

RACCOONS WIN

25-DE05-W29

A teenage girl tries to fit in with the cool kids, and raccoons.

FADE IN:

OVER BLACK

HEAR: Family breakfast on a busy school day. CHATTER, dishes CLACK, FOOTSTEPS rush, toast POPS.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

Rural Maplewood, small town Montana. Where people's yards are measured in acres not feet. Kids still bike on streets without looming danger and wild critters roam.

INT. GIRL'S BEDROOM - DAY

Assorted wardrobe lines the floor. Typical teenage clutter. Rumpled bed. Abandoned souvenirs; dried flowers, plastic Elsa statue, neon sunglasses and a pile of Mardi Gras beads all collect dust. On a laptop, a Youtube News program plays;

ON SCREEN: A News Show highlights some sort of protest.

ABBY, 15, just wants to-fit-in girl; a bit chaotic, normal school day rush, multi-tasks with trying on clothes, holds her phone, snapchats with classmate.

PHONE SCREEN: BRITTANY, 17, popular influencer, with the right clothes and hair to prove it.

BRITTANY

Abby? Cringe?! What is that submarine you're wearing?

Abby looks down, boxy yellow sweatshirt. EEKS rips off the shirt, slips on a little PINK T with spaghetti straps.

ABBY

(teen slang)
Rizz?

BRITTANY

(thumbs up)
Sic!! Cheer rehearsal last period!!

ZIP, black screen. Pulls backpack from under clothes pile.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

SIBLINGS gather round nook, chow on Cheerios. Sissy, 9, looks up to see Abby peek out the door in the PINK racy shirt.

SISSY
Mom!? Abby's got--

SLAM bedroom door closes.

INT. ABBY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Abby grabs sweatshirt off the floor slides it over her head.

EXT. WALTER'S YARD - DAY

CLANG, CLANG hear a shovel hit dirt and rock. WALTER, 70's all-knowing-neighbor digs in the tree line between the two houses, with large "acre" yards.

Abby rushes out. Nearly collides with a raccoon who hastens for the shadows. Abby pulls off her sweatshirt, tosses it into the shrubs. Walter looks up from his work.

WALTER
Yeah, don't be needing no sweaters!

Walter wipes sweat, checks the sun. Abby checks cell phone.

ABBY
Oh, hi Mr. Walter. What ya doing?

Does not wait for an answer, Abby has places to be.

Walter looks after her, picks up her tossed sweatshirt. I "heart" Cats. Folds and places it neatly near the shrubs.

EXT. SMALL TOWN HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

STUDENT raises the American Flag in front of the school.

EXT. SCHOOL FIELD - DAY

End of day, BELL RINGS. Assembly of GIRLS, freshman to seniors practice jumps, drills, pom poms dot the grass.

Brittany grabs Abby pulls her close, adjusts her PINK shirt.

BRITTANY
You're new but with a little work
you will slay on cheer squad!

Brittany takes Abby's waist band, rolls it over, so her skirt hikes up a few inches. Taps Abby's nose.

BRITTANY (CONT'D)

Dope.

ABBY

(excited)

Sure, Brittany, dope.

Brittany leads the cheer. Uses her phone to record herself and posts. The Girls form lines. Abby leans to Classmate.

ABBY (CONT'D)

(off short skirts)

Thought we were rated on jumps and coordination?

CLASSMATE

So Gucci! You are sooo lucky, Brittany has never said a word to me and I try out each year.

They jump, twirl spin, Abby tries to keep up.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Rockwell type street, craftsmen homes, lots of grass, treehouses. After school, the COOL KIDS CLIQUE of seven high school girls and guys with Brittany and Abby hike to Main.

PATRICK, big guy on campus, the football team quarterback, in his jersey, circles around Abby. Ogles the PINK top.

PATRICK

Hey, fire PINK!!

He lands with his arm around Brittany, she gives Abby a wink. Abby smiles, adjusts her top "ah good choice".

Two BOYS, 8, egg-heads, carry grocery bags. Cool Kids, Sam and Joey 16, give each other the nod. Block the Boys.

JOEY

Got some goodies, Kid?

