

House of Cardboard

written by

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HOUSE OF CARDBOARD
Pilot - In Cardboard, We Trust

EXT. BOSTON-1999 DAY

10 year old Pete sits on the back of his dad's old pickup, his feet hanging over the seat, not even touching the floor. he's looking out the window with a grin on his face. his parents RICK (40s) and ELLIE (40s) are having a conversation in the front.

MOM

All I'm saying, is it's \$50. The second he gets any kind of money for his birthday, he goes and blows it on cards. I know he's only 10, but shouldn't we teach him some kind of saving skills?

DAD

It's his money. His birthday. Let him do what he wants with it. He's not spending his college fund.

MOM

I just want him to make smart choices. He could spend it on a hobby that he'll love for a lifetime instead of some fad that will blow over in a year and he ends up with worthless pieces of paper. He could buy a bike and play with the kids in the neighborhood. He could be out making friends.

DAD

He plays with Melissa next door all the time. They love these cards. Just let the kid be a kid, Ellie. How much money have you spent on your crazy Beadie Pals? What was it? \$250 on that one with the flag on the chest?

MOM

It's first Lady Barb, Rick. It's limited edition. It was only \$200, actually, which is way below market, and she'll be worth a fortune one day. It's not some short lived craze. It's an investment. That's my point.

Rick parks the car, and Pete hops out. He looks up at a bright, neon sign reading "cardboard haven" grinning from ear to ear. His dad walks up behind him.

DAD

Which one you looking for today,
Petey?

PETER

Flazark. He breathes fire. His wings are made of stone. He's the coolest starter.

DAD

What are you waiting for? Let's go get him.

INT. CARDBOARD HAVEN - DAY

Pete and his parents walk into the store. sports cards are on display all over the place. comics books are stacked up on the counter. pete spots what he's looking for. a glass display full of beastlings cards. he peeks through and eyes the packs. raging aqua, voltage fury, flaming wonders. finally, he spots what he's looking for. 1st edition. the base set. \$20 a pack. a older gentleman, the SHOP OWNER (60s), approaches him.

SHOP OWNER

Now, that's an enthusiastic young collector if I've ever seen one. What's catching your eye young man.

Pete, a little shy, points to the packs.

SHOP OWNER (CONT'D)

You have quite the eye. The originals. The die hards are always in here looking for them. and I actually just happened to find a couple I misplaced in a drawer. Go on, take a closer look.

The man hands Pete the packs as he smiles again, contemplating which of the two he wants.

DAD

How about this? It's your birthday, so how about you get all three. Your mother and I can cover the difference.

MOM

(irritated)

Rick, we can't. We just fed half the neighborhood at his party. We have to stop for gas on the way home. I'm sorry, P, you're going to have to choose. We just can't afford to help out.

Pete chooses the fire and water packs, and hands the remaining pack to the shop owner, who seems to smirk a bit with pride in watching the young collectors excitement in the remaining two packs. he rings the family out, and slides the third pack over to Pete.

SHOP OWNER

Happy Birthday, my new friend. To kick off a lifetime as a returning customer, this one's on me. I hope to see your face back in here until I close up the doors for good.

PETE

WHAT? REALLY!?! I don't even know how to thank you. This is ... this is incredible. \$20, that's too much. I can. What if I ... can I help clean up? Take the trash out? I can't just take this.

SHOP OWNER

You can, and I insist that you do. These are the very moments I opened this shop for. Maybe, one day, you'll be in this very spot doing the same.

He pulls up a chair at a table set up for playing the card game

SHOP OWNER (CONT'D) However, you can take a seat with me so we can see what kind of cards are in those packs. To be honest, I'm a little curious myself.

Pete almost skips over the table, stumbling into the chair overwhelmed with joy. sits down and breaks open the first pack then ruffles through the cards.

DAD

Anything?

PETE
Not even a holo... buts this ones
really cool!

He holds up a large, gold and blue bird looking over a frozen lake.

PETE
Maybe the next one.

He rips the next pack.

PETE (CONT'D)
A HOLO!

Pete holds up a colorful frog wielding a sword.

PETE (CONT'D)
I can't wait to show this to
Melissa!

The shop owner hands over a plastic sleeve and a hard toploader.

SHOP OWNER
We're gonna take good care of that
one.

Pete looks at the last pack. a bright green dragon with stump legs and a tree for a tail.

PETE
Are you sure. I feel like I should
do something. I can..

SHOP OWNER
(He cuts Pete off, just as
excited as the boy is)
Open the pack, Pete! I want to know
what's inside!

Pete pulls open the pack, flips through the cards, one by one, admiring the artwork. finally, he stops. his jaw drops. He's speechless for a second.

DAD
Well? Another common pack? Sorry
Pete.

Pete, at a loss for words, turns the card around to show his small audience.

FLASH. FLAZARK. HIS CHASE.

SHOP OWNER

That. Is. Beautiful. Happy
Birthday. I hope you remember this.
I hope you're hooked for life.

MOM

That's what I was afraid of.

SCENE 2, ONE LAST EFFORT

INT. P.S. ANDREWS PACKS-2026-DAY

The same card shop, now called "P. S. Andrews Packs." It still has its same 90's vibe, aside from a little bit of new technology. A streaming table, complete with 3 cameras and some fancy, high quality microphones. There's a large stack of display boxes on the table and a stack of over 100 packs front and center. pete is mid live stream with his friends. MELISSA (30's), his long time neighbor, sits beside him. they always stream together, along with their team: CALVIN (30's) and MARTIN (16). Pete is sliding a few hits into sleeves and he gets ready to hand them off to melissa to label for delivery.

PETE

Oh, man. Congrats MikeD4041, that's not a bad hit at all. I'm going to go ahead and toss in some stickers and an uncommon card for you too as well. Appreciate your first purchase. I hope you're happy and keep coming back.... Alright guys, we need about 10 minutes to throw down some burgers and we'll be right back up. We've got some singles coming up and we're going to close the night out with a rip and ship, so subscribe to our stream and we'll send out those notifications out as soon as we're ready to kick it back into gear. And again, thank you to all of you who make it possible for us to make a living doing what we love.

MELISSA

Agreed. You guys are the best. Truly. All of your support its just amazing, but a girl needs to eat, so we hope to see you again soon.

"LIVE STREAM HAS ENDED" scrolls across the screen.

Melissa shuffles together the cards one more time into a neat pile before tossing them into a bag and writing the order number on it.

