

SQUIRREL BOROUGH

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(draft in progress)

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FADE IN

EXT. CRITTENBOUGH HIGH - AUTUMN, WED. NOON

RAYLI scampers through an oak tree, clutching an acorn in one paw, leaping across branches. She is a squirrel (*American Red Squirrel*) in her final year of high school. Her friends are running with her: STINT (girl *Gray Squirrel*), FETTER (boy *Black Squirrel*), and QUASH (boy *Indian Palm Squirrel*). Their clothes are traditional, 1800s.

This tree is Crittenbough High School, with a critter-sized multi-story urban building founded on the main trunk, rising above the treetop, made of bricks with wood doors and windows, with smaller buildings along the boughs. The students are many species of squirrels.

FINLEY is Stint's younger brother (*Gray Squirrel*), chasing behind the 4 others.

FINLEY

Give it back to me! That's mine!

STINT

Rayli, pass it to me!

Rayli passes the acorn to Stint.

FINLEY

Stint! I'm going to tell Mom on you!

Stint stops to taunt Finley, holding the acorn out of reach.

STINT

What are you going to do about it,
huh? Huh?

FINLEY

Stint!

STINT

Hey, Fetter!

Stint tosses the acorn to Fetter. They all dodge through a crowd of classmates.

QUASH

Pass it here, Fetter!

Fetter fakes a pass. Quash leaps to catch the empty air.

FETTER

Psych!

QUASH
(sarcastically)
Ha. Ha.

FETTER
Think fast!

Fetter quickly throws the acorn to Quash, and it bounces off his head. Fetter leaps to catch the rebound.

QUASH
Ow! (Quitting) That's it.

Quash stops playing as the others run past.

FINLEY
Stint, get it back for me!

Stint runs to Fetter and grabs the acorn.

STINT
What, this?

They run up the school steps into the front doors. The sign says "Crittenbough High School".

INT. CRITTENBOUGH HIGH HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They run down the crowded hallway. An old TEACHER (*Eurasian Red Squirrel*) yells at them:

TEACHER
No running in the halls!

They all downshift to speed-walking, dodging other students, heading toward the exit at the other end of the hall. Stint keeps just out of reach of Finley, humming innocently.

FINLEY
Stint! ... Stint! ... Stiiiiint!

They exit and resume running.

EXT. CRITTENBOUGH HIGH - CONTINUOUS

STINT
Hey Rayli, up top!

Stint hurls the acorn high into the tree top. They all leap upward. Then Stint and Fetter have a look of surprise and stop suddenly. Rayli keeps running to catch the acorn, pursued by Finley.

RAYLI

I got it!

Mrs. MARPLE is an opossum, one of the teachers. She dresses conservatively and wears glasses, holding a bag of papers and binders. She is patient but stern. She happens to be standing where the acorn is landing, so she casually reaches up to catch it in one paw.

Looking up instead of forward, Rayli crashes into Marple's belly.

RAYLI

Oh sorry, Mrs. Marple.

MARPLE

Is this yours, Rayli?

RAYLI

Uh, yeah.

Marple squints suspiciously. Then Finley comes into view in the distance.

FINLEY

Hey, give me back my lunch!

Marple sighs, disappointed in Rayli.

RAYLI

No, it was Stint's idea! And Fetter and Quash!

Rayli looks around, but the others are nowhere in sight. Finley catches up.

MARPLE

So what are you going to do, Rayli?

Marple hands the acorn to Rayli. Rayli takes it sheepishly and hands it to Finley, mumbling:

RAYLI

Sorry.

FINLEY

Thanks, Mrs. Marple.

Finley walks away.

MARPLE

I'll see you in class, Miss Rayli.

The school bell rings.

EXT. SQUIRREL BOROUGH - DAY

TITLE SEQUENCE: Views of Squirrel Borough, a working-class squirrel neighborhood in an oak grove by a muddy river. The houses are an old urban style: three-story row-houses lined densely along each bough, made of bricks and wood with windows and chimneys. Squirrels sit on their front stoops as others bustle along the boughs. Some trees have tall office buildings and factories rising above the treetops.

Water wheels draw water from the river in buckets up ropes into a complex network of wooden troughs and reed pipes running through the treetops and into each block. The technology is simple: no electricity, gas, engines, or plastic; metal is scarce.

Wooden suspension bridges and elevated trains connect the trees and cross the river. The trains are like wooden cable cars linked together, but hanging from ropes like gondola lifts. The ropes move on pulleys powered by the water wheels. Raccoons are like busses, with a deck on their back for squirrels to ride. Barges and ferries cross the river.

The population is mostly squirrels of many species. Some chipmunks and opossum work and mingle in the neighborhood. On the ground and river are more critters like beaver, fox, rabbit, skunk, porcupine, gopher, polecat, mink, etc.

INT. SCIENCE CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

Rayli is at her desk, doodling interesting designs on a science worksheet. Stint is at the desk next to her, and Fetter and Quash are nearby among the class of squirrels, all with worksheets. Mrs. Marple is lecturing in front at the chalkboard.

MARPLE

You'll notice in question 7 you need
to calculate the potential energy
of... [*TBA about potential
energy*] ...

Marple continues lecturing in the background as Stint and Rayli whisper.

STINT

(whispering)
Hey Rayli, look.

Stint has crumpled a small wad of paper on the corner of her desk, with her finger cocked to flick it at a CLASSMATE.

RAYLI

(whispering)

Shh, you already got me in enough trouble today.

