

"AUTUMN IN HIGHLAND PARK"

Written by

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**COLD OPEN**

FADE IN:

**EXT. HIGHLAND PARK, LOS ANGELES - DAY**

A vibrant, eclectic neighborhood in Highland Park.

The streets are lined with colorful murals, trendy cafés, and mom-and-pop shops. The atmosphere is a blend of historic charm and modern hipster vibe.

Latin music spills out from a nearby café, adding to the neighborhood's unique character.

One of the main fixtures in the neighborhood is:

**EXT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - ESTABLISHING - DAY**

The building is modest but bustling with energy.

**INT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - RECEPTION AREA - DAY**

The reception area is lively, with everyone speaking in Spanish and English.

AUTUMN (30s, vulnerable, yet determined Canadian immigrant) approaches the reception desk where LUPITA (early 20s, feisty, confident) files her nails.

AUTUMN

Hey, Lupita. How's Miss Judy today?

Lupita looks up, a hint of concern in her eyes.

LUPITA

She's in one of her moods.

AUTUMN

Ooh, that's not good. She asked to see me.

LUPITA

Good luck.

Autumn nods, taking a deep breath as she heads down the hall, but she doesn't get two steps away before she comes back.

AUTUMN

You think it's something serious?

LUPITA  
This is beauty school. What could  
be that serious?

AUTUMN  
Good point. Most of our mistakes  
can just grow back.

Autumn nods, starts down the hall, but then once again  
hesitates and returns.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)  
And when you say she's 'in a mood,'  
do you mean, like, an angry mood,  
or a calm mood?

LUPITA  
I've only seen her in one mood.

AUTUMN  
Bad?

LUPITA  
Bingo.

Autumn turns, then turns back with one final question.

AUTUMN  
So she didn't say anything at all  
about me or, I don't know, not  
extending my visa-

LUPITA  
Autumn!

AUTUMN  
Right.  
(then, gathers herself)  
Thanks, Lupita.

Reluctant, Autumn finally heads down the hall.

**INT. MISS JUDY'S OFFICE - SAME**

MISS JUDY (50s, tough but fair) sits at her desk,  
meticulously drawing a new set of eyebrows on her face.

She looks up as Autumn enters.

MISS JUDY  
Autumn. You've been here, what, a  
couple months now, right?

Autumn stands a bit straighter, nodding.

AUTUMN  
Yes, uh, two months today. Yay.

Miss Judy's gaze hardens.

MISS JUDY  
And in all that time, I don't think  
I've seen you work on any clients,  
only mannequins.

Autumn swallows hard, standing awkwardly.

MISS JUDY (CONT'D)  
I mean, you haven't taken lead on  
any projects, or so much as washed  
a client's hair. Why is that?

AUTUMN  
I... I've been trying to find my  
footing, you know, observing. But,  
I'm ready to step it up now.

Miss Judy leans back in her chair, arms crossed.

MISS JUDY  
You need to do more than that. If  
you don't start showing me some  
kind of real initiative...

AUTUMN  
Please don't say it.

MISS JUDY  
...I'll have to cancel your student  
visa and send you back to Canada.

Autumn is shocked.

AUTUMN  
You said it.

MISS JUDY  
I said it. And I mean it. I don't  
like people wasting my time. Most  
of our students are from the  
neighborhood. I'm sticking my neck  
out giving you a student visa to  
even be in this country.

AUTUMN  
I gotchu, jefe (mispronounces it  
"jeff-ay").

Miss Judy rolls her eyes.

MISS JUDY  
Ok, get to class.

Autumn exits.

MISS JUDY (CONT'D)  
 (calls after her)  
 And your Spanish needs work!  
 (then, to herself)  
 A lot.

**INT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - SAME**

Autumn enters the classroom, which is buzzing with activity.

She exchanges nods and smiles with some of the STUDENTS, including ARACELY (20s, artistic, overnice) and JORGE (30s, class clown).

Lupita is already there, chatting with some classmates.

AUTUMN  
 Good morning, everyone.

ARACELY  
 Hey.  
 (then, notices)  
 Ooh, I like your smock. Leopard  
 print, mmrreow!

JORGE  
 What up, Autumn. Look at you  
 getting spicier every day. And hey,  
 I got your dead dollheads all lined  
 up for you. Ha.

AUTUMN  
 Very funny, Jorge.

LUPITA  
 What did Miss Judy want?

AUTUMN  
 Nothing much, she just wants me to-

Just then, the door swings open and DEREK (30s, charismatic go-getter) rushes in, frantic.

DEREK  
 Is this where I can get a quick  
 haircut? I've got an audition in,  
 like, less than an hour!

Lupita steps forward.

LUPITA  
 My chair's right-

Jorge swoops in and leads Derek toward his chair.

JORGE  
I gotchu, fam.

Derek notices Autumn. Their eyes meet, an awkward pause.  
Autumn steps in front of Jorge's chair.

AUTUMN  
Sorry, Jorge, but I got this. Go  
play with your dead dollheads.

Jorge steps aside, flaring his haircutting cape away like  
he's a matador.

JORGE  
Ok, Canada...

Derek sits down in Autumn's chair. All the Students gather  
around, watching curiously. Autumn stares at his hair.

AUTUMN  
What's the role?

DEREK  
I'm a hero.

AUTUMN  
(over confident)  
You will be.

Derek glances at the crowd, then back at Autumn, trying to  
appear relaxed.

