

HELLO UNIVERSE

Written by

Michael Golamco

Based on the Novel by

Erin Entrada Kelly

The morning's hazy -- summer heat's creeping in.

KIDS surge into school. A banner across its entrance reads: LAST DAY OF SCHOOL -- HELLO SUMMER!

Among the crowd we find VIRGIL SALINAS, 11, Filipino American. Awkward, earnest, right on the cusp of change.

In the distance he sees VALENCIA SOMMERSET, 11, heading into school; he pushes up his glasses as he approaches -

VIRGIL (V.O.)
"Hello Valencia. I'm Virgil."

He sighs, frustrated -

VIRGIL (V.O.)
No -- that's not right...
"Hi Valencia!" Ugh, nope.
(Super cool voice)
"Wassup, Valencia..." Oh man, no!!
C'mon Virgil! It's the last day of
the school year -- just say hello
to her!
(Psyching himself up)
Okay: On the count of three. One,
two, three -

Virgil TAKES OFF RUNNING, weaving past kids like an olympic athlete -

He LEAPS through the air -- PARKOURS past walls,
somersaulting over kids like a superhero -- whoa -

And he STICKS THE LANDING right next to Valencia. Straightens his hair. She turns to him -- now's his chance.

Suddenly, a SHRIEK pierces the sky -- CAW! The ground SHAKES, Virgil FALLS -

He scrambles away as the CAWS grow louder, sunlight above turning into DARKNESS. He sees the BRIGHT EYES of a huge, SHADY, BIRD-SHAPED FIGURE peering out of the dark -

Virgil turns away, squeezing his eyes shut in fear.

Tears stream down his face as the shadowy figure closes in, SWALLOWING HIM UP -

VIRGIL
Nooooooooooooo -

2 INT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - VIRGIL'S ROOM - MORNING 2

Virgil wakes in a cold sweat, shaken by the NIGHTMARE.

VIRGIL (V.O.)
Another nightmare. Pretty scary,
huh?.. Same one as last time -

Virgil grabs a DREAM JOURNAL lying next to his bed. He adds to an ILLUSTRATION of the shadowy figure from his nightmare -

VIRGIL (V.O.)
Giant murderous bird the size of an
elephant, trying to eat me.

He puts on his glasses. Checks a calendar on his wall.
Today's date is circled, underlined, arrows pointing to it:

LAST DAY OF THE SCHOOL YEAR

VIRGIL (V.O.)
But it's just a dream, right?

He stares at it, troubled.

MOMENTS LATER, Virgil presses his nose against a TERRARIUM -- inside is his pet guinea pig, GULLIVER:

VIRGIL (V.O.)
Last night, I read online that
guinea pigs aren't supposed to live
alone. They're social animals.

He picks Gulliver up, sympathizing.

VIRGIL (V.O.)
Now I wish I never read that.
'Cause now I'm worried that
Gulliver's pining away the hours in
desperate loneliness...
My name is Virgil Salinas, I'm 11
years old, and I'm a Grand Failure.

He feeds Gulliver a dandelion.

VIRGIL
I wish eating a dandelion could
make me happy too.

TITLES OVER: HELLO UNIVERSE

3 INT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

3

The kitchen is loud, chaotic -- eggs and *longganisa* (Filipino breakfast sausage) fry on the stove. Virgil's FAMILY is raucous around the table -

His twin brothers JOSELITO and JULIUS (13, good looking, athletic) cackle, roughhousing --

VIRGIL (V.O.)
 Those are my twin brothers,
 Joselito and Julius -- it's like
 they're from a factory that makes
 perfect, athletic, happy kids.

Virgil's trying to eat his cereal in peace, but they keep BUMPING into him -

VIRGIL
 Ow, quit it guys!

JOSELITO AND JULIUS
 Sorry, Turtle!

VIRGIL (V.O.)
 ...I was made somewhere else.

Virgil's DAD (40s, handsome, perfect like his twin sons) looks up from his phone -

VIRGIL'S DAD
 So what are you doing this summer,
 Turtle?

Virgil stares into his cereal.

VIRGIL (V.O.)
 Dad's good looking and strong, just
 like the Twins. And he wants me to
 be like them too -

VIRGIL'S DAD
 Maybe you could play soccer like
 the twins!

Virgil's MOM (40s, perpetually joyful) reads a text on her phone, LAUGHS -

VIRGIL (V.O.)
 Meanwhile, my Mom's always in the
 middle of laughing.

VIRGIL'S MOM
 As long as you get out of the
 house. Get some exercise, Turtle!

Virgil blanches.

VIRGIL (V.O.)
I hate it when they call me Turtle.
 It makes me feel like I'm six years
 old -- like I'm a loser -

VIRGIL'S MOM
 How about swimming lessons?

Just then, someone speaks up for him -

LOLA
 Nonsense!

It's Virgil's grandmother: His *LOLA*, 70s, big wise glasses, expertly slicing a mango. He looks up at her -- she's the picture of warmth and calm in this chaos.

LOLA (CONT'D)
 Let them see your hands, Virgilio.
 (He holds up his hands)
 There, you see that? These are the
 hands of a gifted pianist. We
 should put you in piano lessons,
anak!

She gives Virgil a wink and a smile.

VIRGIL (V.O.)
 That's Lola. *Lola* is what we call
 our grandmas. I like the way it
 sounds -- it fits better. *Lola*:
 Soft. Calm. Like someone who always
 knows the right thing to say -

She nudges him. Whispers -

LOLA
 You know why you're special,
 Virgilio?

She tilts his face up so she can study it; he looks up at her, too shy to make eye contact.

LOLA (CONT'D)
 It's your eyes. You have caring
 eyes. You should let people see
 them.

He smiles, comforted for the moment.

LOLA (CONT'D)
Cheer up, hah! *Ay nakau*, you have such a sorrowful face!

VIRGIL
I had a nightmare, Lola. About that giant bird from your stories.

LOLA
Oh, you mean Pah?.. The huge monstrous bird the size of an elephant, who'd snatch villagers up and eat them?

(She laughs, teasing him)
CAW! CAW!

(Then)
What were you doing in your dream?.. Was it something that scares you?

The heat of embarrassment rises up his neck. Lola sees the shame on his face. Treads lightly.

LOLA (CONT'D)
You know, I had a dream too. I dreamt about the Stone Boy again -

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Deep underground. A boy-sized STONE planted in the earth, standing like a monolith.

LOLA (V.O.)
It was the same dream as before: A shy boy crept into a cave -

A BOY approaches the stone, face unseen -- could it be Virgil?

LOLA (V.O.)
And begged a stone to eat him. So the stone opened its gravelly mouth...

An OPENING appears in the stone; the boy moves closer -

INT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MORNING

LOLA
And... it... ATE HIM!

She tickles Virgil, amusing him.

VIRGIL

Lola, how come so many of your stories end with people getting eaten by stuff?

LOLA

The world's a dangerous place, Virgilio! Don't get eaten!.. Mango?

She offers him a slice of mango.

INT. MOM'S MINIVAN - MOVING - MORNING

Virgil's Mom drives; Virgil and Lola are in the back seat. They pull up to his school.

LOLA

Whatever scares you, you can handle it. I have faith in you, *Bayani*.

He smiles at her encouragement.

LOLA (CONT'D)

Now hold out your fist.

He holds out his fist. She pounds it, laughs. So does Virgil.

5

EXT. BOYD MIDDLE SCHOOL - MORNING

5

Virgil waves as his Mom's minivan pulls away. Lola gives him an enthusiastic thumbs up.

VIRGIL'S MOM

See you later, Turtle!

Virgil groans. As they drive off -

LOLA

Haysusmariosep, do you have to drive so fast?

Virgil looks up at his school. KIDS run by, chatting, excited. He cranes his neck, searching the crowd -

He spots her: Valencia Sommerset, getting out of her Mom's car. She heads for the front steps.

It's just like his nightmare. Virgil stands there, frozen, trying to will himself forward...

A bird CAWS in the distance. He slinks away.

Lunch. Every table is packed. Virgil eats alone -- chicken adobo out of a Cool Whip container.

He sees Valencia sitting alone, studying a SIGN LANGUAGE TUTORIAL on her phone -- signing along, amused by it.

CLOSE on Valencia's ears: She's wearing HEARING AIDS.

Virgil watches, secretly signing out the letters H-E-L-L-O - LAUGHTER nearby. Valencia looks up at the next table: ROBERTA RILEY (11) and MEGAN JACKSON (11) are holding court with their clique of GIRLS. Valencia gives Roberta a friendly smile; Megan side-eyes her.

Valencia reads their lips:

MEGAN JACKSON
(To Roberta, subtitled:)
Do you have to invite Valencia to your birthday? She's so weird.

ROBERTA RILEY
My Mom's making me. Careful. She can read lips.

MEGAN JACKSON
That's so creepy.

Valencia's caught everything they've said. Hiding her hurt, she grabs her things. Heads off -

VALENCIA
I don't want to go to your dumb birthday party anyway, Roberta.

She heads past Virgil, paralyzed as she walks by.

Suddenly, a BASKETBALL COMES FLYING OUT OF NOWHERE -

But Virgil DODGES it like Neo dodging bullets in the Matrix!

Just kidding -- VIRGIL SNAPS BACK TO REALITY as the basketball BOUNCES off his head. He turns to see -

CHEW BULLENS -- massive for an 11 year-old -- cracking up.

VIRGIL (V.O.)
Chet Bullens, aka "The Bull", aka My Worst Nightmare. And if you haven't noticed, I have a lot of nightmares.

CHET
Nice move, retardo.

A nearby TEACHER yells -

TEACHER
CHET! To the principal's office!

The teacher grabs Chet; he sneers at Virgil as he skulks away.

8 INT. BOYD MIDDLE SCHOOL - HALLWAY - DAY

8

The LAST BELL RINGS. Kids surge out into the hall. Virgil comes out of a classroom. A TEACHER behind him calls out -

TEACHER
Have a great summer everybody!

Virgil scans the packed hallway, spots Valencia heading for the exit.

Chet spots her -- he scrunches his face at her, heckling her. She goes right by him, unshaken. Virgil watches, impressed.

Suddenly, her JOURNAL slips out of her backpack, skitters across the floor. Valencia keeps walking, not noticing.

VIRGIL
Hey!

Virgil rushes over, scoops up her journal -- searches for her -- there's a sea of kids between them.

He leaps up -- RUNS across kids' shoulders, his feet flying as he races above the horde toward her -

And HE SNAPS BACK TO REALITY as he barely squeezes through the crowd, finally rushing up to her -

Valencia senses him behind her. Turns around. Her eyes meet his...

And Virgil FREEZES, losing his nerve.

He averts his gaze, stares at his feet. Too shy to speak. He offers up her journal. She takes it -

VALENCIA
Thanks.

She goes. Virgil slumps against a locker, crushed.

10

EXT. BOYD MIDDLE SCHOOL - PARKING LOT

10

Kids burst out of the building, ecstatic -- it's summer!

Virgil lopes outside, feeling like a failure. Suddenly he's BODY CHECKED, knocking his backpack off -

It's Chet, grinning at him. Flanked by his friends, JOHN DAVIES (11), DAVID KISTLER (11), and a few other BOYS -

CHET

Watch where you're goin, retard.

Chet LAUGHS. Virgil gathers his stuff -

VIRGIL (V.O.)

He wouldn't be so tough without his friends backing him up -

John, David, and the other Boys leave. Chet stares Virgil down. Virgil shrinks.

A CAR HORN HONKS. Virgil looks up -- it's his Mom HONKING from her Minivan.

VIRGIL (V.O.)

- He's lucky my Mom's here.

VIRGIL'S MOM

Hurry up, Turtle! I've got yoga!

Nearby KIDS SNICKER. Virgil shrivels.

12

EXT. TANAKA HOUSE - DAY

12

In the front yard, KAORI TANAKA (12, Japanese American, private school uniform, spiky hair) meditates, cross-legged on a zabuton.

She breathes in deep, at one with the Universe.

Suddenly, an irksome NOISE: A JUMPROPE SKIPPING.

GEN

One, two, three -

Kaori opens one eye. It's her little sister/assistant GEN (7, Japanese American, also in a school uniform) skipping with her PINK JUMPROPE.

KAORI TANAKA

Gen! Do you have to do that right now?

GEN

I'm tryin to break my record: A
hundred skips -

KAORI TANAKA

Okay, but you're disrupting my
meditative state!

Virgil trudges toward the girls with his backpack. Kaori
rushes up to him, excited -

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)

so, did you finally say hello to
her?

He hangs his head in defeat. Kaori sighs.

13 EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

13

Insects buzz among summer greenery. Asphalt wavers in the
heat. Virgil, Kaori, and Gen come out of the store, slurping
at ice pops.

Virgil looks up at the awning above his head -- it reads:
GRAND FAILURE.

KAORI TANAKA

- You're not a Grand Failure,
Virgil! Sure you've failed -- a
lot! But that doesn't mean you'll
never succeed!

They head down the street; Gen tries to lick her ice pop
while skipping rope -- but it's not easy.

GEN

Why don't you just go up to her and
say, "Hey, you wanna be my friend?"
That's what I'd do. It works!

KAORI TANAKA

(Eyeroll)

This isn't *Elementary School*, Gen!
In Middle School, life's a lot more
complicated!

VIRGIL

Whenever I try to talk to her, I
freeze up. I can't help it -

KAORI TANAKA

Aw Virgil, it's okay to be shy -

Virgil cringes at that word.

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)

- You've just gotta speak up when you need to.