STINT

Oh, stop your whimpering. You didn't get in trouble.

Stint flicks the wad at the classmate, then looks down innocently at her worksheet. The classmate looks behind her to see who did it. He scans around and sees Rayli looking at him. He gives her a cross look. Rayli shakes her head and whispers to him:

RAYLI

I didn't do it!

Suddenly we see Marple standing on the other side of Rayli.

MARPLE

(sternly)

Miss Rayli!

Rayli sits upright, and grabs her pencil to write on the worksheet, which is mostly covered in doodles.

Marple takes Rayli's worksheet and adjusts her glasses to examine it. She keeps the worksheet and hands Rayli a blank new one.

MARPLE

See me after class, Rayli.

Marple walks away. Stint snickers at Rayli. Rayli glares back at Stint.

The bell rings and all the students start gathering their belongings and putting on their backpacks.

MARPLE

(to the class)

Don't forget your model bridges are due Friday.

Fetter sees Rayli isn't leaving.

FETTER

Aren't you coming, Rayli?

RAYLI

(resentfully)

I have to stay after.

FETTER

Oh. We'll be at the old dogwood
stump. See you there?

RAYLI

Yeah.

She waves to her friends as all the classmates leave. Marple
sits behind the teacher's desk.

MARPLE

Rayli, come here.

Rayli, sullenly takes her backpack and stands in front of
Marple's desk. Marple looks at Rayli for a beat, then:

MARPLE

I don't get you, Rayli. You always
do pretty well on the tests, but you
don't really apply yourself.

She holds up and rattles Rayli's doodled worksheet. Rayli
says nothing.

MARPLE

You'll be graduating this year,
right?

RAYLI

Yeah.

MARPLE

Do you know what you're going to do
yet after high school?

Rayli shrugs.

RAYLI

Not really.

MARPLE

Are you going to college?

RAYLI

I dunno. Maybe. My parents want me
to.

MARPLE

Well, what do you want to study?
What do you like doing?

RAYLI

I like singing.

MARPLE

(nodding)

Oh, are you in the choir?

RAYLI

No.

MARPLE

Oh.

RAYLI

I like drawing.

Marple looks at Rayli's worksheet.

MARPLE

I noticed. I really like your designs here. Do you take art classes?

RAYLI

No. Well just one in 9th grade.

A beat.

MARPLE

Rayli, you've got a lot more potential in you than you think. You just need to figure out where to focus it. Do you understand?

RAYLI

I know.

MARPLE

You say hi to your folks for me, okay?

RAYLI

Okay.

Rayli starts walking out, then at the door she looks back to Marple.

RAYLI

Thanks.

EXT. SQUIRREL BOROUGH - EVENING

View of the Squirrel Borough night skyline with lit buildings and homes. We hear crickets chirping and a frog croak.

EXT. RAYLI'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

View of Rayli's row-house, 3 stories, a warm glow of lights in the windows. Some neighbors are sitting on their stoops.

INT. RAYLI'S HOME - CONTINUOUS

Rayli's mom Furleen is cooking in the kitchen, a traditional housewife in an apron. Rayli's dad, LARNEY, a working-class breadwinner, sits at the table reading the paper. Rayli's older sister, KAYLI, a quiet, studious med-school student wearing glasses, reclines on the couch reading a textbook with a notebook at her side. Her little brother, SCRUB, sits on the floor playing with wooden toys. The room is warmly lit with lanterns and candles.

FURLEEN

Dinner's almost ready. Kayli, do you know where Rayli is?

KAYLI

For the fourth time, Mom, no.

FURLEEN

I swear that girl lives to test me.
I told her to be home by six.

Larney looks over his paper at the wall clock.

LARNEY

She'll be home. It's only 5:58.

Scrub mimics, not looking up from his toys:

SCRUB

It's only 5:58.

FURLEEN

(smiling)

Okay boys, you don't need to gang up on me. Hey Scrub, put away your toys and go wash up.

Scrub continues mashing two toys together, making sound effects with his mouth. Larney continues reading the paper.

FURLEEN

Scrub, did you hear me?

The door opens and Rayli walks in and tosses her backpack on the loveseat.

RAYLI

Hello!

LARNEY
(smiling to Furleen)
See, I told you.

FURLEEN
Hi Dear.

LARNEY (concurrently)
Hey Fluff Puff.

Larney continues reading his paper. Scrub bounds up to Rayli and jumps up to hug her.

SCRUB
Rayli!

RAYLI
Hey Scrub-a-dub!

FURLEEN
Okay, everyone at the table.
Dinner's ready. Scrub, toys!

SCRUB
Okay.

Scrub scoops his toys into a basket. Kayli sets her book down and goes to set the table.

FURLEEN
Rayli, how many times have I told
you not to put your backpack on the
sofa?

RAYLI
Sorry.

Rayli moves her backpack to a wall-hook near the stairs. Scrub sits at the table.

FURLEEN
Scrub, wash you hands.

SCRUB
Oh yeah.

Scrub scampers off to the bathroom. Furleen starts serving food.

FURLEEN
(sternly)
Larney, it's dinner time.

Larney folds up the paper and puts it away. Kayli and Rayli sit down. Furleen continues serving food as they talk. Larney starts eating as soon as he's served.

FURLEEN

(to Rayli)

Were you with Stint and Fetter
again?

RAYLI

Yeah, and Quash.

FURLEEN

At the dogwood?

RAYLI

Yeah.

FURLEEN

You know I don't like you hanging
out with them.

RAYLI

Mom, they're my friends!

