

ALPHA BETA GOLD

Written by

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OVER BLACK:

SUPER: CHICAGO, 1997

FADE IN:

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - CHICAGO - MORNING

YOUNG RUBY, eleven, walks beside her mother CARLA, forty. They walk down a clean and relatively safe street free from dealers, pimps, drug addicts and the homeless.

They approach a private elementary school and stop near the entrance of a schoolyard where well-dressed young girls play or holler or huddle in groups and gossip. Compared to the other girls, Ruby's clothes feel faded, worn, and out of style.

A SCHOOL MONITOR, thirty, walks among the children, supervising.

Carla stares down at her daughter. She wears a black cord with a small little butterfly pendant that looks like it was carved by wood and painted by hand. It was.

Young Ruby stares up at her mother for a long moment, wanting to say something but not knowing what exactly to say or how to say it.

CARLA

Go on, now.

YOUNG RUBY

Can't I stay with you?

CARLA

We've been through this.

She looks toward the elementary school, then back at Ruby. *No you can't.*

Go on.

Young Ruby turns to face the school. She hesitates, then walks into the schoolyard filled with preppy girls aged between five and ten.

A private school that is out of Carla's means, but Carla does what she can in life to make sure her girl has the best education and therefore...the best start in life.

Young Ruby walks toward a group of older girls. They whisper, giggle, and laugh as Young Ruby passes them.

Young Ruby stops at the stairs leading to the entrance of the school. She turns to watch her mother disappear down the road. Then she turns back around and enters the school.

INT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - CLASSROOM

Young Ruby listens to the teacher drone on and on about math as she draws a caterpillar in a forest in her math textbook.

SFX: The recess bell rings.

Students slam their books shut. Young Ruby does the same. Everyone pours out of the classroom. Young Ruby follows suit.

EXT. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - YARD

Young Ruby sits on the stairs leading to the entrance of the school reading a role playing game expansion book as a bunch of ten-year-old bullies suddenly step up to her.

BULLY

Your mom make your clothes?

Young Ruby ignores her. Continues to read.

BULLY (CONT'D)

Answer me or I'll tell my mother to
fire your mother!

The bullies laugh at this.

Defeated, Young Ruby looks up and nods. Her mother did make her clothes.

BULLY (CONT'D)

Thought so.

The bully yanks Young Ruby's dungeons and dragons book from her hands.

What's this?

The bully scrunches her face as she turns the page. She can't believe a girl would read such a book.

You're such a weirdo.

She rips the pages and scatters them in the air. Young Ruby just watches them float down to the ground. She hardly reacts to this, as though it were an everyday affair.

Young Ruby is resigned to the fact that she will be bullied more for personality and socio-economic reasons than the color of her skin.

The fact that Young Ruby loves to be alone and create on her own causes the greatest discomfort amongst other girls who crave social interaction and acceptance.

Young Ruby to these other girls is seen as the loner whereas she see herself as the 'lifer'...cherishing her alone-time for opportunities of inspiration, creation and imagination.

Ultimately, Young Ruby is unknowingly discovering an unspoken and misunderstood discrimination against 'loners' or 'creators' who often need to momentarily step away from the group in order to do something great and inspiring for them.

SFX: The bell rings to indicate recess is over.

All the kids including the bully rush back inside the school. All except Young Ruby.

The school monitor notices Young Ruby hasn't budged. Even the monitor has an unspoken aversion to the 'loner'.

SCHOOL MONITOR

Come on, Ruby!

YOUNG RUBY

Coming.

The school monitor walks inside.

Young Ruby stands, but instead of walking toward the school she walks toward the road.

SFX: The second bell rings to indicate all students should be in class.

Young Ruby continues down the street. She walks and walks, taking in the posh, well-to-do neighbourhood.

EXT. OPULENT HOUSE

Young Ruby walks up toward an opulent home in the city. She walks up a small path, climbs a flight of stairs, and she stands before the door. She hesitates, then rings the doorbell.

A moment later Carla, in a housemaid uniform, opens the door and stares at her daughter with disbelief.

CARLA

What is this? What are you doing?
(BEAT) Ruby, you need to be in
school.

YOUNG RUBY

I could help you.

CARLA

I don't want you to help me. I want
you to go to school. Make something
of yourself. Be somebody.

YOUNG RUBY

I want to be like you.

Young Ruby stares up at her mother, admiring.

This instantly strikes a nerve in Carla. Disturbed by the
thought of her daughter following in her footsteps, she
swallows a lump in her throat as she crouches to face her
daughter.

CARLA

Don't say that. Don't. (BEAT) Go
back to school. We'll talk when I
get back.

YOUNG RUBY

I can help. (BEAT) You don't have
to be alone.

A soft smile breaks over Carla's otherwise life hardened
face. They stare at each other for a long moment.

Finally, Carla nods and releases a deep breath.

CARLA

Come on.

Carla moves out of the way.

Young Ruby walks in.

INT. OPULENT HOUSE

In a massive kitchen, amidst the finest China and silver
cutlery, Carla and Young Ruby wash and clean the dishes
together. Silently, Young Ruby dries the dishes while her
mother washes.

Carla stops for a moment to watch her daughter.

Young Ruby stops when she feels her mother's eyes on her. She stares back at her mother. *Did I do something wrong?*

They stare at one another for a long while.

YOUNG RUBY

What?

Carla shakes her head. Her eyes begin to water. Then she continues to wash the dishes. Young Ruby continues to dry them.

EXT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT COMPLEX - NIGHT

Carla and Young Ruby walk toward the front door of a rundown apartment building with drug addicts sprawled over the sidewalk or preparing a fix in a nearby alley. They walk through the entrance with one door missing and the other unhinged. Garbage and litter scattered all around them. Definitely not the same neighbourhood where Carla works and Young Ruby attends school.

INT. RUNDOWN APARTMENT COMPLEX - MOMENTS LATER

Carla and Young Ruby walk up a flight of dilapidated stairs toward their apartment.

The cacophony of a dozen or so apartments overwhelm them as they approach the tenth floor--their floor.

They reach the tenth floor and walk down a hallway.

HALLWAY

The paper-thin doors of the apartments do very little to block sound.

INT. CARLA'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Carla and Ruby enter a two-bedroom apartment within the rundown apartment building. In the living room there are piles upon piles of game magazines and role playing games and workbooks, stories and novels. A pile of her favorite Wonder Woman comic dominates one of the stacks.

Young Ruby grabs a magazine and sits on an old, torn couch. Her mother heads into the kitchen to prepare some food.

A moment later there's a knock at the door.

Carla steps out of the kitchen to open the door. Opens the door to find a boy staring up at her.

The boy looks beyond Carla to Young Ruby.

BOY
Hey Ruby, it broke again.

YOUNG RUBY
Want I fix it?

The boy nods.

BOY
That be nice.

Young Ruby puts the magazine down, stands, and walks over to him. He hands her a Super Nintendo console in a bag.

Young Ruby pulls it out and admires it.

CARLA
What is that?

BOY
Nintendo.

CARLA
What the hell is a Nintendo?

BOY
It lets you play games.

CARLA
It's a box.

BOY
On TV.

Carla stares at the 'box', perplexed.

YOUNG RUBY
(EXPLAINING)
Computer games, ma.

The boy pretends to be playing an invisible controller to better illustrate what he means.

BOY
You know. Like games on the TV.

Carla shakes her head, baffled. Walks back to the kitchen.

YOUNG RUBY
Five dollars.

BOY
Come on, I don't have money.

Young Ruby stares at him a moment, considering.

YOUNG RUBY
Three days.

BOY
One day.

YOUNG RUBY
Three.

Carla watches the exchange, not too sure what's happening.

BOY
Two.

Young Ruby nods in agreement.

YOUNG RUBY
Fine. Leave it with me.

The boy nods in agreement. Smiles. Walks away.

Young Ruby takes the Nintendo. Walks over to the kitchen table. Places it on the table. Gets a screwdriver from the drawer. Unscrews the casing of the Nintendo and exposes its wires.

Her mother watches Young Ruby in mute amazement.

Young Ruby examines and finds two loose wires.

Young Ruby leaves the kitchen. Disappears for a long moment. She rummages through junk in the other room. She soon returns with black electrical tape.

She smiles at her mother.

Her mother smiles back at her.

CARLA
How do you know what to do?

Young Ruby shrugs.

YOUNG RUBY
I don't, really.

Young Ruby fiddles with the Nintendo.

But I can look, I can observe, and
I can try.

A big, proud smile breaks over Carla's exhausted face.

LATER

Young Ruby plays t Mario Bros. in the living room.

Carla walks out of the small bedroom to find Young Ruby playing Mario.

CARLA
Bedtime. (BEAT) You fixed it?

YOUNG RUBY
Yup.

CARLA
You sure you're my daughter?

Young Ruby stops playing, looks up at her mother.

YOUNG RUBY
(PROUD)
I'm sure.

She powers off the Nintendo, gives her mother a kiss and a hug, and she heads into the bedroom that she shares with her mother.

Carla watches her close the door. Then she stares down at the Nintendo and the controller.

INT. CARLA'S APARTMENT - RUBY'S ROOM - LATER

Young Ruby wakes up in bed. She hears--

SFX: A video game being played in the living room. She gets up. Opens the door to see her mother playing Mario Bros.

ON TV: The last level of the original Mario Bros.

CARLA
Did I wake you?

Carla lowers the volume on the TV.

Young Ruby shuffles to her mother and places her head on her lap while Carla continues to play the game.

CARLA (CONT'D)
I should get to bed.

A moment later her Mario avatar dies on screens. The continue screen appears and she stares at it. Tries one more time.

CARLA (CONT'D)
One more and that's it.

Young Ruby smiles.

INT. BUS STATION - CHICAGO

Carla waits with Ruby by a idling bus with a sign that says: Montreal. They stare at one another.

SUPER: Ten Years Later.

RUBY
You angry?

Carla shakes her.

CARLA
You're doing what's in your heart
to do. How can I be angry at that?

Carla gives her a serious look.

It's going to be tough.

Ruby nods.

But you're gonna do it.

Ruby nods again.

You don't let anyone tell you what
you can or can't do, ever.

Ruby nods that she won't.

Carla takes off a cord with a wooden butterfly with faded paint. It's clear that someone in her family carved this little butterfly pendent.

CARLA (CONT'D)
Your grandmother made this for me.
She said it would bring me luck,
and it did.

She beams at Ruby. After a moment, she continues.

(MORE)

CARLA (CONT'D)

I was going to paint it again, but that never happened.

Carla gives her a loving look.

You know what your grandmother used to say about caterpillars.

Ruby nods.

Here.

Carla hands her an envelope. Ruby looks inside to find cash. A wad of cash.

It's not much but--

RUBY

I can't.

CARLA

Never-you-mind. What do you think I saved it for?

Ruby takes the envelope. Carla places both hands on Ruby's shoulders. She looks at her intently.

CARLA (CONT'D)

You don't let anyone ever tell you what you can or can't do...ever.

Ruby nods.

The motor of the bus suddenly comes to life, startling both mother and daughter. Ruby gives her mother one last hug, then rushes onto the bus.

INSIDE BUS

As the bus pulls away toward Montreal, she watches her mother grow smaller and smaller in the distance until her mother disappears.

INT. BUS STATION, MONTREAL - NIGHT

Ruby grabs her duffle bag and steps off the bus and into the bus station. She stares at the signs and find they are written in French. She reads them with difficulty, lucky for her she took French in high school. Unlucky for her it was Parisian French as distinct from Quebecoise. She heads toward the exit door.

EXT. BUS STATION, MONTREAL - NIGHT

Ruby walks out into the street and hails a taxi. Pedestrians, runaways and homeless people moving about the street. A taxi stops. JEAN, late thirties, gets out to place Ruby's bags in the trunk.

RUBY
Hi.

JEAN
Bonjour.

RUBY
St. Henri.

Jean nods while he jumps into the driver's seat.

INT. CAB (MOVING)

Ruby stares out the window at downtown Montreal. Jean looks up into the rearview mirror.

JEAN
(IN FRENCH)
Saint Henri? Where?

RUBY
Yes. Thanks.

JEAN
Where? Address?

RUBY
Oh.

She fumbles with a printout of the address.

JEAN
First time here? Montreal?

RUBY
Yeah.

JEAN
Vacation?

RUBY
Games.

JEAN
What games?

RUBY
Video games. Montreal is like the
Hollywood of video games.

JEAN
You want to make games?

RUBY
Design them.

Jean makes a face.

JEAN
You? Isn't that like a boy-thing.

RUBY
Yeah. Well this girl's got a job
interview.

Jean smiles, raises his eyebrows at her.

JEAN
A job interview. And no speak
French?

Ruby hands him the address.

RUBY
Here you go.
(IN FRENCH)
High school French. But more
Parisian French.

Jean makes a face at this. *Can that even be considered
French?*

JEAN
That's not real French.

RUBY
It's not?

JEAN
No. It's not.

Jean regards the address a moment. Smiles.

JEAN (CONT'D)
Let's go.

Jean takes her for a tour of the city.

ATWATER

JEAN (CONT'D)
 Movies, here.

WESTMOUNT

JEAN (CONT'D)
 Rich people, here.

MOUNT ROYAL

JEAN (CONT'D)
 Hiking, here.

OLD MONTREAL

JEAN (CONT'D)
 Food here.

AND FINALLY ST.HENRI

JEAN (CONT'D)
 Your neighbourhood.

He makes a skeptical face and finally pulls up beside the address, a townhouse apartment complex.

JEAN (CONT'D)
 Sixty-four.

RUBY
 It was supposed to be 15.

JEAN
 Says who?

He indicates the meter.

JEAN (CONT'D)
 Sixty-four.

RUBY
 Doesn't make sense.

JEAN
 Well, I mean I gave you the tour.

RUBY
 I didn't want the tour!

JEAN

Misunderstanding. But I'll be honest...the meter never lies and I'd give you a break but my cash won't add up and I'll be accused of stealing.

She sighs. Looks at his taxi license number and memorizes it. She hands over the sixty-four dollars from the envelope and gets out of the taxi.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Hey.

Jean indicates the envelope of money.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Hide that.

Ruby stashes the envelope in her pocket.

EXT. RUBY'S APARTMENT

Ruby grabs her duffle bags from the truck then slams the door shut. The taxi peels away, and she watches it disappear around the bend. She turns to face a low-end townhouse apartment complex. After she appraises it, she makes her way toward the front door and rings the doorbell.

PIERRE

(IN FRENCH) What do you want?

RUBY

I'm Ruby.

They stare at one another for a moment.

I rented the apartment above.

Pierre looks her over.

PIERRE

One second.

He closes the door, leaving her outside, alone.

Ruby waits silently.