VIRGIL

It's not that easy, Kaori.

KAORI TANAKA

Yeah it is! "Hello, I'm Virgil Salinas, I love mixing strawberry and chocolate ice cream together."

GEN

Ewwww!

VIRGIL

Don't say eww, it's good!

KAORI TANAKA

"I like books about space, archaeology, grilled cheese sandwiches with the crusts cut off..." See, it's easy!

VIRGIL

It doesn't matter anyway -- the school year's over. But...

KAORI TANAKA

But what?

VIRGIL

Have this feeling that... She and I are meant to be friends.

An EXCLAMATION POINT appears over Kaori's head -

KAORI TANAKA

A PREMONITION??

Gen GASPS.

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)

I think we need to consult the Spirit Stones!

Kaori's bedroom is sparse -- just a low round table, a few books, and a TENT (presumably where Kaori sleeps).

Kaori, Virgil, and Gen gather around the low table, a battery powered LANTERN glowing off their faces. A DISCO BALL projects a STAR FIELD above their heads.

The vibe is magical -- like a campfire in the woods.

KAORI TANAKA
So what's this girl's name.

Virgil looks away, uncomfortable.

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)
Come on, Virgil -- I don't even go
to the same school as you, there's
no way I'll know who she is!..
(Virgil stays mum)
Okay, tell me her initials then.

He takes a deep breath -

VIRGIL
"V.S."

KAORI TANAKA
"V.S."?..
(Gripped by excitement)
Virgil! You guys have the same
initials! V.S., Virgil Salinas!

GEN
How *auspicious*!

KAORI TANAKA
Hush, Gen!.. But it's true, it's
very auspicious! Do you know her
astrological sign?

VIRGIL
She's a Scorpio.

KAORI TANAKA
Ooh, adventurous and courageous!
Enthusiastic and confident! I can
see why you'd be intimidated, she's
so different from you.

Virgil's stung -- but he tries to hide it.

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)
Check this out:

She spreads a STAR CHART across the table. Examines it
closely as Gen peers over her shoulder -

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)
See? The stars are aligned in your
favor.

GEN

It's just a bunch of lines and dots.

KAORI TANAKA

(Exasperated)

I've told you a million times, Gen:
The dots are stars and the lines
are constellations. Pegasus.
Orion's belt. Ursa Major.

GEN

That just looks like a bear.

KAORI TANAKA

That's what an Ursa is! Geez.

VIRGIL

So how's this supposed to help me?

KAORI TANAKA

The stars tell us everything. And they're telling me that you and V.S. coming together is FATE: You have the same initials, you're in the same grade...

VIRGIL

Those are just coincidences, Kaori.

KAORI TANAKA

There are no coincidences.

Kaori offers Virgil a DRAWSTRING BAG.

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)

Think of V.S. and choose a Stone.

Virgil pulls out a STONE, places it in front of Kaori. She studies it. Closes her eyes, focusing her spiritual senses -

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)

I see darkness.

GEN

That's 'cause your eyes are closed.

Kaori opens her eyes so she can roll them. She closes her eyes again, great concentration on her face -

KAORI TANAKA

I see you in a dark place, Virgil.

VIRGIL
 (Troubled)
 What do you mean.

As Kaori speaks, Virgil's anxiety grows:

KAORI TANAKA
I see darkness all around you. I
 see you going deep underground, to
 where the darkness lives. The
 Universe is trying to bring you and
 V.S. back together. And when it
 does, you've got to SPEAK to lift
 the dark and let in the light -

Suddenly the BEDROOM DOOR FLIES OPEN! LIGHT floods the room, ruining its spiritual ambiance!

Kaori's Mom MITSUE (early 40s, Japanese American) enters. She throws open the curtains -- more harsh light floods the room!

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)
 We're in the middle of a spirit
 stone session!

GEN
 You're killing the vibe!

MITSUE TANAKA
 It's a beautiful day outside and
 you're in here talking to rocks.

KAORI TANAKA
 They're not rocks -- they're stones
 that are in tune with the Universe!
 (Under her breath)
 You're monstrously unimaginative,
 Mitsue Tanaka.

Mom's not having it -

MITSUE TANAKA
 In this house, you call me Mom.

Virgil's phone BUZZES. He checks it -

VIRGIL
 It's my Dad. I gotta go.

He grabs his backpack.

MITSUE TANAKA
 You need a ride home, Virgil?

VIRGIL

Thanks Mrs. Tanaka, I can walk.

As he heads out, Kaori mouths the word "speak". Virgil gives an uneasy smile, goes.

MITSUE TANAKA

(Looking around)

It's so sparse in here. Where is everything?

She opens the closet. Kaori's THINGS (furniture, clothes, spiritual artifacts) are stuffed inside, Tetris style.

MITSUE TANAKA (CONT'D)

Seriously?

KAORI TANAKA

Petty items like "furniture" only crowd the Spirit Chamber.

MITSUE TANAKA

Look at Gen's room -- it's immaculate.

They look across the hall into Gen's BEDROOM: It's spotless -- and everything inside (furniture, blankets, toys) is PINK.

KAORI TANAKA

(Unimpressed)

But it's way too pink.

GEN

Pink is awesome.

Mitsue gives Kaori an ultimatum:

MITSUE TANAKA

Take all those things out of your closet and put them where they're supposed to be: Inside this room.

Mom goes. Kaori flops onto the floor, vexed. So does Gen.

A BLUEBIRD flutters off from the windowsill -- we follow it as it arcs across the neighborhood, finding -

Virgil walking along down below. He pulls his backpack close, trepidatious as he stares at the house up ahead:

A RANCH-STYLE BUNGALOW. And in its driveway is Chet, stomping around as he takes shots at a hoop over the garage.

Virgil watches, nervous. If he makes a move right now, he can get past unseen.

Virgil hurries along, keeps his head down. Almost there -

CHET
HEY RETARDO!

Virgil's mortified. He quickens his pace. Chet grins as he approaches, BOUNCING the basketball with each step -

CHET (CONT'D)
Can't you hear? You deaf?

Chet steps right in front of Virgil, towering over him.

Virgil's had it. He looks up at Chet. Adjusts his glasses.

VIRGIL
Look at my hands.

He holds up his hands. Chet scrunches his face up, puzzled.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
These are the hands of a gifted
pianist. But they also make really
good FISTS -

Virgil GRABS Chet by the collar, HOISTS him off his feet -

And he HURLS Chet into the air -- he arcs across the neighborhood, disappearing out of sight...

VIRGIL SNAPS BACK TO REALITY as Chet SHOVES him -

CHET
Do something, loser.

Virgil takes off RUNNING, drowning in shame. Chet LAUGHS, watching him go.

INT. VALENCIA'S MOM'S SUV - DAY

Valencia's Mom drives; Valencia sits in the passenger's seat, watching another Sign Language tutorial on her phone -

She sees some kid (Virgil) run past their SUV and down the street. Weird.

Valencia's Mom taps her -

VALENCIA'S MOM

(Re: Sign Language video)

Honey, why do you need to watch
those? Your Hearing Aids work, your
lip reading's gotten really good -

VALENCIA

(Annoyed)

I just want to learn, okay?

VALENCIA'S MOM

Nothing's wrong with learning... I
just wish you had someone to talk
to.

Valencia looks away, troubled. Mom didn't mean it as an insult, but it still feels like one.

17

EXT. ROBERTA'S HOUSE - DAY

17

A posh, gabled McMansion. A swank BIRTHDAY PARTY'S going on inside; Roberta's out front greeting her GUESTS as their parents drop them off in the semicircle driveway.

Valencia and her Mom pull up in their old SUV.

VALENCIA'S MOM

Okay, here we are -- have fun!

Valencia looks at the party, hesitant.

VALENCIA

Mom... can we just get take out
instead? Go home, watch a movie?

VALENCIA'S MOM

Don't you want to be at Roberta's
birthday? She's your best friend!

VALENCIA

Was my best friend.

Mom eyes her, worried -- irritating Valencia even more:

VALENCIA'S MOM

Valencia... I just don't want you
to be alone this summer -

VALENCIA

Mom: I'm fine, okay? I can take
care of myself.

VALENCIA'S MOM
 Can you please go in there and try
 to have some fun?

18 EXT. ROBERTA'S BACKYARD - DAY

18

The party's in full swing. Roberta's laughing and chatting up Megan and her clique.

Valencia enters and suddenly all eyes are on her. The other girls whisper to each other, covering their mouths. Word's gotten out about Valencia's lip reading.

Humiliated, Valencia pours herself a glass of punch. Sticks to their outskirts.

LATER, Valencia picks at a piece of birthday cake, standing alone, back turned to the house.

In the background, ROBERTA'S MOM waves the girls inside. Roberta and Megan spot Valencia, giggle to themselves as they leave her standing out there by herself.

Valencia looks up -- and sees that everyone around her is gone. They ditched her. She's fuming.

19 INT. ROBERTA'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

19

The girls are gabbing in the great room; Valencia marches past them, refusing to let them see that she's hurt.

She goes up to the massive SPREAD of food on the counter, grabs a fistful of charcuterie, and wraps it in a napkin.

20 EXT. WOODS - DAY

20

A sun-dappled FOREST on the edge of the neighborhood. Valencia walks along a trail.

She takes out her Hearing Aids. Holds out her hands, feels the breeze, the long grass against her skin... Enjoying the silence.

And she doesn't see that SOMETHING is following her. It moves up from behind -- big, fast, and headed right for her -

A shaggy, FRIENDLY DOG! He bounds up to Valencia -- she embraces him, delighted -

VALENCIA
 Hi Sacred!

He licks her face. She unwraps the napkin of charcuterie; he devours it as Valencia scratches his neck -

VALENCIA (CONT'D)

I wish my Mom wasn't allergic. Then
you wouldn't have to be homeless...
I guess it'll just be you and me
this summer: Going solo.

We pull up and away as Valencia tosses a stick with Sacred -
Pulling back to reveal that it's a FRIDGE MAGNET -

31 INT. TANAKA HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

31

- On Kaori's FRIDGE. Kaori digs around in the fridge, tossing
snacks into her backpack. Gen hovers behind her -

GEN

Hey: Are you goin' into the woods
to find Spirit Stones for Virgil?

KAORI TANAKA

If I tell you, are you gonna tell
Mitsue?

GEN

...No.

KAORI TANAKA

Then yes, I am!

GEN

Oooh, can I come?

Kaori's about to say NO -- when Mom enters with her laptop:

MITSUE TANAKA

Yes Gen, of course you can go.

KAORI TANAKA

NOOOO!! I need to be finely attuned
to nature and she's gonna be
yapping in my ear!

MITSUE TANAKA

Take your sister with you, Kaori.

KAORI TANAKA

WHY.

MITSUE TANAKA

'Cause she's your sister. You have
to take her with you wherever you
go.

Kaori GROANS, throws on her backpack.

KAORI TANAKA

Ugh, sounds like a life sentence.

She heads out in a huff. Gen feels bad. Her jump rope wilts in her hand... then she heads out after her sister.

36 INT. SUPER SAVER SUPERMARKET - DAY

36

A suburban supermarket. Virgil tacks up a hand-drawn BUSINESS CARD on the bulletin board:

KAORI TANAKA, PSYCHIC

New Clients Welcome -- NO ADULTS

He heads through the produce section with Kaori and Gen.

KAORI TANAKA

Thanks for putting that up for me.

GEN

Our Mom told Kaori she wasn't allowed to.

VIRGIL

Glad I could help.

KAORI TANAKA

Well I figured out a way to help you with V.S.! I was trying to understand the connection between the two of you, so I went into the woods looking for more Spirit Stones -

GEN

But we didn't find any.

KAORI TANAKA

That's right. We didn't. 'Cause we're not the ones who should be looking.

GEN

(Mind blown)

Oooohh...

VIRGIL

So you want me to go into the woods and search for Spirit Stones?

KAORI TANAKA

Think of them like breadcrumbs the Universe left behind.

VIRGIL

I don't know, Kaori.

KAORI TANAKA

I'm telling you, Virgil: The Universe is trying to bring you and V.S. together. It's fate!

They walk up to Lola and her shopping cart.

LOLA

Virgil, can you grab a peanut butter? It's there. Over there -

She points with her lips. The kids head over to the peanut butter shelves. As Virgil reaches up for a jar -

VIRGIL

Hey, can we keep the V.S. stuff between us?

KAORI TANAKA

Of course! This is a safe space! My lips are sealed.

She zips her lips. So does Gen.

MOMENTS LATER, they're pushing the cart through the supermarket with Lola.

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)

Lola, do you believe in fate?

Virgil sighs. Lola laughs, intrigued -

LOLA

"Do I believe in fate?" Well, that's not your average supermarket talk!

KAORI TANAKA

We aren't your average supermarket shoppers.

Gen holds a pair of starfruit over her eyes like binoculars.

GEN

Can we get these?

LOLA

Put it in the cart.

KAORI TANAKA

So do you think things just *happen*,
or are they meant to be?

LOLA

I think good things happen for a
reason. And bad things too.

VIRGIL

Why do you have to bring up the bad
things?

LOLA

Well if you didn't have bad things,
you wouldn't have good things! They
would all just be Things! You ever
thought about that?

VIRGIL

So you believe in destiny?

LOLA

Yes, everybody has one. Except for
this one girl back in my village --
she was born without a destiny.

KAORI TANAKA

What? How can you be born without a
destiny?