FURLEEN

Why don't you hang out with
Quarabel?

RAYLI

(groaning)

Mom!

FURLEEN

What? She's a good student.

Rayli shakes her head and sighs.

FURLEEN

Larney, help me out here.

Larney looks up from his food, not following the
conversation. Furleen finishes serving and sits down next
between Larney and Rayli.

LARNEY

What?

FURLEEN

Quarabel?

LARNEY

Huh?

FURLEEN

Never mind. Oh, the nut butter!

Furleen gets up again to get something from the kitchen. We
hear the TOILET flush in the background.

FURLEEN

It's just that...I don't think they're the best influence for you.

RAYLI

Mom, we're not doing anything wrong!

Scrub scampers up to the table.

FURLEEN

Scrub, did you wash your hands?

SCRUB

Yeah.

FURLEEN

Are you sure?

Scrub groans and tromps back to the bathroom dramatically. Furleen sits back down.

FURLEEN

Honey, I just want you to do better in school, but your friends, well...

RAYLI

Can we talk about something else, please?!

A tense silence.

LARNEY

Have you decided which colleges to apply to?

Exasperated, Rayli groans and lowers her fork which clanks against her plate.

FURLEEN

Young lady!

RAYLI

I don't know, Dad.

Scrub returns to the table and starts eating.

LARNEY

Well have you decided what to study?

RAYLI

Why does everyone keep asking me that? How am I supposed to know?

SCRUB

Ew, does this have almonds in it?

FURLEEN

Just pick around it, Dear.

LARNEY

(gesturing to Kayli)

Why don't you go to med school like your sister Kayli?

RAYLI

'Cause I'm not Kayli!

FURLEEN

We know you're not Kayli, Dear.

RAYLI

(offended)

What's that supposed to mean?!

Kayli is following attentively but silently. Scrub is trying to bury his asparagus under something else on his plate.

FURLEEN

Scrub, I see you hiding your asparagus. Eat it.

Scrub dramatically stabs the asparagus with his fork, shoves it in his mouth, and chews with pieces hanging out, staring sourly at her.

LARNEY

What about law school?

RAYLI

Ew.

LARNEY

Engineering?

RAYLI

I dunno.

FURLEEN

What do you think, Kayli.

KAYLI

I'm staying out of this.

Rayli picks at her food silently. Furleen leans over and squeezes Rayli.

FURLEEN

We just want you to be happy, Dear.

Furleen kisses Rayli on the head.

RAYLI

I know... May I be excused?

FURLEEN

You haven't finished.

RAYLI

I'm not hungry.

INT. RAYLI'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

SONG: "Find my Spark"

The door opens and Rayli comes in carrying a candle. She drops her backpack on her bed. She puts the candle on her desk, where we see a glass terrarium with her pet firefly BLINKY. She leans on the desk and taps the glass.

RAYLI

Hey Blinky. I bet no one ever asked you to plan your whole life.

Blinky shrugs and flickers his light.

RAYLI

They say I don't apply myself. What does that even mean?

[*Lyrics TBA about finding her passion, planning her life*]

Suddenly we notice Scrub standing in the doorway.

SCRUB

Were you just singing to your bug?!

EXT. CRITTENBOUGH HIGH - THU. NOON

Rayli, Stint, Fetter, and Quash are sitting around the outer branches of the school, eating their lunches. Stint has a spyglass with her. Students are around branches, eating and milling about. FURLEMUND is a student in the distant wearing wealthy white clothes, eating fastidiously.

FETTER

Holy oaks, check out what Furlemund is wearing! Isn't he Mr. fluffy-pants!

QUASH

Ha! He looks like a big aspen!

FETTER

Yeah, a trembling aspen!

QUASH

(in a posh British accent)

"Excuse me, good sir, do you know
the way to the maple tea room?"

FETTER

(in a posh British accent)

"Yes, yes. Have your footmen carry
you to the northern blue spruce and
then you can...prune my ash!"

They laugh. Stint is looking upward through her spyglass.

STINT

Hey Rayli, check it out. There's a
corvus corax!

She hands Rayli the spyglass, who looks near the same
direction.

RAYLI

A what?

Stint touches the spyglass and Rayli's head to point her in
the right direction, making sure the spyglass touches her
eye.

STINT

Up there.

From Rayli's POV through the spyglass we see CORVA, a raven
perched atop the oak branch, facing away. The spyglass is
unnecessary, so the view is an extreme closeup and shaky.
Rayli lowers the spyglass to look directly at the raven.

RAYLI

Oh, a raven. So what?

Stint is snickering at Rayli.

RAYLI

What?

Rayli turns to Fetter and Quash. We see a black ring around
her eye. Stint had pranked her by putting ink on the
eyepiece. They start laughing.

RAYLI

What?!

Rayli catches on, touches near her eye, and sees the ink on
her finger. She is partly exasperated, but amused too.

RAYLI

Again?! Okay, another point for
Stint.

She tries wiping off the rest with her fingers.

STINT

Ooh, let's prank the bird. Rayli, go sneak up and tie their foot to the branch!

Rayli giggles and nods. Stint pulls a string from her pocket and hands it to Rayli.

STINT

Okay, go.

Rayli creeps up the branch slowly and quietly. When she reaches the raven she wraps the string over its foot and starts to tie a knot.

CORVA is a small Common Raven, same age as Rayli but from a different school. Her clothes are a working-class steampunk style, with a backpack integrated in her coat. She wears a headpiece that resembles a leather flight helmet, and goggles which are attached to the headpiece by a hinge so they can be flipped up. She has an Irish accent.

