

THE ORDER

by
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COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A hip coffee shop, filled with young people dressed in plaid all clacking away on their Macbook Pros. At one table, STEPHANIE LU, 21, fiddles with the margins on her resumé.

A chime at the door. In walks ERICA KIM - late 20s and dressed to impress. She's engrossed with something on her phone as she gets in line to order coffee.

Stephanie looks up and sees Erica. Her eyes widen. She gets up, and darts behind the counter of the coffee shop, where a BARISTA is preparing a latte.

BARISTA

Hey! You're not allowed to be back here!

STEPHANIE

(in a hushed whisper)
I will give you five dollars if you let me take *that* lady's order.

Stephanie motions to Erica. The barista squints over at Erica.

BARISTA

(with a goofy grin)
What, you got a crush on her or something?

Stephanie pulls out a 20 dollar bill and places it in the Barista's hand.

STEPHANIE

Shut up. Now give me your apron.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - LATER

Erica gets to the front of the line, where she's met by Stephanie, behind the counter, dressed in the coffee shop uniform.

STEPHANIE

Hi, good morning! What can I get you?

ERICA

I'll have twelve large black coffees, please.

STEPHANIE

You got it.

(beat)

Hey - are you *Erica Kim*? Like, the CEO of Kim's Dims?

Erica looks up from her phone, takes a cursory glance at Stephanie, then goes back to her phone.

ERICA

Yes.

STEPHANIE

Wow, I am so honored to meet you. You're a celebrity on campus.

Stephanie follows Erica as she moves across the counter.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

You know, you're kind of like my idol. I've done almost everything you did on campus. I'm a math major. I play the violin. I even joined the women's rugby team and quit after the first practice, just like you. Just to show them that I could.

ERICA

(uninterested)

That's nice. How's that coffee coming?

STEPHANIE

I guess my question for you is this: I've done everything you did while you were in school. But nobody knows or cares who I am. How did you do it? Become such a big name?

Erica looks up from her phone.

ERICA

My coffee isn't coming, is it.

STEPHANIE

It'll come. If you answer my question.

ERICA

Look. No one is going to care about you unless you're important. And the only way you become important is by hanging out with important people. How did I do that? I joined a secret society.

STEPHANIE

No way.

ERICA

You've heard about The Order?

STEPHANIE

No, never.

ERICA

Good. Now, where's my coffee?

STEPHANIE

Wait, what's The Order?

ERICA

Hon, we had a deal. I answer your question, you give me my coffee. What you do with what I told you is your problem, not mine.

EXT. MAIN QUAD - MISTY TREE UNIVERSITY - DAY

The main square of a large, public university. It's packed with rows of long tables, each bearing a different kind of exhibition. It's quad day - where you can learn about all 892 student organizations that exist on campus.

At one table, Stephanie is politely listening to MARK TEEM, the quintessential nerd, tell a story. He's decked out in a full Indiana Jones costume. As he talks, he points to selfies of himself on the trifold behind him. At the top of the trifold, in big block letters, is the name of the club: "LARPing Around".

MARK

So there I was. After months of exploration, my team and I finally found the golden idol. So, we grabbed the idol and replaced it with it a bag of sand that had identical weight, thinking we'd be safe... but no! It was booby trapped!

(MORE)

MARK (CONT'D)

A giant boulder landed from the ceiling and starting rolling towards us...

Mark pauses for dramatic effect.

MARK (CONT'D)

And that's where we left off in our last campaign. I know. It's really cool. You don't have to say it. You should definitely come to our first meeting today at 7. Then afterwards we could, I dunno, go out for dinner? Just spitballing ideas. I'm Mark, by the way. Mark Teem.

STEPHANIE

Mark. That sounds really, really nice. But I'm afraid I'm busy tonight.

MARK

Oh, I mean, that's fine. I can always push back the meeting. How's tomorrow night?

STEPHANIE

You can just push back your kickoff meeting?

MARK

I mean, I *am* the president.

STEPHANIE

How many people are in your group?