MELISSA (CONT'D)
Can you believe that? One pack and he hits a CannonShark. Wild. I love that card. It almost hurts to send it out.

She looks at the card.

MELISSA (CONT'D)
I hope your new owner doesn't crease you up or anything.

She puts it in the bag.

PETE
Right? What a pull. I've opened over a dozen boxes and got nothing like that. The luck of some people. Maybe the next ones a hit.

Pete opens a pack and flips through the cards.

PETE (CONT'D)
Junk.
(Tossing them back on the table)

MARTIN
Obviously. The odds of hitting an Cannonshark in a single pack are 1 in 1,326.

Awkward pause.

PETE
Let's eat.

The crew gathers around their table while Martin dishes out the burgers.

MARTIN
Pete: medium. Calvin: medium well, no tomato, no onions. Melissa: burnt, no cheese, no toppings. Freak. For me, double patty. bacon. no veggies.

CALVIN

Talk about a banger, everyone. If we match that in the second half, it's at least a couple bands a piece.

Pete's phone vibrates. he looks down at it.

CLAIRE (TEXT)

You spent HOW MUCH on that order?

PETE (TO GROUP)

Yeah... we needed a night like this.

His phone buzzes again.

CLAIRE (TEXT)

We really need to have a conversation tonight.

MARTIN

Don't sweat it, P. Just a little market dip. She'll pick right back up after the new set hits. We needed a cool off anyway.

CALVIN

Yeah, and with this slowdown, I've been grabbing product left and right. Shorter lines means no brawls. Making BANK.

PETE

Yeah, if the lights are still on by then. Claire's been slow too. She's spiraling over this new FedCoin ordeal... it's really killing her. Everyone is just dumping their portfolio into it. Who needs a financial planner when you have an "Infinite money glitch." What a scam. They're going to get burned.

CALVIN

(Tossing a tomato at him)
No tomatoes means NO TOMATOES. Not, just slap one in there and eat around it. Speaking of getting burned, how much did you pay for that retro mystery box?

PETE
(Embarrassed)
Thirty five hundred....

They all look at him.

PETE (CONT'D)
Profits people. We can flip it.

CALVIN
Are you out of your mind? I
wouldn't spend thirty five hundred
bucks on retail... Maybe some fresh
sneakers... But cards? How are you
going to move that?

MELISSA
(Rolls her eyes at Calvin)
I don't think we can flip Thirty
five hundred dollars worth of
product. People just aren't buying
right now well... (Trying to be
supportive) I mean, if anyone can
figure it out, its you. But I don't
know about taking that kind of risk
right now.

PETE
That's the thing. I either take a
risk and it pays off, or I lose
either way. I have to take a
chance, or I have to start selling
off. Selling product is one thing
my collection... I didn't think I'd
see the day.

MARTIN
Did that guy who buys for Pogan
Laul call about a big order?

PETE
Not a big order. One card. Flazark.
I can't sell that.

MELISSA
But if it's that, or lose the shop?

PETE
I know, I know, but my whole career
... my whole life is built around
this card.

CALVIN
Your whole broke life.

MELISSA

(Grills him)

Seriously? Not now.

(Throwing the tomato back in his face as he screams like a girl.)

CALVIN

You're a monster.

He gets up and walks to the door.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

I need some air. Away from that disgusting vegetable.

PETE

He's right though.

MELISSA

No he's not. A tomato is a fruit, and they're delicious.

PETE

What? No. I'm broke. It might be time. I really might have to close up shop and cash out. I can hold my head above water until I...

MELISSA

Pete. Look at me. What's your backup plan? And don't say "get a real job" because you can't even change your own oil without calling your dad. You painted half the trim in your apartment and just left it because it was too messy.

She realizes she being a little aggressive.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

This is what you do. We'll help you through it. Let's check out that box?

CALVIN

(Walking back into the shop) This box? Just got dropped off. It's a little small.. and crushed.

PETE

The post office. Great. My only chance, flattened by someone's Christmas shopping.

Melissa pops open the box.

MELISSA

No.. they actually look okay. (She lifts the contents out to show the group) Whoa, prehistoric collections. These are worth WAY more than what you paid. See. I told you. We will pitch in and get these sold and the doors will stay open.

Pete jumps up and takes the box from Melissa.

PETE

NO WAY! They actually look mint. I can't believe they didn't get damaged. (Pause) They don't look right.

Martin peeks in too.

MARTIN

You see it too?

Calvin also leans over.

CALVIN

Bro...
(resting his hand on his shoulder)

PETE

They look fake.

Everyone looks up at him, defeated.

MELISSA

I'm so sorry, Pete. You're and honest seller. The last person who deserves this.

She looks at Pete sympathetically. Almost a little too passionate for a concerned friend.

MELISSA (CONT'D)

What if I donate some stuff from my shop? I can't handle seeing you fall from this.

PETE

No. I'm not taking anything. From you. Never have. We've traded even since we were kids. This is my mess up.

MARTIN

I can punch some numbers on my end. Maybe I can work some magic and we can work together to dig you out.

CALVIN

I can get you some sneakers to sell. They would look FRESH in your display.

PETE

(Ignores their advice)
I'll figure it out myself. Lets just get the stream going.

CALVIN

Hang on, what if we give you a little help with the stream? Get a little more money out of it?

MELISSA

I don't like the sound of that.

CALVIN

I can log in and maybe I like a few things and place a bid or two. Maybe I decide to back out just before someone else does.

PETE

I know you're just trying to help, but I'll shut the doors before I start shill bidding. I'd rather go than swinging before I stoop to scamming like (Looking at the packing slip from his fake order) YOUGOTDATPULL420. Damnit, how did I not see that coming?

MARTIN

(Flipping through his phone)
Reviews say 0 chance of a refund.
Typical scam streamer. You can dispute it and hope for the best.

PETE

Yeah, and wait a month for them to probably deny it because they can't confirm anything. Let's just get on with the stream, guys. I'm cooked. Might as well go out with a bang.

Martin, levels the camera and pops open his laptop while Calvin stacks a few boxes on the table.

MARTIN

Looks good. We're good to go.
(everyone gives each other
a thumbs up to confirm
readiness)

Live in 3... 2 ... 1 ...

PETE

Welcome back to Pete and Missy pull, chat. Look at you all ready to go.
36 of you already? That's what we like to see! We've got some more beautiful cards ready to run!
Absolute bangers and I can't wait to get started.

Melissa hands him a card.

MELISSA

We're going to start off with one of my absolute favorites, and the bidding starts at \$1. Absolutely adorable.