DEREK  
No pressure, right?

JORGE  
Yeah, no pressure. It's just his  
whole future career riding on this  
one.. cut...

LUPITA  
And, you know, our reputation as a  
school too. No biggie.

ARACELY  
Don't worry, Autumn. We believe in  
you.  
(then, to Students)  
Right?

Some Students nod along, agreeing. The atmosphere is a mix of  
anticipation and support.

Autumn smiles, focusing on her task.

AUTUMN  
Thanks, guys. Really feeling the  
love here.

Derek chuckles at all of this. He settles into his seat as  
Autumn cuts his hair, her hands steady despite the nerves.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)  
(to herself)  
Not bad for my first real haircut.

Derek leaps forward in the chair.

DEREK  
Your first real what, now?  
Autumn pushes him back, and cuts away.

BLACK.

**END OF COLD OPEN**

ACT 1

FADE IN:

**INT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - DAY**

Autumn finishes up Derek's haircut. The Students continue to watch closely.

JORGE  
Nice fade so far, Autumn. Just don't shave off an ear!

ARACELY  
I'd trust her with my hair. She's got a pretty steady hand.

Pleased, Derek examines his reflection in the mirror.

DEREK  
O-kay, ok... You've got skills.

The Students nod in agreement, some even clapping. Autumn blushes, relieved.

AUTUMN  
Thank you... Derek, was it?

DEREK  
It was.

AUTUMN  
And good luck with your audition - oh wait, you're supposed to say, 'break it' right? Break your audition.

He checks his watch.

DEREK  
It's 'break a leg' but thank you. I'll try not to break the audition. Thanks again.

He stands up, smooths his shirt, then exits the classroom in a hurry, leaving Autumn with the rest of the Students.

Lupita gives her a nod of approval.

LUPITA  
Alright, Miss First Real Haircut. Not bad. You might just survive.

Autumn smiles, feeling more at ease.

Miss Judy enters the classroom, clapping her hands to get everyone's attention.



MISS JUDY  
 Alright, class, settle down. Today,  
 we're working on color corrections.  
 I can't have my chicas with brassy  
 orange hair representing my school.

Disappointed, the Students all groan.

LUPITA  
 But I haven't used my purple  
 shampoo yet.

MISS JUDY  
 Miss Girl, that shampoo ain't gonna  
 tone that clown hair down.  
 (then)  
 Pair up and let's get started.

As Students pair up, Aracely approaches Autumn.

ARACELY  
 Want to be my partner? I could use  
 a change in color so you can  
 practice on me.

AUTUMN  
 Sure! Thanks, Aracely. Today's just  
 full of firsts for me, eh?

ARACELY  
 Oh that's right, it is, eh?

They move to a workstation, gathering the necessary supplies.

AUTUMN  
 So, what's the best part of living  
 in Highland Park? I mean, what do  
 you like most about it?

ARACELY  
 Definitely the people. And I love  
 the food! There's this taco truck  
 on York that's bussin'. You have to  
 try it.

AUTUMN  
 I will then. I'm always excited to  
 try new stuff. It's kinda my thing.

JORGE  
 Make it past the taco truck, and  
 you're ready for the final boss:  
 convincing a hipster barista you  
 actually know what a 'cortado' is.

Everyone laughs.

**INT. AUDITION WAITING ROOM - DAY**

Derek sits in a crowded waiting room. He looks around skeptically. Frustrated, he sighs and pulls out his phone, dials his agent.

DEREK  
(hushed, into phone)  
Hey, it's me. Why'd you send me to this audition? I think I'm in the wrong place.

AGENT (V.O.)  
(on phone)  
Are you sure you're not at the right audition? Look around.

Derek stands up and glances around the room.

REVEAL: Everyone is a slightly different version of himself, including the way they're dressed. Some are more handsome, some unflattering, some are balding, and others have exaggerated features. He rubs his temples in frustration.

DEREK  
(hushed)  
Yeah, I'm looking and I thought we agreed no more cattle calls.

Papers can be heard shuffling through the phone.

AGENT (V.O.)  
Cattle call? Whaaat? Trust me, you're in the right place. Just give it your best shot.

Derek pulls the phone away and silently vents, then:

DEREK  
Fine... I'll give it a shot. But if this doesn't pan out, we're having a serious talk.

AGENT (V.O.)  
Really? Another one so soon after we just had-

Derek hangs up, resigned.

DEREK  
Agents...

Derek notices a particularly ODD VERSION OF HIMSELF staring at him and quickly looks away.

**INT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - DAY**

Aracely marvels at her new hair color in the mirror.

ARACELY

Wow, I've never seen this kind of deep red. I love it! You sure you haven't done this before?

AUTUMN

Do mannequins count? Wait, how could they? They don't have any fingers.

They laugh.

**MONTAGE OF AUTUMN GETTING MORE COMFORTABLE:**

Autumn practices different techniques on mannequins and real CLIENTS, with Miss Judy offering tips and corrections.

Autumn studies cosmetology books late at night in her tiny apartment. Dressed in pajamas with her hair up, she's surrounded by sticky notes and highlighters.

Autumn and Lupita grab lunch at a café, laughing and talking.

**END MONTAGE.**

**EXT. CAFÉ - DAY**

Lupita stares at her phone, preoccupied.

AUTUMN

Everything alright?

LUPITA

(sighs)  
Just family stuff.

