Theft

Written By

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FADE IN

INT. ROOM - DAY

Three friends sit in various spots in a simple rectangular room. They're buried in books, papers, and other study supplies.

One among them, BETH, looks particularly studious. She pours over a textbook filled with fine-print text. Another, GREG, heaves a big sigh as he reclines from his study materials.

GREG
Oh my gosh, how long do we need to stay here?

The third friend, MEREDITH, puts down her pencil.

MEREDITH
I don't think we're even half way through. We'll probably need to pull an all-nighter.

GREG
Nooooo.

Greg drops his head to his hands in disappointment.

MEREDITH
I guess we can take a break if y'all want. Food?

GREG
Yes please!

MEREDITH
Beth, food?

BETH
Yeah, let's go.

The three get up to start packing their things. But as they do --

BETH
Um, guys, have you seen my notebook?

GREG/BETH
Nah. / No.
The other two continue packing, unconcerned for the missing notebook. Beth becomes increasingly frazzled.

BETH
Uh, are you guys sure?

MEREDITH
Yeah. Are you sure you brought it?

Beth is slightly taken aback by the suggestion.

BETH
Yeah, I know I brought it. I was just using it!

MEREDITH
Maybe we'll find it when we get back.

BETH
But it has all my notes! I'm going to fail the test without it.

MEREDITH
You can use my notebook, my notes are good. Let's go, Beth.

Meredith and Greg are on their way to their door. They're just about to open it when --

BETH
No!

Meredith and Greg look back, alarmed. Beth is fuming.

BETH
Notebooks don't just disappear. I want to know who has it.

A short pause.

GREG
Are you...accusing us?

BETH
I know you two want Dr. Gill to curve the grade. And if I don't have my notebook, that means I won't get a one hundred.

Meredith and Greg are shocked by her accusation.
GREG
I don't know what to tell you, Beth. We didn't take your notebook.

BETH
It's OK, I won't mad. Just confess now and no hard feelings.

Meredith scoffs in disbelief.

MEREDITH
This is crazy. I'm getting food.

Her hand reaches for the door handle when --

BETH
Meredith, walk out that door and I'll tell everyone about Spring Break.

Meredith is still for a moment. She turns and stares at Beth.

MEREDITH
Nothing happened.

BETH
We can let my Twitter followers decide.

Meredith heaves a sigh of frustration. She walks back to her seat and slumps into the chair in visible frustration.

Beth looks at Meredith in self-righteousness. She turns her gaze to Greg, who anticipates her move.

GREG
Don't even try, Beth. You can't blackma --

BETH
Christmas party.

Greg takes two quick strides back to his seat.

He and Meredith sit, dejected. Beth towers over them.

BETH
OK. Meredith, empty your bag.

Meredith is stunned.
MEREDITH
You're just going to go through our stuff?

BETH
Open it.

Keeping stern eye contact with Beth throughout, Meredith pulls out her bag and dumps its contents onto the floor. Beth hurriedly begins looking through the materials.

MEREDITH
Good luck finding it.

Beth gives Meredith a stern look, and continues rummaging through the things. Her face beams. She picks something up.

BETH
Well this is interesting. Would you like to explain yourself?

Beth holds out a pack of floss. Meredith looks at it confusingly.

MEREDITH
You...got me?

BETH
I sure did. Tell me if this story sounds familiar. A lil' twenty-something drops out of university and starts going to community college. And she needs to be at the top of her class. Except one problem: her best friend seems just a bit too intelligent for her own good. She works and works, but just can't shake the feeling that her friend might become valedictorian instead of her. So she does the only thing she can think of: she sabotages her friend. Collateral damage, right? So while her best friend's chances of getting an A in biology are ruined, lil' Meredith gets to rise to the top and be everyone's ruler. And because she just needs to have it all, she ends the day of diabolical conniving by flossing her teeth so she can have the perfect smile during her perfect speech at her

(MORE)
The room is silent. Greg looks on in awe. Meredith and Beth haven't unlocked eyes.

MEREDITH
You're crazy.

She begins putting her stuff back into her bag.

BETH
Am I? Or am I crazy deductive?

MEREDITH
No, just crazy.

Meredith pulls out her phone and starts scrolling. She's tuned out of the investigation.

Beth isn't satisfied with her supposed evidence. She turns to Greg.

BETH
Bag.

GREG
C'mon, Beth, is this really necessary?

BETH
Bag.

Greg dumps his bag's contents onto the desk and places the bag out of view. Just like before, Beth hurriedly begins rummaging.

GREG
How long is this going to take, I'm hungry.

BETH
Stop worrying about filling your stomach and start hungering for the truth!

GREG
What...

Beth shoots up from the floor with something in her hand.

BETH
"What" is right: explain yourself!
In Beth's outstretched hand are a pair of earbuds.

GREG
They're just earbuds!

BETH
Not "just" earbuds. I know whoever stole my notebook probably wanted to celebrate afterwards. And what better way to celebrate than by jamming out to your favorite tunes using a pair of earbuds!

Beth seems convinced that she's right. Greg looks to Meredith for support, but she's still on her phone. Greg is exasperated.

GREG
I don't know what to tell you, Beth. You're grasping at straws. No, not even straws!

Beth is skeptical of his argument. She tosses the earbuds aside and begins going through her own bag.

GREG
What are you doing...

BETH
I'm going to get us to the bottom of this.

