

Mr. Jenkins'
MYSTERY HOUSE

"Pilot"

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ON BLACK.

THUMP. THUMP. THUMP. A rhythmic pulse like a HEARTBEAT.

EXT. JUNGLE - DAY

Open on a tropical jungle. Windmill palms form a dense thicket, and creeping vines snake down from the canopy. ANIMAL CRIES echo through the trees, and the faint sound of LAPPING WAVES can be heard.

SHAE (V.O.)

Change can be really hard.

It's quiet, but then... there's CRASHING sounds. Multiple sets of running FOOTSTEPS. Terrified SCREAMS drawing closer. The treetops move and sway - something big is coming.

SHAE (V.O.)

Especially if you're the new kid.

Three CHILDREN burst onto the scene: SHAE SCOTT (10), shy tomboy; DOMINIC RAMIREZ (10), tightly-wound bookworm.; and MING-SHI "MINDY" KANG (10), brash and full of attitude.

A silver STEAMER KEY hangs on a cord around Shae's neck.

SHAE (V.O.)

My name is Shae. Those are my neighbors, Dominic and Mindy. And that thing--

A SCORPION-LIKE MONSTER follows closely behind them, gnashing it's pincers.

SHAE (V.O.)

--is going to get me into so much trouble.

SMASH TO TITLES: MR. JENKINS' MYSTERY HOUSE

SHAE (V.O.)(PRE-LAP)

I guess I should start at the beginning.

EXT. SEATTLE HOUSE - DAY

OPEN ON squashed, beanpole of HOUSE, sandwiched between two larger, NEWER HOUSES. It leans, propped against its neighbors like a drunk.

A powder-blue HATCHBACK SCREECHES to a stop in front. The bike rack is overloaded with SUITCASES and BOXES.

A chipper, energetic single mom, SANDY SCOTT (40s), jumps out, clapping her hands with glee.

SHAE (V.O.)
My mom flips houses.

As Shae talks, the scene TRANSFORMS into--

ROUGH DOODLES

of Sandy flipping a house like a strongman. POOF! The page is crumpled, replaced by sketches of PANCAKES and COINS and a half-empty WATER BOTTLE.

SHAE (V.O.)
It's not like flipping pancakes or coins or anything like that.

INT. SEATTLE HOUSE - DAY

Hurricane Sandy moves through the house at HYPER SPEED. RIPPING UP floorboards. PAINTING the walls. PATCHING holes and cracks. The house TRANSFORMS and comes to life as we watch.

SHAE (V.O.)
She's just really good at fixing things. And she loves what she does.

HOLD ON Shae, sitting on the bottom steps of the stairs. The BACKGROUND changes around her like a FLIP BOOK while she remains still. There's flashes of different houses, different decor. But it goes by so fast they all kind of blend together.

SHAE (V.O.)
Her work takes us all over the country! We've gotten to see a lot of cool places.

Shae fades away, and we're back on the ROUGH DOODLES. But this time, they're landmarks. The STATUE OF LIBERTY. The GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE. ARCHES NATIONAL PARK.

SHAE (V.O.)
But, if I'm being honest... I wish we'd settle down. Stay in the same town more than a couple months.
(then)
I just really want to make some friends.

EXT. EVERFALL, MAINE - DAY

A quaint New England town, nestled in a small valley between mountains. Charming brick and white buildings peek between maple and cypress trees, the foliage dusted with warm gold and red colors.

SHAE (V.O.)

When we moved to Everfall, I thought
it'd be the same old story. Just
another town. Just another house.

A CLOCK TOWER stands in the middle. Proud, historic. Hands FROZEN just past 3pm. The town SIGN reads: "Welcome to Everfall. Small town heart, big city spirit."

EXT. EVERFALL ELEMENTARY - DAY

A SCHOOL BELL RINGS. KIDS pour out of classrooms, chatting, laughing. A beat, then Shae follows. She stands, unsure, scanning the schoolyard.

SHAE (V.O.)

But life works in mysterious ways.
Turns out, it's exactly where I was
always meant to be.

Shae shyly moves past cliques of kids. Looking for a window of opportunity.

Then, she spots CARISSA JONES (10), popular, nasty, holding court with several other GIRLS. They laugh as she talks animatedly.

CARISSA

And then, Brian Baybreeze personally
invited me to his concert at Madison
Square Gardens. I, like, screamed.

Shae edges into the circle as Carissa talks.

CARISSA (CONT'D)

I listen to all his singles on Radio
Gibney.

SHAE

Ooh! You like Gibney? Me too!

All EYES whip to Shae, narrowed. One girl GROWLS, teeth bared, almost feral.

CARISSA

Who asked you?

SHAE

(trying)
My favorite's *The Firebird*. My mom and I listen to the soundtrack all the time.

Shae unzips her jacket to reveal a GRAPHIC TEE, screen-printed with ANIMATED CHARACTERS (a la Disney).

Carissa sneers, disgusted.

CARISSA

That is so lame. What are you, five? Movie songs aren't real music.

The other girls laugh along. Shae retreats, embarrassed.

Across the schoolyard, two kids - Dominic and Mindy (from the opener) - notice the exchange. They exchange glances and nod.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY - LATER

Shae trudges home, head down, lost in thought. MAPLE LEAVES crunch underfoot. The SOUND OF WHEELS ON PAVEMENT moves closer, as--

Mindy sidewinds up to Shae on a RIPSTIK.

MINDY

Hey, New Kid! It's Shae, right?

SHAE

(hopeful)
Yeah?

MINDY

Ming-Shi, but everyone just calls me "Mindy". I sit behind you in Sosh.

She offers a fist bump, which Shae returns, softening.

SHAE

(warmly)
It's nice to meet you, Mindy.