A few moments later he returns with keys. He steps outside and gestures for her to follow him, leading her up a flight of stairs to the studio apartment above. Pierre fiddles with the key and lock, and then opens the door.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - MOMENTS LATER

Pierre walks inside the pigsty of an apartment. He gestures for Ruby, who is hesitant, to follow her in. The apartment is a mess. Clearly someone left the apartment upset with the landlord. Food splattered against the wall. Garbage all over the floor. French curses spray painted on the wall.

PIERRE
(IN FRENCH) Bedroom.

Points to a small filthy room.

Bathroom.

Points to the bathroom.

Kitchen.

He opens the light.

I need your first two months and
last two months in advance.

RUBY
I thought it was just first and
last.

PIERRE
No. Quebec law. Two first, and two
last months.

Ruby sighs. Shakes her head. *That's not true...but I need a place!*

RUBY
You gonna clean this place?

PIERRE
Depends.

RUBY
On what?

PIERRE
Can you wait a week?

RUBY
No.

PIERRE
I need a week.

RUBY
I'll clean it myself.

He smiles.

She opens the envelop. Pulls out some cash. Gives him the deposit. His eyes linger over the envelop. He hands her the lease. He indicates the section where he requires her signature.

PIERRE
Signature.

She signs.

Merci.

He grabs the lease and walks out.

She closes the door after him. Then she returns to the kitchen and opens her duffle bags and pulls out her game design books. She then pulls out her notebooks where she's got a few things scribbled down.

Ruby memorizes her job interview pitch of why she always wanted to be a game designer. She moves toward the bathroom.

RUBY
(IN THE MIRROR, PRACTICING) I've
always loved games ever since I can
remember.

Takes a moment to remember.

Not just playing but creating and
designing them. What do I mean?
Well...

Pause, then answers.

I remember when everyone else was
talking about movies I was thinking
about how I'd make a game out of
them. You know, what the mechanics
would be.

She collects her thoughts for a moment.

Mechanics that would best express
the theme and the experience...the
experience of what it would be like
to be that character

She stares and nods at herself in the mirror.

Fun. Yeah. I mean that's what we're
after: fun.

She stares and smiles at herself. Tries different smiles on for size, then continues. She leaps ahead in her imaginary interview.

'Cause I know if you give me this
chance I won't let you down. You
may have a lot of candidates with
degrees and experience which I
don't have. But I will say this.

She considers her words.

I'll never quit, and no one will
ever out work me. I'll do what it
takes. Always.

Satisfied, she walks out of the bathroom and settles into bed. Closes the lights, then her eyes.

EXT. YBU - MORNING

Ruby stands before YBU GAMES, a game developer and publisher, for a long moment, dressed to the nines. Spotless. Designers, programmers and managers walk by her to get into the massive building.

YBU looks like it had once been a clothing factory, a factory large enough to house the one thousand plus employees now making mobile and AAA games. The building has a loft feeling to it.

Behind her, across the street, a row of restaurants. One restaurant is crowded, a cafe bistro with a sign above its door: LE SAINT EX.

Beside her, not too far away from the main entrance, there is an alley and a PHONE BOOTH.

INT. YBU

Ruby walks into the building and makes her way to the receptionist. She takes in the high ceilings, the huge exposed vents, and the red brick walls and wood. Ruby reaches the receptionist's desk. The receptionist regards a few letters, then looks up to greet Ruby.

RECEPTIONIST

Oui?

RUBY
I have an interview.

The receptionist gestures to the waiting room behind her. The waiting room is filled with men, twenty or so, and--

ONE WOMAN.

WAITING ROOM

Ruby walks in and takes a seat. All eyes turn to her. Then suddenly they snap away to--

DANIEL, early thirties, who walks into the waiting room to call in one of the game design candidates.

DANIEL
(TO THE CANDIDATES) Luc Desonais?

LUC raises his hand. Stands. Makes his way to Daniel. They shake hands, then Luc follows Daniel into a meeting room.

Ruby stares at the door of the interview room. She looks away. Waits nervously. Begins to fiddle with the butterfly pendent her mother gave her before she left for Montreal.

LATER

The room is empty.

Ruby scans over two copies of her resume she printed out.

The only other girl that had been selected for an interview walks out of the meeting room followed by Daniel who makes his way toward Ruby.

Ruby stands to greet him.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
(FLAT) Ruby.

Ruby snaps to her feet. They shake hands. She hands over a copy of her resume. He scans it and smiles to himself.

RUBY
It's really nice to meet you.

DANIEL
Follow me.

MEETING ROOM

She walks into a room with three other men sitting around the table.

All around them there is concept art of nude women in distress or a man's interpretation of a female warrior/hero. Posters reminiscent of the eighties. Muscular men saving naked, helpless women from dragons and zombies. Almost naked women holding dual pistols or swords.

Ignoring the posters, Ruby walks around the room introducing herself and giving her interviewers a copy of her resume.

RUBY

Ruby Abel. (BEAT) Ruby Abel.

Daniel takes a seat.

DANIEL

Take a seat.

She complies.

Daniel stares at her for a long time, making her uncomfortable, then he smiles.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

So, Abel, tell us about yourself.

RUBY

(REHEARSED AND NERVOUS) Okay. I grew up in Chicago where I used to spend my time playing all kinds of games from board games to video games. I grew up on games and spent every second analyzing, dissecting, trying to understand the thing that made each one special. You know the thing that made you want to finish the game all the way to the end.

DANIEL

(DRY AND INTIMIDATING) Playing games and making games is not the same thing.

RUBY

I know. And I want to make them.

DANIEL

So you say.

Daniel flips through her resume searching for experience, which he doesn't really find.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

You have no experience.

RUBY

I make games on my own. But...I thought this was a junior position?

She scans the room nervously.

DANIEL

It is.

RUBY

Okay.

DANIEL

This could be a rough job, though. I mean I got to ask why would you want a job as a game designer?

RUBY

Because it's who I am. It's all I want to do.

DANIEL

It's a tough environment. You think you could keep up?

RUBY

I think so. I mean I've always loved games ever since I can remember. Not just playing but creating and designing them. I remember...I remeber....

She forgets her rehearsed answer. Blanks out. Everyone waits for her. Daniel breaks the silence.

DANIEL

You remember?

RUBY

Really loving games.

DANIEL

Are you a feminist?

RUBY

(CAUGHT OFF-GUARD) I...I....no...

DANIEL

They can cause a lot of trouble for a team. I know.

RUBY
I've got different ideas on
maybe...how...women could be
represented in a game. But I'm not--

Daniel interrupts.

DANIEL
I'll be honest. The game design
position has been filled.

RUBY
(DEFEATED) Okay.

DANIEL
I wanted to meet you, anyway. See
maybe if there was a future for you
somewhere else.

RUBY
Somewhere else...like where...

DANIEL
Like management. You're profile
better suits management. (BEAT)
You're a manager.

Ruby takes a deep breath. *No one defines me!*

RUBY
I don't want to be a manager. I
want to be a game designer, maybe
one day a game director.

He smiles condescendingly.

DANIEL
I'm sure.

Suddenly one of the men passes gas, loud! They all shake
their head at him. All except Ruby.

Ruby ignores the room. She waits patiently until these boys
calm down.

RUBY
Will there be another opening?

DANIEL
We'll keep your resume on file in
case there are future openings.
Thank you so much for coming.

He stands, shakes her hand.

She walks out of the office inwardly shattered.

As the door closes she hears the room burst out in a kind of muffled laughter.

She walks out of YBU almost defeated.

Almost.

EXT. YBU

Ruby sits on the stairs leading up to YBU's main entrance, not really knowing what to do. She stares at the street before her and begins to notice a constant flow of YBU employees frequenting Le Saint Ex for coffee.

She stares at this for a long moment. She stands and walks over to a nearby phone booth, while never taking her eyes off Le Saint Ex. She calls her mother.

RUBY (ON THE PHONE)

Hey Ma. Didn't go so well but they're keeping my resume for future opportunities. That's right. Yes. 'No' today doesn't mean 'no' tomorrow. (A SILENCE) I know. Thanks. (BEAT) Ma. I got to go. There's something I have to do. You, too.

She stares at Le Saint Ex, then walks away from the phone booth for a closer investigation.

She makes her way to the cafe. Notices a 'Help Needed' sign in French by the door as designers and testers and producers from YBU walk in and out of the cafe.

INT. LE SAINT EX

She walks in slowly, taking in the scene. TEJ, sixties, an East Indian owner and two employees struggle to serve a hoard of coffee-loving patrons. They are clearly understaffed.

She notices artists and designers at tables discussing games, even games they are working on, which technically they are not supposed to be discussing outside the walls of YBU.

A massive line from the main counter extends almost to the door. Ruby gets in line for coffee and watches the employees--Tej's children, SONIA and DYLAN, both in their early twenties--struggle behind the bar.

It isn't long before she's at the front of the line, facing Tej, who patiently waits for her to place an order.

Ruby stares at him for a moment.

Tej stares back at her, waiting. Then--

TEJ

Yes?

Ruby doesn't say anything, a little unsure about what she is about to do.

Miss?

RUBY

I don't want a coffee.

TEJ

What do you want? I've got a broken machine and no time for games.

Ruby hands him her resume.

He quickly scans it.

TEJ (CONT'D)

We make coffee here. You know that?

RUBY

I know.

TEJ

You can make espresso? Lattes?

RUBY

I can observe. I can think. And I can try.

TEJ

Can you do dishes? That's the question. My busboy just quit.

Ruby nods.

When can you start?

RUBY

When do you need me?

Tej regards his busy cafe-bistro. *Now.*

TEJ

Get in back.

Ruby maneuvers around the counter and heads to the back of the cafe-bistro where she pauses at the sight of a massive pile of dishes.

TIME PASSES

BACK OF CAFE

Ruby stands beside a pile of sparkling, clean dishes. Tej suddenly walks in and stands beside her. He observes her work. Picks up a dish and inspects it.

TEJ (CONT'D)

Good.

RUBY

(INDICATING THE DISHWASHER) Mind if I take a look at it?

TEJ

You can repair industrial dishwashers?

RUBY

Maybe.

TEJ

Maybe?

RUBY

What do you have to lose? It's broken, anyway.

TEJ

Go ahead.

FRONT OF CAFE

Tej goes out front and begins to clean up the stores with his children. Sonia and Dylan leave.

Tej returns to the back.

BACK OF CAFE

TEJ (CONT'D)

Time to go.

Ruby nods. Closes up a panel behind the dishwasher.

Steps back.

Turns on the dishwasher and--

It doesn't work.

TEJ (CONT'D)

Good try.

Ruby shuts it off. Opens the panel.

RUBY

One sec.

She fiddles, then closes the panel again. A moment later she shuts it off, and starts it, and--

IT WORKS!

Tej's eyebrows rise in amazement.

He's stares at the dishwasher, then at Ruby, then at the dishwasher, then Ruby.

TEJ

Not bad.

Tej doles out cash. Hands it over.

Ruby gives him a look as she takes the money.

RUBY

I did fix your dishwasher.

He hands her a few extra bills.

She smiles.

EXT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ruby walks toward the staircase leading to her apartment while Pierre, sitting on the porch, drinking beers, waves at her.

PIERRE

(IN FRENCH) A taxi driver was looking for you. He wants you to retract a complaint.

RUBY

(IN FRENCH) Speaking too fast.

PIERRE

Taxi driver come here. Very angry.

RUBY
He should have thought of that
before he scammed me.

Pierre laughs at this.

PIERRE
Everything's a scam.

RUBY
To some people.

PIERRE
To everyone.

RUBY
(DISMISSIVE) Sure.

PIERRE
He'll be back.

RUBY
I'm sure he will.

She heads up the stairs toward her apartment.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT

Ruby walks into her apartment. Places her money on her bureau and begins to hook up a Nintendo to the television.

LATER

She plays the first 3D MARIO long into the night while pausing the game now and then to take notes on the gameplay.

INT. LE SAINT EX

Sonia wipes down the counter while Tej teaches Ruby how to make a latte. When the cup is full, he creates a drawing in the milky foam on the steaming surface. Then he sprinkles a tad of cinnamon.

Ruby stares down at a leaf drawn into the milky foam of the latte. She pours her own latte, tries to do the same, but messes up.

RUBY
Why a leaf?

TEJ
Make people feel it's organic.

RUBY
Is it organic?

TEJ
Yes and no.

RUBY
What does that mean?

TEJ
How do you judge really? Call it
what you want.

RUBY
Pretty sure there are standards.

TEJ
It's like this. We call coffee
organic if they use manure instead
of pesticides. But how do they know
if the cows ate organically?

He pauses. Shakes his head.

They don't. The manure is only
better than pesticides if the cows
ate organically but what if the
cows ate grass laced with
pesticides?

He raises a concerned finger.

We have a problem there. That's
where the organic thing breaks
down.

SONIA
Dad, it's still organic.

TEJ
No it isn't. They just charge more.
But it doesn't matter. This organic
phase is never going to last. It's
just a phase. People don't care
about that kind of thing. (TO RUBY)
Keep practicing.

Sonia comes to Ruby's aide.

SONIA
Don't worry you'll get it.

Ruby smiles.

SONIA (CONT'D)

Sonia.

RUBY

Ruby.

SONIA

You repaired our dishwasher.

RUBY

Luck.

SONIA

Skill? Luck? Whatever. Dad's impressed. Now you just got to get this whole leaf-thing.

RUBY

Dad?

SONIA

Don't see the resemblance? (BEAT)
And that's my brother, Dylan.

She points at Dylan. Dylan serves a patron a latte. Draws a leaf with ease. Gives the latte to yet another satisfied customer.

RUBY

You guys make it look so simple.

SONIA

It is. Once you get it.

RUBY

I'll get it.

SONIA

I'm sure you will.

DAY TURNS TO NIGHT

Sonia serves a customer while Tej goes to see Ruby's progress.

TEJ

Let's see.

Ruby prepares a latte. Then draws a leaf--with ease. He looks at it for a long dramatic moment, then nods with satisfaction.

TEJ (CONT'D)

You're ready.

Tej walks away.

Sonia walks up to her. Regards the leaf drawn in the fuzz of the milk. Looks up at Ruby with a smile.

SONIA
That didn't take long.

Ruby smiles proudly.

EXT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ruby walks by Pierre.

PIERRE
He's here.

RUBY
Who?

As she says this Jean confronts her.

JEAN
(IN FRENCH, THEN REPEATS IN ENGLISH) I take you for a tour. I show you Montreal. And you make a complaint. I need you to take it back. It affects my bonus, my standing, and my integrity. Nobody has ever complained. I win cabbie of the year every year. Take it back.

RUBY
Non.

JEAN
Non?

RUBY
Non.

She walks by him.

