

Stillwater Mall

Episode 101
Everybody Wants To Rule The World
(Pilot)

created and written by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

JAMES HAMILTON (17) Lanky and self-conscious, James is a romantic who feels deeply but doesn't know how to act on it. Outgoing, but falters when emotions turn real. A movie lover drawn to storytelling, he wants to put the world into words.

BOBBY O'CONNELL (22) Handsome, charming, and unapologetically self-aware, Bobby knows exactly how he comes across and owns it. A natural performer with a taste for mischief, he bends rules instinctively, rarely considering the consequences.

KAT BRENNAN (17) Pretty, composed, and academically driven, Kat is an observant documentarian with a camera almost always around her neck. She often reacts rather than asserts, but sees more than anyone realizes and remembers everything.

MADDIE BRENNAN (19) Bold, sarcastic, and restless, Maddie projects confidence through humor and dismissal. Beneath the bravado is a young woman who feels underestimated, yet instinctively steps up when things fall apart.

GEORGE BRENNAN (60) A rigid Napoleonic traditionalist with an outsized presence, George is a relic of the 1970s. Big hair, big glasses, big lapels, and a fragile ego to match. A control freak who cannot tolerate public embarrassment.

JEANNIE BRENNAN (50s) George's wife, effortlessly glamorous with a structurally impressive blonde hairdo. Emotionally intuitive, she leads with warmth rather than force. A quiet counterbalance to George, she's the heart of Stillwater Mall.

WILLOW (50s) Bohemian in style and spirit, Willow feels she is in communication with the ethereal realm. A huge Turkman carpet bag with her mystical tools of the trade follows her everywhere. Her beliefs are sincere and unshakable.

DANNY HAMILTON (15) James's younger brother and classic teen, loud, impulsive, and perpetually bored. Considers the mall his personal playground. With zero restraint and zero self-awareness, he causes chaos without considering the fallout.

JIM HAMILTON (40s) Gruff and sardonic, Jim runs Video Plus from behind a video monitor, like the Great and Powerful Oz. Heard but never seen, his presence is felt through the unblinking security cameras in the store.

EXT. STILLWATER MALL - DAY

SUPER: STILLWATER MALL, JANUARY 1, 1985

MUSIC: "Cool Places" by Sparks & Jane Wiedlin

An upbeat New Wave synth-pop groove sets the tone. Lyrics from the third verse kick in.

"I wanna go cool places tonight"

"I wanna go to cool places with you"

"And after that, we'll slip out for a bite..."

INT. STILLWATER MALL CENTER COURT - DAY

MUSIC: The song morphs into a sterilized instrumental version playing over the mall's Muzak system.

The two-level mall bustles with activity. A stage sits before a black-draped 20-foot structure. Chairs and a podium are arranged. High school CHEERLEADERS and a MARCHING BAND are setting up on either side of the stage.

INT. STILLWATER 6 THEATRE - DAY

A HIGH SCHOOL COUPLE buys tickets and heads inside.

INT. MALL SERVICE CORRIDOR - DAY

A long, harshly lit service corridor. One door reads "STILLWATER 6 - EMPLOYEES ONLY."

DONNA and MARY (early 20s), sisters who do everything together, sneak down the hallway and stop at the back door.

Donna knocks twice, pauses, then knocks twice more.

BOBBY opens the door with a flourish, welcoming them in.

BOBBY

Seating for two at our exclusive
screening of Breakin' 2: Electric
Boogaloo, right this way, ladies.

The girls GIGGLE. Mary adjusts Bobby's bow tie. Donna kisses his cheek.

Bobby gives an exaggerated bow, and the girls glide into the theatre like an eight-year-old's version of runway models.

MARY

Cute tie, Bobby!

DONNA
You're the best, Bobby!

With a self-satisfied smirk, Bobby follows them inside.

BOBBY
(as he's closing the door)
You girls go get settled, and I'll
see if I can scrounge some popcorn.

MARY
And Junior Mints?

BOBBY
Sure. And Junior Mints.

The door shuts. Three seconds later, it flings open again and Mary and Donna scurry out with Bobby in pursuit.

BOTH
Bye, Bobby!

BOBBY
Wait! Where are you goin'?

CARL (40s), the theatre manager who despises rule breakers, appears behind Bobby like a silent phantom.

Bobby senses his presence, sighs, and closes his eyes in defeat.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Bow tie?

CARL
(seething)
Bow tie.

Without turning, Bobby unclasps his bow tie and holds it up. Carl snatches it.

BOBBY
Soooo, just suspended for the day
again, right? I'll see you...

Carl forcefully slams the door shut.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
...tomorrow?

As Bobby walks away, the door for Andy's Athletic Shoes opens into the hallway. FAWN (20), a very pretty redhead, exits. Her uniform top is a very tight-fitting crop top football jersey.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Hey Fawn! Those new uniforms...

