

IMAGINARY RUBY

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EXT. CITY STREET - NIGHT

Young RUBY (9), dressed head-to-toe in handmade Christmas attire including a red and green tutu and bedazzled rain boots, sits on a bench -- her legs swinging as she HUMS a Christmas song.

Behind her, VIVIAN (40s), tired but trying, talks to GRANDPA CHO (70s), sweet as a Werther's original.

VIVIAN

I would stay if I had a choice.

A BEEPING. Vivian grabs her pager off her belt.

Ruby's eyes light up as they catch sight of the beautiful Christmas decorations across the street.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

I have to go. Thank you, dad.

Vivian kisses Grandpa Cho on the cheek, rushes to Ruby, and crouches in front of her.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

People don't stop needing surgery because it's Christmas time. I really wish they did.

Ruby nods.

VIVIAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Ruby. Have *so much* fun with Grandpa.

(beat)

I love you.

RUBY

Love you too.

Vivian wraps her arms around Ruby, kisses her head, and then she's off. Ruby watches her go.

Grandpa Cho sits next to Ruby on the bench. They sit in silence for a moment.

GRANDPA CHO

I see the super glue worked on the boots?

Ruby's sad frown inches toward a smile.

RUBY

But then Daddy found it and threw it away because of all the patients that come in with their fingers glued together.

GRANDPA CHO

(waving it off)

He made that up. I'll get you some more, but you'll have to hide it better this time. But don't get me in trouble.

RUBY

(smiling)

I promise.

Grandpa Cho stands and holds out his hand for Ruby. She stands and takes it. They walk toward the festive Christmas lights.

Ruby pauses in front of Capitol Theatre with its blinking sign, Christmas wreathes, and garland.

PEOPLE dressed to the nines enter the big doors. The marquee reads: The Snow Queen, presented by Ballet West.

Grandpa Cho squeezes Ruby's hand. She looks up at him with pleading eyes.

CUT TO:

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE - NIGHT

Ruby and Grandpa Cho find their seats up in the balcony, not the greatest seats, but it doesn't matter to them.

Ruby's leg jiggles in excitement, taking in the beautiful auditorium.

The lights dim.

Grandpa Cho grabs Ruby's hand, delighted.

The lights from the stage illuminate Ruby's face. Her jaw drops.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (LOBBY) - NIGHT

Ruby looks up at Grandpa Cho, barely able to contain her enthusiasm.

RUBY

Did you see her costume? Oh my gosh! She was like a disco ball!

GRANDPA CHO

She was --

RUBY

And the snowflake fairies! I think each tutu was different, like *real-life* snowflakes.

GRANDPA CHO

Maybe that can be our next project? Snowflake tutus?

Ruby nods vigorously. Grandpa Cho pats her head tenderly.

GRANDPA CHO (CONT'D)

We'll have to wait until the next storm. I've got a magnifying glass so we can see *every* snowflake detail.

Ruby looks down at the Playbill. The Snow Queen is written in icy lettering. The ballerina poses in her gorgeous disco ball-esque tutu.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - MORNING (20 YEARS LATER)

An alarm BLARES.

The Snow Queen playbill cover is worn and well-loved, and it hangs on a corkboard filled with countless other playbills, trinkets from performances of all kinds, and sketches of relevant costumes (presumably from the performances).

The rest of this room appears to be some sort of massive costume closet - Tulle, velvet, lace, satin cascade from random racks. Other costume designs are pinned to the walls haphazardly.

RUBY (now 30) sits up in what looks like just a pile of fabric, looking like a real mess, but underneath it all, she is a unique woman. She looks up at her corkboard and then over at a digital frame that plays a slideshow of herself at various ages with Grandpa Cho -- most involve some fantastic costumes.

RUBY

Well, that's a sign.

The digital frame changes to a photo of Grandpa Cho giving a thumbs up, almost like a response to Ruby.

Ruby attempts to get out of bed, but something catches her foot, and she falls with a THUD! She stands. She quickly grabs her phone. She presses play on a podcast, "BE A MORE CONFIDENT YOU IN 30 DAYS (or less)," and an artificially calm voice fills the air:

NANETTE (V.O.)

It's Nanette Thorpe... life coach  
and now, your close friend. I find  
it best to start the day with  
positivity.

Ruby walks to her dresser, where a goldfish bowl holds two GOLDFISH swimming lazily. She sprinkles some food into their water. They come alive! The bowl warps her smile.

RUBY

Today is my last chance.

Her face drops in worry.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ruby sits in front of her vanity mirror, dolled up in a rainbow satin shirt -- elevated costume-chic.

NANETTE (V.O.)

You are a goddess. Now say it.

RUBY

(questioning)  
I'm a goddess?

She smears red lipstick on her lips.

NANETTE (V.O.)

You deserve what you want. Now say  
it.

RUBY

I deserve what I want.

Ruby smiles into the mirror. Lipstick is smudged on her teeth. She quickly uses her finger to wipe it away. She smiles again -- it's forced.

NANETTE (V.O.)

Now practice.

(beat)

What do you want?

Ruby presses pause.

RUBY

(rehearsed)

I should be on the design team for The Snow Queen. I know the current updates for the Twentieth Grand Anniversary are not up to your standards. But I have numerous ideas for refining the costumes, and they're all well-suited for the quick turnaround. I think my updates are exactly what you're looking for, because...

(beat)

I've been thinking about this for twenty years.

She smiles at her corkboard where the playbill hangs.

RUBY (CONT'D)

The Snow Queen was the first show I ever saw at Capitol Theatre. And that year, my grandpa got me my first sewing machine. I had been hand-sewing everything --

(beat)

Too much.

Ruby shakes her head, trying to find the right words.

RUBY (CONT'D)

This show is very important to me; you can see that in my designs. I kept the integrity of the previous costumes but added a contemporary flair to capture the imagination of today's audiences.

She grabs a SNOWY QUEEN DESIGN with her distinct red inked signature off the wall and carefully slides it into the protective sleeve of a portfolio book open on her desk. It takes its place among 20 other beautiful red signature designs, arranged by character. Earlier iterations of the same designs are pinned to the wall. She places the book into her portfolio bag.

RUBY (CONT'D)

I know I'm just an apprentice, but I think I've grown more than enough in my three years. My designs speak for themselves, and I -- I would cherish this opportunity.

Ruby stares at herself in the mirror. She stands up straighter but decides that looks weird; she readjusts her posture and presses play on her phone.

NANETTE (V.O.)

Now go get those dreams, Tiger.

Ruby nods at her reflection and then looks at the digital photo frame.

RUBY

(to digital grandpa)

What do you think, Grandpa? Too earnest?

The photo quickly changes. It's almost as if he shrugs at her.

Ruby looks momentarily spooked. She takes a deep breath and gives herself one last nod in the mirror, but there's doubt in those eyes. She waves goodbye to her goldfish and exits her apartment.

EXT. CAPITOL THEATRE - DAY

The sign blinks in gold. It hasn't changed much over the twenty years. It's still classically beautiful with all its Christmas glory.

Ruby looks up at the theatre; her face still shows the same awe as it did twenty years earlier. She steps inside.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (COSTUME DEPARTMENT) - DAY

The room is more organized than Ruby's apartment. There is an order here with sewing stations, dress forms, and a wall of fabrics.

Ruby sits behind her workstation, which is in complete disarray compared to everyone else's.

DANNY (20s), a skeleton in a bow tie, sits at the workstation in front of her. He turns in his chair and holds out the beginnings of a tulle skirt for Ruby to inspect.

RUBY

It looks like a very, very sad flower.

Danny smiles.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
No. Don't smile. That's not good.

DANNY  
It's winter. Flowers are wilted --

RUBY  
They're snow fairies, Danny. Not wilted flower fairies.

Danny studies his garment, confused.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
Think snowflake -- the kind you caught on your hand as a kid and tried to memorize the shape to make a pattern of later. You know?

Danny shrugs, confused, and sits down at his workstation.

Ruby stares at the back of his head for too long.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
I deserve what I want.

She lets out a frustrated SIGH.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
I have to talk to Sandy today.

She turns back to Danny.

DANNY  
You're going over Uma's head?

RUBY  
Uma keeps saying my promotion isn't up to her -- that Sandy doesn't think I'm ready. But I *am*. And I can prove it with my Snow Queen designs. Sandy wants innovation. Uma's redesigns aren't going to cut it. Nanette Thorpe taught me --

UMA (O.S.)  
Hey Ruby!

Ruby jumps at the sound of Uma's voice.

UMA (late 30s) is the kind of woman who talks like she's scooping ice cream but is serving you cyanide: the meanest nice girl you'll ever meet. She LAUGHS an annoying laugh and sits in a workstation behind Ruby.

Ruby's eyes widen. *Speak of the devil!*

Danny covers his mouth, disguising his laugh with a fake COUGH.

Ruby turns in her chair toward Uma, on the edge of terror.

RUBY  
Oh, hi, Uma --

UMA  
How are my worker bees today?

RUBY  
We've steamed the fabric for --

UMA  
(ignoring)  
Do you ever look at Danny and go  
"ah!"

Ruby and Danny exchange a covert, annoyed glance.

RUBY  
We also reinforced the buttons.

UMA  
(to Danny)  
You could play a ghost in a movie,  
Danny. They would barely need hair  
and makeup. I see you and I think  
*ghost*.

Uma LAUGHS. Ruby and Danny wait for it to end.

UMA (CONT'D)  
I'm kidding, Danny!

RUBY  
We've started the updates on the  
skirts for the ensemble, and I was  
wondering --

UMA  
Ooh, Ruby, you're looking clown  
chic today. Always taking costuming  
to the next level. The commitment  
to the look with the overlined lips  
and everything.

Ruby hides her irritation behind a smile.

RUBY

Since we've got a head start on everything, I was wondering if I could take a quick ten?

UMA

Ruby, don't look at me like that. I believe you think your lips are that full. You're always listening to that lady -- Nanette? Doesn't she always say manifest your dreams to reality? I love to see it happening on your face --

RUBY

That's not really what she says --

UMA

I love that we can joke like this -- because we're like family, you know? Anyway, yes, you can go on your ten, bestie.

Ruby jumps up, heading in the opposite direction -- her confidence dashed. But she's forgotten something: her portfolio book of designs.

Uma looks to Danny and lets out a YELP then LAUGHS. Danny is not amused.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (HALLWAY) - DAY

Ruby stares at Sandy's office door. She raises her phone, and looks at her reflection, and studies her lipstick. It's perfect. She lowers her phone and focuses back on the door. She closes her eyes and KNOCKS.

SANDY (O.S.)

Come in.

Ruby nods vigorously, releases her breath, and enters the room.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (SANDY'S OFFICE) - DAY

Ruby enters the immaculate office. It looks more like a sterile doctor's office than a creative director's.

SANDY (late 30s) looks like a cat personified with fashionably dyed silver hair. She stares at her computer and doesn't bother looking up.

SANDY

Yes?

Ruby takes a step further into the office.

Sandy looks up over her reading glasses at Ruby.

RUBY

Hello, Sandy.

SANDY

Hello...

RUBY

Ruby.

SANDY

Yes, I know.

Ruby smiles and takes a seat in the chair across from Sandy's desk.

SANDY (CONT'D)

What's this? Why are you sitting?

RUBY

Oh, I wanted to talk to you --

SANDY

Are you getting the coffee today?  
Did our intern already leave?

Sandy stares back at her computer screen.

RUBY

That's not --

SANDY

I'll have a soy latte. Half a sugar  
packet. Extra hot.

RUBY

I actually --

SANDY

Like, burn your mouth hot.

Sandy looks up at her expectantly.

Ruby's posture has fallen into an unconfident slouch.

RUBY

Got it. And when I get back, can we talk? Because I have some exciting stuff to discuss.

SANDY

Okay.

Sandy dials something on her phone before Ruby can answer. Ruby closes the door behind her.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (HALLWAY) - CONTINUOUS

Ruby leans against the door.

RUBY

Okay, coffee first. Yes. This is happening.

Ruby dashes down the hallway.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Ruby holds herself tight and walks briskly, distraught. She puts on headphones.

NANETTE (V.O.)

Something getting you down?

Ruby nods.

NANETTE (V.O.)

Don't let it! Look at your obstacles right in their beady little eyes and bulldoze them.

Ruby walks at a faster pace.

ASHTON (O.S.)

Christmas cookies for sale!

Ruby turns to see ASHTON (10) -- a rambunctious scamp with wild hair and a matching grin. She holds a BOX OF COOKIES in front of Ruby, blocking her way. Ashton is dressed in a warm coat, but a yellow sash adorns her shoulder.

Ruby digs through her bag for her wallet.

A smile grows on Ashton's face.

NANETTE (V.O.)

No!

Ruby jumps.

NANETTE (V.O.) ASHTON  
You heard me. Bulldoze them. Eight dollars a box.

Ruby removes her headphones. Ashton sees this as an opportunity.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
My dad says they make great  
coworker presents or even teacher  
presents! My dad is a teacher, and  
he said he'd love this -- do you  
have kids?

RUBY  
Sorry, I don't have time --

Ruby tries to make her way around Ashton, but she steps in her way. It's a dance of some sort. Ruby steps one way, and Ashton steps to block her.

ASHTON  
They have holiday greetings already  
written on them. All you gotta do  
is sign your name. That's it!

RUBY  
I have to go, child. Sorry.

ASHTON  
It's for the Sunbeams!

Ashton frowns over-dramatically.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
Please!

NANETTE (V.O.)  
(whispering)  
Be the bulldozer.

Ruby steps to the left and as Ashton steps to block her, Ruby twirls in the other direction. Success! Ruby walks past her down the sidewalk. Ashton glares at her back.

ASHTON  
I summon the power of opal!