Dominic SCOOTERS up behind them, fortified with an unnecessary amount of PROTECTIVE PADDING.

DOMINIC

(textbook)
Didn't you see the sign? The speed limit is 15 in a residential zone. You were going 16.

(MORE)

DOMINIC (CONT'D)

(then, quietly)

The cops could have arrested you.

Mindy pulls Dom into an affectionate headlock, noogies him.

MINDY

And this little ball of caution is
Dominic.

DOMINIC

(wheezing)

Heyyy.

Shae smiles. Could it be? She's finally making *friends*?

MINDY

If you're not doing anything, do you
want to hang out? Wednesdays, we
usually play street soccer.

DOMINIC

I have some extra pads and a helmet if
you haven't unpacked yours yet.

SHAE

Thanks! That'd be really nice. We've
been here a week already, but I've
barely put a dent in my boxes.

MINDY

If you want to follow us, we're just
over on Pleasant Street. Cul-de-sac at
the end. Can't miss it.

SHAE

Oh! Me too!

MINDY

No way! Which house is yours?

SMASH TO:

EXT. PLEASANT STREET - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

An off-beat street with all manner of houses, from the artsy
to the just plain weird. It's a splash of color in an
otherwise cookie-cutter neighborhood.

As we PUSH IN to the CUL-DE-SAC at the end--

EXT. MYSTERY HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Reveal a spindly, crooked VICTORIAN, with leaning turrets and abstract stained-glass windows. It looms overhead, oozing creepy intrigue.

This is the MYSTERY HOUSE.

SHAE

So, this is me...

DOMINIC

<incoherent stammers>

MINDY

(growing excitement)

You're telling me... you live in the Mystery House?!

SHAE

Uhhh... ?

DOMINIC

It's one of Everfall's local legends. Lots of stories about that place.

MINDY

And about the man who built it. Rumor is, the house just appeared one day out of the blue. POOF!

SHAE

That can't be true.

DOMINIC

I heard the old owner, Mr. Jenkins, was a wizard.

MINDY

No one knows what happened to him. He could still be inside the house... Watching. Waiting. Ready to--
(pouncing on SHAE)
--strike!

Shae SCREAMS.

SHAE

(recovering)

Guys, it's just a house. Nothing spectacular. And there's no such thing as wizards. Magic isn't real.

MINDY
Prove it.

SHAE
Huh?

MINDY
Give us a tour.

DOMINIC
(scared)
Mindy...

SHAE
(flustered)
Wait-- I-- Mom said we're not allowed
to have visitors over yet. It's a
safety thing.

Mindy sizes her up. Smirks.

MINDY
What are you hiding?

SHAE
Nothing!

She jumps between Mindy and the house.

SHAE (CONT'D)
I'm serious. The house is all torn up.
There's boxes everywhere.

DOMINIC
(relieved)
Good looking out, Shae! Another time,
perhaps. Well, we should get the goals
set up. It'll get dark soon.

He starts to retreat, but Mindy grabs his wrist and pulls him
back.

MINDY
No. We're doing this.

SHAE
I really can't--

MINDY
You know what I think? I think you're
afraid. Afraid we might be right.

SHAE
No, that's not--

MINDY

Then what's the problem?
(then, pressing)
We're friends, aren't we?

She looks back at the house, contemplating. BITES her lip.

The background dissolves into NOTEPAPER, as she weighs the options.

SHAE'S THOUGHTS (V.O.)

Okay, what's the worst that could happen?

DOODLE MINDY and DOODLE DOMINIC pop onto the page, stick figure-like. Doodle Dominic WAVES.

DOODLE MINDY

Wow, Shae. Your house is super boring.
We're not friends anymore.

Doodle Mindy tries to exit, but falls through ripped up floorboards. AHHHH!

Then, a paint bucket lands on Doodle Dominic, splashing COLOR across the screen.

SHAE'S THOUGHTS (V.O.)

No. Stop it. That won't happen. It'll be fine. If you do this, they'll think you're cool. You want to be cool.

DOODLE SHAE pops up, wearing SHADES. She strikes a POSE. Then, DOODLE SANDY enters, breathing FIRE.

DOODLE SANDY

SHAE! You're in SO MUCH TROUBLE.
That's it, you're grounded!

RAWR! She toasts Doodle Shae to a crisp. The burned stick-figure crumples to the ground in a pile of ASH.

Reality bleeds back in as Shae shakes her head. She takes a final, furtive look back at the Mystery House.

SHAE

Okay. But it has to be quick. My mom can't find out.

MINDY

Trust me. No one will know we were here.

FLIP TO:

A POV SHOT OF THE STREET

DATA and ANALYTIC GRAPHS flit across the screen as a HUD blinks to life.

VOICE (O.S.)

16:00 hours. The door is open. Tiny Subject is entering the house. She is accompanied by two others: House 23-H and 14-C.

ZOOM IN CLOSER, tight on the KIDS as they enter the Mystery House. Squares lock onto their faces.

VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Purpose of gathering: possible playdate.

EXT. ROOF - NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH HQ - CONTINUOUS

The voice belongs to HATTER (early 40s), the Neighborhood Watch. Wily, with a pencil mustache and a top hat. Think Jim Carrey at his hammiest.

He lies on a steep, shingled roof across the cul-de-sac, aggressively chewing a toothpick, binoculars roving.

HATTER

(snapping the binoculars shut)

Oho. Someone didn't listen to Mom.

Hatter crawls backwards down the backside of the roof, before dropping down a trap door, into--

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH HQ - CONTINUOUS

A suburban version of a superhero's headquarters. Minimalist, with exposed concrete floors and draping wires. A Justice League-style COMMAND CENTER crowds the middle of the space.

