

1

EXT. PARK - DAY

1

WIDE ON: Early winter. Orange leaves are scattered about, giving the pathway an elegant yet rustic look. Bare trees reveal a cool, greying sky. It's bitterly cold, but the frost has only just begun to creep up.

Amidst the leaves and trees sits a park bench. On the park bench, we ZOOM IN on HOLLY (16) over the course of the scene, in her red, winter coat. She sits straight, with her hands clasped together, neatly, over an open book. Headphone wires track down from her ears to her pocket. A large, red bow sits in the back of her hair, contrasting her pale, delicate skin.

ON SOUNDTRACK a classical piece, the sort one might hear at the ballet, begins to play. It starts at a hum, then rises as we move closer to her.

CUT TO:

2

EXT. WOODS - DAY

2

In slow motion: A GIRL, no older than Holly, fro-licks through the woods in a long, red, hooded cape. A white dress flails around beneath it. A small crown sits upon her head, complimented by a large red bow in the back of her hair. We watch from behind - we do not see her face.

CUT TO:

3

EXT. PARK - DAY

3

With the BALLETT MUSIC now BLARING, Holly stares, silently, at her book. Unmoving. Unblinking. The faintest of smiles hangs on her face.

She turns a page...

CU BOOK: ...And yet, the pages of the book are completely blank.

The track comes to an end. A more sinister, classical tune starts up.

She takes a pen from her pencil case, almost robotically, and writes:

'CHAPTER 2

After the'

She retracts her pen. A beat.

She crosses out 'After the' and underneath it, writes:

'Freedom.'

CUT TO:

4 EXT. WOODS - DAY 4

CU GIRL: As she turns to CAMERA, we see that the PRINCESS in the woods, is, in fact, HOLLY.

CUT TO:

5 EXT. PARK - DAY 5

WIDE ON: Holly straightens herself up, pulling her coat across her, tighter. She tightens her bow.

CUT TO:

6 EXT. WOODS - DAY 6

PRINCESS HOLLY tightens her bow. Glancing around at the ground, she pulls the hood of her cape up, and begins into the woods. Then -

SNAP

A branch breaks.

She freezes.

CUT TO:

7 EXT. PARK - DAY 7

Holly looks up from her book with a start, dropping the pen that she'd been tapping on the paper. She stares down the path as though she'd just seen a ghost come back to life.

WIDE ON: A GIRL, who appears a similar age to Holly, has planted herself further down the path. She's dressed in all black, glaring Holly down as though she was the wicked one that brought her back to life.

A beat.

Pulling her eyes away from the girl, Holly takes up her pen.

CU BOOK: Next to the word freedom, she writes:

'?'

She has another glance at the girl. She hasn't moved, only for rubbing her arm in the cold.

Holly looks back to her book, and begins to write.

CUT TO:

8 EXT. WOODS - DAY

8

PRINCESS HOLLY glides through the woods, whimsically, as though she were floating with the magic of 'happily ever after'.

HOLLY (V.O.)

In light of her new found freedom,
Princess Holly fell in love with
the forest.

She stops by the trees, running a hand along the leaves of the evergreen. She caresses them, admires them.

HOLLY (V.O.)

Yet, she still felt as though the
beady eyes of another were all but
far from this magical place.

The princess sinks down to the floor, tracing the petals of the flowers. Until suddenly, her focus darts to somewhere in the distance. She stays still, watching the ground like it might open up and swallow her.

HOLLY (V.O.)

No matter how far she ran from her
mother's castle, it seemed that she
could not shake off the trail of
the snake.

9 EXT. WOODS - DAY

9

CU: A snake SLITHERS through the grass, as though it were pursuing a mouse.

10 EXT. WOODS - DAY

10

Princess Holly scrambles backwards, though slowly enough that she does not make a sound. She scans the ground over and over, her breath only becoming heavier as she tries to control it.

As she's looking - her eyes fall upon a sharp stone in the distance. Just sharp enough that it could do some damage, just large enough that it could...

She rushes over to it on all fours.

She looks over it, almost drooling at it like it were a slice of cake. She stretches her fingers, clenching her fists, almost rhythmically, as she admires the stone. She glances around to see if anyone's watching...

11 EXT. WOODS - DAY 11

The snake's close. It stops behind a tree, close enough to the Princess that it can watch.

Princess Holly glances around, again, still knelt over the stone. She catches sight of the snake - it darts behind the tree - her eyes go wide. She puts her hands down...

12 EXT. WOODS - DAY 12

Princess Holly glances around with her eyes only, then moves her hand, slowly, almost unnoticeably, towards the sharp stone.