Ashton moves her hands in a circular motion, "summoning the powers of Opal," and then wiggles her fingers toward Ruby, releasing the most magical WHOOSHES she can muster. Nothing happens -- a big disappointment to Ashton. She looks down at her many boxes of Christmas cookies, defeated.

Ruby HUFFS as she walks, not noticing the "CAUTION ICICLES" sign on the sidewalk. She bypasses it.

Long ICICLES precariously hang from the side of the building. They seem to wiggle with her step.

She opens the coffee shop door with a DING.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

Ruby gets caught up in the TINSEL that frames the entrance. Flustered, she pulls down the decoration. She gathers it in her arms and brings it with her -- some tinsel left in her hair. Ruby steps to the counter.

The BARISTA smiles at her.

RUBY  
This fell on me.

Ruby places the armful on the counter. She pushes it near the Barista.

BARISTA  
(weirded out)  
Sorry about that.

Barista takes the tinsel and puts it behind the counter.

NANETTE (V.O.)  
(whispering)  
You deserve what you want.

BARISTA  
How can I --

RUBY  
Soy latte, half a sugar packet --

BARISTA  
You actually will add that in yourself.

RUBY  
Oh, okay.  
(beat)  
And there was something else.  
Sorry, I lost my train of thought.

JACK (30s) steps in front of her. He's a dreamboat, even from behind.

JACK  
(to Ruby)  
Excuse me. Sorry, I forgot to tip.

He puts a handful of dollars in the Barista's tip jar. He turns to Ruby and smiles.

Ruby is in awe.

His eyes move to her hair.

Ruby pats it, worried.

He grabs the tinsel from her hair and hands it to her.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Tinsel attack.

Ruby smiles bashfully. Jack smiles back. He opens his mouth to say something but turns and leaves instead.

Ruby watches him go.

RUBY  
Scalding....

She turns back to the Barista.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
It needs to be scalding hot, like  
burn your taste buds off.

Barista nods.

Ruby hands her some cash, but her mind is elsewhere, and she almost doesn't notice the latte. She grabs it, stuffs a tip in the tip jar, and exits in a rush.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Ruby exits the shop with headphones in, trying to return to "promotion mode." The latte sends hot fumes in the cold air. She walks down the sidewalk but keeps an eye out for the smoking hot dude.

NANETTE (V.O.)  
You know what they say? Put the  
oxygen mask on you first. How can  
you help anyone else if you're  
dying of oxygen deficiency?

Ruby looks puzzled by this for a moment... And then she sees him, and he's talking to Ashton.

NANETTE (V.O.)  
Look out for you.

Ruby pauses before the "CAUTION ICICLES" sign and watches their adorable interaction. She inadvertently squeezes the latte cup. The top pops off, and the scalding hot liquid splashes all over her. Ruby drops the entire cup, now covering her legs. She jumps, sidestepping the warning sign and right under the danger zone.

Jack and Ashton walk down the sidewalk in the opposite direction. Jack looks back at Ruby, who attempts to cover up her SQUEAL of pain.

Embarrassed, Ruby tries to turn away from them but collides with a pole with a BANG!

RUBY  
Why?!

The icicles jiggle with the vibrations.

Ruby looks up at them. Her eyes widen.

The icicles fall.

CUT TO WHITE.

INT. TRAIN STATION - TIME UNKNOWN

Ruby's eyes blink open. She looks around, stunned -- an empty train station covered in fog.

RUBY  
Hello?

Her words ECHO in this vast space. Now she looks very freaked out.

A podium rises out of the fog. Ruby timidly approaches it.

On the podium is a small service bell and a sign that reads: NEW ARRIVALS, RING BELL!

Ruby looks around, timidly approaches the podium, and then DING! Rings the bell.

Suddenly, JONATHAN (ageless) walks through the fog like a catwalk in a fashion-forward suit.

JONATHAN  
Hi.

He CLAPS his hands, and the train station lights up warmly with cozy winter decor. AMBIENT MUSIC PLAYS. Jonathan sways a bit with the tunes.

Ruby is frozen in shock.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Do you want to hold my hands, Ruby?

RUBY

How do you know my name?

JONATHAN

I know a lot of things.

Jonathan holds out his hands.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

It'll make you feel better.

Ruby looks at his hands distrustfully, but she gives in and grabs them.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

My name is Jonathan, and I'll explain everything if you just close your eyes and take a calming breath.

RUBY

Okay...

Ruby closes her eyes.

JONATHAN

Deep breath.

Ruby takes a deep BREATH, and her demeanor suddenly relaxes.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

Okay! Open!

Ruby opens her eyes and takes it all in. Other PEOPLE, some dressed just as opulent as Jonathan, post up in different areas. They usher other confused-looking PEOPLE around. Some look ready for a long journey, while others are just as unprepared as Ruby.

A woman, WANDA (50s), opens doors to a bright, beautiful light. Ruby is drawn to it. Jonathan ushers her away.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

(to Wanda)

Wanda!

(MORE)

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

(to Ruby)

Don't look at that.

RUBY

Am I dead?

QUICK FLASH

-- Ruby runs into the pole. Her eyes widen as they look up to the jiggling icicles.

RETURN TO SCENE

Ruby is struck with despair.

RUBY

I'm dead!

JONATHAN

Not exactly. I like to call it a limbo party.

RUBY

What does that mean?

Jonathan pulls out two steaming mugs with cute reusable straws from nowhere. He hands her one.

Ruby takes it.

Jonathan holds out a finger like "wait," slides a whipped cream canister out of his sleeve, and tops her mug off.

JONATHAN

(smiling)

Are you ready?

He doesn't wait for an answer. He pulls a tablet from his blazer and turns it toward her. Ruby leans in worried.

ON THE TABLET is an image of her in a hospital bed with all sorts of medical equipment attached to her.

Jonathan quickly hides the tablet from her.

RUBY

No! Wait!

JONATHAN

Trust me, it's better if you don't stare at it. It'll make you feel sad.

RUBY  
Well, obviously!  
(beat)  
Wait, are you, like, an angel?

JONATHAN  
I like to call myself "future life-  
advisor." But yeah, I guess I'm a  
little bit of an angel.

Jonathan smiles proudly and then sucks on his straw.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)  
So, let's talk.

RUBY  
Yeah. Let's. I mean, I was just  
starting to figure my life out! I  
was going to ask to be on the  
design team for the Snow Queen!  
Nanette was giving me the  
confidence I needed --

JONATHAN  
Ugh. Nanette. She was up here for  
literally two minutes, and she  
thinks she's a future life advisor  
now --

RUBY  
She's a life coach.

JONATHAN  
Hardly --

RUBY  
(distracted)  
My fish! Are they going to die?  
They have lived five times longer  
than an average goldfish!

Jonathan covers her mouth. She immediately relaxes.

JONATHAN  
Now, Ruby, this is where you need  
to listen.

Ruby nods and sips from her straw, calmer.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)  
I can help you. I can give you a  
life boost. When you're in a limbo  
party... there is a chance to get  
you back into your life --

RUBY  
I'll do that!

Jonathan leads them in relaxing crushed velvet chairs.

JONATHAN  
Before the accident -- do you  
remember the little girl you  
interacted with?

Ruby nods, worried.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)  
Well, she needs some life  
assistance.

Suddenly, a graph appears on an easel. The graph starts at a high point; a smiley face is at the peak. The graph sharply declines, going from the high to the low point with a frowning face. The graph rises again after reaching this low point, but not as steeply as it fell. It settles at a lower medium level.

Jonathan pulls a pointer stick out of his sleeve and WHACKS the point to the medium portion of the graph.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)  
This graph depicts the highs and  
lows of Ashton's life. We are  
currently here. It's not where we'd  
like it to be.

RUBY  
What happened there?

Ruby points to the low point frowning face.

JONATHAN  
A tragedy.

RUBY  
A tragedy? Like moving away from a  
best friend or worse?

Jonathan SHUSHES her, and the graph magically grows. It takes another dip after the medium level, going even lower than the previous low point.

JONATHAN  
We need to ensure *this* doesn't  
happen.

He circles the lowest low with his pointer stick.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

And we prevent what we call "the big sad" if you help her with her Christmas wish.

The graph changes once again. The lowest low is replaced with a high.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

If you do us this solid, we can get you back into your life.

RUBY

This kid has two "big sads" before she even hits puberty? And *I* am supposed to make it better?

Jonathan nods.

RUBY (CONT'D)

And I can't know what they are? You can't tell me why we are helping Ashton? Don't you think that's important information to know?

JONATHAN

No. That's part of the bonding process. But we kinda owe Ashton a favor.

Ruby waits for him to go on. He doesn't.

RUBY

What if I said no?

JONATHAN

Then *you'd* hang out in limbo party and see what happens naturally, and Ashton's life will be really sad, and it would be a little bit your fault.

RUBY

What if something goes wrong and I can't give her the Christmas wish? What happens to me then?

Jonathan frowns for a moment and thinks.

JONATHAN

That's never really happened before with me. I'm a very good future life advisor, but uh, let me check for you.

Jonathan's body goes limp. Ruby looks at him, confused. She picks up his arm. Dead weight. She drops it. His body slumps to the side. Jonathan perks up

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

If you don't fulfill Ashton's Christmas wish, then... you step into the light.

RUBY

(horrified)  
I die?!

JONATHAN

It's not as bad as you think! You saw the light. Didn't it make you feel good inside?

RUBY

It was a little too bright, in my opinion --

JONATHAN

Don't worry! I'm very good at this. You'll have your life back in no time at all.

Ruby SIGHS, overwhelmed.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

So, this is the deal. You're going to become Ashton's imaginary friend, and you'll advise her on how to accomplish her very special Christmas wish!

RUBY

Which is...

JONATHAN

To sell all her Christmas cookies and win the big prize: VIP access to Geek Fest.

RUBY

*Geek Fest* changes the trajectory of her life?

JONATHAN

Yes is the only answer I can give you. Now go and have fun! Which I know is a struggle for you.

RUBY

Wait! I have more questions! Is God your boss? Is my grandpa haunting my digital picture frame?

A train WHISTLES. The room starts to transform.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Do I get a podcast for this or something?

But he's long gone. The train station has transformed into --

INT. ASHTON'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ashton's room is a shrine to "The Jewel Realm," a TV show comprised of four teen girls (13 to 17), each a different jewel: Citrine, Jade, Aquamarine, and Amber. Their costumes are a combination of regal medieval royalty and superheroes with armor. In the middle of the preteens is a smart-looking woman with glasses and curly hair, DR. GLORIA DIAZ. She appears to be a leader amongst the preteens.

Ashton sits at her desk in her pajamas with headphones. Her tablet plays The Jewel Realm as she draws herself as a new member of The Jewel Realm with the power of opal. A whiteish aura surrounds her body. Another character sketch flies next to her, but it's not fully formed.

Ruby appears behind Ashton.

RUBY

(to herself)

Oh, this is creepy.

Ashton perks up, sensing someone's presence. She takes off her headphones, turns around in her seat, and SCREAMS as she stands in her attempt at a "fighting stance."

RUBY (CONT'D)

Hi --

ASHTON

STRANGER!

RUBY

No! Not totally!

ASHTON

GHOST!

RUBY

Not a ghost! Well, actually --

ASHTON

DAD!

Ashton picks up a stuffed animal off her bed and throws it at Ruby.

RUBY

Stop it! I'm your friend!

ASHTON

I don't know you!

Ashton picks up more ammo and is ready to throw. Ruby raises her hands in defense.

RUBY

I'm your **imaginary** friend!

Ashton lowers her stuffed animal weapon, confused.

RUBY (CONT'D)

You imagined me.

ASHTON

No, I didn't.

RUBY

You did --

ASHTON

(suspiciously)

Where's Barto?

RUBY

Who's Barto?

ASHTON

My old imaginary friend? He disappeared a while ago.

RUBY

Oh. Yes. Barto... He got a promotion.

ASHTON

Huh?

RUBY

He's an... angel now?

ASHTON

(horrified)

He died?!

RUBY

No! No. He's fine. He just -- a smaller child needed him. So, you get me.

Ashton's eyes narrow in on Ruby, and suddenly, Ruby's attire changes into a rainbow-glitter assault to the eyes.

ASHTON

Cool!

Ashton LAUGHS at Ruby's horrified expression. The silver sequins on the shirt magically flip, revealing a neon smiley face.

RUBY

(disgusted)

Please, no.

ASHTON

I guess I did imagine you -- wait!

Suddenly, Ruby's hair changes into long, wavy green tendrils down to her waist and a green medieval dress. Ruby runs to the mirror, but what appears is just a shapeless, cloudy blob. She waves her hand in front of the mirror.

ASHTON (CONT'D)

(grinning)

Now you're an emerald jewel! I'm opal. You can choose your powers, but maybe it could be like a forest builder? Your castle could be a treehouse! Mine is in the clouds --

RUBY

(pointing in mirror)

Where am I?

ASHTON

In my room.

RUBY

I can't see myself in the mirror!

ASHTON

Because you're not real.

Ruby takes a deep BREATH, trying to remain calm.

ASHTON (CONT'D)

What's the matter?

RUBY  
I've had a lot of things happen to  
me today, okay? This is...

Ruby's mouth blurs out, and a song replaces her words:

RUBY (CONT'D)  
(singing)  
*...jingle bells.*

Ruby touches her mouth, which has returned to her face. Her eyes widen in confusion.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
What was that? I said...  
(singing)  
*...jingle bells!*  
(to Ashton)  
Did you notice that my mouth  
disappeared?

ASHTON  
Yeah, and you sang a Christmas  
song.

RUBY  
This is all...  
(singing)  
*...ring-ting-tingling too.*

Ruby looks down at her new outfit and then at the Jewel Realm shrine.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
If these girls are from medieval  
times, there's no way they'd have  
access to this material. Lamé? No  
way.