Pete takes the card from her and holds up a red duck wearing firefighter gear spraying a hose at a large bird on fire.

PETE

We have an absolutely mint Fireduck promo card from the new movie coming up. These are so hard to find and I just absolutely LOVE this card. If everyone is ready to roll, we're going to start the bidding at \$1. (Pause to read chat)
What? No, sorry, we don't accept FedCoin.

SCENE 3, I'LL BE FINE, ACTUALLY

EXT. PETE'S HOUSE - SOUTH BOSTON - NIGHT

Pete parks in front of his clearly unmaintained triple decker apartment and looks up to see a marching protest. People holding signs the say "End Fedcoin. Keep our cash." They march down the street chanting. He gets out and walks towards the door when a protestor assumes he's there to join them.

PROTESTOR

Oh, good. Another one. Did you bring a sign?

PETE

This is my house... You guys are blocking my door.

PROTESTOR

Sounds like a pretty minor inconvenience on comparison to what Fedcoin is about to do to the rest of us.

PETE

What? It's just a crypto. How is that going to affect you in any way?

PROTESTOR

Because the rich will just keep getting richer and the rest of us with just keep getting poorer. Do you know that they're going to replace ALL physical currency with FedCoin? What happens to those of us who didn't buy it?

PETE

I mean, you can just buy some? Sounds pretty reasonable to me. Same with cash now. It used to be backed by gold and...

PROTESTOR

(Cuts him off)

You think WE can afford that? We can barely afford our rent due to all the big corporations buying out all the apartment building and doubling the rent. I can't afford to put money aside for investment.

PETE

My landlord is a 60 year old mechanic who lives in the apartment upstairs. Not all landlords are awful. And if FedCoin replaces cash, wouldn't your money now just be converted? It sounds cheaper than printing it.

PROTESTOR

I don't HAVE money now to convert. Didn't you hear me? I'm a single mom and...

PETE

(Returning her interruption) Okay, so you already don't have money? So what's changing?

PROTESTOR

Just go in your house, bootlicker. There's no explaining things to privileged folks like you.

Pete looks up and his old, beat up apartment building, shrugs, and walks in the door.

INT. PETE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Pete walks in the door of his apartment and flicks on the lights. a little brown pug (Cardr) runs up to him wagging his tail and plops by his feet. Pete throws his keys on the table, the foil wrapper of the pack he opened earlier falling on the floor.

PETE

Cardr. Whats up buddy. How was your day?(Petting the dog.) Lets get you some dinner and see what we missed in the real world today.

He drops a bowl of food on the floor for the dog and walks to the living room, turning on the tv, he takes a seat and flips to the news. the headline reads "big money moves to fedcoin. Bitcoin 2.0?" as the anchorman goes on about investors moving stock money into the new "future of currency" while analysts back up the idea of how safe and secure it is, jokingly saying they might just go ahead and request to get paid in the new crypto. the front door is heard opening and closing, followed by a very annoyed "are.. you.. kidding me right now!?" CLAIRE (30s) walks in holding up the wrapper pete dropped earlier, pushing off an excited Cardr who only wants to greet her.

CLAIRe

Get down! Not now! Pete, what the hell? I don't even make it through the front door and I'm already picking up your mess. I am so tired of seeing these things all over the place.

PETE

It must have fallen out of my pocket. It's just a piece of plastic. Give it to me, I'll throw it away. My day was fine. How about yours?

CLAIRe

(Fuming)

Did the \$3,500 you spent last week just "fall out of your pocket" too? What the hell did you buy without even asking me first? That was our rent money, Pete.

PETE

It was a vintage box. It's worth a lot more than that. I'm going to split it up and sell the packs... well ... I meant to but...

CLAIRe

But? But what? Don't tell me you're just going to keep it now?

PETE

(Full of regret)

The box was a fake. I didn't know. It happens. I'm going to call and dispute it for a refund. I'll figure it out.

CLAIRe

Thirty five hundred dollars on a box of fake cardboard? You are out of your mind. Disputes take months. What are we supposed to eat this month?

PETE

It was supposed to be an investment. I got burned, I don't know what to say. If they were real, I would have doubled my money.

CLAIRe

But they weren't real, Pete. None of this is real. You are blowing money left and right on pieces of paper. I can go print the same thing in my office right now. It's not worth money. You had one good month in the last year, and we're barely scraping by. I just ... I can't live this way.

PETE

This is the way we live. This is what pays the bills, Claire. I run a business. How's work going for you? Everyone and their mother is cashing out their investments for FedCoin right now. At least I have buyers. You won't be splitting anything in a month, you'll be applying for a hostess position at a pizza place.

CLAIRe

Funny you say that, because I just signed on a pretty big client, so in a month, I'll be paying ALL the bills. In MY house. Without you.

Claire gets up and storms to the bedroom, opens a few drawers, throws some things in a backpack, returns, and tosses it at pete.

PETE

A big client, I'm sure. Who is it?
Mr. Krabs?
I'll see you tomorrow when you realize how ridiculous you're being.

CLAIRe

(Handing him Cardr's leash and opening the front door) Actually, Pogan Laul. You can pick up your things next week. There's some broke, miserable protestors outside. Why don't you join them. They'll love hearing about your cardboard.

PETE WALKS OUT.

SCENE 4, HATE TO SAY I TOLD YOU SO**EXT. PARENTS HOUSE - NIGHT**

Pete pulls up to his parents house muttering something to himself about Pogan Laul trying to take his card and his girlfriend. He parks in the driveway and looks up, noticing his dad's old pickup and his mom's fancy new BMW SUV.

INT. PETE'S PARENTS HOUSE - NIGHT

PETE

Well, I'm about to get an ear full.

His parents answer the door, showing some remorse for him.

MOM

Honey, I don't know what to say
Whatever we can do to help... just
come in.

DAD

(As he walks in)
You'll be here one night. Watch.
She's probably calling thinking
about calling you right now.

Pete's phone rings, almost ironically and he answers it to hear calvin playing a Beastlings video game.

CALVIN (V.O.)

I BOUGHT THE MOTHA FLIPPIN
ASTROSHARK!

PETE

(Hanging up) Not now, Calvin.

PETE

(To his parents) Don't ask.

Pete's mom pops off cardr's leash and takes the backpack from her son.

MOM

I'll put these in your room.
Leftover pot pie in the fridge. You
just take a minute to get
comfortable.

PETE

I already ate with the gang.
Really, I just need to get some
rest for now. Thank you, so much
Mom and Dad, but I've had enough of
today. I just want to sleep it off
and hopefully have a good day of
work tomorrow.

