

ESSENTIAL MAGIC

Written by

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EXT. MULTIPLE LOCATIONS IN FREEZE FRAME

SUPER: 60 Years Ago

In sepia tone, YOUNG DONNA, 20, stands on a rocky peak with her hands raised like an orchestral conductor. Lightning and smoke swirl around her. She wears a lion-face necklace.

EVELYN (V.O.)
Grandma Donna's version of history
is a lot of things, but boring
isn't one of them.

Zoom out REVEAL: Under Young Donna's feet, not rocks, but the arched back of a SEA MONSTER. In the air and sea around her, spell-casters, known collectively as "The Pride", shoot fire, acid, and lightning at the beast as it gnashes at them.

EVELYN
She used to tell me stories about
'The Monster Years' all the time.
Mainly about how she and her caster
friends kicked big monster butt.

A Godzilla-like monster lies vanquished on the steps of city hall. The Pride poses with the mayor in victory.

At Young Donna's feet sits LIL GUY, a ball of brown fur with legs: Not dog, goat, or tribble, but a little of all three.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
They called themselves The Pride,
and they were world-class mages.

High in the sky, The Pride fights a fiery phoenix.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
When I'd ask Grandma Donna if I
could fight the monsters too, she'd
smile and remind me that there are
no more monsters left to fight.

In a dark cave, Young Donna holds up a torch to illuminate a mostly-decayed dragon corpse. The Pride stares, aghast.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Without bounties for monster heads,
The Pride and other casters were
forced to move on, and the language
of casting was all but lost.

Young Donna looks on in horror as the other members of The Pride march to work in gray corporate buildings dressed in gray suits, adorned with brief cases and dead eyes.

INT. EVELYN'S BEDROOM - DAY

EVELYN, 16, sandy, frizzy, pixie-cut hair and round, silver-rimmed glasses lays in her bed and reads a textbook-- which FLOATS above her face shrouded in a PURPLE HAZE. Textbook cover reads: *Industry, Empire, and Magic*.

With a flick of her finger, Evelyn turns the page.

EVELYN

But whoever edited this textbook
clearly has a different take on the
matter of worker's rights.

KNOCK KNOCK, her bedroom door opens. Mom JENNIFER, 50s, Deaf, enters. Evelyn startles. The purple haze disappears as she drops the spell. The book falls on her face with a THUNK.

They converse in *AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE*, subtitled/dubbed.

JENNIFER

(In ASL)

Evelyn Anne, I saw that!

EVELYN

(In ASL)

Mom!

JENNIFER

*You can read your book on the desk
like everybody else. No magic.*

EVELYN

I only know one spell anyway!

JENNIFER

*And I'm still mad at Grandma for
teaching you that one. Book. Desk.
Now please.*

Evelyn begrudgingly picks up her book, drags herself to her desk, throws herself into her seat, and opens the book.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)

*Casters always end up dead,
exploited, or worse, celebrities.
Now. I'm going to work. I'll be
back late. I got you a pizza for
dinner, it's in the freezer. No
meat, just cheese, like you like.*

EVELYN

Cauliflower pizza or real pizza?

JENNIFER
*Same thing. Eating more vegetables
is-*

EVELYN
Good for me?

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
Good for you.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
*Right. Are you doing deliveries
after homework is finished?*

EVELYN
Yes.

Jennifer nods approvingly.

JENNIFER
*Proud of you. Come home before the
streetlights come on, and take Lil
Guy with you.*

LIL GUY, ball of fur, tumbles in through Jennifer's legs.

EVELYN
Always.

JENNIFER
Thank you. I love you!

Jennifer signs 'I love you' emphatically with both hands and blows Evelyn a kiss before she shuts the door behind her.

Evelyn pauses, then scampers to the window. Lil Guy hops up on the bed as she watches mom's car pull out and speed off.

Evelyn does a quick hand sign, and the same purple haze envelopes her. She floats into the air until she floats upside down over her textbook on her desk.

INTRO THEME MUSIC PLAYS

EXT. EVELYN'S FRONT YARD - DAY

As Evelyn opens the door, Lil Guy bounds outside with a GOAT-LIKE BLEAT. She wears a PET-CARRIER BACKPACK. Evelyn shuts the door and taps on her phone.

Lil Guy runs in figure eights around the yard. He sniffs around the grass. He stops with a satisfied SNUFFLE, and FLOATS a foot off the ground. Four separate streams of orange pee hit the grass with a SIZZLE.

On Evelyn's screen, Copyright-Free GrubHub, NIBBLE KNIGHTS. Beside her smiling profile photo: FIVE GOLD STARS and "5/5, 165 reviews." She taps a delivery job: a GPS route and timer fill the screen.

EVELYN
Wanna do some Nibble Knight
deliveries, Lil Guy?

Lil Guy lifts his face from grass mid-SNUFFLE. He jumps up and down rapidly, then darts back towards Evelyn. Evelyn lowers the open backpack to him, and Lil Guy rolls in. She slings him on her back.

She picks up a pair of ROLLER SKATES off the porch. She pops on the skates with some awkward hops down the driveway. She casts levitate on her skates, the purple haze engulfs them, and she floats a couple feet in the air. She ZIPS off.

EXT. CITY STREETS - DAY

FUN AND FUNKY MUSIC plays as Evelyn joyfully zips through town. She passes through a series of vignettes in progress:

- As Evelyn races out of a Thai restaurant carrying two full plastic bags, the neighboring shoe store advertises "Mikey There-Max (ie: Nike Air Max) Speed Shoes-- now enhanced with more speed! Run up to 2mph faster!" And a WOMAN outside straps on identical shoes, which light up with GREEN SPARKS, and she sprints off.