ASHTON  
They're magic, and it's pretend.

RUBY  
Touché.

ASHTON  
Huh?

RUBY  
So let's, uh, talk about Christmas  
cookies.

Ashton's face falls.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
Or... not? What's the matter?

A KNOCK on the door.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
Who's that?

ASHTON  
I have a family....

RUBY  
Oh right. You're a child.

JACK (O.S.)  
Did you call me? I was in the shower.

Jack, the hottie from the coffee shop, opens the door a crack. He sticks his freshly showered head through the opening.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Were you talking to someone?

Ruby's jaw drops. She looks to Jack, then to Ashton.

ASHTON  
My imaginary friend.

Jack steps into the room.

JACK  
Oh, Barto?

ASHTON  
A new one.

JACK  
Interesting. *My* imaginary friend was Frank.

ASHTON  
I know --

RUBY  
(to Ashton)  
Who is he?

ASHTON  
My dad.

Jack looks at Ashton, confused.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
(to Jack)  
She asked who you were.

Ruby can't take her eyes off him. She sits on the bed.

JACK  
What's her name?

ASHTON  
What's your name?

RUBY  
Ruby.

ASHTON  
Ruby?! That's a jewel!

Ruby's hair and costume change to a ruby red, and a tiara grows from her skull encrusted with rubies. Ruby touches the tiara on her head -- it doesn't budge.

RUBY  
Is this coming out of my actual skull?

ASHTON  
(to Jack)  
She's kinda weird.

RUBY  
Don't tell him that!

ASHTON  
(to Ruby)  
Why not?

Jack nods, bewildered but supportive.

JACK  
Okay, well, maybe she can help with the cookies? Or maybe with the other Sunbeam kids? Imaginary friends are really good at that. At least Frank was.

Ashton looks down at the ground. She shrugs, avoiding conversation.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Okay. Or not. Whatever you want.  
(beat)  
Lights out soon, okay?

Ashton nods.

JACK (CONT'D)  
No more tablet.

ASHTON  
(sighing)  
Okay, fine.

Jack shuts the door behind him silently.

Ruby stares at the door, a slight smile on her face. Ashton stares at her, totally weirded out.

RUBY  
Is your mom going to come say  
goodnight?

ASHTON  
(dismissive)  
No. She's not here.

RUBY  
Where is she?

ASHTON  
A place called Indonesia. You know  
where Australia is on a map?

RUBY  
Yes --

ASHTON  
It's north of Australia. She works  
there.

Ashton points to a photo of a lush green beachfront on the wall.

RUBY  
Really? What does she do there?

ASHTON  
She's studying geology.

RUBY  
Oh, interesting. Not sure what that  
is, really. Rock stuff?

Ashton nods.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
The long distance relationship must  
be rough on them.  
(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)

Australia is like a day ahead. Or are they, like, divorced. That could be considered a very big sad, Ashton. I'm sorry about that --

ASHTON

My mom and dad aren't divorced. Not all kids come from married people, you know.

RUBY

You're right. Sorry.

Ruby proceeds with extreme caution:

RUBY (CONT'D)

So, uh, your dad mentioned Christmas cookies. Wanna talk about that?

Ashton walks back to her desk.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Are you ignoring me?

ASHTON

Yes.

RUBY

(to herself)

Cool. Another time, then.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (COSTUME DEPARTMENT) - DAY

Ruby's desk is in disarray, but her designs rest on top.

Some SNIFFLING.

Uma sits at her workstation. She blows her nose in a tissue over-dramatically. The tissue blows from her breath -- there's no snot in that nose. Across from her sits Danny.

UMA

(fake crying)

I can't believe it. I was literally talking to her right before it happened.

Danny nods sadly.

UMA (CONT'D)

She's in a coma from an icicle! A skull fracture.

(MORE)

UMA (CONT'D)

I went and brought her flowers, and the lighting in the hospital is terrible. It makes her look dead! She almost looked related to you!

DANNY

Some people like my look. I had to quit my old job because a secretary wrote a vampire fan-fic about me --

UMA

We're like family, Danny. And as your family, I have to tell you that I think you're lying about that --

Sandy enters the workroom. Uma and Danny go back to their workstations.

SANDY

So you've both heard what happened to Ruby?

They both nod.

SANDY (CONT'D)

She was such a... quirky girl.  
(beat)  
It's just terrible timing with redesign so close to the show. We could've used her --

UMA

Ruby has always had bad timing. Remember when she got that stomach flu right before the spring --

SANDY

But you two are hard workers, right? I'm sure we won't be too far behind.

Uma fakes a smile.

UMA

I usually don't do the work of my apprentices, but I can certainly step in. I'm just as fast. My fingers are much longer than Ruby's, which helps --

DANNY

Mine are even longer than yours --

SANDY

Perfect. Listen, Uma. We talked about your redesign and I felt they were still a tad... lackluster. I'll need some new ideas ASAP. Will that be a problem without Ruby?

UMA

Absolutely not. Ruby isn't much of an idea girl. You'd think she was with how much that girl daydreams. Nothing much going on between those eyes. But we do love her, don't we Danny?

Before he can answer:

UMA (CONT'D)

Of course we won't fall too far behind -- longer fingers.

SANDY

Great.

Sandy leaves the workroom without a farewell.

EXT. TRAIN STATION - TIME UNKNOWN

The train station is mostly deserted. A few FUTURE LIFE ADVISORS hang about. They snack on mini pies. They sip on steaming mugs. They chat amongst themselves.

Jonathan lies on a padded bench. He grabs his tablet out of his breast pocket and pushes a button. A RINGTONE.

INT. ASHTON'S ROOM - MORNING

Ruby stirs from her sleeping spot on the floor to the sound of a phone RINGING. Ruby sits up. She looks around the unfamiliar room. Ruby is back in normal clothing; Ashton's imagination is turned off while she sleeps.

RUBY

(sarcastic)

Cool, it's not a dream.

The RINGING continues. Ruby looks to Ashton, who is sprawled in her bed, unbothered by the noise.

Ruby pats her body, looking for the noise, and pulls a phone from her pocket. On the screen is a picture of Jonathan.

Ruby stands and walks to the --

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Ruby answers the FaceTime call.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
Hello?

JONATHAN  
(filtered, FaceTime)  
You don't have to whisper. None of them can hear you when you're talking to me.

RUBY  
Thanks for telling me I'd be working next to the guy who's basically at fault for my death. This is all...  
(singing)  
*...ring-a-ling-a ding-dong-ding.*  
(beat)  
Why does that keep happening? I'm trying to say something, and it comes out as a Christmas song.

JONATHAN  
Because you're around a child.

RUBY  
I'm not even swearing!

JONATHAN  
They have easily moldable minds, Ruby. Now rewind. Who was at fault for your death?

Jack exits a room, holding a phone to his ear. He's all cute in his pajamas and fuzzy slippers, but Ruby frowns.

JACK  
I'm not into these self-help gurus. Unless they can give me mind-reading powers. That would be helpful --  
(beat)  
If I listen, will you stop talking about it?  
(beat)  
I will, okay? Okay. Bye.

Ruby turns the phone toward Jack.

RUBY

That guy distracted me, and I ran into a pole. Next thing I know, I'm a ghost --

JONATHAN

You're not a ghost -- what was he doing to distract you?

Ruby watches as he stretches, showing off his active physique.

RUBY

I don't want to say.

Jack steps into another room. Ruby's attention is fully focused on Jonathan.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Ashton doesn't seem interested in having me help her with her Christmas wish. What am I supposed to do?!

JONATHAN

Ruby, she's a kid. Be her friend. She'll open up to you more when you actually try to connect with her. Just think back to a time when you were a kid. Do what you thought was fun.

RUBY

I only hung out with my grandpa. I didn't do *kid stuff*. My idea of fun was learning how to needle-lace --

JONATHAN

You're just going to have to figure it out.

Ruby ends the call, frustrated. She pokes herself in the head with her fingers like *think, think, think*.

Then Jack reappears in the hallway. Nanette's voice comes from his phone:

NANETTE (V.O.)

Now, maybe you're thinking, how can I help you become the father you need to be? Well, *I* had a dad.

Jack looks down at the phone, unimpressed. He pauses the podcast.

RUBY

Nanette?

He approaches Ashton's door and KNOCKS softly.

JACK

Ash, you gotta get up soon.

RUBY

Thanks for putting me in a coma.

Jack looks in her direction.

Ruby's face softens.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Can you hear me?

Jack SNEEZES in her face. Ruby's face returns to a grimace.

INT. ASHTON'S ROOM - DAY

Ruby paces in front of Ashton. Ashton watches her, still groggy.

RUBY

You know what I loved doing as a kid?

ASHTON

Do I *have* to guess?

RUBY

I loved to design costumes with my grandpa. We learned how to make them together, and I would wear my designs to school --

ASHTON

Wait. Where's your --

Ruby's normal attire transforms into a more regal version of her Jewel Girl's outfit -- less superhero this time, more princess on her day off.

RUBY

Yes! Like this!

ASHTON

I don't want to dress like that.

RUBY

I wasn't saying you should. It didn't totally work out for me.

(beat)

You wanna go somewhere cool --

ASHTON

I have a Sunbeams meeting.

Ashton trudges toward her dresser.

RUBY

You don't seem too excited about it.

ASHTON

(shrugging)

It's okay.

Ruby watches Ashton wet her curls with a spray bottle, waiting for any kind of sign from Ashton.

ASHTON (CONT'D)

Stop staring.

Ruby averts her eyes.

RUBY

Sorry.

INT. LIBRARY MEETING ROOM - DAY

Ashton enters the meeting room appropriately decorated with a winter wonderland theme. Paper snowflakes cascade from the ceiling, and fake trees are strung with white lights.

Jack and Ruby follow behind. Ashton pauses, scanning all the other SUNBEAMS who chat excitedly.

ASHTON

You don't have to sign up for every meeting, dad.

JACK

I don't sign up for every meeting.

Off of Ashton's look:

JACK (CONT'D)

Okay, yes, I've signed up for a lot, but it's winter break. I have the time.

ASHTON  
Just stay with the parents this  
time.

JACK  
(whispering)  
But the parents are boring.

ASHTON  
Dad!

JACK  
Yes. Going.

Jack meanders back toward the other PARENTS, who are all  
moms.

Ashton strolls toward the other Sunbeams. She sits in the  
last row. Ruby sits next to her. They sit in silence. Ashton  
grabs her sketchbook and opens a page. She continues a  
sketch.

Ruby looks around at the other Sunbeams who chat and play  
with each other. It's clear that Ashton is the odd kid out.

RUBY  
You know, I was never really good  
at making friends either. I used to  
ask my mom if it was a disease I  
had.

ASHTON  
A disease?

RUBY  
She was a doctor. I was convinced  
everything different about me was a  
disease that could be cured.  
Unfortunately, that wasn't the  
case.

Ashton smirks.

A snot-nosed kid (not actually, but metaphorically), LEWIS  
(10), turns around in his seat and looks at Ashton. His eyes  
move back to the parents and then back at her.

LEWIS  
Why's your dad always here?

ASHTON  
Because.

Lewis just blinks.

ASHTON (CONT'D)

My mom's in Indonesia. She's really important.

(rehearsed)

She just discovered a cave in the rainforest. Who knows the secrets hidden --

LEWIS

You're weird.

Lewis turns back around and whispers to his friends. They LAUGH.

ASHTON

(whispering)

I'm not weird.

RUBY

You're not.

Ashton goes back to scribbling in her sketchbook.

Ruby turns around to look at Jack, who appears a little uncomfortable but handles the Parent chat like a champ. She turns back to Ashton.

RUBY (CONT'D)

You want to win the cookie selling for your dad, don't you?

ASHTON

I want to win it for Geek Fest tickets --

Suddenly, Jack is next to them.

JACK

(whispering)

I was talking to Mrs... Alice's mom -- and she said that Alice would like you to go up and sit with her.

RUBY

Oh no.

ASHTON

(whispering)  
Dad, no!

JACK

She said that Alice sometimes watches The Jewel Realm --

Ashton SHUSHES him.

ASHTON  
 (whispering)  
 Alice does *not* watch The Jewel  
 Realm.

JACK  
 Her mom said she did --

ASHTON  
 I know who watches, Dad.

JACK  
 I'll find out from the other moms --

RUBY ASHTON  
 Bad move. Dad, don't.

JACK  
 Okay. I won't say another word.

Jack flashes a thumbs up as he walks back to the moms. He's  
 not convincing anyone.

ASHTON  
 Ugh.

RUBY  
 Your dad is trying to help. Even if  
 he's bad at it.

ASHTON  
 Yeah.

The SUNBEAM LEADER (35) quiets the Sunbeam Kids.

SUNBEAM LEADER  
 Before we get into today's  
 activity, basic first aid. Woo!  
 Let's go over some of our Christmas  
 cookie sales.

The Sunbeams CHEER. Ashton sinks in her seat.

SUNBEAM LEADER (CONT'D)  
 Again, this is not about winning,  
 but just as a reminder, the prize  
 is a VIP ticket to Geek Fest. And  
 we do encourage celebration. So,  
 let's give a round of applause to  
 our current cookie-selling  
 leader... Paxton.

PAXTON (9 but looks younger), the cutest kid with coke-bottle glasses and a gap tooth, stands and shakes his hands in celebration. His adoring FANS CLAP and CHEER for him.

RUBY  
(whispering)  
Oh, he's cute.

Ruby looks up toward the ceiling, presumably where Jonathan exists.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
(whispering)  
This is going to be difficult.

ASHTON  
What?

RUBY  
Nothing.