She is casually looking at the landscape when she suddenly feels something on her foot. Startled, she flies away. The string catches around Rayli's hand and pulls her out of the tree. Corva looks down and sees Rayli dangling.

EXT. RIVER - CONTINUOUS

CORVA

What are ya doing down there?

RAYLI

Let me go!

Corva struggles to fly with a squirrel squirming on her foot. She starts descending.

CORVA

I'm tryin to, I am!

Corva is descending over the river, heading downstream away from Squirrel Borough toward open country. We hear the rush of the river water.

RAYLI

Take me down! I'm stuck!

CORVA

I know, I see that!

Rayli's hand slips free of the string and she falls toward the water.

RAYLI

Aaaaah!

Corva dives to try to catch her, but it's too late. Rayli sinks into the water. Then a moment later she bobs up, swept along with the current.

RAYLI

Help!

Rayli tries swimming to shore, but the water is too turbulent, knocking her around rocks.

We see a waterfall ahead, and Corva sees it too.

CORVA

Hang on, I'll get ya!

Corva tries hovering over Rayli to grab her, but everything is moving too fast.

CORVA

Here!

Rayli reaches up but misses. Corva keeps trying, but misses several times. She looks up and sees the edge of the waterfall.

CORVA

Oh no!

RAYLI

Aaaaaaaaah!

Rayli falls over the edge. Corva flies out to look for her. She sees jagged rocks and broken trees at the bottom of the waterfall. Then she spots Rayli falling.

She goes into a dive, grabs onto Rayli, and pulls her away from the waterfall, but she can't pull up because of the weight and momentum.

They crash into the open water and are separated. The river here is wider, and the current pulls them downriver. They try swimming to shore, but Corva has trouble swimming, and she's unable to fly. She's hurt.

CORVA

Ow!

Rayli swims to Corva and grabs her. They try to swim to shore, but make no progress. Eventually they see land in the middle of the river. They manage to steer themselves there.

EXT. ISLAND - CONTINUOUS

Rayli and Corva pull themselves onto the muddy bank, and lay panting and sighing with relief. Corva flips up her goggles, awkwardly rolls onto her feet, and stands up.

CORVA

What in crownation were ya doin' up there?! Ya nearly got us killed!

Rayli sits up, angry.

RAYLI

Why did you drop me in the water?!

CORVA

I didn' drop ya. Ya fell! And I couldn't exactly steer with you thrashin' about. What were ya even tryin' to do?

RAYLI

It was just a joke.

CORVA

It wasn't funny!

Corva feels sore in one wing, so she tries rotating it to work out the pain, gritting her beak.

CORVA

Agh...and I hurt my shoulder too.

RAYLI

Can't you fly?

CORVA

I don' know.

Corva slowly starts flapping her wings and speeding up, getting a couple feet up, but gradually keels toward her wounded wing and falls to the ground.

CORVA

Agh. It's too sore. How am I suppose ta get home now?!

RAYLI

I need to get home too!

Rayli looks around. Corva looks at the waterfall far in the distance.

CORVA

You mean all the way up there?

RAYLI

Oh no... Why did you drop me?!

CORVA

I didn' I tell ya. It's your own fault!

Rayli looks around.

RAYLI

Where are we?

Corva points down the narrow strip of land.

CORVA

I don' know, but there's only one way to go, so that's where I'm goin'.

Corva walks along the shore. Rayli follows.

RAYLI

Wait, I'll go with you.

CORVA

You're not going to tie up m' foot again, are ya?

RAYLI

No. Maybe.

Corva looks back at her sternly.

RAYLI (cont'd)

Kidding!

CORVA

Molt! I'm surely going ta miss school tomorrow, too! I can't believe it!

RAYLI

Why?

CORVA

M' home is just a short flight away, but it's gonna be a long walk.

RAYLI

No, I mean why are you worried about school?

CORVA

Cause I have ta turn in my homework, or it'll be marked late!

RAYLI

So?

CORVA

So then it'll hurt my grades!

RAYLI

Oh.... I'm Rayli, by the way.

CORVA

I'm Corva.

RAYLI

Hm. Why were you at Crittendough?

CORVA

M' seed collection. I was tryin' to find somethin' exotic.

RAYLI

Oh, you like seeds?

CORVA

Noo, it's for m' biology homework. If I find some seeds the other kids don't have, hopefully I'd get the highest grade.

RAYLI

Homework, homework, homework. Nerd much?

They see footprints ahead on the shore.

CORVA

Wait, someone's been here. No, it's us. That's our own footprints! We're trapped on an island!

From above we see they're on a small island with pine trees and brush. Circling above them we see turkey vultures in clothes.

EXT. ISLAND - LATE AFTERNOON

At a different part of the island, something is rising in the water heading toward the island. It's a pirate hat. Then wearer emerges, an alligator, Captain TOOTHMOUTH, wearing pirate garb and an eyepatch on his right eye.

Two more pirate gators emerge, SWASH and SWABBER. Swash has a shovel strapped to his back. Toothmouth crawls onto land, then Swash and Swabber heave a treasure chest onto the shore.

TOOTHMOUTH

Here be the Island of Dead Ghosts.

SWABBER

Captain, isn' that redundant?

TOOTHMOUTH

Speak your tongue, Swabber.

SWABBER

I mean, aren't all ghosts dead by definition? Have you ever seen the ghost of the living?

Toothmouth groans.