- Evelyn leaves a paper bag featuring an Italian chef on a porch while a MAN on the sidewalk argues with a METER MONITOR about a parking ticket for his hover car, the undercarriage glows with PURPLE HAZE.

- In a barber shop, as Evelyn delivers coffees to the RECEPTIONIST, a BARBER brushes across a MAN's bald spot and thin comb-over with a red paddle brush. The man's scalp radiates RED LIGHT and POP his hair grows back thicker.

- On a stoop, KIDS play with assorted toys, like a dinosaur, a doll, and a car with a face. Each toy has a little PINK BUTTON. When pressed, the button releases a PINK HAZE that forms little accessories for the toys, like a jurassic fern, a doll house, and a race track, respectively. Evelyn drops a delivery bag of McDummuld's at their feet. The kids drop their toys and attack it like starved animals.

FUN AND FUNKY MUSIC FADES.

EXT. UNCLE JOE'S GARAGE- DAY

In front of open bay doors, AVA, 16, a trans girl wearing trendy pastels, sits on a tire pile and sips bubble tea.

TOVAH, 16, a large girl wearing coveralls with her name embroidered on the patch, slides out from under a car on a creeper seat. On her face: a grease stain, ruby lipstick, and a confused expression.

TOVAH

But if the crystal fragments were
on both sides of the planet, how'd
d'Vorik locate Persephone?

AVA

Watch the next episode, I can't
keep hiding spoilers from you.

Tovah spots Evelyn gliding toward them and her face lights up. She sits up and calls to her.

TOVAH

Evelyn! My hazelnut! She's back!

Evelyn sees them, beams, and skates to them.

EVELYN

Hey guys!

AVA

(levitate, levi-skate)
Check you out, levi-skate master!
No scraped knees or nothin'!

EVELYN

Not today! I've been getting some
practice in doing deliveries.

AVA

Bet your mom loves that.

EVELYN

What she doesn't know won't hurt
her, and makes my life like a
hundred times easier.

TOVAH

I dunno what you're talking about
Ava, those look like regular, non-
magic-ified skates to me.

AVA
(Affectionately)
So how's law school, smarty pants?

EVELYN
Pssh, I'm not in law school yet, I
still have so much work to do to
even apply-

AVA
(Playfully)
Oh, I'm sorry, how's *college at 16*,
smarty pants? *So much easier.*

Evelyn smiles and bashfully shrugs.

TOVAH
School isn't the same without you,
we all miss you so much!

EVELYN
I miss you guys too. Between class
and work, I don't have a social
life at all now.

AVA
That's okay, we'll still be here
when you're done changing the world
through civil rights litigation.

TOVAH
And we'll wave little triangle
flags with your name on them!

Ava nods and pantomimes waving a pennant at Evelyn.

TOVAH (CONT'D)
Oh! Will you be around this
weekend? My mom said I can take the
car out to the shore, and we were
talking about a boardwalk day.

Tovah shoots persuasive finger guns at her.

EVELYN
That sounds amazing! I have to
check my-

BEEP BEEP- On Evelyn's phone screen, the Nibble Knights timer
turns from black to red and counts down from 5 minutes.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Agh. I gotta go like, now, to deliver this on time. Can't break my perfect delivery streak!

AVA

You'd explode if you did.

TOVAH

All good! I'll call you later?

EVELYN

Yes, please! See ya! Love you both!

Evelyn zips away, decisively out of earshot.

TOVAH

She works too hard.

Tovah rolls back under the car.

AVA

She literally always has. She's Evelyn Birch, she can do anything. And we pity the man or god that tries to stop her.

TOVAH

I know that, I just worry about her. If she keeps running at a hundred and ten percent, she's gonna fry her circuits.

AVA

Like the starship in episode 12?

TOVAH

Spoilers! I'm not there yet!

AVA

Girl, catch up!

EXT. CITY STREET - SUNSET

Street lights come on: In each light box, a CIRCLE GLOWS BLUE and releases a little ball of white light into the box.

INT. COFFEEHOUSE - SUNSET

TING-A-LING of a bell over a wooden door as Evelyn and Lil Guy speed into trendy, earthy coffeehouse, Just Bean Honest.

Behind them, through a big window, out on the street, a STREET PERFORMER does cheap magic tricks with playing cards.

Evelyn hustles to the pick-up counter. A black-haired barista faces away from her behind the counter.

EVELYN

Excuse me, I have a Nibble Knight
order for Greg?

The barista, NITHYA, 17, turns around, revealing a blue hair streak, a handful of facial piercings, and an aggressive resting bitch face. She SLAMS a to-go cup on the counter.

NITHYA

... I have a decaf vanilla soy
latte for Greg.

Evelyn looks startled.

EVELYN

Nithya! Forgot you work here.

Without breaking eye contact with Evelyn, Nithya reaches into the adjacent pastry case and bags a pastry.

NITHYA

I have an iced lemon loaf... for
Greg.

EVELYN

Great! Thanks, I'll just take--

NITHYA

(Deadpan)
Have a nice day.

EVELYN

Thanks! You too. (Pause) Hey, I
know last year we kind of-

Nithya forcefully tosses an empty paper bag on the counter.

NITHYA

We close in 15 minutes.

EVELYN

Right. Yes. I'll be going then.

Evelyn takes the order components from the counter and zips back out the door. Through the window, the street performer tries to engage with Evelyn, but she skates off.

Nithya glares. A gruff man's voice interrupts her rage.