INT./EXT. CAR - DAY

Ashton sits in the passenger's seat of the car with an impressive tourniquet on her arm. She reaches her hands in front of the heater.

Ruby sits in the back. She peeks her head between the driver and passenger seat.

RUBY  
I think we need to hit these  
Christmas cookies head on --

ASHTON  
I was thinking about your jewel  
backstory. I thought your castle  
could be surrounded by lava -- and  
volcanos. Real-life floor is lava.  
And maybe you first are a little  
evil when Dr. Diaz finds you. Then  
she and the rest of the jewel girls  
soften your cold heart --

RUBY  
(dismissive)  
Love it. Great idea. Game plan for  
these cookies. Maybe we should have  
samples out?

Ruby stares at Ashton, waiting. Ashton stares back.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Listen, Ashton, I want to help you with your Christmas cookies. I know Geek Fest is important to you for some reason. I want to make it happen for you.

Jack opens the trunk and loads an armful of cookie boxes.

ASHTON

I should just give up already!

Jack SLAMS the trunk closed and makes his way to the driver seat.

JACK

Did I hear what I think I just heard?

Ashton crawls to the back seat and buckles in next to Ruby.

ASHTON

Paxton's gonna win. He's so small and cute, and he has about a million friends. It's not fair they let him advance with the ten-year-olds.

JACK

Cuteness doesn't always win.

RUBY

Learn this now: cuteness wins a lot.

Ruby pats her leg.

ASHTON

(to Jack)

Ruby says it helps you win.

JACK

Well, Ruby's wrong.

RUBY

I'm not --

JACK

You know I would take you to Geek Fest if I could --

ASHTON

I know, Dad. Teacher's salary.

Guilt washes over Jack's face.

RUBY

Okay, I've got it. We need to make a booth for your cookies: eye-popping, Christmas colors, glitter. Do it all. Kids in homemade booths are the key to many adults' hearts.

Ashton takes a deep BREATH. Ruby nods, encouraging.

ASHTON

Dad, I think we need to do a booth.

JACK

A booth? That's actually -- quintessential to children selling things. I should've thought of that.

RUBY

Kid selling stuff one-oh-one.

ASHTON

Hopefully, it works.

Jack reaches back and grabs Ashton's knee, and squeezes it.

MONTAGE - VARIOUS

- A). Jack drags out a rickety old wooden table.
- B). Ashton finds some leftover wood slabs.
- C). They paint with reds, greens, and whites.
- D). Jack attempts to flick paint at Ashton, who rolls her eyes, hiding her smile.
- E). Ruby looks anxious. She paces in front of them.

INT. GARAGE - DAY

Their make-shift booth is a little sad-looking. Glued on wreaths, badly painted candy canes, horribly written "Christmas Cookies."

Jack and Ashton look at their hard work. Ruby grimaces at the sight.

RUBY

For some reason, I thought he would be better at this.

ASHTON

Me too.

JACK

You too -- what?

ASHTON

I don't think this is cuter than Paxton's dimples, Dad.

JACK

Cuter? No. More... *spirit?* Some would say yes. I definitely would buy cookies from this booth.

Ruby suddenly CLAPS. EUREKA!

RUBY

I know what you need to do!

ASHTON

What?

JACK

What?

ASHTON

I'm talking to Ruby.

JACK

Oh. Uh, okay, I'm going to see if I can find any tinsel to glue on this.

Jack walks across the room and digs through some Christmas boxes, but it's clear he's trying to listen in.

RUBY

If we go to Capitol Theatre, there's a woman named Uma. She pretends she's a nice person. Anyway, we -- er, I mean, she has some of last year's elf costumes. I know she'd let you borrow them because you're a child, and it will make her look good. But you need to pretend you're a happy-go-lucky kinda girl.

ASHTON  
What does that mean?

RUBY  
Like this.

Ruby does her best sweet-kid impression. She smiles, bats her eyelashes, and skips around -- basically, Toddlers & Tiaras.

ASHTON  
No thanks. That's -- you're weird.

RUBY  
Most people who know me would not describe me that way.

Ashton looks at her, unconvinced.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
Okay, maybe *some* people --

ASHTON  
You know other people?

RUBY  
Just go ask your dad to take us there. Okay?

ASHTON  
Fine.

Ashton trudges across the garage to Jack, who is now gluing tinsel on their booth. It's pathetic in an endearing way.

Ruby looks up to the sky.

RUBY  
(whispering)  
Jonathan, this directly affects the Christmas wish, okay? I may check in at work -- only because I'm there.

INT. TRAIN STATION - TIME UNKNOWN

Jonathan looks down at his tablet and frowns at Ruby's face.

He pushes through some doors to a --

INT. TRAIN STATION (LOUNGE AREA) - TIME UNKNOWN

It looks like an elegant teachers' lounge. It's cozy, fuzzy, and cute. Future Life Advisors relax all around.

Jonathan collapses on a couch. He finds a remote and presses a button. Ruby's face appears on a screen in front of him.

Wanda stands behind the couch, peering at his tablet.

WANDA

I don't know, Jonathan. Kind of seems like she's getting distracted by her life.

JONATHAN

Why are you always spying on my humans? It's obsessive, Wanda. Besides, we don't know that.

WANDA

If I were you, I'd turn down her opacity.

Jonathan looks at his tablet. He eyes the "opacity" sliding scale next to the "tethering" scale. He turns the opacity down just a tad.

WANDA (CONT'D)

I would do it more, but that's just me. It kicks them into gear once they realize they can't touch worldly things. Or -- you know what? Tethering them closer together -- make it so she can't leave Ashton's side --

JONATHAN

(annoyed)

She is *my* coma patient, Wanda. Don't you have your person to worry about?

Wanda shrugs. Jonathan eyes the sliding opacity scale and turns it down a tad more.

INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Ruby approaches Jack and Ashton. She touches one of the poorly made bows. Her hand goes through it. She lifts her hand and looks at it, confused.

JACK  
 (to Ashton)  
 Are you sure this is a good idea?  
 How do you even know about this?

Ashton looks at Ruby. Ruby snaps out of her hand trance.

ASHTON  
 (to Jack)  
 Yes. My friend Allison's mom told  
 me.

JACK  
 (excited)  
 Allison?! Who's Allison? Is she  
 part of the Sunbeams? I knew it was  
 a good idea --

ASHTON  
 She's not a *friend* friend. She just  
 talks to me sometimes.

JACK  
 That's nice of Allison's mom. Maybe  
 Allison can come?

ASHTON  
 No.

JACK  
 Okay... You sure?

ASHTON  
 I said no.

JACK  
 If you say so.

Jack wipes his paint-covered hands on his pants. He stands  
 and comes face to face with Ruby. Suddenly, his face changes -  
 - like he can see her.

Ruby stares back at him. He steps back, and Ruby nearly falls  
 into him. She watches him stunned.

EXT. TRAIN STATION (LOUNGE) - TIME UNKNOWN

Jonathan watches Ruby-vision with jaws dropped. He looks over  
 his shoulder at a random FUTURE LIFE ADVISOR.

JONATHAN  
 She's into him!

He stuffs popcorn in his mouth.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

This just got so much more interesting. I knew she was lonely. She cared way too much about her fish.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (COSTUME DEPARTMENT) - DAY

Jack and Ashton walk timidly into the room. Ruby follows behind, taking everything in. She runs her fingers over the fabric, and her hand goes right through it. But then her workspace distracts her.

She sits at her desk, remembering. Ruby searches her desk for something. She pauses, confused.

BEHIND HER

Ashton and Jack approach Uma. Ashton adds an extra bounce in her step.

ASHTON

Are you Uma?

Uma looks up and smiles. Ashton bats her eyelashes.

UMA

I am. Who are you?

ASHTON

Ashton.

Ashton bows. Jack holds back a laugh.

JACK

I'm the dad, Jack.

UMA

So... what brings you here "the" dad and Ashton? How do you know me?

Ashton looks back at Ruby, but Ruby is distracted by her desk. Ashton looks back at Uma.

ASHTON

I've been to some of the shows here.

JACK

Since when --

She elbows Jack in the side.

ASHTON

Yes. And... I really liked your elf costumes you had in last year's show.

UMA

Weren't they just the cutest? The idea came straight from The North Pole.

From behind, Ruby rolls her eyes.

Ashton nods, with her fist under her chin. Classic pageant girl.

ASHTON

What do you do with old costumes?

UMA

We sometimes sell them or donate --

ASHTON

Would you like to donate them to me and my dad?

JACK

Or let us borrow them? Ashton is trying to sell these Christmas cookies, and it would really elevate us.

UMA

I'm sure we could work it out. I just need approval, but I'm sure it'll be fine. We are all about family here. I'm kind of like the mom of this group. Maybe you're thinking, "She's too young to be a mom!" And I'd say, "thank you!"

Uma LAUGHS her unlikable laugh.

Ashton looks up at Jack who doesn't understand the joke either.

UMA (CONT'D)

(suddenly serious)

But it's all about the rearing, dad, isn't it? And some would say that I rear these apprentices into their adulthood.

JACK  
That sounds... like some kind of  
parenting. So, about that approval.

UMA  
I'll be back in a jiff!

Uma stands and heads toward the exit.

Ruby finally joins Ashton and Jack.

JACK  
I thought you said Allison's mom  
told you about this?

RUBY  
Sorry, I got distracted.

ASHTON  
(to Jack)  
Allison's mom told me to say that.

The door shuts loudly behind Uma. And just like that, Ruby's  
preoccupied again with work.

RUBY  
I'll be right back.

Ruby follows Uma.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (HALLWAY) - DAY

Ruby jogs to catch up with Uma, who stands in front of  
Sandy's desk amid a conversation.

SANDY  
...absolutely gorgeous.

Uma smiles as Sandy shows her the Snowy Queen sketch, atop  
several other sketches. It looks familiar... because it's  
Ruby's sketch. They all are.

RUBY  
(breathless)  
My design?

SANDY  
I think these design updates will  
make the dancers pop on stage. It's  
what the show really needed.  
(MORE)

SANDY (CONT'D)

The redesigns before weren't elevated enough for such an iconic anniversary. I didn't think my vision was achievable.

Ruby runs into the office and stares at the sketch.

RUBY

That is my design!

UMA

I agree.

SANDY

Now, what did you need to talk to me about?

UMA

Oh um --

Sandy is distracted by someone in the hall. Ruby and Uma follow her gaze. It's Jack, and he looks lost.

SANDY (O.S.)

Who's that?

UMA

That's actually what I came to talk to you about --

JACK

I'm just looking for the bathroom.

Sandy stands.

SANDY

I'll show you.

(beat)

I'm Sandy.

JACK

Jack. Are you the one that we need approval from?

Sandy LAUGHS.

Both Ruby and Uma frown.

SANDY

Approval for what?

They disappear down the hallway. Uma shrugs and exits the office.

Ruby studies the sketches that usually have her red signature, but they are nowhere to be found. Her excitement has completely faded.

She touches her sketches, but her hand falls through it.

RUBY  
(frustrated)  
What is going on?

INT. ASHTON'S HOUSE (ASHTON'S ROOM) - DAY

Ashton stands in the middle of her room in a frilly elf costume.

ASHTON  
I look weird.

Ashton shakes her foot. A JINGLE from her shoes.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
How is this going to help me sell cookies?

Ruby paces in front of her, mind elsewhere.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
If I have to look like this, then so do you.

Ruby hardly notices that her Jewel Girl ensemble changes into a matching elf costume.

RUBY  
Did she steal it? How is this legal?

ASHTON  
What are you talking about?

RUBY  
Ashton, I think Sandy stole my designs.

ASHTON  
You know her?

RUBY  
Yes.

ASHTON  
I don't get it.

Ruby GROWLS. She lands on the bed with a HURUMPH.

A KNOCK.

JACK (O.S.)  
Can I come in?

ASHTON  
Yeah.

Jack enters. His elf costume is tight in all the right places. It is made for a dancer, after all.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
Eww.

Jack LAUGHS and does a stupid little dance. Ashton watches, amused.

Ruby smirks. It's cute. She can't help it.

Ashton grabs her chest.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
You're... so... embarrassing. I think it's killing me....

Ashton fakes death, falling onto her mattress.

JACK  
(playfully)  
Oh no. NO! Ashton. What happened?  
Someone help! Call 911!

Jack grabs Ashton's shoulders and shakes her over dramatically.

JACK (CONT'D)  
My best daughter! She's dead! Wait!  
I wonder if sticking my finger up  
her nose will reset her heart!

A smile creeps on Ashton's face.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Aha! Got you!

Ashton sits up.

JACK (CONT'D)  
I thought you were getting too old  
for dead-alive.

Ashton nudges Jack playfully. Then her face falls.

ASHTON  
You think these are gonna work?

Ashton stares at her reflection in the mirror. Ruby is just a glowing blob behind her.

RUBY  
If he's there, it's going to work.  
Trust me.

ASHTON  
Gross.

JACK  
I think I look almost as good as a  
ballet boy.

ASHTON  
Nobody wants to stare at your butt.

RUBY  
I think everyone wants to stare at  
his...  
(singing)  
... *jingle bell rock*.  
(beat)  
She said it!

Ashton smiles again. Ruby looks at her, irked momentarily,  
but LAUGHS it off.

EXT. STREET - DAY

Ashton and Jack stand in front of their booth in their elf  
costumes, but coats mostly cover them. Ashton's positive mood  
has died down significantly.

ASHTON  
Christmas cookies for sale! They're  
convenient!

A PERSON walks by without even looking at them.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
We've been here for two hours! Two  
hours! We've sold eight boxes.  
That's not very good.

JACK  
"Convenient" doesn't seem to be  
working. Try "streamlined."  
Business people love that word.  
(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)  
Maybe say it louder. People might  
have headphones in.

A BUSINESSMAN walks past them.

