

AMONGST THE TREES
PILOT EPISODE

Written by

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1. EXT. BRIAN'S HOME. AFTERNOON.

Brian and Ellen are standing outside of a hatchback.

BRIAN
Where the fuck is she?

ELLEN
She's just late okay.

BRIAN
Late? Ten - fifteen minutes - thats
late. This is forty-five minutes.
That's fucking indecent.

Ellen searches through the car pretending to check to see if they have everything. Brian rolls his eyes. She has done this five times already.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Who is this chick anyways?

ELLEN
She's my roommate. You've met her.

BRIAN
Have I?

ELLEN
Yeah, Dena from move in.
(Imitating Brian)
"Your blonde roommate is hot" Dena.

BRIAN
Oh - Yeah - Dena. I though you
didn't like her.

ELLEN
I changed my mind. I like her now.
She broke up with her high school
boyfriend, and now she's pretty
alright. And besides she's - like -
a naturalist - or whatever.

BRIAN
High school boyfriend a dick?

ELLEN
To put it in perspective, his name
was William and he went by William.

BRIAN
So, a tight ass?

ELLEN

To put it lightly - a tight ass. To
put it strongly - thunder cunt

BRIAN

(Laughing)

What was that? "Thunder cunt"?

ELLEN

Speaking of - your friend Eric.
He's the hot one right?

BRIAN

What? I don't know.

ELLEN

Whatever - he's the guy who was on
the football team and whatever
right? He does the - what -
corrections stuff.

BRIAN

Yeah - that Eric.

ELLEN

Dena needs to get fucked.

BRIAN

(Surprised by her
bluntness)

What?

ELLEN

Dena really, really needs to get
fucked.

BRIAN

You want Eric and Dena -

ELLEN

To fuck - yeah.

BRIAN

Can you stop saying that in
relation to my friends sleeping
with your friends.

ELLEN

Look - it's excruciating. She
complains all the time about being
single. And I can't count the times
I've walked in on her -

BRIAN
And she's been?

ELLEN
Yeah - oh shhh - that's her now -
with - blue hair?

ENT Dena

DENA
Hey El.

BRIAN
Yup. Only forty-seven minutes late.

DENA
Oh shit - yeah.

ELLEN
Excuse my brother.
(To Brian)
Brian - Dena.
(To Dena)
Dena - Dickhead.

DENA
I had car trouble

ELLEN
You don't need to apologize to him.
So - blue hair - eh?

BRIAN
Is there any way that we could
discuss this on the road.

They begin loading things into the car. Continue talking.

DENA
I needed a change. I think it's
nice.

ELLEN
Oh - uhm - yeah its great.

BRIAN
I think it looks great -

DENA
Thanks!

CUT TO:

BRIAN

Yeah, and you wanna leave don't you?

ERIC

Well, yeah, but she's in college. I'm looking for something a little more -

BRIAN

I'm just throwing it out there, Ellen thought it would be a good idea.

CUT TO:

16. EXT. THE WOODS.

The bird writhes on the ground.

DENA

Touch it.

ELLEN

Touch it? You fucking touch it if your so curious.

DENA

Okay.

ELLEN

Don't actually touch it! I think we should go.

DENA

Why?

ELLEN

Why? Why? I don't know if you heard it, but there was a fucking gunshot. Now it might just be a normal hunter hunting fucking bluejays, but I don't -

DENA

It's a mockingbird

ELLEN

What?

DENA

You said bluejay - It's a mockingbird.

ELLEN

Okay - I'm sorry - I was too busy worried about a possible crazed madman carrying a gun to do the proper ornithological tests.

DENA

There isn't even blue on it.

ELLEN

Fuck it! Let's just go, okay?

Dena pokes the bird and begins to spark.

DENA

Holy shit. That's not normal. You don't even have to be an ornithologist to know that's not normal.

ELLEN

Okay, okay, I get it - robo-birds are cool and all. And I have no problem questioning this anomaly at the cabin, but right now there is a guy with a gun -

Dena walks away from her.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Where are you going?

DENA

I'm curious.

ELLEN

De, I'm *scared* - can we please -

They see a small shack.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

No - no, no, no - fuck no.
(Feigning authority. It doesn't work.)
Dena stop right there.

Dena walks forward as though in a trance. She is curious disregarding the fear of her friend and perhaps what logic would suggest in the moment.

17. THE SHACK.

Now, in the shack, there are dozens of the mechanical birds hanging off the walls.

ELLEN

Okay. This is not fun. This is not cool. This is just weird. And fucking frightening.

Dena is not listening; she looks around feverishly.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Dena!

Dena fiddles with one of the birds. The interior mechanism has been removed.

DENA

Whoa.

ELLEN

No. Not whoa. This isn't fucking interesting. This is fucking creepy.

(The urgency in her voice elevates)

Also, man with gun. Lest we forget.

Ellen begins pulling on Dena's arm. Dena looks around the small shack. Her gaze focuses on a newspaper clipping. The headline reads "Murder Victims Found Buried in Messinger Woods".

ELLEN (CONT'D)

What does that say?

Dena doesn't read. Now, she is frozen with fear.

ELLEN (CONT'D)

Murder - oh my god let's go. Please, can we go now?

DENA

Yes, yes.

