

ANOTHER ONE BITES
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A high school campus, Mesa, Arizona. January, 1989.

ACT I

RECITATIVE

Another One Bites The Dust, played backwards, reveals a
“hidden message.”

BACKMASKED RECORD
It's fun to smoke marijuana.

NARRATOR
Officer Dunphy gave a presentation about drugs to Mel's chemistry class. He played records backwards and showed them a crack pipe. No one questioned his expertise. After playing *Another One Bites the Dust*, he frowned and crossed his arms, as if to say, “I rest my case.” Mel cracked up.

OFFICER DUNPHY
You find this funny? You won't be laughing when the dope fries your brain.

NARRATOR
She doodled in her notebook and tried not to laugh. Mel's teacher, Mr. Thornhill already hated her because one time she called him:

MEL
Mr. Wormhole.

NARRATOR
He had gone on a tangent about relativity and Star Trek. His attempt to amuse his class flopped but her nickname for him stuck. Even the other teachers called him Mr. Wormhole.

A snippet from the *Star Trek* opening:

STAR TREK VOICE OVER
...to boldly go where no man has gone before.

NARRATOR
Mel went to Dickson High School in Mesa, Arizona. She had moved to Arizona from Michigan after her father died five years ago in 1984.

She lived in a one bedroom apartment with her Mom. They had to share a bed. But it was better than when they had lived in her uncle's basement.

OFFICER DUNPHY

I don't even need to play this record backwards.

NARRATOR

Officer Dunphy played a Dead Kennedys record. The song was about a mortician who could not afford groceries for his family. He fed them meat from cadavers.

OFFICER DUNPHY

These Rock 'n' Roll cannibals want you to worship Satan!

NARRATOR

Mel's English class read *A Modest Proposal* by Johnathan Swift last year. Mel found the song's allusion and political message obvious. The lyrics even included the word "Reagonomics."

The bell rings. Class is over.

NARRATOR

Mel packed up her notebook. Officer Dunphy walked by and said:

OFFICER DUNPHY

You'd sure look pretty if you didn't hide your face behind those bangs.

Officer Dunphy whistles a tune as he walks away.

NARRATOR

Mel tried to de-code a secret message in the tune Officer Dunphy whistled as he walked off. This happened last week. Mel was still mad about it today when told to go to the gym for a drug assembly. It was the third one this year—not even counting Officer Dunphy's presentation. Mel asked her friend Yolanda to ditch with her.

DUET

MEL

Hey Yolanda
Let's go on a
big adventure
have fun together

YOLANDA
 Sorry Mel
 I'll get expelled
 if I'm caught ditching it
 so I'm not risking it

RECITATIVE

NARRATOR
 Mel gave up and trudged down the hallway. She felt claustrophobic because the school had no windows. She thought they had designed the school to feel like a prison. But her Mom told her:

MEL'S MOM
 Honey, they just want to save money on AC.

NARRATOR
 Mel opened the door. It was January and about 60 degrees. She wore an unbuttoned flannel over a T-shirt. Mel wandered past a building under construction and ended up at the smoking section. Next to the entrance there was a porta-potty.

MEL
 Eww! Gross!

NARRATOR
 Mel looked out at the Superstition Mountains. Suburbia seemed even worse in the desert. The sunshine exposed the banality of it all. Even outside she felt trapped. Mel unzipped her bag and grabbed a joint. Her heart pounded so loud she could almost hear it. She put the joint back.

ARIA

MEL
 What's up with the smoking section?
 Doesn't it contradict
 the school's obsession
 with sobriety?

Pot's my medication
 because it's perfect
 for my depression
 and anxiety.

They want you to “Just Say No,”
unless you buy tobacco.
With Reagan there’s no regrets
about big money cigarettes.

RECITATIVE

NARRATOR

Mel reached back in her bag for the joint. She flicked her lighter on and off. She wanted to calm down and have some fun. But this was risky. She paced along the wall.

MEL

Fuck it.