MANAGER (O.S.)
Nithya! Get the plunger! The toilet
is backed up again!

Nithya GROANS and rolls her eyes.

EXT. CITY STREETS - SUNSET

Evelyn and Lil Guy skate up to a doorstep and places the Just Bean Honest bag on the stoop. Evelyn steps back to take the proof-of-delivery picture.

As the camera flashes, a PURPLE BLUR darts through the frame-taking the delivery bag with it!

EVELYN
The heck!?

Evelyn looks up from the screen in the direction the blur went. She spots a flash of purple and green jump down a storm drain on the curb with the bag.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
Thief!

BEEP BEEP, her phone screen shows the red timer, 5 minutes.

Evelyn GROANS and scrambles to the storm drain. She drops to her knees and shines her phone flashlight in the drain.

Staring back at her, with the delivery bag hooked on its tail is a slimy, purple and green, RAT MONSTER, with an exposed brain and beady black eyes. It HISSES like a cat.

Evelyn jolts back with a YELP.

The rat monster dives deeper into the sewer with the bag.

Evelyn pulls herself to her feet. Lil Guy jumps out of the backpack and sniffs at the drain. He BLEATS then dives down the drain after the rat monster.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
No! Lil Guy, stop! Come back here!

She looks around for help, but she's alone. She GROANS and shimmies into the drain after him.

EVELYN (CONT'D)
If I get tetanus, it's on your
little creature conscience!

INT. SEWER - NIGHT

Evelyn lands on her feet in the sewer tunnel. It's cramped; she crouches to separate her head from the ceiling. She shines her phone flashlight around: no movement.

EVELYN

Lil Guy! I appreciate your
dedication to my five star streak,
but Greg won't want sewer juice on
his lemon loaf! Let's just hurry up
and get a new one before they
close! Lil Guy!?

SQUEAK from her feet! She whips her light down.

Two small, baby RAT MONSTERS skitter across her feet.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Ah!

She reflexively kicks one of the little Rat Monsters down the tunnel. She shines her light after it.

Baby Rat Monster hits the ground with a SPLAT, pops up, shakes it off, and skitters away.

Evelyn stares after it, dumbfounded. An adult Rat Monster skitters between her feet and runs past her.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Eek!

She leans to one side of the tunnel. Another Rat Monster skitters past her on the opposite side. Followed by another going the opposite direction. They ignore Evelyn.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Whatever you are, you don't seem
like you want to bite me. Are you
cool? Are we cool?

She looks down the tunnel again, this time she sees a bunch of Rat Monsters minding their business, skittering about.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Please be cool.

She starts walking down the tunnel.

INT. TOVAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Tovah sits at a workbench against the wall. On the wall above her are technical, schematic drawings for big machines of unclear functions. Sparks fly out around her.

On the desk, Tovah solders a claw arm onto an RC car.

Framed photos sit on the desk: Tovah with the robotic team holding up a big trophy, and Tovah and Evelyn as little kids with big popsicles and popsicle-stained faces.

Tovah leans back with a satisfied smile and removes her protective eyewear. On the wall behind her are video game posters and a Bi pride flag.

TOVAH

Nice! Alright, *Car El Arm*, let's see what you can do!

She picks up a remote control and punches it on. A smiling emoticon face lights up on the would-be windshield.

The robotic arm spins uncontrollably! It knocks the pictures, her tools, and a DIGITAL CLOCK off the desk.

Tovah frantically grabs ahold of the car part and lifts it over her head, safely away from things it could hit.

TOVAH (CONT'D)

Okay, okay, no need for that!

She flips a switch on the car's underside and the arm stops spinning. The emoticon face frowns, then disappears.

She sets the RC car down as she bends over to pick up the knocked off objects, including the CLOCK that reads 8:32 PM.

TOVAH,

Oh shoot! Already?

Tovah grabs her phone from the mess on the desk and punches Evelyn's contact. RING, BEEP, BEEP-- 'Call Failed.'

TOVAH

Huh. That's weird. I bet she's doing homework with her phone off and doesn't want to be bothered. Obviously, she needs us!

She scoops up *Car El Arm* (Car Alarm) from the desk and starts toward the door.

INT. SEWER - NIGHT

Evelyn meanders down the sewer, dodging indifferent rat monsters of all sizes under her feet and past her head.

EVELYN

LIL GUY! Not funny! Where are you!?

BEEP BEEP: her screen shows a flashing, red 0:00 timer and the message: "Your order is LATE!"

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Great. Lil Guy, come on! It doesn't even matter anymore!

Lil Guy YIPS from a distance. Evelyn sprints towards him.

She stops at a mountain of objects taken from suburban yards: umbrellas, shoes, toys-- and the Just Bean Honest bag.

Lil Guy poses like a pointer dog at the bag. Evelyn tries to tug him back down the tunnel, but he won't budge.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Okay, okay! We'll take the stupid late order.

She picks up the Delivery Bag. Suddenly, ALL THE RATS snap to attention on Evelyn. THEY SPEAK IN UNISON, deep and ominous.

RATS

Do Not Steal From Us!

All the Rats race towards her at once. One rat jumps at her.

She SCREAMS and throws her hands up in defense, dropping the bag. Lil Guy jumps in and catches the rat in his mouth.

Lil Guy lands and shakes the rat to death.

Evelyn bats and kicks rats away from her as she runs back out of the tunnel. Lil Guy follows. She SCREAMS the whole way.

END OF ACT 1

ACT 2**EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT**

Evelyn frantically pulls herself out of a different storm drain. Lil Guy pops out after her. Evelyn grabs Lil Guy and hustles away from the drain into the street.