MARK

Oh, uh. Right now it's just me. But I'm hoping to get like, a ton of people into it this year.

Stephanie looks over at the trifold. Nobody but Mark appears in any pictures.

STEPHANIE

You just answered so many of my questions. Maybe we can raincheck.

MARK

(dejected)
Raincheck. You got it.

As Mark turns to talk to someone else, Stephanie calls out.

STEPHANIE

Hey, so this is a long shot. But as the president of uh, the LARP club...

MARK

LARPing Around.

STEPHANIE

Right. LARPing Around. You wouldn't happen to know anything about The Order, would you?

Mark squints at Stephanie. He's suspicious.

MARK

The Order? Well, they're only the "most respected of secret societies at Misty Tree University." Why?

STEPHANIE

Let's just say a friend of mine is interesting in joining.

MARK

I mean, I don't want to be a gossip queen. But... they meet on the 6th floor of the Union from 1AM - 4AM every Monday. They're having an invite-only recruiting event tonight at the speakeasy down on the Main Street. You basically need to know someone to get in, though.

STEPHANIE

You seem to know a lot about The Order.

MARK

Ah well, my roommate is in it. It's all he talks about. It's all "Oh, the Order is going to coffee together" or "The Order is saving children in Africa". It's a load of BS if you ask me.

Stephanie is intrigued. She turns on the charm and rests her hand gently on Mark's shoulder.

STEPHANIE

You know Mark? I just remembered. All my meetings tonight were canceled at the last minute. I'm totally free if you'd like to go to dinner after your club thing.

MARK

Are you kidding?! Yes! I mean, uh. Cool... beans. I guess I can make myself available.

STEPHANIE

And who knows? Maybe we can stop by your place afterwards.

Mark shrugs, trying to play off his excitement.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

(with a smile)

Great, I'll see you later tonight.

Stephanie's hand lingers on Mark's shoulder as she leaves. Mark waits, then fist pumps the air.

ACT I

INT. MATH ADVISING OFFICE - DAY

A department of mathematics program advisor, ROBERT FELDMAN, a passionate yet incredibly fragile man, sits in a small office squinting at his computer screen. He clicks his mouse what seems like 30 times. He's playing cookie clicker. There's a KNOCK at the door.

STEPHANIE

Hello? Mr. Feldman?

Stephanie opens the door and pokes her head inside the office. Robert is totally caught off guard, and scrambles to hide the cookie clicker window.

ROBERT

Oh, hello! I wasn't expecting you for - well, I wasn't expecting anyone, actually. Nobody's scheduled an appointment with me since Sharon transferred to this department...

STEPHANIE

I definitely tried to book an appointment with Sharon. But she's filled up for the next four weeks.

ROBERT

Well, I suppose beggars can't be choosers. And yes, I am aware of the implication. How can I help you Ms...

Stephanie takes a seat.

STEPHANIE

Lu. Stephanie Lu. I'm graduating this year and I just need an academic advisor to sign a form that says I've taken all the required courses and am on track to graduate.

ROBERT

Ah, graduation. I love graduations.

(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

There's something so beautiful about one chapter closing and another chapter beginning. You know, when I was your age --

STEPHANIE

Sorry to cut you off, Mr. Feldman. But I didn't really come here for advice. Or advising. I just need you to sign the form.

Robert lets out a sigh. He begins typing on his computer. Robert squints at the results, then looks over at Stephanie.

ROBERT

You're missing a course.

STEPHANIE

What are you talking about?

ROBERT

Yeah, it says you're missing introduction to algebra.

STEPHANIE

I took algebra in the 6th grade. I don't need to retake it.

ROBERT

No, this is *abstract algebra*. It's kind of like algebra, except instead of "finding x", you "find yourself..."

STEPHANIE

That is asinine.

ROBERT

Asinine, Asiten, it doesn't matter what it is. You need to take it. This semester. And I can't sign that form until you pass it.

STEPHANIE

Ugh, fine. Can you at least register me for it?

ROBERT

Technically, I'm not allowed to. You have to go in yourself and update the form. It's really easy, all you do is -

STEPHANIE

You know, I bet Sharon would do it for me. Maybe I'll go and ask her.

