to say sorry // I over --

LAINE

Can you see it?

MAC

What?

LAINE

With the apron, if I go like this. Do you see anything?

MAC

No -- what are you hiding?

LAINE looks around to make sure no one is watching.

She takes off the apron to reveal her dress underneath. It doesn't appear like she's hiding anything.

LAINE

It's everywhere, Mac. I can't get it out. I got rid of my other outfit. The minute everyone sees it, they'll all know.

MAC

Know what?

LAINE

That I ate the rest of the pizza sauce, Mac. I just stared at it. And I could feel my belly rumble and I know everyone's belly has been rumbling, but I needed it, I needed it Mac. My mind zoomed in on it and I couldn't think of anything else and I just grabbed it off the fridge and gobbled the whole thing down. And it spilled all over and I can't -- I can't get it out and everyone will see.

MAC

...Lainey, there's nothing on your dress.

LAINE

Stop lyin' Mac. It's a giant splotch. They will know that I have been eating when they have been hungry and waitin' for food. They'll be angry at me, Mac. They'll get angry and won't love me anymore.

MAC

Just breathe with me. My mama always say all you need to do // is breathe --

LAINE

(losing it more and more)

I can't breathe now, cause I don't know how many more breaths we all can take! We have to find food. We have to find food now. No one's starvin' now, but they're gonna be soon, Mac. We have to get food before they see the splotch.

Maybe if we look real low and tear up the carpet -- we can find some worms to eat. Maybe a mouse. *HA* The Mouse sending us a mouse to eat. That would be a funny joke, Mac, wouldn't that be a funny joke? And then we eat it and WE become The Mouse. Or we look up real high. In the ceiling panels or --

LAINE spots the 5 lb bag of jelly beans on top of the prize wall.

MAC

You're kinda scarin' me right now.

She walks over to the wall.

MAC

Where are you going? Laine?

And begins to climb.

MAC

That's dangerous -- hey we don't need the jelly beans -- we can find food somewhere else.

MAC grabs onto LAINE's leg -- LAINE kicks her off.
MAC falls.

LAINE continues climbing, slowly, deliberately.

LAINE

I remember my papas used to read me fairytales. And my favorite one was Cinderella. I always had them skip to the end, because that was the best part. And my papas always told me that I'd find my prince or princess one day. But that wasn't the part I liked. I liked when she stood out on the balcony and everyone clapped for her. She didn't have to do anything. She was just loved by the right person and that meant everyone loved her to. I wanted to be a princess. But that's not real life. And in real life you gotta do chores and people call you weird for liking the things you like and to be loved you gotta do things, and sometimes you aren't enough for the people you love the most so they go and adopt another baby that they can love more.

MAC

I love you. I do, Laine. That's gotta mean somethin'. Just get down from there // and we can --

LAINE

(not hearing Mac)

And maybe you're doin' all of this for people who only love you cause of the things you do and not who you are.

LAINE is in grasp of the jelly beans.

She goes to reach for them, but then stops.

LAINE

So if you stopped doin' things for them. They wouldn't love you any more. So that's not real love, really.

MAC

I love you no matter what Laine! I love when you teach me karate moves or when we play house or when you tell me about hobby horse competitions. You don't have to do nothin' and I'll still love you. Just come down.

LAINE

(not hearing Mac)

But horses love you no matter what.

LAINE reaches for the horse on a stick -- she grabs it, but then loses her footing.

MAC

LAINE.

LAINE slips and falls to the floor, the horse on a stick and bag of jelly beans lying on top of her.

LAINE is dead.

MAC moved up behind LAINE

MAC is paralyzed in shock.

MAC takes Laine's spot at music stand

TIME PASSES

LAINE moves chair next to BENNY

INTERLUDE

The world moves around MAC -- still stuck in the moment.

Kids take the bag of jelly beans and share them with each other.

They cover LAINE's body with a curtain from the animatronic stage.

Every video game has been scrapped for parts.

New murals have been painted over old murals chronicling their history.

It has become a wasteland.

TIME PASSES

2.6

MAC has not moved.

FRAN and TEDDY surround her -- in the middle of a confrontation.

FRAN

-- And there was no other way anyone else could have hit the button. Derek would've never locked himself in there. Using physics -- which is PROVEN science by real scientists. There was no way he coulda snuck in and out of there that quickly.

TEDDY

And -- and Laine only started talking about how The Mouse was real after all this, which is a sneaky sneak move.

FRAN

And you *knew* Benny was right, so when Teddy went after him, you said nothin' to save his butt.

TEDDY

All you wanted was power power power. And that's how you did it.

FRAN

But when me and Teddy rule again. We were helping run the place just fine before you barged in and ruined it for everyone.

TEDDY

We had so many cool color coded charts.