TOOTHMOUTH

Your point be notwithstanding', here is where we find ourselves. Now make ye-self useful, and shoulder the load to that bent crooked tree.

They walk to a lone crooked tree on a knoll, with Swabber on the left and Swash trailing on the right.

SWABBER

(strained under the weight)
But captain, how is crooked different from bent?

TOOTHMOUTH

Swabber! Stop pesterin' me or I'll make you plank the walk!

Swash points to a spot on the ground.

SWASH

Captain, is here good?

TOOTHMOUTH

Where?

Toothmouth jerks to his right, but still cannot see Swash, so he keeps turning in a jerky motion till he can finally see Swash with his good eye.

TOOTHMOUTH

Where are you? How many times have I told you, Swash, to stay on my good side.

SWASH

Sorry Captain. Here?

TOOTHMOUTH

Yes, here shall be the secret spot
where we bury our buried treasure.

SWABBER

Cap--

TOOTHMOUTH

Swabber! I heard it too.
(to Swash) Now dig!

SWASH

Aye, Captain.

Swash starts digging a hole with the shovel.

TOOTHMOUTH

Soon I shall amass enough fortune to
rule the seven swamps, and all
living souls shall fear my name.

SWASH

What's scary about your name?

TOOTHMOUTH

They will shiver in their breeches
when anyone dares to utter the
frightening words: Captain
Toothmouth.

SWABBER

Now you see, that doesn't have the
terrifying ring you think it does.

SWASH

Maybe to a dentist.

Swash and Swabber snicker.

TOOTHMOUTH

Enough of the two of you
walleyescags! Dig!

It is now dusk. Toothmouth sees Rayli and Corva in the
distance bushes collecting nuts and berries, near a thicket
of pines.

TOOTHMOUTH

Hold! We be not alone.

Swash stops digging. Toothmouth points to Rayli and Corva.

TOOTHMOUTH

We cannot run the risk of revealing
the secret location of our buried

treasure. So as they say: Dead ducks
have no tails.

SWABBER

I think you mean--

TOOTHMOUTH

Never mind what I mean! Just do as I
say. Swash, you go around to the one
on the left. Swabber, you on the
right.

Swash and Swabber slowly sneak toward Rayli and Corva from
opposite sides. Eventually Corva notices a sound.

CORVA

Shh! Listen.

RAYLI

What?

CORVA

I thought I heard something.

Then Swash and Swabber lurch into view, gaping and hissing,
creeping closer. Rayli and Corva freeze with fear.

SWABBER

Sorry to interrupt, but we are under
strict orders to eat you.

SWASH

Looks like we got us a rotisserie
raven and squirrel-kabab. Don't
worry, this won't take long.

Rayli notices a pine tree near the shore with a spiral
staircase winding up its trunk. It leads to some sort of
structure high up the tree. She points with her eyes.

RAYLI

(whispering)
Corva, that tree.

CORVA

(whispering)
I see. One... two... three!

They leap away from the gators who snap their jaws, and
scurry toward the tree. The gators hiss and chase them.

SWASH

Come back here, me meaty drumstick!

The gators start to gain on them, but Rayli and Corva make it to the staircase and climb upward. The gators stop at the bottom.

SWABBER

I didn't ask for my food to go!

SWASH

We'll be waiting here whenever you change your mind.

RAYLI

That was close!

CORVA

Yeah!

Seeing they are safe for now, Rayli and Corva walk more slowly up the stairs, looking up at the mysterious structure.

RAYLI

What do you think that is?

CORVA

I guess we're about ta find out.

EXT./INT. TREE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

As they continue spiraling upstairs, they see it is an old abandoned house, like a haunted house, falling apart, with peeling paint, partially covered in vines and Spanish moss. It is two stories, with several rooms added in an ad hoc fashion, and a large upper deck.

RAYLI

Whoa, look at this place!

CORVA

Wow.

RAYLI

Hello, anybody here?

They wait. No answer. Corva sees the sun setting.

CORVA

Well, I guess this is our shelter for the night.

The front door is ajar. Rayli pushes it open. It creaks. Then it falls down, stirring dust and billowing spider webs. The furniture is distressed; some are overturned.

They enter. The floor creaks. On the mantel Rayli sees a candle in a candleholder and matches. She lights the candle

and takes it. They look around. On the walls they see faded old portrait paintings of raccoons.

CORVA

Look, this must have been a raccoon mansion.

RAYLI

I wonder what happened to them.

They wander upstairs. Rayli notices a pocket watch on a table and picks it up. She brushes the dust off, looks at the intricate designs, and tries winding it, but it doesn't work.

RAYLI

Corva, look. This is so pretty. You think it's okay to take it? Maybe I can get it fixed.

CORVA

I don' see how anyone would miss it.

Rayli wears the watch chain like a necklace and tucks the watch under her clothes. They walk out the double-doorway to the deck. The stars are coming out, and the moon glows. The view of the tree line and glimmering river is beautiful.

CORVA

This seems like a good time to have our supper.

Corva removes her backpack with her beak and sets it down. Rayli pours the nuts and berries out from the backpack, then she starts dividing them quickly: one in her mouth, one aside for Corva, one in her month, one for Corva, one in her mouth, etc. Corva gawks at Rayli's bulging cheeks.

CORVA

You gon' ta eat that all at once?

RAYLI

(with mouth full)

Sorry. Habit.

Rayli nibbles on her cheek stash and talks with her mouth full for the next several lines. Corva removes her headpiece with her claw. She winces in pain.

RAYLI

Your wing hurt?