LOLA

Her name was Ruby San Salvador. Her
parents had every one of their
childrens' fortunes read when they
were born -

Kaori browses the shelves; Ruby's story ANIMATES on cereal
boxes, as she goes from one FORTUNE TELLER to another -

LOLA (CONT'D)

But whenever someone tried to see
Ruby's future, all they got was a
blank picture.

VIRGIL

What happened to her?

LOLA

She left the village to go find her
destiny. And it got a lot quieter
without her asking everybody what
her destiny was!

KAORI TANAKA
So you do believe in fate.

LOLA
I think fate takes you to the place, but you have to make the choice.

Virgil processes this. Then -

VIRGIL
Lola, there's someone I've been thinking about -

Suddenly, Virgil sees her -- right there in front of him: Valencia. Browsing the frozen food section with her Mom.

He can't believe it -- this isn't a daydream, it's real -

37 INT. SUPER SAVER SUPERMARKET - FROZEN FOODS - CONTINUOUS 37

We're ON VALENCIA now -- her Mom reaches into the freezer for a package of steak fries. Valencia taps her.

VALENCIA
Can we get the curly kind instead?

BACK ON VIRGIL, stunned. He makes his move -

VIRGIL
I'll go get the ice cream.

Virgil heads for the freezer section. Lola calls after him -

LOLA
Anak! Get the one in the big plastic tub!

Virgil waves off Lola's suggestion. He approaches Valencia, gathering his courage -

The world slows down. The lights go low. SPOTLIGHTS on Valencia, on him -

We tilt down to Virgil's belly: An X-RAY -- actual BUTTERFLIES.

Virgil feels himself grow lighter. His feet leave the ground as he begins to FLOAT towards her -

Suddenly HE SNAPS BACK TO REALITY when he spots Chet and his Dad round the corner, headed this way!

Virgil hides behind a freezer door. Valencia looks up, just missing him. Chet doesn't see him either.

Valencia locks eyes with Chet. Sneers at him as he goes by.

They both miss Virgil, who's now hiding inside a freezer -- and actually frozen.

Chet smirks, turns to his Dad:

CHET
Hey Dad, what makes people deaf?

Mr. Bullens scrutinizes a bag of chips.

MR. BULLENS
Deaf?.. Could be a lotta different things. Some people are just born defective. Why'd you want to know?

He throws a casual look back at Valencia.

CHET
Just wondering.

Mr. Bullens eyes a SUPERMARKET EMPLOYEE cleaning up a spill -

MR. BULLENS
Sometimes grocery stores, gas stations, whatever, they'll give menial jobs to those kinds of people. Disabled folks don't have a lot going on upstairs, but at least they can do simple things.

38 INT. SUPER SAVER SUPERMARKET - CHECKOUT LINE - LATER 38

Chet and his Dad wait at the register as a TEENAGE CASHIER rings up their groceries. Mr. Bullens checks his watch -

MR. BULLENS
By the time we get outta here, my son'll be graduating high school.

He laughs. Chet laughs too. The Cashier rolls his eyes.

MR. BULLENS (CONT'D)
(To Chet)
I heard you practicing last night.
How many shots did you make?

Chet gilds the truth:

CHET

A bunch! I lost count... If I keep practicing, I'm pretty sure I can make the team next year.

At the next check stand, Valencia spies on their conversation. Mr. Bullens shakes his head -

MR. BULLENS

Mmmmm, I don't know buddy. I don't think Coach'll forget the stink of last year's tryouts... Just warning you: Don't set yourself up for disappointment.

Chet withers. His Dad chuckles at something on his phone.

Valencia clocks all of this, pocketing it away for later.

Her Mom taps her -

VALENCIA'S MOM

Hey -- we forgot the avocados.

Valencia groans, heads off -

39 INT. SUPER SAVER SUPERMARKET - PRODUCE - MOMENTS LATER 39

Valencia expertly selects an avocado, drops it in a bag.

Her hearing aids THUNDER as a DISTORTED VOICE comes up on the loudspeaker -

PA VOICE

MARTY TO SEAFOOD, CUSTOMER WAITING.

Valencia winces -- ugh.

And that's when she sees it: A ray of SUNLIGHT illuminating a splash of COLOR in the middle of the bulletin board -

Valencia's drawn to the hand-written BUSINESS CARD tacked to its center:

KAORI TANAKA, PSYCHIC

New Clients Welcome -- NO ADULTS

Valencia pulls it off the board, intrigued. She snaps a pic.

21 EXT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - NIGHT 21

Colorful lights burst from the windows of the Salinas house -- there's SINGING coming from inside:

VIRGIL'S MOM (PRE-LAP)
Somewhere over the rainbow /

22 INT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS 22

The Salinas family's singing KARAOKE together -- *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* by Israel Kamakawiwo'ole -

SALINAS FAMILY
Way up high / And the dreams that you dream of, once in a lullaby /

Virgil's sitting in the corner, wishing he could be anywhere else. Mom tries to coax him out of his shell -

VIRGIL'S MOM
 Come on, Turtle! Sing with us!

She holds the mic up to his face -

VIRGIL
Somewhere over the rainbow, blue birds fly -

He pushes the mic away. The Salinases take over, singing together as one happy family. Virgil flees into the kitchen -

23 INT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS 23

He finds Lola reading the newspaper. She sees the sour look on his face.

LOLA
 Want to play Monopoly, anak? Or how about Connect Four? You love connecting fours!

VIRGIL
 Not now, Lola.

LOLA
 What's wrong?

VIRGIL
 ...Nothing.

She tilts his face up. Studies his eyes.

LOLA
 Something's wrong, I know it!
 There's that sorrow again, in your eyes.

VIRGIL

...I was just thinking about
someone from school.

LOLA

She's a friend of yours?

VIRGIL

She doesn't know me yet.

(Off Lola's look)

I mean, we're really different.
She's like... Malaya of the
Crocodiles.

LOLA

(Intrigued)

Oh... Malaya of the Crocodiles!

Lola looks out the kitchen window, SEES -

A SUNSET ON A HILL -- and there is MALAYA OF THE CROCODILES,
11, standing tall in the traditional battle dress of a
Filipino Warrior... played by the same actress as Valencia
Sommerset. Plus Malaya has Hearing Aids too.

QUICK FLASHES of Malaya as Lola speaks:

LOLA (V.O.)

She's fast as a deer -

(Malaya outruns a deer!)

She's sharp as a knife -

(Malaya spears a fish!)

She's FIERCE!

(Malaya ROARS in a
crocodile's face!)

BACK ON VIRGIL

VIRGIL

Yeah -- she's like Malaya.

LOLA

So why don't you say hello?

VIRGIL

Whenever I try to, I feel... like
Pah's flying over me.

Lola gives him a sympathetic look.

LOLA

Bayani, whenever you hear a worried voice inside you say, "Ay nakau, what if this happens or what if that happens", you say to yourself, "Listen, Pah: I'm not going to let you push me around, I'm Virgil Salinas!"

VIRGIL

Lola: It's not that easy. Bayani means *hero*, right? I'm no hero. I'm just... *Turtle*.

LOLA

You are a hero, Bayani. Listen: When all else fails, just look them in the eyes. They'll know that you're special.

Virgil looks up at her, turning this around in his head.

29

EXT. BIG OPEN FIELD - DAY - VALENCIA'S NIGHTMARE

29

The sun **BLAZES** in a cloudless sky. Valencia walks alone through dry, knee-high grass.

She looks around: Here and there are small **GATHERINGS OF PEOPLE**. Speaking to each other, indecipherable.

VALENCIA

Hello?

Suddenly **EVERYONE** turns to look at her. Their eyes are pupil-less marbles. Valencia backs away, creeped out.

A **GIRL** in a **BLUE DRESS** (looking like Roberta) steps up to Valencia. Her lips don't move, but her **VOICE** sounds out:

GIRL IN BLUE DRESS (V.O.)
Solar Eclipse.

The Girl points up at the sky. The circle of the **MOON** passes in front of the **SUN**. The sky goes dark -

And suddenly, **EVERYONE VANISHES**. Valencia looks around, frightened, lost -- she's alone in the dark -

30

INT. VALENCIA'S HOUSE - VALENCIA'S BEDROOM - LATE NIGHT

30

Valencia **SNAPS AWAKE** from her **NIGHTMARE**, rattled.

Her bedroom is a green, indoor forest of plants and dried flowers, full of drawings and artifacts from nature.

She clicks on a lamp. By her bedside is a small ceramic STATUETTE of Catholic Saint René Goupil. She speaks to it:

VALENCIA

Dear St. René, Please help me get rid of this nightmare so I can have a good summer. Or at least a summer with good nights' sleep. Amen.

She makes the "R" sign and taps three times against her lips.

Valencia lays back in bed. Closes her eyes. No good.

She pulls out her phone. Flips through her photos... and lands on the picture of KAORI'S BUSINESS CARD.

42 EXT. THE NEIGHBORHOOD - THE NEXT MORNING

42

Dawn rises over the woods.

43 INT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - VIRGIL'S ROOM - MORNING

43

Virgil grabs his things as he Facetimes with Kaori:

KAORI TANAKA

Choose five stones. Any ones you like.

VIRGIL

How do I know which ones are Spirit Stones?

44 INTERCUT KAORI TANAKA - INT. KAORI'S BEDROOM - MORNING 44

KAORI TANAKA

(Mysteriously)

The Universe will guide you. Bring them to my place at 11!

Virgil nods, hangs up. Kaori OUT.

He takes Gulliver out of his terrarium, speaks to him:

VIRGIL

Come on, Gulliver. We'll get you some fresh dandelions.

Virgil stuffs a couple of folded t-shirts into his backpack, gently places Gulliver inside.

EXT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - MORNING

Virgil heads out the front door. Lola looks up from her gardening, rushes over to him -

LOLA

Psst! Virgilio! I have to tell you something: I had a dream last night about a boy named Amado. He was walking toward a red tree -

VIRGIL

A tree?

LOLA

Yes! A bright red tree! Oh my gosh, I yelled to him, "Amado, don't go to that tree!" But he didn't listen. And then...

VIRGIL

The tree ate him?

LOLA

YES!! Exactly!

VIRGIL

So what does that mean? Don't walk up to bright red trees?

LOLA

No, anak: Beware the color red.

46

EXT. WOODS - MORNING

46

Virgil heads down a trail, scanning the ground.

He picks up a stone. Examines it in the light -

VIRGIL (V.O.)

Are you a spirit stone?

Something about it feels right. He pockets it.

47

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE WOODS - MORNING - LATER

47

Virgil spots a couple of STONES nestled on the ground. He compares them both -- one of them is RED.

He pockets the other stone -- that's five. He tosses the RED STONE away into the brush.

Suddenly he hears rustling coming from the brush. The sound of HOOFBEATS. BREATHING -

VIRGIL

H-h-hello?

A HUGE RED BULL CHARGES OUT OF THE TREES. Virgil's horrified -

BACK TO REALITY: It's Chet Bullens, swinging a STICK through the foliage. Smashing bushes, taking hockey swings at rocks.

Virgil panics, darts behind a tree. He holds his breath, his heart BEATING out of his chest as Chet goes by...

It's quiet. Just the rustle of the trees in the wind.

Virgil comes out of hiding -

CHET (O.S.)
Hey retard.

Chet faces him down. Virgil's frozen. Nowhere to run.

CHET (CONT'D)
Whatchu got in that backpack?

Virgil backs away -- but Chet RIPS his backpack off of his shoulder so hard, it knocks Virgil to the ground.

And Chet LAUGHS as he TAKES OFF RUNNING through the trees.

VIRGIL
No, no, no -- Gulliver!

48 EXT. WOODS - CLEARING - MOMENTS LATER

48

Chet hauls Virgil's backpack to an abandoned old WELL.

Virgil bursts out of a stand of trees; Chet throws the well's cover aside, dangles Virgil's backpack over its mouth.

CHET
Say goodbye to your stuff.

And Chet drops the backpack into the maw of the well.

VIRGIL
GULLIVER!!

Virgil rushes to the well, looks over its rim into the DARKNESS. Chet laughs as he walks off into the woods.

Virgil stares into the depths of the well, torn, heartbroken -

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
Gulliver!! I'll save you!

He places the FIVE STONES he was carrying onto the rim of the well. gingerly climbs over its edge.

49

INT. WELL - DAY

49

Virgil clammers down the ladder -- it's too dark to see the bottom. His foot SLIPS -- Virgil hugs the ladder tight.

He steels himself -- keeps going. But when his foot tries to find the next rung, there's nothing there.

No more ladder rungs. And the bottom of the well is still cloaked in darkness. Virgil swallows hard. Panic rising.

VIRGIL (V.O.)

What if I fall and break my leg?

Virgil's Imagination: He lets go -- FALLS... BREAKS HIS LEG!

VIRGIL (V.O.)

Or what if there are spiders down there?

Virgil's Imagination: He FALLS... and is covered in SPIDERS!

VIRGIL (V.O.)

Or what if I explode?

Virgil's Imagination: He FALLS... and EXPLODES in a FIREBALL!

He makes a choice. He closes his eyes, lets go of the ladder... FALLS INTO THE DARK -

And he HITS the dry bottom of the well with a THUD.

He coughs, sputters. Checks his legs -- nothing's broken.

He searches the ground, finds his glasses. He finds his phone, tries to power it on -- it's hopelessly SMASHED.

Then Virgil hears something: CHIRPING.

Virgil scrambles in the dark, finally finding his backpack.

He pulls out GULLIVER, safe and sound. Virgil cradles him close -

VIRGIL

Gulliver, you're okay! I thought...

He stifles his emotions, takes panicked breaths. He looks up at the circle of daylight above -- it seems so far away.

