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The First Ten Pages of 'Quiz Bowl'

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FIRST TEN PAGES

Lauren Fontanilla

1. INT. SCHOOL GYM - DAY

A dingy gym full of juniors taking the SAT. There are long rows of tables set up on the basketball court where anxious students sit scribbling answers down on scantron sheets. The test proctor, MR. KRIPKE, is asleep.

In the first row, ALDEN COSGROVE (17) is confidently bubbling in his answers. He's about halfway done.

Alden is the only student wearing a tie. But, unlike the mass of nervous energy behind him, he sits comfortably.

Someone coughs.

Distracted, Alden glances back to see who broke his concentration. When he turns back to finish his test, he accidentally skips a row of bubbles. The rest of his answers are off by just one question.

The clock runs down before Alden notices his mistake. A phone timer goes off and the proctor starts awake.

MR. KRIPKE

That's time!

Alden's scantron is lost in a stack of his peers' papers

2. INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Breaking away from the throng of students exiting the gym, Alden jogs down the hall to catch up to a girl up ahead of him. JESS BAXTER (17) clutches her bookbag close to her chest.

ALDEN

Jess! Wait up

She doesn't slow down.

JESS

Can't wait. Gonna be sick

Alden cuts off her route to the girls bathroom.

ALDEN

That bad huh?

JESS

A squared plus B squared equals...

ALDEN

C squared?

JESS
I forgot the frickn' Pythagorean
Theorem, Alden!

Together, they make their way down the hall and Jess relaxes
a little bit.

ALDEN
I'm sure you did just fine

JESS
Well what about you, Ivy League?
Are your bags already packed for
Harvard?

He scoffs

ALDEN
Overplayed. But I submit my early
admission application to Princeton
next week.

JESS
Jersey?

ALDEN
(shrugging)
I like pizza and property taxes.

They enter a classroom at the end of the hall together.

CUT TO:

3. INT. CHEMISTRY CLASSROOM -DAY

About thirty bored students are listening to Mr. Kripke's
dull lesson on Hydrogen bonds. Jess doodles a caricature of
him being abducted by aliens in the margins of her notes.

Alden drums his fingers against his desk and idly watches a
bully blow spit wads into another student, BARRY MADIGAN
(14)'s, hair.

Someone taps him on the shoulder and hands him a note from
Jess. It reads:

How do you think Ash gives Pikachu baths?

He smiles and scribbles down a response.

CUT TO:

4. EXT. TRACK - DAY

Dressed in PE shirts (and knee length shorts), Alden and Jess jog along the school track panting out a conversation between labored breaths.

ALDEN
Absolutely not!

JESS
Biological webs are what make him
Spiderman.

Gulp of air.

JESS
Otherwise he's just a strong dude
with sticky fingers.

The pair are lapped by a few other runners, including PARKER DAVIS (18). Jess fires back a response but her voice becomes noticeably softer as the athletic students approach.

ALDEN
Like a spider!

JESS
Or a tree frog...

ALDEN
Yeah but who's going to buy a copy
of the "Amazing Frog-Man"?

CUT TO:

5. INT. SCHOOL CAFETERIA - DAY

Jess and Alden are sitting on the floor by a vending machine. Jess has a lunch tray but Alden brought his own bag from home.

ALDEN
Actually, FM radio uses different
frequencies to modulate the carrier
waves

JESS
As opposed to?

ALDEN
(Through a bite of PB&J)
Amplitude

The sound of a toilet flushing in the background.

CUT TO:

6. EXT. VALLEYVIEW HIGH - DAY

Red leaves swirl around the school's front doors. The smell of pumpkin spice and the looming promise of snow hang in the air.

7. INT. SCHOOL GYM - DAY

The SAT tables have been removed and the gym is back to being a drab student torture chamber.

Tacky Halloween posters are hung up beside school banners.

Basketballs and students whiz around the gym. Dressed again in PE uniforms, Jess sinks a free throw over Alden's head.

JESS
You're on 'S'

Alden takes the same shot... Which rebounds off the backboard and soars into the bleachers.

JESS
H-O-R-S-E

ALDEN
Shut up

CUT TO:

8. INT. ALDEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Fast asleep, Alden starts awake as his phone buzzes next to his ear. The lock screen says it's 3 AM.

He swipes through to read a message from Jess:
Bio-webs never run out

He types:
Mechanical ones aren't gross

CUT TO:

9. INT. ALDEN'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Finishing the top button on a fresh shirt, Alden stands in front of his closet with his phone pressed between his ear and shoulder. He surveys his options and runs the fabric of a couple ties through his fingers.