FAWN
Don't.

BOBBY
I mean, uh, hey, is Andy looking
for...

Fawn breezes right past him without slowing.

FAWN
No.

BOBBY
(trying another tack)
Maybe this weekend! You wanna...

FAWN
Stop.

Bobby watches Fawn stride away. He's deflated, but just for a beat. He shrugs, smiles, then jauntily heads off for his next date with mischief.

INT. VIDEO PLUS STOREFRONT - MOMENTS LATER

MUSIC: "Workin' for a Livin'" by Huey Lewis and the News

Music from Video Plus blasts out into the mall concourse as shoppers drift past the storefront.

Bobby walks up and enters, carrying two food court drinks.

INT. VIDEO PLUS - DAY

JAMES teeters on the counter, stretching to balance an intricate *Police Academy* standee onto the highest VHS shelf. DANNY rockets a football from the far end of the store.

DANNY
Incoming!

Danny WHISTLES a bomb-drop.

James tries to one-hand the ball and save the standee, but the ball takes out both him and the display, leaving him flat on his back, buried under a cascade of colorful cardboard.

JAMES
DUDE!

DANNY
 (laughing)
 Sorry!

Bobby rushes over, helping James to his feet. James turns the music down. Danny grins from the safety of the other side of the counter.

BOBBY
 You okay?

JAMES
 I will be, after I kick my
 brother's ass.

Danny LAUGHS, snatches his football, and escapes into the mall.

James wrestles with the mangled standee. Bobby hands him one of the drinks.

BOBBY
 Here, let me. I fix these things
 all day long.

JAMES
 How goes it over at the theatre?

Bobby rapidly rebuilds the standee with practiced ease.

BOBBY
 Honestly? I just got fired, and I
 think for real this time. Carl
 caught me trying to sneak Mary and
 Donna in to see Breakin' 2.

JAMES
 You tell anybody else about this
 yet?

BOBBY
 Not yet. Why?

JAMES
 Because you can't let Electric
 Boogaloo be your signifier.

BOBBY
 My what?

JAMES
 You've got a reputation to think
 about.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

If anybody asks, tell them you were sneaking them into something cool, like Terminator.

BOBBY

Good call.

Bobby stands and shows off the reconstructed standee. James nods his approval.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

So, here's what I'm thinkin'. We both know your little brother, G.I. Jerk-Off, is a royal screw-up, right? I know all about movies, right? I can put standees together in my sleep, right? Think your dad would bring me on?

A bulky VIDEO SECURITY CAMERA mounted to the wall behind them WHIRS to life, its tally light blaring as it NOSILY pans to the boys.

A crackle of STATIC bursts from a speaker beside it. We hear JIM, James's dad and owner of Video Plus.

JIM (O.S.)

You're hired.

JAMES

That was easy.

The boys toast with their food court drinks.

INT. NOW! FASHIONS STOREFRONT - DAY

Now! Fashions is a trendy boutique bursting with hyper-current styles. Clothes and decor are awash in pastels and neon hues.

MUSIC: A Muzak version of "Obsession" by Animotion fills the boutique.

INT. NOW! FASHIONS SALES FLOOR - DAY

JEANNIE nervously adjusts sweaters on hangers, fluffs stacks of jeans, then back to the sweaters.

The door chime PINGS.

Jeannie spins to see WILLOW floating in like she's being carried on an ethereal breeze.

WILLOW

Something called to me and I just knew you needed me. The air is simply charged with electricity.

JEANNIE

What do you mean "something" called you? I called you! Twice! And of course the air is electric! It's the middle of winter, the heat is on in the mall and you're wearing a crocheted shawl and two sweaters. You've probably built up enough static that you could stick a light bulb in your mouth and light it up like Uncle Fester!

WILLOW

Really? Do you have any...

JEANNIE

I need your help!

WILLOW

(back to earth)

Of course, honey. I'm sorry. I'll try the light bulb thing later. Let's set up on your counter.

Willow shuffles across the carpet and brushes up against a metal rack. She's zapped with static discharge. She shakes out her hand, surprised.

WILLOW (CONT'D)

(to herself)

Ooh!

Willow eyes Jeannie mischievously, shuffling up quickly behind her, reaches out and touches her shoulder.

WILLOW (CONT'D)

Zap!

She makes contact with Jeannie and there's a loud crack of static. Jeannie jumps.

JEANNIE

Willow!

WILLOW

(only a little sorry)

I'm sorry honey. Let's get started.

With effort, Willow hauls her bag up to the counter and fumbles with a purple cloth covered in symbols. All the static makes it cling to her sweater.

JEANNIE
(frustrated)
Need some help?