JEAN
Non?

RUBY
Non.

Jean watches Ruby climb the stairs and disappear into her apartment without looking back.

PIERRE

When a woman says non it's non.

JEAN

(IN FRENCH, TO PIERRE) Shut up!

INT. LE SAINT EX -- MORNING

The cafe hasn't opened yet. Sonia prepares the coffee bar while Ruby finishes up a latte for Tej. He smells it, takes in its aroma, then sips.

TEJ

Too hot. No good, burnt.

Ruby nods. She starts a new latte from scratch. Grinds the beans. Heats up a container of milk. Grabs a cup. Pours in an ounce of espresso. Pours in the hot milk. Gives it to Tej.

Tej breathes in the aroma. Sips it. Closes his eyes. Sips it again.

TEJ (CONT'D)

Better. Much better.

He opens his eyes.

You're ready.

INT. LE SAINT EX

Ruby stands beside Sonia who takes an order.

PATRON

Manjaro. Latte.

Sonia gives Ruby a look.

Ruby nods.

She scoops coffee. Grinds the beans. Warms the milk. Prepares a shot of espresso. Pours the espresso in a cup. Pours the warm milk in the cup.

The milk foams to the brink of the cup. Then--

Both the patron and Sonia watch Ruby as she draws a leaf with the last few drops of milk.

Sonia looks down at the surface of the cup. The patron looks down at the cup.

A perfect leaf.

Sonia smiles.

PATRON (CONT'D)

Nice.

The patron walks away.

SONIA

That's the fastest I've seen.

RUBY

What?

SONIA

No one who's ever worked here has nailed it that fast. Usually takes weeks before they're serving coffee.

Ruby smiles.

RUBY

Beginners luck.

SONIA

(NOT CONVINCED) Right.

Another patron places an order.

PATRON 2

A Chilchini. Espresso. Double.

Ruby scoops some beans. Grinds them. And prepares a double espresso for the man. Suddenly, Daniel and several men walk by the cafe. He leads the pack.

Through the window Ruby watches Daniel and his design minions walk down the sidewalk, then she returns to the moment to finish up the Chilchini.

DAY TURNS TO NIGHT

Le Saint Ex is empty.

Tej pays out Ruby her tips and hourly wage. Ruby pockets the money without counting it. She then walks out into the night as he locks the door behind her.

Impressed, Tej watches Ruby through the glass door until she disappears down the block.

EXT. LE SAINT EX

Ruby walks down the street toward her apartment. She stops in front of a pawn. She stares in the display window at a Nintendo 64 beside a personal computer. She stares at them for a long moment, then continues her walk home.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM

Ruby lies in her bed staring at her butterfly pendent. She holds it up by a small reading lamp by her bed.

INT. LE SAINT EX

Someone draws a butterfly in the milk fuzz of a latte.

A patron stares down at the butterfly as it is being created. When the butterfly is finished, he stares down at it, then up at Ruby.

PATRON 3
(TO RUBY) Cool.

Ruby smiles at him.

Dylan steps up behind her to warn her to stick to the routine.

DYLAN
Better not let my dad catch you
doing that.

RUBY
Just taking it to the next level.

SONIA
Yeah, don't. He won't like it.

RUBY
You never know.

Sonia chimes in.

SONIA
He won't. I know.

DYLAN
You're playing with fire.

RUBY
What's the worst that can happen?

LATER

Ruby wipes down the bar, staring at a group of game designers sitting at a table, discussing what might be game design theory. She stares at them trying to pick up tidbits of their conversation.

Tej serves a patron while Sonia mans the cash register.

PATRON 4
A spicy Lateano...

Tej prepares a specialty latte.

...with a butterfly.

Sonia instantly looks at Ruby. *Now you're in trouble!*

Ruby stops cleaning.

TEJ
With a what?

Ruby kneels to clean something on the floor. She eavesdrops on Tej and Patron 4.

PATRON 4
With a butterfly.

TEJ
I don't understand.

PATRON 4
Like not a leaf. But a butterfly.

TEJ
(PERPLEXED) We don't do that.

PATRON 4
Oh. Sorry. It's just people were talking at work, saying you guys are like latte artists.

TEJ
We are. We do leaves.

PATRON 4
Just leaves?

Tej draws a leaf in the frothy milk foam of the latte. He hands the patron the latte.

TEJ
Leaves.

The patron gazes at a leaf drawn out in his latte.

PATRON 4

Great. Thanks.

Tej stares after the patron, loses himself for a moment, then snaps out of his thoughts to serve another patron.

LATER

Le Saint Ex is closed and empty.

Ruby, Sonia, and Dylan are cleaning up. Ruby mops the floor close to the bar. Sonia wipes down a table. Dylan walks into the bathroom with all his cleaning gear.

Tej makes lattes and tries to draw a butterfly in them. Ruby walks over to him. Stares at all the failed attempts in the dozen or so lattes covering the bar.

RUBY

(TO TEJ) Cool idea.

Tej looks at her surprised.

TEJ

What?

RUBY

The Butterfly. I like it. Trying something new. People like that kind of creativity.

Tej smiles.

Sonia stops to watch Ruby.

TEJ

Might get people talking.

RUBY

Yeah. Probably would. (BEAT) Were you thinking just butterflies...or Birds and stars....whatever...

TEJ

Haven't decided yet.

RUBY

Be cool to give customers the option. Give them a sense of agency.

Tej stares at her, not understanding what she means by 'agency'. She explains.

Choice.

TEJ

Yeah. Give'em choice.

Sonia gives her a look of disbelief. Ruby smiles at her. Sonia returns to mopping the floor.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM - NIGHT

Ruby lies in her bed reading a book on game design. Every now and then she scribbles something in the margins of the book or highlights something of interest.

INT. LE SAINT EX

Ruby clears a table beside a table of three game designers: DOUG, FRANCIS, and NICO, all in their early twenties. She musters the courage to say 'hi.'

RUBY

Hey. Can I get you anything?

DOUG

We're good.

Francis and Nico shake their head.

RUBY

Playing a game?

DOUG

Playing. Discussing.

RUBY

Cool game.

NICO

Know it?

RUBY

Sure.

NICO

I'd invite you to play...but this is really research.

RUBY

I get it. I won't disturb you.

She walks away. Stops. Returns.

RUBY (CONT'D)
Can I ask you something?

NICO
Ask.

RUBY
Any advice for somebody who wants
to get into YB?

NICO
As?

RUBY
As a game designer.

FRANCIS
Like a brother?

She stares at him for a moment, then just goes with it.

RUBY
Yeah. A brother.

FRANCIS
Best way in would be to design and
pitch a game to the owner.

NICO
He's fucking with you. No, no.
Actually, YBU just opened a school
for like subsidiaries from the
government. The best out of the
program usually gets an internship.

DOUG
Tough to get in, though. Only
twelve get in. Hundreds apply.
Maybe thousands. Be a game designer
is the new thing.

RUBY
Sounds tough. Thanks.

Ruby begins to walk away just as Francis calls out to her.

FRANCIS
Hey!

Ruby stops in her tracks.

(MORE)

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

Better tell your brother to apply soon. I think the application deadline is in like a few days.

She smiles at him.

RUBY

Will do.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Ruby connects her laptop to a phone jack and powers up her laptop. Within moments she connects to the internet and keys in "YBU design school" in a search engine.

She taps into the first link that appears from her query. She scrolls down the page. She finds the link to apply for the next semester. She reads the requirements. Reads 'bilingual'.

She then taps into another link and begins to fill in an on-line application.

EXT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Ruby walks out of her front door. She begins down her stairs just as Pierre's cab pulls in. He jumps out to face her.

JEAN

(IN FRENCH, THEN REPEATS IN ENGLISH) I was wrong. I'm sorry. Please take back the complaint.

She stops walking. Stares at him for a long moment.

RUBY

I'll withdraw the complaint. You help me with my French.

JEAN

I'm not a teacher.

RUBY

That's too bad.

She continues to walk to work.

JEAN

Wait. Wait. Just a few courses.

She stops.

RUBY
Once a week. Starting tonight after
work. We go until I'm no longer
mixing English with French.

JEAN
(IN FRENCH) Are you nuts? Mixing is
Quebecois!

Ruby walks away from him.

JEAN (CONT'D)
Okay. Okay. (IN FRENCH) Are you a
beginner?

She stops and smiles.

RUBY
(IN FRENCH) I studied in high
school, but it's not good enough.
(BEAT) You know 'Le Saint Ex.'

Jean nods that he does.

RUBY (CONT'D)
Meet me there at seven tonight.

INT. LE SAINT EX

Ruby prepares a latte for Patron 5.

RUBY
What will it be?

PATRON 5
What are my choices?

RUBY
Leaf. Star. Butterfly.

PATRON 5
Butterfly.

Ruby draws a butterfly. Hands over the latte to the patron.

RUBY
There you go.

Ruby turns to Sonia.

RUBY (CONT'D)
You have a computer with internet I
can use?

SONIA

Calm down. Give them time to read
your application.

Ruby gives her a look. She needs to check her e-mail.

In the back.

BACK ROOM OF LE SAINT EX

Ruby logs into her e-mail only to discover she doesn't have
any new messages. She logs out, disappointed.

INT. LE SAINT EX - NIGHT

Ruby sits at a table in Le Saint Ex with Jean. They just
stare at one another. Jean clearly has no idea how to conduct
a French course. He's waiting for something, anything from
Ruby.

JEAN

What?

RUBY

What?

JEAN

I don't know where to start.

RUBY

We could just talk.

JEAN

(IN FRENCH) Let's do that. What
brings you to Montreal you
blackmailing cheat?

Ruby smirks at this.

RUBY

(IN FRENCH AND ENGLISH) Games.
There aren't too many game
companies in Chicago, but
Montreal's got dozens, and I
figured I'd have a chance here.

JEAN

That's perfect. You're French is
great. Better than most English
people who have live here all their
lives. You don't need me.

RUBY
That was half-English.

JEAN
That's Quebecois.

RUBY
Stop foolin'.

JEAN
I'm telling you. That's Quebecois.

RUBY
Not for me.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Ruby connects her laptop to a phone jack and powers up her laptop. She checks her e-mail. Still no word from the YBU design school. She closes her eyes with a sigh.

EXT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Ruby walks out of her front door, walks down the stairs and walks to work.

INT. LE SAINT EX

Ruby serves Patron 6. Thinking about her application, she draws in a halfhearted butterfly. Patron 6 looks at it and makes a face. He's not sure what to make of the illustration in his milk froth.

PATRON 6
That doesn't look like a butterfly.

RUBY
Look carefully.

Patron 6 regard the milk fuzz.

PATRON 6
Still doesn't look like a butterfly.

Patron 6 walks away, disappointed.

Sonia edges up to Ruby.

SONIA
What's going on?

RUBY
I need to check the computer.

SONIA
You know where it is.

BACK ROOM OFFICE

Ruby logs into her e-mail to find a rejection e-mail. She stares at it for a long while, then she decides something, stands firmly, and walks out of the office.

FRONT OF CAFE

Ruby approaches Tej who is grinding beans. When Tej sees Ruby standing before him, he stops the grinder to face her.

RUBY
Can I take the morning off?

TEJ
Is that a question or statement?

She stares into him.

Take it off.

RUBY
Thank you.

Ruby walks out.

EXT. YBU

Ruby marches into the building.

INT. YBU

Ruby walks in the main entrance then moves toward the stairwell.

STAIRS

Ruby takes the stairs down to the basement of the YBU building where the 'design school' is located.

HALLWAY

Ruby opens a door with a sign saying 'Design School.'

She walks up to the reception.

RUBY
Can I speak to the manager of the
school?

SUSAN
And you are?

RUBY
I just would like more information
on my rejection so that when I
reapply next year I'll get in.

Susan narrows her gaze on Ruby.

SUSAN
You are?

RUBY
Ruby Abel.

SUSAN
You would have to talk to the
program manager. But he's not here.
Let me get your file.

Susan leaves the room, then returns with a file and an art
and animation teacher. Susan makes the introductions.

SUSAN (CONT'D)
This is Ruby. Ruby this is Oliver
and Mario. They and the program
manager decide on the candidates.
(BEAT) Ruby would like to know why
she didn't get into the program
this year so she has a better
chance next year. (TO RUBY) Right?

Ruby nods.

OLIVER
You serious?

Ruby nods.

Mario regards her file.

MARIO
You lack experience.

RUBY
It's a school.

OLIVER

Yes and no. But you don't have the pre-requisites. You don't know any of our software.

RUBY

I only recently bought a computer. My mother saved a while to buy it for me.

OLIVER

That's very nice of her. But the truth is you won't last. Not without the basics.

RUBY

I can learn.

MARIO

It's a tough program.

RUBY

I want to be a game designer.

MARIO

But this program is more than just design. It's a six-month boot camp. Half of the twelve candidates won't even make it through the first three months.

RUBY

I can learn the software. I can learn anything, I know I can. (BEAT) This is all I wanted my whole life. I swear, give me a chance and you won't be sorry. I won't waste your time.

MARIO

I'm sorry. We've already decided. The twelve have been selected.

Ruby's eyes water, but no tears slip. She swallows a lump forming in her throat. She takes the initiative to shake their hands.

RUBY

Well...thank you for at least talking to me.

She turns and walks away.

They watch her until she disappears.

EXT. LE SAINT EX - BENCH

Ruby sits on a bench staring at YBU across the street. Through the window of the front door of Le Saint Ex, Sonia spots her. She clearly sees Ruby is down in the dumps.

Ruby watches the designers and artists walking in and out of YBU, the overwhelming majority are men.

Sonia walks out of Le Saint Ex with two lattes. She walks over to Ruby and hands her one.

SONIA
What do you think?

Sonia indicates the coffee cup.

Ruby stares at her attempt at a butterfly in the foam and fuzz of the latte.

RUBY
Not bad.

SONIA
Bullshit. It's terrible.

Ruby grins. *Pretty much.*

You didn't get in.

Ruby shakes her head.

When my dad came here, no one would even give him a job. It's not as bad now as it was then but it's still pretty tough for immigrants.

She stares at her dad preparing an espresso, then back at Ruby.

All he ever wanted was to own a cafe.

Ruby regards her.

I don't know where he got that from. Indians aren't really coffee drinkers. But he had that in him.

She laughs.

Wasn't like he could just ignore it.

(MORE)

SONIA (CONT'D)

His dad had told him he could be anything he wanted in Canada and that his caste wouldn't keep him down.

Ruby nods.

He finally got a job as a busboy in a cafe. Learned everything he needed to learn, and when the owner was ready to retire, he bought the place off him. Now he's dealing with the big corporations that want to run him out of business but that's another story.

Sonia pauses.

