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The Burgundy Letter**

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# THE BURGUNDY LETTER

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT BY  
*Kirk Shimano*



*The Burgundy Letter*

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## Characters

IM + 2W + 6 Any Gender + 0-100 “The Anonymous” characters

**HESTER90:** Female, once one of the most popular girls in school, now a social outcast. She remains sure of herself even as her outlook is tinged by a deep remorse.

**PEARL** 🧡💧: Female, Asian heritage, happiest when immersed in the minutiae of any topic. While those who don’t know her may see her as solitary, she sparkles with like-minded individuals.

**CLIMATE\_DALE:** Male, though already a future head of state in his own mind, he is shockingly unaware of who he is today.

**ROCHI:** Pearl 🧡💧’s best friend and fierce defender, a firm believer in justice.

**THE MODERATOR:** Hot air and not much else.

**HAWTHORNE:** Our guide through this story.

**TOWN SLOWPOKE:** Always five steps behind.

**TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL:** Always five steps ahead.

**TOWN WORRYWART:** Wait, how many steps are there? Did I miss one?

**THE ANONYMOUS:** Anywhere from zero actors to a hundred – a faceless body with an unsettling presence, full of judgment and devoid of sympathy.

## Casting Notes

All characters in this play are of high school age.

PEARL 🧡💧 must be played by an actor of Asian heritage, as her experience as a racial minority is a key element of the story. The genders of CLIMATE\_DALE (male) and HESTER90 / PEARL 🧡💧 (female) are also significant, as this informs online social dynamics.

There are no other restrictions to the casting of any other character in this piece.

## Setting

Online. Some time ago.

## **Set Description**

A single set is used for the duration of the play. It is mostly empty, with perhaps a few embellishments to suggest the inside of a computer.

There is a single, large upscale monitor (or any other similar mechanism) that is used to display static images and text. This is in the view of the characters as well as the audience.

The stage includes a raised platform where multiple actors can stand - to be elevated as they speak to the masses or degraded in public shame. Should a platform not be available, a series of boxes or other elements may be substituted: the key feature is that these are used to set a character apart from the crowd.

On the side of the stage there is an area from which HAWTHORNE narrates. It may include a lectern or a chair. This area is apart from the story, and the other characters never interact with it.

## **Author's Note**

The play is written so that the specific slur used is not important, and I would encourage a staging in which no specific slur is mouthed or otherwise used - even if it means a theatrical moment when the clap is used but no words are spoken on stage.

From a narrative perspective, I want to ensure the audience doesn't get stuck on a question of how offensive the slur is. If a specific word is used, I think some in the audience might then wonder "Well, it wasn't that bad" or "No, that word is too offensive", and have their thoughts occupied with an evaluation of the slur itself. Instead, I want this to be a story where everyone acknowledges a wrong has been committed, then we explore the aftermath.

## PROLOGUE

*The stage is set as it will be for the entirety of the show. At centre is a giant monitor or any other mechanism that allows you to display a static image.*

*The rest of the stage should give the impression of being inside of a computer online. Interpret that as you will, but a few strips of neon lights probably wouldn't hurt.*

*HAWTHORNE enters, taking a spot at the front of the stage, perhaps seated in a comfortable chair or standing at a podium. They will remain there for the story's proceedings, apart from the action, serving as our guide.*

HAWTHORNE: I didn't go searching for this story. I don't know who was right and who was wrong. I just think it deserves to be heard. It all starts with the world's ugliest website.

*A very ugly website occupies the monitor.*

I had a free period in the afternoon so I was assigned to help out in the library. They found out I know something about computers, like they always do, so they thought it would be a good idea for me to redo the school site. Websites aren't really my thing, but they obviously needed the help.

*As HAWTHORNE describes the various pages, the slides update to match.*

I wanted a fresh start but I thought I'd archive the old pages first. It was pretty boring. Someone who really wanted the world to see their recipe for creamed spinach cupcakes. Web page for the Spanish club before it disbanded – ¡Adios! I sorted it out, wrote it to disk, and forgot about it. It all tended to blend together until one day...

*The monitor changes to show a red 'A'.*

I don't know what it was about it, but it stood out. It wasn't tagged with any of the typical metadata. The file name, like the image, was just the letter A. This wasn't just a cut and paste job from a text editor, either. No, someone took the time to sculpt this one character. There was something almost... menacing about it. I tried to delete it but somehow I just couldn't. I came back to it day after day, staring at it. I looked at the logs to find who had created it and who had accessed it. I asked the librarian

about it and picked the brains of some of the longer tenured members of staff. It became an obsession of mine, to find the history of this one relic.

*The monitor goes blank.*

The results, my dear audience, are what I bring to you today. It is a harrowing tale, a story of a shame that the community never forgave. It is a history of who we were and how it makes us who we are today. So now, if you will indulge me, let us look back into our past, diving deep into our history. A time when, perhaps, the world seemed a bit simpler: the year two-thousand fifteen. Our story begins with a very, very public event.

HAWTHORNE *points at the monitor. It ignites with the word “SHAME” in bold, simple capital letters.*

## SCENE I: THE SHAMING

*THREE TOWNSPEOPLE file onto stage, abuzz with a whispered excitement.*

TOWN WORRYWART: Are we late? Did we miss it?

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: If we missed it, then why would everyone still be here?

TOWN SLOWPOKE: What are we here for again?

TOWN WORRYWART: I hope we didn't miss it.

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: It's a public shaming.

TOWN SLOWPOKE: Who's being shamed?

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: Hester Ninety.

TOWN SLOWPOKE: Why is Hester being shamed?

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: Hester Ninety is being shamed because...  
*(realizes they don't know the answer)* well they'll read off the offence as part of the shaming.

TOWN WORRYWART: Unless we missed it. I was late to the last one and I missed the reading of offences and I just had to pretend I was as offended as everybody else. I put on my best offended face and was, like, “Boo! Yes it's so terrible you did that thing! Shame!” Oh I really don't want to have to do that again.

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: Shh! It's starting!

*THE ANONYMOUS* slide into view. These can be represented by actors dressed in robes and masks, scarecrow-like figures propped on sticks, projections on the monitor, or any combination of the above. Whatever form they take, they are oppressive and faceless.

*THE ANONYMOUS* frequently act in unison, moving about the stage in a mass and expressing their displeasure. At times, a single member or a smaller group may break off to hurl a specific insult or interact with another character, but if they do they retreat back to the group at the first moment possible, lest they be singled out themselves.