ROBERT

No, no! You don't have to do that. I can do it just fine. Look at me. I'm doing it.

Robert clicks on the screen, and is presented with a red error message: "Class is full, no waitlist options available."

ROBERT (CONT'D)

Actually, I can't do that. The course is full.

STEPHANIE

Look. There is no way in hell that I'm delaying my graduation so I can pretend to be Jackson Pollack for a semester. What are my options?

ROBERT

Theoretically, if you could find someone currently enrolled in the class to offer you their spot, I could take care of switching the enrollment...

STEPHANIE

Perfect. So give me the class roster.

ROBERT

I can't do that! That would be a major violation of student privacy. I could get fired. And this job is literally all I have.

STEPHANIE

Alright, that's fine, I'll just ask Sharon.

ROBERT

You know, you can't keep using Sharon to get me to do things for you.

STEPHANIE

(almost earnestly)
No, really. I appreciate all your time and energy.

(MORE)

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

I'll just go talk to Sharon about it and see what she can do.

ROBERT

Okay, please. Just... don't talk to Sharon. She is so annoying. All she talks about is how many students she helps and how great and wonderful it is to work in education and blah, blah, blah. I can get you the roster. You just can't tell anyone it came from me.

STEPHANIE

(smiling)

My lips are sealed.

Robert prints out a copy of the class roster and hands it to Stephanie. She scans the names quickly, and notices "Mark Teem" is enrolled. Bingo.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

(as she leaves)

You know, Robert. You're cool. Don't let anyone else tell you otherwise.

Stephanie exits his office, leaving Robert to relish in the first compliment he's received in years.

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM - NIGHT

Mark sits at the head of an empty auditorium. On the chalkboard behind him is a large, intricate display that says "LARPing Around Mass Meeting. Welcome!". Mark is laying on his back, scrolling on his phone, dejected. Stephanie walks in.

STEPHANIE

Your meeting finished early?

Mark SNAPS to his feet.

MARK

Oh, hey, hey, hey! Yo! What? Oh yeah. Meeting finished super early. Everyone uh... had LARP experience already. So it was kind of like preaching to the choir.

STEPHANIE

Cool. How many signups did you get?

MARK
(brazenly)
Uh, like 4000.

STEPHANIE
That's literally the size of the
entire senior class.

MARK
Okay, well. Maybe it was more like
400.

Stephanie stares at him with skepticism.

MARK (CONT'D)
Okay, fine. No one came. I just...
said that to impress you.

STEPHANIE
Mark.
(beat)
There are so many other reasons
for me to like you.

MARK
I know, I know. I shouldn't lie
like that. I'm supposed to just be
myself and everything will be
fine. But you know, I kind of feel
like the person who said that
originally was very societally
normal. So being themselves didn't
ever like, scare people, or
whatever.

STEPHANIE
(feigning interest)
That sounds really, really heavy.
You know, I'm going through
something pretty heavy myself.

MARK
Oh yeah?

STEPHANIE
Yeah, I found out today that I
might not graduate.

MARK
No way. How come?

STEPHANIE
Well, apparently *algebra* is a
requirement for math majors.
(MORE)

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Which is ridiculous. Because I took algebra in the 6th grade.

MARK

Well, it's probably...

STEPHANIE

(cutting him off)

Abstract algebra. I know, I know. But honestly, how different could that really be from regular algebra?

MARK

I guess I don't know. I'm actually enrolled in abstract algebra this semester.

STEPHANIE

(faking surprise)

You don't say!

MARK

Yeah, I'm also a math major.

STEPHANIE

Wow. Creative *and* smart.

MARK

(flustered)

Well, I wouldn't say all that creative. Or all that smart. I just do what I can.

STEPHANIE

So listen. I've got a favor to ask you.

MARK

Yeah, sure. What's up?

STEPHANIE

I really need to take that class this semester.

MARK

Okay.

STEPHANIE

And the only way I can get in is if someone in the class gives me their spot.

MARK

Okay.