ASHTON  
WE HAVE VERY GOOD COOKIES HERE,  
SIR! THEY ARE VERY STREAMLINED!

The Businessman covers his ears and walks on.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
(to Jack)  
Didn't work.

Ashton looks to Ruby, who sits on the sidewalk.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
Well, she's not helping.  
(to Jack)  
Take off your coat and pose like a  
model, Dad.

JACK  
But it's cold.

ASHTON  
Ruby said it would work! Do it!

Ruby suddenly sits up. EUREKA!

RUBY  
(to herself)  
I have a copy of my designs at my  
apartment.

She CLAPS her hands.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
(to Ashton)  
I think we need a different  
location. I've got the perfect  
place!

Ashton looks at her hopefully.

CUT TO:

EXT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ashton and Jack stand in front of their booth, but this  
location is not much better than the last.

JACK  
How is this location better?

ASHTON  
Good question.

Ashton looks for Ruby.

Spotted! Ruby stands in front of her apartment complex. She attempts to dial in a code in the apartment entry box, but her hand keeps falling through.

EUREKA! Ruby tries to walk through the door, but her face slams against the glass.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
What are you doing?

Ruby rubs her forehead in pain.

RUBY  
I was just -- there's something important inside.

ASHTON  
You know this place?

RUBY  
It's hard to explain, but yes.

Ashton raises an eyebrow.

ASHTON  
(to Jack)  
Dad, I'll be right back. My friend Allison lives here, and I have to pee.

JACK  
(unconvinced)  
I'll come --

ASHTON  
No. You can't just leave the cookies out here. Someone could steal them! And I really can't wait for you to load them in the car.

Ashton does a "gotta pee" dance.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
I'm gonna pee my pants --

JACK

Fine! Fine. Wave from the window,  
so I know you haven't been  
kidnapped.

Ashton gives two thumbs up and leaves his side. Jack stands awkwardly.

JACK (CONT'D)

It's definitely weird without a  
kid.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - DAY

Ruby searches through the mess of her apartment, but nothing budes. Frustrated, she tries to blow on papers to get them to move, but to no avail.

Ashton waves out the window and then turns and watches Ruby.

ASHTON

Is this...  
(whispering)  
...against the law?

RUBY

No. This is my --  
(singing)  
-- *grown up Christmas Wish.*

Ruby closes her eyes, frustrated.

Ashton sits on Ruby's bed. She picks up some fabric.

RUBY (CONT'D)

I guess I can't tell you how I know  
about... this place. But I know it.

Ashton looks over at the digital frame that shows Ruby and Grandpa Cho.

ASHTON

Wait! That's you!  
(thinking)  
Whoa. Is this your house?  
You were a real-life person?

RUBY

A real-life person with a life and  
a job. And fish!

Ruby runs to her fish bowl. They're alive! She tries to pick up the fish food, but her hand goes through it. Ruby looks down at her hands.

Ashton approaches Ruby. She grabs the fish food and dumps some in the bowl.

ASHTON

I didn't know imaginary friends  
were real people.

RUBY

I'm not sure they usually are.

From the corner of her eye, Ruby spots something. Her design! Ruby grabs for it, but her hands go through it. Ashton picks it up for her.

ASHTON

Wow. This is cool. This could be a  
diamond girl in Jewel Realm. They  
don't have a diamond jewel yet, but  
I think she could be the key to a  
lot of mysteries in the show.

Ruby's sketch is of an Snowy Queen with a stiff snowflake tutu.

RUBY

Thanks, Ashton. I was really proud  
of it. A diamond should wear this.

Ruby looks over to her digital frame, which shows a photo of young Ruby wearing a silly costume. Grandpa Cho grins behind her.

RUBY (CONT'D)

It was inspired by the first real  
costume me and my grandpa made  
together. We spent hours looking at  
snowflakes until we found the  
perfect one.

The digital frame switches to a photo of him with his hands over his heart touched.

ASHTON

My dad likes to do that, too.

RUBY

Really?

Ashton nods.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Sometimes, I think my grandpa is whispering in my ear while I'm sketching -- giving me encouragement from beyond.

ASHTON

You think they can do that? Help you after they're gone?

RUBY

Going to be honest, Ashton, I don't really know what I think anymore.

(beat)

I miss my grandpa. He was the one that really got me and my costuming. My parents don't get it - - it's not their fault. But it's the only thing I've ever done right -- the only thing I've ever really cared about.

Ashton nods in understanding. Ruby glances at Ashton. It seems like she actually *does* understand.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Maybe you feel similar --

Ashton looks down at her elf costume and then up at Ruby suspiciously.

ASHTON

You work at the theatre, don't you?

Ruby pauses but takes the bait. She nods.

RUBY

And Sandy stole my design. I knew I wasn't going crazy.

Ashton studies the sketch.

ASHTON

This one? Isn't this your name? How did they do that?

RUBY

I don't know. Maybe she cut it off? It's in ink. This isn't the exact same one. It's an earlier sketch.

ASHTON

*This one* has your name on it.

RUBY  
Will you do me a favor?

ASHTON  
What?

RUBY  
Will you take it for safekeeping?

Ashton nods and is about to fold it when:

RUBY (CONT'D)  
Don't fold it!  
(beat)  
Sorry. You just need to put it in a  
portfolio.

Ruby points to one on her desk. Ashton grabs it and puts her sketch inside.

Ashton starts toward the door.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
Can you do me one more favor?

EXT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ashton stomps toward Jack with the goldfish bowl in tow.

Jack, now coatless, smiles at a WOMAN as she takes a box from him. As soon as she's out of sight, he puts his coat back on.

ASHTON  
Let's go, dad.

JACK  
I just sold a box!

ASHTON  
Can we be done for the day?

RUBY  
Wait, no, Ashton --

JACK  
Where did you get fish from?

ASHTON  
I... won them...?

JACK  
(confused)  
What was going on at Allison's --

ASHTON

Just kidding! Allison is going to the Bahamas for Christmas, and she needed a fish babysitter.

(beat)

My goldfish usually don't last a week.

Ruby looks horrified.

JACK

We can go if you really want.

ASHTON

That's what I want.

Ruby stays behind as Jack loads the booth into the car. She looks a little worried.

INT. ASHTON'S HOUSE (ASHTON'S ROOM) - NIGHT

Ashton sits at her desk, drawing away. Her tablet plays The Jewel Realm. Ashton pauses her sketching session when Dr. Diaz comes on the screen. She watches intently. Ruby stands behind her.

RUBY

We really should've stayed out there.

Dr. Diaz leaves the screen. Ashton pauses the tablet, lowers her headphones, and looks back at Ruby.

ASHTON

We sold more than we usually do.

RUBY

I thought you wanted this prize.

Ashton shrugs.

RUBY (CONT'D)

What's going on?

Ashton says nothing and continues to draw.

Ruby looks down at her Jewel Realm outfit. She musters her best Ruby of the Jewel Realm impression and stands:

RUBY (CONT'D)

C'mon, Opal! You helped me overcome... the "evil" in my heart. Now it's time to let me help you.

Ashton drops her pencil and looks at Ruby, amused.

RUBY (CONT'D)

I hardly want to set things on fire anymore.

(whispering)

That's what I do, right?

ASHTON

Well, I can always put out your fires with the power of opal. Just gotta call on the clouds.

Ashton summons the power of opal, swirling her hands and making WHIRLING noises with her mouth.

ASHTON (CONT'D)

We probably shouldn't do this without talking to Dr. Diaz.

Ashton drops the act.

ASHTON (CONT'D)

I know what you're doing.

RUBY

Is it working?

Ashton shrugs.

RUBY (CONT'D)

C'mon.

ASHTON

It's just -- I'm gonna feel really sad when I lose, and it's gonna feel worse if I tried hard.

RUBY

I think, eventually, it will make you mad that you didn't try your hardest.

Ashton SIGHS, annoyed.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Maybe it would help if you told me what is so important about Geek Fest?

ASHTON

Sofia Alvarez is going to be there.

RUBY  
Sofia Alvarez is...?

Ashton points to Dr. Diaz on the poster.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
Oh --

ASHTON  
If I win, I get VIP access. Which means I can meet her. She's my *hero*.

Ruby studies the poster.

RUBY  
No offense, she kind of seems like the most boring one.

ASHTON  
Boring?! She's a genius geologist who is at the core of *everything*. The Jewel Realm girls wouldn't even exist without her.

RUBY  
Geologist? Like your mom?

Ashton looks like she's been caught in the middle of something. But then:

ASHTON  
Yeah. It reminds me of her when she can't call and stuff.

RUBY  
Why didn't you tell me about meeting her before?

ASHTON  
(ignoring Ruby's question)  
No offense to my dad, but he doesn't get it. And I *really* need to meet her. She needs to see my drawings.

Ashton holds up her drawing of Ruby as her Jewel Realm character. Ashton has talent -- it actually looks like Ruby. Impressive for a 10-year-old.

RUBY  
Wow. That's me.

ASHTON

Yeah. Can't you tell by the confused face?

RUBY

(smiling)

I look like that?

Ruby makes the same face as the drawing. Ashton smiles.

ASHTON

I think me and Sofia are the same. And maybe she couldn't be my best friend -- but I really *need* to meet her.

RUBY

She's kind of like *your* grandpa.

ASHTON

No, my grandpa's old. And a boy.

RUBY

No. That's not -- see, my parents always supported me, but only my grandpa *got it*. Sofia would be what my grandpa is to me, but for you.

(beat)

Your dad seems pretty cool though, and I think he's really trying to understand you. I'm sure your mom is too. It's probably hard because she's not with you right now.

ASHTON

I guess.

They sit in silence.

RUBY

You know, having someone in your corner really makes a world of difference. Even if it's just approval from someone important.

(beat)

I honestly don't have that anymore. And now people have taken advantage of it, just casually swiping my hard work like it's nothing.

ASHTON

I can't believe they stole your sketch. That takes the guts of a villain to do something like that.

RUBY  
There's probably a good  
explanation.

Ashton's eyes seem to glaze over.

ASHTON  
I should take in your design and  
*force* them to explain... or we'll  
prove that it's stolen!

RUBY  
That's really nice, but --

ASHTON  
(excited)  
A plan to get you justice! That's  
what the Jewel Realm Girls are all  
about! It's only fair!  
(beat)  
Let's do it -- what do I do?

Ruby pauses, questioning everything. *Should she...?*

RUBY  
You could show it to Uma. She loves  
feeling superior to her superiors --

ASHTON  
We'll have to think of an excuse to  
tell my dad. He can distract Sandy  
while we get to Uma! It's perfect!

RUBY  
Okay, well, afterward, we really  
need to focus on --

ASHTON  
Tomorrow!

INT. ASHTON'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - MORNING

Jack sips from a steaming mug. He scrolls on his phone.

ON THE PHONE

Lists of podcasts: Lists of podcasts: "Single Dad Dating,"  
"Ready to Mingle," "Dadding by Nannette Thorpe."

His finger hovers over "Dadding." He presses play.

NANETTE (V.O.)

As a father, one has to remember to  
show their love.

Jack looks at the phone, impressed with the not-terrible  
advice.

NANETTE (V.O.)

Hashtag: no daddy issues.

Nope. Jack pauses the podcast.

Ashton gallops into the room in her elf costume, looking  
extra Christmasy. She sits at the island of the kitchen. Jack  
hands her a plate with a muffin and a banana. Ashton is all  
smiles.

JACK

You seem extra chipper this  
morning.

Ashton shrugs and munches on her muffin while drawing  
something in her sketchbook.

JACK (CONT'D)

You ready for round two today?

ASHTON

I'm so ready. I'm a Christmas  
cookie-selling machine!

Jack looks down at Ashton's drawing.

JACK

What're you drawing?

Ashton turns the sketchbook toward him. He looks at the  
impressive drawing of Ruby.

JACK (CONT'D)

She looks familiar.

ASHTON

It's Ruby. I know I said she was  
weird... but I kinda like her.

Ashton stands and looks down at the leg of her elf-pants,  
where there is a large hole.

ASHTON (CONT'D)

(rehearsed)

Oh no! Dad, look! There's a  
mysterious hole in my pants!

(MORE)

ASHTON (CONT'D)

I can't sell cookies looking like this.

Ashton looks over at Ruby and gives her a thumbs up.

ASHTON (CONT'D)

We better go to the theater to fix these.

JACK

I'm sure I could YouTube it --

ASHTON AND RUBY

No!

Jack is surprised by her ferocity.

ASHTON

If the booth tells us anything, it's that you're not the best at creative stuff. Now, go do whatever you do to make your hair look better.

JACK

Okay...

(mumbling)

I thought the booth was good.

Ruby and Ashton wink at each other.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (LOBBY) - DAY

Ashton and Jack walk in and admire the holiday decor.

Ruby pops up behind them.

RUBY

So, today should be tech rehearsals. Uma will be in the auditorium.

ASHTON

(whispering)

Distraction detonate!

JACK

What?

ASHTON

I just got *so hungry*, Dad.

JACK

There are carrots and hummus in  
your backpack.

He fishes it out of Ashton's backpack. Ashton swats it away.

ASHTON

I need sugar. I'm about to go sell  
cookies. I need energy!

(beat)

There were vending machines by the  
costuming department.

JACK

Ashton, you know what really gives  
you energy? Wholesome foods --

ASHTON

Dad, please!

Ashton gives him sad puppy dog eyes. He gives in.

JACK

Fine. For the sake of the cookies.

Ashton grabs the backpack, and Jack walks down the hallway.  
Ruby watches him.

ASHTON

Justice will be served!

RUBY

You've got this.

Ruby follows Ashton into the --

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (AUDITORIUM) - CONTINUOUS

Ashton scans the seats for Uma.

Ruby is distracted by the stage.

