

Stillwater Mall

Episode 101

Everybody Wants To Rule The World
(Pilot)

created and written by

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TEASER

EXT. STILLWATER MALL - DAY

SUPER: STILLWATER MALL, JANUARY 1, 1985

MUSIC: "Cool Places" by Sparks & Jane Wiedlin

The upbeat New Wave synth-pop groove sets the tone.

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 bordering on mayhem. A stage sits before a black-draped 20-foot structure. WORKERS arrange chairs and a podium as CHEERLEADERS and a MARCHING BAND set up on either side of the stage.

GEORGE BRENNAN (60), a rigid old-school martinet with big hair, big glasses, and big seventies lapels, is halfway up a ladder, looming over the set-up like a king surveying his subjects from the parapet.

A WORKER on a much taller ladder reaches up to the second-level railing to tie off one end of a huge banner that reads: "Stillwater Mall! New Year! New Look! Noon - New Year's Day 1985!"

GEORGE

(yelling up to the worker)

That side needs to come up another
5 or 6 inches! More... More...
There! Tie it off!

MADDIE BRENNAN (19), blond, bold, sarcastic, and restless, walks up to her dad.

MADDIE

Daddy, that was close enough.

GEORGE

I'm sorry, what? Wait a minute.
Where's your sister?
(calls out)
Kat!

KAT BRENNAN (17), dark-haired, composed, observant, and wearing a camera around her neck, has been photographing the set-up. She drags herself over to her father.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
 Kat, what do we say about "good
 enough?"

KAT
 (by rote, begrudgingly)
 Good enough is never good enough.

GEORGE
 (to Kat)
 Thank you.
 (to Maddie)
 Honey, please go work with your
 cheerleaders, they're not...

MADDIE
 ...good enough. I got it.

GEORGE
 Kat, I need coverage today, lots of
 it. Every angle, every moment. Yes?

KAT
 Yes, daddy. I know we start around
 noon.

Shaking his head, George calls out to the assembled crew.

GEORGE
 (to the whole area)
 Eyes up here! What time do we start
 today?

ALL
 12:00!

George stands silent, waiting.

ALL (CONT'D)
 EXACTLY!

GEORGE
 (nods in approval)
 Back to work, please!
 (to Kat)
 And remember...

GEORGE (CONT'D)
 Coverage.

KAT
 Coverage.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
 Good girl. Now, where the hell is
 Hamilton? HAMILTON!!!

A loud BANG is heard from under the audio table. JAMES HAMILTON (17), lanky, self-conscious, and a movie-loving romantic, emerges from underneath, rubbing the top of his head.

JAMES
Here, Mr. B... uh, Mr. Brennan!

James trots over to the ladder. George steps off, revealing he's only a diminutive 5'4". James is a head taller, but still intimidated.

GEORGE
Hamilton, look at this. Look at these speakers.

They both look. A beat.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
See what I see?

JAMES
Um, speakers on the corners of the stage?

GEORGE
(resigned)
The stage left monitor is at least three inches higher than the right. You can see that, can't you?

JAMES
Got it! I'll get those evened up right now.

George storms off to go bust somebody else's balls for a moment. Kat goes up on the stage with James to help him adjust the speaker.

KAT
Pizza today?

JAMES
Absolutely! Can you get two?
Bobby's coming over on his break to help run sound with me.

KAT
(laughs)
So much for a quiet lunch for two.

George sees that James and Kat are a little too close for his liking.

GEORGE
HAMILTON!

Kat and James part, startled.

KAT
I'm sorry, daddy's being
extra...daddy today.

JAMES
Eh, it's okay. It'd be nice if he
saw me as more than just the kid
that works at the video store
upstairs.

KAT
Since when do you care what my dad
thinks?

George is watching, hard.

JAMES
(changing the subject)
I better get this done so I can get
back upstairs. See you in a bit?

Kat smiles, lifts her camera, snaps a few shots, and heads
toward the food court. James glances over at George, who
watches him adjust the speaker stand. James makes one final
adjustment. George nods, then surveys center court,
satisfied.

GEORGE
(to himself)
Perfect.
(to the room)
I'll say it again, people. Good
enough...

All heads turn to George.

ALL
(over it)
...ISN'T GOOD ENOUGH!

In the background, the tall ladder topples. A pair of
dangling feet appear, followed by one side of the banner
slipping loose and hanging limp.

George just stands, eyes closed, counting to 10.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

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 tentatively knocks twice, pauses, then knocks twice more.

BOBBY O'CONNELL (22), handsome, charming, and unapologetically self-aware, opens the door with a flourish.

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 struts behind them.

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 slams the door shut with finality.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
...tomorrow?

Bobby drags himself down the corridor, deflated, but just for a beat. He shrugs it off and jauntily heads toward 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 strides 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 atop the highest VHS shelf. DANNY (15), James's younger, camo-clad pain-in-the-ass of a brother, rockets a football at him 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. If anybody asks, tell them
you were sneaking them into
something cool, like Terminator.