Jeannie unceremoniously rips the cloth off of Willow's sweater and lays it flat on the counter.

WILLOW
Perfect. Everything is unfolding as
the Universe commands.

Willow pulls out a small nightlight base with a red, flickering Christmas bulb and an extension cord. She hands Jeannie the plug.

WILLOW (CONT'D)
Plug this in, honey. Safety first.
No open flames!

Willow produces a sage bundle the size of half a French baguette and a lighter.

As Jeannie plugs in the night light, Willow flicks her Bic and a huge flame leaps out. Willow ritually lights the sage, sending up a dense cloud of smoke.

JEANNIE
Enough with the lighter! You're
gonna set off the smoke detector
and the fire alarm! What the hell
happened to "Safety first?"

WILLOW
That's why I'm smudging, dear.
Safety first. We need to cleanse
the energy and remove negative
vibrations!

Willow pulls a giant abalone shell from her bag and sets the smoldering sage in it, then reverently retrieves crystals, a carved goddess, brass bells, and her wrapped tarot card deck. She murmurs softly as she starts creating a tiny shrine.

JEANNIE
(on edge)
Willow, how much lon...

WILLOW
Shhh!

Willow continues to fidget, every minuscule adjustment pushing Jeannie closer to the edge. Finally, Willow unwraps her tarot deck.

WILLOW (CONT'D)
Hold out your hand.

Jeannie obeys. Willow sets the deck in her palm, places Jeannie's other hand on top, closes her eyes, and clasps Jeannie's hands between hers.

WILLOW (CONT'D)
Your reading, your energy.

After a beat, eyes still closed, Willow takes the deck and sets it on the cloth. She taps the deck twice, but misses the third tap and hits the counter.

One eye opens, she shrugs it off, cuts the deck and begins the reading.

WILLOW (CONT'D)
The Past.

She flips over the first card and studies it seriously.

JEANNIE
What? What is it?

WILLOW
The Eight of Swords - Reversed.
This shows great pressure. A build up. Like a pressure cooker with a stuck valve.

JEANNIE
So... bad?

WILLOW
Oh, profoundly. Now, The Present.

Willow flips the second card and GASPS. Jeannie is frozen.

JEANNIE
What. Does. That. Mean?

WILLOW
The Tower - Upright. Upheaval.
Collapse. Disruption. The pressure from the past energized the present, and not in a good way. The past is the powder keg, the present is the fuse.

JEANNIE
 (terrified to ask)
 And the future?

Willow turns the final card. She hangs her head and says nothing.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)
 Wheel of Fortune! Fortune is good,
 right?

WILLOW
 (finally)
 It's The Wheel of Fortune -
 Reversed, honey. It's bad. Unlucky.
 Everything that happens today is
 going to battle against the natural
 order... and lose.

Jeannie is galvanized into immediate action. She snatches the sage bundle and unceremoniously extinguishes it by jamming the smoldering end into her half-full coffee cup. Willow is flabbergasted.

JEANNIE
 Oh boy, we gotta tell George. Pack
 up your stuff!

Willow starts to reverently retrieve one item at a time. Jeannie finally snaps.

She roughly scoops up the cloth with everything inside, stuffs it into Willow's purse, presses it into her hands, spins her, and marches her toward the door.

INT. MALL CONCOURSE EAST - DAY

JEANNIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Coming through!

Shoppers freeze, looking around for the source as Jeannie and Willow burst out of Now! Fashions and sprint across the concourse.

A MALL WALKER flattens himself against a kiosk to avoid being run over.

They charge straight into George's Bicentennial Male Clothiers.

INT. BICENTENNIAL MALE SALES FLOOR - DAY

MUSIC: A slowed-down, more melancholic Muzak version of "Tie a Yellow Ribbon" by Tony Orlando and Dawn filters through the store's speakers.

The dark wood tones and brass accoutrements give the store the faux gravitas of a Colonial Williamsburg bed and breakfast. A STUFFY CUSTOMER looks up from comparing two bland ties and HARRUMPHS as Jeannie and Willow blast through the store.

INT. GEORGE'S OFFICE - DAY

George's outdated style is matched by his office's outdated decor. So much wood paneling.

GEORGE is standing at an open file cabinet, on the phone. Jeannie and Willow crash into his office, manic. George's nonchalant attitude indicates this isn't the first time.

GEORGE
 (into the phone)
 Edgar, lemme call you back. I think
 I'm about to have my chakras
 realigned within an inch of their
 lives.

George calmly hangs up, closes the cabinet, and sits at his desk. After a beat...

GEORGE (CONT'D)
 Go...

It's off to the races. They fire simultaneously.

| | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| JEANNIE | WILLOW |
| George, listen! | The wheel has reversed! |

| | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| JEANNIE (CONT'D) | WILLOW (CONT'D) |
| Something bad... | Luck has inverted... |

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| JEANNIE (CONT'D) | WILLOW (CONT'D) |
| We have to warn you! | You've got to listen! |

George raises a hand. They both stop.