I'm sure things will happen for you, probably not the way you expected, but they'll happen just as long as you don't give up on yourself. The universe can't help those who give up on themselves.

RUBY

That a fact, Buddha?

SONIA

Sure is.

RUBY

Universe help you much?

Sonia laughs at this.

SONIA

Universe can't help someone like me. I'm all over the place right now trying to figure out my thing.

Sonia smiles.

See you're lucky. You know what you want. That's the hardest part. Now it's just about getting there with the universe as your invisible GPS.

Sonia sighs.

I'm still trying to figure out the destination. UNIVERSE GPS, you see, only works when you know the destination.

Ruby nods pensively.

RUBY

Maybe girls aren't supposed to be
in this industry.

SONIA

That's bullshit! I see more girls
nowadays playing games than men.
Don't give me that nonsense. (BEAT)
Would be nice if those games were
made for them, too. Only way that
happens is if they're made by them.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT

Ruby tries to sleep. She tosses and turns and isn't quite
successful.

INT. LE SAINT EX - MORNING

Ruby serves a patron a cake while Sonia prepares coffee
beside her. The next patron in line is Susan. Susan
scrutinizes Ruby's face for a moment.

SUSAN

I recognize you.

RUBY

(DISMISSIVE) What can I get you?

SUSAN

You're the one that came by to talk
to us. That paid off.

Ruby glares at her, not appreciating her sarcasm.

RUBY

Very funny.

Susan doesn't understand.

SUSAN

What?

RUBY

I don't find that very funny.

Sonia faces Susan and glares at her. Susan looks at Sonia,
then Ruby.

SUSAN

Have you checked your e-mail?
You've got class today. Soon, too.

RUBY

What are you talking about?

SUSAN

The fact that you came to see us,
that you pleaded your case
impressed two out of the three
judges of the program. They opened
a space for you.

Ruby turns to Sonia.

Sonia simply hands her a pad of paper and pen.

SONIA

I'll be fine.

Susan and Sonia watch Ruby scramble out from the bar, quit
the cafe, and rush across the street.

INT. YBU - BASEMENT FLOOR

Ruby runs through the hallway and into a classroom to find
eleven young men and one girl sitting at the desks with
notebooks. One of the interns, CHRIS, gives her a look like
she doesn't belong.

Ruby ignores him and takes a seat. He continues to stare at
her. She smiles at him. He turns to face the white board.

Ruby stares at the clock.

Time ticks away.

After a long moment Daniel walks in.

DANIEL

I'm late. (BEAT) Get used to it.
We're in full production and it
almost seems as though for every
bug we fix we create ten more. Of
course you don't get what I'm
saying. But maybe one day...one of
you wannabes will.

He scans the students.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Right, okay, two girls.

He stares at them to intimidate them as a bully would.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
What's wrong with you?

TANYA
What do you mean?

DANIEL
I mean why are you in my classroom?

TANYA
I don't understand.

DANIEL
Of course you don't. But seriously let's hope you last longer than a month. We've yet to have a girl last longer than a month. (TO RUBY) You. I guess some people have to learn the hard way.

RUBY
What lesson would that be?

DANIEL
I'm sorry.

RUBY
Learn what the hard way?

DANIEL
Women make better producers.

RUBY
For now.

He meows.

DANIEL
Asserting yourself. Good girl.

Ruby glares at him. She refuses to let him bring her down. Right now, she knows she's one of the luckiest girls in the world to have this shot.

Daniel gives Ruby a skeptical look, then begins his rehearsed, introductory lecture.

DANIEL (CONT'D)
I'm sure you were the best gamers in your town. I'm sure you had the highest scores in Pac Man. Saved every princess in Mario.
(MORE)

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Figured all the secrets in Prince of Persia. Bad news for you. Playing games and making games aren't the same thing. It's my job to separate the dreamers (GLANCES AT RUBY) from the designers. It's my job to find the one out of this group who is worthy of YBU.

He smiles menacingly.

This is not your average internship. You will do what we say and we will watch how you do it and we will cut each and every one of you until there is only one left.

He pauses to let them take this fact in.

You heard right. Only one of you get in. The rest go back to what you were doing before like--

He glares at Ruby.

--making coffee and serving cake. Now you will have your first challenge. The five worst will be cut. The two best will be the leaders of two teams we make out of the remaining eight. Then the members of the winning team will get unlimited resources to compete against one another.

He pauses, smiles, then grabs a marker, and writes "CHARACTER" on the whiteboard.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Your first assignment is to create a unique and inspiring character with cool mechanics. You are to model and animate each and every mechanic as best as you can to sell the idea. I don't care if you don't know how to model or animate. Learn. You have a month and unlimited access to the computer lab. It's more than I ever got.

He walks toward the door.

See you in a month.

And leaves.

Everyone stares at the whiteboard: "CHARACTER"

COMPUTER LAB

The interns attempt to use a 3D rendering software.

Ruby watches one of the students, ZAZ, shape and build a model. She then turns to her computer, stares at the interface of the program, and is too intimidated to even move her mouse. *How am I supposed to learn all this?!*

Ruby tries to find the help section in the program but everything is in French and the wording, quite frankly would even be difficult for native French speakers.

She turns to TANYA on a computer beside her.

RUBY

Is your computer in English?

TANYA

None of them are. It's a Quebec thing.

RUBY

Could I ask for an English computer?

TANYA

I wouldn't. They're kind of sensitive about that. (MORE TO HERSELF) You ask for a program in English and they think they're gonna lose their language.

RUBY

Oh.

Ruby turns to Zaz. Watches him model away as though 3D modeling were the easiest skill in the world.

RUBY (CONT'D)

(TO ZAZ) Could you maybe give me some help? Get me started.

He doesn't answer. He laughs at her suggestion and continues to work. Ruby sighs then begins to search online for a tutorial on this 3D rendering software.

INT. LE SAINT EX

At the bar Ruby serves a patron a cake while Sonia prepares coffee beside her. She 'interrogates' patrons as she serves them, desperately searching for an artist to help her.

MONTAGE BEGINS

RUBY
You look like an artist.

PATRON 7
Producer.

She serves the patron cake.

NEXT

Another patron stands before her.

RUBY
You look like a modeler?

PATRON 8
Audio designer.

She serves the patron an espresso.

NEXT

Another patron stands before her.

RUBY
You look like a modeler?

PATRON 9
Tester.

She serves the patron a coffee.

NEXT

Another patron stands before her.

RUBY
(LOW ENERGY; ALMOST DEFEATED) You
look like an artist? Modeler.

PATRON 10
I am.

Ruby's eyes brighten.

RUBY
Really.

PATRON 10
Last time I checked.

RUBY
Like 3ds max5?

PATRON 10
Yup.

RUBY
Hard to learn?

PATRON 10
Takes time.

RUBY
You teach yourself.

PATRON 10
Pretty much. Bought instructional
DVDs. Cost me an arm and leg.

RUBY
Free coffee if you lend them to me.

Sonia nudges her firmly, letting her know she cannot be making these kind of deals without her dad's consent.

Tej hears as well, and he turns toward her to see what exactly is transpiring.

PATRON 10
You're cute.

RUBY
I just want to borrow them. Free
coffee and cake until I bring them
back to you.

PATRON 10
You're serious? (BEAT) Can you do
that?

Sonia nudges her again. Ruby nudges her back.

RUBY
Yup.

PATRON 10
I only have the advanced DVDS. No
good to a beginner.

RUBY
I'll figure it out.

PATRON 10
You're better off buying the first
five.

RUBY
I just want to get an idea of the
program.

PATRON 10
(SHRUGS) Sure.

RUBY
Starting today. Go ahead.

PATRON 10
I'll get those to you by the end of
the day.

Ruby smiles as he leaves.

TEJ
I couldn't help--

RUBY
Dock my tips. Please. I need those
DVDs.

Tej smiles at her.

TEJ
Okay.

TIME PASSES

BACK ROOM OF LE SAINT EX

Ruby watches an advanced instructional video of 3DSMAX, pausing every now and then to try out a technique or feature that was just explained to her. She's having a hard time getting it. She probably should begin with the beginner's DVD. But she pushes on nevertheless.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Sitting in bed, Ruby brainstorms on possible characters she could create for the YBU challenge. Nothing comes to her. She crumbles her design and tosses it in a waste basket, which is overflowing with crumpled paper and failed ideas.

INT. LE SAINT EX

Ruby prepares a latte. Sonia prepares an espresso beside her. Patrons wait for their orders.

SONIA
How's the assignment going?

RUBY
Slowly.

SONIA
Nothing yet?

RUBY
Not yet. It will come.

LATER

Ruby sits at a table.

Jean sits in front of her.

JEAN
(IN FRENCH) Did you finish your homework?

RUBY
(IN FRENCH) You didn't give me any.
(BEAT) You prepare a lesson?

JEAN
(IN FRENCH) No.

RUBY
(IN FRENCH) You're not a very good teacher.

JEAN
(IN FRENCH) That's because I'm not a teacher. (BEAT) You excited you got into the program?

RUBY
Gonna be tough, tougher than I thought.

JEAN
(IN FRENCH) Maybe we should stop the French classes.

RUBY
Nice try. (BEAT, then in FRENCH) I have to design a character.
(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)

Not just the idea but the actual model in a computer.

JEAN

Doesn't sound so tough.

RUBY

I'm not an artist.

JEAN

You should just quit.

Ruby laughs at this.

Jean doesn't find it funny.

Take it easy.

Ruby suddenly realizes he is serious.

You only have one life. Why would you put yourself through that kind of stress?

RUBY

It's the good kind of stress.

LATER THAT NIGHT

Alone at the same table Ruby struggles to design a character but is unsuccessful with every scribble in her notebook. Tej locks up the front door as the last few patrons walk out.

TEJ

Ruby. I'm closing up.

RUBY

Okay. Sorry.

INT. YBU - BASEMENT/COMPUTER LAB

Ruby stares at a blank computer screen.

Other candidates struggle to model their characters in 3DSMAX. At least they know what they want to model. At least they are at that stage. She doesn't even know what she wants to model.

Ruby gazes at Chris' computer screen. He seems pretty advanced in the project. He seems to already be at the animation phase of the project, animating what seems to be a soldier.

EXT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ruby walks to the staircase while Pierre, sitting on the porch, drinking beers, waves at her.

PIERRE
(IN FRENCH, THEN ENGLISH) End of
the month is coming.

RUBY
I know.

PIERRE
Just a reminder.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM

Ruby pulls out an envelope from a drawer and counts her money. She adds her tips and money she made from working at the cafe. She has just enough for rent. Her funds are running low. She pulls out a few hundred for rent. She places the rent money in another envelope.

EXT. OLD MONTREAL

Ruby walks aimlessly, searching for inspiration for her game character.

INT. LE SAINT EX

Ruby wipes down the counter.

SONIA
Anything yet?

RUBY
Not yet. (BEAT) I think I'm gonna
need those beginner DVDs after all.

SONIA
You think?

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Her laptop plugged into a phone jack, Ruby scans the internet for animation training DVDs. On the computer she peruses all the courses. She scrolls down to check the price. Almost one thousand dollars. She hesitates, then orders them.

LATER THAT NIGHT

Ruby sleeps soundlessly. A picture of her and her mother on the dresser beside her.

Suddenly her eyes spring open. She grabs her sketchbook and begins writing and drawing with energy and vigor. The ideas are coming out faster than she can write or draw them.

INT. LE SAINT EX - MORNING

Ruby shows her design to Sonia.

SONIA

I like.

RUBY

Yeah?

SONIA

Yeah. I like the suit.

INT. YBU - BASEMENT/COMPUTER LAB

Ruby tries to model her character using the computer but it's a complete mess. She tries to model a head out of a sphere without realizing that's just not how it's done.

EXT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - FRONT DOOR

Ruby checks her mailbox for her DVDs. Not there yet. She sighs deeply, then enters her apartment.

INT. RUBYS APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Ruby scans the internet trying to read up about modeling a character with a 3d modeling software. She reads and jots down notes.

INT. LE SAINT EX - MORNING

Ruby shows her notebook with her character design to Tej and Dylan and Sonia. A basic sketch of a character in a notebook. Tej scrutinizes the design. What she doesn't realize is that she shouldn't be taste-testing a half-baked proverbial cake. Easiest way to get discouraged.

TEJ

A computer specialist?

RUBY

Yeah.

TEJ

Breaks into computers?

RUBY

Yeah.

DYLAN

Can you even make a game out of that?

RUBY

I could.

TEJ

Can't say if it's good or bad. I don't know these games.

RUBY

I'm just asking if you like it.

TEJ

I don't know.

Tej walks away.

Ruby loses a little confidence in her idea.

DYLAN

Could be cool...I guess...

Dylan walks away.

Another piece of confidence chips away.

SONIA

(REASSURING) It's cool!

Ruby gives her a forced smile.

EXT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ruby checks her mailbox. Nothing. Her head drops with a sigh. A moment later, she hears a voice.

PIERRE

(IN FRENCH) I signed something for you. 25 dollars. Was 15. But I charge a 10 dollar convenience fee.

Ruby stares at the package in his hands. She barely registers the scam. She can hardly believe her eyes.

RUBY
Thank God.

PIERRE
It's just DVDs.

RUBY
You checked it.

PIERRE
I had to make sure.

RUBY
Of what?

He shrugs. She takes the DVDS. She pays him.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Ruby watches the modeling training DVDs, taking notes and practicing on her laptop.

NIGHT TURNS TO DAY

She continues to practice how to model a character on a computer.

DAY TURNS TO NIGHT

She's modeled most of her character. Almost looks professional. Dozens of empty coffee mugs behind her.

INT. LE SAINT EX - MORNING

Ruby can hardly keep her eyes open as she wipes down the counter. Tej notices this. He walks up to her.

TEJ
Why don't you go to the back?

RUBY
And?

TEJ
Sleep.

RUBY
I'm sorry.

TEJ
Get some sleep.

RUBY
Just five minutes.

TEJ
Sure.

Ruby heads to the back room. Curls up on a couch.

MORNING TURNS TO NIGHT

Tej walks into the back room. Wakes Ruby up.

RUBY
Shit! I'm so sorry.

Tej walks out, saying nothing.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT

Ruby watches the animation training DVDs, taking notes and practicing on her laptop.

NIGHT TURNS TO DAY

She continues to practice animation.

DAY TURNS TO NIGHT

She's got basic mechanics via animation attached to the character. She watches another tutorial on how to attach a controller to the character within the program so that she can control the character with the arrow keys on the keyboard.

INT. YBU - BASEMENT/CLASSROOM

Ruby watches a presentation. Now she's the only girl in the class. The other girl already quit the program for reasons no one really knows.

Three teachers judge the presentations at the back of the classroom. An animated astronaut moves about on a television screen and Candidate 1 pitches his idea.