ALDEN

So maroon or cobalt?

JESS (V.O.)

None?

CUT TO:

10. INT. HALLWAY - DAY

On their way to chemistry, Jess and Alden are approached by OLIVE PARK (17) and another girl holding a clipboard. The two girls corner them before they can safely slip into the classroom.

OLIVE

Hi! Jess Baxter right?

Jess mumbles something incoherently under her breath and clutches her bookbag closer to her chest.

ALDEN

Who's asking?

Olive shoots Alden a frustrated glare. She tries to redirect the conversation back towards Jess again.

OLIVE

Girls tennis. Have you ever thought about playing?

Jess shakes her head quickly. They shove the clipboard towards her anyway.

JESS

I've never played

TENNIS GIRL

That's alright. We have a fantastic beginners' program at the JV level...

ALDEN

(interrupting)

Hey! She doesn't want to join your team!

OLIVE
 And who asked you, Sweater vest?
 Let her speak for herself

Alden swats the clipboard away.

ALDEN
 Stop harassing my friend!

JESS
 Alden, it's fine. Let's just go to
 class

As they shove past, Alden ushers Jess into the classroom and shuts the door in the girls' faces. Olive watches Jess's silhouette disappear through the thin crack.

Jess and Alden take their seats and start emptying the contents of their bags onto the desks.

ALDEN
 You good?

JESS
 I'm fine

MR. KRIPKE (O.S.)
 What do you kids even think a
 "powerhouse of the cell" means?

CUT TO:

11. EXT. ALDEN'S HOUSE — MIDNIGHT

All's quiet at the Cosgrove Home. The only active window is Alden's, which is only lit by a dim blue glow.

12. INT. ALDEN'S BEDROOM — MIDNIGHT

The cramped bedroom of a geeky teenage boy. Superhero posters and a periodic table plaster the walls to cover up where the paint is peeling. The space is cluttered, but neat. The closet's open to expose dress shirts and ties hung up by color. The bed is not made.

Alden is lounging back in his desk chair, illuminated only by the LCD screen on his laptop. He's loosened his collar, but clearly not dressed for bed. He only wears one ear bud and there's a Discord voice channel open on his computer.

JESS (O.S.)
 (over the internet)
 But at least he has a real day job.
 Bruce Wayne is just boring and
 entitled

ALDEN
 And rich

Alden leans forward to refresh another tab. The CollegeBoard
 webpage.

JESS (O.S.)
 But Matt Murdock would still be an
 interesting character even if he
 wasn't an acting vigilante

ALDEN
 You only like him because he's
 repressed and Catholic

He refreshes the page again

JESS (O.S.)
 Oh, like Batman is the poster child
 for emotional stability?

ALDEN
 (cutting her off)
 OH MY GOD!

He bolts up in his chair as if an electric current rattles
 down his spine. The page finally loaded.

JESS (O.S.)
 Hold on, my internet's slow

Alden drums his fingertips against his keyboard, staring at
 his curser next to a blue button that reads "See My Scores"

ALDEN
 5 bucks to go first?

JESS (O.S.)
 No way.

ALDEN
 I don't want to look

JESS (O.S.)
 Of course you do. You made me stay
 up until midnight!

ALDEN
 How could you even consider
 sleeping at a time like this?

Jess's snort comes through as a warbled chuckle.

ALDEN
 Please Jess...

JESS (O.S.)
 Okay, fine

A faint click over the server. Jess's audio peaks as her voice hits an octave higher than normal.

JESS (O.S.)
 1380!

Adjusting his earbud, Alden smiles to himself. It's a good score and he's proud of her.

JESS (O.S.)
 I mean, sure that's what I figured,
 right?

ALDEN
 Good enough for Evergreen

JESS (O.S.)
 Whatever Ivy League, your turn.

Alden nervously flexes his fingers as he brings his mouse to hover over the results button. He circles it a few times before clicking down in one irrevocable tap.

He freezes. A beat.

JESS (O.S.)
 What? Not perfect?

Alden's breath catches in his throat. His brow furrowed deep and dark. His nervous fingers work their way through his coiffed hair.

He refreshes the page again, but the number stays the same:

750

In big bold letters splayed across the banner. He failed.

JESS (O.S.)
 Oh, the suspense is killing me

His motions grow more erratic as Alden continues refreshing the page over and over again. His breathing getting choppy.

JESS (O.S)

Hello?

Alden lets go of his computer mouse and clutches his temples in his hands, propping up his head by bracing both elbows against the desk. Hunched over his laptop with his nose just inches from the unwavering score.

JESS (O.S.)

Alden?

Imploding silence.

DISSOLVE TO--