

FALL KIDS

Story by

Trevor Dylan Benoit

Written by

The Benoit Brothers

TITLE SEQUENCE OVER BLACK

A melancholic tune crescendos slowly.

As it does, the screen writes...

"FALL KIDS"

Music fades to silence.

FADE FROM BLACK TO:

INT. BEDROOM - DAY

A spacious room, filled with boxes still packed away lie across various parts of the floor. AVA SUZUKI, 14, searches through one of the them.

AVA

It's not in this box either! I swear that I packed it in one of mine.

FROM THE DOORWAY -

The head of Ava's mother, SHELLEY SUZUKI, 45, pokes into the room. She prepares to tie her hair up into a bun as she walks in.

SHELLEY

I know you did. I reminded you before we left yesterday.

AVA

Then why isn't it here?

SHELLEY

Did you search every box?

AVA

Yes, except for this one.

Ava points to the one at her feet.

SHELLEY

Well... are you going to look?

AVA

I was about to until you interrupted me.

SHELLEY

You don't have to be such a smart
ass, Ava.

TOMMY (O.S.)

She can't help it. She's too smart
for her own good.

Now leaning against the panels of the doorway is TOMMY
SUZUKI, 18, with his arms folded across his chest.

SHELLEY

Don't encourage her.

Ava bends down to search through the box in front of her.

AVA

Encourage me, Tommy.

TOMMY

I'll say no more. Other than the
pizza that just got here. Dave is
already eating some.

He points back down the hall with his thumb before walking
away.

SHELLEY

He better not.

Shelley quickly follows Tommy downstairs.

Ava glances into the box again, this time pulling out a black
journal. Inside is a small message written in pen: **If you
can't find a spare moment for me, perhaps you can for
yourself. Love, Dad.**

Ava closes it with disgust and tosses it back in the box.

Ava digs through the box with all her energy and might before
pulling out a book.

AVA

I FOUND IT!

The book: **When Marnie Was There by Joan G. Robinson with
Illustrations by Peggy Fortnum.**

She opens it and sifts through some of the pages, giving a
smile to herself. Moving over to the windowsill, she places
the book down.

She looks outside the open window and notices a girl around her age staring at her from a room in the house across the street. Quickly, the girl folds the blinds and disappears behind them.

Ava confused by the interaction, stares into the distance.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

A small television rests on the kitchen counter playing a local news channel. "**THE DOLL MAKER TAKES SECOND VICTIM**" reads at the bottom. The newscaster speaks, but the sound is turned off.

The family sits on the floor eating pizza at different places. Shelley puts the television remote down.

DAVE SUZUKI, 7, cuts his pizza with a fork and knife. He struggles as his paper plate moves around in front of him.

AVA
Why do you do that?

DAVE
Do what?

AVA
Eat your pizza like that?

DAVE
It's too hot if I don't.

AVA
You're supposed to fold it like a piece of paper.

DAVE
That's stupid.

AVA
Why is it stupid?

DAVE
Because you don't get to enjoy the toppings if you eat it like a burrito.

AVA
Yes, but at least you won't burn your mouth that way.

SHELLEY
Let him eat the way he wants.

AVA
I'm just trying to help him eat
more efficiently.

DAVE
More like help me not enjoy my
pizza.

Ava turns to give him a look of annoyance and disgust.

TOMMY
Let it go. Both of you. If he
doesn't want to do a New York fold,
he doesn't have to. Everyone has
their own method of madness.
Alright?

AVA
Fine.

Dave lifts a piece of pizza into his mouth with his fork,
looking directly at Ava. He over-exaggerates the delicious
flavor as he begins to chew.

Ava folds her pizza and mimics Dave as she eats her slice.
Shelley palms her forehead out of frustration.

INT. AVA'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ava lays on a mattress on the floor in her bedroom.

Ava reads from the book she found in the boxes earlier,
paying deep attention to what is written inside.

SHELLEY
Have you started writing again?

Shelley walks towards Ava and sits down on the floor next to
her. Ava quickly closes it and puts it down away from her
mother.

AVA
It doesn't matter.

SHELLEY
I think it does, it's important to
expr-

Ava interrupts her train of thought.

AVA
Can we maybe not talk about it?

Shelley stares at her daughter.

SHELLEY

Of course.

They look at each other in silence. Ava nods her head, biting her lip.

AVA

Was there anything you needed mom?

SHELLEY

Um, yes. I wanted to let you know that I'm going to be heading into Boston tomorrow for an interview so I won't be home until late. Would you be able to walk your brother home?