Hatter lands in a superhero pose, scattering dust dramatically. As he stands, he begins to hack and cough, fanning the debris away from his face.

HATTER

Boy, I've really gotta start dusting.

(beat)

You think company won't notice, but they really, really do.

Various autonomous mechanics assist Hatter as he walks through the space. One takes his binoculars. Another dusts off his coat.

HATTER (CONT'D)
(calling out)
Spyte!

A beat. Nothing happens.

HATTER (CONT'D)
(sing-song)
SPYTE!

A strange lump on the COUCH wriggles, squeaking. A THROW PILLOW shifts aside to reveal--

SPYTE - a COATI wearing engineer's goggles. Picture a strange hybrid between a raccoon and a weasel... and that's Spyte.

HATTER (CONT'D)
Aww. Were you taking a widdle nap?

Spyte nods, shifting his goggles to rub his eyes with his tiny PAWS.

HATTER (CONT'D)
Well, rise and shine, friend! There's work to be done. Update the captain's log!

Spyte YAWNS, rising up on his hind legs. He SQUEAKS loudly.

HATTER (CONT'D)
The captain's log! The records of our reconnaissance mission.

More squeaks, as Spyte skitters over to the command center. He plops into a seat, tapping at buttons on the console.

HATTER (CONT'D)
What do you mean you thought you were the captain?

He stares Spyte down. Narrows his eyes.

HATTER (CONT'D)
Give me that.

He swipes the small LEATHER TOME that's strapped to Spyte's HARNESS. Messy handwriting scrawls "Captains Log" on the front in glittery gel pen, above a crude doodle of Hatter in a pirate hat.

HATTER (CONT'D)
(pointing at the cover)
See? Captain.

Spyte rolls his eyes. As Hatter flips through the pages--
CARISSA enters, dumping her backpack on the floor.

CARISSA
Uncle Hatter, I'm home.

He MUMBLES a greeting as she moves through the house, to--

A wall, crowded with dozens of MONITORS. She taps the screens, and several light up with data read-outs and video feeds of the neighborhood.

HATTER
How was school?

CARISSA
Beneath me. How's stalking?

HATTER
(exasperated)
For the last time, learn the difference. Stalking is--

CARISSA
(parroting)
--willful and repeated harassment.
Reconnaissance is tactical observation.
(beat)
Whatever.

She taps a command into the computer. ENERGY READINGS populate the screens, along with several still photos of the MYSTERY HOUSE, SHAE and SANDY. She minimizes them all, opening the Brian Baybreeze fan site instead.

HATTER
I'd like you to keep a close eye on the new girl.

CARISSA
Ugh, that lame-rod? Why?

HATTER
I have a feeling she'll lead us right to him.

Hatter taps a button on the command center, projecting holographic photos into the air. They're all of a BLURRY MAN - think Sasquatch photos.

CARISSA
I don't get your obsession.

HATTER

And I don't get yours. But I still buy
you the stupid CDs.

Carissa makes a face as Hatter talks, shoving HEADPHONES into
her ears. As she cranks the MUSIC up, we PUSH IN on--

The Blurry Man's picture. The closer we get, the more it
sharpens into an actual, distinguishable face.

SHAE (PRE-LAP)

(calling out)

MOM?

INT. FRONT ROOM - MYSTERY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The same face is captured in an oil PORTRAIT. The subject is
broody, intense, yet charming. This is MR. JENKINS (40s). As
we pull back, reveal the picture is hanging over a craftsman
FIREPLACE.

SHAE (O.S.)

Hellooooo....?

Reveal a cozy, two-story Victorian in the middle of
renovations. Open cans of PAINT, TARPS, and WOODWORKING TOOLS
are scattered about the space.

The FRONT DOOR cracks open. Shae's head pokes through,
tentative.

A beat. Silence.

Then, she ushers Dominic and Mindy in, a finger pressed to
her lips. Mindy and Dominic have stars in their eyes.

DOMINIC/MINDY

(hushed)

WOOOWWWWWWWW!

The PORTRAIT of Mr. Jenkins looms overhead, WATCHING. His
EYES seem to follow the trio, as they sneak into--

INT. KITCHEN - MYSTERY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Spacious, with complex, patterned BRICKWORK. Piles of POTS,
PANS, UTENSILS, and other paraphernalia litter the counters.
Various multicolor STAINS streak across the wooden CABINETS,
and fuzzy, grass-like MOSS sprouts between tiles.

SHAE

MOM?

Something DRIPS into a soaking pot. Shae approaches the FRIDGE, pulling NOTEPAPER loose from a smiley face MAGNET'S grip.

SHAE (CONT'D)

(reading)

Ran to the store. Be back soon.

Mindy twirls through the space, giddy.

MINDY

I wonder how many potions Mr. Jenkins brewed in this very room.

SHAE

I'm telling you, he wasn't a wizard.

MINDY

Dominic, what do you think one was? A loooooove potion?

She points to a bubblegum pink stain.

SHAE

It's a paint swatch.

Mindy GROANS, eye-rolling.

MINDY

Ugh, you're no fun.

Shae looks stung. She thinks for a moment, and then DING! A light-bulb moment.

SHAE

I'll show you fun.

As upbeat music ramps up, transition into--

A HOUSE EXPLORATION MONTAGE:

-- WALK-IN CLOSET: Shae throws the DOORS open, and Mindy and Dominic's mouths drop. REVEAL an extensive closet, like a warehouse, crowded with various COSTUMES and CLOTHES. As they play dress-up, we cycle through several OUTFITS per kid. They vogue, showing off their mismatched clothes.

-- LIBRARY: Parodying Indiana Jones, Dominic swaps another BOOK with a first edition of "The Most Boring Book Ever". It suddenly comes alive in his hands, SNAPPING. Dominic SCREAMS and runs. Reveal Shae and Mindy, who were using string to puppet the book.