MOM

We completely understand, come on
upstairs.

Pete follows her up and opens what he thinks is his bedroom
door, but is apparent now just a room filled wall-to-wall
with Beadie Pals. He shuts it and stares at his mother.

MOM (CONT'D)

They're going to be worth money one
day! Watch. the spare rooms in your
fathers office now. he hasn't used
it since he retired, but we still
have your old bed.

She pops open a door across the hall to a relatively empty
room, aside from a desk with an old computer, a little old
box tv, and pete's bed, complete with Flazark bedding.

MOM (CONT'D)

See, we even kept your comforter on
it.

PETE

I appreciate it and all... but it
kinda just reminds me of everything
going on.

He pulls the covers off and reveals bedsheets of the same
pattern.

PETE (CONT'D)

You know what. It's fine.

Pete's dad, not hearing anything that just happened comes in
with a glass of water for his son.

DAD

Look at that! Your mother pulled
your old bedspread out as soon as
she heard you were moving back...
er, spending the night. Wanted you
to feel at home.

MOM

Shut up Rick. He hates it.

DAD

See. I told you it was a bad idea.

MOM

All I wanted to do was support -

PETE

GUYS. It's fine. Again, I appreciate everything, but I can't right now. I want to take a shower. I want to go to bed. I want to wake up. And I want to solve ALL of my problems tomorrow. I am spent.

DAD

You're right, P. We'll let you call it a night.

MOM

I'll have breakfast in the morning for you, sweetie. I'm really sorry.

Pete's parents leave, and his dad can be heard mocking his mother.

DAD (V.O.)

I'm going to put his covers back on. He's gonna love it.

MOM (V.O.)

Oh, will you shut up.

CUT TO:

INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

Pete, gets out of the shower, he opens the cabinet to see an old Flazark toothbrush and rolls his eyes at it. He can hear his parents having a conversation on the other side of the thin walls.

DAD (V.O.)

Great idea with the sheets, Ellie. His girlfriend throws him to the streets and you want to remind him why.

MOM (V.O.)

(MORE)

MOM (V.O.) (CONT'D)

I was trying to be supportive. I can't imagine what he's going through. How long do you think he'll be here? We can't afford to house him on your retirement alone. I knew it. I knew he was going to throw his whole life away obsessing over that paper, and you just encouraged him all along.

DAD (V.O.)

The kid will be fine. He's smart and determined. He's run the shop over a decade. I wasn't wrong to push him at all. He's made a career out of his passion, while I worked to my 70's. Every day, selling cars I can never afford. You know what? All this aside, I envy him.

MOM (V.O.)

Well, last I checked, we're scraping by on what you have saved and I've pinched every little penny for years to get us here. I wanted more for him.

DAD (V.O.)

Pinching pennies, huh? How much was that airfryer?

MOM (V.O.)

It was on sale. Maybe if you didn't....

Pete can't take it anymore and walks away from the bathroom mirror. He sits on his bed for a second, hesitant, then takes out his phone, and presses send.

PETE (TO PHONE)

Hey. It's Pete. Tell Pogan we have a deal.

INT PETE'S PARENTS KITCHEN - MORNING

Pete groggily walks into his parent's kitchen. His dad is at the table reading a newspaper while his mom is preparing breakfast.

MOM

Good morning, sweetie. Told you I'd have breakfast ready. I made your favorite. Sorry, we couldn't afford the good bacon.

She sets the plate as Pete sits at the table, then sets down a half full glass of orange juice and adds water to it

MOM (CONT'D)

It makes the juice last longer.

PETE

Thanks, mom. That's just fine. I need to get to work quickly and get to closing.

Pete's dad dropped his paper and glares at him while his mom gives a little satisfied smirk.

DAD

Closing? You're going to give up your shop over this? Over some girl who honestly wasn't even that likeable?

MOM

Oh, Rick, she wasn't that bad. She always seemed to love my Beadies. I kinda liked her. Not many people can appreciate the first lady like that.

DAD

She was showing pity, Ellie. Just being polite. She was miserable to be around. The boy shouldn't give up his dreams over a girl like that.

PETE

Well... Thanks I guess? But honestly, I'm okay with it. She was right. It's time to grow up. I won't survive this market cool off. If I sell off before it drops too much, I can recoup some losses and pay off some debt. I think it's time, dad. You think you can put in a good word for me at the dealership? I think I can handle it. Making deals like a chip off the old block.

Pete's mom jumps up with excitement.

MOM

Oh! Good! An interview for a REAL job! I think your father has an old suit and tie upstairs in your closest.

PETE

You mean the Beadie Pal room?

MOM

That's the one! I'm going to go look. I'm proud of you, Pete.

She runs up stairs to look for the suit as Pete's dad leans in.

DAD

Listen Pete. You are OUT of your mind. You've worked your whole life for this. I know just as well as you do that this slump will pass. You're not going give that up. You're not going to sell cars to a bunch of rich brats spending daddy's money. I'm not going to watch you end up like me with a woman like Claire controlling what you spend every last dollar on.

PETE

It's not ALL about Claire.

DAD

Isn't it though? You know who's never complained about your cards? Who's been running that shop with you since day one? Who actually gets excited when you pull something good?

PETE

(defensive)

Melissa and I are business partners, Dad.

DAD

Right. Business partners. You two have been inseparable since you were ten years old, Pete. The only person who doesn't see it is you. Or maybe you do and Claire made you feel guilty about it.

PETE
(uncomfortable)
Can we not do this right now?

DAD
Fine. But when you figure it out, don't say I didn't tell you. Claire sucked, Pete. Open your eyes. You can BE in love and DO what you love.

PETE
It's NOT just about Claire. The market is dead. My business is dead. Maybe I'll still stream with Melissa for a side gig. I can flip some retail stocks like Cal.

DAD
The sneaker kid? You're better than that. I'm not going to sit back and watch you clear out Walmart shelves to make a few bucks. That's pathetic. I've always believed in you even when your mother and that whiny monster you called your girlfriend didn't. And I still do.

PETE
My mind is made, dad. I appreciate it, but I need some stability. I'm not closing the book, just starting a new chapter. Can you give me some interview and selling pointers when I get back tonight?

DAD
You know what? I support you no matter what you do. All I ask, is that you take the day at work to really think it over before you lock up. Who knows, maybe you'll have a good day and a change of heart. Do that, and we'll talk when you get home tonight.