STEPHANIE

So...

MARK

So you want me to give you my spot
in the class.

STEPHANIE

It would really mean a lot to me.

MARK

Wait, but let me ask you
something.

STEPHANIE

Sure.

MARK

(guarded)

Is that the only reason you agreed
to go to dinner with me?

STEPHANIE

Mark! I am offended. I would *never*
manipulate someone like that to
get enrolled into a *class*. Honest
to god, I only found out about my
graduation predicament after we
agreed to meet up tonight.

Mark stares at Stephanie for a moment. He sighs, then
lets his guard down.

MARK

You're right. I'm sorry, that was
wrong of me. You seem like a nice
person.

(beat)

Can I take a little to think about
it?

STEPHANIE

Yeah, of course. Take your time.
Dinner?

INT. MARK'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Mark and Stephanie walk into a large, posh two-bedroom
two-bathroom apartment. It's the peak of student housing
on campus.

STEPHANIE

Wow, this place is actually nice!

MARK

Why do you gotta say "actually"...

In the living room is DREW MORALES [Classically beautiful, senior]. He's well dressed, exudes confidence, and says everything with a smile. He's in an intense discussion on the phone.

DREW

Look, Alex. I get that you're busy. You're juggling forensics, interpretive dance, and the squirrel feeding club. But we can't lose our treasurer!

(beat)

Uh huh.

(beat)

Alright. Well, I appreciate you calling to tell me first. I'll tell everyone else tonight.

(beat)

Yep. Bye.

Drew hangs up the phone and lets out a big sigh. He notices Mark and Stephanie.

DREW (CONT'D)

Oh, hello.

Stephanie stares at him but doesn't say a word. She's momentarily struck by his beauty.

MARK

Hello, Andrew.

DREW

Dude, it's just Drew. Just Drew.
(to Stephanie)
And who are you?

STEPHANIE

Oh. I'm Stephanie. It's nice to meet you.

She reaches out for a handshake.

DREW

(still holding
Stephanie's hand)

Mark, you never told me that you were seeing someone!

STEPHANIE Oh! We are not together.

MARK Well, you haven't been around.

Drew pulls his hand back.

DREW
Woah. I don't want to get in the middle of a lover's quarrel.

STEPHANIE
We're not a couple.

MARK
(blowing past that)
Are you getting ready for your Order event tonight?

DREW
Mark. Why would you say that? That's supposed to be a secret!

Drew makes a stern face at mark for a moment of tension, then breaks into a smile.

DREW (CONT'D)
Ha! I'm just joking. Some people take secret societies so seriously. I think it's just good to give back to the community in whatever way I can.

STEPHANIE
(playing dumb)
Uh, Secret society?

DREW
Oh, sorry. I just assumed you'd know what those are. I'm in a secret society called The Order.

STEPHANIE
That's neat. What do you do?

DREW
I could tell you, but I'd have to kill you!

They awkwardly laugh at his joke.

DREW (CONT'D)
No, seriously. I'd have to expunge your student record if I told you.

STEPHANIE

You can do that?

DREW

We can do a lot of things.
If you are curious, you're more
than welcome to come to the event
tonight. Mark does have an
invitation with a +1. But I guess
you're not dating, so maybe that'd
be awkward...

STEPHANIE

Awkward? No! It wouldn't be
awkward at all. Mark and I would
love to go!

MARK

Oh, hell no. I wouldn't go to one
of those things even if my wildest
dreams --

STEPHANIE

As a couple.

MARK

Came true? Cool. Wow. Things are
moving fast.

STEPHANIE

Drew, we'll meet you there. Could
I just talk to Mark for a second?
In private?

INT. MARK'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Stephanie leads Mark into his bedroom.

MARK

Okay. Things are almost moving too
fast. Okay. Full disclosure. I
have never been with a woman
before. I have seen a *ton* of
YouTube videos though.

STEPHANIE

Mark, stop talking. I *really* need
to get into this group.

MARK

What? Why! They're a bunch of
stuck up assholes. I mean, look at
Drew. That guy's a nightmare.