ELLEN

I know it's a good idea. Let's go.

From a ways off:

ERNEST (O.S.)

Who's there?

ELLEN
(With the desperation of
someone who thinks
they're now dead.)
Oh fuck.

ERNEST (O.S.)
Who are you?

DENA
We're campers.

ERNEST (O.S.)
Campers?

DENA
We're staying in the cabin.
(To Ellen)
What's Eric's last name?

ELLEN
(Whisper)
I don't know.

DENA
(To Ernest)
We're staying in Vera's cabin.

ERNEST (O.S.)
Vera Bixby?

DENA
Uhm - I don't know - she's our
friend's Aunt. We don't know her
last name.

ERNEST (O.S.)
Are you armed?

ELLEN
What? Of course not.

ERNEST (O.S.)
It's just safe to ask.

ELLEN
Are you?

ERNEST (O.S.)
Yes, but it is sheathed.

ELLEN
Oh yeah - I definitely trust you.

ERNEST (O.S.)
I'm sorry if I scared you. I'm
coming around the corner now. Do
not panic.

ELLEN
(More to herself than
anyone in particular)
Exactly what they say when you
should definitely panic.

Ernest comes around the corner.

ERNEST
Ernest Messinger.

He extends his hand to Ellen. She doesn't shake his hand. He
extends his hand to Dena. They shake. He stares at her for a
long time.

ELLEN
Ellen.
(Noticing his awkward
stare)
And this is Dena.

ERNEST
I see. I understand now.

ELLEN
And what are you doing in the
woods?

ERNEST
I'm the forest ranger.

DENA
Wait - Messinger? Like as in the
Messinger Woods?

ERNEST
Named after the family.

DENA
The newspaper clipping -

ERNEST
Ah - yes - that is a long story.

ELLEN
Alright. We'll be leaving now.

ERNEST
Yes - this is private property.

DENA

What is?

ERNEST

The dirt path is the boundary. This is part of my property.

DENA

I'm sorry - we didn't know.

ERNEST

(He looks at her for a long time.)

It is - ok. It's getting dark though, and you should leave now. Things have been known to happen in these woods when the sun goes down.

He stands there awkwardly.

DENA

Do you know me?

ERNEST

Me?

ELLEN

(Overlapping)

Of course he doesn't know you.

ERNEST

No - I do not believe I do.

DENA

You just - never mind.

ELLEN

Goodbye - it was - *nice* to meet you. Goodbye

(Pressuring Dena who seems frozen)

Good - bye.

They leave. Ernest watches them leave.

17. INT. THE CABIN.

Brian and Eric are sitting quietly drinking beer. The girls enter breathing heavily.

BRIAN

Is everything okay?

BRIAN

Shut up -

He tries to kiss her again.

DENA

Fuck off! I'm going back to the
cabin.

Brian grabs her.

BRIAN

Like hell you are.

He holds her against a tree kissing her ferociously. She knees him in the groin. He flinches, but recovers and grabs her arm and twists it until there is a subtle popping sound, and Dena writhes in pain on the ground. Her arm is broken.

BRIAN (CONT'D)

Cunt.

He punches her head.

CUT TO:

42. SMITHFIELD SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The general hustle and bustle of a small town sheriff's office. Officer Bob Lloyd II enters the office of Sheriff Robbie Lloyd.

BOB

Hey dad.

ROBBIE

Dammit, Bob, you know you gotta
call me chief or Sheriff when we're
on the job.

BOB

Sorry, chief.

ROBBIE

That's better. Now what's the word?

BOB

What?

ROBBIE

Why'd you come in here.

BOB
Oh right, Vera Bixby called.

There is a wave a silence.

ROBBIE
Yes, and?

BOB
She says her nephew Eric, you know
the guy who applied to work here
about a month back, Eric Bixby.

ROBBIE
Yeah, yeah, I know who you mean.

BOB
He and a few of his friends, they
went out to her cabin for the
weekend.

ROBBIE
Alright, and?

BOB
Well, it's Monday.

ROBBIE
And?

BOB
Well, the weekend's over.

ROBBIE
Right.

BOB
And, well, they haven't come back
yet.

ROBBIE
And does she suspect anything in
the vein of foul play? Or maybe
they just liked their vacation so
much they wanted it to last a day
longer.

BOB
Well, Eric, you know the guy who
applied --

ROBBIE
Yes, Bob, I know he applied.

BOB

Well, he didn't show up for work today at the supermarket, you know the one on 4th and Summerset.

ROBBIE

Bob, I know where the supermarket is. So the guy missed a day of work?

BOB

That's right.

ROBBIE

Anything else?

BOB

No. I don't think so. There were four of them in all.

ROBBIE

Right, and no sign of them?

BOB

No, sir.

ROBBIE

Alright, throw a line out to Ernest see if he's got any tabs on them.

BOB

Will do, Dad, chief - uh - sir.

Bob exits and Robbie lets out a deep breath. He furrows his brow.

ROBBIE

Hey Bob.

BOB

Yeah?

ROBBIE

I'll call Ernest, alright.

BOB

You sure? I'd be happy to.

ROBBIE

Don't worry about it.

Robbie pick up the phone and dials the number. Waiting for it to go through. These next scenes are intercut between Robbie in the Sheriff's office and Ernest in his own shack.