Boys freeze. Abby frowns. Sam records with cell. Joey grabs a loaf of bread from the bag, Patrick runs wide. Joey passes. Patrick catches, slams it down. Brittany breaks into a cheer.

BRITTANY

Touchdown!!

Abby winces. Walter exits the Hardware store; with a rod. Picks up the bread studies the brand, takes a big SNIFF.

WALTER

Ah, Bread of Life. Must be yours.

Pops it in the Boys' grocery bag. Carries on. Boys race off.

SAM

Sweet!

Sam posts the video. Uneasy, Abby tugs at her shirt.

EXT. WALTER'S YARD - DAY

Abby crosses the yard. At the hole, Walter wipes dirt off hands. Distracted with her phone, Abby heads to her house.

WALTER

Abby?!

He pulls her folded shirt from the shrub. She almost forgot.

ABBY

Oh, yea, thanks for saving me!

(off the hole)

Looks like serious work. You need one of those machines, you know, with a drill. Go a lot faster.

WALTER

Oh, sure. But there's all kinds of rocks, tree roots, debris.

Uses his rod to point in the hole.

WALTER (CONT'D)

And I woulda missed....

He uses the rod to pull back the shrubs and there is the burrow. Abby kneels down, takes pictures with her phone.

ABBY

Dope. Animals' nest. That means Cool, Mr. Walter.

Walter, bemused, regards an apprehensive Abby.

WALTER

Tuff to fit in, huh? It'll be fine.

Abby lays more slang on the old dude. Pulls on the Cat shirt.

EXT. SCHOOL FIELD - DAY

The next day the Girls work it, practicing their moves for Cheer tryouts. Brittany leads among gossipy whispers.

GIRLS

(chat over each other)

Sleep on! She would never give up
cheer squad. True. Is she? No way?
You lying. She's cool.

Their eyes track Brittany, hi jumps for the cheers. DEEP THROTTLE ENGINE. Muscle car pulls up. Eyes track the action.

PATRICK.

Brittany rushes to car. Flirty twirl gets her in, zooms away.

EXT. DOWNTOWN - LATER

The Cool Kids Pack with Abby head downtown. Muscle Car rounds the corner. Abby and Pack pile in with Patrick and Brittany.

INT./EXT. MUSCLE CAR - DAY

The Muscle car weaves through town, tunes blare, Kids sing loud. The car passes the Demonstrators from the News show.

EXT. PLAIN BUILDING - DAY

Outside a plain brown building. Demonstrators stand vigil. Some hold signs. Some kneel. Some pray beads. We don't quite see what their cause is yet.

PATRICK

Ahh, get a load of this.

Rolls down window. Sam pulls his phone to video tape.

PATRICK (CONT'D)

Get a life. Cringy.

KIDS IN CAR

(muffled screams)

Go home. Freedom. Fight for Rights.

Car does a U. Joey grabs Abby's soda throws it at the crowd.

SAM

(behind phone camera)

Ahh, good one, nailed it.

Abby turns, looks out rear window. Crowd remains stalwart.

EXT. WALTER'S YARD - DAY

End of day, Walter's hole gets deeper. Abby treks along, watches video on her phone.

SCREEN: Soda can sprays across the protestors. HEAR cheers.

Walter's hand blocks Abby from falling into the hole.

WALTER	ABBY
Whoa, heads up...	Sorry...crimeny!

Walter relaxes, pulls back the shrubs. A raccoon nurses kits.

ABBY (CONT'D)
She has babies!!

WALTER
Would have squashed her nest with
the "fancy drilling machine".

ABBY
They are soo cute.

Abby uses her phone to video.

WALTER
Dope! Where do you post these?

Abby thinks, hadn't considered, hit's her head, points "duh".

INT. MAKE-UP COUNTER, DRUG-STORE - DAY

The next day Brittany lines her lips with a new stick. Smacks in a mirror. Abby GIGGLES. Brittany nudges her.

BRITTANY
Here, you need some color.

Brittany adds some bright pink lipstick to Abby.

BRITTANY (CONT'D)
And if we pull your hair up.

Brittany twists hair high on Abby's head. Steals a clip.

BRITTANY (CONT'D)
Dope! You look older, suave.