HEADLIGHTS speed towards her and SCREECH to a halt. Evelyn SCREAMS, shields her face with her arms, stumbles back, and falls on her butt.

The driver door opens and Tovah jumps out, barely visible around the blinding light.

TOVAH

Evelyn!? Geez, are you okay!?

Evelyn clambers to her feet.

EVELYN

Tovah!? Ah! Haha! Get in the car!
Get in the car! We need the police!

Evelyn climbs in the passenger seat with Lil Guy on her lap.

TOVAH

Police!?

Tovah hops in and the car speeds away.

INT. TOVAH'S CAR - NIGHT

The suburbs fly by out the window.

TOVAH

Explain!

EVELYN

There are monsters in the sewers!

Tovah slams on the breaks. SCREECH. Both girls' bodies jolt against their seatbelts.

EVELYN (CONT'D)

Ow!

Tovah emphatically points to the STOP sign.

TOVAH

Monsters, like real life monsters-

EVELYN
Yes, and they stole my Nibble
Knights order and-

TOVAH
-and you want to go to the police
about it? Not your world-famous-
monster-slayer Grandma?

EVELYN
Mom would kill me.

TOVAH
That's what you said about the levi-
skates. Just don't tell her!

EVELYN
That's different! This would be
personal!

TOVAH
Lil Guy, what do you think?

Lil Guy looks at her, opens his mouth, unfurls his tongue,
and reveals a BABY RAT MONSTER.

EVELYN
AH! Why would you do that!?

TOVAH
I don't think he should eat that.

Lil Guy re-curles his tongue around the rat monster and closes
his mouth. Viscous, green slime drips out like drool.

EVELYN
Eww! Just swallow it already if
you're gonna eat it!

TOVAH
So that's the monster?

EVELYN
Yeah, one of hundreds! So we need
to tell someone!

TOVAH
Ev, with a lifetime of love for
you, sometimes you're so smart
you're dumb.

EVELYN
Is now the time for this?

TOVAH

Yes, it is. You're the smartest person I know, but you refuse to learn magic. That's dumb!

EVELYN

I don't refuse-

TOVAH

You're part of like 2% of the population that can do it at all, but you let your mom get so in your head about it!

EVELYN

I do not! It's not that simple-

TOVAH

Yes it is! You wanted to go to college early, so you did. You want to be the youngest law student in your school's history, and you will be next semester. If you wanted to learn magic, you'd probably be a prodigy at that too and you wouldn't even need help right now!

EVELYN

(Offended)

Dude!

TOVAH

You're smart, you're tough, you're awesome, and I don't think you've ever failed at anything- so do you want to be a caster or not?

EVELYN

Of course I do!

TOVAH

Prove it!

EVELYN

Fine! I'll prove it! We'll go get Grandma Donna!

TOVAH

Heck yeah, that's the Evelyn I know and love!

Tovah does a speedy U-turn, hits the curb a little bit, then the car tears off down the road.

EXT. THE BEACH OF LIVING RETIREMENT COMMUNITY - NIGHT

Tovah's old Buick SCREECHES to a halt outside of a large condo on the beach, framed by the ocean. A large, spotlighted sign reads, "The Beach of Living - Retirement Community."

INT. THE BEACH OF LIVING RETIREMENT COMMUNITY - NIGHT

In a hotel-like hallway, Evelyn's hand KNOCKS on a white door marked 1G. The door flies open.

Two old, yet strong, arms fly out to pull the girls and Lil Guy inside, and the door slams closed again.

INT. DONNA'S SUITE - NIGHT

GRANDMA DONNA, 80s, short, wrinkly, orange hair with grey streaks, full of life, wraps them up in a group hug.

GRANDMA DONNA
My Girls! Oh! I can't believe
you're old enough to drive already!
Come in, come in!

The girls follow Grandma Donna deeper inside. The suite looks like a normal, well-decorated retiree's apartment, except for a small doorway made of GOLD RIPPLING LIGHT against the back wall, which currently shows to a regal-looking bedroom.

Donna points to the doorway and flicks through it as if turning pages in a book. The room through the door flashes past bedrooms, a bathroom, a sauna, a library, an expansive closet, and finally, the kitchen.

GRANDMA DONNA (CONT'D)
I've got cookies! I'm nailing this
retired old lady thing!

Evelyn steps forward.

EVELYN
We're in a bit of a rush Grandma-

TOVAH
We need you to help us fight some
monsters!

Donna stands up straighter.

GRANDMA DONNA
Monsters?

Lil Guy steps forward and drops the Rat Monster at her feet. Donna unflinchingly picks it up and examines it.

GRANDMA DONNA (CONT'D)
Rats, I hoped it would be an
exciting one. Oh! Rats!

Donna laughs at her own joke.

EVELYN
You've seen these before?

GRANDMA DONNA
Oh, yes, it's just a slug rat.

EVELYN	TOVAH
(Distressed)	(Excited)
Slug rat?	Slug rat!

GRANDMA DONNA
Ehhh, their real name is in some
dead language, but why raise the
dead when 'slug rat' does the job.

She hands Lil Guy the slug rat back. He holds it in his cheeks like a chipmunk.

EVELYN
Right, well. I followed one down a
drain, and there were hundreds of
them, I think I found their nest-

GRANDMA DONNA
(Delighted)
Ah! You went bravely into the nest,
that's my granddaughter!

EVELYN
Yeah, well, they have a pile of-

GRANDMA DONNA
Stolen items? Yes, yes, that's
their MO: petty theft and being a
general nuisance.

TOVAH
Are these really monsters? They
seem a little small. And, alive.