FRAN

We need organization and rules. We need chores. Plans to find food. Fixing this place up. We can make this a true sobriety again. And if you don't let us, we'll tell everyone what you did.

TEDDY

We'll show 'em all the proof we got. We've got a bunch. Notes and science. You will finally see the consequences of actions.

MAC

(still numb)

They won't listen to you. They don't listen to proof. You saw how it worked out for Benny. Doesn't work. Won't be any better for you. They only listen to The Mouse. I could have you two gone in a snap if I wanted to. Never see you again.

TEDDY and FRAN look at each other nervously.

FRAN

Are you going to do that?

MAC

... No.

FRAN

Mac, for realsies, do you like being prophet?

MAC

I've got the love of everyone in the class. Nobody can leave. And -- and love of everyone is the best kind of love.

TEDDY

If they knew you were just usin' them for their love they wouldn't.

FRAN

If they knew what you did to Derek. Or Benny. Or Laine --

MAC

I didn't do anything to Laine. I didn't do anything to Benny either. Or Derek really. I didn't -- I didn't do anything.

FRAN

You don't really do stuff, Mac. You don't really hurt, but you don't really help. You just float on by. Laine did a lot. Teddy did some. Why don't you?

MAC

...

FRAN

You wanna do somethin'? You want people to love you for somethin' good?

MAC

...Yes.

FRAN

Then go.

FRAN points to the front door.

FRAN

Go. Find food. Or help. If you can. Or just go and never come back.

MAC

What?

FRAN

What's the game plan if you stay? We got some jellybeans and we'll eat those. And then what? We just wait? Forever? It's obvious you don't wanna go home to whatever messed up house you live in, but the rest of us want to. Do nothing somewhere else.

TEDDY

I think you should go, Mac.

MAC takes a breath.

MAC

EVERYONE!!

All the kids quickly gather around, waiting for MAC to say what's next.

KIDS

I bet this is about the new holiday / You think it's another message from The Mouse? / My tummy grumbles LOUD / etc.

MAC

I have an announcement. I am leaving. I am going through the door.

KIDS

What? / No / She's doing a joke! / I don't think that's allowed / etc.

JOEY

But Teacher *told us* --

MAC

The Mouse told me that it was okay for me to go. Just me. To find help and food. That it will protect me on my journey. In the same way it will protect all of you when I am gone. I don't know how long I will be gone. But hopefully soon. In the meanwhile, you will listen to Teddy and Fran, as The Mouse said that it thinks they will do a good job. The Mouse has told me that it is sorry. For anything -- everything that The Mouse did or didn't do that hurt you. Or made you sad. The Mouse is scared. The Mouse is just trying its best. The Mouse thinks that you are all wonderful and special in your own ways and The Mouse is very very thankful for how much you love it. The Mouse loves you all very very much.

KIDS

We love The Mouse / Thank you Mac / Mac's pretty cool / etc.

MAC

May you all be a kid today.

KIDS

And also you too!

MAC takes off her crown and hands it to TEDDY.

The lights flicker.

MAC slowly walks through the games to the door, she lingers by the door as TEDDY speaks.

TEDDY

STUDENTS. Today we enter a new eras tour! With me and Fran in charge, we will have rules, but we will have kindness. We will listen to The Mouse, but listen to it ourselves. We've got a plan for finding and making some more food. We will make a big circle and talk about our problems if we have problems. We will make sure no one is lonely. Or scared. No one is better than anyone else. Here, we will make sure that we are all equal, we are all safe, and we are all loved.

Cheers from the kids.

MAC takes one last look at her kingdom.

The Mouse's eyes flicker and flicker -- and turn off.

She takes a breath.

Opens the door.

And the room goes silent.

Behind the door there is an adult sized silhouette.

MAC

Teacher?

Everyone freezes.

The kids look at their crowns, the murals, the carnage.

They look at each other -- a flood of reality beginning to wash over them.

A moment of silence before --

ALEX'S MOM

Alex, honey, are you in there?

A cacophony of voices flood in:

AMY'S MOM

Amy -- if you're there // say something

JOEY'S DAD

Joey -- // Joey buddy.

PLUTO'S UNCLE

Pluto! It's your Uncle Samson // here to get you!

LAINE'S PAPA J

Laine! Laine! //David do you hear her?

FRAN'S MOM

Franny, don't you worry, we've got you.

LAINE'S PAPA D

Lainey, girl! We're here!

BENNY'S MOM

Benny! Everything's going to // be alright, we're here!

EVELYN'S DAD

Evelyn, are you // in there?

MAC'S DAD

Macy! Macy, honey, are you there?

And it dawns upon them... they're kids.

They're just kids who want to be loved.

And as that fully starts to hit them --

BLACKOUT.

END OF PLAY