PETE
Appreciate it. I really need to head into the shop, but we ARE talking sales tonight. I'll see you then.

Pete gets up and walks to the door, then turns back to his dad.

PETE (CONT'D)
And dad... Thank you. Really.

SCENE 5 SPEND IT WISELY

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Claire is sitting in an office alone, dressed to the nines for an important meeting. today, she meets Pogan. he's trusting her to manage millions, and the stress is showing. she looks at her phone, doing some last minute research. "Billions pile into Fedcoin. fomo or lotto?" Pogan walks in with his representative.

POGAN

Claire? Happy to meet you. This is my lawyer, I think he has some paperwork to sign, and I think we can get started on hearing what your plan is. I'm excited to get to work.

She quickly shakes their hands and sits to start flipping through the pages.

CLAIRE

You seem to have everything...actually pretty well managed. I mean, I'm happy to see what I can do, but what's your goal here? What are you looking to invest in? Obviously, we're going to want to go heavily into FedCoin, but this says you're looking for some physical assets as well. What do you mean? Classic cars and real estate are at an all time high, so its a gamble, but -

POGAN

(Cuts her off)

I'm a bit of a collectibles fanboy. Have you seen my streams? Your history, or our research really, seemed to suggest you might know a thing or two about the trading card market. Have you been following? Vintage cards are going for six figures. You're joint owner of P.S. Andrews?

CLAIRES

(Swallows)

Oh yeah, that. Technically yes. I helped with a lot of the financials, getting it going and creating a savings fund, but to be completely honest, my boyfriend is actually the owner. Or ex... recent ... (Pauses) I mean, I've certainly learned a thing or two along the way but I'm not the brains behind it. While I'm being honest, I don't think they're the wisest investment. Have you see the numbers? Trading cars are crashing.

POGAN

Correcting. I've been around the block. I know what my moneys been going into. This is disappointing. Maybe this isn't the fit we thought it was. Sorry to cut the meeting short.

CLAIRES

Wait! We can put your money where you like. I'll do some more research. I'm happy to spend every dollar as you see fit. In fact, if we can do business together, how about you move some of this budget to FedCoin... and I'd be willing to sell you my share of the shop. We both win.

SCENE 6 ONE LAST EFFORT (PART 2)

INT. P.S. ANDREWS PACKS - DAY

CALVIN

PEETAAHH. Check these babies out. Deluxe boxes. Limited runs and some singles. All of them OUT. OF. PRINT. Retail. All of them - I might have just solved your money problem. I don't know why nobody grabbed these this morning. It's like nobody wanted to spend any money today. I couldn't believe the restock was still there.

PETE

Yeah... about that. I can't take those. Claire threw me out. I'm done for. Calling it quits. P.S. is no more. Time to blow out everything and hope I can pay everything I owe off. Maybe I'll sell some cars like my old man.

CALVIN

Now that's a load of BULLLL, bro. Wait —she really threw you out? I guess I couldn't say it before... but that chick was a WHITTCHHH. Good for you, man. But you're talking crazy. You know what we can make off these?

PETE

I don't have time to sit on any more product. I filled my tank with cupholder change last night on my way to my parents' house, who, by the way, turned my old room into a Beadie Pal shrine. My night was awful. Flip them yourself, man. I'm finished. Not changing my mind. I have no other choice.

CALVIN

Pete I know wouldn't give up that easy. Pete I know would get to work. Pete I know loves this place. What happened? That chick got to you that bad? Help me set these up and let's get to selling 'em.

PETE

Pete you know doesn't want to be sitting on a bean bag in an empty living room by himself, Cal. Not everything is a flip. You do sports cards and sneakers — that's your thing. You hopped on the bandwagon to make a buck and screwed people like me. You don't even play the game, you see profits.

CALVIN

Whoa. That's cold, P. I'm gonna let it slide because you got a lot going on and I know you don't mean it. We've been in business for years and I ain't never seen you like this... (beat) Hold on a second... there's a game?

(Door alarm dings. TOM (30s), a customer, walks in.)
PETE

Hey, Tom!

TOM

(dry but friendly) Yo.

PETE

Here for the new set? Set this baby aside just for you. Packaging is perfect.

Tom looks it over, pleased.

TOM (CONT'D)
Perfect. I'll take it.

PETE

You know, we're having a sale right now – for just a bit more you can get a second one.

Tom pause for a second, confused.

TOM (CONT'D)
...Two boxes? Why would I need two?

PETE

You could leave one sealed and open one. The cards in this set are top notch.

TOM

...No... I don't need to open one. I just like the box. The artwork is great.

(AWKWARD PAUSE.)

CALVIN

Suit yourself. You enjoy it.

TOM
Thanks bro.

(Tom walks out.)

PETE
(to Calvin)
You know, he's a cool guy.

CALVIN
Yeah... I like him... So you're telling
me there's a game?

PETE
(too agitated)
Forget it. We blow this out and
we're done.

(Pete walks over and tapes a "STORE CLOSING SALE" sign on the door, then returns to help Calvin empty boxes.)

CALVIN
Take that sign down. You gonna
regret that real soon. You watch –
things will turn around.

PETE
Somehow, I doubt that.

Almost instantaneously, a man dressed in a suit (MAN 1) busts through the door full of angst. out of breath almost. He starts asking about the prices.

MAN 1
How much for that box?

PETE
This one? Market is about 375, but
you're in luck because we're about
to close up shop ... 25 percent...

MAN 1
Wait? This stuff is all on sale?
Give me more. I'll take all of
them.

PETE
Sorry. Even shutting down, I have
to limit everyone to two a piece.
Gotta save some for the kids, you
know?

MAN 1

Five hundred. I'll give you five hundred a piece for all of them.

CAL

You're tripping. You can't flip these at five hundred bucks, my guy. Trust me, we don't want you holding the bag.

MAN 1

I don't care. That not enough? Six hundred. Just give me the boxes.

Another customer (MAN 2) walks in, wearing a Boston Bruins jersey and the same frantic expression.

MAN 2

You're going to take all of them? What about the rest of us?

MAN 1

Should've gotten here faster. I'm taking them all.

MAN 2

The greed of some people. I'll take a couple. Whatever he's paying, I'll beat by 25 percent.

CALVIN

You guys cray. Dude's offering six bills a piece, I don't suggest-

MAN 2

Six hundred bucks? Hah. I'll pay double.

PETE

(to Cal)

This is... odd, to say the least. Let's hold off a second and check the market.

CALVIN

We ain't gonna pass up that kind of money. This is your miracle. What did I tell you?