CUT TO:

13 EXT. PARK - DAY 13

WIDE ON: Holly leans over her book, scribbling away.

HOLLY (V.O.)

But this snake was her Mother's snake - and that meant, it wasn't just any snake. This was a *magic* snake.

CUT TO:

14 EXT. WOODS - DAY 14

The PRINCESS still leans over the stone, her fingers inches away from it. A smile creeps on to her face as she gets closer...

HOLLY (V.O.)

As she explored the woods, the snake sought to take a more comforting form...

15 EXT. WOODS - DAY

15

From behind the tree that the SNAKE was hidden, a FIGURE steps out. They can be no older than Holly. The GIRL (16) wears a black corset with thick black pants (the sort that go underneath a skirt - only her skirt has been ripped off). Dark hair illuminates green, snake-like eyes.

16 EXT. WOODS - DAY

16

With just a glance at the girl, Holly jumps backwards, away from the stone. She shields her eyes, cowering into the ground.

The girl approaches.

GIRL
Your highness?

The Princess doesn't move.

GIRL (CONT'D)
Are you hurt? Please, I only want to help.

Holly speaks at the girl through her fingers. With that, she drops her arms completely and stares up at the girl, who has extended a hand to her.

PRINCESS HOLLY
What are you doing here?

The girl smiles down at her, reaching out further. Somehow, this causes the Princess to retract further from her, almost scowling with discomfort.

GRACE
(Laughing, softly)
Just take my hand!

CU: Princess Holly's eyes. She analyses Grace with the closest precision.

HOLLY (V.O.)
It had taken the form of a familiar face - that of Grace, an old friend

-

CUT TO:

17 EXT. PARK - DAY 17

Holly stops herself and huffs. She crosses out the word, 'friend' and, instead, writes, 'acquaintance'.

HOLLY (V.O.)
- *Acquaintance* -

CUT TO:

18 EXT. WOODS - DAY 18

Grace continues to smile down at the Princess, her hand still out. Finally, the Princess takes it, and Grace drags her up. She offers her a nervous smile, while Grace can do nothing but beam.

HOLLY (V.O.)
Grace, simply put, was the type to wear all black in a yellow house.

CUT TO:

19 INT. YELLOW HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - DAY 19

In a YELLOW LIVING ROOM:

CLOSE ON: A YELLOW SOFA sits against the YELLOW WALL

CLOSE ON: GRACE appears on the sofa. She's slouched. Miserable, head to the side and arms folded like she could slap a bitch. Her all-black outfit perfectly contradicts...

CLOSE ON: ...Grace's parents, in red-white outfits, reminiscent of Holly's. They glare down on her, disapprovingly.

HOLLY (V.O.)
She was the perfect contradiction to whatever she was doing. And she knew it.

Grace rolls her eyes, takes up her bag and leaves.

CUT TO:

20 EXT. PARK - DAY 20

Holly taps the pen on her page.

From further down the path, the GIRL begins towards Holly with folded arms.

She stops near the empty seat, staring at Holly. Holly looks the girl in the eyes.

GIRL
(uncomfortably)
You alright if I sit here -

HOLLY
(unemotional)
Of course.

Holly shuffles up. The girl sits, still gripping her arms. We can now see that this is GRACE, only in casual clothing, or the sort of thing a My Chemical Romance fan would wear, casually.

They avoid each other's glare. Then:

GRACE
What you writing?

HOLLY
A story.

GRACE
About what?

HOLLY
Me.

She continues to write.

CUT TO:

21

EXT. FIELD - DAY

21

PRINCESS HOLLY and GRACE stroll through the grass, together.

GRACE
They're all looking for you.

PRINCESS HOLLY
Of course. They want me to join her.

GRACE
Indeed. Though I'd be foolish to say that I couldn't see their motivation -

Holly turns to her suddenly, holding on to a smile.

PRINCESS HOLLY
They believe it to be in their best
interest?

GRACE
Yes...

Grace continues walking. The Princess follows after her.

GRACE (CONT'D)
But, it's as I said, I know you to
be nothing like her.

Holly stops again. She smiles at Grace, warmly.

PRINCESS HOLLY
No. I'm not.

GRACE
If you could just prove to them
that you were as kind as I know you
to be, then they would see that
they have nothing to fear.

PRINCESS HOLLY
Right. Of course.

She goes to follow Grace, the hesitates.

PRINCESS HOLLY (CONT'D)
How did you find me?

CUT TO:

22 EXT. PARK - DAY

22

Grace leans towards Holly as she speaks. Holly, however,
keeps her head down.