CANDIDATE 1
My character gets stuck on a space ship with space zombies. His main skills are shooting and melee.

MONTAGE

CANDIDATE 2

An animated soldier moves about on a television screen and Candidate 2 pitches his idea.

CANDIDATE 2

So I was thinking a character in a post-apocalyptic world. He's like a this guy who's skill is surviving and fighting against the zombie hoard.

CANDIDATE 3

An animated cowboy moves about on a television screen and Candidate 3 pitches his idea.

CANDIDATE 3

(IN FRENCH) Hey guys. This is Ryder. Ryder finds himself in a town overrun by zombies with the task of cleaning up the town. That's why he's main strength is shooting and slicing.

CANDIDATE 4

An animated samurai moves about on a television screen and Candidate 4 pitches his idea.

CANDIDATE 4

My character is a Samurai, trying to return peace and order to the world after a great evil turns everyone in medieval Japan into a berserking zombies!

CANDIDATE 5

An animated Little Prince with a space gun moves about on a television screen and Candidate 5 pitches his idea.

CANDIDATE 5

(IN FRENCH) So my character is the Little Prince with a twist. After a mad scientist from Asteroid 18 steals his rose and turns everyone in the universe into mindless, brain-eating minions, the Little Prince vows revenge.

(MORE)

CANDIDATE 5 (CONT'D)

So he learns how to wield a space gun to save his rose, though he's not sure why he wants to save his rose or what makes her so important.

MARIO

Interesting.

DANIEL

Everybody went.

The other teachers give Daniel a look. They know he's purposely singling out Ruby. Ruby raises her hand.

Daniel sighs.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

Oh yes. I almost forgot. The girl.
(IN FRENCH) Let's get this over with.

Ruby boldly walks to the front of the class. Loads in her EXE, but it crashes in front of everyone. Daniel smirks. She takes in a deep breath.

RUBY

One second.

She tries again.

Again it crashes.

Daniel smiles a smile of victory. She's out of his program! Suddenly, Mario suggests another way.

MARIO

Right button on the file and try opening as administrator.

Ruby nods, follows his instructions, and within moments her character, her 'computer specialist' pops up on the television monitor. No animations play on the character.

RUBY

So my character is Sam and she comes from a tough neighbourhood in Chicago. She lost her family in a terrorist attack and so her thing growing up was that she wanted to protect her country. Her thing though isn't guns or killing. She's like Marta Hari. She infiltrates.

(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)

She stealths her way in and she hacks and shuts terrorist cells down before they have a chance to hurt someone. She's perfect for a game of puzzles and sneaking around with a focus on interrogation mechanics.

MARIO

No shooting?

RUBY

No shooting.

OLIVER

No zombies?

RUBY

Not in this game.

DANIEL

Where are the animations? We asked specifically for animations.

RUBY

They're there. I actually found a cool feature to allow designers to map animations to the actual keyboard, so--

She grabs the keyboard and starts moving the character and showcasing the bare bone mechanics.

They're playable so you can actually feel the mechanic. So you can see and feel what the experience would be like.

Mario and Oliver smile.

She knocked this challenge out of the park.

Daniel broods silently. It's clear he doesn't want a woman moving forward as a designer and is adamant in his belief that women make better organizers or producers than designers.

EXT. YBU

Ruby walks out of YBU and heads over to a nearby phone booth, while never taking her eyes off Le Saint Ex. She calls her mother.

RUBY (ON THE PHONE)
Hey Ma. I did it. I can't believe it. No. The other girl didn't show up. Who knows? I have no idea.
(BEAT) No, no. I've got this.
(BEAT) I don't know yet. Tomorrow they let us know more. (BEAT; a silence as her mother fills her ears with inspiration, goodwill and power words) Thanks, Ma. (BEAT) Thanks. (BEAT) I know....

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Ruby stares at her character on her laptop screen. She twirls her butterfly necklace in her hands.

INT. YBU - BASEMENT FLOOR/"SCHOOL"

Ruby sits in the classroom with the only eight candidates left in the program.

DANIEL
Okay. You eight survived the first round. Now for the second. (BEAT) We're taking two of the more unique characters and having the creators lead a team to create a playable prototype based on the character. The twist is...the winners don't get to work on their characters. (BEAT) That's right. You need to take someone else's idea and make it work as your own. (BEAT) It was determined by the judges whose judgement I sometimes question that Chris' mercenary and Ruby's computer chick were the characters that stood out. Chris leads one team. (GLARES AT RUBY) The girl leads the other. That's it. Figure out the teams. Give me the names tomorrow.

CHRIS
Those who want to be on my team meet me in the cafeteria.

All the class empties in the cafeteria leaving Ruby alone with Daniel. Daniel smiles at this. He approaches her.

DANIEL

Lucky girl. I don't know who helped you with your character but that wasn't your work, and I'd like to see you pull that off a second time. (BEAT) You want a suggestion?

He stares at her.

DANIEL (CONT'D)

When the scraps come back from the cafeteria...let them design while you make the coffee.

With these words Daniel leaves her alone in the classroom. Ruby closes her eyes. Meditates. Finds her centre. When she opens them again, there are four men sitting around her. CHUCK. JON. IGGY. AND DAVE.

RUBY

(TAKING CHARGE) Okay. So we'll start with a brainstorm.

Jon and Dave immediately sigh and walk out.

IGGY

They're just pissed. They wanted to lead.

RUBY

I don't give a shit. All I want to know is how we're going to win this thing.

Iggy and Chuck look at one another. Chuck raises an eyebrow. Iggy smiles.

IGGY

Let's meet tomorrow.

RUBY

You guys know Le St. Ex.

IGGY

Coffee joint? Across the street?

RUBY

Yeah. Let's meet at six. I'll get us a private room.

CHUCK

The others.

RUBY
Send them the invite.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Ruby writes and sketches in a notebook, lost in her thoughts and imagination, still somewhat surprised that she made it to the next phase of the YBU challenge.

INT. LE SAINT EX - MORNING

Ruby wipes down a table. She notices a man, ADAM, 24, drawing on another table. She inches over and looks over his shoulder while he draws, appreciating his work.

RUBY
Really nice.

Turns to see her. Turns back to his drawing.

ADAM
Thanks.

Ruby inches closer.

RUBY
Can I?

ADAM
Sure.

Adam lets her look at his sketchbook.

RUBY
Where'd you learn?

ADAM
My dad was a painter.

RUBY
You work at YB?

ADAM
Three years. (BEAT) I come here to chill and work on other things.

RUBY
Cool. (BEAT) Ruby.

She extends her hand.

They shake.

ADAM

Adam.

RUBY

Maybe one day we'll work together.

ADAM

You an artist?

RUBY

Designer.

ADAM

Interior?

RUBY

Game designer.

ADAM

(IMPRESSED)

Wo.

RUBY

(CORRECTING)

In training.

ADAM

Well, that's cool. Maybe we will work together.

Ruby smiles but doesn't respond to this.

LATER THAT EVENING

Ruby stands in the doorway waiting for her team. Iggy and Chuck soon turn up, but not the other two.

RUBY

Where are the others?

IGGY

Caf.

RUBY

They coming?

Iggy shakes his head. Ruby sighs.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Wait here.

She marches across the street toward YBU. Up the stairs and through the main entrance.

INT. YBU - BASEMENT/CAFETERIA

A bunch of men play 'MAGIC' at the table.

RUBY
(POINTS AT JON AND DAVE) You two.

They regard her.

Yeah, you. You can get over your gender issues and join the team or you can stay here and apply to this program next year, though I'm pretty sure they don't take last year's losers.

She pauses. Then--

You want this? Get over it and win it. Then, you can teach me a lesson or run circles around me in the last challenge I don't care.

She stares into them, waiting.

What will it be? Win now so you can kick my ass later, or just...lose.

INT. LE SAINT EX - NIGHT

Ruby and the team--the entire team--debate over what they should do with Chris' character. They all stare at a picture of the character for a long while. Finally--

RUBY
What if it were more of a experience than a game?

IGGY
It's got to be a game.

RUBY
I mean a game...but what if there were many things you could do to complete the game?

CHUCK
What do you mean?

RUBY
Not sure yet. It's just he designed a Marine.

IGGY

Make a good shooter. (BEAT) Zombie game?

RUBY

Enough with the zombies. Seriously.

IGGY

I'm just sayin'.

RUBY

Look we're tired. Let's sleep on it, reconvene tomorrow. Okay?

They all look at her and nod at differing degrees of enthusiasm.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Ruby watches TV. Suddenly a documentary on the Rwanda genocide begins. Images of the UN force that directly disobeyed orders to stay and help. She straightens up, watches the TV with great interest.

INT. LE SAINT EX - MORNING

Ruby draws Mario from Mario Bros. in a latte. It's pretty close considering she's drawing in milk fuzz and foam. Adam stands before her, waiting for his latte. Ruby puts in the final touches then hands it over to him.

ADAM

Mario. Cool.

RUBY

It looks like him?

ADAM

Totally. An illustrator and a designer. Nice.

RUBY

I wish.

She smiles at him. He walks away. Sonia nudges her shoulder, staring at Adam's butt as he walks away.

SONIA

Not bad. He ask you out?

RUBY

Hope not. (EXPLAINING) No time.

SONIA
There's always time for some of
that.

RUBY
No time.

SONIA
(SKEPTICAL) Right.

LATER THAT AFTERNOON

JEAN
(IN FRENCH) Talk.

RUBY
(IN FRENCH) About what?

JEAN
(IN FRENCH) Are we done?

RUBY
(IN FRENCH) Almost but...no. I need
more practice.

JEAN
(IN FRENCH) Then practice.

RUBY
(IN FRENCH) How long you live in
Montreal?

JEAN
(IN FRENCH) All my life.

RUBY
(IN FRENCH) What does the license
plate motto mean? 'Je Me Souveins'

JEAN
(IN FRENCH) I will always remember.

RUBY
Remember what?

JEAN
To speak in French.

RUBY
(IN FRENCH) Yeah?

JEAN
(IN FRENCH) Yeah.

RUBY

(IN FRENCH) Are you a separatist?

JEAN

(IN FRENCH) Doesn't mean anything to a guy like me? The politicians don't give a shit. Just something that gives them purpose and a hell of a lot of importance and money.

He looks out the window at pedestrians.

The ones fighting for it probably don't even want to win independence. If they win, they lose, if you know what I mean. Kind of like cancer.

He waits for a response, then continues.

More people making a living off cancer charity and care and research than dying of it. Imagine they actually found a cure. Terrible.

He winks at her as though revealing a secret.

Business first, people last, or haven't you figures that out yet.

Ruby doesn't bother to jump onto his conspiracy wagon. Instead her game designer mind snatches onto a kernel of his message.

RUBY

(IN FRENCH) That's interesting. If they win, they lose. Kind of a different take on a game.

JEAN

(IN FRENCH) It's all a game. Some play better than others. (BEAT) I never bothered.

Ruby smiles and seems very thoughtful. The game design gears spring into motion!

INT. YBU - BASEMENT/COMPUTER LAB

Ruby and her team lounge on chairs, lost in their thoughts. Ruby works something out in her notebook.

RUBY

We'll take another two minutes then
will come together with whatever we
have.

Jon sighs. Gets up.

JON

We ain't going nowhere.

RUBY

Where are you going?

JON

I'll be back.

Jon quits the lab. They all stare at Ruby for a reaction. She just ignores Jon. She has no mental energy to spare on his issues and insecurities.

IGGY

He ain't coming back.

RUBY

Whatever.

DAVE

He'll come back.

A silence.

RUBY

So, what do we have? (NO ONE SPEAKS
UP SO SHE CONTINUES) I'm thinking
we could create a game that tries
to explore the mechanics that were
put forward in a meaningful way.

IGGY

What?

CHUCK

Double what?

RUBY

Tweak the cliché. Flip the cliché
on its head. Instead of doing a
zombie game we explore the things
that drive populations to zombie-
like behavior.

IGGY

What?

CHUCK
Double what?

RUBY
Propaganda. Misinformation. Hate.
Mindless killing.

IGGY
Zombies.

RUBY
Not zombies.

IGGY
I'm lost.

RUBY
We create a fictional city. Not
very big. Something we could
actually pull off in the month we
have in some form. We create a
situation where he has shooting and
melee and stealth mechanics but the
goal isn't to win in the
traditional sense.

CHUCK
It isn't?

RUBY
No. It isn't. The goal is to
sacrifice yourself to save people
from killing crews. To use those
mechanics in a meaningful way.

A thoughtful silence.

IGGY
We should just do zombies.

RUBY
No.

IGGY
Why?

RUBY
Cause it's our chance to do
something else. Express something
different. Give players an
experience they don't often get.

CHUCK
So...no zombies.

Ruby shakes her head.

RUBY

The goal is not to collect, but to give. Not to kill but to protect and heal, in fact the more you overtly kill the more heat you attract, the faster your game ends. That's what I'm thinking. (BEAT) The more discreet the more people you save and help. It's about a balance between goals and mechanics that culminates to one epic moment. I'll explain more...but...let's designate roles unless someone has another idea they want to put forward that is in no way related to zombies cause seriously I'm doing a zombie game.

Everyone stares at her blankly.

Okay, then.

INT. LE SAINT EX - MORNING

Exhausted, Ruby can barely keep her eyes open as she prepares a latte, draws something that doesn't end up being anything. The patron stares at the design.

PATRON 4

What is it?

RUBY

What does it look like?

PATRON 4

I don't know.

RUBY

Keep looking at it.

PATRON 4

Saturn.

Tej observes her.

RUBY

There you go.

PATRON 4

Cool.

Tej walks up to her.

TEJ
Why don't you take a rest?

RUBY
I'll be okay.

TEJ
Five minutes in the back.

RUBY
Okay.

She heads out to the back.

MOURNING TURNS TO NIGHT

Ruby sleeps on a small couch.

Tej walks up to her.

TEJ
Wake up. I'm closing.

Ruby wakes with a start.

RUBY
Shit. I'm so sorry.

TEJ
Why don't you work part time until
you finish your project?

RUBY
I need the hours.

TEJ
I can lend you money...then when
you make your first game you pay me
back.

Ruby smiles at him.

RUBY
I'll take you up on that.

TEJ
Only one condition.

RUBY
What?

TEJ

Win.

Her smile grows.

INT. YB SOFT - BASEMENT/COMPUTER LAB

Ruby's team work hard, each member at a computer station. Jon is there, only he's not working. He's busy chatting on a social network. Ruby regards him, then looks to Iggy and Chuck. Iggy regards Jon, sighs, then looks at Ruby. Ruby shrugs. She doesn't know what to do. For now she decides to let him be.