DANCERS stand on the stage underneath bright lights. Their  
costumes sparkle.

Ruby can't help herself. She sits, smiling at the nostalgia.

ASHTON

(to Ruby)

I don't see her.

Ruby doesn't take her eyes off the stage:

RUBY  
She's probably backstage.

Ashton nods, unzips her backpack, and grabs Ruby's portfolio. She sets the backpack down next to Ruby and runs toward the stage. The backpack tips over, and some of the innards spill on the floor. But Ruby doesn't notice, too focused on the stage.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (BACKSTAGE) - CONTINUOUS

Backstage is bustling with DANCERS, STAGE HANDS, and COSTUMERS alike. Ashton sticks out among the bunch, but she's on a mission. Finally! Ashton spots Uma. She taps Uma on the shoulder.

UMA  
Oh! You -- you're here --

ASHTON  
Yes, I have to show you something.

UMA  
Right now?

ASHTON  
It's important.

Uma looks to the stage, where a PRINCIPAL DANCER marks her dance as they test lighting cues with her new and improved costume of Ruby's design.

UMA  
Okay. But it needs to be quick.

Uma leads her out the stage door.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (PRODUCTION BOOTH) - CONTINUOUS

Jack walks down the hallway. No sign of vending machines. He turns around himself, confused and lost. Again.

SANDY (O.S.)  
You lost again?

Jack jumps, spooked.

Sandy hangs in the doorway of the stage booth. She smirks at him.

JACK  
Looking for sugar.

SANDY

(smiling)

Our vending machines suck. I have some gummy bears. Sugar is a must during tech week.

Sandy digs through her jacket pockets. She hands over a packet of gummy bears. He's about to step away, and then:

JACK

Ashton really appreciates you lending us costumes.

SANDY

It was the least I could do.

Jack pockets the gummies, but he also accidentally touches his phone:

NANETTE (V.O.)

When opening up yourself to dating again, remember it's like riding a bike, but seductive --

Jack digs in his pockets, embarrassed.

NANETTE (V.O.)

Close your eyes, put your feet in those stirrups, and pedal to your new partnership --

Jack finally pauses the podcast.

JACK

Sorry. It's a podcast thing.

Sandy tries to hide her smile.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (AUDITORIUM) - CONTINUOUS

The lights in the auditorium turn off. Ruby is already emotional as the music plays.

The stage lights up, and the Principal Dancer twirls on stage in Ruby's updated design. The Principal Dancer sparkles in her snowflake-inspired tutu.

Ruby's eyes water, delighted and emotional to see it.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (HALLWAY) - CONTINUOUS

Ashton holds Ruby's portfolio under her arm.

UMA

What is going on? Is something wrong with the costume?

ASHTON

I know Ruby.

UMA

Oh, so the news probably hit you really hard. Just like the icicle. I'm sorry. I shouldn't joke like that.

ASHTON

Yes. The news -- what news?

UMA

I don't know if I should tell you if your dad didn't tell you.

ASHTON

Please tell me. My dad says I'm basically a teenager. I can handle it.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (PRODUCTION BOOTH) - CONTINUOUS

Jack puts his phone back in his pocket.

JACK

Do you have another pack? We've got a long day of Christmas Cookie selling ahead of us.

Sandy nods and grabs another packet of gummy bears.

SANDY

You seem like a great dad.

JACK

Yeah, unless we lose this thing and Ashton doesn't get to go to Geek Fest.

SANDY

Geek Fest? Kids make the silliest things into the biggest deals, don't they?

JACK

Well, her hero is going to be there. And if we get this VIP package, she'll get to meet her.

SANDY

Why can't you take her?

JACK

I'm happy to know that I give off "wealth," but I'm a teacher. Can't really afford that.

(beat)

The thing is, this is more than just a hero to Ashton. I think she sees this woman as a mother figure in a way. She doesn't just look up to her. She sees herself in her. I don't think she does it consciously, but the way she talks about her... I don't know. Maybe I'm reading into it.

Sandy reaches out and touches his arm compassionately.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (AUDITORIUM) - CONTINUOUS

Ruby wipes the tears from her eyes and tries to get a hold of herself as the tech performance ends. Her eyes are drawn to Ashton's bag on the ground. Her sketchbook lies open on the floor.

Ruby bends down to the backpack mess on the floor and attempts to pick it up. But of course, she can't. Her hand goes through it. Then she notices the page.

ON THE PAGE

A mishmash of Dr. Gloria Diaz clippings from entertainment magazines. It's a collage of the character and the actress Sofia Alvarez.

On one half of the page, Dr. Gloria Diaz traipses through a dense forest as she looks at a map of Indonesia. A block of text is glued beneath.

*"Dr. Diaz, with a knowing glint in her eyes, deciphered that this final spot on the map held the elusive key to The Jewel Realm. While her geological studies initially led her deep into the heart of the Alas Purwo forest, it became clear that her destiny was a journey far beyond the realms of ordinary science."*

The page next to it shows a drawing of Ashton as Opal. Dr. Diaz's arm is around her in a mothering way.

BACK WITH RUBY

Ruby closes her eyes, overwhelmed with guilt.

RUBY  
Oh no! I'm the worst! Oh --  
(singing)  
-- *a blue Christmas* --

She covers her mouth, distressed.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (HALLWAY) - CONTINUOUS

Ashton shakes her head in disbelief.

ASHTON  
A coma?

UMA  
I never realized how dangerous  
icicles could be --

ASHTON  
Uma, this is really important.

Ashton grabs Ruby's designs from underneath her arm.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
Your boss stole Ruby's designs.

Ashton hands over the portfolio. Uma opens it and studies the sketch.

UMA  
Wow. Who would do such a thing?

ASHTON  
I told you, your boss. She's a real  
villain. You can't let her get away  
with this. She's stealing Ruby's  
ideas while she's in a coma! And on  
Christmas!

UMA  
Okay, well, let me keep this and...  
I'll talk to Sandy. Okay?

Ashton nods and dashes in the opposite direction. Uma waits a bit and walks down the hallway and into the --

## COSTUMING DEPARTMENT

Where she approaches her desk, she throws the portfolio into a desk drawer amongst Ruby's other designs and the tracing papers with Ruby's stolen designs.

She slams the drawer closed, annoyed.

## INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (AUDITORIUM) - CONTINUOUS

Ruby, on hands and knees, blows on the sketchbook, trying to access the rest of the book, but nothing works.

Ashton runs down the aisle and stops in front of Ruby.

ASHTON  
You're in a coma?!

RUBY  
Where's your mother?

ASHTON  
Indonesia -- she's studying --

RUBY  
Geology?

ASHTON  
Yeah, I told you that.

RUBY  
And she happened to stumble upon  
the magic of the Jewel Realm?

Ashton looks down, embarrassed.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
Why would you lie to me about that?

ASHTON  
I'm not a liar. I'm a storyteller.

Ruby reaches out to comfort Ashton, but her hand falls through her.

RUBY  
Please tell me.

ASHTON  
She died. Okay? I don't remember  
her. I was too little. So, I  
sometimes pretend I do.  
(MORE)

ASHTON (CONT'D)

I don't like it when people feel bad for me.

RUBY

Ashton, I'm so sorry --

ASHTON

See! I hate that!

RUBY

I'm supposed to be helping you, and I made it all about myself!

ASHTON

You helped --

RUBY

When do you have to sell all your cookies by?

ASHTON

Um... tomorrow.

RUBY

Tomorrow?!

(beat)

I'm sorry I dragged you into my life like this. Is it even worth it? I don't even know if this is the life I want! I'm such a --

(singing)

-- *Mr. Grinch!*

ASHTON

It's not fair! They stole your stuff!

RUBY

Maybe it's not -- but that's not -- it doesn't matter anymore! Okay? I'm in a coma. At least... at least my designs will be seen. They look beautiful on stage.

Ashton nods sadly.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Let's just focus on things we can control. Okay? Selling cookies should've been our number-one priority this entire time. I work best on tight deadlines.

INT. TRAIN STATION (LOUNGE AREA) - TIME UNKNOWN

Jonathan looks bored on the couch as he watches Ruby.

ON THE TV

Ruby attempts to grab Ashton's hand again, but it goes right through. They exchange a glance.

ASHTON  
Is that normal?

RUBY  
It's fine.

BACK ON THE COUCH

Wanda walks up behind Jonathan. He perks up.

JONATHAN  
Oh, zip it!

He throws popcorn at her and turns his attention back to the TV.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)  
These things tend to work themselves out.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (PRODUCTION BOOTH) - DAY

Ashton almost runs into Jack. Apparently, Jack and Sandy have hit it off because they seem awfully comfortable with each other. Ashton and Ruby both frown at the sight of them.

ASHTON  
We have to go, Dad.

JACK  
Sandy is going to buy the entire company cookies! That's a huge chunk of our inventory.

ASHTON  
I don't want --

RUBY  
Ashton, you *have* to accept.

JACK  
This is really nice of Sandy.  
(to Sandy)  
We'll deliver them tomorrow.

Jack ushers Ashton down the hallway.

Sandy waves her spindly fingers as she watches.

Ruby studies Sandy but quickly runs to catch up with Jack and Ashton.

EXT. CAPITOL THEATRE - DAY

Ashton speed walks in front of Jack and Ruby.

ASHTON  
(under her breath)  
Falling for the enemy -- classic.

JACK  
Ashton, we gotta talk. You were very rude. If we win this, it's because of Sandy's help --

ASHTON  
Maybe I wanted to earn it, Dad! Not because some lady has a crush on you!

Guilt washes over Jack.

RUBY  
(to Ashton)  
At this point, we have to take what we can get.

JACK  
I'm sorry, Ashton -- I didn't -- I can't seem to get this right. Do you want me to go back there and say the deal is off?

ASHTON  
No.

Jack tosses Ashton a packet of gummy bears.

JACK  
Look, we still have some boxes left to sell -- better to give ourselves a cushion.

ASHTON  
Where did you get these?

JACK  
Sandy.

ASHTON  
(disgusted)  
Sandy!

She drops the gummy bears.

JACK  
Ashton!

Ashton picks them back up.

ASHTON  
Sorry. Let's go.

RUBY  
Let's sell the rest of those  
cookies. Pull out all the stops.

MONTAGE - TIME LAPSE

A). Ruby directs Ashton, who directs Jack.

B). The booth slowly transforms into a beautiful Christmas booth.

C). Ashton sets down a bunch of fabric in front of Ruby. Ruby directs Ashton, who directs Jack. They add even more to their elf costumes.

D). Ashton and Jack practice a cute little dance. They GIGGLE at each other.

E). Ruby smiles at the new dynamic duo. They've got Christmas spirit up to their ears.

END MONTAGE

EXT. STREET - DAY

It's a busy street with bustling CHRISTMAS SHOPPERS.

Ashton and Jack add the finishing touches to their booth. They nod at each other and put on the final touch -- their Christmas hats. Jack turns and presses play on a speaker. "SIMPLY HAVING A WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS TIME" by Paul McCartney (or any other Christmas bop) fills the air.

SHOPPERS stop and stare as Ashton and Jack hit a pose.

Ruby watches proudly.

It's not the best dance, but it contains a lot of cuteness. Plus, their costumes add to the fun. They each hold out a box of cookies as they dance. A small number of Shoppers have gathered around them, admiring their Christmas spirit.

The song ends, and they pose, holding their cookies out for the world to see.

Ruby APPLAUDS with the Shoppers as they gather around to buy the cookies. Ruby looks ecstatic -- almost in tears.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Ashton and Jack break down their booth, proud of their day's work.

Ashton spots Ruby and runs over.

ASHTON  
We sold all but two!

Ruby holds up her hand for a high-five. Ashton goes for it, but her hand goes through it.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
Why is that happening?

Ruby looks down at her hand. Ashton looks at her, worried.

RUBY  
It's okay. Maybe it means I'm going  
back into my body or something.

Ashton nods. Ruby looks concerned, but she quickly recovers with a smile.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
Are we going to celebrate?

INT. ASHTON'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - NIGHT

An array of ice cream and toppings on the countertop. There's no room for anything else.

Ashton, Jack, and even Ruby wear matching animal pajama onesies. Ashton scoops a large amount of chocolate ice cream in her bowl. She covers it in sprinkles and gummy bears.

Ruby looks at Jack's pathetic bowl.

RUBY

You need to teach this man how to  
dessert.

ASHTON

Your ice cream is sad, Dad.

RUBY

Pathetic.

They both LAUGH.

JACK

I like plain ice cream.

Ashton grabs some chocolate syrup. She looks at Ruby for  
reassurance. Ruby nods. Ashton smiles viciously and points  
the syrup in his direction.

Jack shakes his head and shovels an absurd amount of ice  
cream into his mouth.

RUBY

Oh. Now you gotta get him!

Ashton squirts the syrup. It drips down Jack's face.

JACK

(teasing)

My own child! How dare you!

He wipes his face and licks his fingers. Ruby stands and runs  
behind Ashton.

INT. TRAIN STATION (LOUNGE AREA) - TIME UNKNOWN

The adorable food fight plays on the large screen in front of  
Jonathan. Wanda walks past. She's trying not to stare at the  
TV, but her walking slows.

JONATHAN

Oh, come on, Wanda.

WANDA

You know --

RUBY (ON TV)

Hurry! Get all the ammo!

ON THE TV: Ashton lunges for the syrups, but it's too late.  
Jack is locked and loaded with a can of whipped cream. He  
shakes it, smirking.

BACK WITH JONATHAN: Jonathan gives Wanda a look that could kill, and Wanda dashes away.

Jonathan grabs his tablet from his jacket.

Wanda suddenly appears behind him.

WANDA

What are you going to do?

JONATHAN

Watch and see.

