

I MADE A PROMISE

"Two Weirdos Learn the World"  
Act Two, Part A

Written by  
[First Draft]

## ACT TWO, PART A

EXT. BACKYARD - FAMILY HOME - DAY

Secret is three months old now. She's all legs and ears and chaotic energy. She has chewed through two leashes already. There are teeth marks on the porch railing.

Mary stands in the middle of the yard with a bag of treats and a clicker she ordered online. She has watched approximately forty hours of training videos. She has a plan.

MARY

Okay. Sit.

Secret looks at her. Sniffs the grass. Chases a leaf.

MARY

Sit.

Secret finds something fascinating in the dirt.

MARY

(louder)

Secret. Sit.

Secret looks up. Wags. Does not sit.

Mary's jaw tightens. She's frustrated, and the frustration is familiar -- the same frustration she felt trying to decode girls at school. Something that should be simple and isn't. But this time she doesn't walk away. She can't walk away. This is the thing.

She takes a breath. Goes back to the video on her phone. Watches the sequence again. Treat above the nose, lure backward, dog's butt hits ground, click, treat. Mechanical. Repeatable. A system.

She tries again. Treat above Secret's nose. Lures back. Secret's butt hits the ground for half a second.

Click. Treat.

Secret looks up at her. Something just connected. Mary does it again. Treat, lure, sit, click, treat. Again. Again.

By the tenth time, Secret sits on the hand signal alone. Mary doesn't celebrate. She's already thinking about the next thing.

INT./EXT. - VARIOUS - TRAINING MONTAGE - DAYS/WEEKS

The rhythm of training. This should not feel like a movie montage where everything works. It should feel like work.

Mary in the yard, teaching Secret to shake. Secret paws at Mary's hand, misses, paws again. Mary repositions. Again. Again. Secret gets it. Mary immediately raises the bar -- now shake with the other paw.

Mary in the living room, teaching Secret to weave between her legs. Secret goes the wrong way, tangles the leash, sits down confused. Mary untangles, resets, starts over. The family walks around them like they're furniture.

Mary in the yard in the rain. She doesn't care. Secret doesn't care. They're working on heel, and heel is hard. Secret drifts left. Mary stops. Waits. Secret comes back to position. Click. Treat. They walk three more steps. Secret drifts. Mary stops. Waits.

Mary at her desk late at night, watching training videos, taking notes in a notebook. The handwriting is messy and urgent. She's sketching out sequences -- if this, then that. It looks like code. It looks like someone building a system.

Mary on her bedroom floor, teaching Secret to bow. Secret lies all the way down instead. Mary laughs -- a real laugh, sudden, surprised. It's the first time we've heard her laugh since Act One.

EXT. BELLINGHAM STREETS - NIGHT

Mary and Secret walking. Not training, just walking. Secret on a loose leash, trotting beside Mary, checking in every few steps. They have a rhythm now.

The streets are quiet. Bellingham at night -- porch lights, the smell of wood smoke, rain on pavement. Mary isn't wearing headphones. She isn't on her phone. She's just walking with her dog.

They pass a house where a party is happening. Laughter, music, people their age on the porch. Mary doesn't slow down. Secret doesn't either. They keep walking.

Through the kitchen window of the family home, we see Mom and Dad watching Mary and Secret come up the walk. They don't say anything. They're afraid to name what they're seeing.

INT. PET STORE - DAY

Mary walks Secret through a pet store. It's a controlled training exercise -- Secret in her vest, heeling, ignoring other dogs, ignoring dropped treats on the floor. Mary is focused, watching Secret's body language, reading every ear flick and weight shift.

A KID runs up to pet Secret. Mary stiffens.

KID

Can I pet your dog?

Mary doesn't answer right away. She's processing -- the kid, the social expectation, the correct response. Secret sits automatically, looking up at Mary, waiting for the cue.

MARY

Yeah. Let her sniff your hand first.

The kid pets Secret. Secret is calm, polite, exactly what Mary trained her to be. Mary watches the interaction and something crosses her face -- she's seeing the version of social navigation she wishes she had. Secret knows exactly what to do because Mary taught her the protocol. Nobody taught Mary.

INT./EXT. - VARIOUS - PARALLEL MONTAGE

Split-screen feeling, even if we don't literally split the screen:

Secret learning to stay calm in a restaurant, lying under the table, ignoring dropped food. Mary at the same restaurant, ordering for herself, handing the menu back, managing the interaction. Both of them doing something that doesn't come naturally. Both of them getting through it.

Secret learning to hold a sit-stay while strangers walk past. Mary in a grocery store, navigating the checkout line, making small talk with the cashier. Same skill. Same effort. Same controlled discomfort.