GEORGE
 One at a time.

WILLOW
 I'll go first!

GEORGE
 Of course you will.

Willow steps up, assumes her best Mystical Priestess pose, dramatically flinging back her shawl, raising her palms skyward.

WILLOW

George, fate is twisting out of alignment. The natural flow of the day has been disrupted. The cosmic river is being blocked by all this negative energy and the dam's about to burst! Fortune Reversed is a sign that...

JEANNIE

Everything is gonna go sideways today, George. Everything!

Silence. After a beat, he points at Willow.

GEORGE

You. Mystic Seer...

George closes his eyes and puts his fingers to his temples.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Read my aura or whatever. What am I thinking right now?

Willow doesn't skip a beat.

WILLOW

That you wish someone would drop a house on me.

George taps the tip of his nose with his index finger. Bingo.

JEANNIE

(exasperated)
Oh, George!

GEORGE

(chuckling)
A boy can dream, can't he?

Willow starts to make a metaphysical hand gesture to hex him, but she looks at Jeannie and stops.

WILLOW

You're lucky you're married to Jeannie.

George smiles at Jeannie.

GEORGE

What do you know? We finally agree on something.

Willow prepares to fire back.

JEANNIE

(to Willow)

We don't have time for this. I'll talk to him.

(sincerely)

Thank you, sweetie.

WILLOW

Love you, honey. Good luck.

Nose up in the air, Willow gives George a dismissive glance, spins dramatically and exits.

George gets up from his desk, watching her go.

GEORGE

She's family. I love her. But your sister is a real pain in the ass.

He walks over to Jeannie, sitting her down on the couch.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

So, what's really going on?

JEANNIE

It's just the cards... It just went from bad to worse.

George takes her hand.

GEORGE

Sport, you've got to stop letting Willow fill your head with all that reading-chicken-bones nonsense. Have a little more faith in yourself. In us.

JEANNIE

I know. I really do.

GEORGE

The mall is in great shape. The event is planned out to the last detail. Everything is gonna be just fine.

JEANNIE

Please don't say that!

George stands, gently helping Jeannie to her feet.

GEORGE

Come on, let's track down the girls
and get this show on the road.

George kisses her cheek, grabs his jacket from the coat rack, and they head out.

INT. VIDEO PLUS - DAY

James and Bobby lounge against the counter, watching a movie on the store's monitor. The *Police Academy* standee still sits on the floor beside a stack of un-shelved VHS boxes.

Another crackle of STATIC.

JIM (O.S.)

That standee gonna get put up
today?

James scrambles up on the counter and Bobby carefully hands the standee up. James is just about where he was last time when...

KAT breezes in, carrying two pizzas, her 35mm camera hanging around her neck.

KAT

Hi James!

JAMES

Kat!

James whips around too fast, flashes a huge grin, and immediately loses his balance. Arms flail and he and the standee topple again.

Bobby makes a hopeless attempt to catch everything. He never stood a chance.

KAT

James!

Kat hurries to the counter, drops the pizzas, and hesitantly peers over.

James, Bobby, and the standee lie in a crumpled heap on the floor.

Seeing they're okay, she quickly pops off the lens cap and snaps a few embarrassing photos.

KAT (CONT'D)
 Purely for historical documentation
 and absolutely not for blackmail!

BOBBY
 I forgot to ask. Does the job come
 with insurance?

Jim's camera swivels toward the boys.

JIM (O.S.)
 No.

James's arm emerges from under the pile and gives his dad a
 weak thumbs up.

JAMES
 All good here, dad!

INT. VIDEO PLUS - MOMENTS LATER

James and Kat talk quietly across the counter as Bobby climbs
 up to place the standee. Jim's camera WHIRS and moves,
 watching Bobby.

INT. JIM'S OFFICE - DAY

Four black-and-white monitors view the store. On the desk: a
 tabletop microphone, joystick, and a well-used ashtray. A
 curl of cigarette smoke drifts past the screen.

Jim's hand reaches in, keying the mic.

JIM
 A little more to the left. Back a
 little. A little more. There.

Bobby gives the camera a thumbs up. Jim releases the mic key,
 stubs out his cigarette, and immediately lights another.

INT. VIDEO PLUS - DAY

Bobby leaps down off the counter. Kat hands him a slice of
 pizza.

KAT
 So, you got fired from the theatre
 again, huh? What was it this time?

BOBBY
 Got caught sneaking a couple of
 girls into Br--

James COUGHS LOUDLY.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
Terminator. I let 'em in to
Terminator. Y'know, a cool movie.

James shakes his head.