Jonathan's finger hovers over a button on his tablet.

INT. ASHTON'S HOUSE (KITCHEN) - CONTINUOUS

Jack squirts the whipped cream all over Ashton. Her jaw drops.

ASHTON

You're the adult!

JACK

You started it.

Ashton grabs handfuls of ice cream and forms them into ice cream balls.

Ruby stands next to Jack, nodding, and points to his face.

RUBY

Ready! Aim! Fire!

JACK

We should definitely stop while  
we're --

PLOP! But Ashton misses Jack's. Instead, it hits Ruby right between the eyes. She wipes off the ice cream.

Ashton LAUGHS. But Jack is bewildered -- now looking directly at Ruby.

JACK (CONT'D)

(freaked out)

Who are you? Why are you -- how did  
you get in here?

Ruby puts her hand to her chest like "me?"

Ashton stops laughing.

JACK (CONT'D) ASHTON  
 (to Ruby) You see her?!  
 Yeah, you!

Jack runs to the other side of the island table and grabs Ashton protectively.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
 Dad!

RUBY JACK  
 You see me? I'm a teacher! Nothing here  
 is expensive!

Ruby runs to the mirror. Cloudy blob no longer -- it's her reflection. She turns back to Jack and Ashton.

ASHTON  
 Dad! It's Ruby.

JACK  
 No. Ruby is imaginary.

RUBY  
 (to Jack)  
 It's me! I don't know how this is  
 happening! You can see me?!

JACK  
 You can leave now, and I won't call  
 the cops --

ASHTON  
 You think this little lady is  
 trying to rob us, Dad? Look! She's  
 wearing the same pajamas as us!

Jack looks down at their pajamas. His eyes narrow.

JACK  
 This isn't possible.

ASHTON  
 (grinning)  
 Dad, meet Ruby. Ruby, meet Dad.

JACK  
 I don't get it.

ASHTON  
 Stranger things have happened.

JACK  
I actually don't think stranger  
things have happened.

Ashton smiles between the bewildered adults.

ASHTON  
Well, I got ice cream in my hair.  
I'm going to take a shower while  
you two clean up the kitchen.

Ashton slinks out of the kitchen.

Ruby and Jack stare at each other awkwardly.

RUBY  
It's weird for me too.

Jack nods slowly.

JACK  
Guess we should, uh, clean up? I  
don't -- this is --

RUBY  
On it.

Ruby grabs the paper towels. She squeezes it in her hands,  
delighted.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
Hey! I'm fixed!

Off of Jack's confused face.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
I couldn't hold stuff before. But I  
guess now that you can see me, I  
can.

Jack studies her for a moment before grabbing more paper  
towels.

JACK  
You look so familiar.

RUBY  
Yeah, we've met. Kind of.  
Unofficially. It actually happened  
right before my accident -- before  
I became imaginary.

JACK

You know what? I think I remember you. Were you at the coffee shop by the theatre?

Ruby nods, embarrassed.

JACK (CONT'D)

Yeah! Tinsel attack. I was going to talk to you. But... I said tinsel attack and made it weird. So you're a real person?

RUBY

I was. Now I'm in a hospital somewhere.

Jack takes it all in. He grabs the ice cream and puts it back in the fridge as Ruby wets some paper towels and cleans the sticky countertop.

JACK

I've been picturing you as an old lady for some reason. I guess maybe because my imaginary friend was a bird man. Does this mean that he exists somewhere in the real world?

RUBY

(laughing)  
I doubt it.

JACK

This is all so...

RUBY

Unbelievable? I've just been learning to trust it all. Life -- or the in between -- is unpredictable.

Jack grabs all the toppings and puts them away.

JACK

Thanks for hanging out with Ashton. It's been -- she seems -- I don't know, happier. Or, like, *seen*.  
(sighing)  
Her mom would've been better at this part.

RUBY

She had me convinced her mom was in Indonesia studying geology.

Jack nods as he puts some paper towels under his feet for a quick mop-up.

JACK

Yup, that's her go-to. It's kind of my fault. The entire reason she loves The Jewel Realm is because I said Dr. Diaz looked like her mom. Kinda became an obsession after that.

RUBY

Does she?

Jack points to a photo of LYDIA (20s); they do look very alike.

RUBY (CONT'D)

It sounds like a way to connect with her mom. Even if it's imaginary.

JACK

Hey, you were, too, at one point. So, we can't knock the effectiveness of the imaginary.

A moment of silence, and they're weirdly comfortable in it. Enjoying each other's company.

JACK (CONT'D)

Hey, do you like fire?

RUBY

Well, if it's contained, then I can enjoy it. And actually, my character in the Jewel Realm loves it.

JACK

Perfect.

He stands and leaves.

Ruby sits confused.

INT. TRAIN STATION (LOUNGE AREA) - TIME UNKNOWN

Jonathan barely blinks as he watches.

Some other "Future Life Advisors" meander behind him but quickly get pulled into the Ruby and Jack show, pull up their own chairs, and munch on various Christmas goodies.

EXT. ASHTON'S HOUSE (FIRE PIT) - NIGHT

Ruby and Jack sit in camp chairs. A small fire flickers between them.

JACK

So how is this possible?

RUBY

It was strange. One minute, I was a living person; the next, I was...

(singing)

*...walking in a winter wonderland.*

Ruby covers her mouth, embarrassed.

RUBY (CONT'D)

I guess I'm not allowed to tell you what happened next. The singing happens when I'm saying something I shouldn't.

JACK

Okay. Well, I'll ask and we can see what you're allowed to tell me.

(thinking)

Are all imaginary friends the... undead?

RUBY

(laughs)

We're not zombies. But I think it's just with me, like a special arrangement to help Ashton with her...

(singing)

*...I wish it was Christmas today.*

(beat)

That's actually close to the answer.

Jack thinks about this.

JACK

Christmas wish? Which I know is tickets to Geek Fest. It has been our number one concern in this household lately.

(beat)

So, how exactly does this deal work work?

RUBY

It all depends on whether Ashton  
sells enough Christmas cookies. If  
she wins, I wake up, and if she  
doesn't, I...

(singing)

*Underneath the Christmas lights.*

JACK

I would've danced way harder if I  
knew that!

RUBY

You did a lot! You got us a pretty  
big sale with Sandy. And honestly,  
I don't know if I deserve it. I've  
been so selfish. I wish I could go  
back and redo everything.

(emotional)

We went and borrowed costumes  
because... I wanted to check up on  
my life, you know? I should've been  
more focused on Ashton.

JACK

(warmly)

Hey, you did a lot too.

RUBY

We better have fun tonight. Just in  
case the odds aren't in our favor  
tomorrow.

JACK

You know what me and Ashton do when  
we're feeling small and  
insignificant?

Jack grabs something out of his pocket: a jeweler's loupe,  
AKA a tiny magnifying glass. He holds it up, excited.

JACK (CONT'D)

Hold out your arm.

Ruby does as she's told. Jack looks through the jeweler's  
loupe.

JACK (CONT'D)

Found a good one.

He lifts his head but keeps the jeweler's loupe in the same  
spot.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Hurry, it'll melt.

Ruby looks through the device: a gorgeous intricate snowflake. She grins as she looks up at Jack.

INT. TRAIN STATION (LOUNGE AREA) - CONTINUOUS

Everyone watches Ruby and Jack on the TV with wide eyes.

FUTURE LIFE ADVISOR  
She knows her opacity is up! Why  
isn't she touching the man?

EXT. ASHTON'S HOUSE (FIRE PIT) - CONTINUOUS

Ruby looks up at Jack.

RUBY  
I used to do this with my  
grandpa....

JACK  
I'm nerdier because I have the  
thingy.

He shakes the jeweler's loupe and hands it over to her. Jack holds out his arm, and Ruby peeks through the device, searching his coat for the perfect snowflake.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Nature is the original artist.

Ruby's eyes travels up his arm, to his shoulder, then to his face. A flake falls on his eyelash.

INT. TRAIN STATION (LOUNGE AREA) - CONTINUOUS

Everyone crowds closer together, shoving snacks in their mouths.

JONATHAN  
If they don't kiss, I swear to our  
boss --

EXT. ASHTON'S HOUSE (FIRE PIT) - CONTINUOUS

Ruby lingers close to his face.

RUBY  
You have one on your eyelash.

JACK  
I'll try not to blink.

But the snowflake melts away. She drops the jeweler's loupe, and studies his face.

RUBY  
I wish we would've met earlier.

JACK  
Like when you were a real living,  
breathing human being?

Ruby smiles. He smiles back. They move in closer. Inches apart.

Ashton opens the back door, disappointed.

ASHTON  
Are you guys making S'mores out  
there without me?

Jack and Ruby separate coyly.

JACK  
Never!

INT. TRAIN STATION (LOUNGE AREA) - TIME UNKNOWN

Jonathan and the Future Life Advisors all WAIL in disappointment.

As the TV shows, Ruby, Jack, and Ashton gather around the fire happily.

INT. ASHTON'S HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - MORNING

Ruby, Jack, and Ashton are asleep on the couch, wrapped in blankets. Comfy and cozy. Ashton shoots up, awake.

ASHTON  
The results!

Ruby and Jack both jump into consciousness.

Ashton scrambles to her feet, grabs the tablet, and squeezes back between Jack and Ruby.

They look at the tablet screen as it loads.

They all seem to hold their breath.

A swirling loading sign.

They all let out a GASP. The results are in. And the winner is... **Paxton**.

Ashton blinks in disbelief. She looks at Ruby grievously.

ASHTON (CONT'D)

Oh no.

RUBY

Hey, it's going to be okay.

ASHTON

I should've tried harder!

RUBY

It's not your fault, Ashton.

Ruby tries to keep her smile, but her eyes water.

RUBY (CONT'D)

I got to hang out with you and your dad. And I had the best time. I got to become a jewel girl. I can't imagine a bigger honor.

(beat)

Just know that there is more than one person out there who's going to get you -- you just gotta let them in. Okay?

Ruby looks at Jack, who's also trying to hold it together but failing. Ruby grabs Ashton in a hug.

ASHTON

You can't leave!

JACK

Ashton...

But their embrace doesn't last long. Ashton's arms fall through Ruby as her body starts to fade.

Jack runs to Ashton's side.

ASHTON

(crying)

Please stay!

RUBY

I'm sorry...

But Ruby slowly disappears. Ashton tries to grab onto her but to no avail.

ASHTON

Ruby!

But she's gone.

ASHTON (CONT'D)

I'll bring her back!

Ashton closes her eyes tight, sending more tears down her cheeks. She squeezes her fists -- trying really hard to summon something.

ASHTON (CONT'D)

Please. Please. Please, come back,  
Ruby.

Jack sets his hand on Ashton's shoulder. She opens her eyes.

JACK

I'm sorry, Ashton.

She looks up at Jack. He grabs her in a hug as Ashton cries in his shoulder.

INT. TRAIN STATION - TIME UNKNOWN

The station is deserted. It's only Ruby. But then Jonathan appears in front of her. Jonathan smiles at her sadly.

Jonathan ushers her toward big, beautiful doors. Fog pours from the cracks. A train WHISTLES. Ruby walks toward them -- they seem irresistible. But she pauses and looks back at Jonathan.

JONATHAN

Wait! Don't you want to see if  
they're okay?

RUBY

Of course, I do! I didn't know that  
was an option.

Jonathan walks ahead of her. Ruby can't take her eyes off the door but eventually follows Jonathan into a --

INT. TRAIN STATION (SCREENING ROOM) - TIME UNKNOWN

Two comfortable chairs with thick blankets. Jonathan leads her to a chair. They both sit.

A TV shows Ashton and Jack.

MATCH CUT:

INT. ASHTON'S HOUSE (LIVING ROOM) - MORNING

Ashton and Jack separate. Jack wipes away her tears.

ASHTON  
What should we do, Dad?

Jack thinks about this for a moment.

JACK  
Let's go to the hospital. I hear  
talking to people when they're in a  
coma helps.

Ashton nods enthusiastically.

INT. HOSPITAL (RECEPTION) - DAY

NURSE WALLACE (40s), a woman with a bubblegum personality, is trying her hardest to stay polite. Jack and Ashton look at her hopefully.

NURSE WALLACE  
You're trying to visit your friend  
in a coma, but you don't know her  
last name?

Ashton and Jack exchange a glance.

ASHTON  
She didn't really give us that  
information.

NURSE WALLACE  
I'm sorry, but if you don't have  
her last name....

JACK  
There can't be that many people in  
comas here, right?

Nurse Wallace's patience is wearing thin.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Ashton and Jack pace in front of the hospital.

ASHTON  
I have an idea!

INT. HOSPITAL - DAY

Ashton and Jack re-enter in their elf costumes. They both wear white Santa Claus beards to disguise their faces.

ASHTON  
(disguised voice)  
Hellooo!

Nurse Wallace's face lights up.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
We've never stepped foot inside  
this hospital ever before --

Jack covers her mouth.

JACK  
We wanted to come and bring some  
Christmas joy to the patients here.

ASHTON  
And we have two boxes of cookies to  
give to you nurses for being such  
good citizens and helping out the  
sick.

NURSE WALLACE  
(almost in tears)  
That is just the nicest thing I've  
ever heard.

Ashton sets the two leftover cookie boxes on the nurse's station.

NURSE WALLACE (CONT'D)  
We just need to sign you in. What  
are your names?

JACK  
Kris... Krangle.

ASHTON  
I'm...

Her eyes wander, looking for anything...

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
Chair?

JACK

Yes. Cher.

ASHTON

Yes. Cher. Chair isn't a name. Did you think I said chair? That's so funny! Cher Krangle. Family.

Jack looks at her like "quit it."

NURSE WALLACE

So sweet.

Ashton and Jack exchange weak smiles.