NARRATOR

She lit the joint and thought about Tina, her best friend back in Michigan. It had been so long since they last talked that Mel felt ashamed to call her. She looked at the porta-potty. She hadn’t used one since a traumatic incident her last month in Michigan.

ARIA

MEL

They said our field trip was a rare privilege
to visit Henry Ford’s Greenfield Village
Mrs. Bloom said, “Look at these
historic buildings and Model T’s.”

When it was time to leave I had to go
I had to use a porta potty, you know.
It was so gross, but what could I do?
I held my breath till I was through.

Then I heard laughter and noise,
it was Curtis and a bunch of boys.
Curtis shouted “I don’t know karate,
but I can jam this porta-potty.”

I tried the door but it was stuck
 I could not believe how bad this sucked
 the door didn't budge, but I kept trying
 pushing and pulling, screaming and crying

After, like, forever Mrs. Bloom
 finally rescued me from the room
 Then she told me I ruined the afternoon
 and said, "I'm so glad you're moving soon."

RECITATIVE

NARRATOR

Mel heard whistling and she had a coughing fit.

Officer Dunphy whistles the same tune as before.

NARRATOR

Was that Officer Dunphy? Why was he there? Mel could get arrested and expelled.
 There was only one place to hide. She opened the door to the porta-potty and got
 inside.

ACT 2

RECITATIVE

NARRATOR

Mel tried to hold her breath. How long would that cop be there? She relit the joint
 and hoped the smoke would cover the sewage aroma. She recalled the stench of the
 cop's breath when he leaned over her desk. Mel's fear morphed into rage.

ARIA

The EQ and reverb simulate the space of the porta-potty.

MEL

Why are they hounding kids for using drugs?
 Cops are nothing but fascist thugs,
 creeping around our classrooms,
 making me hide in this outdoor bathroom.

All this oppression makes me hate
 being forced to live in a right-wing state.
 It wasn't this bad in Michigan.
 I wish I could live there again.

RECITATIVE

NARRATOR

Mel took one last drag and threw the butt in the toilet. Sweat ran down her face. There was no place to hang her flannel so she kept it on. She looked for her Donna Pearlbottom novel, but it wasn't in her bag. She felt dizzy. The heat and smoke was getting to her.

MEL

Fuck it.

NARRATOR

Mel opened the door. Smoke drifted out—way more than expected. She waved it away. The air felt good, but it was cold. The sun was overcast. She didn't see the cop. She stepped outside. It was snowing.

ARIA

MEL

How is it snowing?
 What was I smoking?
 This must be magic.
 It makes me nostalgic.

RECITATIVE

NARRATOR

Something was wrong. It wasn't just the snow. Mel saw Maple Trees instead of Cacti. The buildings looked different, yet familiar. She buttoned up her flannel, crossed her arms, and headed back to school. Her teeth chattered. She reached for the door and realized:

MEL

This is not my school.

NARRATOR

This was the high school from her old neighborhood in Michigan.

MEL

Did the pot and porta-potty make a portal?

She opens the school door.

NARRATOR

Mel felt woozy. Kids rushed by on their way to class.

ARIA

MEL

I can't handle this situation

I'm having heart palpitations

this is really upsetting

I'm trembling and sweating

This is not what I expected

I'm feeling light headed

I can't get enough oxygen

how am I in Michigan?

Oh my god! Oh my god! Oh my god! Oh my god! Oh my god! Oh my god!

RECITATIVE

NARRATOR

Mel saw Tina, her old friend.

MEL

Tina! Hey Tina!

NARRATOR

She rushed toward Tina calling her name. It dawned on Mel that Tina could not hear her—that no one could see or hear her.

MEL

No!

NARRATOR

Mel screamed. No one reacted except a girl down the hall. She turned around. The girl had teased up bangs and a pink polo shirt. But aside from her hair, makeup, and clothes she looked the same as Mel. Time stood still. Mel walked toward the double and came face to face with herself.

ACT 3

RECITATIVE

NARRATOR

Mel's double looked puzzled. She opened her mouth but said nothing. Mel turned and ran off.