Drone up and out of the well to find -

50 EXT. WOODS - CLEARING - CONTINUOUS 50

Sacred bounding out of the brush, ears perked.

He heads up to the well, BARKING and sniffing. Down below, Virgil calls out -

VIRGIL
Is someone there? Chet?.. Hello?

51 EXT. WOODS - TRAIL - MOMENTS LATER 51

Valencia heads through the forest. She spots Sacred -

52 EXT. WOODS - CLEARING - CONTINUOUS 52

Valencia scratches Sacred's neck. He whines, licks her hand.

VALENCIA
Sorry, I don't have any food with
me.

She sees the well's COVER lying on the ground. Crinkles her nose at it.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)
Someone could fall in there.

53 INT. WELL - CONTINUOUS 53

Virgil hears movement above. Sees someone's silhouette. He's so unused to calling for help, it's hard for him, even now:

VIRGIL
H-hello?

Above ground, Valencia hefts the cover back onto the well -

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
Chet?! No, please -- don't -

But she can't hear him.

As she slides the cover back into place, the circle of daylight above Virgil's head is ECLIPSED -

And the cover settles into place with thud, leaving Virgil in total DARKNESS.

Good deed done, Valencia turns to go -

She sees the FIVE STONES Virgil gathered, sitting on the edge of the rim. Strange. She heads off.

At the bottom of the well, Virgil slumps to the ground.

He hugs Gulliver and his backpack to his heart, the gravity of this situation hitting him with full force.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
We're trapped.

54 EXT. TANAKA HOUSE - MORNING

54

Valencia scans the house for signs of danger. Looks like a normal suburban house.

VALENCIA (V.O.)
St. René, if there's a crazy psycho killer in that house, please protect me. Amen.

She makes the "R" sign and taps three times against her lips. RINGS the DOORBELL.

A moment later, the door opens a crack. Gen peeks out.

GEN
Password?

Valencia's surprised to see a little kid answering the door. She plays along -

VALENCIA
"Venus rises in the west."

Gen nods and lets Valencia in.

55 INT. TANAKA HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

55

Gen pads up the stairs. Valencia follows, trepidatious -

GEN
What're those things on your ears?

VALENCIA
Hearing Aids.

GEN
Oh.
(Then)
You talk funny.

VALENCIA
I know. It's because I'm deaf.

GEN
Oh.

INT. WELL - DAY

Virgil looks up in the darkness. Breathes in deep, calming himself.

He LEAPS UP, finds a foothold against the wall; he SPRINGS UPWARD again, BOUNCING higher and higher until -

EXT. CLEARING - CONTINUOUS

Virgil SMASHES through the well cover with a Ryu-from-Street Fighter II UPPERCUT -

INT. WELL - DAY

But VIRGIL BREAKS BACK INTO REALITY -- where he's pathetically jumping up and down in the dark, trying to reach the well's bottom rung.

56

INT. TANAKA HOUSE - KAORI'S BEDROOM - MORNING

56

Valencia and Gen enter to find Kaori sitting at the low table. A stick of incense burns at its center.

KAORI TANAKA
Welcome, Just Renee!
(Off Valencia's confusion)
In your text I asked you what your name was, and you said "Just Renee".

Valencia gets it, remembering she gave Kaori a fake name:

VALENCIA
Yeah, that's me. You're Kaori Tanaka?

Kaori solemnly nods, ever the professional.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)
So you're a psychic?

KAORI TANAKA
Spiritual Advisor.

GEN
She advises people on spiritual stuff.

KAORI TANAKA
Yes Gen, I just said that.

GEN
 (Re: Valencia)
 She has Hearing Aids and she talks
 funny.

Valencia's annoyed at having to explain this yet again:

VALENCIA
 I'm deaf.

GEN
 So why do you wear Hearing Aids if
 you're deaf.

VALENCIA
 The Hearing Aids don't work by
 themselves. I have to see peoples'
 faces so I can put the sounds and
 lip movements together.

GEN
 (Fascinated)
 Ohhh.

VALENCIA
 There are "How-Tos" on how to talk
 to me.

KAORI TANAKA
 (Intrigued)
 Like what?

CUT TO:

QUICK CUTS OF VALENCIA SPEAKING DIRECT TO CAMERA:

VALENCIA
 First, face me.
 Second, don't cover your mouth.
 Third, speak clearly.

BACK ON VALENCIA -

VALENCIA (CONT'D)
 That way I can read your lips. It
 helps.

Gen taps her. Faces her.

GEN
 That's so cool! So what am I saying
 right now:

Gen moves her lips without making any sounds.

VALENCIA

Nothing. You're just moving your lips without making any sounds.

GEN

(Sincerely impressed)

You're amazing.

KAORI TANAKA

So that's Gen. Please excuse her if she's clueless -- she's seven.

Gen randomly has her jump rope bunched on top of her head like a big pink wig.

GEN

I'm not clueless...

KAORI TANAKA

Please, sit.

They both take a seat at the low table.

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)

So, Just Renee: What brings you here?

Valencia breathes deep.

VALENCIA

There's this... Nightmare I keep having. Over and over again.

GEN

(Deeply concerned)

Oooh...

In the darkness of the well, Virgil leaps up, trying to grab that last rung; but it's a foot taller than he can reach.

QUICK MONTAGE as he tries various ways to escape -

- He desperately searches for handholds in the walls, but there's nothing to grab onto.

- He tries to kick jump off of walls, tries tying his shoes together to hook the last rung with them -- they get stuck!

- He takes Gulliver out of his backpack, tries standing on top of it while reaching all the way up with Gulliver in his hands... Nope.

His heart BEATS, punctuating his fears -- he hyperventilates, barely getting the words out:

VIRGIL
Ca-Ahlm-d-down... Ca-Ahlm-d-down -

He looks to the darkness above -

MATCH CUT TO:

VALENCIA'S NIGHTMARE: The SUN being eclipsed by the MOON -

58 INT. TANAKA HOUSE - KAORI'S BEDROOM - DAY 58

Kaori listens intently; Gen is rapt as Valencia recounts her nightmare:

VALENCIA
- And then she says "Solar Eclipse". But not with her mouth -- I hear her say it in my mind:

FLASH TO VALENCIA'S NIGHTMARE -- the GIRL IN THE BLUE DRESS -

GIRL IN BLUE DRESS (V.O.)
Solar Eclipse...

The moon completely devours the sun... and everyone DISAPPEARS.

BACK ON VALENCIA

VALENCIA
Suddenly, everyone's gone. I'm all alone. And then I wake up.

Gen turns to Kaori:

GEN
What do you think it means?

KAORI TANAKA
Sometimes your brain needs to deal with stuff that makes you afraid or anxious. So I think that... maybe you're scared. Scared of being alone.

Valencia scowls, doubtful.

VALENCIA
I'm not scared. I like being alone.

KAORI TANAKA

Yeah, but you don't have to be
alone all the time -

VALENCIA

I can take care of myself.

KAORI TANAKA

I'm not saying you can't -

VALENCIA

(Gets to her feet)

I gotta go.

Gen looks up from her IPAD: A Sign Language video.

KAORI TANAKA

I could be wrong. But it seems to
me like... when everyone
disappears, being alone is what
scares you. It'd be scary to
anyone.

Valencia processes this, still doubtful.

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)

Maybe I'm way off.

INT. WELL - DAY

Virgil's curled up in a ball, hyperventilating -

VIRGIL (V.O.)

I should've listened to Lola -- I
shouldn't have picked up that red
stone -

59

EXT. TANAKA HOUSE - DAY

59

Kaori and Gen walk Valencia out of the house.

KAORI TANAKA

We can meet again anytime you want.

GEN

Bye,

(Signing)

R-E-N-E-E!

Valencia looks back at her, face softening.

VALENCIA

You just learned that?

GEN
 Yeah, that's you, right?
 (Signing)
 R-E-N-E-E.

She smiles, uplifted by Gen's energy.

VALENCIA
 That's pretty good.

Kaori checks her watch. Stares out at the street, worried.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)
 You okay?

KAORI TANAKA
 I have another client who was
 supposed to be here by now.

She checks her phone, troubled -

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)
 But he's really late... and he's
 never late.

60 INT. WELL - DAY

60

Virgil holds Gulliver close, trying to keep it together.

He hears something -- feathers RUSTLING.

VIRGIL (V.O.)
 What was that?

Somewhere in the distance -- CLAWS SCRATCH. Virgil looks around, frightened -

VIRGIL (V.O.)
 I'm gonna die down here -- become
 rat food! Or maybe even... Pah
 food!
 (Then)
 Breathe... Try to be strong for
 once and breathe -

He hears a girl's VOICE -

RUBY SAN SALVADOR (V.O.)
 Bayani... Imagine you're someplace
 else.

Virgil squeezes his eyes shut, focusing -

A SPOTLIGHT appears: A REFRIGERATOR in the dark.

Then, a kitchen sink, cabinets -- pieces of the KITCHEN from Virgil's house illuminate around him -

61 INT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - VIRGIL'S IMAGINATION 61

It's airy, full of sunlight -- a pot of something delicious bubbles on the stove.

We are now inside Virgil's imagination. Everything's a bit larger than life, slightly off.

Virgil walks through the room, anxious -

VIRGIL

Lola?

Lola's mango slices sit unattended on the kitchen table.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
Mom? Dad? Julius, Joselito?

INT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - DAY - VIRGIL'S IMAGINATION

Virgil moves through the house. It's empty. Quiet...

And he doesn't see the SHADOW rising behind him -

A bird's SHRIEK pierces the air -- CAW!! Virgil turns down a hall, sees Pah's SHINING EYES in the darkness!

Virgil runs, tries to parkour off a bannister, but he slips and falls -

He doesn't have his superpowers here -- he's just regular old Virgil.

62 INT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS 62

Virgil hides behind a corner, afraid to look. The walls SHUDDER as Pah approaches -

Virgil clamps his hands over his mouth, terrified to make a sound. Pah grows ever closer... CAW!

In the distance, he hears that young girl's VOICE again -

RUBY SAN SALVADOR (O.S.)
Bayani! Over here!

Virgil rushes around the corner, following the voice -

RUBY SAN SALVADOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)
This way!

The voice is coming from behind a DOOR. Virgil runs for it as the shadow races after him -

And Virgil pulls the door open and runs through...

63 EXT. TANAKA HOUSE - DAY

63

Gen skips rope on the porch as Kaori texts Virgil -

KAORI TANAKA (TEXT)
WHERE ARE YOU???

On her phone's SCREEN: This is the ninth text she's sent him. They've all gone unanswered.

MOMENTS LATER

Kaori actually CALLS HIM -- she gets his VOICEMAIL:

VIRGIL (V.O.)
Hi it's Virgil, leave a message -

KAORI TANAKA
Virgil, where are you??

A CLOCK ON THE WALL: 12:30 PM

Kaori paces, concern growing. In the background, Gen skips rope -

GEN
Sixty-six, sixty-seven -

Kaori texts Virgil again -

THE CLOCK READS: 12:35

She's huddled in a chair, phone to her ear -- it's ringing, but Virgil's still not picking up. She looks up at the clock -

THE CLOCK: 12:45

Kaori gets up, rushes past Gen.

KAORI TANAKA
Something's wrong. Really wrong.

Gen misses a skip with her jump rope, KNOCKS a little ZEN SAND GARDEN over. STONES skitter across the floor -

The stones slide to a neat stop at Kaori's feet.

GEN
Oops. Sorry.

Kaori stares at the stones, eyes widening. An actual LIGHT BULB goes off above her head.

KAORI TANAKA
Don't be. This is fate.

64 INT. TANAKA HOUSE - KAORI'S BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER 64

The girls sit at the low table. Kaori opens a drawstring bag, lets a few SPIRIT STONES spill onto the table -

One of the stones bounces off the table -- Kaori chases it down, annoyed -- it gets STUCK in a heating vent.

GEN
What does that mean?

KAORI TANAKA
(Dismissing her)
It doesn't mean anything.

Gen drops on the floor, reaches in to pull out the stone -

GEN
Maybe he's stuck.

She hands the freed stone to Kaori. She stares at it, thinking -

KAORI TANAKA
...No. He's not stuck. Virgil's
been detained.

GEN
Detayed?

KAORI TANAKA
Detained. Interrupted.
(Really worried now -)
He's held up somewhere. Trapped.

66 INT. TANAKA HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY 66

Kaori and Gen fill their water bottles, strap on their backpacks. Gen throws a few snacks in hers.

GEN
Where do you think Virgil is?

KAORI TANAKA
I don't know. We have to find him.

Gen grabs her jumprope as they head out the front door.

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)
What do you need that for?

GEN
I'm still trying to break my
record.

Kaori sighs and heads out. Gen slings her jumprope over her shoulder and follows.

67 INT. TANAKA HOUSE - MOM'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER 67

Mitsue Tanaka's working on her laptop, her back turned to the open door.

Kaori sneaks past, completely undetected. So does Gen.

68 EXT. TANAKA HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER 68

Kaori slowly opens the front door so she and Gen can escape -

MITSUE TANAKA (O.S.)
KAORI TANAKA!

Kaori freezes, busted.

MOMENTS LATER

Mom drops a stack of flat-folded CARDBOARD BOXES at Kaori's feet.

MITSUE TANAKA (CONT'D)
I ordered a bed for you. It's
coming next week. In the meantime,
you're going to re-arrange your
room like a bedroom -

KAORI TANAKA
What?? No, Mitsue -

MITSUE TANAKA
And you're gonna pack all of your
psychic things into these boxes so
we can get rid of them -

Gen's gutted by what she's hearing.