GRANDMA DONNA
Sure they're monsters! Chaos comes
in all sizes.

EVELYN

How do we get rid of them?

GRANDMA DONNA

The French way! We add salt and fry
'em up! Show me your fire!

Grandma does a hand gesture and conjures a softball-sized fireball, which floats between her hands.

EVELYN

I don't have a fire.

GRANDMA DONNA

Hmm. Well. I'll teach you on the
way! Let me get my things!

Donna diffuses her fireball and steps into the kitchen.

TOVAH

Alright! Let's fight monsters!

EVELYN

Just like that? No training, no
prep, no nothing?

Donna emerges from the kitchen with a big canister of SALT.

GRANDMA DONNA

Training? This *is* your training!
I've done my training. Why, it was
only 20- 30- yuck- 50 years ago
that I was in my prime monster
fighting days! Slaying-est witch in
the world!

EVELYN

Grandma!

GRANDMA DONNA

Sorry, sorry, 'Caster' is the word
you kids like better nowadays.
Slaying-est caster in the- but now
it's lost the alliteration!

TOVAH

Slaying-est mage in the mesosphere?

GRANDMA DONNA

Ah! Big words! So clever! Now then,
it's been far too long since I've
had a good monster fight. Let's go!

Donna leads them out the door. Evelyn looks uneasy.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

In front of a storm drain, Evelyn tries to mimic the hand sign Donna used for fire. She generates little sparks.

EVELYN
(Under her breath)
C'mon!

She signs again, she gets a candle-sized flame.

TOVAH
You did it!

EVELYN
No, it's not *right*. It has to be
right. I can't fight monsters if
it's not *right*.

Donna places the canister of salt in the street.

GRANDMA DONNA
Keep at it, Evy.

Donna signs, and the canister GLOWS RED and GROWS to the size of a barrel. She does a different hand sign, and the barrel GLOWS ORANGE and MULTIPLIES into three salt barrels.

TOVAH
Cool! Can you do that to my
allowance?

GRANDMA DONNA
Yes! But it *is* a federal crime!

Donna leads them each to a barrel of salt.

GRANDMA DONNA (CONT'D)
Evy darling, if you would levitate
these barrels along behind us, I
can do the fire for the both of us.

EVELYN
No, I can do it!

GRANDMA DONNA
You will, but for now, let's stick
to our strengths.

TOVAH
What can I do?

GRANDMA DONNA
I'm sure you'll think of something.

Tovah's shoulders drop, her enthusiasm wavers.

TOVAH

O-Okay, I'll think about it then.

EVELYN

Grandma, c'mon, I think Tovah-

Tovah throws her hands out, excited.

TOVAH

Wait! I've got it!

Tovah excitedly jogs back toward the car.

EVELYN

Where are you going?

TOVAH

I'll be right behind you, you guys
go on ahead!

Tovah hops in the back seat and shuts the door behind her.
She pops on protective eyewear and the glow of the soldering
iron radiates through the windows.

GRANDMA DONNA

That's a shame.

EVELYN

What is?

GRANDMA DONNA

Non-magic folks get a little funny
about watching real, organic magic.

EVELYN

What? No, it's not that. She's seen
me levitate stuff a million times.

GRANDMA DONNA

I suppose everyone is so used to
that cheap, simulated magic that
real magic has lost is oeuvre. I
think the mass production of magic
items really put the nail in the
coffin for mage culture across the
globe. It really boils my blood-

EVELYN

So the rats?

GRANDMA DONNA

The rats!

Grandma Donna casts levitate on the manhole cover atop the storm drain and flings it recklessly to the side, CLANG.

GRANDMA DONNA (CONT'D)
Come, come!

Donna jumps down the hole. Lil Guy follows her.

Evelyn glances back at Tovah's car before she walks toward the open manhole.

INT. SEWER - NIGHT

Donna and Evelyn dodge underfoot slug rats. Evelyn pushes levitating salt barrels, Donna leads with a fireball torch.

GRANDMA DONNA
Remember, the rats are a hive mind.
Salt takes out the body, fire takes
out the mind. This is a brute force
problem.

EVELYN
Ah yes, that's us, the brutes.

GRANDMA DONNA
Pah! We can be brutes! Why, back in
my Pride days, we once took on an
entire pack of werebears-

EVELYN
-in the cave system under West
Virginia, yes, you've told me
before.

GRANDMA DONNA
And I'll tell you again, we were-
There! The nest!

She points ahead. The pile of stolen goods comes into view.

They hurry to the pile. Rat monsters crawl around aimlessly.
They place the salt barrels around. Donna assesses the pile.

GRANDMA DONNA (CONT'D)
They've been here a while. I expect
quite a bit of resistance.

EVELYN
Let's do it.

Evelyn levitates swaths of enlarged salt grains. Grandma Donna winds up to punch the pile, but stops just short, and delicately taps it. DING.

The rats turn in unison as they did before.

RATS

Do not steal from us!

The rats charge at them.

GRANDMA DONNA

Hit it!

FIGHT MUSIC. Evelyn launches salt balls at the rats, BAM BAM BAM! They fall in a hail storm of salt and SIZZLE on contact.

Donna shoots fireballs from her finger tips with machine gun speed and accuracy. She burns the salted rats to ash.

GRANDMA DONNA (CONT'D)

Ha-ha! Get 'em again!

More rats charge at them from a different side; they turn to face them. Evelyn over-confidently hurls a barrage of salt.

The rats HISS as they dodge the attack. They spit acid that SIZZLES on the ground by Evelyn's feet. She backs up.