Secret on a crowded sidewalk, staying focused on Mary despite noise, bikes, other dogs. Mary on the same sidewalk, staying focused on Secret despite people, conversations, the sensory weight of a busy street. They are each other's anchor.

Mary teaching Secret to read hand signals -- subtle gestures that mean sit, down, heel, stay. Secret reading Mary's body language before Mary even gives the signal. Mary noticing this. Starting to wonder if she could learn to read people the way Secret reads her.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mary at her desk, laptop open. She's researching service dog certification requirements. The notebook beside her is filling up with training plans, schedules, milestones.

On the bed behind her, Secret is curled up, nose tucked under her tail. She lifts her head when Mary's breathing changes -- when Mary gets tense about something on screen, Secret notices before Mary does.

MARY

(to Secret, not looking up)

If you're going to come everywhere with me, you have to be perfect everywhere. You know that, right?

Secret puts her head back down. Her tail thumps once.

MARY

Okay. So we're doing this.

She opens a new document. Types: SERVICE DOG TRAINING PLAN. Starts building it out. Week by week. Location by location. Every scenario she can think of. Planes. Restaurants. Movie theaters. Classrooms.

This is Mary building the infrastructure for her own survival. She can't navigate the world alone. So she's engineering a partner who can do it with her. And the

engineering is the part she's good at.

INT./EXT. - VARIOUS - SERVICE DOG TRAINING

Harder now. Public spaces. Real stakes.

Mary and Secret at a coffee shop. Secret in a down-stay under the table. A dog walks past outside. Secret's ears prick. Mary sees it, puts gentle pressure on the leash. Secret settles. They sit there for an hour. Secret doesn't move. Mary drinks coffee she doesn't really like because drinking coffee in a coffee shop is a thing people do and she's practicing.

Mary and Secret at the airport, practicing for flights. They ride the escalator. Secret hesitates at the top -- the moving floor is weird. Mary doesn't drag her. She waits. Lets Secret figure it out. Secret steps on. They ride down. Go back up. Ride down again. By the fourth time Secret doesn't hesitate.

Mary and Secret in a movie theater. Dark, loud, unpredictable sounds. Secret lies at Mary's feet, calm. Mary is watching the movie but also watching Secret, and also noticing that she herself is calm in this dark loud room in a way she wouldn't have been a year ago. She's not sure if it's because she has Secret or because the training has changed her too.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mary sets up her phone on a stack of books. Angle: the backyard, Mary and Secret in frame. She's recording a training video. Nothing fancy -- just her and Secret doing the weave-through-the-legs trick she spent weeks perfecting.

She watches the playback. Does it again. Better angle. Again. She's a perfectionist about this the way she's a perfectionist about the training itself.

She posts it. Account name: my\_auddie\_gal. Thirty followers, mostly family.

She gets four likes. One comment from her aunt.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - WEEKS LATER

Mary is editing a video on her laptop. Secret doing a sequence of tricks -- shake, high-five, spin, bow, play dead. The editing is clean. She's good at this. It's building, the same way the training is building.

She posts it. Checks her phone twenty minutes later. 200 views. More than she's ever gotten. Comments from strangers. Heart emojis. "How did you teach her that?"

Mary reads every comment. Not performing excitement. Just reading. Taking it in. People care about this. People she's never met are impressed by the thing she built.

EXT. BACKYARD - DAY

Mary is setting up to film, but today is different. She's in Irish dance shoes. She hasn't worn them in two years.

She stands in the yard with Secret. Takes a breath. And then she starts dancing -- the Irish dance she used to do with her friends, precise footwork, fast and rhythmic. And Secret is doing it with her. Weaving between her legs in time with the steps. Matching her rhythm. It's intricate and joyful and slightly insane, and they have clearly practiced this hundreds of times.

It's the most alive we've seen Mary since she was nine years old. Her body doing what it does best. And Secret right there with her, moving together like they share a nervous system.

She checks the video. Watches it back. Almost smiles.

She posts it.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - THE NEXT DAY

Mary is on her bed with her laptop. She refreshes the page. The video has 10,000 views. She refreshes again. 14,000. Comments are pouring in, mostly from strangers. People are tagging friends. Sharing it.

Her phone buzzes. Text from SOPHIE -- a name we might recognize from the birthday party in Act One.

SCREEN: SOPHIE: "Mary!! Is this you?? This is INSANE. I sent it to everyone. We're all dying."

Mary stares at the text. Sophie. From before. The old life. She doesn't know what to do with this.

SCREEN: A notification. An Irish dance group in Dublin has shared the video on their Facebook page. 50,000 views. 80,000. The number is climbing in real time.

Mary closes the laptop. Looks at Secret, who is asleep on the bed, unbothered.

MARY

You're famous.