LATER IN THE CAFETERIA

Jon texts a friend while crunching on chips.

Ruby walks in.

RUBY

Hey Jon, can I talk to you?

JON

I got a minute.

RUBY

It's just the whole team is really pulling together and when you text while they're working it kind of brings the team down.

JON

And you'd rather I didn't do that?

RUBY

Yeah.

JON

Sure. I can do that.

RUBY

Great. That's all I'm asking.

Ruby gets a sense that this was too easy.

INT. LE SAINT EX - AFTERNOON

Ruby draws and writes in a notebook at a table.

ADAM

Not working today?

RUBY
Project.

ADAM
Right. (HE STARES DOWN AT HER
NOTEBOOK) Looks complicated.

RUBY
Just trying to figure out why this
game we're making is going to be
fun.

ADAM
Does it have to be?

RUBY
What?

ADAM
Fun. Does it have to be?

Ruby thinks about this a moment, then shrugs.

RUBY
No. It has to engage and
stimulate...but it doesn't have to
be fun. Fun helps though.

ADAM
If you have some time...I'm going
to the YBU anniversary party. I'm
allowed to bring a friend...so
whatever...

His voice trails away. He stares at her for a long moment,
when she suddenly realizes that's his way of inviting her.

RUBY
So whatever...You're inviting me?

ADAM
All work, no play.

RUBY
That would be cool.

EXT. RUBYS APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ruby walks by Pierre.

PIERRE
(IN FRENCH) How come you never
bring a boy home?

RUBY
(IN FRENCH) None of your business.

Pierre meows.

INT. RUBYS APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Ruby continues to work on her game project, filling in her notebook in her bed.

INT. LE SAINT EX

Ruby sits at the table drinking a latte, while watching a bunch of game designers play a card game.

ADAM
Ready?

RUBY
You mind I just want to...

ADAM
Eavesdrop...sure...

She eavesdrops.

GAME DESIGNER (O.S.)
It sucks cause it takes her hand
and patronizes you. You can weave a
tutorial into the game without
being so literal. Teach one thing.
Present the problem. Teach another.

The game designer lets out a laugh.

Now YBU is so scared that players
will miss something or get
frustrated or confused that they'd
rather treat the player like a
goddamn child than weave mechanics
slowly and cleverly without
patronizing the player.

Ruby smiles.

ADAM
Shall we?

Ruby smiles.

EXT. SERGIOS - A BAR NEAR YBU

Walking toward the entrance--

ADAM
Hope this ain't vegetarian...not
that it's bad or anything...

RUBY
Don't worry. I'm not a vegetarian.

ADAM
I'm hungry.

RUBY
You and I both.

INT. SERGIOS

Ruby and Adam walk into the pub to find--to their utter disbelief--naked models on tables covered from head to toe in food. Designers and producers fill empty plates with food straight off these naked women as though it were no big deal. This event something much more reminiscent of a bachelor party than a developer party.

Chained to the wall are other naked women that anyone can paint on with non-toxic finger paint. The three or four women mangers and producers mingle with the designers as if they were used to this sort of thing.

Boys will be boys.

Adam stares in shock, then looks to Ruby who is still processing the scene in mute disbelief.

A long dramatic silence.

ADAM
You want to get out of here?

RUBY
(DAZED AND REPULSED) Yeahhhh...

INT. BURGER JOINT

Adam and Ruby sit at a table waiting for food.

ADAM
I'm really sorry.

RUBY

Whatever.

ADAM

They weren't supposed to do that.
Not after the trouble they got with
the last party.

RUBY

Food did look good.

ADAM

That it did.

RUBY

Just not off living flesh.

A waitress delivers two massive poutines.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Let's hope this poutine thing is as
good as you say it is.

ADAM

Oh, it's good.

Adam lets Ruby observe the dish placed before her. After a short struggle with a fork full of melted cheese she takes her first bite of poutine. A silence. She closes her eyes, then opens them.

RUBY

That's good.

ADAM

Quebec's national dish.

RUBY

Really good.

EXT. MOUNT ROYAL

Adam and Ruby hike up a dark, moon-lit trail.

ADAM

So what got you in all this.

RUBY

I don't know. I've always loved the
way games make me feel.

ADAM

Smart. Empowered. Entertained.

Ruby searches for the right word.

RUBY

Inspired. I love games and I think we can do a lot more with the medium, just gotta get outta our box that churns the same shit out over and over again.

ADAM

Things are changing.

Ruby gives him a skeptical look.

They walk up the mountain in silence. They reach the top and stare over the city, taking it all in.

RUBY

In the end...despite the whole naked girl thing...I had a good time.

ADAM

Good.

INT. YBU - BASEMENT/COMPUTER LAB

Ruby and her team, save Jon who is messaging several friends, work hard at creating assets for their playable prototype. Ruby turns to Jon, sighs, then continues her work.

INT. RUBYS APARTMENT

By the window, Ruby gazes at her butterfly pendant, lost in her thoughts.

INT. YBU - BASEMENT FLOOR/COMPUTER LAB

Everyone huddles around Ruby as she loads up the prototype.

IGGY

Is it gonna work?

CHUCK

I can't fuckin script another line?

SUDDENLY the prototype loads! Everyone shouts for joy. Jon walks in.

JON

It works! Awesome!

Everyone glares at him.

JON (CONT'D)

Go team!

He logs into his computer to message his friends.

Ruby addresses her team.

RUBY

We've still got some bugs to iron out...but we should be good for Monday.

IGGY

He didn't do anything. His name shouldn't even be on this.

RUBY

So say something.

IGGY

I will.

Iggy walks up to Jon, smiles uneasily. Jon looks up at him.

JON

What?

IGGY

Nothing.

Iggy walks back.

IGGY (CONT'D)

Whatever.

RUBY

Does everyone feel the same?

Chuck nods, so does Dave.

RUBY (CONT'D)

Anyone want to say something?

CHUCK

Just gonna cause trouble for nothing.

Ruby contorts her face at this. A moment later she calls Jon over.

RUBY

Jon. Come here.

JON

One sec.

RUBY

Jon. Come here.

JON

Yup, one sec.

Jon hesitantly walks over. He stares at the monitor where the team's prototype is loaded. Ruby indicates the monitor.

RUBY

This here is our game. I want you to explain to us your specific contribution.

JON

(WITH A SMIRK) Moral support.

RUBY

That supposed to be funny. Do you see any of us laughing?

JON

Look man, it was all you, and I didn't like the idea, so, you know what I wasn't inspired.

RUBY

That's not what I asked. What did you contribute?

JON

I told you I didn't like the idea...if you don't want to put my name on it I mean you can take it off.

RUBY

Oh that's going to happen. I'm not asking your permission for that. I just wanted to make sure from your own mouth you understood why you were suddenly eliminated by the team you were supposed to help.

Jon's face grows red.

JON

Fuckin' bitch! If you weren't a girl I'd kick your fuckin' ass right now.

Ruby stands and faces him.

RUBY

Okay. Let's for the next few minutes pretend I'm not a girl, and let's go outside so you can kick my ass.

JON

You're a joke.

RUBY

Everyone. I think I can kick his ass, and I want you all to think of me as a completely valid opponent to this fuckin' coward.

Everyone stares at each other in mute disbelief.

(TO JON) Outside, now!

Jon turns white as a ghost. Ruby leads the team outside to teach this bully a lesson.

EXT. YBU - MOMENTS LATER

Ruby followed by Jon and the team pour outside. Ruby leads them to the side of the building into an alley.

Ruby faces Jon, while the others surround them, eager to see how this will all unfold.

JON

Hit me.

RUBY

I never said I wanted to hit you. I said I'd give you your chance.

JON

Hit me, then.

RUBY

I gotta do everything for you. You started this, I'll finish it.

JON

Okay tough girl!

He pushes her to the ground and laughs. She stares up at him then all of sudden leaps to her feet, tackles his legs, flooring him.

Jon grabs her in a headlock. She pulls her head out. Grabs his arm, pins his chest, and immobilizes him. Then she grabs his arm and twists it in an awkward direction.

RUBY
Apologize to this team.

JON
Fuck you.

RUBY
Apologize!

She yanks his arm, he squeals in pain, and suddenly agrees to apologize.

JON
I'm sorry. I'm fuckin' sorry.

Ruby relaxes her grip, stands, and walks away leaving everyone staring down at Jon in shocked disbelief.

EXT. RUBYS APARTMENT - LATER

Ruby walks toward home with a growing smile on her face.

INT. RUBYS APARTMENT - BATHROOM

Ruby stares in the mirror at herself, proud. But then she suddenly realizes she's missing something.

Her necklace!

Panic overtakes her. Without a moment to lose she rushes out of her apartment.

EXT. YBU - SIDEWALK & ALLEY

Ruby searches the sidewalk and alley for her necklace. But it's nowhere to be found. She pauses to watch Chris walk out of YBU, laughing with one of his team members. When they round the corner, she returns to her search.

WALKING ON THE SIDEWALK

Ruby walks from YBU back to her apartment staring at the ground for her necklace. Still, nothing.

INT. LE SAINT EX

Ruby cleans the bar with a wet rag in fairly low spirits. Just when she thinks things couldn't get any worse, Iggy rushes in.

IGGY
Ruby. Our main files are corrupt.

RUBY
What?

IGGY
Our main files are corrupt. Our game doesn't fuckin' work.

Ruby gives Sonia a look.

SONIA
Go. I'm fine.

Ruby races out of the cafe following Iggy.

INT. YBU - BASEMENT/COMPUTER LAB

Ruby marches toward her team members.

Chuck sits behind a computer trying to launch the game with no success.

Always the same message: 'file corrupt'.

DAVE
I didn't think he'd go this low.

IGGY
We don't know who it was.

Ruby stands behind Chuck.

CHUCK
The backups are corrupt.

Ruby pushes him aside to try and launch the game.

It ain't gonna work.

IGGY
No way we have time to re-do everything. Fuckin' hell!

DAVE

I find him I'm gonna kick his fuckin' ass.

IGGY

(SHAKING HIS HEAD IN DISBELIEF) It was a good idea. (BEAT) FUCK!

EXT. YBU - NIGHT

Ruby sits on the stairs leading to the entrance of YBU. Not sure what she's going to do next, she watches everyone walking down the street in a half daze.

After a moment she stands and heads to the phone booth. Grabs the phone. Dials. Her mother soon answers.

RUBY

(ON THE PHONE) Hey, Ma. Everything's good. Just wanted to say hi. Yeah. You know how it is. No. Nothing. I'm telling you. Just tired. Ma. JUST tired. Thanks. (HER EYES WATER) Thanks. Nothing I can't handle. Okay. Okay. I know. (BEAT) I'm the best. There I said it. (BEAT) I'm the best! There. Like I mean it.

INT. LE SAINT EX

Ruby sits at a table staring out the window at all the employees of YBU walking up into the building. She looks to a loud table and watches a few game designers playing a board game: Settlers of Catan.

An idea suddenly comes to her. She stands slowly as though in a trance and walks over to their table. The table grows quiet as their eyes turn toward Ruby.

GAME DESIGNER

Yes.

RUBY

Continue.

GAME DESIGNER

What do you want?

RUBY

Sorry. (BEAT AS SHE BACKS AWAY) Didn't mean to disturb your game.

She runs out of the cafe. Tej and Sonia and Dylan regard one another. Tej shrugs. Everyone goes back to work.

GAME DESIGNER

Weird.

INT. YBU

Ruby waits by the entrance door. Adam comes through a door. He walks toward the reception area.

ADAM

What's going on?

RUBY

I need your help.

ADAM

I'm in crunch.

RUBY

This is sink or swim, and you fuckin owe me.

ADAM

For what?

RUBY

That bachelor party.

He nods.

ADAM

Right.

EXT. RUBYS APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ruby sits on her staircase.

Iggy is the first of her team to show up. He gets out of a taxi and walks up to her.

IGGY

What's going on?

RUBY

You'll know soon enough.

IGGY

You saved the files!?

RUBY
I'll explain when we're all here.
Upstairs. Make yourself at home.

He heads upstairs.

One by one her team shows up.

RUBY (CONT'D)
Upstairs.

Pierre counts the men on his hand. At last Adam shows up with his drawing equipment. She smiles, stands and leads him upstairs.

Pierre steps out and watches them walk into the apartment and close the door behind them. Pierre shakes his head in disbelief. Sips his beer. Shakes his head.

PIERRE
(WITH A SIGH) Tabarnaque!

INT. YBU - CLASSROOM

Ruby and her team walk inside the class. Chris smiles at her as he prepares to present his game for his team.

DANIEL
You made it. You have something to present?

RUBY
We do.

DANIEL
Good.

CHRIS
So just to give you a basic set-up we revisited the whole idea Rena put forward. The reality...players don't really want to play a girl... they want to protect her. So Samantha, gets caught on one of her reconnaissance missions. The agency wants to leave her to die, but her boyfriend, from the same organization, with the same mechanics, infiltrates Iraq to save her from a terrible, terrible death.

Ruby sighs miserably.

That's where our mission begins.

Ruby watches the demo with disbelief. At last they reach her character, Samantha--in rags, practically naked.

CHRIS (CONT'D)

When you save her, you need to carry her to the chopper. (BEAT)
And that's the game. Thoughts?

RUBY

It's exactly what I expected.

DANIEL

Good. I love it. You guys took a half-baked idea and made it marketable.

OLIVER

It's fine. But you were supposed to create something with the character.

DANIEL

That's not what we said. We said use the character in a meaningful way and that's what they did. We never said the character needed to be the playable character.

OLIVER

Right. My mistake.

MARIO

Ruby. Go ahead.

Susan and Adam walk into the room as Ruby walks up to the front of the class with her team.

RUBY

So our game is set in the fictional African country of Oran. Our hero, true to form, begins as a bravado Marine working for the UN. After the first mission, the tutorial mission, he discovers genocide is about to break out. He reports his findings but is strangely ordered to withdraw and evacuate from Oran. But he can't do this in good conscience, knowing he could save lives with his equipment and skills.

(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)

So he and a contingent of UN soldiers disobey orders to protect the Oru, against the Ortu. That's the context the mechanics will feed into.

Daniel contorts his face, which throws Ruby off for a moment, just a moment.

The gameplay is a mix of shooting and stealth. The loop is rescue and steal provisions to build up a hub to battle waves of brainwashed men.

She gives Chris a look when she says this.

The mid-level loop is to slash and burn the propaganda spewing radio stations and the main leaders of the genocide. Also the game would be squad based with bots that can be replaced by a real player at any time in your struggle to save the Oru. (SHE OPENS HER BAG) This prototype will illustrate the gameplay, and loops, and it's already gone through several tests with designated groups.

DANIEL

What the hell is that?