MITSUE TANAKA (CONT'D)
You're too old for this! This
psychic nonsense has to stop -

GEN
It's not nonsense -

MITSUE TANAKA
End of discussion.

65 INT. DARK SPACE - VIRGIL'S IMAGINATION

65

Virgil slams a door shut behind him. He looks out -- nothing but darkness.

He hears that girl's VOICE -

RUBY SAN SALVADOR (O.S.)
Don't worry. You're safe now.

Virgil's a mix of astonishment and fear:

VIRGIL
Who's there?.. Where are you?

The voice grows closer -

RUBY SAN SALVADOR (O.S.)
Hold on, I'm coming to you... dang,
it's so dark down here! You can't
see your hand in front of your
face!

A CANDLE FLAME snaps to life. A girl's FACE illuminates -

This is RUBY SAN SALVADOR, 12, from Lola's story. And she looks just like Kaori Tanaka.

VIRGIL
Are you... a ghost?

Ruby laughs -

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
It's me, Ruby San Salvador: The
girl who didn't know her own
destiny.

VIRGIL
How come you look like Kaori
Tanaka?

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
Your mind decided you needed a
friend... and this is what she
looks like.

VIRGIL
What are you doing here?

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
 I finally found my destiny, Bayani:
 It's to help people in trouble.

Virgil pauses, thinking -

VIRGIL (V.O.)
 I'm going crazy. I'm definitely
 gonna die down here.

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
 You're not going crazy.

Virgil's stunned -

VIRGIL
 Did you just read my thoughts?

She smiles at him. Her lips don't move, but he can hear her voice in his head:

RUBY SAN SALVADOR (V.O.)
 Yeah. 'Cause I'm in your head.

VIRGIL
 So can you help me get out of here?

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
 Of course not! I'm imaginary!

Virgil sinks to the ground. Gulliver peeks out of his backpack; Virgil pets him, woeful.

VIRGIL
 Then I guess it's hopeless.

She sits alongside him.

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
 C'mon, Bayani... Nothing's ever
 hopeless.

Kaori's bedroom window slides open. Kaori tosses her backpack out, then clammers out herself. Gen follows.

Kaori looks around -- the coast is clear. They throw their backpacks over the fence. Kaori jumps up, climbs over.

Gen struggles to get over the fence... until Kaori helps her over.

73

INT. VALENCIA'S HOUSE - VALENCIA'S BEDROOM - DAY

73

Valencia sits at her desk, staring at a blank page in her journal. She taps her pencil, listless...

Lonely.

She looks to the statuette of St. René -

VALENCIA

What do you think, St. René? Am I scared of being alone?

CLOSE on St. René's calm face. Silence.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)

Please: Send me a sign.

Her phone LIGHTS UP, BUZZES. She answers it, surprised -

It's Kaori on Facetime:

KAORI TANAKA

Hey Just Renee: Have you seen a small, scrawny kid on your way home?

74

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - INTERCUT KAORI AND GEN - DAY

74

KAORI TANAKA

He's eleven, he's brown and has dark hair -

GEN (O.S.)

And he looks sad all the time -

KAORI TANAKA

And he looks sad all the time.

VALENCIA

No, I haven't seen anybody like that. Who is he?

KAORI TANAKA

His name's Virgil Salinas. He was supposed to be here a long time ago but he hasn't shown up and...

VALENCIA

You all right?

KAORI TANAKA

He's my best friend and he's missing!

Valencia sees the worry in Kaori's eyes.

VALENCIA
If you want, I can help you find
him.

70 INT. DARK SPACE - VIRGIL'S IMAGINATION

70

Virgil huddles in the dark, Ruby by his side.

VIRGIL
I wonder if anyone's looking for
me.

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
How do you know someone hasn't
already started?

Virgil closes his eyes, hugging his knees.

VIRGIL
It's too quiet down here.

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
Silence is good sometimes, Bayani --
that's when you can hear best.

VIRGIL
Hear what?

She elbows him, playful:

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
Your thoughts!

VIRGIL
Well I don't want to think about
being trapped down here.

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
That's the problem! People don't
want to listen to their own
thoughts, so they fill the world
with noise.

(Then)
If you ask me, you were already
trapped -- even before you fell
down here.

VIRGIL
Now you really sound like Kaori
Tanaka.

He hugs his backpack, trembling.

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
 If you don't like it here, imagine
 you're someplace else.

Virgil looks out into the darkness -

A SPOTLIGHT illuminates a SHELF OF BOOKS.

A filing cabinet. Pieces of a CLASSROOM come to life -

71 INT. RESOURCE ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK - VIRGIL'S IMAGINATION¹

Sunlight pours in from the windows. This classroom's layout is for special needs: Small circular tables with a few chairs each.

Virgil finds himself at one of the tables with his math teacher, MR. LINTON (30s). Multiplication tables are spread out on the table in front of them -

MR. LINTON
 To master multiplication tables,
 memory is your best friend.

Ruby slides in next to Virgil, unseen by Mr. Linton.

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
 I remember this day.

Virgil's already staring up at the head of the classroom -

VIRGIL
 Yeah -- it was the best day of the
 school year.

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
 Right. 'Cause this was the day you
 first saw her -

Up ahead, Valencia's sitting at another table, working with a teacher.

Virgil gathers his nerves. Stands, starts walking toward Valencia -

MR. LINTON
 Virgil?.. Virgil -

Virgil ignores him. Pushes himself forward.

He steps up to Valencia. She looks up at him, curious. He opens his mouth to speak -

But no words come out. Virgil's shocked -- he tries to force himself to speak, but his voice is gone.

Suddenly -- a SHRIEK in the distance -- CAW!!!

Virgil averts his gaze. The lights stutter -

When they come back on again, he and Ruby are alone.

Virgil backs away, frightened. Ruby looks at him, panicked -

The sound of FLAPPING WINGS. Virgil spots Pah's bright EYES coming for them in the dark -

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
Imagine we're someplace else!
Hurrffff -

A spotlight illuminates: The mouth of the WELL appears in front of them like a tunnel.

They run into it... FALL SIDEWAYS into the dark -

76 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

76

Kaori, Valencia, and Gen walk down the street together.

GEN
Where do you think Virgil's being detained?

VALENCIA
Detained?

KAORI TANAKA
I have this feeling that he's trapped somewhere.
(Uncertain)
I don't know.

VALENCIA
What's he like?

Gen taps Valencia -

GEN
Virgil's really nice. He has super kind eyes. He even has a pet rat.

VALENCIA
(Genuinely fascinated)
Really?

Kaori taps Valencia to get her attention -- and simultaneously gives Gen a little shove.

KAORI TANAKA
It's not a rat. It's a guinea pig.

VALENCIA
Oh, I love guinea pigs. I had one when I was little.

GEN
Ooh, what was their name?

VALENCIA
Her name was Lilliput.

This name tickles Gen's mouth as she says it:

GEN
Lilliput?
(Giggles)
Lilly-put! LILLIPUT!

There's an irritated sting in Kaori's voice:

KAORI TANAKA
Hush Gen!

Gen clams up, hurt. Valencia walks alongside Kaori -

VALENCIA
What's going on?

Kaori looks away, guilty. She confesses:

KAORI TANAKA
This is my fault.

VALENCIA
What? How?

KAORI TANAKA
I told Virgil to go into the woods and find five stones.

Valencia's puzzled -- "five stones" sounds strangely familiar.

VALENCIA
Five stones?.. What for?

KAORI TANAKA
I can't say any more. Client-Spiritual Advisor privilege.
(MORE)

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)

Anyway, Virgil said he was gonna go
look for the stones this morning...
And then he disappeared.

77

INT. DARK SPACE - VIRGIL'S IMAGINATION

77

Virgil and Ruby hide in the dark. They've lost Pah -- but
he's still shaken, breathing hard. Ruby tries to calm him -

RUBY SAN SALVADOR

It's okay, Bayani -

Virgil's had it -

VIRGIL

Stop calling me Bayani! Lola calls
me that, and it's not true -- I'm
not a hero, I'm not a warrior!
You're wrong! Lola's wrong...

A familiar VOICE calls out -

VIRGIL'S MOM (O.S.)

Turtle...

A SPOTLIGHT illuminates a pair of glass SLIDING DOORS; a SIGN
appears overhead: BAGGAGE CLAIM.

Pieces of an airport baggage claim area come to life.

78

INT. AIRPORT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

78

Virgil's Mom, Dad, and his Brothers hurry through baggage
claim.

VIRGIL'S MOM

Hurry up, Turtle! She's waiting for
us!

Virgil lags behind them, trying to catch up.

The family approaches a tiny WOMAN hefting her luggage off
the baggage carousel -

It's LOLA. The family crowds her with hugs and kisses; Virgil
hangs back, shy.

VIRGIL'S DAD

Mom, you made it!

VIRGIL'S MOM

Welcome to the U.S.!

LOLA

Thank you, thank you!

JOSELITO AND JULIUS

LOLA!

LOLA

Boys! Look at how big you are now!
I brought you some garlic peanuts,
they're in my *ano* -- my suitcase.

Virgil watches with longing. Ruby steps up alongside him.

RUBY SAN SALVADOR

I remember this.

VIRGIL

It was the day she came to live
with us.

Virgil's Dad helps Lola with her luggage.

VIRGIL'S DAD

How was your flight, Mom?

LOLA

Before we left the Philippines,
they made me take off my shoes so
they could x-ray them! What do they
think I'm going to do, hide
explosives in my *tsinelas*?

Her eyes fall upon the Virgil. A smile grows on her face.

LOLA (CONT'D)

Oh my gosh, who's this?

VIRGIL'S MOM

That's Turtle.

Virgil squirms at his hated nickname.

LOLA

Turtle..? No, no -- this is not a
turtle! This is my Virgilio! Give
your Lola a hug -

She gives Virgil a big hug and a smelling kiss -

LOLA (CONT'D)

Oh, anak -- I missed you so much! I
haven't seen you since you were a
baby!

Virgil leans into her embrace, comforted by her.

LOLA (CONT'D)
 (Whispers)
 You know why you're my favorite?
 (She looks him right in
 the eyes -)
 You're the kindest.

He's touched -- he holds onto her tight, desperately trying to live in this moment forever.

VIRGIL
 I miss you, Lola.

She smiles.

LOLA
 Put out your fist.

He does. She pounds it. Laughs.

Virgil steps away, starting to crumble.

VIRGIL
 I don't want to think about this. I
 don't want to see this -

His eyes fill with tears.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
 What if I can't get out of here?
 What if I never see her again?

The lights GO OUT. Lola and Virgil's family disappear.

Virgil and Ruby are alone in the darkened airport.

They hear a sound: CAW -

Virgil's eyes widen -- he's coming -

79 EXT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - DAY

79

Kaori, Valencia, and Gen stake out the place from the sidewalk.

Valencia approaches the house. Kaori and Gen give her a thumbs up -

She RINGS the doorbell.

On the other side of the door we hear the SHUFFLING of house slippers. Lola opens the door -

LOLA

Yes?

VALENCIA

Is Virgil home?

LOLA

Virgil?

She studies Valencia carefully -- her face, her Hearing Aids.

LOLA (CONT'D)

No, he's not home right now. He went out this morning, into the woods. If you give me your name, I can tell him you were here.

Her question throws Valencia. She goes with the truth:

VALENCIA

...It's Valencia.

LOLA

Valencia?

A glimmer of recognition blossoms in Lola's eyes; she smiles.

LOLA (CONT'D)

Oh -- I was expecting you!

VALENCIA

You were?

LOLA

Well, I was expecting somebody.
Come in, come in!

80

INT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - DAY - CONTINUOUS

80

Lola leads Valencia into the entryway. Valencia sees pairs of shoes neatly lined up by the door.

She slips off her own shoes and places them with the others. Lola smiles at Valencia's thoughtfulness.

LOLA

Your mother blessed you with a good name. Valencia Cathedral is one of the most important cathedrals in Spain.

VALENCIA

Really?

LOLA

She picked a good, strong name for
you. I like your mother!

Valencia smiles; Lola's warmth is infectious.

LOLA (CONT'D)

Let me get you a pen -

Lola heads into the other room.

Valencia's eyes are drawn to a framed FAMILY PHOTO of the Salinases: Virgil's Mom, Dad, Brothers, Lola, and Virgil -- standing a bit apart from his family, like he doesn't quite belong.

Valencia closes in on Virgil. Studies his face carefully. She whispers to herself:

VALENCIA

I know you.

FLASH TO: The last day of school -- Virgil handing Valencia her fallen journal.

Lola returns with a pen and paper. Taps Valencia to get her attention.

LOLA

Does Virgilio have your phone
number so he can type a message to
you?

VALENCIA

I'll write it down.

LOLA

You know, there was a girl in my
village who was deaf. People talked
around her like she wasn't even
there. They didn't think she was
paying attention. They figured,
*there's no use in hiding our
secrets if she can't hear us...* But
you know what? She heard
everything.

Lola leans in close, a smile of understanding.

LOLA (CONT'D)

She heard with her eyes.

Valencia hands Lola her phone number.

VALENCIA
 (Charmed)
 I hear with my eyes too.

LOLA
 I know. I can tell.

VALENCIA
 Sometimes... it's hard for people
 to see that about me.

LOLA
 Don't worry. The right people will
 always see you for who you are.
 That's what I tell my Virgilio.

VALENCIA
 But how will you know?

LOLA
 It's in their eyes.

Lola and Valencia share a look -- direct eye contact. There's a consensus between them.