AVA

Why can't Tommy do it?

SHELLEY

He starts at the grocery store tomorrow, his transfer has him starting right away so he's heading there after school.

AVA

Damn it.

SHELLEY

Watch your mouth. It's not like you have anything else to do tomorrow?

AVA

How do you know?

SHELLEY

Do you?

AVA

Maybe?

SHELLEY

Just do it. Please.

AVA

Sure.

SHELLEY

Thank you. That's all I ask. In exchange, you can order whatever you want for dinner.

AVA
Anything, but pizza. I'm going to
be lactose intolerant if I eat any
more of that stuff.

Shelley leans in and kisses Ava on the forehead.

AVA (CONT'D)
Gross.

Shelley rolls her eyes and smiles.

SHELLEY
I love you too.

She rises and turns off the light. Darkness consumes the
room, all except for the light illuminating from the hallway.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)
I know that starting fresh isn't
exactly what you wanted. Hell, it
isn't what I wanted for you either.
But it's what we needed. At least I
think so.

Ava doesn't answer.

SHELLEY (CONT'D)
I hope you know that despite how
you might feel about me right now,
that one day you might understand
why we left. I'm just trying to do
what's best for you.

Shelley stands in the doorway. Without another answer, the
light from the hallway begins to disappear. There is a click
of the door and then complete darkness. Followed by silence.

Ava lays on her bed, underneath her covers. She stares at the
ceiling, eyes wide open. She exhales a loud sigh. After a
time, she rolls over. Falling asleep.

EXT. B.M.C. DURFEE HIGH SCHOOL - EARLY MORNING

Tommy and Ava both walk on the pathway to their new school.
They stop in their tracks shortly before the entrance.
Students continue past them, looking at them in confusion.

AVA
Sweet buttery Jesus, I don't want
to go in there.

TOMMY

Me either.

AVA

We could just... not go in there.

TOMMY

We could. We should. But we won't.

AVA

I know.

They look at each other for moment. Slowly they turn their heads forward again, breathing in and out simultaneously. At long last, they move along and into their high school.

INT. CLASSROOM - LATE MORNING

Ava takes her seat by the window giving her a perfect view of the outdoors. Students around her converse with one another, others fool around on their cell phones. The teacher in the class reads a book at his desk.

STUDENT

New girl.

Ava turns to make eye contact with a girl in the seat next to her.

STUDENT (CONT'D)

Figures you get the good seat on the last week of the school year.

AVA

Story of my life.

STUDENT

Speaking of which, what's your story? Why move here? This town's a shithole.

AVA

It seemed like the perfect shithole, so we figured why not.

The student pauses for a moment before laughing at Ava's response.

STUDENT

That's a good answer. You're hilarious.

She takes a moment and then leans closer. Trying to be serious, but failing completely.

JILLIAN

My name is Jillian by the way, but most call me Jilly.

AVA

The names Ava. People call me Ava.

JILLIAN rubs her chin.

JILLIAN

That makes sense.

AVA

I think so too.

JILLIAN

You got any plans for the summer?

AVA

To be honest, I haven't thought that far ahead. We just got into town yesterday.

JILLIAN

Wait. You got into town yesterday and your parents already made you go right to school? That's brutal.

AVA

My mom thought it would help to at least to go to school and meet some people my age.

JILLIAN

Sounds like a smart mom. My parents are always traveling for work so I don't see them very much.

AVA

Sorry to hear that.

JILLIAN

Thanks. I get to see them in a few days and then we are leaving for Hawaii for the summer.

AVA

Take me with you.

JILLIAN

Would if I could. It'll be nice to get away from here considering everything that's been happening the past few months.

AVA

What do you mean?

JILLIAN

Don't tell me. Your parents didn't tell you about the curse?

AVA

The curse?

JILLIAN

Probably best I don't say anything. We all try not to talk about it.

AVA

It?

The bell rings loudly and all the students bolt out of the classroom.

JILLIAN

I wouldn't worry too much. You're too old anyway. So, it's no problem.

Jillian smiles at Ava. She lifts her bag over her shoulder as she briskly walks towards the door and out of sight. Ava turns back to look out the window.

INT. OFFICE ROOM - AFTERNOON

Shelley stands by a window, looking out at the city below. The door behind her opens and a silhouette of a man appears from it.

MAN

Shelley Suzuki.

Shelley breaks her spacious stare and turns to look at the man.

SHELLEY

Yes! Good afternoon.

MAN

Good afternoon. Come on in.

