

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

Noooooo.

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 picks up 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)

BETH (CONT'D)

perfect graduation.

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