*HESTER90* enters, ashamed. She wears a cape obscuring her body and tries to avoid making eye contact with *THE ANONYMOUS*, but finds it impossible to escape their omnipresence.

*THE MODERATOR* enters and marches next to *HESTER90*. *THE MODERATOR* affects an air of sorrow, though it is clear they enjoy being the centre of attention.

**THE MODERATOR:** Salutations. It is my solemn duty as the moderator of *The Field* to ensure that –

*HAWTHORNE* jumps to attention and addresses the audience. *THE MODERATOR* continues to speak but their voice isn't heard.

**HAWTHORNE:** It just occurred to me that you, the audience, my audience, might need a bit of context here. This... (*indicates everything onstage*) None of this is actually a real place. What you're seeing is a representation of *The Field*, which is an online community that was way popular back in the olden days. Hence the decor. But yeah, everyone spent so much time on here that it might as well have been a real place. If you lost your status in *The Field* then well... I suppose you'll see. Anyway, sorry for interrupting, but I just wanted to make sure we were all cool. (*looks to THE MODERATOR*) The Moderator is kind of a gas bag, anyway. Believe me, you didn't need to hear the whole speech to get the gist. Anyway, thanks, sorry, bye.

*HAWTHORNE* leaves and *THE MODERATOR*'s speech resumes.



THE MODERATOR: – and so on to the subject at hand. It is my sworn obligation to –

*THE MODERATOR suddenly breaks character, revealing them to be the teenager they actually are. They shout at an unseen person in the real world.*

THE MODERATOR: (*teen voice*) MOM! I TOLD YOU I'M BUSY! I JUST HAVE THIS THING THAT – NOO! PEPPERONI IS GROSS! FOUR CHEESE... please.

*THE MODERATOR clears their throat and returns to character.*

It is my sworn obligation to preside over the case of one Hester Ninety.

*THE MODERATOR gestures for HESTER90 to stand on the platform. When she reaches it, the monitor changes to display the name 'HESTER90' in bold letters.*

Our community has long endeavoured to remain one of inclusivity, where we vow to treat each other with dignity, free of racial prejudice. It is my sad duty to report that Hester Ninety has broken this vow. The transgression occurred one afternoon when Hester Ninety was broadcasting the contents of her computer desktop in order to get feedback on a presentation.

*THE MODERATOR points to the monitor, which changes to show a computer's desktop display. While much of the window is displaying a slide deck for a climate change discussion, there are other computer windows visible.*

At first glance, this may seem unobjectionable - perhaps even a benefit to the community. But when Hester Ninety shared her screen, she had forgotten...(*takes a dramatic pause*)...WHAT SHE HAD REVEALED IN THIS CORNER OF THE SCREEN!"

*THE MODERATOR points to a corner of the monitor, which zooms in on a series of chat bubbles, though the specific text is pixelated and unreadable.*

THE MODERATOR: We have obscured the text in this chat conversation so that we do not repeat the attack on our community. Hester Ninety, do you recall what you said?

HESTER90: (*truly ashamed*) Yes, I do.

THE MODERATOR: Let us replay the moment in question.

*There's a stark lighting change or other indicator to show that we are in a different time. HESTER90, now at ease, jokes with a friend. Her cohort in the conversation is obscured, perhaps offstage. They laugh.*

HESTER90: ...and so, of course Pearl got the highest grade on the Calc test.

OTHER VOICE: That sucks! You studied so hard!

HESTER90: I know, right? Every time. A+ in Calc but B- in English. She's such a <CLAP>.

*The last word is covered by a simultaneous CLAP from everyone onstage – the theatrical equivalent of a bleeping.*

OTHER VOICE: LOL. Yeah. <CLAP>s are the worst.

*We return back to the present. HESTER90's amusement has changed to horror.*

THE MODERATOR: Hester Ninety – we do not tolerate the use of hateful language in our community.

HESTER90: I know, but I never meant to –

THE MODERATOR: And are you aware that the term which we have just witnessed is tied to a history of racial persecution?

HESTER90: Yes, but I don't really think that –

THE MODERATOR: Hester Ninety, do you deny making this comment?

HESTER90: No, I do not.

*The ANONYMOUS hiss in contempt.*

Look, it was a private chat! I mean, I'm really sorry for anyone who saw this and was offended, but it was just a dumb joke to a friend. I mean, look at me. You know I'm not here to spread anti-Asian hate. I swear, that's not really who I am.

*The ANONYMOUS hisses louder.*

THE MODERATOR: But as we can see, there were two in this conversation. Hester Ninety, will you name your colluder, so that they too will share in judgment?

HESTER90: No. I'm not going to drag anyone else into this.

THE MODERATOR: But surely justice would be better served by your colluder coming to share your place at this very moment?

CLIMATE\_DALE: (*offstage*) Excuse me!

*CLIMATE\_DALE appears and makes his way to the stage. He nods at members of the ANONYMOUS and makes eye contact with the TOWNSPEOPLE, who are clearly star-struck. THE MODERATOR is also pleased by his appearance, welcoming him to the stage.*

I am sorry for the interruption, but may I please have a word?

TOWN SLOWPOKE: (*whispering*) Omigosh! I can't believe that! Is it really? Is that...?

*HESTER90 makes room so that CLIMATE\_DALE can stand beside her on the platform. The monitor changes to read "CLIMATE\_DALE."*

THE MODERATOR: Climate Underscore Dale! A welcome voice even in this dark time.

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: (*whispering*) He added 'climate' to his name just to show how serious he is about fighting climate change. He's had more posts than any other member of *The Field* has ever had.

TOWN WORRYWART: (*whispering*) Is he looking this way? I think we just made eye contact! Am I allowed to do that?

THE MODERATOR: As a leader in this community, are you here to compel Hester Ninety to reveal her co-conspirator?

CLIMATE\_DALE: While I am certain that we all abhor the words that were spoken, what would we gain by dwelling on this? Shouldn't we leave the past in the past and focus our energy on the future?

*THE ANONYMOUS mutter with interest – some are slightly swayed by this argument, but the MODERATOR is unmoved.*

On that note, I would like to remind you all that we will be meeting here in this same location, one month from now, for my annual Earth Day address.

*Enthusiastic applause from the audience.*

Yes, so you all in agreement with me? We should move on and –

THE MODERATOR: There is still the damaged party. Can we please have Pearl –

ROCHI: Hold up!