Shelley enters the room and sits down at one of the chairs in front of his desk. The plaque reads: **CHRISTOPHER MCKELLAN.**

CHRISTOPHER

Thank you for coming in. We were really excited to have you here. Rowney talks really highly of you.

SHELLEY

That means a lot.

Christopher opens the folder in front of him, sifting through the many pages.

CHRISTOPHER

I've been looking your resume and cover letter over. Impressive stuff. Two bachelor's degrees. A masters. Volunteer service. A portfolio of writings and published work. Truly admirable.

Shelley smiles with confidence as Christopher continues to look at the papers in front of him. He closes the folder of materials.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

But it's doesn't really matter, does it?

SHELLEY

Excuse me?

CHRISTOPHER

Did you really think we were just going to give you a position here because of a bunch of words you wrote on a page? I don't care if you won a Pulitzer prize. You have to earn your place here.

Shelley fights back tears and does her best to maintain her composure.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

Look, I can offer you a janitorial position, where you can clean up the office. Maybe sit in on writing meetings while you do. It'll be on the job experience and eventually, you might be able to be a part of our editorial staff.

Shelley stands up. She maintains eye contact with Christopher.

SHELLEY

Thank you for the opportunity, but I don't think I'm a good fit for your team.

CHRISTOPHER

I don't believe you are either.

He holds his hand out towards the door.

CHRISTOPHER (CONT'D)

Good luck and may you find success elsewhere.

Shelley turns and walks out the office. She makes it to the elevator. Tears begin pouring down her face. Pressing the signal button, the door opens.

She pushes the ground floor button over and over again, as fast as she can. The doors begin to close and she collapses to the floor inside.

The doors slam shut.

EXT. OUTSIDE OF THE SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

Ava and Dave wait outside of the high school. Students walk by to head home for the day. A rack of bikes are all locked up next to them.

DAVE

One of the kids in my class got pulled into the office today.

AVA

That rowdy of a class? What'd the kid do?

DAVE

He threw his hat at one of the other students and told them to... pardon my language, "lighten the fuck up."

AVA

Don't swear. That's my thing.

DAVE

What? I didn't say it, he did.

AVA
Yeah, but you just said it.

DAVE
I was just telling you what
happened.

AVA
You could have paraphrased.

Dave stares at his feet as he rises.

AVA (CONT'D)
It's a good story though.

Dave looks up and over at Ava.

AVA (CONT'D)
You really should lighten up.

Dave smiles at his sister as Tommy rounds the corner. Halting
as he almost bumps into them both.

TOMMY
Oh! Hey guys. I hope you haven't
been waiting for too long.

AVA
Only a few minutes.

Tommy walks over to the rack. He unlocks his bike from the
chains.

TOMMY
You both have good first days?

DAVE
It was alright.

AVA
What he said.

TOMMY
It couldn't have been that bad.

Ava and Dave stare at Tommy.

TOMMY (CONT'D)
(shrugs)
Fine, it sucked.

The Suzuki family walks down the sidewalk away from the
school.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

I really don't see why we had to start school on the last week of the year. It seems kind of pointless.

AVA

Yeah, especially considering you graduate in a few weeks.

TOMMY

That too. I probably won't even go to the ceremony.

DAVE

Why not?

TOMMY

I don't know anyone here, it's not like I have a bunch of friends I can celebrate with. They're all back home.

AVA

This is our home.

TOMMY

You know what I mean Ava.

AVA

No, I really don't. I hated that town.

TOMMY

And you like this one?

AVA

What do you think?

TOMMY

Well I hate it here. It's dangerous.

AVA

It's dangerous everywhere. Whether we are here or there. It's all one cesspool.

TOMMY

Why do you have to say stuff like that?

Tommy hops on his bike.

TOMMY (CONT'D)

I'm going to work. I take it you
can get Dave home in one piece?

AVA

I think I can handle it.

Ava studies Tommy.

Tommy pauses for a moment. He has something to say, but refrains. He pushes forward and rides quickly on his bike down the street. Ava watches as he zips around a corner and out of sight.

Dave looks up at Ava, who stares confidently onward.

DAVE

You shouldn't treat him like that.

AVA

Like what?

TOMMY

Like he's dad.

AVA

I don't treat him like that.

Dave shuffles his backpack as he looks at the pavement below.

DAVE

I miss you Ava.

AVA

What do you mean? I'm right here.

DAVE

No, you aren't. You've been gone
for a while now and it makes me
sad.

Dave starts to walk ahead of Ava. She thinks on what he said for a moment, before she follows him.