People pile into the shop, grabbing things off shelves, arguing over the limited supply. pushing. shoving. chaos building. Pete sees it turning ugly.

PETE

ALRIGHT! I need everyone out! Form a line outside in the order you arrived. One person at a time!

The people all ignore him and continue fighting.

PETE (CONT'D)

GET OUT! ALL OF YOU!

Still no response. Calvin starts livestreaming the chaos.

CALVIN

"WORLDSTARRRR"

MAN

A MILLION! I'll pay one million for everything in the shop!

Pete grabs a booster box out of the tote bin calvin was carrying them in, walks to the door, rips open the seal and tosses it out the door, packs spilling everywhere.

PETE

Stores closed. Go get them.

The crowd flocks out the door and starts fighting over the packs on the ground as pete slams is shut and double locks it.

CALVIN

You owe me one seventy five for that box still.

PETE

What.. the hell.. Was that?

CALVIN

Beastling mania bro. I've seen it before. You seen the restock videos? You think its easy what I do?

PETE

I've never seen anything like that. You got your phone? What's the CardChart app say?

Calvin pulls out his phone.

CALVIN

App's down.

Pete checks his own phone.

PETE (CONT'D)
"404. Not found."

He rushes to his laptop on the desk and starts typing furiously.

PETE (CONT'D)
TG Collector site is down too.

CALVIN
Check eBay sales.

Pete types again. his eyes go wide.

PETE
You're not gonna believe this.

He turns the screen toward calvin. Sold listings fill the page – all for insane amounts: a graded 8 Astroshark for \$175,000; booster boxes (still in print) at \$350,000; even bulk cards going for \$40k-\$50k.

PETE (CONT'D)
Text Melissa and tell her we're going to Martin's. I'll give him a call.

He pulls out his phone and dials.

INT. MARTIN'S BATHROOM – SAME TIME

Martin lounges in a bathtub surrounded by floating rubber Fireducks.

MARTIN
What's upppp, P?

PETE

You're not gonna believe what just happened.

MARTIN

Your girlfriend threw you out and a bunch of people tried to storm your store and buy everything out for ridiculous prices the second you put up a sale sign?

PETE

How did you—?

MARTIN

I saw the livestream. Word travels fast these days. I saw some weird stuff happening this morning before Cardchart crashed. I wouldn't sell anything until it clears up. You could lose some money.

PETE

Some guy offered a million dollars for the whole inventory.

MARTIN

Hah. That's a good one. For real though, Hold off until everything clears up.

PETE

I'm serious. Watch the rest of the stream. I threw everyone out. I don't know what do do.

MARTIN

A million dollars? And you passed it up. And I'M the over analyzer? Alright man, Let me finish up my tubby and you guys can come over. I'll text you the address. See if we can figure out what's going on. A million dollars? You crazy, bro.

PETE (V.O.)

Send it over and we'll be right there.

(MORE)

PETE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
(PETE HANGS UP.)

MARTIN
(Still in the bath)
"Just hangs up. That's rude,"
(he starts squirting water
from the jets at a rubber
duckie.)

Cut back to the shop.

CALVIN
She said she'll meet us there. You
get
the address?

PETE
He just sent it to me. How long
have we known Martin and none of us
have been to his house?

CALVIN
I don't know, man. He said his
mom's really embarrassing or
something. Let's just go.

PETE
Hold on a second.

Pete quickly rounds up what's left of his inventory and
shoves it into a safe.

PETE (CONT'D)
I don't trust anyone after what
just happened. Let's go see what
Martin can find.

They head to the door and walk out — passing the crowd
outside still beating the ever-living hell out of each other,
fighting over the packs Pete threw earlier.

CALVIN
I'm telling you, man... just a normal
Tuesday restock.

SCENE 7, THE REVEAL

EXT. MARTIN'S HOUSE - DAY

Pete and Calvin pull up, stunned by the sheer size of the
place.

INT. MARTIN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

The door swings open. martin's mom - stunning - greets them. pete and cal freeze, dumbstruck.

MARTIN'S MOM

Oh! You must be Pete and Cal. Come in. Marty's waiting for you.

CALVIN

Martin has a sister?

MARTIN'S MOM

You're too sweet.

They step inside and enter martin's room - every inch plastered with Beastlings merch.

MARTIN

Guys. You're not gonna believe this.

CALVIN

Do you have a girlfriend?

MARTIN

What? No. That's my mom, dude.

CALVIN

THAT'S your mom?

Martin ignores him and pulls up a POWERPOINT on his gaming monitor. Title slide: "WE'RE ALL SCREWED: A Financial Breakdown by Martin, Age 16"

MARTIN

So, I think I see what happened here. You guys heard about FedCoin?

PETE

The new crypto that was supposed to be the next Bitcoin - the one every investor piled their money into? Who hasn't heard of it.

MARTIN

Exactly. Well... they're all gonna be
bumming.

(clicks to next slide: a graph plummeting off the screen)

MARTIN (CONT'D)

because it looks like it REALLY
messed things up. Like,
catastrophically. Somehow,
somewhere, something went really
wrong.

CALVIN

How wrong? What happened?

MARTIN

Apparently the dollar is now
registering as negative twelve in
value.

CALVIN

Negative dollars? How do you even
measure that?

MARTIN

You count out customer change on
your fingers, Cal. I'm not getting
into the specifics. All you need to
know is money is completely
worthless right now and people are
panicking.

MELISSA enters the room.

MELISSA

MARTY! Your mom is HOTTT!

Martin keeps ignoring everyone.

MARTIN

I'll break it down since Melissa
will actually get it, basically—

Martin clicks the next slide, a cartoon of a man
shooting himself in the foot

MARTIN (CONT'D)

someone at the Treasury
accidentally linked FedCoin's value
to America's DEBT instead of its
ASSETS.

MELISSA

What? How does that even happen?

MARTIN

(clicks slide: LinkedIn profile of a young guy in a tech bro hoodie)
Meet Chad Berkshire. 28 years old. Harvard grad. Degree in "Blockchain Innovation." He wrote the FedCoin algorithm after a three-day, all inclusive retreat in Costa Rica.

CALVIN

Dude's got HUSTLE!

MARTIN

(clicks slide: screenshot of Instagram story) This is from his Instagram the day FedCoin launched. Caption: "Just finished coding the future of currency! Blessed and stressed! Hashtag disrupt everything!"

MELISSA

So... It was intentional?

MARTIN

Crypto bros will be crypto bros. This is a bigger rug pull than the hawk tuah girl.