She pulls out a pair of dry erase markers.

BETH
We are going to map out everything we've done in the past twenty-four hours. And we're going to arrive at the truth.

GREG
Beth, no! Just admit that the notebook isn't here!

BETH
It's here, I know it! We're starting.

Beth erases the math equations that were previously on the board and writes their names at the three corners of a triangle.
BETH
Greg, what did you have for breakfast?

GREG
...What?

BETH
What did you have for breakfast?!?

Nearly foaming at the mouth, her shout shocks both Meredith and Greg into alertness.

GREG
I...I had eggs and toast.

BETH
Good. See, that wasn't hard.

The sudden shift in mood from angry to sublime is unnerving. Greg and Meredith exchange worried looks.

MONTAGE
Various shots of Greg and Meredith acting out information to Beth. The whiteboard diagram becomes increasingly convoluted.

END MONTAGE

All three friends are breathing heavily, evidently exhausted from the information relay. They wipe sweat from their brows.

The whiteboard diagram has become a convoluted mess. Beth looks up towards it, silently begging for the answer to present itself.

MEREDITH
Beth. I think that's it.

BETH
No!

She fidgets around her spot, clawing at the whiteboard.

BETH
It's here. I know it's here.

GREG
Beth, let's go. This isn't healthy.
Beth looks at the other two in sheer denial of their conclusion.

   BETH
   How am I going to study...?

   MEREDITH
   I told you, you can use my notebook. They're good notes.

The viability of this option slowly dawns on Beth. A soft smile begins to appear.

   BETH
   OK...thanks Meredith...

Meredith smiles and helps Beth back to the study desk. The three begin to head out again out the room.

But before anyone's left the room, Beth notices something interesting about Greg's bag. There seem to be two extra zippers at the rear of his backpack.

Zippers that are quite large. Large enough to hold a notebook.

   BETH
   Oh Greg, I didn't notice that your backpack has two extra zippers in the back.

Greg seems just a bit startled by this observation.

   GREG
   Oh yeah. I forgot about those.

There's the slightest hint of reservation in his voice.

   BETH
   Do you use it a lot or are they just extra?

   GREG
   Uh, I don't know. I use them sometimes.

   BETH
   So you wouldn't mind if I --

Greg turns to Beth. He's scared.

   BETH
   -- if I looked real quick just to (MORE)
BETH (CONT'D)
see if my notebook might be there.

Greg looks to Meredith for support but receives only a look of concern.

GREG
I think we already decided that the notebook isn't here, right? So let's just go get some food.

As he speaks, Beth slowly approaches him.

BETH
I know, but it wouldn't hurt to just double-check, right?

Greg is backing away. Beth attempts to reach for the bag but Greg snatches it away.

GREG
NO!

BETH
Why don't you want me to open it, Greg? What are you hiding?

GREG
Nothing! But you need to respect my privacy!

BETH
We stopped caring about privacy a long time ago: give me the bag!

GREG
No!

Beth is fuming. For a few seconds, time seems to stand still as they stare each other down.

But Beth makes a move. She pulls out a hammer from her backpack and holds it threateningly above Meredith's phone, which lies on the study desk.

The other two are stunned.

BETH
Give me the bag.

GREG
Why do you have a hammer!?!
BETH
Give me the bag, or so help me!

MEREDITH
Beth, please, think about what you're do-

BETH
Quiet! I know Greg couldn't have done this on his own. You two were conniving against me from the beginning.

Beth waits for Greg to give her the bag, but he's steadfast. Done with waiting, she bolts toward Greg and wrestles the bag from him. A sinister smile takes over her face as she throws away the hammer.

BETH
I'm sorry I had to do that, Greg. But the truth must come out.

GREG
Don't open it!!

BETH
It's too late for that! I gave you a chance to confess. Now you'll both be revealed for the snakes that you are.

Beth nearly tears open the bag in excitement. The first zipper reveals nothing. Beth rips open the second zipper, and when she sticks in her hand she feels her prize.

She rips out her hand with a green notebook in her grasp. But as she begins to flip through it, she sees that it is not her notebook: there are no words within. Only a single sheet of paper.

She examines the paper and her confusion is only compounded. She reads the paper aloud.

BETH
Swing Dancing Competition. Saturday the 25th, 7:30, Abilene Civic Center...?

Beth receives no reply. Greg is slumped on the floor, nearly sobbing.

BETH
What is this...?
Greg wipes his eyes.

GREG
It's a flyer for Saturday's swing
dance competition. Me and Meredith
were going to compete.

MEREDITH
Greg!

Beth is still confused.

BETH
You two go swing dancing...?

GREG
Me and Meredith have been doing it
for two months. But we didn't want
you to make fun of us.

Beth looks to Meredith. Her eyes are downcast. She looks to
the mess of a whiteboard she's created.

Beth realizes the misguidedness of her actions. She puts the
notebook and flyer back into Greg's backpack.

BETH
What am I doing...

Her friends are still downhearted.

BETH
I'm sorry guys. I don't know what's
gotten into me.

Beth helps Greg to his feet. She hands Meredith her phone
back.

BETH
If you guys don't want me to get
food with you all, I understand.

Meredith and Greg exchange looks.

MEREDITH
No, you should come. Let's just
forget about this.

Beth beams, as does Greg. The three pack up their things and
head out the door.
As they leave, we slowly see that Beth's notebook was in the room the whole time.

THE END

FADE OUT