LOLA (CONT'D)
 You know, you remind me of
 somebody. Somebody strong, smart,
 and brave... who isn't afraid of
 crocodiles.

Valencia looks back at her, unsure of what Lola just said -

VALENCIA
 Crocodiles?

81 INT. AIRPORT - NIGHT - VIRGIL'S IMAGINATION 81

Pah's shadow spills around a corner. Virgil and Ruby hide -
 The shadow grows ever closer. Pah's SHRIEK gets louder -
 Virgil BOLTS from his hiding place; Ruby follows -
 They sprint down the corridor, Pah's shadow gaining on them.

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
 Get us out of here!

Virgil focuses his thoughts, runs past a TREE -
 And then another. More trees until they find themselves in -

82

EXT. DARK WOODS - NIGHT - VIRGIL'S IMAGINATION

82

A shadowy FOREST -- a dark echo of the neighborhood woods.

Virgil hides behind a tree. It's quiet. He gingerly peeks out.

Pah's shadow circles above the tree tops, searching for him.

He sees Ruby run into a clearing -- she's out in the open!

Pah's shadow races after her -- she SCREAMS as the shadow begins to envelop her -

Virgil swallows his fear. Finds his bravery. He rushes out of hiding -

VIRGIL
LEAVE HER ALONE!

Pah's shadow SHRIEKS, turns away from Ruby... and rockets toward him.

Virgil instantly regrets his actions. He runs -- huge CLAWS spread out over his head, closing in -

He rolls into a ditch, hides.

Suddenly FLAMING ARROWS WHIZ through the trees -- they're dots of light soaring into the night sky, forcing Pah to arc off in the other direction.

We hear Pah flap away, HOWLING. They're safe.

Virgil and Ruby emerge from their hiding place. They look up to see -

MALAYA OF THE CROCODILES, 11, the spitting image of Valencia.

She lowers her bow, gives them a confident smile.

A TITLE SPLASHES ACROSS THE SCREEN:

MALAYA OF THE CROCODILES

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
Who are you?

MALAYA
(Annoyed)
Can't you read?
(Then, as if in her own
action movie:)
(MORE)

MALAYA (CONT'D)

I'm fast as a deer, sharp as a
knife, fierce as a... You get it.
I'm MALAYA OF THE CROCODILES!

Her voice ECHOES. Ruby is unimpressed. Virgil is shocked.

EXT. EDGE OF THE WOODS - DAY

Sunlight breaks through the trees. Kaori, Valencia, and Gen follow a path through the woods.

GEN

You think Virgil's in here?

VALENCIA

His Lola said he went into the
woods.

Kaori strides ahead like a general leading her troops.

KAORI TANAKA

I have a feeling he's this way.

She's headed right into the thickest part of the bush.

GEN

Um, I don't think that's a trail.

Valencia digs in her backpack -

VALENCIA

I brought a map.

She pulls out a HAND DRAWN MAP of the woods. It's precise, beautifully illustrated.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)

I drew out all the trails myself.

Gen is entranced.

GEN

Whoa! Kaori, look at this! Look at
all the squirrels!

Valencia's map is dotted with illustrations of squirrels.

VALENCIA

I mapped out all the spots with
high levels of squirrel activity.

GEN

Isn't that cool?

Kaori nods, feeling like her thunder's being stolen.

Valencia heads down a trail. Gen eagerly follows. Kaori lingers behind, unused to not being the leader.

QUICK MONTAGE as the girls search various locations:

- They shine their phone flashlights into a shallow cave... and find a family of POSSUMS. They HISS!

- They clamber up a log, calling out for -

GIRLS
VIRGIL!... VIRGIL!...

- They check underneath a BRIDGE; Gen finds a broken pair of glasses, puts them on -

GEN
Are these Virgil's?

Kaori shakes her head no.

- They head down a trail -- Gen squeals as she spots a squirrel; she chases after it.

Suddenly, they hear rustling up ahead.

Something's coming toward them. The girls stop -

KAORI TANAKA
Virgil?

No -- it's Chet. Picking his way through the woods with a big stick, searching under bushes.

Valencia sees him, grousing. He looks up at our girls, already smirking.

CHET
Hey, Deafo.

Kaori taps her, puzzled.

KAORI TANAKA
Who is this kid?

GEN
Hey, have you seen an 11 year old
kid out here? His name's Virgil.
He's missing.

CHET

That Chinese kid, or whatever he is?.. Why are you looking for that loser?

KAORI TANAKA

He's our friend. So have you seen him or not?

He laughs. Approaches, menacing.

CHET

I've been too busy hunting snakes. You better watch out -- you might get bit. HISSSSSSSS!!

He points his stick directly at Valencia.

CHET (CONT'D)

Especially if you can't hear 'em.

VALENCIA

I know these woods. The biggest snake you'll find here'll be the size of a ruler.

Gen taps her -

GEN

Really?.. Wow.

Chet scoffs -

CHET

We'll see about that.

He heads off. The girls share a look.

85

EXT. DARK WOODS - LATER - VIRGIL'S IMAGINATION

85

Virgil, Ruby, and Malaya shelter in a clearing, their faces illuminated by a CAMPFIRE. The sky above is bright with stars.

Malaya's hard at work crafting something from rope, expertly tying and knotting -

MALAYA

Pah's not as bad as you think. Most things aren't.

RUBY SAN SALVADOR

So what makes you such an authority on giant nightmare birds?

VIRGIL
She's Malaya of the Crocodiles!

MALAYA
Yes, you might've heard of me:
Great warrior, expert archer, giant
crocodile hunter -

She flexes.

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
And obviously super humble!
(To Virgil)
What the heck dude? I thought I was
supposed to help you!

MALAYA
(Also to Virgil)
Maybe your imagination decided you
needed someone brave. Or that the
"girl without a destiny" here
wasn't doing a good enough job -

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
I was here first!

MALAYA
And yet you still needed saving.

VIRGIL
Guys! Stop! I can't keep running
from Pah. I just want to stop being
scared.

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
We can't kill him or escape him. So
we have to -

MALAYA
Face him.

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
I was just going to say that!

MALAYA
Well I thought of it first.

Ruby rolls her eyes just like Kaori Tanaka.

MALAYA (CONT'D)
This is what we need to do:
Imprison him. Lock him away, so far
and so deep, he'll never bother us
again.

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
 That's your best plan? Seriously?
 He's not a parrot that escaped from
 his cage! He's huge!

VIRGIL
 So how do we imprison him?

Malaya throws him a crafty look.

MALAYA
 I've been scouting his lair. He
 returns every night -- he's
guarding something... I say we
 sneak in there. Head underground...
 and while he's asleep, we -

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
 Capture him!
 (Off Malaya's annoyance)
 See? I can think of things first
 too.

83 EXT. WOODS - DAY

83

Valencia, Kaori, and Gen head down a trail searching for -

KAORI, GEN AND VALENCIA
 VIRGIL!.. VIRGIL!

Valencia's Hearing Aid BEEPS.

VALENCIA
 Hold up. I need to change my
 Hearing Aid battery.

She finds a secluded spot off the trail. Takes out her
 Hearing Aid, replaces the battery.

She senses someone coming towards her, looks up -

It's Roberta, Megan, their friends. Laughing, taking selfies,
 all of them neat clones of each other.

Valencia freezes, mortified. Megan spots her, points.

MEGAN JACKSON
 Hey, look who it is.

Valencia shrinks, a deer caught in headlights -

MEGAN JACKSON (CONT'D)
 What are you doing out here, loser?
 Don't you have any friends?

The girls laugh -

MEGAN JACKSON (CONT'D)
Oh yeah, guess you don't.

Valencia looks to Roberta, betrayed.

Roberta clocks it, looks away. Guilty.

MEGAN JACKSON (CONT'D)
We dropped you 'cause you're
defective.

Valencia's hurt. Frozen. Outnumbered.

She feels a tap on her shoulder -

KAORI TANAKA
You know these girls?

She recognizes the hurt on Valencia's face.

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)
(To Roberta and Megan)
What's your problem?

MEGAN JACKSON
Are you her guide dog or something?
How much is she paying you to hang
out with her?

The clique titters. Gen's annoyed.

GEN
Hey -- we're her -
(Signs the word:)
Friends.

Roberta, Megan, and the others laugh -

MEGAN JACKSON
What is that supposed to be?!

Valencia's pissed. Kaori steps in -

KAORI TANAKA
I'm sorry you're not cultured
enough to understand. Maybe open a
book and think for yourself, you
clones. C'mon -- don't waste your
breath on them.

Kaori turns to go. A smile grows on Valencia's face.

MEGAN JACKSON
Whatever, losers.

Valencia's not going to let her get the last word.

VALENCIA
(Loud and clear)
This -
(Signs the word FRIENDS so
they can all see -)
- means friends.

She stares them down. Megan turns and goes in a huff. Roberta and the others follow.

Gen calls out after them:

GEN
You all dress the same!

Kaori and Valencia laugh.

84 EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

84

The girls walk onward. Valencia turns to Kaori -

VALENCIA
Hey. I was thinking about what you said... about my nightmares.

KAORI TANAKA
Yeah?

VALENCIA
And I think I'm okay with being alone... but... I don't have to be. Not all the time.

Kaori gives her a look of understanding. Gen does too.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)
And maybe... we should keep talking about this stuff. 'Cause it helps.

Kaori looks back at her, buoyed -

KAORI TANAKA
Yeah. Anytime.

Gen stops in her tracks:

GEN
The Ceremony of Lost Things.

VALENCIA

What?

Kaori's skeptical.

KAORI TANAKA

I don't know, Gen.

VALENCIA

What's the Ceremony of Lost Things?

KAORI TANAKA

It's this ritual to help us find
what we're looking for. But we're
trying to find Virgil -- not Mom's
keys!

GEN

We have to try.

VALENCIA

What do we need?

KAORI TANAKA

A special type of stone.

GEN

Like the five stones you told
Virgil to get?

Valencia raises an eyebrow -- those "five stones" again.

KAORI TANAKA

No. We just need one: Snakeskin
Agate.

Valencia taps Kaori to make sure she got this right:

VALENCIA

Snakeskin Agate?

KAORI TANAKA

Yeah. It's a kind of stone, it
looks like it has scales like a
snake -

VALENCIA

I know about Snakeskin Agate. It's
a kind of volcanic rock -- but you
won't find any around here.

KAORI TANAKA

Well... maybe we don't have to find
Snakeskin Agate *precisely* -- maybe
it can be something like it. A rock
with scales. Our energy'll make up
for the rest.

Gen looks to Valencia -

GEN

What do you think, Just Renee?

Kaori pauses -- she's not used to being questioned.

Valencia studies both of them.

VALENCIA

I think... if your sister says we
need to find a rock with scales,
then I guess we need to find a rock
with scales.

Kaori's face softens. She and Valencia share a look -- an
understanding.

86 EXT. DARK WOODS - NIGHT - VIRGIL'S IMAGINATION 86

Virgil, Ruby, and Malaya move through the woods with purpose,
illuminated by the moon.

89 EXT. PAH'S BURROW - NIGHT - VIRGIL'S IMAGINATION 89

They approach the open MAW of a CAVE, its entrance strewn
with bones: The remains of massive creatures Pah devoured.

Malaya lights torches. Hands one to Ruby, Virgil. He stares
at the cave, uneasy.

90 INT. PAH'S BURROW - CONTINUOUS - VIRGIL'S IMAGINATION 90

The kids head down into Pah's lair, torches illuminating the
way.

Malaya nudges him. Hands Ruby her torch. Unloads the bundle
on her back, rolls it out -- a massive NET, woven from good,
strong rope.

91 EXT. WOODS - DAY 91

Chet stalks through the forest on a quest of his own.

He lifts the underbrush with a stick -- no snakes.

Suddenly he spots SOMETHING SKITTERING away. He follows after it -- inches along, searching the underbrush.

He freezes, sees: A scaly TAIL poking out of the bushes. He slowly approaches. Pulls away the brush like a curtain -

REVEALING a slender SNAKE resting among the rocks. Lying still, tongue flickering. Chet's eyes widen -

He pulls a folded PILLOWCASE out of his back pocket and shakes it open -

CHET
I'll show Deafo... who really knows snakes around here.

And he slowly reaches for the snake's tail.

92

INT. PAH'S BURROW - NIGHT - VIRGIL'S IMAGINATION

92

As they descend deeper into the burrow, Virgil's stressed -- breathing hard, on the verge of hyperventilating again.

Malaya squeezes his arm -

MALAYA
It's okay to be scared, Bayani. You can't be brave if you're not scared.

He nods. Continues on.

The tunnel opens up into a massive chamber -

INT. PAH'S LAIR - NIGHT - VIRGIL'S IMAGINATION

Virgil's stunned when he sees what's at its center:

A BOY-SIZED ROCK. Standing like a monolith, just like in Lola's dreams.

Virgil approaches cautiously, flanked by Ruby and Malaya.

They hear a SOUND coming from inside the rock -

A muffled WHISPER.

Virgil looks back at the girls, worried.

VIRGIL
Help me.

He finds a fist-sized stone on the ground, STRIKES the boy-sized rock -- chips off a piece of it.

The girls pitch in as they chip away at it together.
 A chunk of the rock breaks loose, revealing what's beneath:
 A BOY'S FACE. It's Virgil himself, trapped inside the rock.
 Our Virgil backs away, shocked.
 A SHRIEK fills the cavern.

SOMEWHERE IN THE DARK, Pah's eyes flicker open.
 A gigantic WING flexes in the shadows. A great CLAW crushes
 the ground, shaking the earth.