Lupita can't resist Autumn's expression, begging for more.

LUPITA (CONT'D)

My mom's been kinda sick, and I'm trying to, you know...

AUTUMN

I really don't know.

LUPITA

Just... I don't know, balance this school thing and helping out at home. My dad still works, so...

AUTUMN

Wow, that sounds really tough.

LUPITA

It is, but whatever. We gotta keep pushing, right?

(then)

(MORE)

LUPITA (CONT'D)  
 My mom always says, 'You gotta keep  
 putting one foot in front of the  
 other, even if you got no feet.'

AUTUMN  
 Well, she sounds amazing.

LUPITA  
 She is. That's why I'm here, to  
 make her proud. And to make sure I  
 can take care of her, you know?

Autumn nods, indicating she does know. A newfound bond is  
 formed between them.

**INT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON**

The class is wrapping up for the day.

Autumn is cleaning her station when Miss Judy approaches.

MISS JUDY  
 Autumn, can I see you in my office  
 for a minute?

Autumn nods, following Miss Judy out of the classroom.

STUDENTS  
 (teasing)  
 Oooh...

AUTUMN  
 What is this, Grade 5? Grow up.

**INT. MISS JUDY'S OFFICE - SAME**

Miss Judy sits behind her desk. She gestures for Autumn to  
 have a seat as well.

MISS JUDY  
 How do you feel?

AUTUMN  
 I feel...good?

MISS JUDY  
 Well, you're doing good too. But I  
 need to know if you're ready for  
 more responsibility.

AUTUMN  
 Oh I'm ready for-

MISS JUDY  
 There's an event this weekend - a  
 community fundraiser. ZMB is gonna  
 be giving out free haircuts and  
 makeovers.

AUTUMN  
Sounds fun.

MISS JUDY  
It isn't. That's why I want you to  
lead a team.

Autumn is surprised.

AUTUMN  
Really? So soon?

MISS JUDY  
I knew you were gonna say that.

Just then a YOUNG LOCAL knocks on the door.

MISS JUDY (CONT'D)  
Right on time.

YOUNG LOCAL  
Hi, are you Miss Judy? I'm the one  
that's been sending you all those  
emails about enrolling. I live just  
a few blocks from here.

Miss Judy shoots Autumn a contemptuous look.

MISS JUDY  
(to Young Local)  
Thank you for coming in so I can  
tell you in person, but I'm so  
sorry, mija, we're at enrollment  
capacity right now.

YOUNG LOCAL  
Oh, ok. Thank you.

The light in Young Local's eyes dims as she exits.

MISS JUDY  
(calls off, eyes Autumn)  
But we may have a spot opening up  
real soon.

AUTUMN  
Wow, you are—  
(then sees Miss Judy's is  
serious)  
I mean, I'd love to do the event.

Miss Judy beams.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)  
But... maybe I don't lead my first  
one, eh?

MISS JUDY  
Fine, this time. But you better  
start stepping it up, or I see a  
lot of snow in your future.

Autumn looks back out the door and sees Young Local crying in the reception area.

MISS JUDY (CONT'D)  
Show me you can handle this.

AUTUMN  
I will. Thank you. And I won't...

MISS JUDY  
Don't say it.

AUTUMN  
...let you down.

MISS JUDY  
You said it.

AUTUMN  
I said it. And I meant it.

Miss Judy smiles and nods, dismissing her.

Autumn leaves the office, feeling both excited and nervous.

**INT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - RECEPTION AREA - SAME**

Autumn exits the office, running into Lupita and Jorge. They look at her expectantly.

LUPITA  
What's up? You look pale.

JORGE  
Like, whiter than your normal white.

AUTUMN  
Hey! I keep telling you, I might look white, but both my parents are from Mexico, eh?

JORGE  
Mexican-Canadian?

AUTUMN  
Yes... they immigrated to Canada where I was born, but I'm Latina.

Lupita and Jorge snicker at this declaration.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)  
Anyway, Miss Judy invited me to be on a team at the community fundraiser this weekend!

Lupita and Jorge look like she told them someone just died.

LUPITA  
 Aw, I'm so sorry.  
 (then, off Autumn's  
 expression)  
 I mean, yay. Congrats.

JORGE  
 Damn, newbie. Moving up in the  
 world already, huh? From paid  
 hairdos, to free ones in like-

Lupita elbows Jorge quiet.

LUPITA  
 Alright well, don't worry, we got  
 your back, Canada.

Autumn smiles, feeling more confident with their support as  
 she exits.

JORGE  
 What's up with the elbows. That  
 shit hurt.

LUPITA  
 She's really trying, so we should  
 help her out.

Lupita and Jorge watch Autumn off in the distance, bouncing  
 around the academy, interacting with everyone she encounters.

LUPITA (CONT'D)  
 We helped you.

Jorge nods, remembering.

#### INT. AUDITION ROOM - DAY

Derek stands in front of the CASTING DIRECTOR as he finishes  
 up his monologue.

DEREK  
 ...Into the abyss.

CASTING DIRECTOR  
 Good, uh...

She looks down at his headshot.

CASTING DIRECTOR (CONT'D)  
 ...Derek. And great hero-hair by  
 the way.

Derek's face warms, flattered.

CASTING DIRECTOR (CONT'D)  
 But now can you try it with a bit  
 more... urgency?