JAMES
Dude...

MADDIE enters buried under a mountain of purses and textbooks.

She unloads the whole pile onto the cluttered counter, triggering an avalanche of books and video boxes.

MADDIE
I can just dump these here while
they perform, right?

BOBBY
Perform? Who?

MADDIE
I got hired last week as the
assistant coach for the Quarrymen
cheerleaders, which, right now,
means hauling all their shit around
while they get to dance and cheer.

BOBBY
(proudly)
I'm a performer too, y'know.

Maddie looks at him blankly, then looks at Kat and asks,

MADDIE
(points to the pizza)
Can I get in on that?

Kat and Bobby reach for the same slice. It slips, flips, and lands face down...

MADDIE (CONT'D)
...on my purse. Thanks.

She grabs her own slice.

Bobby grabs some napkins, retrieves the fallen slice in one hand, and starts wiping the sauce from her purse with the other.

BOBBY
 (playing it cool)
 Yeah, I'm an actor, and...

MADDIE
 Wait, you work at the movie
 theatre, right?

JAMES
 He used to. He works here now.

MADDIE
 That sucks. I was hoping you
 could've snuck my sister and me
 into Electric Boogaloo.

James and Bobby exchange a look.

GEORGE (O.S.)
 I figured I'd find you loitering
 around in here.

Everyone turns, jolted at the sound of the gruff, booming
 voice of George. Jeannie is at his side.

Startled, Bobby drops the slice again. He scoops it off the
 floor and sets it back on the counter.

| | |
|--|--|
| <p>KAT (meek) Hi, daddy.</p> | <p>MADDIE (indifferent) Hi, daddy.</p> |
|--|--|

George nods to his daughters, but never breaks eye contact
 with James. He plants an elbow on the counter and leans in. A
 heavy silence.

James holds his ground. Barely.

JAMES
 (gulps)
 Hi Mr. Brennan.

George doesn't even blink.

GEORGE
 Hamilton. Everything will be ready
 by 11:45, right?

JAMES
 Of course, Mr. Brennan.

GEORGE

Do I need to remind you how
important this is, Hamilton?

Jeannie steps in front of George to talk to James.

JEANNIE

(waving off George)
I think he got it the first 12
times you told him this week. Go
talk to the girls, George.

Jeannie playfully reaches across the counter and tousles
James's hair.

JEANNIE (CONT'D)

(quietly to James)
Papa bear.

JAMES

(relieved)
Thanks, Mrs. B.

GEORGE

(to the girls)
It's exactly 11:15 AM. The
presentation starts at exactly
12:00 PM.
(to Kat)
You're taking pictures, correct?

MADDIE

(same emphasis as her dad)
Exactly.
(slightly condescending)
You two better run along.

JEANNIE

(indicating the pizza)
Ooh! This for everybody?

James grabs a napkin, puts a slice on it, and hands it to
Jeannie with a playful bow.

George snatches the slice that fell on the floor... twice.

James raises a hand to intervene, but Bobby smoothly
intercepts, casually lowering his arm.

BOBBY

Bon appétit!

George brings the floor pizza to his mouth.

Maddie, James and Bobby watch with delight. Kat watches in horror, but she can't look away.

She slowly raises her camera and CLICK, just as George takes a big bite.

GEORGE

What's with the pictures? You've seen me eat pizza before. I probably paid for this anyway.

Jeannie brushes crumbs off George's lapel and takes his arm.

JEANNIE

C'mon, George, you don't want to miss your big moment.

George GRUNTS and lets himself be pulled away. Jeannie throws a wink back to the room. Three out of the four exchange knowing grins. Not Kat. She's still mortified.

KAT

Gross!

MADDIE

You kidding? I need that blown up and framed!

BOBBY

Jesus Christ, doesn't your dad ever smile?

MADDIE

Sure, when his little Kitty-Kat brings home another straight A report card.

KAT

Hey!

MADDIE

He hasn't been proud of me since they raised the legal drinking age to 21 and I couldn't run to the store for his bourbon anymore.

An uncomfortable beat.

JAMES

Oookay then. Let's go check out that big reveal.

Maddie finishes her pizza, wipes her mouth, and casually takes the soda from Bobby's hand, swapping it for her napkin.

As she takes a long drink, Bobby stands slack-jawed, letting the last few minutes steamroll him.

BOBBY

My dad thinks it's stupid that I want to be an actor.

MADDIE

Yeah, I mean, it kinda is though... right?

KAT

Maddie!

Maddie sees that her comment really stung. She softens, just a little.

MADDIE

I'm sorry. It's just my dad. He pushes me over the edge sometimes.

BOBBY

It's alright.

MADDIE

No... it's cool you want to act. I mean, look at me. I want to dance, but here I am babysitting teenagers.