-- CORRIDOR OF MIRRORS: Shae and Dominic carefully walk through a maze of MIRRORS and GLASS. Multiples of Mindy appear in the creases. She pulls a spooky face, trying to scare Mindy and Dominic, but runs face-first into glass.

The music tapers as the kids come across

A HALLWAY

Plastered with CAUTION TAPE, a "WET PAINT" sign stuck in the center. Mindy ducks underneath.

SHAE

Mindy! We're not allowed back there.

MINDY

Come on, you're not even a little curious? What's the harm?

SHAE

My mom could be home any minute!

MINDY

Guess we better be fast then.

Dominic hesitates, but then slips past the tape to join Mindy. Shae holds her ground, arms crossed.

SHAE

I'm serious, Mindy.

MINDY

And I thought you were "fun", Shae.

As Mindy and Dominic continue on, Shae anxiously dances in place. It doesn't take long for her to break down.

SHAE

Guys, wait up!

She takes off after them, into--

INT. HALLWAY - MYSTERY HOUSE

Shae wanders down a short cooridor, which DEAD ENDS into a blank, wood-paneled wall. Mindy and Dominic are crouched beside it, eyeing a large, vertical crack near the middle. Flickering light filters through it.

DOMINIC

What is that?

SHAE

There must be something back there.

She probes the wall, knocking against the wood.

KNOCK. KNOCK. One spot sounds different, hollow. Shae pushes against it. Beneath her hand, the wall glows. Like it's responding to her fingerprints.

Deep within, something CLICKS. The wall depresses, sliding open to reveal--

A SECRET PASSAGEWAY

Leading deeper into the house. A trail of GLASS LANTERNS light the way forward.

SHAE

Woah...

MINDY

Now that's what I'm talkin' about.

INT. SECRET PASSAGEWAY - MYSTERY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

GAS LANTERNS dance with deep red flames. Stuttering SHADOWS snake along the walls, circling the kids.

MINDY

(re: the shadows)
Remind you of anything?

DOMINIC

Don't do it.

MINDY

(creepy voice)
"There's no earthly way of knowing...
which direction we are going..."

Dominic elbows her. She LAUGHS.

The hallway gives way to--

A DARK, LARGE, CIRCULAR ROOM

Nearby, something HUMS.

MINDY (CONT'D)

(calling out)
Hello?

Her voice echoes through the space. A beat.

DOMINIC

I don't think we should be in here.

MINDY

Are you kidding? We found a secret room! We should absolutely be here.

As she wanders inside--

The floor lights up beneath her feet. The glow reveals--

INT. CONSOLE ROOM - MYSTERY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A tall center CONSOLE, decorated with various LEVERS and BUTTONS. It sits dormant, powdered with DUST.

SHAE

What is that?

DOMINIC

It's some kind of a machine...

SHAE

But what's it for?

Shae approaches a WRITING DESK in the corner, carefully lifting the accordion-style lid. As the dust stirs, she SNEEZES.

DOMINIC

Perhaps a power source? Maybe Jenkins was into renewable energy?

Dominic pushes his glasses up, circling the console, as Mindy tests a few buttons. Duds.

MINDY

Well, whatever it does, it's bust. Lame.

Shae sorts through messy stacks of PAPERS on the desk. PENS have been jammed into COFFEE CUPS. A FRAMED PHOTOGRAPH wobbles on a broken stand.

She picks it up, rubbing the dust away, to reveal--

A smiling MR. JENKINS, in a welder's smock, smudged with oil. He's posed beside a YOUNG WOMAN (23). Pretty in a plain way. A FLOWER is tucked in her long hair. A third of the photo is missing, torn away.

SHAE

Your stories ever mention a girl?

Mindy and Dominic join her, studying the photo.

DOMINIC
None that I've heard.

SHAE
Wonder who she is.

As Shae sets the photo back on the shelf, she notices the base moves, like it's loose.

MINDY
Hang on. Did you see that?

Mindy tests it again. It's definitely a false bottom. She reaches in, easily prying the base open, revealing--

A STEAMER KEY. Old, rusting at the joints. Tied to a leather CORD.

Mindy lifts it out, letting the cord dangle from her fingers.

DOMINIC
Oh wow! A steamer key! Those haven't been around for, like, 80 years.

MINDY
Ugh. Boring.

Mindy tosses it to Shae as she goes back to surveying the console.

SHAE
What do you think it goes to?

DOMINIC
Well, they used to open trunks. Old-timey suitcases. Seen anything like that lying around?

SHAE
(shaking head)
Don't think so.

MINDY
What about this?

Shae and Dominic rejoin Mindy, as she points at a KEYHOLE in the console.

DOMINIC
That... might work.

Shae moves to push the key into the keyhole. But as the key approaches the console, it begins to RATTLE. So much so that Shae's whole arm shakes wildly.

SHAE

Woah, what-- ?!

As the key jumps and struggles against the cord, bright BLUE LIGHT erupts from the keyhole.

Shae, Dominic, and Mindy shield their eyes, flinching, as--

CLICK. Deep inside, gears knock as the machine slowly comes to life.

The VIDEO SCREENS blink rapidly awake around them. Each showcasing a different scene. Some familiar, some beyond imagination. ALIEN LOCALES. DIFFERENT TIMES. DIFFERENT CITIES.

DOMINIC

Ohhh, I knew this was a bad idea.

Sparkling ENERGY floods through the thick GLASS CHAMBER in the middle, breathing life into various LEVERS and BUTTONS. They move and slide on their own.

EXT. CENTRE PARK - EVERFALL - SUNSET

In the middle of town, at the edge of a community park, sleeps the dormant CLOCK TOWER. As we push in on its giant face, a TICKING sound grows louder.