Derek nods, preparing to start again when the CAMERA OPERATOR chimes in:

CAMERA OPERATOR  
Also, uh, love the hair, but can you try to keep your movements smaller. The camera will catch everything it needs.

Derek nods, preparing to start again, but before he can react, the PRODUCER adds another note:

PRODUCER  
And don't forget, more intensity in your eyes. It'll bring out your hair even more.

Derek nods, preparing to start again, when finally, the DIRECTOR steps forward.

DIRECTOR  
Remember to project your voice, but without shouting. Shouting musses your hair.

Derek, overwhelmed, repeats their notes back to them:

DEREK  
Urgency, smaller movements, intensity in the eyes, project without shouting. Got it.

He takes a deep breath, drops his head for three seconds, lifts it with a dramatic expression, then runs his hand through his hair and starts his new performance.

Everyone is captivated.

#### **EXT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY**

It's the weekend.

The community center is buzzing with activity. Stalls are set up for food, games, and various services in Highland Park.

Autumn, Lupita, Jorge, and Aracely set up their station, preparing for the day.

LUPITA  
Alright, team. Let's make this a success, eh.

AUTUMN/JORGE/ARACELY  
Yes!

JORGE  
Let's represent ZMB, qué no!

They work on Clients, giving free haircuts and makeovers.



The atmosphere is lively, with laughter and chatter filling the air.

**INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - DAY**

Autumn is working on a Client's hair when she notices Derek enter the center.

He looks around, spots her, and walks over with a huge grin plastered across his face.

DEREK  
Hey. It's Autumn, right? Fancy seeing you here.

Autumn looks up, surprised and pleased.

AUTUMN  
(plays along)  
Oh hey, it's Derek, right?

They both laugh.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)  
How'd the audition go?

DEREK  
Good. I think.

AUTUMN  
You think you got it?

DEREK  
No idea.

AUTUMN  
Really?

DEREK  
Part of being an actor in LA is never knowing if you booked the gig, and never giving up hope that you can still get it, all the way up until it airs. And when it airs and you're not in it, that's the only time you accept that you 100% did not get it.

AUTUMN  
Oof, sounds brutal. You must really love it. Or really hate yourself.

DEREK  
It is brutal. And I do love it. And I... also sometimes hate myself.  
(then)  
Anyway, I thought I'd drop by and support. I kinda just moved to Highland Park.

AUTUMN  
I kinda just moved to Highland  
Park, too. Look at us, twinsies.

Derek laughs. He sits down, letting Autumn continue her work.  
They converse comfortably.

Her client, SR. GONZALEZ (60s, grumpy but lovable), listens  
and decides to chime in.

SR. GONZALEZ  
Wait, so you're the reason this guy  
might get a part on TV? Must be  
some kind of magic scissors you got  
there, guera. Keep cutting.

Derek laughs, shaking his head.

SR. GONZALEZ (CONT'D)  
If she can make you look good,  
maybe there's hope for me yet.

Everyone laughs, easing the tension.

Lupita and Jorge exchange knowing glances.

JORGE  
(whispers, to Lupita)  
Looks like somebody's got a fan.

AUTUMN  
Hey, keep it professional, Jorge.  
Gossip on your own time.

Jorge reacts, busted.

JORGE  
You got it, jefe.  
(then, to himself)  
She got that supersonic hearing.

AUTUMN  
I heard that.

Everyone, except Jorge, giggles and continues their work.

**END OF ACT 1**

**ACT 2****INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - LATE AFTERNOON**

The fundraiser winds down. The team cleans up.

Autumn stands back, watching the community interact, feeling a sense of accomplishment.

AUTUMN  
(to herself)  
I can do this.

A smiling Derek approaches.

DEREK  
Looks like you guys pulled it off.

AUTUMN  
Yeah, it went better than I expected. Thanks for coming by.

DEREK  
Of course. Can I help you with anything?

AUTUMN  
Actually, if you don't mind grabbing those towels?

DEREK  
For sure.

Grabbing the towels, their hands brush, but they both quickly snatch them away. They exchange cordial smiles at the mishap.

**INT. COMMUNITY CENTER - STORAGE ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

Autumn and Derek put away supplies. The atmosphere is relaxed, the hard work of the day behind them.

DEREK  
So, how are you liking LA so far?

AUTUMN  
It... just feels right. Plus, I'll take sunshine over snow any day.

DEREK  
Yeah, I don't know how you dealt with the cold up there. I got long johns on if it even hits 50.

AUTUMN  
50? That's bikini weather.

DEREK  
 Well I don't know much about  
 Highland Park, yet, but I do know a  
 lot of LA, so if you need any tips  
 or places to hang out, let me know.

AUTUMN  
 I might just take you up on that.

Lupita pops her head in.

LUPITA  
 Hey, lovebirds. We're heading out  
 for drinks. You in?

AUTUMN  
 Sure, sounds fun.  
 (then, to Derek)  
 You coming? Or do you need to go  
 home and put on your long johns?

Derek reacts, embarrassed.

#### INT. LOCAL BAR - NIGHT

A cozy, lively bar with string lights and an internet-jukebox  
 playing a mix of oldies and modern hits.

The group sits at a table with drinks and snacks. Autumn sits  
 between Lupita and Derek, feeling more at home.

JORGE  
 To Autumn, the newest member of our  
 team, who only cut one mullet  
 today!

They all laugh and raise their glasses.