*ROCHI pushes through the ANONYMOUS to the stage.*

THE MODERATOR: *(teen voice slipping through)* Ugh! Can't I just, have one minute to make my point? Who are you even?

ROCHI: I'm RoChi.

*ROCHI points to the monitor, which changes to read "RoChi" – the presentation is a bit splashier than the other names.*

Rhymes with "mochi," except there's no ice cream inside of me – just venom. I do all the graphics here.

*ROCHI points again and it reads "KABLAM!"*

But that's not why I'm here. What's important is that the person you're about to summon here is my friend, and she doesn't deserve to be humiliated. So the show's done. Lights up. No post-credits scene. Everyone can go home.

*The ANONYMOUS start to leave, murmuring.*

THE MODERATOR: While your opinion, like all opinions, is welcomed here in *The Field*, I'm afraid we don't have any alternatives here. And only the Moderator can declare when an event is done. So...

*THE MODERATOR shoos ROCHI off the stage.*

Pearl Two Hearts Emoji Spouting Whale Emoji, would you please join us.

*PEARL 🧡💙🐳 enters. Her bright clothes stand out amidst the gloom of the proceedings. She is unsure of how to carry herself, smiling awkwardly but then remembering her role. ROCHI tries to stop her but PEARL 🧡💙🐳 waves ROCHI off, signalling she will be okay. She walks up to the MODERATOR. The monitor, changes to read "PEARL 🧡💙🐳."*

THE MODERATOR: Thank you for joining us, Pearl Two Hearts Emoji Spouting Whale Emoji.

PEARL 🧡💙🐳: Thanks. Er, I mean, you're welcome.

THE MODERATOR: Pearl, you were the subject of this message, were you not?

PEARL 🍷💧: Um, yeah, I think so.

THE MODERATOR: And was it clear that this was a prejudicial comment about your race?

PEARL 🍷💧: (*visibly uncomfortable*) Yeah...

HESTER90: We don't need to do this to her.

THE MODERATOR: You made her part of this story. This is your fault.

*The ANONYMOUS hiss.*

*(to HESTER90) The Field have decided that your punishment is two-fold. First, you shall serve Pearl for an hour a week, in whatever capacity she deems appropriate.*

PEARL 🍷💧: What the what? This is something that we're actually doing?

THE MODERATOR: I'm sure you will find a way to make her understand the damage she has done. But of course, her offence was not only against you, but against all of us in the community. For that, she deserves to be forever marked, as a public reminder of her sins. And thus, the second part of the punishment of Hester Ninety.

*THE MODERATOR dramatically reveals a bright letter 'A', but it's not the one we're expecting. It's in a terrible font and a little lopsided. It's also shown on the monitor.*

THE MODERATOR: She shall have to affix this to her avatar and have it boldly visible at all times. Hester90, attach this now.



*THE MODERATOR hands the letter to HESTER90, who holds it as if it was a dead rodent.*

HESTER90: Oh please. I may be shunned but I still have standards.

*HESTER90 pulls a marker and a pair of scissors and makes quick work of the letter, producing an 'A' that is much more aesthetically pleasing. She holds it up for inspection, then affixes it to her chest.*

*The ANONYMOUS hiss, more loudly than before.*

THE MODERATOR: Hester Ninety, may this emblem forever burn as brightly as the shame it represents. Now we shall – (*teen voice breaks through*) OKAY MOM! I'M COMING! Sorry everyone, gotta go. TTYL!

*THE MODERATOR runs offstage. ROCHI comes to PEARL   and walks with her offstage. HESTER90 stands, unmoving. CLIMATE\_DALE starts to leave but HESTER90 grabs him by the shoulder. Surprised, he waits as the ANONYMOUS quickly disperse.*

*The THREE TOWNSPEOPLE from the beginning of the scene remain.*

TOWN SLOWPOKE: I don't get it. What does the 'A' stand for?

TOWN WORRYWART: Yeah I was afraid that I was the only one who didn't get it. Maybe it's 'Accused'? Or 'A Big Racist'?

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: It doesn't stand for anything. It is only what it is.

TOWN SLOWPOKE: Ohhhhhhhh. I don't get it.

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: It doesn't matter if it's an 'A' or an 'F' or a smiling poop emoji. All that matters is that Hester has to wear it, and that we all know what it means.

TOWN SLOWPOKE: It is a very pretty scarlet colour, though.

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: Actually, it's not scarlet. Scarlet is a bright red, sometimes with a tint of orange. This is perhaps more of a burgundy.

HAWTHORNE: And thus began the tale of the Burgundy Letter.

*The THREE TOWNSPEOPLE leave.*

## **SCENE 2: THE AFTERMATH**

HAWTHORNE: Of course, the shaming was all anyone could talk about for some time afterwards. Those closest to the centre of the event were no exception.

*HESTER90 and CLIMATE\_DALE are now alone on stage. They begin to pace in a circle.*

CLIMATE\_DALE: I really should be going.

HESTER90: So you're not going to say anything?

CLIMATE\_DALE: I tried to help. Didn't you see me try?


HESTER90: I saw your lips moving. I'm not sure I saw you "trying."

CLIMATE\_DALE: It's not my fault you left that chat up on the screen.


HESTER90: Yeah. I know.

*ROCHI and PEARL  enter on the side of the stage. They begin to pace as well, in a separate conversation.*

ROCHI: Are you sure you're doing okay, Pearl?

PEARL : Yeah I'm fine. It's just weird, you know?

ROCHI: Yeah, for sure. Super weird. You're not actually going to meet with her, are you?

PEARL : Well they said that was part of the rules, so I guess I should...

ROCHI: Wait wait. Hold the casserole and put the pan back in the oven – 'cause this idea is underbaked. It's her punishment, not yours.

PEARL : Yeah, it's just weird.

*Our attention returns to CLIMATE\_DALE and HESTER90.*


CLIMATE\_DALE: I was really hoping it wouldn't end up so, you know, public.

HESTER90: Oh really? Because I was thrilled about how everything played out. Wouldn't change a thing. Let's do it again tomorrow!


CLIMATE\_DALE: I'm sure the worst of it is over.

HESTER90: That's good, because I'm not.


*Back to PEARL  and ROCHI.*

PEARL : What if I can help her? You saw how everyone looked at her.


ROCHI: It isn't your job to help her! Aren't you angry? I know I am.

PEARL : Yeah... no. I mean of course I'm not happy. You know what? I've actually never been called... that word before. Mostly it just makes me feel sad. Like maybe I thought I was one thing but now I found out I'm not.