PAH. Like a dinosaur awakening from his slumber.

The kids turn to see him emerging from a cave opening -
 The whole lair SHUDDERS -- Virgil SCREAMS in fear -

93 EXT. CREEK - DAY

93

The girls search a dry creek bed for stones.

Kaori suddenly stops, ears perked:

KAORI TANAKA
 Did you hear that?

Valencia and Gen stop in their tracks.

VALENCIA
 What's happening?

GEN
 Kaori heard something.

Kaori rushes for the trees. The girls follow.

94 EXT. CAVE - NIGHT - VIRGIL'S IMAGINATION

94

Virgil hides behind the Stone Boy.

In the background, Pah's form moves closer -- his massive
 head peeks into corners, SNIFFING, searching for Virgil -

Virgil sees the girls hidden behind a nearby stalagmite.
 Frantically waving at him, calling him to join them.

He sneaks toward them. He's out in the open -

Pah turns, sensing him -- CAW!! -- Virgil RUNS FOR IT -

Virgil runs as fast as he can, Pah closing in behind him -

Virgil skids to a stop at a CLIFF EDGE -- it drops down hundreds of feet below. He turns to see -

PAH rearing back above him. We see his entire massive form for the first time -

His huge wings unfurl, sending a hurricane GALE blasting through the cavern -

RUBY SAN SALVADOR
BAYANI!

Malaya draws her bow, fires an arrow.

It RICOCHETS off of Pah's beak. He turns his attention toward her, furious.

Pah STOMPS the ground -- the ceiling collapses, cutting Malaya and Ruby off from Virgil.

Pah turns back toward Virgil. The ground SHAKES. Virgil scrambles backwards, terrified, all the way to the precipice -

He hides his face, his eyes. Pah closes in, his own bright eyes focused on his prey...

Suddenly, the earth SHIFTS -- Virgil's hand SLIPS -

He begins to slide off the cliff edge, desperately clawing and scrambling at it until -

He TUMBLES off the edge.

And he falls and falls, vanishing into darkness.

95 EXT. WOODS - DAY

95

The girls rush up a crest in the trail to find -

Chet slumped against a tree, GROANING, the pillowcase wrapped around his arm as an impromptu bandage.

He looks like he's dying. But as soon as he sees the girls, he toughens up -- puts on his annoyed, mean face.

KAORI TANAKA
Oh man, you again?.. Were you screaming?

CHET
What? NO.

He cradles his wounded arm.

VALENCIA
What happened to your arm?

CHET
I got bit by a snake! It was huge.
It almost bit my whole arm off. I
think I got poisoned!

GEN
(Amazed)
Really??

Valencia sighs, dubious. She pulls off her backpack and kneels next to him. Chet pulls away from her -

CHET
What are you doing?

VALENCIA
I know a lot about snake bites. So
show me your stupid arm.

CHET
No way!

VALENCIA
Look: If you've actually been
poisoned, you need medical
attention. If not...

Chet grousing. She pulls away the pillowcase to expose the snakebite...

Gen's eyes widen, hoping to bear witness to a horrifying,
gaping WOUND -

But there's no wound at all. Gen and Kaori are disappointed -

KAORI TANAKA
That's it?

GEN
There aren't even any fang marks!

Chet yanks his arm away, offended.

CHET
That's 'cause when it bit me, I
grabbed it so hard with my other
hand, it didn't have any time to do
any real damage.
(MORE)

CHET (CONT'D)

Then I crushed its throat and threw
it down the old well.

VALENCIA

Okay, well, that's definitely not
poisonous.

CHET

How do you know?

VALENCIA

'Cause it's barely even a bite! You
probably got bitten by a water
snake or a garter snake.

Gen taps Valencia -

GEN

You sure know a lot about nature.

VALENCIA

I spend a lot of time studying it.

Chet rolls his eyes.

CHET

Whatever, Deafo.

Valencia groans. Her patience is GONE -

VALENCIA

My name's not "Deafo". It's
Valencia.

Kaori and Gen share a look -- *did they hear that right?*

CHET

I don't care what your name is!

VALENCIA

Well I like it. It's a good, strong
name.

CHET

(Mocking her voice)

Like you ever hear anyone call you
by it, *Valencia Somerset*.

Valencia's had it. She throws him a look -

VALENCIA

"Practice all you want. Just don't
set yourself up for
disappointment."

Chet's stunned. Embarrassed.

Kaori and Gen have no idea what Valencia's talking about, but they sense the sudden change in temperature.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)

Just 'cause your Dad makes you feel like crap doesn't mean you have to make other people feel like crap too.

Chet picks himself up, nursing his pride -

CHET

Whatever.

He chuck's the pillowcase on the ground, walks away.

96

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

96

As the girls walk onward, Kaori taps Valencia -

KAORI TANAKA

Hey, tell us the truth. Is your name really Just Renee?

She faces Kaori, a new confidence blossoming:

VALENCIA

Sorry -- before we met, I was afraid you guys might be serial killers, so I gave you a fake name. My real name is Valencia -

She sounds it out proudly:

VALENCIA (CONT'D)

Valencia Somerset.

Infected by Valencia's conviction, Gen raises a FIST and SHOUTS OUT like a battle cry:

GEN

VALENCIA! SOMERSET!

The girls LAUGH. As they walk onward -

KAORI TANAKA

We should go into business together! We could be business partners: Tanaka and Somerset!

FLASH TO a NEON SIGN blazing to life: **TANAKA & SOMERSET**

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)
 You know a lot about the natural
 world: Rocks, squirrels.
 Snakebites.

Gen giggles -

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)
 And I know a lot about the
 spiritual world. It'd be the
 perfect team-up! That's probably
 why the Universe brought us
 together: Kaori Tanaka and...

Something in Kaori's head CLICKS. Her eyes land on -

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)
V, S...

Kaori taps her, energized -

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)
 Do you go to Boyd Middle School?
 Are you in the Resource Room on
 Thursdays?!

Valencia's thoroughly confused -

VALENCIA
 Yes and yes?

Gen's jumping up and down, barely able to contain herself -

GEN
 Ohmygosh Kaori!! She's V.S.!

VALENCIA
 What's going on?

GEN
 Valencia, you're -

Kaori clamps her hand over Gen's mouth.

KAORI TANAKA
 We can't say. Not yet.

VALENCIA
 C'mon, tell me.

KAORI TANAKA
 I will. I promise. But we can't
 interrupt the hands of Fate -- not
 now.
 (MORE)

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)

It'll all make sense once we find
Virgil... We should keep looking
for that stone.

GEN

We don't need a snakeskin-ish
stone, now we have an actual
snakebite!

She holds up the pillowcase Chet used to wrap up his "bite".

The girls share a look -- ugh.

GEN (CONT'D)

No, listen: That kid knew who
Virgil was, right? It's like you
said, Kaori: The Universe left us a
breadcrumb.

Kaori contemplates this. Then, to Valencia -

KAORI TANAKA

What do you think?

Gen looks to Valencia too.

VALENCIA

Makes sense to me.

97

INT. WELL - DAY

97

Virgil's shaken back to reality: Alone in the darkness of the well.

He collapses, exhausted. Hopeless.

98

EXT. WOODS - GLADE - DAY

98

A little nook between the trees. Sunlight cuts across the woods in beams.

The girls sit cross-legged in a circle, gathered around the neatly-folded pillowcase. They chant together in unison:

GIRLS

*Keeper of lost things, guide us to
what we seek -*

Gen sneaks a peek with one eye; Valencia keeps her eyes closed, while Kaori maintains total professional decorum:

GIRLS (CONT'D)

*We send this heartfelt request to
the Universe of granted wishes -*

99

INT. WELL - DAY

99

Tears stream down Virgil's face.

FLASH TO Chet holding Virgil's backpack over the open well.

VIRGIL

I should've spoken out.

FLASH TO Valencia at school, walking right past Virgil -

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

I should've said hello.

Virgil cringes, crushed by his anxieties.

A spotlight appears in the dark -- motes of color, warm light pulsating like fireflies.

Virgil's FAMILY appears, gathered in their LIVING ROOM, singing Karaoke -

VIRGIL'S MOM

*Somewhere over the rainbow /
Bluebirds fly /*

Lola starts singing too -- and she's good:

LOLA

*And the dream that dare to / Oh
why, oh why, can't I? /*

Virgil watches, full of heartbreak and longing.

VIRGIL

If I ever make it out of here, I'm
gonna speak out. I'm gonna say
hello.

102

EXT. WOODS - GLADE - DAY

102

Kaori digs in her backpack, pulls out a tin biscuit box. Inside are various psychic tools and baubles.

She produces a CANDLE and MATCHES.

VALENCIA

Where'd you get those matches?

GEN

Our Mom uses them to light her
secret cigarettes.

KAORI TANAKA

Mitsue doesn't think we know about them.

GEN

But... we do.

KAORI TANAKA

Candlelight is vital to the ceremony.

GEN

Oooh, can I light it??

Kaori hands Gen the matches. This seems unwise -

VALENCIA

You sure it's okay to light a candle in the middle of the woods?

Gen strikes a match -- too hard -- she drops the lit match into the brush! It IGNITES in an instant -

Gen SCREAMS! The fire spreads -- Kaori and Valencia stomp it out, laughing -

KAORI TANAKA

It's out! It's out! You can stop screaming -

But Gen's still SCREAMING because she sees something bounding toward them -

It's Sacred the Dog! He scrambles up to Valencia, licking her face. She pets him, laughing. Gen is shook.

GEN

Woah.

VALENCIA

This is Sacred. I feed him sometimes. He lives alone in the woods.

The girls put their hands out so Sacred can sniff.

GEN

He doesn't have a home?

Valencia shakes her head no. Gen scratches his ears, earnest:

GEN (CONT'D)

I wish you had a home.

Kaori is unimpressed.

KAORI TANAKA
Well this is great. We asked the
Universe for an answer and it sent
us a dog.

Sacred sniffs at the pillowcase, tail wagging.

106 INT. WELL - DAY

106

Virgil rises to his feet, sick of being scared. Sick of being sad.

He looks up into the dark, raises his voice -

VIRGIL
PAH!..

He listens. Silence.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
PAH! I'm here! Come get me!

He YELLS til it feels like his lungs will burst -

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
PAH!!!

A feather brushes his cheek.

A SHADOW shifts in the dark. It fills the well around Virgil, claws out, feathers swirling --

Pah's EYES appear in the dark. Virgil looks up as he approaches -

Smaller now, less terrifying but still formidable.

Virgil wipes the tears from his eyes. Faces him down.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
I don't want to fight you.

Pah's eyes lock onto his.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
I just want to say...

He swallows hard, his heart bursting.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
...Hello.

Pah blinks. Moves closer, head turned so his eye can focus on Virgil's face. Virgil sees himself reflected in Pah's eye.

And he does the unthinkable: Virgil reaches out.

QUICK CUTS of Virgil's Mom, Dad, Brothers, Chet, Lola, Valencia...

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
Hello... Hello... Hello -

And Pah nudges him, presses his downy-feathered forehead against Virgil's face... a new pact between them.

104 EXT. WOODS - GLADE - DAY

104

Sacred perks his ears up. Turns his head.

He BARKS, takes off running into the bush.

GEN
Where's he going?

Suddenly Valencia's phone BUZZES. She checks it:

LOLA (TEXT)
Hello, Valencia of Spain!

105 INT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - INTERCUT LOLA - KITCHEN - DAY

105

Lola's sitting at the kitchen table, texting -

LOLA (TEXT)
Have you seen my Virgilio?

Valencia smiles, thinking.

Then, something in her mind CLICKS -

The wind picks up. Leaves swirl around her.

Time slows as her pupils dilate, the hair raises on her skin.

She turns to Kaori:

VALENCIA
How many stones did you ask Virgil
to find?

KAORI TANAKA
Five. Why?

FLASHBACK TO VALENCIA -- staring at the five stones on the rim of the well.

The gears are turning in Valencia's head -

GEN
What's going on?

KAORI TANAKA
Hush Gen -

VALENCIA
Chet got bitten by a snake -

FLASHBACK TO CHET -

CHET
I crushed its throat and threw it
down the old well -

FLASHBACK TO SACRED -- leading Valencia to the well.

BACK ON VALENCIA, excitement growing:

VALENCIA
I know where Virgil is.

107 EXT. WOODS - CLEARING - DAY

107

Sacred tears out of the woods; the girls follow close behind.

He runs up to the well, whining and sniffing at it.

108 INT. WELL - CONTINUOUS

108

Virgil hears someone above -

VIRGIL
Hello?

He hears muted VOICES -- he YELLS up at them -

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
HELLLLPP!!!

His own volume startles him -- he didn't know he had it in
him -

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
HELLLLPP!!! HELLLLPP!!!

He looks up, sees a SLIVER OF LIGHT; the well's cover is
pulled away -- the sliver grows into a full CIRCLE OF
DAYLIGHT as -

The girls reopen the well.

They peer into the darkness -

VALENCIA
Is he down there?

KAORI TANAKA
VIRGIL!

VIRGIL
Hello?!

KAORI TANAKA
Omigosh!.. VIRGIL! How'd you get
stuck down there? You can't climb
back up?

VIRGIL
The bottom of the ladder is
missing! I can't reach it from
here!

Gen fills Valencia in while Kaori yells into the well:

KAORI TANAKA
Okay Virgil, hang on -- we're gonna
get you out!

Kaori, Valencia, and Gen huddle up.

VALENCIA
Do we have anything he can use to
climb up?