AUTUMN  
 Thanks, Jorge. I think.  
 (then, whispers to  
 Aracely)  
 I thought mullets were still cool.

ARACELY  
 (whispers)  
 That might be one of those Canada  
 things.  
 (then, re: Derek)  
 So, what's the deal with you two? I  
 saw them looks. I love it.

Autumn blushes.

AUTUMN  
 Nothing, I got a lot going on.  
 We're just friends.  
 (then)  
 Right, Derek?

DEREK  
What?

AUTUMN  
I said, we're just friends, right?

DEREK  
(stifles disappointment)  
Right. Just friends.

They clink glasses. Aracely shoots Lupita and Jorge a look, not buying it. The night continues with laughter and stories.

**INT. AUTUMN'S TINY APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Autumn enters, exhausted but satisfied.

Her small apartment is cozy, filled with personal touches from her snowy life in Canada.

**INT. AUTUMN'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS**

She drags her tired body in, sees a photo of her dad and grabs it.

AUTUMN  
(to the photo)  
I'm doing it, Dad. I'm not even  
sure how, but I'm really doing it.

She falls onto her bed and stares at the ceiling, reflecting on the day.

**INT. DEREK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Derek lies in bed. He stares up at his own ceiling.

He has a faint smile as he thinks about his day. But then his expression shifts to worry. He tosses and turns from side to side, trying to get comfortable, but his thoughts won't let him rest.

DEREK  
(to himself)  
Hmph, stupid audition. I probably  
should've done something different  
for that last take. Maybe if I'd...

He trails off, lost in thought. He picks up his phone and stares at it, willing it to ring. Frustrated, he slams it.

DEREK (CONT'D)  
(to himself)  
This asshole agent...

He closes his eyes tightly, takes a deep breath, and tries his hardest to sleep.

**INT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - NEXT MORNING**

Autumn arrives early, ready to continue proving herself. Miss Judy is there, setting up for the day.

MISS JUDY  
Morning. You did good yesterday.

AUTUMN  
Thanks. It was actually fun.

MISS JUDY  
Good. Sounds like you're ready for more.

AUTUMN  
Well, it was just one event.

MISS JUDY  
Hold on, I'm getting another email from someone in the neighborhood looking to enroll.

Miss Judy feigns checking her email on her phone.

AUTUMN  
I mean, it was just one event but I can handle way more than that.

MISS JUDY  
That's what I thought. We have a special client today - someone who could bring a lot of attention to the academy. Think you can handle it?

AUTUMN  
I can.  
(then, perfect pronunciation)  
Gracias, jefe.

MISS JUDY  
Better. A lot better.

**INT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - RECEPTION AREA - LATER**

Autumn stands by, waiting. The door opens and in walks MONICA RAMIREZ (40s, influential local blogger). Confident, stylish, and all eyes are on her.

Monica takes a few random pics on her bedazzled phone.

MONICA  
I heard good things about this place. Let's see if you live up to the hype.

AUTUMN

We'll do our best. I'm Autumn, and I'll be taking care of you today.

Monica nods, assessing her. They walk to Autumn's station, the other Students whispering and watching closely.

Monica stops and looks around, taking in the other Students.

MONICA

Hmph, I guess this neighborhood is still gentrifying. I got my own personal white girl working on me.

Everyone's work screeches to a halt at the "white girl" comment. They all look to Autumn. Even Miss Judy pops her head in, her eyebrows raised even higher than they've been drawn on today.

AUTUMN

White? Girl, my parents are Mexican and I grew up eating poutine. I'm just confused.

Everyone laughs. The tension released. Miss Judy disappears.

MONICA

So if you mess up my hair, I can...  
(then, sings)  
... 'blame Canada?'

Sure, but I'm here now.

**INT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - AUTUMN'S STATION - LATER**

Autumn works on Monica's hair, her hands steady, her confidence growing with each passing moment. The other Students watch, silently rooting for Autumn.

Monica actually seems impressed.

MONICA

This wasn't horrible. You've got a real talent, Autumn. I might have to write about this place.

AUTUMN

Thank you, Ms. Ramirez.

MONICA

You can call me 'Monica.'

AUTUMN

Right. Thank you, Monica. That means a lot.

Monica pulls out her phone and takes a pic of Autumn, then she checks the mirror one last time, flips a lock of her new hairdo over her shoulder and struts off like a runway model.

Relieved, Autumn turns to find Students screaming with joy at her accomplishment.

**EXT. HIGHLAND PARK - EVENING**

Autumn walks home as the sun sets over the eclectic neighborhood. She checks out the mom-and-pop shops...

The trendy cafés... The colorful murals, feeling more connected to this place, more at ease with her new life.

She approaches one particular mural, and becomes transfixed by its colorful, detailed depictions of Hispanic heritage.

Out of nowhere she hears:

MI VIEJA (O.S.)  
Vas a estar bien, querida.

Autumn turns to find a small Hispanic woman, MI VIEJA (60s-70s, endearing), sweeping the sidewalk in front of her store.

AUTUMN  
I'm sorry, I don't speak Spanish.  
At least not yet.

MI VIEJA  
I said, you're gonna be ok, mija.

AUTUMN  
Oh, uh, thank you.

MI VIEJA  
You come from far away, but you're here now, and if you take care of us, we'll take care of you.

AUTUMN  
Wait, how did you know I was from far away?

MI VIEJA  
You come from Canada, no?

Autumn freaks out.