STEPHANIE

Look. It doesn't matter if they're assholes. If you're important, nobody cares about you because you're a *nice person*. They care about you because you're important.

MARK

I care if people are nice.

STEPHANIE

And that's what makes you such a good person. So, it would be great if you could... just, be positive about this. Okay? It's really important to me.

MARK

Fine, yeah. Positive. I'll be as positive as a proton.

STEPHANIE

And stop doing that.

MARK

What?

STEPHANIE

You know. The whole "nerdy dude makes nerd jokes" bit. It's cliché.

MARK

You're the one who told me to be myself.

STEPHANIE

I feel like you told yourself to be yourself, not me.

MARK

Well, you alluded to it.

STEPHANIE

Did I, though? Look, do you. Be yourself. Just... be yourself a little differently tonight. Okay?

ACT II

EXT. FIRST STREET SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

A crowd of students are lined up at an unmarked black door. A scary looking bouncer, LARRY, stands in front, checking names off of a list. A sign is lit up in neon above: "Sweet Dreams Erotica House". Mark and Stephanie approach the front of the line. Mark gives the bouncer a nod, and the bouncer lets them both in.

STEPHANIE

You know the bouncer?

MARK

Larry's an old friend. He actually owns Sweet Dreams. I used to work there. Yeah, that experience really helped me develop the people skills that I have today.

STEPHANIE

(scoffs)

What people skills?

MARK

Role playing.

STEPHANIE

Gross.

INT. FIRST STREET SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

They step inside. The door opens to an old-timey 1920s bar. Drew is chatting in a circle with five others, CASSIE, DAVID, LORRIE, VIKRAM and MARIA.

CASSIE

So yeah. I've stopped wearing makeup entirely. I mean, how can I preach the truth when I'm hiding behind a mask, you know?

LORRIE

That is so amazing. You're such a good role model. Seriously. You should be on the cover of Time.

DAVID

Look, all I'm saying is that you looked a lot hotter when you wore makeup.

MARIA

(to David)

You can't say that! It's 2018! You have to say she looked a lot *more beautiful* when she wore makeup.

VIKRAM

(to himself)

Startup idea: Makeup, but when you put it on, it looks like you're not wearing makeup. It's like... decaf coffee. But for makeup. Damn, that's good. I gotta write that down.

Stephanie and Mark approach the circle.

STEPHANIE

Hi, Drew.

DREW

Stephanie! Let me introduce you to everyone.

David steps up to Stephanie.

DAVID

No, let *me* introduce you to me. I'm David.

He grabs her hand and kisses it like a prince would do to a princess.

DAVID (CONT'D)

I've never met someone so... beautifully exotic before.

VIKRAM

I'm pretty sure that's racist.

DAVID

Jokes on you, dude. I don't see race. I'm just making a casual observation that she doesn't seem to be from around town.

DREW

David is the president of the Greek Life here on campus.

(MORE)

DREW (CONT'D)

That's Cassie, Lorrie, Vikram, and Maria. And together, we make up the exec board of The Order for this year. We did have one more, Alex - our treasurer. But he dropped out at the last minute. May his student record rest in peace.

(beat)

And everyone, you know Mark. My roommate.

Mark raises his hand, puts on a small smile. Everyone grimaces back.

DREW (CONT'D)

Well, why doesn't everyone go around and say the organization they're in charge of?

Everyone groans.

DREW (CONT'D)

Fine, I'll go first. I am in charge of the student records office on campus.

CASSIE

I'm the president of the CAC - the coalition against conformity. We're like, part religious, part activist. Our slogan is "Don't drink *the* Kool-aid, drink *our* Kool-aid."

VIKRAM

Entrepreneurship club.

LORRIE

I'm the chief editor of the school's magazine - Time Magazine. Look, I know what you're thinking. Who reads magazines anymore, right? But this is our year. I can feel it.

DAVID

I'm the chief of my fraternity, Delta Iota Kappa. We're known for having the *biggest* --

MARIA

David!

DAVID

Parties. We have big parties. What did you think I was going to say?