ROCHI: Then you shouldn't force yourself to be more sad by talking to her.

PEARL : I don't think it works that way. I'm going to be thinking about it no matter what, so I might as well do what they told me.

ROCHI: Well if Hester Ninety gives you trouble you just let me know. I may be a vegan pacifist but that doesn't mean I can't bring the pain when needed.

PEARL : But you're not a vegan.

ROCHI: All the more reason for Hester Ninety to watch her twelve. Or six. Or all her numbers.

*ROCHI swings their arms wildly.*

PEARL : Graceful as always.

ROCHI: (*laughing*) Shut up!

*Back to HESTER90 and CLIMATE\_DALE.*

CLIMATE\_DALE: I think we're going to need to keep some distance for a bit.

HESTER90: Yeah. That makes sense. At least until this blows over.

CLIMATE\_DALE: Yeah... and maybe after, too.


HESTER90: So that's it. You're cutting me out of your life.

CLIMATE\_DALE: It's not that simple. I have to think about my future... and everything.

HESTER90: Everything is so simple for you.

*We return to ROCHI and PEARL .*

ROCHI: So do you have any idea who the colluder is?

PEARL : Would it really help at all if I did?

ROCHI: Maybe you're okay letting someone get away without being punished, but I'm not.

PEARL : I don't need you to –

ROCHI: This isn't for you, it's for me. Pearl, promise me you'll let me know if there's anything I can do to help you.

PEARL : I promise. Thanks RoChi.



*They engage in an elaborate best-friends-only handshake / high five combination before leaving, laughing.*

*Back to HESTER90 and CLIMATE\_DALE.*

CLIMATE\_DALE: I should go.

HESTER90: Okay then. Goodbye forever, I guess.

CLIMATE\_DALE: That's not what I meant.

HESTER90: Then tell me how I'm wrong.

*CLIMATE\_DALE has no answer, so he leaves.  
HESTER90 stands alone.*

### **SCENE 3: HESTER AT HER TRACKPAD**

*HESTER90 moves to the centre of the stage with trepidation.*

HAWTHORNE: In truth, the physical size of the letter was quite small. One could perhaps mistake it for a pop of colour, if unaware of the history. Yet to Hester, it felt as if it were written in two thousand point font, blinking a bright burgundy searchlight.

*THE ANONYMOUS make their presence known. Perhaps they swirl about HESTER90, close enough for her to feel their breath as they whisper. Or perhaps they are entirely offstage, their voices carrying from all directions. They hiss ominously, like a cat about to strike.*

THE ANONYMOUS: Nobody likes you.

THE ANONYMOUS: Why don't you disappear?

*HESTER90 circles around the stage, finding nowhere to hide.*

HAWTHORNE: If it were me, I would have signed off and never returned.

THE ANONYMOUS: You're just as ugly on the inside as you are on the outside.

THE ANONYMOUS: Maybe if you were better looking, you wouldn't try so hard to get attention.

HAWTHORNE: But she stayed because... actually, you should hear from her directly. In a blog post she wrote:

*HESTER90 steps out of the scene and addresses the audience directly.*

HESTER90: Of course I've thought about leaving *The Field*. If I deleted my account today, all of the Anonymous bullies would have to come up to me at school and say those things to my face – and we all know that none of them have the guts to do that.

THE ANONYMOUS: Go away and don't come back!

THE ANONYMOUS: Disappear!

THE ANONYMOUS: Delete your account!

HESTER90: But if I did that, I would be doing exactly what they wanted, and I refuse to give them that satisfaction. If I stay, I might be able to tough this out. If I go, I'm the girl who ran away, and that's what I'll be forever.

*HESTER90 re-enters the scene – still distraught, but a bit stronger than she was before.*

HAWTHORNE: And in this way Hester Ninety went about her life. And while *The Field* never softened its gauntlet of insults, Hester's stature did change in one unexpected manner. For in her simple emblem: this burgundy letter Hester had made herself, one could not but help to notice the spark of a talented graphic designer who had made an icon both simple and unique.

*The ANONYMOUS disperse as THREE TOWNSPEOPLE return, speaking in hushed tones.*

TOWN WORRYWART: Are you sure you want to do this?

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: I'm going to be an influencer and I really need a strong logo for my brand.

TOWN WORRYWART: But what will people say?

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: They'll say it's a fabulous design and not even think of it further. Maybe they'll even congratulate me for giving a chance to an unfortunate.

TOWN SLOWPOKE: Are you saying you want to work with Hester Ninety?

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: What do you think we've been talking about?

*The TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL approaches HESTER90. We see them discuss without words: the TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL's bearing animated and descriptive, hers reserved but helpful. It is clear they are pleased with her descriptions.*

HAWTHORNE: And so she had a great many requests for her skill. Perhaps it was exactly her status that attracted all of her customers, as if working with someone so low elevated their moral standing.

*THE TOWNSPEOPLE leave. HESTER90 is now alone onstage.*

HAWTHORNE: In the light, one could only marvel at Hester Ninety's strength, as she continued despite the constant stream of harassment. But in the darkness...

*The ANONYMOUS return.*

THE ANONYMOUS: Nobody needs you.

THE ANONYMOUS: You are not a person.

THE ANONYMOUS: You are garbage.

HAWTHORNE: And so it went.

*THE ANONYMOUS usher HESTER90 offstage.*

#### **SCENE 4: PEARL** 🍷🐳

*PEARL 🍷🐳 and ROCHI enter and make themselves comfortable, folding paper into origami as they chat indistinctly. HESTER90 enters, a little awkward and unsure whether she should interrupt.*

HAWTHORNE: As per her penance, Hester Ninety sought the victim of her transgression and tried to make amends.

HESTER90: Hello, Pearl Two Hear –

*PEARL 🍷🐳 gasps dramatically, scattering her folding paper about. She turns to see HESTER90 and flushes with embarrassment.*

PEARL 🍷🐳: OH! I didn't see you there. Hello, Hester Ninety.

HESTER90: It's fine, Pearl Two Hearts Emoji Spouting Whale Emoji. And please, call me Hester.

PEARL 🍷🐳: Yeah. Pearl's fine, too.

HESTER90 (*turning to ROCHI*): And you are...?

ROCHI: You can just think of me as one of those competitors on a reality television show.

HESTER90: I'm not sure I –

ROCHI: Not interested in making friends.