BOBBY

Good call.

Bobby stands and proudly 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 NOISILY 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. MALL CONCOURSE EAST - DAY

JEANNIE (O.S.)

(shouting)

Coming through!

SHOPPERS freeze, looking around for the source as JEANNIE
BRENNAN (50s), glamorous and warm, and WILLOW (50s), bohemian
and mystical, 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.

Jeannie and Willow crash into George's office, manic. His nonchalant attitude indicates this isn't the first time.

GEORGE
(into the phone)
Edgar, lemme call you back. I think
my chakras are about to be
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
George, listen!

WILLOW
The wheel has reversed!

JEANNIE (CONT'D)
Something bad...

WILLOW (CONT'D)
Luck has inverted...

JEANNIE (CONT'D)
We have to warn you!

WILLOW (CONT'D)
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
The Tarot cards have spoken,
George. Fate is twisting out of
alignment and the natural flow of
the Etherverse has been disrupted.
Fortune Reversed is a sign that...

Jeannie cuts to the chase, holding up three Tarot cards.

JEANNIE
(desperate)
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 my
sister.

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
rattling-chicken-bones nonsense.
Have a little more faith in
yourself. In us.

JEANNIE
I know. I really do.

George stands, gently helping Jeannie to her feet, kissing her cheek. He grabs his jacket from the coat rack and opens the door.

GEORGE

The mall is in great shape. The event is planned out to the last detail. Nothing is going wrong today.

A SERIES OF CRASHES echoes from out in the mall.

WORKER (O.S.)

MR. BRENNAN!

END OF ACT ONE

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ACT TWO

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 definitely 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.

KAT

(meek)
Hi, daddy.

MADDIE

(indifferent)
Hi, daddy.

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,
Georgie. Go talk to the girls.

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)
Everybody knows their jobs. It's exactly 11:15 AM. Remember, the presentation starts at exactly 12:00 PM.

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 CLICKS 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.

KAT

You said you wanted me to document everything, daddy.

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

Ooookay 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's 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	BOBBY
You'll live.	You'll live.

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

As the four head out, 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!

George's voice echoes up from downstairs.

GEORGE (O.S.)
Hamilton!

James winces and bolts out of the store.

STATIC as the PA system turns on.

GEORGE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
(deafening through the PA)
HAMILTON!!

George's amplified voice reverberates through the mall. The already-on-its-last-leg Police Academy standee shudders, wobbles, and collapses again.

JIM (O.S.)
DAMMIT!

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. MALL CENTER COURT - DAY

James is at the audio board. George hovers as Bobby and another worker hold a string along the last row of chairs to make sure the line is perfect. 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 is in the zone.

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 today's big event, starting at 12:00... EXACTLY.

Bobby winks at George, whose stare grows more venomous.

BOBBY (CONT'D)
 We'll be hearing from Business
 Owners Association president, Mr.
 George Brennan, but before then,
 how about a little sing-along?

James frantically shakes his head no, silently begging Bobby
 to stop. 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 Bicentennial Male Clothiers!

Bobby dives into 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 saunters 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 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. Maddie races in to help.

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
(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.

A single, awkward COUGH from the audience.

Kat's camera shutter breaks the deafening silence. 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 while I 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. George lets a small, self-satisfied smirk flash.

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

DANNY (O.S.)

DIIICK!

Danny's expletive echoes through the mall. George freezes as nearby shoppers turn to glare at him. He scans the faces around him.

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

A TEEN nods in agreement with Danny.

Walt smiles, shaking his head.

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, multicolored neon filaments flowing like liquid light. The crowd CHEERS.

Jeannie blows a kiss to her daughters.

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

The audience files out, parting to reveal Willow. Holding up the damning Tarot card, 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.

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?

MADDIE

(shrugs)
Sure, I guess.

Maddie heads to the escalator with Bobby scampering after her. 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. James motions for Kat to sit beside him on the edge of the stage, tucked away from the crowd.

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.

As James watches Kat leave, Danny approaches to get his football from the garbage can next to him.

DANNY
Move over, dork.

Just as James shifts aside, a PATRON dumps wet garbage into the can. Unfazed, Danny reaches in, retrieves his now marinara-slathered ball, and wipes it against his shirt. He looks around and spots a friend.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Nick! INCOMING!

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

GEORGE (O.S.)
SONOFABITCH!

Danny runs for his life. George barrels past behind James, shoulder sloppy with marinara, filthy football in hand, and charges up onto the stage after him.

GEORGE (CONT'D)
HAMILTON!

Shaking her head, Jeannie passes in front of James with a handful of napkins and follows after George.

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

INT. MALL CENTER COURT - DAY

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. 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 3:00
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 toward 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