She turns to Kat and James.

MADDIE (CONT'D)

No offense.

KAT

None taken.

JAMES

Well... some taken.

Together. Same time, same cadence, same dismissive confidence...

MADDIE

You'll live.

BOBBY

You'll live.

Bobby grins at Maddie. She manages a half smile and walks away.

As the four make their way to the front, James stops and calls back to his dad.

JAMES

Dad! You gonna come and watch the unveiling?

The speaker crackles to life. Jim lets out an "are-you-shitting-me" guffaw.

JIM (O.S.)

Ha!

James just shrugs and runs off after the others. Uniformed mall cop DOUG O'MALLEY (30) enters with two video tapes.

DOUG

I'm just returning these.

JAMES

Hey! Just set 'em on the counter.

Doug walks up and stops short at the sight of the pizza. His eyes dart around before he quickly snatches a slice, takes a bite, then waves his returns at Jim's camera.

DOUG

(loud, performative)

Hey Jim! I'm just dropping these off, buddy!

When he slaps the boxes firmly on the counter, the *Police Academy* display immediately collapses again. Doug freezes like a caught-in-the-act raccoon, then scampers away.

JIM (O.S.)

DAMMIT!

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

INT. MALL CENTER COURT - DAY

James is at the audio board as Bobby sets up the last row of chairs. Maddie finishes talking to the CONDUCTOR, then goes over last minute instructions with the cheerleaders.

Kat walks up behind James, puts her elbows on his shoulders, rests her camera on his head and starts taking pics. James starts to turn.

KAT

Hold still, tripod!

James smiles and complies. A displeased George steps up and CLEARS HIS THROAT. Kat and James break it up and get back to the job at hand. George hovers, watching.

JAMES

(to Bobby)

Uh, hey! I need a mic check!

BOBBY

On it, boss!

Bobby dashes up to the stage, takes the mic from the stand and looks to James for his cue. After a few adjustments on the board, James nods.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

One, two... One, two...

Bobby digs the sound of his voice over the speakers.

JAMES

I'm gonna need more. It won't be this quiet. There's gonna be people talking, music playing. Give me a little something.

Getting the green light was all he needed. The change from Stagehand Bobby to Entertainer of the Year is instantaneous.

BOBBY

Good morning, Stillwater! I'm Bobby O'Connell, and I'll be your warm-up act before the big event today! Starting at EXACTLY 12:00...

(winks to George)

...we're going to hear from Mr. George Brennan but before then, how about a little sing-along?

James vigorously shakes his head "No!" George's temperature starts to rise.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

In fact, in honor of Mr. Brennan,
here's a little ditty you've no
doubt heard a thousand times coming
out of his store!

Bobby dives in to an a cappella version of "Tie A Yellow Ribbon."

BOBBY (CONT'D)

EVERYBODY!
"Tie a yellow ribbon 'round the ol'
oak tree"
"It's been three long years"
"Do you still want me?"

GEORGE

Cut that mic!

James fumbles with the board.

BOBBY

"If I don't see a ribbon..."

George yanks the mic cable from the back of the board.

BOBBY (CONT'D)

Hey!

Barely under control, George hands the cable to a petrified James and hisses through clenched teeth...

GEORGE

Five. Minutes.

George storms off. Kat returns to James's side to console him as Maddie walks up, amused.

MADDIE

Nice work, O'Connell!

JAMES

Can somebody please tell me why
this is all my fault?

BOBBY

You said you needed more, I gave
you more!

George, Jeannie, and five members of the BUSINESS OWNERS ASSOCIATION approach the steps leading up to the stage. George cues Maddie, who nods to the Conductor.

The Conductor raises his baton and leads the band into a spirited SOUSA MARCH. Maddie prompts the Cheerleaders to begin building their human pyramid.

An easel stands center stage with a large black-and-white photo of a younger George at the original ribbon cutting for the centerpiece, now covered.

The group climbs the steps. The 5 members sit near the podium, with George and Jeannie opposite them.

Association member EDGAR VALE (60s) steps up to the microphone.

EDGAR
(to the Conductor)
Thank you.

The Conductor gracefully swipes his baton. The band stops.

EDGAR (CONT'D)
Good afternoon and happy 1985! I'm
Edgar Vale, proprietor of The Ink &
Quill Athenaeum.

WALT (70s), the mall's ever-present heckler, has an outburst between fake coughs.

WALT (O.S.)
Bookstore!
(beat)
I'm just sayin'.

EDGAR
(unfazed)
Yes... colloquially. Thank you,
Walt. Now, it is my distinct and
ceremonious honor to introduce the
president of the Stillwater Mall
Business Owners Association, Mr.
George Brennan.

George stands, folder tucked under his arm.

The Conductor starts the MUSIC again.