PEARL 🍷🐳: That's RoChi. I guess I'll be seeing you later?

*ROCHI is hesitant, but takes the hint. ROCHI leaves with a last flail of their arms to indicate they're ready to lay a smacking, if needed.*

HESTER90: Look, we both know I'm only here because I need to be. We can just sit here and do our own thing, if that's what you want.

PEARL 🍷🐳: Oh, okay.

HESTER90: I did want to apologize, though. I'm sorry you had to see that. You know I didn't mean it?

PEARL 🍷🐳: Yeah, I guess.

HESTER90: Cool, well I'm glad we're good.

*HESTER90 notices the papers scattered about and begins to pick them up.*

PEARL 🍷🐳: Oh okay. Thanks. You don't have to do that.

*HESTER90 places the papers in front of PEARL 🍷🐳. They sit. Quietly. PEARL 🍷🐳 makes a few half-hearted folds of paper. HESTER90 looks around, finding nothing to rest her eyes upon.*

*There's a moment of awkward silence. Followed by another.*

HESTER90: So...

*At first HESTER90 tries again to keep to herself, but then feels compelled to break the silence.*

The whale emoji in your name. Is that because you really like whales?

PEARL 🤍💙🐳: Nah, I don't really like whales. I really LOVE WHALES! (as PEARL 🤍💙🐳 dives into the wonders of whales, images can be shown on the monitor to accompany the wonders of nature she describes) I mean not just whales, really, all cetaceans. Did you know that the Kwakiutl tribe in what's now called North Vancouver believed that the souls of hunters transformed into orcas after they died? Or that the earliest known ancestors of whales that lived millions of years ago had four legs and were about the size of a large dog? Do you know what the fatty organ in a dolphin's forehead is called?

HESTER90: (confused) Um, is this like a joke or something?

PEARL 🤍💙🐳: No! That's why it's so amazing! This is totally scientific! IT'S CALLED A "MELON!" Isn't that great? Like some character from an old black and white movie. "Now that's using your melon!" Except that's what it's called! A melon! I actually don't know why but it's so great. Sorry I get pretty carried away when I'm excited. When I get interested in something I just read everything I can about it. And then as soon as I get the chance to talk to someone about it I just want to talk and talk and talk until they're sick of me.

HESTER90: Oh no it's great! I'm glad you have something that makes you so happy. When I was little I used to love going to the marine park and –

*PEARL 🤍💙🐳's mood darkens immediately. HESTER90 stops herself when she notices.*

PEARL 🤍💙🐳: An orca's life span is shortened by ten years when it's in captivity.

HESTER90: Oh. I didn't know.

PEARL 🤍💙🐳: Yeah, neither did I. That's why it makes me feel so sad. I used to love the marine park, too. And now the fact that I went there so much makes me feel like I did something bad that I can't take back.

HESTER90: Yeah...





PEARL 🤍💙🐳: I guess you've learned something about that.

HESTER90: That is certainly true.

PEARL 🤍💙🐳: Well, I'm glad you came.

*They continue to talk silently as HAWTHORNE steps in.*


HAWTHORNE: And so it became a regular event. Hester Ninety would come to visit and they would talk of many things, though of course certain topics would always re-emerge.

PEARL  : But of course it's not just about the cetaceans themselves – the people who study them are also soooo cool. Do you know how they tag whales for research? They'll have someone with a tag with these super strong suction cups and it'll be on the end of this long thing. So the person will have this tag. And when the whale flukes for just a few seconds they'll reach out and... (PEARL   mimes tagging a whale) Oh man, it's so cool. Like Pokémon, except the opposite, because the whole goal isn't to stuff them into a little ball, it's to understand what happens when they're free.



HESTER90: You're really special, did you know that? I honestly never would have expected anyone could make me this interested in whales.

PEARL  : Can I tell you another fact?



HESTER90: Please do!



PEARL  : Did you know that they put whale calls on Voyager?

HESTER90: You mean like the one they sent out into space?

PEARL  : Yep! And actually when some scientists wanted to train for talking with life on other planets, they started by studying whale calls. Because they felt like it was a good example of a complicated language that wasn't human at all and it might be good practice.

HESTER90: And did they figure it out?

PEARL  : Oh I wish! Nah, we still only know a little bit about what whales really mean.

*PEARL   makes a whale call. It isn't very good, and they laugh about it.*

PEARL  : You would think I would be better at this.

HESTER90: Here let me try.

*HESTER90 gives a whale call. It is actually surprisingly good.*

PEARL  : Whoa!

HESTER90: Maybe I'm ready to go into outer space!

HAWTHORNE: With each meeting the two grew closer, an unexpected flower in the unlikeliest of circumstances.

HESTER90: I've been reading more since we last met.

PEARL 🍷💧: That's great! Reading is the best!

HESTER90: Have you heard of "whale fall?"

PEARL 🍷💧: (*darkens*) I have. It didn't seem like something nice to read about. I don't like to read about beachings, either.

HESTER90: I know what you mean. When I first ran into the term I thought it was going to be a real bummer, too. I mean it starts when a whale dies.

PEARL 🍷💧: Can we talk about something else?

HESTER90: We can, but I'd really like to share this with you first.

PEARL 🍷💧: Okay.

HESTER90: So when a whale dies there's no one to give it a whale funeral, or whatever. So the body just... falls. But the ocean is so deep that the body has to fall for meters and meters, and the whale's body is so huge that an entire ecosystem develops around it as it sinks down. There are, like, entire species that have their whole life span during one whale fall. The more I think about it the more beautiful it is. Like on the surface you might see the whale take its last breath and think that was just the ending. But really, that last breath is just the beginning.

PEARL 🍷💧: Wow. That's a lot to think about.

*HESTER90 gets up to leave. PEARL 🍷💧 digs around in her papers and completes a few folds.*

PEARL 🍷💧: I want you to have this.

*PEARL 🍷💧 hands HESTER90 an origami whale.*

HESTER90: Oh no. I'm here for you, not the other way around.

PEARL 🍷💧: I want you to take this. Don't worry, I have like a million of them and can make more whenever I want.

*HESTER90 takes the origami whale.*

HESTER90: You're nicer than I deserve.

PEARL 🍷💧: I... uh...

*PEARL 📄💧 is frustrated, a flash of pain she can't quite put into words crosses her face.*

PEARL 📄💧: Hester, can I ask you something?

HESTER90: Of course. If it's about whale fall I think I already told you everything I know, though.