AUTUMN  
Ohmygod, did you just read my mind or something?!

MI VIEJA  
No, you have a Canada flag right there on your bag.

Autumn checks the side of her bag and sees a red maple leaf flanked by two red bars, the Canadian flag.

AUTUMN  
Oh. Right. Same thing happened to me at the airport when I-



Autumn looks up from her bag and finds that the woman has completely vanished.

The store she was sweeping in front of is closed, and looks like it has been for a while.

Autumn looks back at the mural and can't believe her eyes: The shrouded woman in the painting has changed, and now looks exactly like the old woman she was just talking to.

She thinks her eyes are playing tricks on her. Stunned, she slowly walks away.

**INT. DEREK'S TINY APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Derek is on the couch staring at his phone. He has his contacts open to "Mom" and is pondering whether or not to press Call.

To his surprise, the phone suddenly RINGS. The screen: MOM.

DEREK  
(sighs)  
Hey, Mom.

**INTERCUT WITH:**

**INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT**

Derek's MOM (60s, supportive, TV/movie buff) takes off her makeup for the day in front of her vanity.

MOM  
Hey, sweetie! How did that audition go, Mr. Hollywood?

DEREK  
It went... okay, I guess. I mean, I did my best, but you never know.

MOM  
I'm sure you did great, honey. You always do great, and you always do your best because you're a professional Hollywood actor.

DEREK  
Thanks, Mom. I just... you know, keep thinking maybe I could have... you know.

MOM  
Derek, you've always been so hard on yourself. You have to trust that what you did was your absolute best and leave it at that, just like Nicholas Cage does.

DEREK  
 Right, because nothing says  
 'absolute best' like stealing the  
 Declaration of Independence.

**INT. AUTUMN'S TINY APARTMENT - NIGHT**

Autumn sits at her small kitchen table, her phone buzzing with messages of congratulations from her classmates. She smiles, responding to each one.

A FaceTime call from DAD (60s, supportive, widower) pops up. She answers, his face filling the screen from his nose up.

DAD  
 Daughter! How's it going, kiddo?

AUTUMN  
 Great, Dad. Highland Park feels...  
 magical. I think I'm really  
 starting to find my place here.

DAD  
 You've always got a place here,  
 too, you know.

AUTUMN  
 I know, but that's your place. And  
 I want this place to be my place.

DAD  
 Well, it sounds like a lot of  
 sunshine. I hope you're not turning  
 into one of those avocado toast  
 people.

AUTUMN  
 Dad, I can barely afford toast, let  
 alone avocado.

**INT. DEREK'S TINY APARTMENT - SAME TIME**

Derek fidgets on the couch as he continues his conversation.

DEREK  
 ...I know that, but I just-

MOM  
 How many auditions have you had  
 this month?

DEREK  
 (smirking)  
 Too many to count. But this one  
 felt... I don't know, different.  
 More pressure, I guess.

MOM

Derek, if I had a dollar for every audition you've had, I could retire in Hollywood style—complete with a pool boy.

DEREK

What? What about dad?

**INT. AUTUMN'S TINY APARTMENT - SAME TIME**

Autumn looks away from the phone so she doesn't have to look up her dad's nose anymore.

DAD

...I heard living in that much sunshine is unnatural. You're gonna get skin cancer, eh?

AUTUMN

Dad, there is absolutely no way I can do another minus fifty degree winter. Mom would want me to live in the sun. Where I want to be. Where I belong.

DAD

Alright, alright. Just promise me you won't start surfing, eh? Those waves are like bills, they just keep coming and crashing you.

AUTUMN

Sure, Dad, no surfing. I'll stick to safer hobbies, like trying to parallel park on a hill without hitting anything.

**INT. DEREK'S TINY APARTMENT - SAME TIME**

Derek sits up, affected by his mom's words.

MOM

...That sounds like pressure you put on yourself, honey. I believe in you. You have so much talent, and I'm proud of you for following your big Hollywood dreams like they do in the movies.

DEREK

Thanks, Mom. I just need it to pay off sooner than later, you know.

MOM

And it will. Just keep pushing forward. Don't lose hope. No matter what, I'm always here for you.

DEREK  
I know. Love you, Mom.

MOM  
Love you too, Dare-Dare. Tomorrow's  
a new day. And remember, I'm your  
date when you go to the Oscars.

He shakes his head, annoyed by the mom-thing she's doing.

DEREK  
Mom...

He ends the call.

**END INTERCUT.**

**INT. AUTUMN'S TINY APARTMENT - SAME TIME**

Autumn holds back tears.

DAD  
...Well your mother always thought  
you were so brave. Always trying  
new things.

AUTUMN  
She thought I was brave?

DAD  
...No, she didn't think it, she  
knew it, kiddo.

Autumn looks to a picture of her and her mother that hangs on  
the wall.

AUTUMN  
Thanks, Dad.

DAD  
Just remember, if you ever need a  
dad joke, I'm always here for you.

AUTUMN  
Yeah, I'll keep that in mind.

**INT. DEREK'S TINY APARTMENT - SAME TIME**

Derek leans back on the couch, smiling as he looks out at the  
dotted lights of Highland Park at night, hopeful.

**END OF ACT 2**

ACT 3**INT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - DAY**

The classroom is buzzing with activity.

Students practice on mannequins and real Clients.

Autumn works on a Client's hair, Lupita and Aracely nearby.  
Lupita shows Autumn her phone.