George and Edgar meet halfway, shake hands, and George steps up to the podium, opens his folder and lays his notes in place.

GEORGE
 (to the Conductor)
 Thank you.

The band plays on, the Conductor blissfully in his own world.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
 (louder)
 Thank you!

Still nothing. The Cheerleaders near the top of their human pyramid.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
 (bellowing)
 THANK YOU!!

George's voice booms over the PA and through the mall.

The band jolts to a stop in a chaotic cacophony.

Startled, the Cheerleader pyramid collapses into a tangled heap of arms, legs, and ponytails.

George closes his eyes to shut out the chaos. He takes a beat, squares his shoulders, plants on a big, insincere Ken doll smile, and opens his eyes. Game face: Engaged.

Maddie stand behind the audience, clipboard in hand, keeping an eye on everything.

MADDIE
 (to herself)
 Uh-oh... He's breaking out the
 Brennan Bullshit Smile.

GEORGE
 Welcome, I'm George Brennan,
 President of the Stillwater Mall
 Business Owners Association and
 owner of Bicentennial Male
 Clothiers.

George holds for applause.

There isn't any. The silence hangs.

The only sound is Kat's camera shutter... CLICK, CLICK, CLICK.

His plastic Ken doll smile melts into a very real scowl.

From the board, James starts clapping enthusiastically, followed by Kat and Bobby.

After a beat, Maddie reluctantly joins with an exaggerated clap all her own.

A reluctant smattering of GOLF CLAPS trickles through the court.

George gives the tiniest nod to his daughters as James brown-noses an overly-eager thumbs-up.

George sees it, gives a subtle head shake and a dismissive eye roll, then turns back to the crowd.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

On March 28th, 1976, it was my great honor to stand here with these distinguished members of the Business Owners Association and cut the ribbon to officially open Stillwater Mall. If you'll indulge me to wax romantic on that special day, I remember--

A football flies in, bouncing off the podium, scattering George's notes everywhere and ricocheting into the microphone.

A jarring SCREECH of FEEDBACK echoes through the mall.

George retrieves the football and angrily turns his gaze towards the second level.

INT. MALL SECOND LEVEL - DAY

Danny stands with a few FRIENDS, hands out like he's calling for a pass.

DANNY

Sorry, dude! Little help?

INT. MALL CENTER COURT - DAY

George looks at Danny, pumps a fake pass, then sinks a perfect no-look toss straight into the garbage can at the foot of the stage.

The Brennan Bullshit Smile returns, and he inhales to continue...

DANNY (O.S.)

DIIICK!

Danny's expletive echoes through the mall.

Nearby shoppers turn to look.

A MOM covers her CHILD'S ears and scowls at George.

A TEEN nods in agreement with Danny.

George lets a small, self-satisfied smirk flash.

GEORGE

As I was saying... Some of you may remember, we had to shut down the waterfall after a few cases of Legionnaires' Disease were traced back to it. But thanks to the vision of a very talented local artist and businesswoman, our signature feature is back in business. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome the artist and owner of Now! Fashions here at Stillwater Mall, my beautiful wife, Jeannie Brennan!

The APPLAUSE for Jeannie is immediate and heartfelt... and much bigger than George's.

He claps, but his pride sinks just a touch. Jeannie smiles warmly at George, pats him on the cheek, and steps to the mic.

George, Edgar, and the Business Owners Association members move behind Jeannie, lifting the ceremonial gold rope.

JEANNIE

Hi everybody, and thanks so much for spending your New Year's Day with us. 1985 isn't just another new year... there's a new energy in the world. The past, the present, and the future all meet right here, today. So, in honor of what came before, and our hopes for the road ahead, we dedicate this new Stillwater landmark. Ladies and gentlemen, may I present: Lightfall.

She nods. They pull. The cover falls away, unveiling the original granite waterfall, now aglow with cascading neon filaments flowing like liquid light. The crowd CHEERS.

Jeannie blows a kiss up to her daughters.

George steps back to the mic, but the band STRIKES UP again.

The audience files out, parting to reveal Willow. She gives an "I told you so" eyebrow raise, flips her shawl over her shoulder with a theatrical flourish, and proudly strides off.

Deflated, George drops his shoulders and walks away.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. MALL CENTER COURT - DAY

James, Bobby, Kat, and Maddie gather by the board as James wraps wires.

MADDIE

That was a lot more fun than I expected, but I gotta run back upstairs and get all the girls' crap.

BOBBY

(enthusiastic)
Want help hauling all that?

MADDIE

(shrugs)
Sure, I guess.

Maddie and Bobby walk to the escalator. Kat and James have a shy moment. Just looking at one another, no one speaking. Finally...

JAMES

(pointing to the stage)
Yeah, that was... something.

KAT

(laughs)
Your brother is officially on my dad's shit list now!