PEARL 📄💧: Oh yeah. Hah! No, not that. It's just that you've been so nice to me. And I don't understand how you can be so nice to me now when you were so mean to me before.

HESTER90: I don't have a good answer for you. I didn't know you then.

PEARL 📄💧: Then why did you think of me to pick on?

HESTER90: I didn't think. That was the problem. Pearl, I am so sorry.

PEARL 📄💧: People are sorry about lots of stuff. Too bad it doesn't really change anything.

HESTER90: I know. You're right.

*They ponder that for a moment, clearly making HESTER90 uncomfortable.*

PEARL 📄💧: Will you be coming again later?

HESTER90: Of course!

*HESTER90 leaves. PEARL 📄💧 returns to her folding.*

## **SCENE 5: THE MODERATOR'S FARM**

HAWTHORNE: But while friendship bloomed between these two, others remained skeptical that Hester Ninety deserved an opportunity for redemption. The most notable appeal went directly to the Moderator.

*THE ANONYMOUS enter, though not in the same intimidating swarm we have seen before. Instead, they form an agricultural scene - some emulating stalks of wheat, some playing farm animals. This can be further augmented by a pastoral scene displayed on the monitor. A particularly rambunctious member nips at THE MODERATOR's heel as a farm dog.*

*THE MODERATOR is thoroughly delighted by this scene, but to the rest of us it's rather unnerving.*



*ROCHI enters, clearly disgusted but trying mightily to not offend.*

ROCHI: Thank you, Moderator for allowing me to come to... this place.

*A member of THE ANONYMOUS lets out a long mooooo.*

THE MODERATOR: Do you play the Farming Game also? You'll have to send me your barn key! The co-op is the best part!

*A member of THE ANONYMOUS squeals like a pig.*

ROCHI: (*insincere*) Yes. I'll have to try it. Like, totally. But first I came to talk to you. About Pearl.

THE MODERATOR: Pearl? I don't think I know a Pearl.

ROCHI: She's been forced to spend time with Hester Ninety.

THE MODERATOR: Oh yes! Pearl! Is she causing a problem that I should know about?

ROCHI: Dude! That is two hundred and thirty times the opposite of what is happening here! Pearl is the one who is having Hester forced onto her!

THE MODERATOR: Please don't call me "dude"...

*CLIMATE\_DALE enters, stepping gingerly as to not squash the various ANONYMOUS posing as unharvested crops.*

THE MODERATOR: Oh, Climate Underscore Dale! I'm so sorry, it seems I double booked.

CLIMATE\_DALE: Completely understandable! I mean, it's easy enough to forget about our Earth Day events – we're only talking about the fate of the planet, after all. (*there's a glint in his eye for a tense moment*) But of course I'm only joking! (*they laugh insincerely*) And RoChi! It's good to see you!

ROCHI: I... wasn't aware you knew I existed.

CLIMATE\_DALE: But of course! You'll be providing the graphics for Earth Day, will you not?

ROCHI: Yeah I will not, not. I mean I am. I mean I already started.

THE MODERATOR: Climate Underscore Dale, you are so organized already that you barely need my assistance! I'm sure your Earth Day speech is going to be the best attended event of all!

*THE MODERATOR chops down a few ANONYMOUS stalks of wheat and sows some new seeds.*

CLIMATE\_DALE: As much as I appreciate the attention that you and everyone else have given to my many accomplishments, I only hope that this translates to the importance of the cause.

THE MODERATOR: So humble! It's no wonder we all love you! (*THE MODERATOR gives the ANONYMOUS dog an energetic scratch*) You know, an amusing thought just occurred to me. Have you noticed that you occupy the exact opposite position in our community from Hester Ninety?

CLIMATE\_DALE: (*laughs nervously*) Ah! Yes that's quite amusing. I don't often hear the two of us connected in the same thought, as you would expect.

ROCHI: So about Pearl's punishment –

THE MODERATOR: Well, why don't we consult Hester Ninety herself! I have been meaning to consult with her on a project I am funding.

*THE MODERATOR hits a few invisible buttons to summon HESTER90. She appears onstage, slightly befuddled, carrying a stack of papers.*

HESTER90: I thought I had another two days to work on your page. It's only a sketch now but I can show you – (*notices everyone else gathered*) This isn't about the page.

*HESTER90 notices THE ANONYMOUS and recoils. THE ANONYMOUS hiss quietly but stop as soon as THE MODERATOR turns around.*

THE MODERATOR: It is and it isn't. Please, let me see what you've made so far.

HESTER90: I didn't realize everyone would be here. I'll come back later.

THE MODERATOR: Nonsense! The community of *The Field* are just joining me in a round of The Farming Game. Surely you've played it?

HESTER90: I don't really do any group activities in *The Field*.

THE MODERATOR: Well that is a disappointment! I would hope you would be working on your reintegration into the community! (A member of *THE ANONYMOUS* hisses at *HESTER90*. *THE MODERATOR* doesn't notice.) It is such a joy for me to be the Moderator for such a giving people. Why, just the other day, my grandmother's refrigerator broke and *The Field* immediately banded together to buy her a new one.

HESTER90: Here's what the banner graphic will look like. I think you'd like it best if it were a mix of green and –

THE MODERATOR: I am sure that I will love it! No one would ever doubt the quality of your work. But I must say, I have had concerns, and your lack of engagement in *The Field* only amplifies them.

ROCHI: You need to leave Pearl alone!

HESTER90: Leave her alone? But I thought that we –

ROCHI: She's too nice for her own good!

THE MODERATOR: Yes, yes. Thank you for bringing this to my attention, citizen. We shall let you know if we need further information.

ROCHI: But –

*THE MODERATOR dismisses ROCHI with a wave of their hand.*

ROCHI: You can try to shut me up, but it won't be so easy once I've found her colluder.

*ROCHI leaves, disgruntled. HESTER90 immediately seizes upon THE MODERATOR.*

HESTER90: Please don't ban me from seeing Pearl. She is the most kind person I know.

THE MODERATOR: Still, I worry. I believe that –

*THE MODERATOR stops suddenly. HESTER90 pokes them tentatively, no response.*

CLIMATE\_DALE: The Moderator's connection must be down. Happens all the time. Terrible WiFi.

*HESTER90 turns, realizing the implications of CLIMATE\_DALE's presence for the first time.*

HESTER90: There's a world where you could have been my friend, helping me through my isolation. But we know how that turned out. Pearl is the only person I have to talk to. Without her, I don't know what I would do. Maybe just post all of my thoughts publicly to *The Field*? You might be... disappointed if some of the things I knew were simply scattered around.