LUPITA  
You're really killing it.  
Everyone's talking about Monica's  
blog post.

JORGE  
I thought she was gonna be a hater.

AUTUMN  
(feigning modesty)  
I just did my job.

ARACELY  
You ain't gotta be humble. I love  
that she called you 'a hidden gem  
in Highland Park.' That's huge.

Autumn smiles, but before she can respond, Miss Judy rushes  
in, clapping her hands to get everyone's attention.

MISS JUDY  
Alright, listen up! I've got some  
exciting news. Thanks to Autumn's  
stellar work, Monica Ramirez has  
offered to feature ZMB in her next  
video segment. This is really huge  
for us, people. This could add to  
our one five-star Yelp review.

The class erupts in cheers. Autumn looks around, feeling  
proud, but also nervous.

AUTUMN  
(to Miss Judy)  
Wow, that's amazing. What does she  
want us to do?

MISS JUDY  
She wants a live demonstration.  
We'll set up here, and she'll film  
us working on clients.

Autumn's eyes widen.

AUTUMN  
I'll take lead!

MISS JUDY  
You sure you're ready?

The class nods, giving her supportive smiles. Lupita mouths, "You got this."

Autumn takes a deep breath.

AUTUMN  
Yes. I'll do it.

She throws her fists in the air like Rocky.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)  
I'm a leader!

MISS JUDY  
Ok, calm down, Miss Leader. It's one day.

Autumn reacts, sheepish.

**INT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - THE NEXT DAY**

It's the day of the live demonstration and the academy is abuzz with preparation.

Cameras and lights are being set up by a CREW.

Students run around, getting everything ready.

**EXT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY**

A small CROWD has gathered outside, curious about the filming. Derek is among them, watching.

**INT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - DAY**

Monica Ramirez and her Crew are all set up. Autumn, Lupita, Jorge, Aracely and a few other Students are at their stations, ready to go.

MONICA  
(to the camera)  
Welcome back, everyone! Today, we're at ZMB Beauty Academy here in Highland Park, showcasing some incredible talent. Let's meet our star for today, Autumn!

The camera turns to Autumn, who smiles nervously.

AUTUMN  
Hi, everyone. We're going to show you some advanced techniques and give you a glimpse into the world of cosmetology.

The demonstration begins. Autumn works on a Client, gaining confidence as she explains each step to the camera.

The other Students follow suit, working on their Clients and explaining their processes.

JORGE

I call this my 'Guacamole Special'  
'cause it's smooth, spicy, and  
always leaves 'em wanting more!

Everyone laughs. Autumn finds it funnier than most and cackles loudly, which causes her scissors to slip, cutting a huge plug out of the back of her Client's head. Shocked, Autumn's eyes widen.

Lupita sees this and rushes over.

LUPITA

(covers)  
Wow, you're doing so great, lemme  
just, uh, show you how I would...

Lupita makes a few snips and suddenly it looks like the plug never happened. Autumn steps aside and lets Lupita take over.

Autumn mouths, "Thank you". Lupita winks back.

Just then, Autumn clocks Monica who's clocking her standing around doing nothing while everyone else works on Clients.

Autumn scans the room for a solution, but instead catches Miss Judy's disappointed gaze.

Desperate, Autumn keeps looking around and sees that Derek has made his way inside. She smiles, getting an idea.

AUTUMN

(to the crowd)  
And for the final part of the  
demonstration, I'd like to do  
something a bit different. Derek,  
would you mind helping me out?

Derek looks up, surprised.

DEREK

Me? No, I don't mind. Sure, what do  
you need?

AUTUMN

Would you mind performing while I  
do a quick makeover on you? We are  
in Hollywood, so I wanna show how a  
little styling can change your look  
for different kinds of roles.

Derek steps forward, happy to be a part of the show.

DEREK

Sure. I love making things up.

AUTUMN  
 (under her breath)  
 Yeah, me too.  
 (then, to the crowd )  
 Derek here is an actor. We're going  
 to demonstrate how a quick change  
 in hairstyle can help with  
 different character looks.

Autumn works on Derek's hair, transforming it while he checks himself out in the mirror and makes up his lines.

DEREK  
 (in character)  
 You don't understand, it's not just  
 about the money. It's about  
 integrity.

Everyone watches, intrigued by the combination of acting and hairstyling happening in front of their eyes.

AUTUMN  
 (as she works)  
 See, hairstyling isn't just about  
 looking good. It can also be about  
 embodying a character, bringing a  
 new dimension to the acting.

DEREK  
 (still in character)  
 I've given everything for this, and  
 I won't let it slip away that easy.

The transformation is striking. Derek's new look suits the character he's portraying to a tee.

The crowd reacts, impressed by the demonstration.

AUTUMN  
 (to the crowd)  
 And there you have it. A quick  
 change that can make all the  
 difference in a performance.

Everyone applauds enthusiastically. Derek steps off his "stage," his new look drawing admiration from onlookers.

He can't help himself and takes a bow.

The demonstration wraps up, and Monica approaches Autumn, microphone in hand.

MONICA  
 Autumn, this was incredible. Not  
 bad for a white girl. I'm sure  
 we'll be seeing a lot more of you.

AUTUMN  
 Uh, thanks. I guess we all have our  
 moments. But, uh... I already told  
 you, I'm not white and I really  
 don't appreciate—



LUPITA  
Hold up, Monica. Autumn's been  
nothing but respectful.