CORVA

Yeah.

RAYLI

Hang on.

Rayli goes inside and tears down strips of a tattered old white curtain. Corva watches and eats food as Rayli returns.

RAYLI

Here, let me wrap you wing. It'll feel better.

CORVA

Thanks.

Rayli is gently wrapping the fabric like a sling around Corva's body and sore wing, leaving her good wing free.

RAYLI

By the way, thanks...for saving me...from the waterfall. I'm sorry your wing is hurt.

Corva smiles gently.

CORVA

It'll heal.

A beat.

RAYLI

My family must be worried sick about me. I don't even know how I'm going to get home.

CORVA

I've got a plan. Come home with me. We just go downstream, then m' dad can fly you home. Easy peasy.

RAYLI

Downstream? But I need to get up there!

She points upstream.

CORVA

I know, but there's no way back that way. I think you need to go farther ta get closer, ya know?

Rayli contemplates.

RAYLI

Okay, I guess you're right. Thanks. But how are we going to get off this island.

CORVA

I can just build us somethin' to float downstream.

RAYLI

You can do that?

CORVA

Yeah. M' dad is a builder. I'm gon' ta be engineer. That's why I wan' ta keep m' grades up, so I can get in the best school.

RAYLI

Oh, so your dad's really tough on grades?

CORVA

No, no, he never fusses. I do that enough ta m'self.

RAYLI

Oh. So you just know what you want to be? That must be nice.

CORVA

Why, what are you gon' ta be?

RAYLI

I don't know. It's kind of a sore spot.

CORVA

Well, I'm gon' ta roost for the night. We've got a big journey tomorrow. G'nite, Rayli.

RAYLI

G'nite, Corva.

Corva goes inside the house to sleep. Rayli leans on the deck rail, looking at the river, and sings a reprise melody of "Find My Spark":

RAYLI

She just knows what she wants,
and she does it.
I want to know what I want,
and love it.
Maybe the river knows where.
Maybe she'll carry me there.

We see a view of the tree, house, and Rayli.

EXT. ISLAND - FRI. MORNING

At the bottom of the tree house we see Swash and Swabber. They yell up the tree:

SWASH

Wakey, wakey! Me belly's grumbling
for somethin' tasty!

SWABBER

You can't stay up there forever.
We've got places to be and booty to
plunder!

SWASH

Hellooooo!

EXT. TREE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Rayli and Corva are outside a shed attached to the house,
looking down at the gators.

CORVA

Okay, you know what to do?

RAYLI

Got it.

Rayli scampers out on a bough and quickly gnaws off a small
branch.

Corva grabs a twig in her beak and pries off the two wooden
doors from the shed. The old rusted hinges pop off easily.

Rayli pulls some vines off the house and strips the leaves.

Corva drags the doors with her beak to the edge of the bough
overlooking the water.

Rayli returns with the vine ropes wrapped around her
shoulders, a long straight twig, and two branches the width
of the two doors.

Corva looks down at the two gators idly waiting at the tree
trunk.

CORVA

Here goes.

EXT. ISLAND - CONTINUOUS

Swash and Swabber are playing cards, waiting.

SWABBER

You know, Swash, that Captain
Toothmouth isn't going to pay us
overtime for this.

SWASH

Yeah, that's a direct violation of
the articles of agreement.

SWABBER

Don't you think it's time for us to
be formin' a union?

One of the wooden doors belly flops onto the edge of the
shore behind them. Swash turns toward the noise.

SWASH

What was that?

SWABBER

I said don't you think we should be
formin' a union.

SWASH

No, no. That sound.

The other wooden door belly flops next to it. Swabber still
doesn't notice.

SWABBER

It's the beatin' of the drum for
pirate equality!

One of the branches spears into the shore, standing upright.
Then the other.

SWASH

No you log head! Those sounds!
Something's fishy.

Several trees away they hear a squirrel barking.

SWASH

Over there!

They scuttle over to the other tree. Rayli pops out from
behind, clinging to the trunk several feet above the ground.
She circles the tree trunk, then leaps toward another tree,
vaulting with the long pole to cover the distance. The gators
chase her as she vaults from tree to tree, drawing them away
from the treehouse.

Corva tiptoes down the spiral staircase and to the wood
materials. She puts the two branches on one of the doors,
then pushes both doors into the water.

EXT. RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Corva hops on the door with the branches and holds the other
door close with her claw as they drift downstream.

Rayli suddenly dives into the water close to her, having leapt from a high tree. She swims toward Corva, carrying the pole and wearing the ropes.

The gators come chasing after them into the water.

SWASH

Come back here, you gamey nugget!

Rayli gets onto the other door, but it's drifted away from Corva.

CORVA

Throw me the rope!

Rayli takes one of the ropes and throws an end to Corva, who catches it her beak. They pull the rope to draw their doors together. The gators are closing in.

SWABBER

It's nothing personal! Just part of piratin'!

With amazing speed, Corva ties together the doors and branches into a sturdy raft. Rayli uses the long pole to steer. The waters get more rapid.

SWABBER

You know we're not even supposed to be in rivers. We deserve hazard pay for this!

SWASH

You're right! It's time to stand up for our rights!

The gators turn and swim back to the island.

SONG: "Going with the Flow"

Rayli and Corva guide their raft downstream as they pass through scenery and see ducks, turtles, and other wildlife.