In mirror, Abby's head tilts to each side. Brit snaps pics.

Around the counter Brittany tries every cosmetic, shrugs.

ABBY

But why?

BRITTANY

Get in bars, get on TV, be famous?

ABBY

But why are you helping me, I mean
with the squad and make-up, hair?

Brittany dots Abby's nose with a tuft of powder. GIGGLES.

SALESLADY (O.S.)

Do you girls need some help?

A SALESLADY joins them at the counter.

BRITTANY

Ohh, gotta get back to school.

Brittany drops the lipstick in Abby's bag, pulls her outside.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Brittany drags Abby to the street, busts a gut. She sprays
stolen perfume over herself then Abby.

ABBY

Smells nice.

Abby enjoys this a bit too much.

Hands slip over Brittany's eyes. She turns. PATRICK! SQUEALS.
They twirl. All the Cool Kid Marauders show up.

Joey grabs Abby, twirls her around. Abby reciprocates. Sam
records, of course. The Troubadours survey down the street.

EXT. PLAIN BUILDING - DAY

Peaceful chants outside the building. The Brigand of Cool
Kids prance, jeer at the Demonstrators. Taunt. Things go--

SILENT AND SLOW MOTION.

The Kids scream, dance, jabs and jeers. Joey grabs a sign.

Throws it down, stomps it. Swings Abby round, she stomps the
sign too. Brit hugs Abby. Patrick pats her tush. **She's IN.**

Havoc and silent mockery. Brittany claps. HOOTS. Joey grabs a string of beads from praying hands, drapes it over his neck, jumps on a car, mimes a rapper!

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Back in class, Joey absently twirls the beads around fingers. Students study *Anne of Green Gables*. TEACHER 40, reads.

TEACHER

"Dear old world", she murmured,
'you are very lovely, and I am glad
to be alive in you." So what do we--

BAM the Rosary breaks, beads spew and bounce over the floor.

TEACHER (CONT'D)

Joey! Is that you?

LAUGHTER erupts, Joey shrugs. Bell RINGS. He leaves the mess.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

The room has emptied, Teacher scratches on a board. Slim fingers pick up the beads. Crawls on knees. Abby pockets the beads one by one. On the Crucifix. Pulls dirt from His feet.

EXT. WALTER'S YARD - NIGHT

The sun sets. A pink glow covers the land. Abby digs in the dirt with her hands. Fiercely. Paws at the soil, mud flies.

Walter wanders up, checks the stars. Holds a new shirt.

WALTER

Using a shovel be a might faster.

Abby looks up, mud covered. Mad. Confused. Watery eyes.

ABBY

(screaming)

Why are you digging here?

WALTER

(melodramatic)

Sustenance, salvation, gift of
life.

She looks at him like he's crazy.

WALTER (CONT'D)
 (matter of fact)
 A well, it's a new well for water.

Abby SIGHS. Contemplates. Walter joins her on the ground.

ABBY
 They like me, they really like me.

WALTER
 The raccoons?

Abby looks at him like he really IS crazy.

WALTER (CONT'D)
 No, right, the other kids. You got
 your wish. Well what's not to like?

He hands her the shirt. Now he really is crazy. She unfolds it. GUT LAUGHS. Shakes her head. SHIRT: I "heart" Raccoons.

WALTER (CONT'D)
 Yeah, life's hard. But it's near
 impossible to go against what your
 own heart tells ya. Eventually--

Walter taps the "heart" on the shirt.

WALTER (CONT'D)
 --your North Star takes over,
 guides your path.

Points to the North Star in the sky. Abby looks up. BEAT.

ABBY
 You one of those dudes who pray?

WALTER
 Without ceasing.

Walter winks, covers the coons. Abby pulls on the sweatshirt.

INT. ABBY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Abby uses a needle, restrings the beads. Holds her work up to the light. BAM, remembers, searches her room, little frantic, she digs through those Mardi Gras beads. There it is. Dust covered childhood, Communion rosary. Compares the two for bead spacing. Looks good. Counts the beads... ten.

INT. GYM - DAY

At cheerleading tryouts... it is THE day.

Judges, teachers, coaches assemble behind tables. Smattering of students dot the bleachers. Sam with trusty phone camera.