GRANDMA DONNA (CONT'D)

Again, Evy!

Evelyn launches more salt, but she doesn't hit a single rat. More rats charge towards her from another direction.

GRANDMA DONNA (CONT'D)

Faster! Before they learn your tactics! Like so!

Donna kicks over her barrel. She levitates all the salt at once. In very controlled movements and very precise hits, her salt hits and SIZZLES every rat in a 10 foot radius.

GRANDMA DONNA (CONT'D)

Now hit 'em with the fire!

EVELYN

That wasn't the plan!

GRANDMA DONNA

Do it anyway!

Evelyn signs quickly for fire, but only gets a spark. She tries again, faster. Spark. Donna holds off the rats.

GRANDMA DONNA (CONT'D)
Deep breath, Evy! Do it!

Try, spark, nothing. Try, nothing.

EVELYN
I can't! Please! Grandma- AH!

A slug rat SPLATS onto her face and latches on. She tries to rip it off, but it's too slimy to grip. SOUR NOTE, END MUSIC.

EVELYN POV:

Darkness. Then, her eyes open.

Through a filter of purple slime, repeated, distorted images in hexagonal fractals as if viewed through a fly's eye:

- Multiple rat perspectives on the fight: Donna hurling fire, Evelyn struggling against the slug rat on her face, Lil Guy chasing Slug Rats.

- Multiple rat perspectives from rats deeper in the tunnels.

- Multiple rat perspectives from rats above ground, stealing more stuff from suburban homes.

- Multiple rat perspectives of a CONCRETE ROOM where a SHADOWY MAN sits, holding a slug rat aloft.

- In the center-most hexagon- a close-up of the Shadowy Man's BROWN EYE, which looks inquisitively, DIRECTLY AT HER.

END POV

Car El Arm zips past Evelyn's head on the curve of the tunnel. The arm swings wildly, the emoticon face displays :D. It RIPS the slug rat off Evelyn's face with a loud, wet POP.

Evelyn looks around, disoriented. Red HIVES cover her face.

Tovah charges in at a full tilt sprint with a BIG WRENCH.

TOVAH
This is the coolest beta test ever!

Tovah stops next to Evelyn. She sees the hives and cringes.

TOVAH (CONT'D)
Yeesh! You good?

EVELYN
I saw- I don't-

The rats nearest Evelyn go up in flames.

GRANDMA DONNA
Less chit-chat, more hit-rat!

EVELYN
(To Tovah, unconvincingly)
I'm fine.

TOVAH
Of course, you're Evelyn Birch!

With a reassuring smile, Tovah hustles to the nearest salt barrel, WHACKING away slug rats with her wrench as she goes.

GRANDMA DONNA (O.S.)
One more time, Evy!

Evelyn takes a deep breath and slowly signs fireball.

WHOOSH, a sizable fireball appears between her hands. Her face lights up with pride and firelight. She pushes the fireball at the nearest rat and it ignites.

Tovah pushes the salt barrel over. The waves of salt CRASHES onto the surrounding rats with a SIZZLE.

They exchange a smile and take a battle stance. FIGHT MUSIC, BETTER THAN EVER!

Evelyn signs, the salt balls levitate. Tovah, with her wrench, hits them like baseballs, straight into rat skulls.

After each SIZZLE, WHOOSH from Evelyn's small but consistent fireballs. Rows and rows of rats, flambéed.

Lil Guy shakes and smashes a rat into submission. Car El Arm flails a flaming rat to ignite more rats.

Unnoticed by Evelyn and Tovah, Donna sits still atop of the pile. With an approving smile, she watches Evelyn fight. Suddenly, the ground SHUDDERS, and Donna's smile drops.

From the final tunnel, an earth-shaking WAVE OF RATS moves in unison as one being. Other rats skitter to join the wave.

RATS
(Booming unison)
Enemy of the king. Your violence
will be met with violence.

GRANDMA DONNA
Ain't that always the way.

Grandma Donna stands and starts to sign.

Evelyn quickly signs Fireball. Between her hands FLASHES a BIG SPHERE of FLAMES-- too big, too fast- she YELPS.

As the flame dissipates, the skin on her forearms bubbles and blisters, her fingers curl, and she HISSES in pain.

GRANDMA DONNA (CONT'D)
Salt me, girls!

Tovah pitches salt balls with snowball-fight-MVP accuracy. Evelyn makes pained, inaccurate salt throws.

Grandma Donna throws her hands forward toward the Rat Wave. This time, TORRENTS OF FLAMES shoot from her arms.

A climactic WHOOSH of flame. The Rat Mountain turns to ash, leaving only a small Rat Ball. END FIGHT MUSIC, HIGH NOTE.

RATS
(Meek, higher pitch)
This is not over, interlopers!

The ball of rats rolls away down the tunnel.

Evelyn starts to charge after them. Donna grabs her shoulder.

GRANDMA DONNA
No need, I know a guy who'll want to collect those ones alive.

EVELYN
But we have to finish this!

GRANDMA DONNA
We did. Threat neutralized and spoils reclaimed, huzzah hooray.

Donna signs and the pile of goods GLOWS RED and shrinks to the same size as the barrels. She signs again, it glows purple and levitates. She drops it into an empty barrel.

EVELYN
Why didn't you show me fire tsunami first!? Would've been more useful!

GRANDMA DONNA
Ha! Clearly, fireball was fire enough. Hold those out.

She gestures to Evelyn's blistered arms. Evelyn extends them. Donna performs a new sign.

A RED haze settles on Evelyn's wounds, including the hives. As the haze fades, her face is back to normal, but her arms scab and peel.