[Lyrics TBA about adventure]

EXT. ISLAND - LATER

Swash and Swabber are marching back and forth in a pathetic picket line of two, holding signs that say "STRIKE! Pirate Local 104". They're in front of the treasure chest and open pit, chanting:

SWASH & SWABBER

Yo, ho, yo, ho,
longer lunch breaks or we go!

Yo, ho, yo, ho,
unsafe looting, we say no!

Captain Toothmouth is glowering at them, growling.

EXT. TOWN - AFTERNOON

[*New scene TBA: They stop at a small town for provisions. Rayli pranks Corva, who doesn't like it. They see raccoons scamming someone and inadvertently foil their scam. The raccoons confront them and see the stopwatch on Rayli's neck, which belongs to their grandparent. The raccoons chase them. Rayli and Corva escape on the raft. The raccoons swear to find them.*]

EXT. RIVER - DUSK

Rayli and Corva are drifting downstream on the raft through a rocky canyon. A fog hovers at the top of the canyon. It is raining lightly. Rayli holds her paw out.

RAYLI

I think it's starting to rain.

CORVA

It's just a drizzle. There should be another town just past this canyon.

The rain starts getting heavier. They get wet, especially Rayli. Corva raises her good wing.

CORVA

Come on over here. You're lookin' like a wet dog.

Rayli takes shelter under Corva's wing.

RAYLI

Thanks.

CORVA

Sure thing.

RAYLI

Hey, I'm sorry I tricked you earlier today.

CORVA

It's okay.

A beat.

RAYLI

So what do you for fun?

CORVA

Well, I like to read.

RAYLI

That's it?

CORVA

I don' have time for much else.
Mostly homework. Sometimes my dad
helps me build things for school
projects.

RAYLI

What about your mom?

CORVA

She's gone.

RAYLI

Oh. What happened to her?

CORVA

I'd rather not talk about it, if ya
don' mind.

RAYLI

Oh, sorry.

CORVA

It's alright.

RAYLI

So it's just you and your dad?

CORVA

Yeah, just us. Ever since I was
little. I sorta help take care of m'
dad.

Rayli looks up at Corva. Corva looks out at the water.

Suddenly there's a bump, and raft starts turning.

CORVA

We hit a snag!

Rayli picks up the pole. Corva dips her wing tip in the water
like an oar.

There's another bump, and the raft starts tipping. Rayli and
Corva turn the raft to get past the snag.

There's a flash of lighting, then a clap of thunder. The rain gets heavy. They drift by a tributary river joining the mainstream. The water is white and choppy. The shores are lined with large boulders at the foot of the canyon walls with no place to land.

CORVA

Hang on!

They struggle to navigate the raft, as it hits rocks and floating logs. A fallen tree on one shore channels the water into a rapid. The raft starts falling apart. The rains get heavier and the water gets whiter. They are heading toward a dead tree standing in the middle of the river, but they are unable to steer away. The raft strikes it and breaks apart. Corva clings to one of the doors going around the right side, partially submerged. Rayli clings to one of the raft branches going around the left side.

RAYLI

Corva!

CORVA

Rayli!

They try in vein to propel themselves together. They keep dipping underwater, coughing, shivering. Lightening and thunder. We see them drifting down the ever-darkening canyon.

EXT. UNDERWATER - NIGHT

Later that night, we see the POV of something swimming underwater. Looking up, the surface is calm, with moonlight rippling. In the distance we something floating on the surface.

After a few lurches forward, we see the silhouette of Rayli hanging motionless over a branch, and the door with Corva's foot and tail in the water.

EXT. FROG COLONY - LATER

A cluster of swamp houses sit on stilts above the still water, with shabby, improvised construction. The doors, windows, and porches glow with lantern light. They're all interconnected with boardwalks and docks. Spanish moss dangles from the surrounding trees. We hear water lapping against the pylons, as moonlight ripples off the surface.

Many frogs are sitting on their porches, croaking, wearing tattered clothes. Some sip from jugs. Some rock on creaking rocking chairs. One plucks a languid tune on a banjo. A young frog whittles a stick. They have cajun accents.

Rayli is asleep on a porch swing. Corva is asleep on the dock, without her headpiece. They are wrapped in blankets. Rayli eventually stirs, opens her eyes, and looks around. She sees an old male frog CRAW in a rocking chair on the other side of the porch.

RAYLI

Where am I? Where's Corva?!

Rayli sits up abruptly and sees Corva sleeping on the dock. Craw gestures to Corva.

CRAW

Is dat yaw frien'? We fish ya from da riva jus' drifdin' by. Ya musda had quite a turbulence.

RAYLI

Is she okay?

CRAW

Yeah, yeah, she's jus' resdin'.

Craw's wife FROLLY comes out of the house carrying two bowls of steaming porridge in metal pots with spoons. She brings one to Rayli.

FROLLY

Here ya go, dearie. Dis'll warm ya up from da inside.

RAYLI

Thank you!

Corva starts to stir and open her eyes.

FROLLY

I'm Frolly, dis here is Craw.

Craw shoots his tongue out to catch a flying bug; it crunches as he chews it up. Ma goes to the dock and puts the porridge pot in front of Corva.

FROLLY

I bet you hungry afta dat big spill. Eat up, darlin'.

CRAW

Where is ya two headin'?

CORVA

To Raven Steam.

FROLLY

Raven Steam. Oh, ya godda ways ta go still. But seein' how your raf' is

busted up, we can get ya on da
rivaboat in da mornin'.

CORVA

Thanks. Where are we?

Craw spits into a nearby spittoon.