Nurse Wallace hands them their visitor badges and a clipboard with room numbers. Jack gives her a friendly nod.

Ashton and Jack speed-walk down the --

HALLWAY

They stop at a marquee that says what floor is what.

JACK

She'll be in the ICU.

They find the ICU. Floor 4. Ashton presses the elevator button.

A DOCTOR walks down the hall. The two try their best to act inconspicuous.

ASHTON

Ho, ho, ho!

As soon as the Doctor is out of sight, Ashton looks up at Jack.

ASHTON (CONT'D)

Are we bad people because we aren't singing to the patients?

JACK

No. We're terrible singers.

Jack looks down at the clipboard.

JACK (CONT'D)

Look, Ruby Cho. Room 4223. That's gotta be her.

INT. HOSPITAL (HALLWAY) - DAY

They stand outside room 4223.

Ashton opens the door to --

ROOM 4223

Ashton and Jack stand in the doorway, unsure what to do. Their Christmas cheer has dropped substantially because there she is: Coma Ruby with tubes and other things sticking out of her.

INT. TRAIN STATION (SCREENING ROOM) - TIME UNKNOWN

Ruby and Jonathan watch it all go down on the TV.

RUBY

I can't die when they're in there --  
wait, is this her second big sad?  
This is too much.

JONATHAN

It is, isn't it? C'mon, let's go.

RUBY

(terrified)  
Where?

Jonathan SNAPS his fingers, and the screening room slowly changes into --

INT. HOSPITAL (ROOM 4223) - DAY

Ruby and Jonathan stand in the back of the room. They watch as Ashton approaches Ruby.

Ashton looks back at Jack, who tries desperately not to let the tears fall from his eyes. Ashton runs back to him, grabs his hand, and forces him to come closer to Coma Ruby.

ASHTON

She looks weird.

Behind Ashton:

RUBY

(sadly)  
It's the fluorescent lighting. They  
don't do anyone any favors.

ASHTON  
(to Jack)  
What should we say to her?

Jack grabs a chair and puts it next to the hospital bed.  
Ashton sits on his lap.

JACK  
Hey, it's us.

ASHTON  
Ashton and Dad -- Jack. You've only  
been gone for, like, two hours and  
I already miss you a lot.  
(beat)  
You're my best friend. I don't know  
-- what am I supposed to do now? I  
don't even care about Geek Fest  
anymore.

Jack squeezes Ashton lovingly.

Ruby watches Ashton pet her unconscious hand. She longs to  
give her reassurance back.

RUBY  
(to Jonathan)  
What if I don't wanna go into the  
light, Jonathan? I know you said  
it's nice, and I can feel it when I  
get close. But...

ASHTON  
What if I changed my Christmas  
wish? Then maybe she could stay?  
They can't make me like her and  
then take her away!

JACK  
I don't know if it works that way,  
Ashton. She could still wake up.

Ruby looks at Jonathan, torn.

ASHTON  
I promise to stop making up stories  
about my mom! I'll even stop  
watching The Jewel Realm if that  
means I could keep her. Dad! Say  
something!

JACK

Unfortunately, you feel like part of the family now, and if you leave, we'll feel empty.

Ashton squeezes Jack. Ruby can't take it.

RUBY

(begging)

See, Jonathan! It feels right being here with them.

JONATHAN

Bingo!

RUBY

What does that mean?

Jonathan pulls his tablet out of his jacket. On the tablet is Ashton's life chart.

JONATHAN

This is Ashton's chart if her Christmas wish was granted.

RUBY

This is just mean at this point.

JONATHAN

Shhh!

Ruby closes her mouth.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

This is her chart now...

The chart's trajectory raises way past the other chart.

JONATHAN (CONT'D)

...since you came into her life. And we can't take that away from her now. You know why we did this, right?

RUBY

I'm sure her mother had something to do with it.

JONATHAN

Precisely. And maybe your grandpa had something to do with it, too.

RUBY  
 (stunned)  
 I get to stay?

Jonathan nods. Ruby hugs him. They jump in excitement. She lets go.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
 What happens now?

Jack reaches out and grabs Coma Ruby's hand.

Ruby looks at her hand and then at Jonathan.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
 Did I just feel that?

Jonathan smiles knowingly and shrugs.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
 Thank you.

JONATHAN  
 I told you I was good at this.

Ruby starts to dissipate. Jonathan waves goodbye enthusiastically. And she disappears completely.

Coma Ruby's hand twitches.

Jack and Ashton stare at it.

JACK  
 Did she just move?

ASHTON  
 I don't know! You're hogging her hand!

They are too focused on her hand to notice that her eyes are open. She blinks -- tears fall from them.

Ashton looks up and sees her.

ASHTON (CONT'D)  
 Oh, my jingle bells! Dad! Look!

Jack looks up to see Ruby's open eyes. They both run up next to her face. She makes eye contact with them. She can't smile because of the tubes shoved down her throat, but her eyes say it all: she's happy.

JACK  
 What do we do?

ASHTON  
CODE RED!

JACK  
You don't know what the codes mean!

Ashton runs to the door.

ASHTON  
We need a doctor or nurse in here!  
Don't worry! It's good!

Jack grabs Ruby's hand again and looks down at her.

JACK  
Hi.

Jack is struck with worry.

JACK (CONT'D)  
Wow, I *really* hope you know who I  
am. I may need to check into this  
hospital --

A NURSE runs in.

ASHTON  
She opened her eyes!

Nurse runs to her aid. Flashes a light in her eyes for a  
pupil check.

A DOCTOR walks in.

DOCTOR  
You two need to exit.

Ashton and Jack are ushered out of the room.

Ruby's watery eyes stare up at the light.

INT. HOSPITAL (4TH FLOOR HALLWAY) - DAY

Jack and Ashton sit in chairs, waiting.

JACK  
I really hope she remembers us --

ASHTON  
She'll remember.

The Doctor steps out in the hallway, saving Jack from the  
question.

DOCTOR

She's awake now. A little groggy,  
but she asked to see you two.

The two stand relieved.

INT. HOSPITAL (ROOM 4223) - DAY

Ruby sits up in bed. She sucks water through a straw. Her head is bandaged up, but it's the same Ruby. Her face lights up when Ashton and Jack enter.

RUBY

Hi.

ASHTON AND JACK

Hi.

RUBY

Can I get a hug?

They both dash to her side and embrace her in a warm hug. They separate.

JACK

So what happened?

RUBY

I guess I did whatever I was  
supposed to do.

Ashton goes in for another hug.

JACK

So wow, that entire thing actually  
just happened.

Ruby shrugs.

ASHTON

Yeah. I got my Christmas wish.  
Except now I can't dress you  
however I want.

In the corner of the hospital room, Jonathan watches proudly, going unnoticed.

JONATHAN

I'm so good at this. It's  
incredible.

Ashton jumps on the hospital bed.

JACK  
Be careful.

ASHTON  
When do you get out?

RUBY  
They said by tomorrow. I wasn't out  
for that long.

ASHTON  
Perfect. We can get you justice  
now!

JACK  
Your designs!

RUBY  
No --

ASHTON  
You can't let them get away with  
that. They should've waited until  
you were dead, at least.

JACK  
Ashton!

RUBY  
Maybe they've already taken care of  
it. You gave Uma the sketches.

JACK  
Sorry, but you can't just wait this  
out. We're specifically teaching  
Ashton that you don't let people  
walk all over you.

ASHTON  
Exactly.

Ashton smiles smugly.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (COSTUME DEPARTMENT) - DAY

Ruby, now with a smaller bandage on her head, enters the room  
with Jack and Ashton flanking her like a pair of bodyguards.

Uma stands, dropping the garment she was working on.

UMA  
Ruby! You're... awake?

Ruby nods.

UMA (CONT'D)  
(unenthusiastically)  
Wow. Amazing.

RUBY  
Is Sandy in?

UMA  
Um, I think so?

RUBY  
Thanks!

Ruby turns to exit. Ashton and Jack follow her, but before she's out of the room, Ashton pauses:

ASHTON  
Don't worry, Uma, we're gonna take care of this.

Ashton runs to catch up with Ruby and Jack.

Uma's face drops.

DANNY  
Was that Ruby?!

UMA  
Yes....

Uma falls into her seat.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (HALLWAY) - DAY

Ruby stares at Sandy's door. Jack and Ashton still stand by her side.

RUBY  
I need to do this alone.

Ruby walks in without an announcement. The door closes.

ASHTON  
I can't believe the enemy helped us win.

JACK  
Maybe if you would've told me what was happening --

ASHTON

She was imaginary then.

JACK

Okay, yeah. You're right.

(beat)

You don't really have a friend named Allison, do you?

ASHTON

Nope. And I promise not to lie like that again.

JACK

Good. We will talk about that more extensively later.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (SANDY'S OFFICE) - DAY

Sandy barely looks up from her desk. Then she double takes.

SANDY

Ruby?

RUBY

You stole my designs.

Sandy gives her her full attention.

RUBY (CONT'D)

I saw the costumes. Those are *my* designs. What? You think I was just going to stay in that coma forever?

Sandy looks shocked. She digs through her desk drawers.

RUBY (CONT'D)

You don't have anything to say to me?

Sandy hands her the designs. Where her signature once was is Uma's signature.

SANDY

Uma told me she had some changes she thought I would be interested in. I had no idea.

(beat)

Now that I think about it, it was after your accident.

Ruby's demeanor changes. She sits in the chair.

SANDY (CONT'D)

I was definitely interested in them, Ruby. Because they're good. And frankly, I was surprised coming from her. Uma isn't bad; she's just not very innovative. You are. I had no idea you had this talent. I think she's been keeping you from me.

RUBY

I -- I was going to come pitch these to you and then... the accident.

(beat)

I can find proof that it's my design.

Sandy stands and makes her way to Ruby.

SANDY

No need. I believe you.

Ruby looks at her hopefully.

SANDY (CONT'D)

Production isn't going to be too happy about the name change in the program but we can't let this slide.

Ruby beams.

INT. CAPITOL THEATRE (HALLWAY) - DAY

Ashton and Jack stare at the door.

The door suddenly opens to Ruby, who is doing a terrible job of hiding her excitement. She jumps enthusiastically and grabs Jack in a hug. Their faces are close to each other. Ashton looks away. Then, Sandy steps out of her office.

SANDY

Oh my -- hi, Jack.

Ruby and Jack separate but still remain close.

Ashton glowers at Sandy.

SANDY (CONT'D)

Hello.

Ashton attempts a smile.

ASHTON  
Thank you for buying so many  
cookies.

SANDY  
You're welcome.

Ruby spots Uma down the hallway.

SANDY (CONT'D)  
Uma, meeting in five.

UMA  
I know.

JACK  
(to Ruby)  
What's going on?

Ruby walks briskly toward Uma.

RUBY  
Uma!

Uma tries to hold her ground.

RUBY (CONT'D)  
I have to say I'm incredibly hurt.  
Stealing my designs?

UMA  
I just -- I thought they were  
beautiful -- it felt like I was  
honoring you in a way.

RUBY  
Uma. You know how hard I worked for  
you and this show - my *entire*  
career. I knew you didn't like me,  
but I always tried to change that.  
I even laughed at all your really  
bad jokes--

UMA  
My jokes were bad?

RUBY  
I just can't believe you almost  
took this all away from me.

UMA  
Ruby, I'm--

RUBY

Look, I'm not mad at you. I feel bad for you. I wanted this job more than anything, and I still would never have done what you did.

Uma tries to hide the surprise on her face. Ashton and Jack smile at Ruby's confidence behind her.

UMA

I am sorry -- and not just because I got caught.

Ruby is not convinced.

UMA (CONT'D)

I was going to tell Sandy. My greatest accomplishment cannot be yours. I knew you deserved the credit, but I just couldn't stand the idea of being seen as less talented than you. I have no excuse for what I did and I'm sorry. And I will spend the rest of my career trying to make up for it -- if I still have one.

RUBY

Well, Uma, good luck with whatever comes next for you.

Ruby turns away from her without another word. She holds her composure, but she grins at Jack and Ashton.

Sandy opens her office door.

SANDY

Uma, I'm ready for you.

Ruby marches toward Jack and Ashton, who can barely contain their excitement.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ruby stares down at the new Snow Queen playbill. She opens to the credits page where her name, RUBY CHO, is listed under COSTUME DESIGN. She smiles and traces her name. She then sticks the new Snow Queen playbill beside the well-loved one on her corkboard.

ASHTON (O.S.)

I think we need more fluffy stuff on the bottom, Ruby.

Ruby, dressed in a Ruby of the Jewel Realm costume, turns around to Ashton, who wears an Opal character costume, a medieval superhero gown that looks like it was crafted out of clouds.

JACK (O.S.)  
We sure I can't just be a geologist  
character?

They both turn to Jack, who wears what looks like knights' armor but is made with lava rock.

ASHTON AND RUBY  
No.

Ashton runs over to the mirror and checks herself out.

ASHTON  
Sofia is going to be impressed.

RUBY  
Absolutely.

Ashton strikes a pose as Jack sidles up to Ruby.

JACK  
(whispering)  
You sure we should've accepted  
these passes from Sandy?

RUBY  
She owes me. And she knows people.  
It was the least she could do.

Ruby throws a VIP Geek Fest lanyard over her head. She hands Ashton and Jack their lanyards.

Jack looks down at his knight costume.

JACK  
Does this mean I'm your prince or  
something? Since we match?

RUBY  
We'll have to ask the creator.

ASHTON (O.S.)  
If I say yes, are you guys gonna  
kiss?

JACK  
(teasing)  
No way, gross.

ASHTON

Yeah. He's your prince.

Ashton turns away from them knowingly.

Ruby and Jack move closer and share a sweet kiss. **Finally.**

THE END