INT. LOCKER ROOM - DAY

Abby and the other Tryouts primp in mirrors. Brittany strides in, tall, gorgeous, dominant. The girls bow to her arrival. Brittany passes each girl, gives them smattering approvals. Fluffs hair, adjusts wardrobe, okays make-up. Now Abby.

BRITTANY

Feeling good?

Abby shakes her head.

ABBY

Nervous. Thanks for all your help.

Brittany hands her a little pill.

BRITTANY

You'll be flying through the air.

ABBY

Wait, what?

BRITTANY

Chill, just a little boost, put a pep in your step.

(wink)

Guaranteed to get you on your toes and on the team.

Brittany closes Abby's hand around the pill. Brittany jumps up on a bench. GIRL uses her phone to record, this is good.

BRITTANY (CONT'D)

Girls, you are slaying it!

Amazing! We can do anything! Girls

Rule. We don't let NOTHING stop us!

The locker room cadre goes into a CHEER for themselves.

INT. GYM - DAY

Tryouts in full swing. Abby in line for her turn. In her hand, the pill and the beads. She tosses the pill.

INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY

Later, Students move into rooms for class. Bell RINGS.
Brittany grabs Abby, snaps fingers, to remember name.

BRITTANY
Hey Girl, tell Ms. Snapper, I'll be
in the gym, practicing.

ABBY
What's up?

Brittany adjusts Abby's hair.

BRITTANY
Dope. You do look older.

Brittany races out the door. Abby watches from the window.
WINDOW: Brittany jumps in the Muscle car with Patrick.

ABBY
NOOOOO!

Abby races down the stairs, out into the street.

INT./EXT. MUSCLE CAR - STREET - DAY

Abby grabs the passenger window. Brittany puts on lipstick.

ABBY
Wait. You don't have to do this.

BRITTANY
(sardonic)
What? What do you think I'm doing?

Abby stammers. Confused. Brittany shoos her with her hands.

BRITTANY (CONT'D)
LOL. I won.

Patrick hits the gas, the Muscle car powers away. Leaves Abby
alone in the street. A wild raccoon escapes from a dumpster.

INT. ABBY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Abby is glued to her phone.

ON SCREEN: VIDEO MONTAGE a string of TikTok posts
- Cool Kids dance down the street with Abby and Brittany
- Cool Kids steal bread, play football, Brittany cheers
- Cool Kids confront protestors
- Cheer practice with Abby, Brittany coaches
- Cheer Tryouts - Abby wins - Brittany thumbs up to camera

BRITTANY (V.O.)
 --sure I can train anyone to win
 cheer squad, even her. It's a bet!

ON SCREEN: Shaky, in and out of focus, Abby in her Cat Sweatshirt at her hall locker, gawks at Brittany.

SILENT. Abby's face goes ashen. It sinks in, she's the joke, the brunt. Head drops. Slow body convulsions. Beads RUSTLE.

EXT. STREET - DAY

The next day after school, Cool Kids with Abby grab sodas. Stroll past the Protestors again. Abby moves to the line, picks up a sign. Lets her rolled skirt down, pulls her raccoon sweatshirt over her skimpy top. Sure Sam on camera.

JOEY & SAM
 Where you going? You? What? Wait?
 You're one of them kooks who prays?

ABBY
 Yeah, without ceasing.

Abby drops the mended beads with their OWNER. He pushes them back into Abby's hand. Nope, Abby raises her own beads.

JOEY & SAM
 Wait, what about Women's rights and-

ABBY
 --Exactly! The rights of a girl
 baby to be born. Now that's Dope!

Abby holds her poster high. Pic of a very new, newborn yawns.

EXT. WALTER'S YARD - NIGHT

Walter swings BAM, water shoots forth. Abby sits with momma coon who laps from the pooling water as her kits nurse.

Abby shows Walter her TikTok posts of racoon antics.

PEACE. Pulls out her long forgotten First Communion rosary (with Eucharist medal). Checks the North Star. Barely audible-

ABBY
 --Brittany...Patrick,...Joey...Sam

Abby's fingers slide, one by one, across the beads.

FADE OUT.

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