GRACE
You don't seriously think I don't
know where you go off to? We live
in the same house, Holly. Even Mum
knows -

Holly turns to her with a panicked sort of look.

Grace scowls.

CUT TO:

23 EXT. WOODS - DAY

23

GRACE leads Princess Holly on...

GRACE

When I used to work as a scullery
made, from under your chambers, I
would forever admire the apples in
the castle orchard.

Holly stops by some flowers. She bends over to caress them,
her other arm floating by her side. She smiles with the
softness of an angel.

PRINCESS HOLLY

Yes. They were quite something.

She floats over to some more plants, maintaining a whimsical
smile as she dances between the trees.

Grace observes with folded arms.

GRACE

But I could never quite get to
them. My permissions never let me
venture so far.

(pause)

Your mother wouldn't allow it.

PRINCESS HOLLY

The Queen, you mean.

GRACE

Yes. Your mother.

The Princess looks up to Grace. She keeps the smile, but
takes on a more serious tone.

PRINCESS HOLLY

She was the Queen before she was my
mother.

(laughing nervously)

Surely you knew that.

She goes back to the flowers....

GRACE

Well, I never did get chance to try
one myself. But the cores... They
found their way into my hands many
a time. And so, apparently, had
they found their way to others
hands for a long time, too.

Holly isn't listening now. She's too busy dancing around a tree.

Grace smirks, and pulls back a branch.

GRACE (CONT'D)
Through here, your highness.

At 'highness', Holly's attention is caught. She smiles to Grace, then floats through the opening in the trees. Grace follows, checking that no one else is around before heading behind the branch herself.

CUT TO:

24

EXT. WOODS - DAY

24

CLOSE ON: A RUBY RED APPLE shimmers in the setting sun. We PULL AWAY to see it hanging from a branch, surrounded by many similar apples. Below it, Grace and Princess Holly stare up with wide eyes.

PRINCESS HOLLY
It's... perfect.

GRACE
Indeed.

Grace pulls her eyes away to focus on Holly. She does so with some ease.

GRACE (CONT'D)
The servants had been planting the seeds for many years. There was once a whole orchard, much like the one by the castle, only your mother had them all destroyed. All but one sapling, that prospered through the years, into one, mighty, life-full tree.

It's as though Holly can't hear her, she's so mesmerized...

GRACE (CONT'D)
Do you want it -

Holly begins to nod.

GRACE (CONT'D)
- Your highness?

PRINCESS HOLLY

Yes. Yes, very much.

GRACE

Then take it.

Holly lifts her dress above her ankles and starts for the tree. She takes a step up on a stump to get closer -

PRINCESS HOLLY

(laughing)

Can I?

GRACE

No.

She turns to Grace, suddenly.

PRINCESS HOLLY

But you said I could!

GRACE

No, I didn't. Whether you should or shouldn't doesn't mean you can't. But if you want to prove to them that you're not the monster they think you are, you ought not to.

PRINCESS HOLLY

What a dirty trick! I ought to take it just so you can't!

GRACE

By all means... but we both know that I'm the last bastion of hope you have left. I intend to report to them every move you make -

PRINCESS HOLLY

- That doesn't mean they'll believe you!

GRACE

I was your scullery maid! They'll believe every word I utter!

Holly turns her back on Grace. She sulks to the side, picking at the edge of her dress.

PRINCESS HOLLY

Who are *they* anyway? Who are they to decide who I am?

GRACE

They're the people, your highness.
They're the one's that killed the
Queen. Don't think they'll hesitate
when they get their hands on you.

Grace hisses, with the Princess' back to her. Her snake-like
qualities surface for a moment.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You're just as evil as she was!

Holly turns, again, suddenly. Only now, the colour drains
from her face. She trembles. Goes faint.

PRINCESS HOLLY

(Through a hoarse whisper)
Don't ever call me that.

GRACE

What? Evil?

She shudders, almost squeaks as she turns away.

GRACE (CONT'D)

You're just like her. They know
that. What's worse is they know
that you're worse. The evil queen
and her damned daughter. You were
evil the moment you were born.

PRINCESS HOLLY

Stop.

GRACE

Pretending to be perfect doesn't
make you good, Princess. It makes
you vile, and cruel...

PRINCESS HOLLY

Stop. Please.

GRACE

If you're so perfect, you wouldn't
pick the apple. But that's all you
want to do. That's all you cared
for. Not me - not me who saw the
apples at all but a mile away from
my quarters for nine years. Nine
years!

Holly falls to her knees. She sinks away behind the tree and
hides in her cloak.