JAMES

Yeah, right after me. Mr. Number One With a Bullet.

KAT

No, no. You're not at the top. There's a lot of people my dad hates way worse than you.

A smile between them. A moment of awkward silence. There is definitely something unspoken.

After a beat, Maddie and Bobby come back down the escalator. Maddie is empty-handed, except for Bobby's drink. She sips while Bobby the Pack Mule staggers behind, barely managing the mountain of purses and books.

JAMES
 (to Bobby)
 Dude! Where's your leash?

Bobby shoots James a scowl and flips him off... which immediately detonates the delicate balance he had. He scrambles to keep everything together. Maddie has kept walking. She calls back to him.

MADDIE (O.S.)
 Um, are you coming?

Bobby awkwardly staggers and hurries after her.

Kat and James share a LAUGH at Bobby's expense as they sit together on the edge of the stage.

KAT
 So... rumor is, KISS is coming through in March. We should totally go!

JAMES
 Oh, absolutely!

KAT
 Should we invite my sister and Bobby?

JAMES
 On a double-date to KISS?

KAT
 I don't know that my sister would consider it a date.

JAMES
 Yeah, but Bobby definitely will! I'm in!

KAT
 I just have to keep my grades up. I loaded up this semester so I can just coast through senior year.

JAMES
 You know if you ever need help with homework, all you gotta do is reach out and I'll come running!

Their eyes meet. Soft smiles.

KAT
 You would, wouldn't you?

JAMES

Yes.

Side-by-side, their hands almost touching. James lets his little finger drift until it lightly brushes against hers. Kat smiles... and hooks her pinkie around his.

PETE (O.S.)

Kat! C'mon! We gotta bounce!

The spell shatters.

Startled, they separate as PETE RATNER (18), over six foot of varsity basketball player, strides up and throws a possessive arm around Kat.

KAT

(unenthusiastic)

Yeah... okay.

PETE

Wassup, James?

JAMES

Not much, Pete. Just hangin'.

PETE

(grinning, confident)

Ready for the big game, baby?

KAT

(not even remotely)

Sure.

PETE

(to James)

USC and Ohio State! It's gonna kick ass! I'm dumping a bunch of bread on the Bucks!

JAMES

Good luck with that.

PETE

(to Kat)

Mike said we could come over whenever. We'll hang and watch MTV until kickoff.

(dismissive to James)

Later, dude.

Pete steers Kat away. She glances back, holding a beat.

KAT

Bye.

James lifts his hand in a small, deflated wave.

JAMES

(forlorn)

...Bye.

INT. MALL CENTER COURT - MOMENTS LATER

Danny approaches the garbage can to get his football, just as a PATRON dumps wet garbage into it.

He reaches in and retrieves his now marinara-slathered ball. Grimacing, he wipes it against his shirt, looks around, and spots a friend.

DANNY

Nick! INCOMING!

Danny fires. There's a THUD, followed by a wet SQUISH. Danny winces.

GEORGE (O.S.)

SONOFABITCH!

Danny runs for his life as George storms after him, shoulder sloppy with marinara, filthy football in hand.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

HAMILTON!

Shaking her head, Jeannie follows after George with a handful of napkins as one of the cheerleaders digs out her boom box, sets it on a chair, pops in a cassette, and hits play.

MUSIC: "Don't Change" by INXS

James joins Bobby, dropping himself heavily down on the edge of the stage. Both are crestfallen.

Maddie is standing a few feet away, talking to the squad. It might as well be a mile.

BOBBY

(nods towards Maddie)

Seriously, what's the deal?

JAMES

That's just the way she is, man.
I've known her for years.

(MORE)

JAMES (CONT'D)

She's actually pretty cool when she's not trying to be cool.

(beat)

At least she doesn't have a boyfriend.

BOBBY

Ratner?

JAMES

Yeah. Friggin' guy just swooped in and snapped her up like he was picking up his jock jacket from the dry cleaners.

BOBBY

Douche...

A beat as the boys silently ponder life.

JAMES

Got any beer at your place?

BOBBY

Always.

JAMES

My dad said we're closing at 3 today. Head over for a few after?

BOBBY

(glancing at Maddie)

Oh, yeah.

Jeannie and Willow walk by, stopping long enough for Jeannie to tousle James's hair again. She gives the boys a conspiratorial wink.

JEANNIE

Welcome to the New Age, boys.

The boys exchange a look and head toward the escalator. The lyrics kick in as they ascend towards Video Plus.

"I'm standing here on the ground"
 "The sky above won't fall down"
 "See no evil in all directions"
 "Resolution of happiness"
 "Things have been dark for too long"

The neon-lit waterfall glows, a colorful granite sentinel keeping vigil over Stillwater Mall.

END OF EPISODE