Secret doesn't open her eyes. Her tail thumps once.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

The family at dinner. Mom, Dad, Izzy, Mary. Secret under the table.

IZZY

(showing her phone)

Mary, you have like 300,000 views.

MARY

I know.

DAD

Is that -- is that good? What does that mean?

MARY

It means a lot of people watched it.

MOM

People are commenting from everywhere. Someone from Ireland, someone from --

MARY

Yeah.

She keeps eating. The family is excited, almost giddy. Mary is not performing excitement. She's processing. This is

validating but it's also overwhelming and she doesn't know what to do with a feeling that big, so she does what she always does -- she keeps working.

MARY

I'm going to teach her piano next.

IZZY

You're going to teach your dog to play piano.

MARY

She can already do chords if I set it up right. It's just targeting.

Izzy looks at her parents. Her parents look at each other. This is the most consecutive sentences Mary has spoken at dinner in two years.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - VARIOUS

A sequence showing what social media has become for Mary. Not the numbers -- the people.

Mary reading DMs from other dog trainers. Actual conversations about methods, techniques, what works. She's typing long responses. She's engaged. This is the community she never found in a school cafeteria -- people who care about the thing she cares about.

Mary reading a message from a teenager who says: "I have anxiety and watching your videos is the only thing that makes me feel better. How did you teach Secret to stay so calm?" Mary reads it twice. Types a response. Deletes it. Types a different one. This matters to her. She's careful with it.

Mary on a video call with another trainer, comparing techniques. She's animated. She's arguing, actually -- about the best way to teach a spin. She's not being polite about it. She thinks she's right. She is right. The other trainer laughs and concedes. Mary almost smiles.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mary on her phone in bed. She's fallen down an internet rabbit hole -- but not about dog training. She's reading

something, scrolling slowly, going back and re-reading paragraphs.

CLOSE ON SCREEN: An article about autism in women and girls. We can see phrases: "masking," "difficulty reading social cues," "intense special interests," "sensory sensitivity," "often diagnosed later or not at all."

Mary's face. She's very still. Not upset. Not relieved. Something more specific -- she's recognizing herself in a description for the first time. Every sentence is landing like a small confirmation.

She reads for a long time. Then she puts the phone down and looks at the ceiling.

Secret, on the bed beside her, shifts to rest her chin on Mary's stomach. Mary puts her hand on Secret's head. They stay like that.

INT. CAR - DAY

Mary in the passenger seat. Mom driving. They're on I-5, heading south toward Seattle. Mary is quiet but not the bad kind of quiet.

MOM

You nervous?

MARY

No.

Beat.

MARY

I think they're going to say yes.

MOM

What do you mean, say yes?

MARY

I mean I think I have it. I've read everything. It all fits. I just need someone to make it official.

Mom glances at her. There's something in her expression -- not surprise exactly. More like the feeling of a puzzle piece clicking in that she's been holding for years without

knowing where it went.

MOM

And if they do? How would you feel  
about that?

MARY

Good. It means there's a reason.  
She looks out the window.

MARY

It means I'm not just bad at being  
a person.

Mom reaches over and puts her hand on Mary's arm. Mary lets  
her.

INT. UW MEDICINE - OFFICE - DAY

A quiet office. Mary sits across from a CLINICIAN (50s,  
unhurried). Mom is in a chair by the wall. Secret is in a  
down-stay at Mary's feet.

We don't hear the full assessment. We see fragments: Mary  
answering questions, sometimes quickly, sometimes after long  
pauses. The clinician writing. Mary describing something  
with her hands -- a gesture that looks like she's trying to  
physically show what it feels like to be in a crowded room.

The clinician nods. Says something we can't hear. Mary's  
face doesn't change, but her hand drops to Secret's head.

CLINICIAN

Based on everything we've discussed  
today and the assessment results,  
you meet the criteria for autism  
spectrum disorder.

Silence.

CLINICIAN

I know that can be a lot to hear --

MARY

No. It's good.  
The clinician pauses. This isn't the usual reaction.

MARY

I mean -- it makes sense.

Everything makes sense now. The way

I -- the way everything was.

She's not emotional. She's not crying. She's clarified. Like someone who's been driving in fog and it just lifted.

Mom, in her chair by the wall, is the one crying. Quietly. Not sad tears. The tears of a mother who just found out there was a reason her daughter suffered so much, and it had a name, and nobody knew.

Mary looks at her.

MARY

Mom. It's good.

MOM

I know. I know it is.

Under the chair, Secret's tail thumps against the floor.

INT. WHATCOM COMMUNITY COLLEGE - EMPTY CLASSROOM - EVENING

The room is empty. Rows of desks, fluorescent lights, the particular institutional hum of a building that's supposed to be closed. Mary has gotten permission to be here.