SONG: "Catch My Drift"

The banjo segues into a tune. The song builds with frogs croaking and crickets chirping (crickets played as instruments), and frogs joining in with other instruments, and Rayli and Corva tapping their spoons on the metal pots.

CRAW

Dis here Croaken Cove.

[*Lyrics TBA* about knowing your
priorities in life]

We see a view of Croaken Cove in the moonlight.

EXT. RIVERBOAT LANDING - SAT. MORNING

Craw leads Rayli and Corva on a path along the shore of the Critterritti River, much wider than the tributary we've seen so far. They are heading toward a landing where a riverboat is docked.

CRAW

Dat dere is riva boat dat can take
ya to wheres ya goin'.

EXT. CRITTERRITTI RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Capt. TOOTHMOUTH, SWASH, and SWABBER are swimming downstream. Toothmouth sees Rayli and Corva on the shore.

TOOTHMOUTH

Ahoy, thar be our two escaped
prisoners.

SWASH

Where?

TOOTHMOUTH

Thar, teadin' on the shore. Now do
your jobs right, mateys, and gobble
them up hastily! Swash, Swabber, go
lay an ambush up ahead on the shore.

SWASH & SWABBER

Aye, captain.

They start swimming to shore, but shortly we hear an alarm bell ring underwater. Swabber lifts an alarm clock out of the water, on a chain around his neck.

SWABBER

Break time!

He silences the alarm and they turn to swim to closest shore.

TOOTHMOUTH

What? Now?!

SWABBER

Aye captain, it's regulation.

TOOTHMOUTH

But they'll get away! Can't it wait till after?!

SWABBER

No. Besides, I have to go to the bathroom.

TOOTHMOUTH

Number one or number two?

SWABBER

You're not allowed to ask me that.

SWASH

Yeah, can't ask that.

TOOTHMOUTH

Just go in the river!

SWASH

Ew, we're swimming here!

TOOTHMOUTH

The fish do it in the river!

SWASH

Different union.

TOOTHMOUTH

Arg, well hurry up then.

They arrive at shore and look around.

SWABBER

We need proper facilities.

TOOTHMOUTH

Facilities?! Just go behind that tree!

SWABBER

Uh, okay, but turn away. I need me
privacy.

TOOTHMOUTH

Fine!

Toothmouth and Swash turn away from the tree as Swabber goes
behind it. After a couple seconds:

SWABBER

Uh, Captain?

TOOTHMOUTH

What?!

SWABBER

No toilet paper.

Toothmouth glowers and growls.

EXT. RIVERBOAT LANDING - CONTINUOUS

Craw, Rayli, and Corva arrive at the riverboat CLEMENS. It is
an old side-wheeler wood-burning steamboat, white with three
decks with gingerbread trim. All variety of critters are
boarding across the stage-plank. Smoke and steam waft from
smokestacks and 'scape pipes from the idling boiler.

CRAW

I'll introduce ya t' Langhorne. He's
an ol' frien' o' mine goin' way
back. He'll take good care o' ya.

Rayli and Corva are impressed with the boat.

RAYLI

Whoa, I've never seen anything this
big!

CORVA

It's beautiful.

INT. RIVERBOAT PILOTHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

LANGHORNE is an old turtle with a Georgian accent. He is the
riverboat pilot, wearing a traditional uniform and hat,
standing at the large wheel in the pilothouse. He sees Craw
entering.

LANGHORNE

Well I'll be dipped in mud. If it
isn't ol' Craw himself.

CRAW

Langhorne, I'd say you was lookin'
good if it was any true.

LANGHORNE

An' you're lookin' just like a
skinful of dry bones!

They laugh. Rayli and Corva follow inside.

LANGHORNE

Why, I haven't seen you since you
since Metty's picnic, when you tried
to eat thirteen crickets in one
mouthful on a dare.

CRAW

Don' remind me. I woulda done it too
if you didn't sneak chili peppa's
inside o' dem!

LANGHORNE

That wasn't me, I keep tellin' ya.

CRAW

Well I still suspec' what I suspec'.

LANGHORNE

But I swear for the next hour you
were coughin' crickets all over the
place, an' mostly all over Metty's
new yella dress!

CRAW

Yeah, it took near a month fo' her
ta forgive me, but eventually she
softened up. Hey, let me introduce
ya here to Rayli an' Corva. Dey's
special guests o' mine. We fish dese
two lost souls floatin' in da riva.
Dey's headin' to Raven Steam.

LANGHORNE

Raven Steam, huh? Well, young
ladies, I'll gladly give you passage
there. Anything for friends of Crawl.

RAYLI & CORVA

Thank you.

CRAW

Well, I'll leave 'em in your
custody. Say hi to Marba fo me.

LANGHORNE

Take care, ol' friend.

Craw exits.

RALI

Your boat is amazing!

LANGHORNE

This here is the Clemens, the
fastest steamboat on the great
Crittteritti River.

Langhorne looks out at the landing to ensure everyone is done
boarding. He pulls a rope to tap the bell three times.

LANGHORNE

And we are ready to embark on our
journey.

The ready whistle blasts three times.

CORVA

How does it work?

SONG: "Steamboat a'Comin'"

The boilers build up steam, the paddle-wheels start churning,
and the boat pulls away from the landing.
Langhorne patters to the rhythm of the steam engine, paddle-
wheels, bells and whistles.

LANGHORNE

[*Lyrics TBA* about navigating the
river. You can't plot your course
because the river always changes, so
you have to be open to what comes
your way.]

[*Draft in progress. See synopsis at hundsness.com/movie*]