RUBY

It's our prototype.

DANIEL

It's a boardgame.

MARIO

Can we play?

RUBY

That's why I brought it.

DANIEL

(PROTESTING) Hold on! We can't accept this.

OLIVER

Sure we can. We said playable prototype. We never said digital. This is cheaper. Quicker. Faster to balance. (STARES AT RUBY) You ask me this is a great idea.

Susan and Adam and Mario walk up to Ruby. They take a seat as they prepare to play the game.

Daniel watches from the back of the class.

SUSAN
Love the artwork.

ADAM
Thanks.

RUBY
You have to save as many Oru as you can, eventually the heat meter hits, and you're attacked by a wave of killer crews of the ONP. The Oran National Party.

Susan smiles proudly at Ruby.

The game begins.

EXT. YBU - PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

Ruby calls her mom.

RUBY
Hey, Ma. We did it! They loved the game and spent hours playing it when the class was way over. (BEAT) Yeah. Yeah. (BEAT) Okay I just want to tell you...I'm heading out to get a drink. (BEAT) I know. You too.

She hangs up, turns around and faces Jon. A long dramatic silence.

RUBY (CONT'D)
What do you want?

JON
(HESITANT) I wanted to say I was sorry.

RUBY
You fuck up our files and then you want to say sorry.

JON
I didn't do that. I swear. I wanted to apologize for not helping. I don't know why I acted like that.

RUBY
You mean like an ass.

JON
Yeah. I'm not usually like that.
Seriously.

RUBY
Okay.

JON
Here.

He pulls something out of his pocket.

I fixed it.

He hands over her butterfly necklace. She stares at it like it were the most precious thing in the world.

JON (CONT'D)
We good?

Ruby nods with tears in her eyes as she stares at her necklace.

RUBY
We're good.

JON
You are one tough fuckin' chick.

She smiles at this.

RUBY
You want to go for a drink with the team. You should really extend that apology.

JON
Yeah.

RUBY
Come on, then.

She leads him down the street.

INT. YBU - CLASSROOM

Daniel stands before Ruby and her team. Mario and Oliver stand beside him.

DANIEL

You're on your own now. The challenge is to come up with a design that you present at two milestones to show us the evolution of your game. Each milestone you will be graded on the presentation and progress. The one with the best grade wins. Any questions?

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Ruby sits up in bed surrounded by crumpled papers. She doesn't know what she's going to do for her next game pitch. It's just her against the blank page. Daunting. Extremely daunting.

EXT. MOUNT ROYAL - MORNING

Carrying her notebooks, Ruby walks through a path on the mountain hoping for inspiration.

INT. LE SAINT EX

Ruby sits at a table still trying to figure out what to do for her final presentation. Adam walks in and takes a seat in front of her. He looks at her and smiles.

ADAM

Any ideas?

Ruby shakes her head.

Bummer. Guess you don't want to go for a drink tonight?

Ruby shakes her head.

Bummer.

RUBY

Hey let me ask you something. Does a game have to be fun? Is just something I've been thinking about.

He thinks about this for a long moment.

ADAM

I think so.

RUBY
Is a Zero Sum game fun?

ADAM
I don't even know what that is.
(BEAT) Why don't you just do a
zombie game.

RUBY
I'm not doing a zombie game.

ADAM
Will there be a zombie mode?

RUBY
No.

ADAM
No?

RUBY
No.

A short silence.

ADAM
I have something to tell you.
(BEAT) Word of your team's last
pitch is getting around the studio.
One team is even designing a board
game prototype for their next
pitch.

Ruby smiles.

CONT'D)
Don't let it get to your head. You
still got to win this thing.

RUBY
That's the plan.

ADAM
I won't distract you any longer.

RUBY
Thanks, Adam.

ADAM
You owe me a drink when this is
done.

RUBY
You got it.

INT. YBU

Ruby walks toward the computer lab. As she enters she notices a photocopied illustration on the floor. She stares at a naked picture of herself copulating with her entire male team of the previous challenge.

She walks slowly toward the lab. She stares inside, Susan is yanking off the last two illustrations that were taped to computer monitors for everyone to see.

SUSAN

Never mind this. We'll find out who did it.

RUBY

Doesn't matter. Doesn't bother me.

SUSAN

Well, it's inappropriate.

RUBY

Way it goes.

SUSAN

Let's hope things eventually change.

RUBY

Till it does, fuck it. I ain't wastin' my energy on their insecurities.

Susan smiles.

Ruby heads to one of the computers and logs on.

EXT. LE SAINT EX

Ruby walks out of YBU to unexpectedly spot Tej walking drunkenly across the street. He stops in the middle of the street, frozen with fear, staring at the headlights of oncoming traffic.

RUBY

(TO HERSELF) What the hell!

She races to help him. She guides him across the street and into the cafe.

INT. LE SAINT EX

Ruby helps Tej into his building.

SONIA

Dad!

Sonia comes to his aid.

RUBY

I've never seen him like this.

SONIA

Help me bring him up.

Ruby nods. They help him climb the stairs to his apartment.

UPSTAIRS

Ruby waits at a table in the kitchen.

Sonia puts her father to bed.

RUBY

Is he gonna be okay?

SONIA

Yeah. It's June that's why.

RUBY

Sure. June.

SONIA

He lost his family during the attack on the Golden Temple in 84. The quarantine began in June.

RUBY

What does that mean?

SONIA

To put down fifty or so separatists fighting for their language, land and water rights the Indian government shut down and quarantined an entire city in Punjab. Cut off water and provisions. That alone would have done the trick, can't fight when all you think about is food and water, right...but I guess the government had another agenda. They declared a total media black out to keep the world in the dark.

(MORE)

SONIA (CONT'D)

Brought in like 200 000 soldiers
with tanks and all kinds of
weapons.

RUBY

Fuck. Kind of messed up.

SONIA

You think? Killed over 3000
pilgrims to get 50. Brutal stuff.
They chose a religious anniversary
when they knew the city and temple
would be crammed with pilgrims. He
was just a boy but it still kind of
screws him up.

She looks toward her father's bedroom.

You think he'd get over it by now.
But no. (BEAT) I don't know what he
saw there. Never talks about it.

Ruby goes thoughtful and inward.

RUBY

Fuck.

SONIA

Can't imagine being in that.

RUBY

Fuck.

SONIA

What he had to do to survive.
(BEAT) Be glad you're born on this
side of the hill.

RUBY

Fuck.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Ruby stares at a blank page for a long while. Once again it's the artist versus the blank page. She grabs her laptop and begins to surf the net. She types in "1984 & Golden Temple". A few links pop up. She begins reading about the attack on the Golden Temple. Suddenly she begins to write frantically, her ideas pouring out faster than she can write them down.

INT. YBU - HALLWAY

Ruby waits outside the classroom with Iggy and Dave. Suddenly Chuck walks out of the classroom with a smile. Clearly, everything went well for him.

CHUCK

(TO RUBY) Your turn. Take it easy on them.

She smiles. Enters the classroom.

CLASSROOM

Ruby walks up to the front of the class and fires up a powerpoint presentation. She begins the presentation. A slide with rebels standing against government soldiers. Examples from OPERATION GREEN HUNT. Indian women currently fighting the government.

RUBY

Imagine you were caught in the crossfire between rebels and the government over land and water.

She takes in a deep breath and clicks to the next slide of a church in a small town.

You visit the holiest church in Oran for Christmas just as the government quarantines the town. No one gets in. No one gets out.

Clicks to the next slide. A slide of a reporter with duct tape over her mouth.

On top of which they order a total media blackout. They are planning something they don't want the world to know about.

Click. A slide with references of cities under quarantine.

Anyone who tries to escape is shot dead. Women, children, the elderly, doesn't matter. After the first few days people are begging for and fighting over provisions.

Click. A slide with references of civilians fighting for survival.

And there you are in the middle of all this.

(MORE)

RUBY (CONT'D)

You can find a camera and try to take pictures and sneak those pictures out to the media in order to secure UN involvement.

Click. A slide with reference to the protagonist, a woman in her mid-twenties, fully clothed.

Or you could spend the limited time you have not helping yourself but helping children escape before the government attacks with the entire army.

Click. Mobs looting homes.

Or you could loot homes and use that money to bribe your way out of the quarantine zone.

Click. Thirsty people drinking water.

Or you can find ways to reconnect the water for everyone.

Click. Indian Rebel women standing strong against the Indian army.

Or you can join the rebels and help protect sacred documents in the church when you discover attacking the rebels is only a pretext to destroying a secret and sacred library within the church.

Click. Pilgrims visiting the church for Christmas.

Or you could help one of the many families visiting for Christmas get out. Thousands of NPCs and stories and people for you to help. (BEAT) You can do so many things. But you gotta do something cause you know Oran's entire army is coming in to destroy the church's library and kill off the rebels who didn't already starve to death.

Click. The last slide is an illustration of her proposed protagonist. A strong looking female reporter very much in the vein of Lois Lane.

DANIEL

Is this a joke?

RUBY

No. It's very serious.

DANIEL

Lots of 'You could.' What DO you do?

RUBY

Well, it's up to you. We weave in lots of opportunities and outcomes in a very small space. I'd call it the world's smallest open world game. Allow for a lot of emergent experiences and systems for long term engagement. A lot of player stories and possibilities with very little digital real estate. I mean that's the high-level intention.

Daniel sighs and rolls his eyes. Oliver and Mario smirk.

DANIEL

Games like this wouldn't sell. Open World games are a dying breed. People don't want freedom. They want a journey. They want you to give them an experience. Yeah one or two end up being hits. But they are rare. Why would we make a game based on an unproven structure that doesn't sell. My main feedback would be to give the player a main goal and make the main character a little more appealing so players want to protect her.

RUBY

Okay.

DANIEL

Another note. If you want guys to play a girl for a few hours you should also consider giving them something interesting to look at.

RUBY

Right.

OLIVER

I don't agree with Daniel, and taking this feedback is up to you. Here's my feedback.

(MORE)

OLIVER (CONT'D)

I like the character as is and I think he is categorically wrong about Open world being a cult style game. I think it's the future and I like your thinking. Also I don't need anything interesting to look at except an aspirational character, and she is aspirational. (BEAT) The set-up is impressive, and I'd like to know more about the mechanics and how you intend to cram so many possibilities in such a small space. (BEAT) There is one thing though, contextually. Something that just doesn't scan. (BEAT) To my mind, it doesn't ring true. Military wouldn't attack the holiest place in a city like that on Christmas especially if cutting water and starving them out would suffice. Maybe tweak that so it's a little more credible.

MARIO

I see what you're doing, and Oliver has a point. Here's my question. Since you fictionalized the country, you could also make it about elves or orcs or fairies. An orc government would do something like that. It's easier to believe. You could make the entire game a metaphor. (BEAT) Again, this is just feedback. I really like the idea as a whole. What I like is that it's pushing a structure and philosophy that is starting to build traction especially with the recent release of GTA. It truly shows the potential strength of our medium to do something more than just fun or entertaining.

OLIVER

Of course, you still have to somehow make it fun.

RUBY

Do I?

OLIVER

I think so.

DANIEL
Why else would we play it?

RUBY
I don't know. To get something else
out of it.

DANIEL
Like what?

RUBY
An experience.

DANIEL
But not a fun one?

RUBY
An experience of yourself.

DANIEL
I have no idea what that means.

RUBY
A game that doesn't try to define
the player or impose arbitrary
authored scenarios or rules of
definitions. Let the player be the
player.

DANIEL
Sounds abstract and expensive for
nothing.

MARIO
(INTERRUPTING) And that's fine, you
get to pitch your game, Ruby. It's
probably the only time you get to
do this without marketing making a
god damn mess of the thing. Do what
you sense is right...and take our
feedback or don't. It's up to you.
But for your next pitch let's hear
more about the mechanics. (BEAT)
Great presentation.

OLIVER
Very cool.

MARIO
Could you call in Iggy?

RUBY
(SUPPRESSING A HUGE SMILE) Sure.

Ruby walks off proud. She exits the room. Gestures to Iggy that he's up.

RUBY (CONT'D)
Good luck.

IGGY
Fuck I'm nervous.

RUBY
Remember to breathe and everything
will be fine.

Iggy regards her skeptically.

IGGY
You're not supposed to help me. I'm
the competition remember.

She winks at him.

RUBY
I wanna beat you at your best.

He laughs his anxiety away, then fist bumps her.

EXT. YBU - PHONE BOOTH - NIGHT

Ruby tries to call her mother but no one answers. She lets it ring for a while, then hangs up.

INT. LE SAINT EX - LATER

Jean walks into the cafe. Spots Ruby sitting at a table by herself. Sits with her.

JEAN
(IN FRENCH) You still need these
damn lessons?

RUBY
(IN FRENCH) I plan to be here for a
while.

JEAN
(IN FRENCH) So it went well. You
actually think you're gonna win
this thing?

RUBY
(IN FRENCH) I feel good about what
I'm pitching.

JEAN

(IN FRENCH) You want an idea...one that will win for sure. For sure, sure? (BEAT) You play as a taxi driver.

RUBY

(IN FRENCH) And?

JEAN

(IN FRENCH) You play as a taxi driver. It sells itself.

Ruby smiles uncertainly.

RUBY

(IN FRENCH) You race?

JEAN

(IN FRENCH) Yes.

RUBY

(IN FRENCH) You make sure to take the longest route?

JEAN

(IN FRENCH) Yes. Sometimes the shortest.

RUBY

(IN FRENCH) When no one's in the cab.

JEAN

(IN FRENCH) That's right. (BEAT) Could be fun?

RUBY

(IN FRENCH) Could be.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - BEDROOM

Ruby sits in bed once again with her notebook. This time ideas come to her fast, faster than she can scribble them down. Ideas on how to make the game she just pitched a reality. She draws buckets. Buckets of stories. She draws a symbol of a computer brain--the game state--and how it would allocate stories and personalities to instantiate all AI at game start.

She moves on to mechanics and systems. She begins to outline an interaction/conversation system that would make sense with the game she wants to make. Basically, she's on fire, more inspired than she's ever been in her life.

EXT. YBU - PHONE BOOTH - MORNING

Ruby calls her mother. The phone rings endlessly. Ruby hangs up, then tries again and still no one answers. She then calls her mother's neighbor.

RUBY
 (ON THE PHONE) Hey. I'm trying to
 get in touch with my mother. (BEAT)
 I don't understand. What? (BEAT)
 What?

INT. LE SAINT EX

Ruby walks in with watery eyes. She walks up to Tej. Tej appraises her. Immediately senses something's wrong.

TEJ
 What's going on with you?

Tears begin down Ruby's face.

Wo. Come, come.

Tej leads her to the back of Le Saint Ex.