TICK. TICK. TICK. TICK.

The minute hand GROANS, creaking as it fights through years of rust and stagnation.

For the first time in a very long time, the clock tower's hands move. They spin wildly, before suddenly freezing again. The hour hand points to the "11", while the minute hand settles just below the "8".

It's hard to tell at first, but the minute hand is still moving. It creeps down, moving counter-clockwise ever so slowly...

INT. NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH HQ - SUNSET

Dying sunlight filters through the tinted windows. It's quiet.

Spyte YAWNS, struggling to stay awake as he watches neighborhood video feeds. Hatter SNORES on the couch, Captain's Log draped over his eyes.

Suddenly, the screen in front of Spyte goes RED, flashing like a siren. A loud ALARM punches through the silence, startling Hatter.

HATTER
(stirring)
Hrm? Wha-- ? What's going on?

Now alert, Spyte SQUEAKS urgently, skittering from station to station. Fluctuating data readings reflect in his goggles.

HATTER (CONT'D)
Show me.

Hatter joins Spyte at the console. Sure enough, a video feed shows the minute hand of the Clock Tower TICKING DOWNWARD. Energy spikes in a graph beside it.

HATTER (CONT'D)
Those brats found the key.
(then)
Where the heck was it? I looked everywhere. Even in the laundry bin!

Spyte squeaks a reply: "that's gross!"

HATTER (CONT'D)
Sometimes you've got to get your hands dirty.

Carissa runs into the room, hands clamped over her ears.

CARISSA
What's going on?!

HATTER
The countdown resumed! And now, ultimate cosmic power rests in the hands of children.
(beat)
I told you to keep an eye on the target! What have you been doing?!

CARISSA
The Brian Baybreeze concert's tonight, remember? I was getting ready.
(excited)
Daddy's picking me up in his private jet!

This gives Hatter pause.

HATTER

Isn't he in Bolivia or Botswana or something?

CARISSA

Bermuda. But he promised he'd be home in time.

HATTER

Right... Welp, if you want something done right, you have to do it yourself. I'm going in.

Hatter snaps a pair of hi-tech GOGGLES over his eyes.

HATTER (CONT'D)

Have fun nerding over your booooyfriend.

CARISSA

You tooooo.

Hatter smirks, patting Carissa's head awkwardly.

HATTER

(wickedly)

Our moment has finally come, Spyte. All we have to do is steal the key. Just like taking candy from a baby.

He lets loose a villainous CACKLE. It's impressively crazy, until--

Hatter sputters, COUGHING. He holds up a finger, bent over as he hacks.

HATTER (CONT'D)

Boy, that really does a number on the cords.

Off Hatter's continued WHEEZING--

PUSH IN ON the feed of the Mystery House. Windows alight and flickering.

INT. CONSOLE ROOM - MYSTERY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The room's SPINNING. A tornado of LIGHT funnels around the kids and the console. Each hanging on for dear life.

DOMINIC

Turn it off! Turn it OFF!

Shae tries to twist the key, to remove it -- but it won't budge.

SHAE

I can't! It's stuck.

MINDY

(turning green)

I think I'm gonna be sick.

As the wind and the light become almost too much to bear--

Suddenly, it stops. The trio fall over, dazed. Dominic rubs his butt, wincing, as Mindy tries to stand, staggering like she's fresh off the Disneyland Teacups.

DOMINIC

I don't think I like magic.

MINDY

Amen.

The key pops out of the keyhole, clattering to the floor. Shae grabs it, turning it over in her hands. A NAME and a NUMBER are now stamped into the handle: Shae. 2903.

SHAE

Is everyone okay?

MINDY

I may never eat again. But, apart from that--

(thumbs up, panting)

They look up at the console, arcing with energy like a Tesla Coil.

SHAE

Mom is so going to kill me.

INT. HALLWAY - MYSTERY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

As the secret passageway slides closed behind the trio, reveal--

The once "normal" hallway is now shifting, restructuring. STAIRCASES defy gravity and DOORS float freely, untethered. Think Alice's tunnel to Wonderland.

Mindy mounts one of the staircases, walking up the side of the wall.

MINDY

(smug)

"Just a regular old house," huh?

SHAE

This doesn't make sense. I must be dreaming...

Dominic PINCHES her arm.

SHAE (CONT'D)

OW! Dominic!

Shae pinches him back, hard.

DOMINIC

(rubbing his arm)

You seem pretty awake to me.

Mindy's now hanging upside-down from the ceiling.

MINDY

(using fingers to make
"fangs")

Look, I'm a bat! <hiss>

Suddenly, the shifting stops. Something CLICKS into place, and the hallway becomes--

THE ESCHER CORRIDOR

Mind-bending, but stable. The doors no longer float, instead lining both walls in neat rows. A GLASS LANTERN hangs outside each one, crackling with colored CANDLELIGHT.

While the style and design of each door varies wildly, each is NUMBERED like a hotel. A PLAQUE sits in the upper middle, framed around a PEEP HOLE.

Shae slips the key's cord over her head as the kids move deeper into the corridor.

DOMINIC

I don't understand. How can all of this fit inside a single house?

SHAE

It's like it's bigger on the inside...

Mindy stops in front of a door. Number 86. As she reaches for the DOORKNOB, the key around Shae's neck glows. Overhead, the door's lantern flame sparks, turning from WHITE to GREEN.

CLICK. The door CREAKS open and LIGHT floods into the hallway. Shae and Dominic squint, shading their eyes.

EXT. WORLD 86 - DAY - CONTINUOUS

REVERSE ANGLE on the DOOR. The trio gapes in awe. We PULL BACK to reveal a vast WORLD. This doorway, seemingly connected to nothing, is but a small speck in the grand scheme.