ARIA

MEL

Passing through a portal
is more paranormal
than a normal girl can take.
But facing her own double
is the sort of struggle
that puts her sense of self at stake.

RECITATIVE

NARRATOR

Since no one, but her double, could see her, Mel left school without trouble. She walked along the Flint River.

ARIA

MEL

I'm stuck in a parallel universe.
What did I do to deserve this?
I'm missing in Michigan
because I was wishing in
a portal, that I was living in
my old home in Michigan.

RECITATIVE

NARRATOR

Mel watched the fish swim and wondered what it was like to be a fish. She always felt stuck inside her mind. She used to pretend to be her kitten, Molly Ringworm. It was a fleeting break from being herself. But her Mom gave the kitten away when they moved.

ARIA

MEL

What's it like to be a cat
chasing a string?

What's it like to be a fish
swimming downstream?

What's it like to be a bat
flying in the night sky?

I want to see all of that
in my mind's eye.

RECITATIVE

NARRATOR

Mel realized she was near her childhood home. She walked into the backyard and climbed through her old bedroom window.

ARIA

MEL

Lavender walls and carpet like before
and my old Miss Piggy lamp from the dime store.

But there's a Milli Vanilli tape on the nightstand
I can't believe she likes this fake machine-like band.

On the dresser there's Aqua Net and magazines,
People, Cosmo, and Seventeen.

A pair of Guess jeans hang on her door
And McDonald's wrappers litter the floor.

RECITATIVE

NARRATOR

Seeing that her double was not vegetarian made her sick. A cat meowed and ran to her.

MEL

Molly Ringworm! You're so big now.

NARRATOR

Mel stepped into the hallway and picked her up. She purred. Mel saw her Dad's motorcycle helmet. Did that mean he was still alive? It made sense. His death had been the catalyst for their move. Mel heard the front door unlock.

MEL

Oh shit!

NARRATOR

Molly Ringworm leapt from her arms and scampered away. Mel ran back to the bedroom and hid in the closet. It was the double and her boyfriend.

CURTIS

Come on, Melissa! What's the big deal?

THE DOUBLE

It was, like, freaky. She totally looked like me.

NARRATOR

The boyfriend wore a football jersey and acid-washed jeans. He looked familiar.

CURTIS

Was she hot?

THE DOUBLE

Shut up, Curtis!

NARRATOR

Mel realized it was the same Curtis who had locked her in the porta-potty five years ago on that field trip.

MEL

Why's she with that asshole?

NARRATOR

Curtis took off the double's shirt and bra. They made out.

(pause)

The double sat up.

THE DOUBLE

She was so gross. Like, she had greasy bangs covering her face. Like—total burnout!

CURTIS

Whatever.

NARRATOR

Curtis started dry humping the double.

A car pulls into the driveway.

THE DOUBLE

Oh shit! My Dad's car. They're home early.

NARRATOR

She put her top back on.

CURTIS

I should go.

NARRATOR

The double walked him out. Mel wondered if her parents could see her. So far she was only visible to her cat and the double.

MEL

Dad, there's so much I want to tell you.

NARRATOR

Mel heard shouting. The double returned with a Walkman. She put on headphones, laid down, and flipped through a magazine.

MEL'S MOM

He's just a friend. You're acting crazy.

MEL'S DAD

Don't walk away from me, you stupid bitch.

MEL'S MOM

Get your hands off me!

NARRATOR

Her parent's bedroom door slammed shut. Mel cried. Her double showed no emotion. She tossed the magazine and turned off the light. Mel could see nothing in the darkness. She wiped her nose on her sleeve.

MEL

I hope the music covers up my sobbing.

NARRATOR

Sweat trickled down her back. She took off her flannel. The house fell quiet. Mel's tears dried and she felt calm. She cracked open the door for some air. The light was harsh. She stepped out of the closet onto gravel.

She squinted and saw the Superstition Mountains on the horizon. A building was under construction next to the smoking section. She turned around and saw the porta-potty. She was home.

THE END