CALVIN

You know, I always liked her.

MARTIN

It gets better. (clicks slide: news headline "FINTECH FOUNDER FLEES TO BAHAMAS") Chad Berkshire is now on a beach in the Bahamas with 47 million in FedCoin—which he converted back to dollars RIGHT before the crash.

PETE

So he did know?

MARTIN

Oh, he definitely knew. But since FedCoin was "decentralized," no regulatory body can touch him.

(MORE)

MARTIN (CONT'D)
(clicks slide: split screen of Fox News and MSNBC anchors) So these geniuses told everyone to panic-buy "physical assets."

CALVIN
The whole WORLDS got hustle. I need to step up my game.

MARTIN
Problem is, gold and silver are controlled by banks. Real estate is tied to mortgages, which are tied to... dollars. So people started buying ANYTHING physical they could trade.

AWKWARD SILENCE.

PETE
Okay... so why why Beastlings?

MARTIN
Because their money is worthless. Our cards are basically NFTs you can hold and don't crash when you close the app. This Rocky card? Yesterday, worthless. Today? BMW.

MELISSA
Whoa. That doesn't make any sense.

MARTIN
It doesn't make sense to me either. It's actually the one thing that doesn't make sense to me. There's no math to explain it. People just really, really want cards.

CALVIN
So we've spent our whole lives collecting the most valuable thing on Earth right now?

MELISSA
No — we did. You got in when everyone else did, to make money.

CALVIN
(brushing off her jab)
Okay, sourpuss. That doesn't matter. We all have big collections right now. We're sitting on gold. That means...

THEY ALL LOOK AT ONE ANOTHER AS IT HITS THEM.

ALL
We're... really, really rich.

CUT TO:

SCENE 8, A WHOLE NEW WORLD

INT. PETE'S NEW MANSION - NIGHT - PARTY MONTAGE

A wild mansion party is in full swing. EDM blasts. Pete's old dented beater sits out front on absurdly expensive \$10,000 wheels. a giant inflatable fireduck floats in the in-ground pool next to a massive projector screen where guests play a vintage Beastlings game. Cardr drifts by on a pool raft, waving lazily. Pete's parents walk through the massive kitchen, staring in awe.

PETE'S MOM
This is beautiful, Rick! We could never afford this!

DAD
Yeah... The kid did alright for himself.

PETE'S MOM
(brushes her hand over the countertop) Sooo expensive.(points to the fridge) Look at these appliances! We should get the same ones.

Cut to more partying.

Melissa and martin's mom dance together, vibing. Pete and Calvin watch from chairs, stunned.

MARTIN
(walking up, looking between the girls and the guys) What are you guys doing?

MELISSA
(to Martin)
Your mom is HOTTTTT.

Human bowling – Guests send a skateboarder flying into a massive tower of sealed collector boxes, sending them crashing down. TOM rushes in, horrified.

He snatches a surviving box, inspecting it closely. he finds the tiniest tear in the plastic.

TOM

Damaged! You guys ruined the box!

He throws it in disgust.

END PARTY MONTAGE.

EXT. MANSION ROOFTOP - NIGHT

The party cools. The crew sits on the roof, admiring the city skyline.

MELISSA

Wow. Can you guys believe this? I mean... who would've thought? All of this. All yours, Pete. It's a dream come true.

PETE

I honestly still don't believe it either. Yesterday, I was gonna close up shop... and today(looks out over the mansion) All of this.

CALVIN

Man, just this morning I traded a damaged Astroshark for a Range Rover. Last week it wouldn't be worth one of my shoelaces.

MARTIN

I haven't bought anything yet. I'm trying to figure out the best way to invest.

PETE

You're rich, Marty. You don't need to invest. Don't you wanna get out of your mom's house?

MARTIN

My mom's a really good cook... I don't wanna give that up.

CALVIN

Your mom, man. (Smiling)

MELISSA

Your MOM.

They all laugh at the absurdity of their new lives.

PETE
(leaning over the balcony)
I just can't believe it all. I
remember the day I bought that
shop. I just thought I was making a
living doing what I love.

FLASHBACK - INT. PETE'S OLD APARTMENT - NIGHT

PETE rushes around the kitchen preparing dinner before CLAIRE gets home. he sets the table, lights candles, plates everything. the front door opens. Claire enters, immediately scanning the mess of dishes.

CLAIRe
What is all this?

PETE
I wanted tonight to be special. I
have big news.

CLAIRe
(not acknowledging "good
news")
Look at this mess, Pete. The
kitchen is never going to be the
same. The stove is covered in
grease. I work all day and you
expect me to come home and clean
this up?

PETE
(used to her tone)
I will clean it up. I wanted to
make something special. I said I
have good news.

CLAIRe
(wiping the stove, disgusted)
What good news? What could you
possibly tell me that makes
destroying my kitchen worth it?

PETE
My loan was approved. I'm buying
the shop.
(MORE)

PETE (CONT'D)
All my hard work is paying off.
Isn't that amazing? I'm going to
have my own store.

CLAIRE
(Unenthused)
That's great, Pete. More cards.
(sarcastic)We're gonna be soooo
rich.

PETE
I was hoping you'd sign off on it
with me. Co-owners. I run it, you
do the bookkeeping. Like a power
couple.

CLAIRE
I'm not quitting my job to sell
cardboard, Pete. I'll manage the
financials, but that is not a
profitable business. I'd like to
retire someday, not run a little
shop until the fad dies and we're
broke. The economy is awful. A
business like that won't survive.

PETE
(ignoring her tone)
Well... that's still great. I could
really use you in the background
making sure I don't do anything
stupid.

CLAIRE
I'll try. No promises. Let's just
eat dinner and I'll look it over
after.

They sit. Claire eyes her plate.

CLAIRE (CONT'D)
Pete, you know I don't like my
broccoli cooked this way.

CUT BACK TO ROOFTOP

PETE
Realizing) You know what? She was a
witch. Everything I did was wrong
or just never good enough. Why did
I put up with that?

CALVIN

I mean, she ain't bad looking

PETE

But she never supported me. Why was I such a pushover? I never needed her. In fact, if she waited one more day to leave, she probably wouldn't even admit she was wrong.

MARTIN

How funny is it that now her entire job revolves around Pogan and his cards? The irony. Now HER career is cardboard.

MELISSA

I'm proud of you, Pete. Sticking out all the hard times. Through all that abuse. Right when you think it's time to give up... you see what happens when you never give up? You deserve this.