Their eyes all land on Gen's PINK JUMPROPE. Kaori smiles -

KAORI TANAKA
There are no coincidences.

109 INT. WELL - MOMENTS LATER

109

Virgil's heart pounds as he spots someone coming down the
ladder -

VALENCIA SOMERSET. He's stunned.

She reaches the bottom rung, drops down one end of the
jumprope -

VALENCIA
I'll tie the other end to the
ladder. Then pull yourself up.

He reaches for the rope. *It's pink. Weird.*

110 EXT. WOODS - CLEARING - DAY

110

Virgil clammers out the well. The girls help him over its rim. He's dirty, exhausted, face streaked with tears.

Kaori hugs him tight -

KAORI TANAKA
VIRGIL!! I was so worried!

Gen hugs him too.

GEN
You were right, Kaori! He was
detained!

It's dawning on Kaori now: A new sense of her own agency.

KAORI TANAKA
Yeah! I guess I was!
You okay, Virgil?

GEN
Are you hurt? How'd you get down
there? What happened? Were you
scared? Did you think you were
gonna die?

KAORI TANAKA
Gen! That's too many questions at
once!

Virgil wipes away his tears, overcome by emotion.

GEN
Why are you crying?

VIRGIL
(Totally crying)
I'm not crying.

GEN
Yeah you are -

Kaori nudges Gen to salvage Virgil's pride:

KAORI TANAKA
Hush.

Sacred sniffs and licks Virgil's hand; he pulls away -

KAORI TANAKA (CONT'D)
It's okay. He's friendly.

GEN
He's homeless.

Virgil runs his hand along Sacred's head, comforted.

Gen taps Valencia -

GEN (CONT'D)
How'd you know he was down there?

Valencia finds the FIVE STONES on the rim of the well -

VALENCIA
Kaori sent him looking for five
stones in the woods. Here they are.

She scoops them up, puts them in Kaori's hand.

KAORI TANAKA
They worked. Just like breadcrumbs.

Virgil pulls off his backpack, takes Gulliver out. He's safe.

VIRGIL
He got trapped down there. I had to
rescue him.

Gen pets Gulliver.

GEN
Yay, Gulliver!

VALENCIA
Did you just say *Gulliver*?

KAORI TANAKA
That's the name of his guinea pig.

VALENCIA
...My guinea pig was named
Lilliput.

Virgil recognizes that name instantly but stays clammed up.

VALENCIA (CONT'D)
Lilliput is an island in Gulliver's
Travels. Isn't that a coincidence?

Kaori and Gen are dying to say it -

VALENCIA (CONT'D)
I know, I know -- there are no
coincidences.

Kaori nudges Virgil, imploring him to say something -

KAORI TANAKA
So Virgil... you already know
Valencia, right? Valencia Somerset?

Virgil averts his gaze, not ready to make eye contact.

He's dirty, he's been crying, his glasses are askew -

He wipes his face, embarrassed that Valencia Somerset is seeing him like this:

Vulnerable.

Suddenly Valencia's phone BUZZES. She checks it -

VALENCIA
My mom's freaking out in ALL CAPS.
I've gotta go. I'll text you later,
Kaori.

She waves, walks off.

Kaori turns to Virgil, gobsmacked -

KAORI TANAKA
OH VIRGIL...

111 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

111

Virgil, Kaori, and Gen walk home; Sacred dutifully follows.

KAORI TANAKA
I can't believe it, Virgil: V.S.
was right there, and you didn't
even talk to her! The Universe
keeps bringing you together, and
you won't take action!

VIRGIL
The universe isn't doing anything,
Kaori!

KAORI TANAKA
Then how do you explain everything
that happened today? The fact that
she came to see me on the day you
disappeared. The fact that she
figured out where you were. The
fact that Gen had a jump rope when
we needed it -

GEN

Kaori told me not to bring it but I
brought it anyway!

KAORI TANAKA

And let's not forget, Valencia had
a guinea pig with a name just like
Gulliver's -

VIRGIL

Kaori, all that stuff is just...

KAORI TANAKA

Don't say it.

VIRGIL

Coincidence.

Kaori GROANS dramatically -

KAORI TANAKA

If that's what you believe, then
there's no hope for you, Virgil
Salinas.

(Then)

Come on, Gen. Mitsue's making
chicken cutlets tonight.

GEN

Yay, chicken katsu!

The girls split off, heading for home. Sacred follows after
Virgil.

112 EXT. CHET'S HOUSE - LATER

112

Virgil trudges down the street, frustrated at himself;
Sacred's right by his side.

VIRGIL

All I had to say was two words.
"Thank you."

Sacred looks up at him, listening.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

"Hello Valencia, thank you. You
saved my life. I owe you one..."
UGH -- why did I have to be so
Virgil-like?

Virgil pauses. Looks up. Sees that dreaded house ahead:

The Bullens residence. And Chet's in the driveway, practicing his layup.

Chet holds the ball as he spots Virgil heading toward him.

Something's changed in Virgil: He's too tired, too fed up with everything to be scared.

Chet smirks -- but there's a tremor in his voice:

CHET
What are you lookin' at, loser?

Virgil stops, faces him down.

VIRGIL
I'm not a loser.

Chet approaches, surprised to hear back-talk:

CHET
What'd you say?

Virgil's voice GROWS LOUDER:

VIRGIL
I SAID: I'm not a loser.

He locks his eyes on Chet, unnerving him.

Chet tries to play it off -

CHET
Okay, retard.

But Virgil's not going to let this go:

VIRGIL
Don't call me that.

CHET
Or what.

Sacred GROWLS. Chet shrinks a little -- Virgil pulls Sacred back -

VIRGIL
Don't worry, I got this.

He looks Chet in the eye, refusing to back down.

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
Or... Or... nothing. If you want to
keep calling me that, then okay.
(MORE)

VIRGIL (CONT'D)

Go ahead. But I'm not gonna be afraid, and I'm not gonna waste any more time on you.

Chet's gobsmacked.

Virgil walks off. Sacred follows.

113 INT. TANAKA HOUSE - DAY

113

Kaori and Gen sneak in through the front door, kick off their shoes.

Mitsue comes downstairs carrying a big box of STUFF: All of Kaori's psychic accoutrements -- the Spirit Stones! Her books, treasures, baubles!

Kaori sees them, horrified -

KAORI TANAKA
What are you doing?

MITSUE TANAKA
I told you to get rid of this stuff-

KAORI TANAKA
No -

MITSUE TANAKA
You're too old for these things,
Kaori. It's nonsense -

KAORI TANAKA
No, listen -- it's not -

MITSUE TANAKA
This discussion is over.

Gen bursts into tears -

GEN
Mom, don't... please! It's not nonsense!

MITSUE TANAKA
Oh Gen, honey -

Gen's full-blown CRYING now -

GEN
It means something to me. And to Kaori. And to Renee -

KAORI TANAKA
Valencia -

GEN

And to Valencia! It's the only
thing we do together, and I don't
want it to end! 'Cause I'm helpful,
Mom! For once, I'm helpful! Please
don't throw our stuff away!

Touched, Mitsue takes a knee. Hugs Gen tight.

MITSUE TANAKA
Okay, okay...

She hands Kaori back her box of psychic stuff.

MITSUE TANAKA (CONT'D)
But the tent goes. Deal?

KAORI TANAKA
Okay, Mom.

Hearing "Mom", Mitsue nods, her expression softening.

Gen brushes away tears, still traumatized.

114 EXT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - DAY

114

Virgil heads up to his house; Lola comes out, her phone in
her hand -

LOLA
Anak! There you are! I was texting
your friend, trying to -

Virgil rushes up to her, gives her a huge HUG.

Lola studies him -- his dirty clothes, the fatigue on his
face.

LOLA (CONT'D)
Virgilio... Where have you been?

He looks up at her, heart full of emotion.

VIRGIL
I got eaten, like the Stone Boy.
But my friends chiseled me out.

115 INT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

115

The Twins set the table; Virgil's parents put out the dishes.

They look up to see Virgil and Lola -

VIRGIL'S MOM
Where have you been, Turtle? It's
almost dinner!

She spots Sacred. Grouses:

VIRGIL'S MOM (CONT'D)
What is that strange dog doing
here?

The Twins rush over to Sacred, vigorously petting him:

JOSELITO SALINAS
Where'd you get him?

JULIUS SALINAS
Is he friendly?

VIRGIL
He's homeless. Can we keep him?

VIRGIL'S MOM
Absolutely not! Get him out of here
before he messes up the carpet!

Lola scratches Sacred's ears -

LOLA
I think he should stay. A dog will
be good for the house. Scares away
the robbers.

She winks at the boys. Mom sighs, folds her arms... relents.

VIRGIL'S MOM
Fine. But he needs a bath. Now wash
up, get ready for dinner, Turtle -

VIRGIL
STOP.

Everyone's stunned. The whole family turns their eyes on him.

Virgil looks different now -- stronger, like they need to
listen:

VIRGIL (CONT'D)
I wish you wouldn't call me Turtle.
It makes me feel like a little kid.
And I'm not a little kid anymore...
So from now on, call Virgilio. Or
Bayani. Or just Virgil.

The family's speechless. He's never spoken to them like this before.

Li steps up to him. Touches his face, seeing him with a new understanding:

VIRGIL'S MOM
Okay. Of course, Virgil.

116 INT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - VIRGIL'S ROOM - NIGHT

116

Now bathed and fed, Virgil sits at his desk staring at the FIVE STONES. Sacred (also bathed and fed) sleeps, curled up nearby.

Virgil examines each of the stones:

Two of the STONES look a lot alike, but one is smaller than the other. They look like SIBLINGS:

117 EXT. TANAKA HOUSE - BACKYARD - DAY

117

Kaori cheers Gen on as she skips rope with a brand new pink jump rope -

GEN
Ninety-eight, ninety-nine, one hundred!

They celebrate Gen's new personal record with high fives -

KAORI TANAKA
Okay, now do two hundred.

GEN
Aww!
(Starts skipping)
One, two -

118 INT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - VIRGIL'S ROOM - NIGHT

118

Virgil looks at the THIRD STONE -

This stone is a big, rough-edged ROCK:

EXT. CHET'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Chet shoots hoops -- and keeps missing. There's a new humility in him we haven't seen before.

Mr. Bullens pulls up in his SUV. Gets out, makes finger-guns at his son -

MR. BULLENS
Good form, son.

Chet throws him a wounded look. Mr. Bullens doesn't catch it as heads into the house.

And Chet says nothing as he keeps taking shots.

120 INT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - VIRGIL'S ROOM - NIGHT 120

Virgil examines the FOURTH STONE -

This stone is really different -- but unique in its own way:

121 INT. VALENCIA'S HOUSE - VALENCIA'S BEDROOM - DAY 121

We're ON VALENCIA as she, Kaori, and Gen craft new handmade BUSINESS CARDS:

TANAKA & SOMERSET (AND GEN)

New Clients Welcome -- NO ADULTS

Kaori taps Valencia -

KAORI TANAKA
Now all we need are more clients.

VALENCIA
Hey -- what were you and Gen talking about before we went to the well?.. You promised you'd tell me.

Gen looks up at Kaori -- *should we tell her?*

Kaori processes this; then -

KAORI TANAKA
When it's time for the Universe to speak, it will.

Valencia studies her for a moment, but lets it go.

Gen taps Valencia -

GEN
(Signs, Subtitled)
Hey V.S. -
(Spoken)
How 'bout some pink right here?

VALENCIA
(Signs)
Sounds great.

KAORI TANAKA

(Signs)

She loves -

(Holds up a PINK CRAYON.)

VALENCIA

(Signs)

I noticed.

The girls laugh.

Valencia's Mom watches them from the doorway, tickled -- happy that her daughter has finally found her tribe.

122 INT. VIRGIL'S HOUSE - VIRGIL'S ROOM - NIGHT

122

Virgil turns the final STONE around in his hands:

This stone is glassy-smooth and slender. It looks fragile, but looks can be deceiving.

LOLA (V.O.)

Fate takes you to the place, but
you have to make the choice.

He looks closely, seeing his reflection in the stone.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - THE NEXT DAY

Virgil runs down the street, Sacred alongside him.

A SHADOW trails behind him -

PAH flies high above, following -- playfully looping through the sky like a kite.

EXT. VALENCIA'S HOUSE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Virgil runs up to the front door. RINGS the doorbell -

A moment later, Valencia answers the door.

They're finally face to face again.

Virgil looks down at his belly -- yup, the BUTTERFLIES are still there... but his gaze slowly rises.

His eyes lock onto hers. He looks like he's going to speak, but instead, he raises his hand.

VIRGIL

(Signs)

Hello.

She smiles, signs back -

VALENCIA
Hello.

And Virgil looks back over his shoulder.

Pah is finally gone.

124 EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD STREET - DAY

124

Virgil, Valencia, Kaori, Gen, and Sacred head down the street together, trading jokes, laughing; Gen skips rope here and there.

125 EXT. CHET'S HOUSE - DAY

125

Chet's shooting hoops alone.

He spots our kids heading down the sidewalk toward his house.

He eyes them; they eye him back.

Chet turns away, takes another shot -- but it rebounds wide into the street -

And Virgil grabs the ball. A moment of tension between them.

Then, Virgil passes the ball back to Chet.

Chet stares at the ball in his hands, then at Virgil. His expression softening.

The kids head off, leaving Chet for now. He watches them go -

Laughing and enjoying each others' company.

And the tribe heads onwards...Into the woods.

We zoom up into the sky -

Where the clouds spell out: HELLO UNIVERSE.

THE END