OFFICE (BACK OF LE SAINT EX)

TEJ (CONT'D)
 What happened?

RUBY
 My mom had stroke. My neighbor says
 she's going to be fine, and she
 gave strict orders that I should
 stay here and win the competition.

Tej gives her a half-smile. A skeptical smile.

TEJ
 What do you think?

RUBY
 She's lying. I know she is. She
 thinks I'd lose or be distracted or
 disadvantaged if I didn't focus on
 the competition.

TEJ
Is she right?

RUBY
Probably.

Tej nods pensively.

TEJ
The thing parents want more than anything in life is to see their children realize their dreams and be happy. Right? That makes sense. But--

He pauses, and smiles at her.

Someone put something so strong in you when you were a kid that I know no matter what you are going to make it. I don't think anything of this world will stop you from getting what you want. Am I right?

Ruby smiles.

Someone told you long ago that you could be whatever you wanted and didn't let you think otherwise, and that's why you're in the finals. But here's the thing...the thing about life....

He pauses until he knows she's completely focused.

Some things you get another chance to do. Other things you only get one chance. That's the thing about life. Am I right?

Her eyes grow watery. He peers into her.

See there are two things you gotta know when you're chasing a thing. You got to ask yourself what you're willing to do to win. And you got to also know what you ain't willing to do. That's just important.

He gives her a grave look.

There are many studios and competitions. You understand what I'm saying.

She nods.

INT. YBU - SECRETARY'S DESK

Oliver, Mario come to see Ruby.

RUBY
What happens if I miss the next
milestone?

OLIVER
What's happening?

RUBY
I've got a family emergency.

OLIVER
Technically you get zero, which
puts you out of the race.

MARIO
Not if we all agree to extend the
date. Fine by me.

OLIVER
Me too. (BEAT) If Daniel is okay
with it...we could extend it.

EXT. YBU

Ruby scans all the employees coming out of the building,
searching for Daniel. At long last Daniel walks out.

RUBY
(IN FRENCH) Daniel, please. Can I
talk to you? I tried to contact you
but--

DANIEL
(IN FRENCH) What is it?

RUBY
I talked to Mario and Oliver--

DANIEL
What is it?

RUBY
I need an extension.

DANIEL
No way.

RUBY
No way? I have an emergency.

He stops and faces her.

DANIEL
Good. I told you...you belong in
production, not design.

She stares at him with dawning understanding.

RUBY
It was you, wasn't it? You
corrupted our files...you drew that
picture.

DANIEL
Darling. The game of games isn't
for girls. You can manage and
cheerlead. But you ain't ever going
to design a game. Not at this
company.

He turns his back on her and walks away.

She watches him walk away.

INT. RUBY'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Ruby opens her drawer grabs her envelope and realizes she
doesn't have any money for the bus back to Chicago.

EXT. LE SAINT EX

The last customers pour out.

Ruby walks in with a backpack.

RUBY
Tej. Can I have an advance?

He looks at her, smiles as he comes to understand she's
leaving Montreal to see her mother.

Tej raises his finger for her to wait. He disappears in the
back of the store and then returns with a bundle of cash.

TEJ
They'll be other chances.

She nods.

He hands her the money.

Do not insult me by one day trying
to give this back. You understand?

She nods with tears forming in her eyes.

Go see your mom.

INT. TRAIN STATION (TICKET BOOTH)

Ruby faces the clerk.

CLERK

(IN FRENCH) We don't have anything
until next week.

RUBY

(IN FRENCH) Please. I need to get
on tonight.

CLERK

(IN FRENCH) I'm sorry. There's
nothing I can do.

EXT. TRAIN STATION

Jean pulls in. He gets out of his taxi.

JEAN

(IN FRENCH) What's going on?

RUBY

(IN FRENCH) I need your help. There
are no more buses for a week. I
need you to drive me to Chicago,
I'll pay you.

He laughs, then when he sees she's not kidding he gets
altogether serious.

JEAN

Are you crazy?

RUBY

Please. I need help.

JEAN

You blackmail me, then you ask me
to take you to Chicago. Twelve hrs.

RUBY
I have enough for the gas.

JEAN
There and back?

RUBY
There.

Jean laughs.

RUBY (CONT'D)
My mother's sick.

JEAN
Chicago?

She nods.

He laughs absurdly. Hops back into his cab and drives away.
Then suddenly he stops. Reverses back to her.

JEAN (CONT'D)
(IN FRENCH) God damn you! Get in.

She smiles and hops in the taxi.

I'm not driving you to Chicago.

JEAN (CONT'D)
I'll take you to the airport. I'll
lend you travel points and money
for the plane ticket. Cheaper like
that for you and me.

RUBY
Thank you.

JEAN
Only God knows why I ever let you
in my cab!

EXT. CHICAGO AIRPORT

RUNWAY

An Air Canada plane lands.

PARKING

Ruby hops in a cab.

EXT. HOSPITAL

Ruby jumps out of the cab and charges into the hospital.

INT. HOSPITAL

Ruby finds a nurse. The nurse gestures toward a section in the hospital. Ruby then rushes toward the direction the nurse indicated. She reaches a room. Slows down. Walks inside.

ROOM

Carla sleeps in a hospital bed. A rhythmic beep indicates a low pulse rate. She shares the room with one other patient.

Ruby takes a seat beside her mother and holds her hand.

Sensing her, Carla slowly rouses. She opens her eyes to see Ruby. Unable to speak, she shakes her head. *You shouldn't have come.*

Ruby nods her head firmly in answer. *Of course I came!*

Carla squeezes Ruby's hand tightly, thanking her. Barely manages--

CARLA
(INAUDIBLE WHISPER) You're the
best.

She smiles, closes her eyes as her heart beat slows to a stop. Almost as though she was waiting to see her daughter one last time before letting go.

FLASHBACK: INT. CARLA'S APARTMENT - CHICAGO

Three-year-old Ruby lies in bed beside her mother. Carla has a leather cord and a small faded butterfly pendent around her neck (the one she gave Ruby). Ruby touches it. Carla lets her look at it.

CARLA
Your grandmother made it for me.

THREE-YEAR-OLD RUBY
Because she loved you.

CARLA
Because she loved me, and she loved
butterflies.

Three-year-old Ruby smiles.

THREE-YEAR-OLD RUBY
I'm not sleepy.

Carla smiles at her little girl.

Three-year-old Ruby stares at her mother. Carla tells her a story that had once been told to her.

CARLA
A long time ago in a forest far,
far away the grasshoppers tricked
the caterpillars into forgetting
how to become real butterflies.
See the grasshopper were jealous
that caterpillars could become
butterflies and they realized that
the most important thing for a
caterpillar was their food plant
which was their soul food. Food
that would change them into
butterflies. So what these
grasshoppers did was they hid the
knowledge that there even was such
a thing as a food plant so that
they could control caterpillars and
keep them from becoming
butterflies. Then they told
caterpillars they had work like
grasshopper and for grasshoppers to
become a butterfly and they never
told them the truth that all they
had to do was find their soul food.

Three-year-old ruby's eyes close. Carla stops.

THREE-YEAR-OLD RUBY
I'm not sleeping. My eyes are
closed, but I'm not sleeping.

Carla smiles.

CARLA
And these sneaky grasshoppers
created alienated all the
caterpillars in a Work Depot from
the rest of the forest, and these
few grasshoppers manipulated and
used caterpillars to do whatever
they wanted them to do with black
magic to keep them down. Everywhere
in their Work Depot were posters
and words and pictures that scared
caterpillars from leaving the the
Depot or becoming real.

(MORE)

CARLA (CONT'D)

All these words and images posted around the Depot were like an invisible prison of fear caterpillars couldn't really see or break out of. And this was so they could control them. It was control by a thousand images. (CORRECTING) It was death by a thousand images. Images that told caterpillars they had to look a certain way and do certain things or act like this or that to become real when nothing was further from the truth. Grasshoppers were turning caterpillars into grasshopper slaves, and all the caterpillars really had to do to become a butterfly was simply leave the Work Depot and find their soul food.

Three-year-old Ruby's eyes are closed.

CARLA (CONT'D)

But that was easier said than done as the grasshoppers created all kinds of obstacles and traps for caterpillars to waste their energy and focus on meaningless things that kept them weak and fearful so that they would never lose their slaves. But one day a mother smuggled her little caterpillar out of the Work Depot so that her baby would have a chance at becoming what she never could.

Carla stops. Watches her little girl sleep. But after a long moment Young Ruby opens her eyes again.

YOUNG RUBY

(OPENING HER EYES) Did she?
(CLOSING HER EYES) Did she become a real butterfly?

CARLA

I'm not finished.

THREE-YEAR-OLD RUBY

It's because I feel sleepy and I just want to know.

Carla smiles at her. Caresses her forehead.

CARLA

She did. But she also discovered the grasshoppers were not only keeping caterpillars down with black magic but also...they were destroying the forest. So she and a few other dreamers--a bird, a whale, and a porcupine--decided to work together to save the forest from the grasshoppers. But that's another story and I still haven't told you about how the tough little caterpillar discovered she was a lot more than what the grasshoppers said she was.

Carla kisses three-year-old ruby on the forehead again and stares at her...just stares at her.

Three-year-old Ruby opens her eyes, feeling her mother's loving gaze. She stares up at her for a long moment.

CARLA (CONT'D)

Don't let anyone ever tell you what you can or can't do.

THREE-YEAR-OLD RUBY

I won't.

CARLA

You know what your grandmother used to say about caterpillars. It's not where they start that counts...

THREE-YEAR-OLD RUBY

...it's where they finish.

Three-year-old Ruby smiles.

CARLA

I love you more than the universe.

THREE-YEAR-OLD RUBY

I know.

Three-year-old Ruby closes her eyes and sleeps at last.

INT. BUS (MONTREAL BOUND)

Ruby opens her eyes. She stares out the window at the fast moving road. Suddenly she pulls out her notebook and begins sketching how she would complete her game despite the fact that she might miss her milestone presentation.

It's not about winning the internship anymore. It's about something else. Something deeper and much more profound.

EXT. BUS STATION - MONTREAL

Jean waits for Ruby. Ruby rushes out.

JEAN
You think you can make it?

Ruby jumps in the taxi.

RUBY
I might.

He jumps in and races away.

EXT. YBU

Jean pulls in.

Ruby rushes out of the taxi and into the building.

INT. YBU - CLASSROOM

Ruby rushes in the class. Daniel and Mario and Oliver are gathering their stuff, preparing to leave.

RUBY
I made it.

DANIEL
No. You didn't. We're done.

RUBY
Please. Just five minutes. I have everything I need. Everything.

DANIEL
Time's up.

Mario shrugs.

MARIO
There's nothing we can do.

Daniel and Mario leaves.

OLIVER
I'm so sorry.

They leave her alone in the class. She stands there and stares at the void for a long moment. She holds and gazes at her butterfly pendent. A smile breaks over her face.

RUBY
(GROWING CONFIDENT)
I'm the best. I'm the best.

She begins to laugh. She gave her best and she sacrificed winning to see her mother for one last time. No regrets. Deep down, she knows she'll have another chance, that the universe will conspire for her, and she'll take everything her mother taught her and succeed.

INT. LE SAINT EX

Iggy steps up to the cash.

RUBY
Your first day?

IGGY
Yeah.

RUBY
So.

A silence. He doesn't know how to tell her.

IGGY
It's fuckin' awesome.

Stops himself. Stares at her.

You're not mad are you?

RUBY
I don't regret a thing.

IGGY
I hope we work together one day.
Seriously. You're one of the best
designers I know. I mean that.

Ruby smiles and hands him his latte.

And you throw a mean punch.

LATER THAT DAY

Ruby cleans a table with Tej as Susan approaches her.

SUSAN

Hey. I'm here with Oliver. Do you have two seconds? He wants to talk to you about something.

Ruby looks to Tej. Tej nods that he can clean up by himself, then a knowing smile breaks over his face as he senses the magic of the universe at play. Something good is about to happen for Ruby and he can feel it.

Ruby sits down at the table. Oliver and Susan smile at her. She smiles back at them, waiting.

RUBY

What's going on?

OLIVER

It really sucks what happened.

RUBY

Rules of the game. I'm over it.
(BEAT) What's going on?

OLIVER

I want to say something because it doesn't happen often to me. (BEAT)
You inspired me. You did.

RUBY

Okay.

OLIVER

You did something to me. You made me remember. You made me remember why I wanted to make games before I got caught up in the business of games. What sucks is there's nothing I can do for you at YBU.

RUBY

Okay.

OLIVER

That's why I'm leaving. To start my own company. It's about time I make my own god damn game!

RUBY

That's awesome for you!

OLIVER

And you.

RUBY
What do you mean?

OLIVER
What do you think I mean?

Ruby looks to Susan. To Oliver. To Susan.

SUSAN
I'm one of the partners.

Ruby looks down at her pendent and smiles. Tej brings them lattes and biscuits. He has no idea what's going on...and yet...he knows.

TEJ
On the house.

FADE OUT

CREDITS OVER a montage of every 'Save the Princess' game ever made.

PREMISE

The universe is magic and those who believe it will see and experience it and those who don't won't. The key to the magic of the universe is always believing in yourself.

SYNOPSIS

A poor woman from the South Side of Chicago moves to Montreal, Quebec to break into the male-dominated game industry to pursue her dream of becoming a game designer. 'Alpha Beta Gold' is the name of the story and it's an inspirational drama in the vein of movies like Rocky, GI Jane, or, more recently, Million Dollar Baby. It follows the journey of a young woman using her savings to support herself in a new country where she hopes to break into the game industry as a game designer. Problems occur when her mother falls ill and she must decide between going home to be with her mother or pursuing her dreams. Audiences will love her tenacity and determination, and they will especially love her indomitable will.

CHARACTERS

Ruby Abel: 21 years old. High school drop out. Creative savant. A beautiful Black woman from the South Side of Chicago.

Carla Abel: 42 years old. Single Mother. Domestic worker. A strong and stern Black woman from the South Side of Chicago.

Pierre. 40 years old. Landlord. He sits on his porch and drinks beer all day.

Jean. 46 years old. Taxi driver. He's the ultimate taxi con until he meets up with Ruby.

Tej. 56 years old. Business owner. He came to Canada on a dream and made it happen. Only now he has to contend with the stringent Quebec Language Police and the coffee corporations trying to put his little cafe-bistro out of business.

Sonia. 22 years old. Daughter of Tej. One of Ruby's first friends in Montreal.

Dylan. 20 years old. Son of Tej. His character becomes more important in the spinoff television series Le Saint Ex, which follows this Indo-Canadian family's struggle to survive amidst the Quebec Language Laws and hostile corporate takeovers.

Adam. 24 years old. Illustrator. Friend and love-interest of Ruby.