Grace approaches from behind and sits next to her, on the floor. She opens her mouth to speak -

CUT TO:

25 EXT. PARK - DAY

25

Grace peers over Holly's shoulder to see what she's writing.

A beat.

Holly throws her pen down, violently, and glares at Grace. She backs away.

HOLLY

Why are you here?

GRACE

Mum sent me.

A beat.

Then, Grace grabs her head phone wire and tries to plug it in her ear, but Holly snatches it back before she has chance.

HOLLY

Stop.

She takes up her pen again. Grace smirks, and slouches back in the chair. Her Eyes turn to the book, and she reads from there.

CUT TO:

26 EXT. WOODS - DAY

26

Grace leans close to the Princess' ear. She tries to cower away.

GRACE

(whispering into Holly's ear)

Your mother was killed because she was a vile human being.

(pause)

I worked for you for nine years. I spent every moment with you. But you, you're the vile the one. You're the most evil of the lot.

Grace hisses again. Her eyes glow with the green of a snake.

GRACE (CONT'D)
 Isn't it time you joined your
 mother?

The princess throws herself up. She marches back from Grace.

PRINCESS HOLLY
 (holding back tears)
 I'm the evil one?

She giggles, with a broken-sort of distortion as her voice falls between the desire to cry and the need to laugh.

FLASHES of the STONE and the SNAKE fade in. They flash through Holly's mind... Grace stands up, and faces the Princess.

GRACE
 As evil as they come.

Finally, she snaps.

She lurches at the apple, pulling it from the branch, and hurls it at Grace with a roar.

Grace takes a hit to the head, trembles backwards and falls. She begins to laugh hysterically.

CUT TO:

27 EXT. PARK - DAY

27

Grace rests her head in her hands. She glances at Holly, who, sensing the glance, stops writing.

GRACE
 Look, I know you don't like what
 mum said but she did use those
 words for a reason...

Holly ignores her and continues to write.

CUT TO:

28 EXT. WOODS - DAY

28

The princess stands over Grace, a few remaining leaves in her fist. The anger forces red hot tears to pour out of her as Grace continues to laugh.

GRACE

Wa-hayy!! There you have it! The
evil princess lives up to her
title!

PRINCESS HOLLY

No!

The princess clutches her face, covers her ears. Screaming.
Crying.

GRACE

Go on! Do me in! I saw you with
that stone before. Y'know, your
mother may have asked me to watch
over you before she died - by
turning me into a snake. A snake!
Cursed for the rest of my life to
watch over you! But you... I know
what she raised you to be, I heard
what she taught you. And I know
that you're nothing like her. You
are so much worse.

Grace cackles a final time.

CLOSE ON: With her eyes pressed together, tight, the shadow
of Grace lies over the Princess' face. It spins round and
disappears as she transforms back into a snake. At this, the
princess opens her eyes and screams. She falls to the floor
and scrambles back from the snake.

CLOSE ON: Holly rocks backwards and forwards, pressing her
hands to her ears, eyes closed as tightly as they can go.

CUT TO:

29

INT. ROYAL CHAMBERS - NIGHT

29

Princess Holly sits on the stone floor, rocking backwards and
forwards, in the same position as the previous scene.

A woman, the QUEEN, strides past CAMERA (though we only see
her from the waist down).

QUEEN

Wicked child.

Holly stays quiet.

QUEEN (CONT'D)

You are never to run again.

PRINCESS HOLLY

I'm sorry -

QUEEN

They want to kill me, Holly. And you would leave me. Alone, to die -

PRINCESS HOLLY

I can't live here! Not in this place, not with them... I'm just exhausted. I can't do this anymore.

Holly lets out a few tears, but she tries her best to wipe them away.

The queen giggles to herself. She turns to Holly, slowly.

PRINCESS HOLLY (CONT'D)

I'm not happy here. I'm not like you. Please, I just want to be happy. And out there -

QUEEN

They're calling me evil, you know? Evil as they come.

PRINCESS HOLLY

I know - !

QUEEN

But deliberate cruelty, that, I have never been guilty of. Not when it comes to you. But you don't love me, do you, Holly? You're being selfish, Holly.

PRINCESS HOLLY

I don't mean to be -

QUEEN

I ought to hand you over to them.

A beat.

QUEEN (CONT'D)

I always raised you to rule in my image. At least in that, I've succeeded. I've raised you to be evil. Cruel, nasty... evil.

PRINCESS HOLLY

No. No, I don't - I didn't mean to be. I'm sorry!

(MORE)

PRINCESS HOLLY (CONT'D)

I just wanted to be happy. I thought I - please, I don't mean to be. I'm sorry.