GRANDMA DONNA (CONT'D)
Good as new.

TOVAH
Looks pretty gnarly to me.

EVELYN
Yeah, can you do that again?

GRANDMA DONNA
Oh, you're fine. Now then, let's get this junk back to its rightful owners and get you home before your mother has a conniption.

EVELYN
Mom! Oh, no! What time is it!?

Tovah whips out her phone. She sucks her teeth.

TOVAH
Good news, it's not late.

EXT. SEWER - DAWN

Tovah pulls Evelyn up out of the manhole near the Buick as the sun rises behind them.

TOVAH
Bad news, it's early.

Evelyn notes the sunrise and grimaces.

EVELYN
Rats.

END OF ACT 2

ACT 3**EXT. SUBURBAN SIDEWALK - DAWN**

Tovah's Buick drives slowly down the street. Stolen goods haloed in purple haze fly out of the windows and land on porches of passing houses.

TOVAH
(Old-timey newsie
impression)
Lost goods here, getcha lost n'
found odds n' ends here, get 'em
while they're hot!

INT. TOVAH'S CAR - DAWN

Evelyn sits in the middle seat in the back between two piles of stolen goods, examining her arms. She gently scratches it. It peels like a bad sunburn.

BZZ, BZZ, BZZ-- her phone vibrates in her pocket. She pulls it out and cringes.

On the screen, messages from her mom from the last three hours come in all at once: Where R U? "3 Missed Calls" Pick Up Now Plz. "2 Missed Calls" Why is ur location off? "Missed Call from Mom."

She takes a deep breath. She looks at her burns again. She scratches, then winces.

GRANDMA DONNA
Don't pick at it.

EVELYN
Can't you heal it again?

GRANDMA DONNA
Nope. Sometimes you'll be knocked
around, and you've got to be tough
about it.

Evelyn GRUMBLES. PING PING, her phone makes a new noise.

On her screen, her Nibble Knights profile. 4.5 Stars. At the top of the feed, a new one-star review. "I never got my order and she didn't even call" with a sad face emoji.

Evelyn slumps and GROANS. Tovah looks at her in the rearview.

TOVAH
Whatcha got there?

EVELYN
Greg's terrible review of me.

TOVAH
Ignore that. C'mon Ev, you did something way more important.

EVELYN
I know, but it's gonna haunt me.

GRANDMA DONNA
What do you care what this Greg man says about you on the internet?

EVELYN
It's not like some internet troll Grandma, I did a bad job and I lost half a star.

GRANDMA DONNA
Oh pish, you did a fine job given the circumstances. Greg can go kick rocks. I know your mom's kept you on a failure-free diet since you could walk, but the sooner you figure out that no one can be perfect all the time, the better.

EVELYN
I guess.

GRANDMA DONNA
Sure, take more guesses, be unsure, be wrong even, but for the love of all that's green, quit sulking.

EVELYN
(Dismissive)
Okay, Grandma.

Donna adjusts the rearview to look Evelyn in the eye.

GRANDMA DONNA
I know it's not easy for you, but you're tough, right?

Tovah quickly readjusts the mirror.

TOVAH
Pep talk without compromising the driver's visibility, please!

EXT. SUBURBAN PORCH - DAWN

The Just Bean Honest bag lands on the porch. It's crumpled and wet on the bottom and looks generally sad.

CREAK of a door opening. GREG, mid-40s, in pajamas, bald but with long hair on the edges, steps out and picks up the bag.

The wet bottom of the bag rips. A mushy yellow cake and a spilled coffee SPLAT onto the concrete.

Greg slumps. The world's saddest man.

INT. EVELYN'S FOYER - DAY

The front door creaks open. Evelyn's eyes peek through.

EVELYN

Coast clear.

Evelyn opens the door. Mom steps forcefully in the way, still dressed for work. Arms crossed, pissed.

JENNIFER

(In ASL)

Where have you been!?

TOVAH

What's your idea of 'clear,' Ev?

JENNIFER

(To Donna, disgusted)

And what are you doing here?

Grandma Donna signs in PIDGIN SIGNED ENGLISH. PSE uses ASL signs, but English grammar- indicating Donna didn't learn ASL for her Deaf daughter.

GRANDMA DONNA

(In PSE)

She came to me!

JENNIFER

*Then you should have sent her home!
You're the adult!*

EVELYN

I am an adult!

JENNIFER

Not in this house-

Jennifer sees Evelyn's burnt arms. She points at them.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
What happened!?

GRANDMA DONNA
 (In PSE)
She's fine! Just a little sunburn.

Jennifer forcefully, but carefully, picks up Evelyn's arm.

JENNIFER
*In the middle of the night? I know
 magic did this, Mom! How dare you!*

Jennifer drops Evelyn's arm and emphatically signs to her.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
*I told you: If magic solves one
 problem it creates three more!*

EVELYN
I'm fine!

JENNIFER
*I told you: Magic is dangerous! You
 didn't listen and now you're hurt.
 See? Actions have consequences!*

EVELYN
I'm fine, Mom!

GRANDMA DONNA
 (In PSE)
*Magic is not dangerous if you
 practice. If you would let the girl-*

JENNIFER
*And I told YOU, Mom: Evelyn is not
 going to be a witch like you, ever!*

Donna is taken aback, hurt.

JENNIFER (CONT'D)
*Go home, Mom, we'll talk later.
 Tovah, I'm texting your mom.
 Evelyn, go to your room and don't
 come out until work or class.*

Evelyn starts up the stairs.

EVELYN
 (Spoken, under her breath)
That's all I do anyway.