CLIMATE\_DALE: No one would believe you.

HESTER90: Hm. Probably...

*There is a note of a threat in her voice. It is clear that CLIMATE\_DALE is fully aware of what she means.*

*THE MODERATOR springs back to life.*

THE MODERATOR: So sorry! The WiFi in my place is terrible. Oh! Climate Underscore Dale! Do you have thoughts?

CLIMATE\_DALE: I agree with what Hester has to say. How could we expect her to improve if she is given no role model? Let Pearl be that guide to a better life.

*CLIMATE\_DALE attempts to nonchalantly lean on an ANONYMOUS wheat shaft but stumbles.*

THE MODERATOR: Well, far be it from me to second guess Climate Underscore Dale! Business adjourned, I have radishes to harvest!

*HESTER90 nods and quickly leaves the stage. THE MODERATOR leaves with THE ANONYMOUS, all having a glad time playing at their farm game. CLIMATE\_DALE turns to say something but finds that HESTER90 has already left. He stands alone on the stage.*

## **SCENE 6: THE ACTIVIST'S VIGIL**

*We are back to where we began. The monitor reads "SHAME" as it did in HESTER90's shaming.*

HAWTHORNE: It is nighttime in *The Field*. The public square is empty.

*The THREE TOWNSPEOPLE return. They speak in low voices, as if not wanting to wake up the sleeping townspeople about them.*

TOWN SLOWPOKE: Why is the shaming stuff up?

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: There's always someone who deserves to be shamed, so we must keep it at the ready.

TOWN WORRYWART: You don't think we'll ever be up there, do you?

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: It depends on if we ever do anything worth shaming.

TOWN SLOWPOKE: But we were the people DOING the shaming! That makes us the good guys, doesn't it?

*The TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL shrugs.*

*CLIMATE\_DALE doesn't notice the TOWNSPEOPLE as he approaches the platform.*

Ooooh! Look who it is!

TOWN WORRYWART: Do you think that he saw us? I wouldn't want him to think that we're stalking him.

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: That is one person we shall never see upon the shaming stand. Let us leave him to his business.

*THE TOWNSPEOPLE leave. CLIMATE\_DALE looks to see that no one is around. He then assumes his place on the platform where we once saw HESTER90 before.*

HAWTHORNE: Remorse drove him here. I cannot show you the inside of a heart, but I assure you that his was as chaotic as confetti in a snowstorm. So I'm not spoiling anything by telling you all that he was the other person on the end of that fated chat with Hester, right? I'm assuming you've all figured that out by now? Good. Well everyone in *The Field* hadn't at this point, and it was causing much distress for one Climate Underscore Dale.

CLIMATE\_DALE: (*shouting*) Hello? Is anyone out there.

HAWTHORNE: There wasn't.

CLIMATE\_DALE: Can anyone hear me?

HAWTHORNE: Not at that moment. Unless you count all of us.

CLIMATE\_DALE: I have a confession to make! It was me! I was the colluder! I belong up here with Hester Ninety!

*CLIMATE\_DALE laughs, the relief of releasing his secret overwhelming his other senses. An offstage*

*THUMP gets his attention and he stops. No one arrives.*

*Reassured that no one is around, CLIMATE\_DALE steps up and addresses a nonexistent crowd.*

Hello! Howdy there. Hi. Thank you all for coming. I couldn't ask for a nicer crowd for my final judgment. HA! But seriously, my life is terrible and I hate myself. I bet you can't guess how many nights I've stayed awake just wondering what would happen to my future career if anyone found out about this. Here's a hint: it's a lot. I thought it would kill me if you found out here, but really it's not so bad.

HESTER90: *(offstage)* But it gets worse.

*CLIMATE\_DALE attempts to hide again but finds himself more exposed than ever. HESTER90 enters, a wry smile on her face.*

HESTER90: Don't worry, it's not anyone that matters.

CLIMATE\_DALE: Hester! Will you come up here with me?

HESTER90: Sorry, but I don't have the time. I was just working on a late request for tomorrow.

CLIMATE\_DALE: Please, stand with me for a moment.

*HESTER90 looks and sees the terror in CLIMATE\_DALE's eyes. Against her better judgment, she steps up. He reaches for her hand, but she pulls it back.*

CLIMATE\_DALE: I wish I were as strong as you.

HESTER90: Hah. "Strong." That's definitely the word for a woman doing the work that you don't want to do.

CLIMATE\_DALE: It's not that I don't want to. It's that I can't.

HESTER90: Oh really? Just stay out here till the morning and I think you'll be amazed by what you can accomplish.

CLIMATE\_DALE: I'm not like you. I have plans –

HESTER90: Okay, it's been a moment. Goodbye.

CLIMATE\_DALE: No, wait! I didn't mean it like that. Sorry.

HESTER90: People are sorry about lots of stuff. Too bad it never changes anything.

CLIMATE\_DALE: What was it like being up here?

HESTER90: I don't remember.

CLIMATE\_DALE: I don't believe you.

HESTER90: And I don't care what you believe. Huzzah! What a match we make!

CLIMATE\_DALE: Stop acting like you don't care.

HESTER90: Only when you stop acting like you do.

CLIMATE\_DALE: Why do you have to throw everything back in my face?

HESTER90: Maybe I'm not. Maybe the problem is that even when I'm not saying anything about you, you just assume that everything is about you. "Climate Underscore Dale." I'm surprised you let the planet get first billing.

CLIMATE\_DALE: Please, I just want to know what it felt like up here.

HESTER90: The problem is that you're asking entirely the wrong question. What happened up here was one afternoon. A terrible one, but ultimately only a few hours to survive. Clearly I've just suppressed the whole experience. It's like something horrible that happened to someone else.

CLIMATE\_DALE: I am glad to hear that –

HESTER90: I'm not finished. Like I said, you were asking the wrong question. Being up here? This was nothing. Being the person who has been up here? Now that was terrible. It is terrible. It's not just one thing. It's not just one day. It's the rest of your life.

CLIMATE\_DALE: People forget, though, don't they? Eventually?

HESTER90: I'll let you know when it happens.

CLIMATE\_DALE: I really can't imagine it.

HESTER90: Then maybe you should try it some time.

CLIMATE\_DALE: I don't understand what difference it would make at this point! What is it that you want from me?