She walks Secret through the rows. Practicing. Sit here. Lie down. Stay while I walk to the front. Stay while I open a door. Stay while I drop a book.

Secret is calm. Professional. She's been trained for this. But the room is new and she checks in with Mary every few seconds -- a glance, an ear rotation.

Mary walks Secret to a spot beside a desk in the third row. Points down. Secret lies down. Mary sits in the desk. They stay there, in the empty room, for a long time. Practicing being in a classroom.

INT. WHATCOM COMMUNITY COLLEGE - CLASSROOM - DAY

The room is full now. Twenty students, a PROFESSOR at the front, the ordinary chaos of a college class starting. Backpacks dropping, laptops opening, conversations.

Mary is in the third row. Secret is under the desk, invisible to most of the room. Mary's hands are flat on the desk. She's managing the noise, the people, the proximity. This is hard. But Secret is there, and Secret is calm, and Mary can feel that calm through the leash.

The professor starts talking. Mary opens a notebook. Starts writing.

A student in the next row notices Secret and does a double-take. Whispers to a friend. They both look. Mary doesn't acknowledge them. She keeps writing.

After class, the whispering student approaches.

STUDENT

Is that -- are you the girl with  
the dog videos?

Mary looks up. This is a social situation she didn't prepare for.

MARY

Yeah.

STUDENT

My roommate is obsessed with your  
account. Can she -- can I take a  
picture?

MARY

Of Secret, sure. She's working  
right now, but when we get outside.

The student is delighted. Mary is not uncomfortable exactly -- more like she's translating in real time, figuring out the protocol for this particular interaction. Secret sits up, professional, ready for her close-up.

They walk out together. Mary is navigating a campus, a conversation, a social interaction that she didn't initiate. Secret is beside her. They're doing it.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Mary is editing a new video -- Secret sledding down a hill, catching the sled rope in her mouth, dragging it back up, and going again. It's spectacular and funny and looks

impossible.

She posts it. Goes to bed.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Mary wakes up. Checks her phone. She sits very still for a long moment.

SCREEN: The sledding video has been reposted by the SportsCenter account. "This dog made our Top 10." 4 million views. Her phone is clogged with notifications she can't scroll through fast enough.

A DM from a talent management company. Another from a pet food brand. Another from a TV producer. Her inbox is full of strangers offering her things.

Mary puts the phone down. Looks at Secret, who is lying on the bed, looking back at her.

MARY

Don't let this go to your head.

Secret yawns.

INT./EXT. - VARIOUS - THE EXPLOSION - MONTAGE

The scale of what's happening. Quick cuts, each one landing a little heavier:

SCREEN: A compilation of Secret's videos posted by Lil Wayne on Facebook. Views ticking up. 20 million. 50 million. 100 million.

SCREEN: Secret painting on a canvas with a brush in her mouth. Comments from verified accounts. Chelsea Clinton: three heart emojis. Mark Hamill: "This dog is more talented than most people I've worked with."

Mary on the phone, someone pitching her an endorsement deal. She's listening but her eyes are on Secret, who is lying on the floor chewing a toy. The gap between what the person on the phone is talking about and what Mary actually cares about is enormous.

MARY

(into phone)

I don't really -- I'm not interested in that. Thank you though.

She hangs up. Gets on the floor with Secret.

Mary and Secret at a park. A stranger recognizes them. Then another. Mary handles it -- she's not rude, she's just brief. Secret is the charming one. Mary is the builder behind the product and she's fine with that.

SCREEN: Follower count. 1 million. 1.5 million. 2 million. The TikTok account crossing 5 million. These are just numbers. They don't mean anything to Mary except that the thing she built works.

Mary at her desk, ignoring emails from influencer agencies, working on a new training sequence. She's teaching Secret to play Jenga. The blocks keep falling. Secret keeps trying. Mary keeps building the system.

And through all of it -- through the fame and the numbers and the strangers who know her name -- the camera keeps returning to the same image: Mary and Secret, alone, working. That's the real thing. Everything else is weather.

EXT. BELLINGHAM - WATERFRONT - DUSK

Mary and Secret on their nightly walk. The same streets they've been walking for years now. Secret is fully grown -- a beautiful, alert Australian Shepherd moving in perfect sync with her person.

Mary's phone buzzes. She glances at it. Some notification about views or followers or a media request. She puts it back in her pocket.

They walk. The water is calm. The mountains are turning purple in the last light.

Mary has built something. A career she didn't plan. A following she doesn't fully understand. A way of being in the world that works for her specific brain. All of it built on the back of one relationship. One dog. One promise she doesn't know she'll have to make yet.

Secret looks up at her. Mary looks down. They keep walking.

END OF ACT TWO, PART A