Monica motions for a Crew member to cut the feed.

ARACELY  
Why you always gotta hit her with  
the 'white girl' huh? She's Latina.

JORGE  
Seriously, we're a team here.

LUPITA  
Would you like it if people kept  
calling you, 'brown girl'?

ARACELY  
Or, 'chola'?

JORGE  
Or, 'beaner'?

Everyone is dumbfounded by Jorge's comment.

JORGE (CONT'D)  
Too much?

Miss Judy steps in, noticing the tension.

MISS JUDY  
Alright, alright, that's enough.  
We're here to support each other,  
not tear each other down.  
(then, in Spanish)  
*Monica, you're an invited guest  
here. I expect better from you.*

The Crew quickly packs up and exits. Monica leaves in a huff.

MISS JUDY (CONT'D)  
(calls off)  
Five stars...!

Autumn braces for what she expects will be a dressing down  
from Miss Judy, but instead:

MISS JUDY (CONT'D)  
Autumn, you did great today. That's  
the kind of initiative I'm talking  
about. Let's keep that energy. All  
of you.

AUTUMN  
Thanks, but now what do you think  
she'll-

MISS JUDY  
Don't worry about it. Let the work  
speak for itself.

Miss Judy exits, passing by a sign on the wall which reads:  
 "At ZMB, We Let the Work Speak for Itself."

The Students rush to gather around Autumn, cheering and congratulating her.

LUPITA

You did it, Autumn! You're a star!

JORGE

Yeah, maybe now you can teach us a thing or two. Be the new Miss Judy.

(and)

Lemme draw you some new eyebrows.

He comes at Autumn with an eyebrow pencil, but she bats it away, laughing.

Relieved, Autumn now feels a sense of belonging and accomplishment.

**EXT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - FRONT ENTRANCE - EVENING**

Derek waits for Autumn. His phone rings. The screen says: ASSHOLE AGENT. Excited, he answers, then listens intently.

DEREK

(into phone)

No fucking way.

He ends the call, his expression a mix of hope and fear.

Autumn walks out of the academy, the sunset casting a warm glow over the neighborhood. She sees Derek waiting.

DEREK (CONT'D)

Hey, superstar.

AUTUMN

Hey yourself, superstar.

DEREK

You know, you look better on camera than I do.

AUTUMN

Ha! I doubt that. Thanks for helping me out. I didn't mean to put you on the spot, but...

DEREK

But, you put me on the spot. Don't worry about it, I had fun. I guess my agent was right about taking those improv classes. Maybe he's not such an asshole after all.

(and)

You were amazing, by the way.

AUTUMN

It's been a wild ride, but... I'm finally starting to feel like I belong here.

DEREK

You know what? I feel the exact same way. Must be an LA thing. How about we grab dinner to celebrate?

AUTUMN

Why are we celebrating? She's probably gonna bury me.

DEREK

I doubt that. But we can celebrate me booking a huge part in a really popular show though.

AUTUMN

What? You got it?!

She leaps into his arms and hugs him, then thinks better, pulls away and straightens her clothes.

AUTUMN (CONT'D)

Yes, uh, let's celebrate. As friends, of course. You pay for dinner, and I'll pay for drinks. Lupita told me about this really cool restaurant that she said is 'busting.'

DEREK

'Busting?' It's, bussin', Canada. You'll catch on. Let's go.

Autumn beams. They walk off together, the energy of Highland Park alive around them.

Mi Vieja watches them for a moment, then goes back to sweeping the front of her store.

FADE OUT.

**END OF ACT 3**

**TAG**

FADE IN:

**INT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - CLASSROOM - THE NEXT DAY**

The academy is back to its usual bustling routine. Lupita approaches Autumn with a mischievous grin.

LUPITA  
Hey, I got a surprise for you.

AUTUMN  
(suspicious)  
What is it?

LUPITA  
You know that taco truck on York we keep talking about? Well, it's parked outside, and we're all getting lunch on Miss Judy.

AUTUMN  
No way! That's awesome.

Jorge approaches.

JORGE  
Come on, Canada. Let's see if you can handle the heat.

They all laugh and head outside where the taco truck awaits. The Students gather around, ordering food and enjoying the lively atmosphere.

**EXT. ZMB BEAUTY ACADEMY - FRONT ENTRANCE - DAY**

The team eats together, laughing and bonding. Autumn looks around at her new friends, feeling more at home than ever.

AUTUMN  
(to herself, smiling)  
Yeah, I can handle this.  
(then, to everyone)  
But I don't think I can handle this. Ohmygod this is so hot! My mouth is on fire.

The vibrant community and the happy faces of the ZMB team laughing at Autumn are the last thing we see. Almost.

**INT. TELEVISION STAGE - DAY**

Derek is on set. Embarrassed, he's dressed in tights and boots, and looks absolutely RIDICULOUS. The Crew snickers.

He stands in front of a huge green screen.

DIRECTOR  
Alright, Derek. Remember, you're a  
superhero who's just discovered  
your powers. Action!

Derek takes a deep breath, then delivers his one line with  
over-the-top enthusiasm.

DEREK  
I am the mighty Thunderbolt! Into  
the abyss!

DIRECTOR  
(to himself)  
He shouldn't have cut his hair.

The Crew snickers even more.

FADE OUT.

**END OF PILOT**