Warm, golden sunlight bathes white sand BEACHES, which stretch along a ROCKY COAST. In the distance, LUSH TROPICAL JUNGLES stretch up to deep gray mountains.

This place looks familiar. We saw it in the teaser.

Mindy steps through, still completely transfixed. Eyes wide in wonder. Her mouth falls open, the corners pulled into a slight smile. Shae trails behind her, equally in awe.

INT. ESCHER COORIDOR - MYSTERY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Dominic holds the door for a beat. With a heavy sigh, squeezing his eyes shut, he runs through too. It swings SHUT behind him.

HOLD ON the corridor a beat. Silence. Then, somewhere above, the FRONT DOOR RATTLES.

EXT. MYSTERY HOUSE - TWILIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Hatter crouches by the front door, desperately trying to touch the knob. It SHOCKS him repeatedly.

HATTER

AH! Wow, you've gotten-- <WINCES>
...stubborn. But you know, a little
electricity isn't enough to deter me,
old girl.

LIGHT builds behind the front door's stained glass window. Then--

BZZT! A shockwave rips out of the house, sending Hatter flying a couple feet. He lands on his butt on the walkway.

HATTER (CONT'D)

After ten long years, this is the
welcome I get?!

The house creaks. Wind stirs leaves across the lawn. Hatter picks himself up and dusts off.

As he does so, he notices Carissa's sitting by herself on the Neighborhood Watch stoop, dressed up for her concert. She looks excited, hopeful.

SANDY (O.S.)

Can I help you?

Hatter whirls around, caught. Sandy adjusts her grip on several large grocery bags, brows knit in confusion. Then, realization.

SANDY (CONT'D)

Hatter?

Hatter squints, as if to say "Do I know her?" And then it hits him.

HATTER

Sandy?!

Dramatic sting.

EXT. BEACH - DAY

A large ALIEN SEA CREATURE breaches the water, flying through the air before crashing back into the sea with a giant SPLASH.

MINDY

Isn't this beautiful?

SHAE

I've never seen anything like it. And trust me, I've been quite a few places.

MINDY

We should claim it. Make a fort, just the three of us. Our secret base for our secret world. No parents allowed.

DOMINIC

(excited)

Yeah! We could make a castle!

Cut to ROUGH DOODLES of an elaborate STONE CASTLE with multiple turrets. Doodle Shae, Doodle Dominic, and Doodle Mindy, in medieval garb, wave from the roof.

MINDY (O.S.)

A castle has to have a moat. With alligators, of course.

A MOAT is sketched around the castle. ALLIGATORS pop into the water. Mouths open, teeth bared. CHOMP CHOMP CHOMP.

DOMINIC (O.S.)

Where are we gonna get alligators?
We'd have to hire someone to catch
them, and transport them here... I
don't think our allowance covers that.

MINDY (O.S.)

'Kay, fine. No alligators.

POOF. Alligators gone.

DOMINIC (O.S.)

What do you think, Shae?

The doodles fade back into reality. Mindy and Dominic look at Shae expectantly.

SHAE

Me? I'm good with whatever.

MINDY

Come on, you have to want something.

SHAE

I do. But...

DOMINIC

But what?

SHAE

(sadly)

My mom and I are only staying here
while she fixes up the house. When it
sells, we'll move on and I'll have to
say goodbye. To you. To this place.
But you can stay, so...

(she takes a steadying
breath)

It only matters what you want.

Mindy and Dominic exchange somber glances. Shae sniffles, hugging herself. But Mindy breaks the tension, slugging Shae's shoulder.

MINDY

You're dodging the question.

DOMINIC

Yeah! This will always be our place,
even if you're far away someday. So
we're doing this together.

SHAE

You mean that?

MINDY

(winking)

You can't get rid of us that easy.

Mindy and Dominic nod. Shae smiles, relaxing.

SHAE

What about a treehouse? I've always wanted one... My Dad and I talked about it, back when he...

Shae trails off.

MINDY

(jumping in)

A treehouse sounds awesome.

DOMINIC

We'll have to collect materials. And to do that, we'd need to go into--

SHAE

The jungle...

The trio look towards the TREES, apprehensive. Mindy snaps a piece of DRIFTWOOD off, brandishing it like a sword. She mounts a BOULDER.

MINDY

Come on, gang! We're cul-de-sac kids, aren't we?

SHAE/DOMINIC

Yeah?

MINDY

And what do we do?

DOMINIC

Play soccer on Wednesdays?

MINDY

No, no. That's our old thing. We're adventurers now. Boldly going where no kid's gone before.

SHAE

Oo, I like that.

MINDY
So, let's get out there!
(pointing stick to jungle,
with authority)
Je ne sais pas!

SHAE
What does that mean?

MINDY
I 'unno.

EXT. JUNGLE - MOMENTS LATER

Mindy leads the pack, bushwhacking with her stick. Shae and Dominic follow behind. An ALIEN BUTTERFLY flutters by, its wings dusted with bioluminescence.

DOMINIC
What a gorgeous *Rhopalocera*. Maybe I can capture one and bring it back home to study!

MINDY
(affectionately)
Nerd.

The butterfly lands on a nearby tree, stretching its wings. A SKULL and BONES design manifests.

DOMINIC
On second thought, maybe not.

GLOWING EYES appear in the underbrush, which follow the children deeper into the jungle. Exotic ANIMAL CALLS bounce around them.

SHAE
Maybe we should go back. We don't know what could be hiding in the jungle.

MINDY
Don't worry. Most animals are as scared of you as you are of them.

RATTLE. Something like a rainstick shudders nearby.

DOMINIC
(whimpering)
I don't think that's possible.