JENNIFER
You're all grounded for a month.

Evelyn turns around to her.

EVELYN
You can't ground Grandma!

JENNIFER
Try me. Go. You too, go.

END ASL. Jennifer points Evelyn up the stairs and ushers Tovah and Donna out. Jennifer shuts the door as Evelyn marches up the stairs, followed by Lil Guy. She MUTTERS.

EVELYN
I'd rather get third degree burns.

INT. EVELYN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Evelyn steps into her room and closes the door behind her.

GRANDMA DONNA (O.S.)
That could've gone worse.

Evelyn YELPS and whips around to see Donna lounging on her bed. Donna picks up a worn stuffed rabbit from the pillow.

GRANDMA DONNA (CONT'D)
Aww, you still have your Beebee! I would have thought you'd be too grown up for him by now.

EVELYN
How'd you get up here?

GRANDMA DONNA
Magic.

Evelyn PLOPS into her desk chair.

EVELYN
Mom said what she said, you gotta go, and I gotta nap before class in... an hour.

Evelyn THUNKS her head on the desk. Donna sits up and scoots to the edge of the bed.

GRANDMA DONNA
How could you sleep after your first fight! Oh! I'm so proud!

EVELYN

(Muffled, face down)

First and last. Mom's gonna keep me
under lock and key till I'm 25.

GRANDMA DONNA

Oh, pish! She doesn't understand
magic like we do, she never has.
Ignore her. You're my blood, you're
gonna do it all someday.

Evelyn pulls her head up and spins to face Donna.

EVELYN

I want to, it's just-

GRANDMA DONNA

Anywho! Now that it's just us
witches, tell me everything you saw
inside the hive mind.

Evelyn recoils.

EVELYN

How did you-?

GRANDMA DONNA

It made a meal of your face! I
assume you had the instinct to open
your eyes.

EVELYN

I did, but I don't know what I was
looking at. I was IN the hive mind?

GRANDMA DONNA

Just your consciousness. The slime
contains a fiendish neurotoxin that
lets the hive see into your mind,
but it works both ways, so you get
a peek into the hive before the
slug rat dissolves your face in
acid.

EVELYN

Horrifying, thanks.

Donna waves the thought away.

GRANDMA DONNA

But what did you see?

EVELYN (O.C.)
I saw us fighting. Then I saw more
rats. Then I saw a man, who looked
straight at me-

Grandma Donna stands abruptly.

GRANDMA DONNA
A man looked straight at you?

EVELYN
Yes.

GRANDMA DONNA
Not at the rat, he looked at you?

EVELYN
I think so? It was like he knew I
could see him. He was in this dark
concrete room surrounded by rats-

GRANDMA DONNA
The rats, how did they regard him?

EVELYN
Uhh, I don't know? Friend-ily?

Grandma Donna sinks pensively back onto the edge of the bed.

GRANDMA DONNA
That's. I mean. That could be-
Well, this is- Hmm. Unideal.

EVELYN
Do you know him?

GRANDMA DONNA
Of course not, I don't associate
with strange men! But that might
mean that someone sent the slug
rats out on purpose.

EVELYN
Sent them out? Out of where? They
were extinct!

GRANDMA DONNA
That's right. So, if someone's
bringing monsters back on purpose,
I doubt they're beginning and
ending with slug rats.

EVELYN
Sorry, bringing monsters back? How?

Grandma Donna rises from the bed.

GRANDMA DONNA

If there are monsters under our feet, there are monsters under our noses.

Evelyn blinks at her, baffled.

EVELYN

What?

GRANDMA DONNA

You and your friends are coming down to the shore next week, yes?

Bafflement intensifies.

EVELYN

Wh- Yes? How do you-?

GRANDMA DONNA

Splendid, stop by and I'll teach you a new charm or hex.

EVELYN

You didn't answer my question: How could someone bring monsters back?

GRANDMA DONNA

That's a very long story, I'll tell you when you visit. Oh! I'll show you a defensive hex! You really did learn the gas before the brakes, atta girl, Evy!

EVELYN

Grandma, I've got school! And work! I can't just-

GRANDMA DONNA

You can!

EVELYN

This is a huge problem for someone who only knows one- two spells!

GRANDMA DONNA

It is!

EVELYN

What if I burn myself again?

GRANDMA DONNA

You will!

EVELYN

What if I try to do magic like you
and I just can't?

Donna becomes extremely, gravely serious.

GRANDMA DONNA

You can. You're finally old enough
to act on your own terms. You have
boundless potential, and I will die
before I see you squander it.
Saturday, four o'clock. Yes?

Evelyn is taken aback. Intimidated. She stammers.

EVELYN

O-Okay. Yes. S-Saturday.

Donna reverts to her flamboyant, airy default. She starts
toward the door.

GRANDMA DONNA

Grand! I'll set out tea and
whatnot. Keep practicing your fire
in the meantime, my mini-me monster
slayer! Until then!

She turns in the doorway, door half closed behind her.

GRANDMA DONNA (CONT'D)

Oh, by the way, I took the stairs.
Sometimes, 'magic' is just a bit of
stealth and some slight of hand.
Remember that.

Donna winks and shuts the door behind her.

Evelyn closes her eyes. She flops on her bed. As her head
hits the pillow, she sleepily exhales. She smiles.

EVELYN

Hm. Evelyn Birch, monster slayer.

Her BLARING ALARM CLOCK goes off. She hits it with a GROAN.

INT. SEWER - DAY

Deep in the sewer, something HUGE moves in the shadows.
Something clawed. Something angry. Something that SCREECHES.