CALVIN

Yeah, putting up with that chick... I'd feel like I deserve a mansion too. I feel like I deserve one for the handful of times I met her.

PETE

Yeah... thank you guys. My worst day rolled right into my best. I can't see how this could get any crazier—

Suddenly the party below erupts in cheers

MARTIN

Sounds like it just did. Wanna see what's going on?

SCENE 9, KARMA

INT. MANSION - CONTINUOUS

The crowd goes wild. The crew pushes through and sees it: POGAN LAUL, surrounded by his entourage... and CLAIRE. Fans scream as pogon signs autographs.

POGAN

This party is WILD! Whose place is this?

PETE

It's... it's mine. This is incredible. I love your streams, Pogan. You've done so much for the Beastlings market andhelped my shop. Pete Andrews.

POGAN

WHOA. Pete Andrews? Like... P.S. Packs Pete Andrews?

PETE

Yeah, that's me. You're probably looking for that Flazark-things have changed a bit.

POGAN

Nah, bro. I don't expect that anymore. I don't exactly have a spare private island to trade for it. But... you might not like who I'm here with.

Claire steps forward, realizing everything at once.

CLAIRe

This is your party?

PETE

Nice to see you too.

CLAIRe

This is your house?

PETE

That's what the deed says.

CLAIRe

Well... you might want to break that deed out and put my name on it. Because as part owner of P.S. Packs, this house is half mine.

MARTIN

That's not how that works... legal documents can't just-

PETE

(cutting him off) I've got this, Marty. You don't own anything.

(MORE)

PETE (CONT'D)

You're just my accountant. The shop is mine 100%. You just get a wee slice of the buy. I'll have Marty cut you a check for negative two million dollars since that's technically what it's worth right now. Do you accept FedCoin?

MARTIN

Did he just make a math joke? Go Pete. Tell her!

CLAIRE

Actually, I wrote the contract. Part of the value of the assets belong to me. I'll take your precious dragon card and we'll call it even, or you'll hear from my lawyer.

Martin steps forward with a folder.

MARTIN

I've been reviewing this to prepare for this exact moment. (points to clause) You're right—you should be entitled to some assets. But looks like you kept signing short-term agreements. This here... your little chicken scratch about not wanting to "get buried in the debt he inevitably takes on"? Your contract expired eight months ago. Right when I took over as accountant.

MELISSA

So you must just be here to enjoy the party? Because you're not leaving with a piece of Pete's hard work, Claire!

CLAIRE

(fuming, humiliated) I'm going home to read MY copies. I know some of this is mine.

PETE

All you ever did was math and complain about wrappers on the floor. Go for it. Martin will outsmart anything you bring back.
(MORE)

PETE (CONT'D)
You never believed in this, and
you're not getting a piece of it
now.

MELISSA
Have a good night. How about a
booster pack on the house?

Claire snatches the pack and storms out as the crowd chants:

CROWD
CLAIRES-ELL-A! CLAIDE-ELL-A!

Claire bumps into a party goer on the way out.

CLAIRE
Get out of my way, you loser!

PETE
(to Melissa) Clairella?

MELISSA
I don't know. First thing that came
to mind.

POGAN
Whoa. Bro... you dated that?

PETE
Yeah... too long. Moment of weakness.
I bet you'll be working with her
for a while too. The way she writes
contracts.

POGAN
I'll keep her in line.
(He turns and looks at the
crowd)
What's everyone looking at?! PARTY
ON!

Music kicks back up. The party roars again.

SCENE 10, IT GETS WORSE

EXT. MANSION ROOFTOP - LATER

Pete and Melissa share a moment alone on the rooftop, looking out at the beautiful city skyline on the rooftop.

MELISSA

It's beautiful, isn't it?

PETE

It really is. Never thought I'd be
in a place like this, with a view
like this.

MELISSA

You know, I always dreamed we
would. Live together in a big
beautiful house that looks over the
city. That one day, our dream would
make us rich.

PETE

(Smirks are her and
laughs) You always
dreamed we would live
together?

Melissa nervously twirls her curly red hair, not sure what to say as Martin and Calvin come up the stairs and interrupt them.

MARTIN

Man, did you see her face? She
deserved every last bit of that.

CALVIN

Cruella bites the dust. What a burn
Miss.

PETE

I don't know what came over me.
I've been so afraid to stand up to
her for years. I've never seen it
until now.

CALVIN

Sounds like karma to me. I told
you, P. Girls a witch.

PETE

I was about to sell the shop
yesterday. I would have handed the
whole thing over to Pogan and
Claire just to survive for another
few weeks.

MELISSA

Yeah, and she HATED that shop. Now she's at home trying to figure out how she can take half of it from you.

PETE

You guys don't think she can do that, do you?

MARTIN

No way. I've looked that contract up and down. She made damn sure she wasn't really tied to it in any permanent way. She was a bookkeeper. And a bad one at that. Took me weeks to fix her mess. It's like she wanted you to fail.

PETE

Good luck to Pogan Laul. For real. He's going to be stuck with her now.

He turns and admires his new estate.

PETE (CONT'D)

What a night.

MARTIN

What were you saying earlier about things not getting crazier?

PETE

I can be wrong sometimes. Now—now it can't get crazier.

CALVIN

YO! Guys! I traded an empty box for a drone! Look at this!

He crashes the drone into the house; it falls into the pool.

CALVIN (CONT'D)

Oh. Damn. I'll get another one.

They all laugh at the absurdity of their new lives.

PETE

(leaning over the balcony)
I never saw this coming.

Martin's phone buzzes. He pulls it out, scrolls for a second. His face changes.

MARTIN
(*urgent*)
Guys... you need to see this.

The laughter dies. They crowd around him.

MARTIN'S PHONE SCREEN - SHAKY CELLPHONE FOOTAGE:

Chaos. People fighting in the streets over booster packs. Someone smashes a store window. Flames in the background. A news chyron scrolls across the bottom: "TRADING CARD RIOTS SPREAD TO 15 CITIES - NATIONWIDE VIOLENCE OVER CARD SHORTAGES"

BACK TO ROOFTOP:

The crew stares at the screen in silence. In the distance, sirens wail. The glow of fires visible across the city skyline they were just admiring.

Calvin looks uncomfortable. Melissa's hand goes to her mouth.

Pete stares at the phone, then out at the burning city. The weight of it hits him.

MELISSA
Oh my God! People are going to get killed out there!

The sirens grow louder. More explosions echo across the city.

PETE
Over trading cards...

CUT TO BLACK.