The jungle goes eerily quiet. Faint SCRAPING sounds approach, as something approaches the kids. And then--

The SCORPION-LIKE MONSTER from the opener appears. It rears on its hind legs, ROARING.

SHAE

RUN!

Shae grabs Mindy's HAND, quickly pulling her out of the way, just as the Scorpion Monster's CLAW swipes. It misses by mere inches.

The trio dart through the jungle, hopping over logs and roots. FREEZE FRAME.

SHAE (V.O.)

So, there you have it. Now you're up to speed.

Action! SCREAMS resume.

Shae looks ahead, scanning the terrain. MARKER draws over the scene, drawing arrows where she should jump, circling what she should grab...

SHAE

This way!

Shae runs up an incline and leaps for a swinging VINE. Using her momentum, she Tarzans through the canopy.

SHAE (CONT'D)

WOO-HOO!!!

Mindy smirks, following suit. She kicks off of the ground, catching a nearby vine. With surprising acrobatics, she hooks her legs through a hanging loop, flipping up into the upper branches. She lands with her feet together, back straight, hands in the air.

MINDY

Thank you, Gymnastics.

Meanwhile, Dominic HUFFS, falling behind. The Scorpion Monster gains on him.

SHAE

(calling out)

Dominic! The vines! Use the vines!

Dominic tries to grab one and misses. Tries again. In his distraction, his foot catches on a root and he TRIPS, tumbling across the jungle floor.

SHAE/MINDY

NO!

Mindy looks to her right. EXOTIC FRUIT hangs from the branches.

MINDY
Hey ugly! Over here!

Mindy hurls the FRUIT at the Scorpion Monster. The JUICE splashes across its eyes, temporarily blinding it. It roars in anger, clawing at its face.

Meanwhile, Shae swings back towards Dominic. She snags him out from under the monster.

DOMINIC
(breathless)
Ohmygosh, it was right there. I thought I was gonna die.
(beat)
And yet, strangely, I feel so alive!

MINDY
(calling out)
My RipStik doesn't look so dangerous now, does it?

DOMINIC
Don't push your luck.

INT. KITCHEN - MYSTERY HOUSE - TWILIGHT

Sandy clears dirty pots and pans off of the stove. She lights a gas burner and puts a KETTLE on. In the background, Hatter tries to sidle off on his own, but snaps back into place when Sandy turns around.

SANDY
So, you're the Neighborhood Watch? I gotta say, I'm surprised. Didn't think you'd stick around this place.

HATTER
Someone had to keep an eye on him.

Hatter leans out of the kitchen, looking down the hallway. His eyes catch on the portrait of Jenkins. A hint of sadness flickers across Hatter's face.

SANDY
What happened, by the way?

HATTER
(distracted)
Hm?

SANDY

Between you two? You guys were so close.

HATTER

(interrupting)

Listen, I'd love to catch up. But I've got to use your restroom. It's like Niagara Falls up in here! Whew! Will you excuse me?

Before Sandy can answer, Hatter dashes off in a hurry.

Off her stunned face, as the tea kettle WHISTLES--

INT. ESCHER COORIDOR - MYSTERY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Hatter jogs down the hallway, scanning the glass lanterns. Red. Red. White. Red. White. Red. Red. As they fly by, they blur together, into--

A MEMORY

HATTER (11) runs down this very same hallway with two other kids - JENKINS (11) and SANDY (11). They're happy, carefree.

The original Cul-De-Sac Kids.

As we come back to the present--

Hatter stops in front of the only green lantern. Door 86.

Spyte worms out from under his coat, perching on Hatter's shoulder as he reaches for the knob.

HATTER

Just like old times, eh?

EXT. BEACH - WORLD 86 - DAY

ALIEN ANIMALS pour out of the trees, scurrying across the sand. The cul-de-sac kids burst through, followed closely by the Scorpion Monster.

SHAE

We're almost there! Just a little further.

They sprint towards the FREESTANDING DOOR at the end of the beach, but skid to a stop when it unexpectedly opens, revealing Hatter and Spyte.

MINDY

Hatter?!

SHAE
You know this guy?

MINDY
You don't?

DOMINIC
Ugh. He's the neighborhood creep.
Always calls the HOA to complain about
us.
(shudders)

SHAE
But what's he doing here? In the
house? Unless...
(blanching)
Mom's home.

INT. KITCHEN - MYSTERY HOUSE - SAME

Sandy sits at the table, waiting. Hands wrapped around a cooling mug of TEA. She checks her watch.

SANDY
(calling out)
Everything okay in there?

A beat. She takes a loud SIP.

EXT. BEACH - WORLD 86 - DAY

The Scorpion Monster ROARS behind them. Shae, Mindy, and Dominic SCREAM, resuming their scramble towards the door.

HATTER
Here! Take my hand!

Hatter offers his hand, which Shae hesitantly takes. He pulls her to safety. Mindy and Dominic cross the threshold, dodging the Scorpion Monster's snapping pincers by mere seconds.

INT. ESCHER CORRIDOR - MYSTERY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

SLAM! The door shuts on the Scorpion Monster's irritated face. Shae, Mindy, and Dominic COUGH and PANT, exhausted. Shae puts a hand on her chest, trying to catch her breath, and notices the KEY is missing.

SHAE
(patting around frantically)
The key! It's gone!

DOMINIC
Oh no. You don't think it's--

They look back at the door, suddenly ominous.

SHAE

We have to go back for it!

She reaches for the knob, but Dominic blocks the door.

DOMINIC

Are you crazy?! That thing'll eat us
for breakfast!

HATTER

He's right. It's a lost cause.
Probably best you forget about it.

He starts to walk off, heading back towards the front of the house.

MINDY

Ahem. Forgetting something?