QUEEN

They're almost here. I don't want to die amongst the *evil* I have raised.

The Princess shudders.

QUEEN (CONT'D)

Leave.

A beat.

The Princess pushes herself up. Holding back tears, she marches to the door. Her mother screeches after her:

QUEEN (CONT'D)

Evil child! Run! Go!

Her mother's footsteps rush at the door.

The Princess steps out the door, revealing GRACE behind it (who must have been watching her this whole time). Behind the Princess, we can see the Queen grabbing at Grace, then pointing violently at Princess Holly, as though giving her an instruction.

The Princess starts to close the door...

CUT TO:

30

EXT. HOLLY'S HOUSE - DAY

30

...Holly, in her non-princess form, pulls the door closed of her normal, modern day semi-detached house. She shoves past Grace (who has been watching through the living room window) and storms down the garden path.

CLOSE ON: Holly allows the tears to fall. As she wipes them away, a confused Grace heads inside. As she stands in the doorway.

GRACE

What did you do? Mum! What did Holly do? Holly! What did you -
(sighing)
Oh my god -

Holly continues, alone.

CUT TO:

31 EXT. WOODS - DAY

31

Holly is leaning against the tree, now. Her face is red with tears, but they are replaced by something worse. Something hotter. Stronger.

PRINCESS HOLLY

(whispered)

I'm evil?

(louder)

Is that what I am?!

(shouted)

I'm the most evil of the lot!

She runs away, through the trees.

A beat.

The snake slithers to the apple, now lying on the ground. It encases it, hisses over it.

A longer beat.

Rushed footsteps arise from afar. They grow louder and louder, until Princess Holly appears once again. She goes to the Snake and the Apple and falls to her knees. Then, she takes the sharp stone and raises it high above her head. Looking down at them:

HOLLY

(through gritted teeth)

If I am evil, then evil is all I shall be.

She brings the stone down on the snake and the apple as hard as she can. She stabs and stabs...

FADE TO:

32 EXT. WOODS - DAY

32

CLOSE ON: A segment of blood spattered, red apple, sits in the Princess's hand. She falls down against the ground and sighs.

WIDE ON: The Princess stares straight into the camera. She brings the apple to just below her mouth. Ready to eat it.

A long, long beat.

CUT TO:

33

EXT. PARK - DAY

33

Holly sighs. She puts the lid on her pen and closes the book so that the back is showing, then tightens her bow and looks to Grace. Grace has been staring at her, expectantly, the whole time.

GRACE

Mum used those words for a reason, Holly. Sometimes you can just be a bit... uptight.

A beat.

HOLLY

So that's it, then? I'm just - uptight?

GRACE

Well, I don't know. I know it's bloody annoying when you are, but -

HOLLY

Maybe that's just it. Maybe I *am* just, uptight. That's just *me*.

A beat.

GRACE

But, surely you don't mean to be. Mum seems to -

HOLLY

She just thinks I'm evil.

GRACE

No, no. I - I don't think she should call you names, though. There was no need to *call* you uptight -

HOLLY

But you agree with her?

GRACE

Yeah, but she didn't need to say it like that. You're not evil, anyway.
(smirking)

(MORE)

GRACE (CONT'D)

Even if you think you are in your fancy red coat.

Holly looks to her book. She traces the spine with her finger tips.

HOLLY

So if I just make sure I'm not uptight from now on...

GRACE

But that's you! Just - just don't give me hell when I tell you you're doing my head in.

(pause)

Mum will forgive you. She forgets how much of a pain in the ass she can be sometimes.

HOLLY

(through a sigh)

Like mother like daughter.

GRACE

(smiling)

Hey, she's my mum, too!
And I know I can be a pain in the ass, that's for sure. I'm a pain in my own ass, sometimes.

Holly laughs, softly. She smiles. Grace smiles back.

GRACE (CONT'D)

So, what are you writing?

HOLLY

It's a fantasy story, really. About someone who did some bad things and they tried to prove to people that they weren't -

GRACE

How does it end?

HOLLY

The main character loses.

GRACE

Oh.

HOLLY

Although, I am thinking of changing the ending. It doesn't quite feel right anymore.

GRACE

Yeah. You've got to have a happy ending in a fantasy story.

HOLLY

Yes. Happily ever after seems a little more realistic, now.

Holly turns the book over in her hands, to the front cover.

CLOSE ON: The front cover reads: 'The Snake and the Apple.'

CUT TO BLACK.

34

QUE TITLES

34

END OF 'THE SNAKE AND THE APPLE'