*ROCHI emerges from the shadow. It's unclear how much of the conversation they have witnessed, but it has been enough.*

ROCHI: COLLUDER!

CLIMATE\_DALE: I... you... no... not us... not me...

*For once, CLIMATE\_DALE is at a loss for words. He runs off.*

CLIMATE\_DALE: Have a good night!

*ROCHI is also about to leave but HESTER90 shouts.*

HESTER90: You're Pearl's friend, right?

ROCHI: Yes and you're not.

HESTER90: Please, you've got to understand. You don't know what it's like to be shamed.

ROCHI: I don't know what it's like, but I do know that he deserves it.

HESTER90: No one deserves it!

ROCHI: Including you?



HESTER90: Yes! I mean, of course, it's not my place to judge. But please, don't do this.

ROCHI: Stay fresh, Hester. I have work to do.



*ROCHI leaves.*



## SCENE 7: HESTER AND PEARL

HAWTHORNE: Hester, previously so cold in her solitude, was enflamed with panic. Was it her responsibility to prevent another from suffering her fate? She turned to the one person whose opinion she felt she could trust.

*HESTER90 enters to find PEARL   absorbed in reading a book.*



HESTER90: Pearl! I've been looking for you!

*PEARL  , distracted, looks up and notices HESTER90.*

PEARL  : Oh hey! Sorry. I was just reading about –

HESTER90: Pearl, I need your advice.

*PEARL   closes her reading.*

PEARL  : Really? You want advice from me?



HESTER90: You're the only one I trust.

PEARL 💖💧🐳: Wow, it's just that no one ever – ignore that. I've been reading more about how to be a strong individual and I am going to stop selling myself short. So. What is your question?

HESTER90: The other person in the chat with me. I think they're about to be exposed and I don't know what I should do.

PEARL 💖💧🐳: I don't think you want to hear what I'm thinking right now.

HESTER90: Please, Pearl, that's why I'm here.

PEARL 💖💧🐳: I think we should spend less time feeling sorry for people who do racist things and more time thinking about people who are victims of racism.

HESTER90: I didn't mean –

PEARL 💖💧🐳: I wasn't finished. When I hear about something I just can't stop thinking about it, and I keep reading and reading until I've learned everything that I can. Sometimes that leads me to really cool stuff like the cetacean that travelled the most oceans in the least amount of time. But sometimes it leads me to reading about the history of persecution.

HESTER90: Oh Pearl...

*PEARL 💖💧🐳 opens her reading and begins looking through her notes.*



*NOTE: Pearl's monologue has two versions, one based in the history of Chinese Canadians and one based in the history of Chinese Americans. The production should choose the variant that is more applicable to the audience.*

**CANADIAN VERSION:**



PEARL 💖💧🐳: Did you know that British Columbia had a special tax that they only put on Chinese immigrants who were coming into the country? In the end the government collected over NINE MILLION DOLLARS – and that was, like, old timey money, so you know it's actually even more than it sounds. And then Chinese Canadians didn't get to vote till nineteen forty seven. I know that sounds like a long time ago, but do you know a bowhead whale can live two hundred years? That means that if I ever meet a bowhead whale – and oh by the way, I really hope I get to some day – then more than half of its life would be spent in

a world where people who look like me can't vote. My rights are less than half a bowhead whale old.



US VERSION:

PEARL  : You've heard about the Chinese Exclusion Act, right? Where they made it illegal for anyone to come here from China? Do you realize the only reason they ever got rid of it was because they wanted China's help in World War II? And even then, they only allowed in one hundred and five people. One hundred and five! That's, like, fewer than the number of kids in our school who are allergic to peanuts. Oh and by the way, this all happened in nineteen forty three. I know that sounds like a long time ago, but do you know a bowhead whale can live two hundred years? That means that if I ever meet a bowhead whale – and oh by the way, I really hope I get to some day – then more than half of its life would be spent in a world where people who look like me were excluded. My rights are less than half a bowhead whale old.



HESTER90: Wow, Pearl. That's a lot.

PEARL  : It is. And now you're a part of that.

HESTER90: Pearl... I mean, of course. I never thought of it that way.



PEARL  : You know what's extra messed up? I feel lucky. Because for some other people racism is staring them in the face every single day and I had to go to the Internet to learn more about it. I'm lucky because the racism against me stays hidden in the background. Except when it isn't.

HESTER90: I wish I could do more than tell you how sorry I am.



PEARL  : Well maybe you should start by revealing this other person. Seems like maybe that would be a way of showing you learned it was wrong.

HESTER90: Oh Pearl... I want to help you. But that... If you had to live through what I did. The constant degradation.

PEARL  : Oh, I know something about it.

*THE ANONYMOUS start to gather. They appear to approach HESTER90, but instead circle around PEARL  .*

THE ANONYMOUS: What's the matter, can't take a joke?

PEARL  : You know, these people, they don't operate based on reason. They may say they hate you for what you said about me,

but that doesn't stop them from saying things to me that are even worse.

THE ANONYMOUS: Why don't you go back to where you came from?

PEARL 🍷🌊: I haven't suffered to the same extent as you. But I've suffered.

HESTER90: Pearl. I am so, so sorry.

PEARL 🍷🌊: Yeah, well, good for you, I guess.

*PEARL 🍷🌊 leaves, taking THE ANONYMOUS with her.*

## SCENE 8: THE REVELATION:

*We return to the public square from the first scene. The monitor reads SHAME once more, though now it has an Earth Day spin to it.*

HAWTHORNE: *The Field* was once again set for a public shaming. Today, though, the shame was shared by all of us – an entreatment for us to share in the responsibility for doing better to care for our planet. By the day's end, though, the target of shame would be much more individual.

*The THREE TOWNSPEOPLE enter.*

TOWN WORRYWART: Are we late? Did we miss it?

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: You always ask that, and we're always early.

TOWN SLOWPOKE: But then where is everyone?

*THE ANONYMOUS make a sudden entrance, filling the room to capacity.*

TOWN SLOWPOKE: There they are!

TOWN KNOW-IT-ALL: Climate Underscore Dale's Earth Day addresses always get the best turnouts! Of course, it's no surprise given how dedicated he is to the cause!

*CLIMATE\_DALE approaches the platform. He waves eagerly to the crowd, attempting to project an aura of confidence, but his darting eyes make it clear he is expecting an ambush.*

*PEARL 🍷🌊 also arrives, taking a position in the back.*



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