Hatter freezes. Turns slightly. Mindy holds out her clenched fist. When she relaxes her fingers, the key drops down, dangling from its cord.

Hatter pats his pockets, then growls.

HATTER

You little--

DOMINIC

Taking things that don't belong to
you... ? So uncool. Not to mention, a
felony.

HATTER

This isn't over. I will get that key.

MINDY

You can certainly try.

Hatter swipes at Mindy, trying to steal it back. She dodges every attempt with casual coolness, before tossing the key to--

Dominic, who tosses it to Shae. The trio play keep-away. Mindy cracks open Door 86, dangling the key in front of it. Hatter lunges for it, bursting through the ajar door, back into--

EXT. BEACH - WORLD 86 - DAY

Hatter lands hard on the sand. As he scrambles to pick himself up--

The door SLAMS, trapping Hatter. He HAMMERS the wood with his fists.

HATTER

Let me in, you crazy brats!

MINDY (O.S.)

(muffled through the door)

Say you're sorry and we'll consider it.

Hatter shivers, glancing around. Anticipating the Scorpion Monster... or something worse. Every little noise startles him.

HATTER

Y-you'll be sorry when I'm through with you.

MINDY

That doesn't sound like an apology.

HATTER

Because it's not!

A giant SHADOW shades Hatter and the door, looming overhead. Then, a low, guttural GROWL. He turns, offering a meek smile.

HATTER (CONT'D)

(squeaking)

Nice kitty?

CUT TO WIDE. Hatter's SCREAM echoes through the jungle, stirring exotic birds from the canopy.

INT. FRONT ROOM - MYSTERY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Shae leads Mindy and Dominic to the front door.

SANDY (O.S.)

Did you find the bathroom okay? You've been gone a long--

Sandy leans out of the kitchen, surprised to see Shae instead of Hatter.

SANDY (CONT'D)

Oh. Hi, honey.

SHAE

(sheepish)

Hi, Mom. This is Mindy and Dominic. They wanted a tour of the new house.

DOMINIC/MINDY

Hi Mrs. Shae.

Sandy arches an eyebrow, shooting Shae a look. Shae blushes, expecting fire and fury.

SANDY

Did you happen to see a man walk by?
Kind of weird, wearing a top hat?

MINDY

(sweetly)
No. Should we have?

SANDY

(frowns)
Huh. I wonder where he went.

MINDY

Well, thanks for the tour, Shae. You
free tomorrow after school? On
Thursdays, we play DnD.

SHAE

Totally.

Mindy hands the key back to Shae, who accepts it gratefully.

SANDY

Next time, no playing in the house.
Got it? I don't want you kids to get
hurt.

MINDY

(winking at SHAE)
Oh, we won't. Don't worry.

Reveal that Mindy is crossing her fingers behind her back.
She and Dominic quickly grab their backpacks and exit.

As the door shuts, Sandy crosses her arms, pursing her lips.
But she can't stay mad - she breaks, smiling and tousling
Shae's hair.

SANDY

I'm glad you're making friends.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH HQ - NIGHT

BZZT! A portal opens overhead and Hatter is spat out onto the
lawn. He's scratched to hell, clothes in tatters. Spyte
crawls out of Hatter's coat, equally battered.

As he picks himself up, he notices Carissa, still waiting on the porch step. Head in hands, dejected. Forgotten. Hatter softens.

HATTER

Still want to go to that concert?

He limps over and offers his hand. Carissa wipes her eyes and nods, perking up.

She loops her arm through Hatter's as he fiddles with a DEVICE on his arm. BZZT! The portal reappears and they walk through.

SHAE (V.O.)

Okay, okay. So maybe I didn't get into that much trouble. But I did get extra chores for a week, which totally blows.

EXT. MADISON SQUARE GARDEN - NIGHT

BRIAN BAYBREEZE (20s) - a total Justin Bieber type - performs onstage. The FANS - mostly teenyboppers - go WILD.

CARISSA

I love you Brian!

Carissa is up and out of her seat, cheering. Spyte perches on her shoulder, jamming to the SONG. Hatter remains in his seat, trying hard to pretend that he hates this, arms tightly crossed over his pink "I Heart Brian" shirt.

EXT. PLEASANT STREET - DAY - DAYS LATER

The sun sets on the strangest street in Everfall. Shae rides her BIKE down the road alone, heading home.

SHAE (V.O.)

I meant what I said, though. It's tough being the new kid. Even when you've been one as many times as I have.

Dominic and Mindy, on their respective SCOOTER and RIPSTIK, ride up and join her. Shae smiles, genuinely happy.

EXT. MYSTERY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The kids ditch their bikes at the curb, running inside--

INT. FRONT ROOM - MYSTERY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Past Sandy, cheeks smudged with PAINT. She dodges, carrying a PAINTER'S TRAY.

SANDY

Careful! There's wet paint in the hall.

SHAE (V.O.)

I've been in a lot of neighborhoods. A lot of houses. But this time feels different.

INT. CONSOLE ROOM - MYSTERY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Shae removes her key, plugging it into the console. It whirs to life, sparking and glowing.

SHAE (V.O.)

Mr. Jenkins created something amazing. Magical. Beyond my wildest dreams. The Mystery House opened my eyes to a whole new world. One full of possibilities. And suddenly, change didn't seem so hard at all.

INT. ESCHER CORRIDOR - MYSTERY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The hallway rearranges around the kids as they run by an endless stream of doors. Giddy, excited. What adventure will the next door bring?

378. 412. 13. 82.

SHAE (V.O.)

Maybe someday I'll have to say goodbye. To my friends. To this house. But we have time. And I have a feeling our story is only just beginning.

Shae stops in front of number 29. Reaches for the KNOB and TWISTS.

As the door opens--

FADE TO WHITE.

END OF SHOW