MARIA

I'm the president of the public health org on campus. We're the ones responsible for "Wrap it Wednesdays" - where you can get free condoms at the union. The name was my idea.

STEPHANIE

Wow. Is it like, a requirement to be a president of a club to be in The Order?

Everyone looks around, lips pursed, like they're all in on a joke.

VIKRAM

I mean, yeah. Our slogan is the "Champions and the Premier", not the "Followers and Mediocre."

The circle erupts into a little too much laughter for such a weak punchline. Mark looks at Stephanie and rolls his eyes. His face says: "Shoot me."

DREW

So, what club are you in charge of?

STEPHANIE

Oh, me? I'm uh... I'm in charge of...

Stephanie shoots a panicked glance at Mark. Mark puts on a face that says: "don't look at me." A metaphorical lightbulb turns on in her head.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Actually. Mark and I are co-presidents of LARP club.

Mark is surprised, shoots a confused look at Stephanie.

DREW

Aw, wow. Co-presidents *and* a couple. So cute.

CASSIE

LARP? What is a LARP?

STEPHANIE

Uh. So LARP is this thing. It stands for uh, Live action role-playing. It's basically like, we all get around in a circle, and talk about... Indiana Jones. And how he's impacted our lives. At least, that's where we start. We kind of take it from there.

CASSIE

(confused)

So it's like, a statement against the patriarchy?

STEPHANIE

Uh, sure.

VIKRAM

That reminds of this company I was whiteboarding the other way with my mentee. So, it's Monopoly. But it's in VR. And you aren't playing with pieces - you are the piece. Haven't you ever wondered what it would be like to be a shoe?

STEPHANIE

You know, I have. And it's exactly like that.

CASSIE

Wait, so is it a statement against the patriarchy or is it a board game?

STEPHANIE

Why not both?

DAVID

Honestly dude, that sounds pretty lame.

MARIA

David! Be respectful! It's not lame, it's *unique*.

DAVID

Nah, that's really lame.

LORRIE

Well, I for one think that it's great to be... passionate about... something?

MARK

(blurting)

Okay! Stephanie, could I talk to you for a second?

DREW

Ooh, a lover's quarrel.

MARK

(curtly)

We're *not* a couple.

INT. AT THE BAR - NIGHT

Mark pulls Stephanie to the bar.

STEPHANIE

So that's going well!

MARK

What are you doing?

STEPHANIE

What?

MARK

You lied to them about being the president of *my* club. You don't even know the name of the org!

STEPHANIE

Sure I do. LARPing in town.

MARK

LARPing around.

(scoffs)

I don't know why I thought you were nice - you're just like everyone else here.

STEPHANIE

Excuse me?

MARK

Opportunistic asshole.

STEPHANIE

I would think you'd be happier about the fact that now people know what LARPing even is.

MARK

They *don't* know what it is. You made it sound like a weird Indiana Jones cult. And that's already pretty weird to begin with! How am I ever going to get new members if the most prestigious group of people on campus think its for losers?

STEPHANIE

That sounds like a you problem. Besides, it doesn't matter what they think.

MARK

If it doesn't matter what they think, then why are you trying so hard to impress them?

Stephanie is silent.

MARK (CONT'D)

You wanna be the "co-president" of LARPing Around? Fine. Then do your part. Convince the e-board that LARP is cool.

STEPHANIE

Ha! Okay, that'll never happen.

MARK

Fine. Then I don't trade you my spot in algebra.

STEPHANIE

You *just* judged me for being manipulative to get what I want. Now you're going to turn around and do the exact same thing to me?

MARK

That sounds like a you problem.

Stephanie stares down Mark, who stares back at her. Then, she gives in.

STEPHANIE

Ugh, fine. But you're trading me that class.

MARK

We'll see.

ACT III

INT. FIRST STREET SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

Stephanie and Mark rejoin the exec-board circle. Everyone stares at them expectantly.

MARIA

Is everything okay? I have a lot of resources for troubled couples.

STEPHANIE

You know, I want to set the record straight. I feel like I misrepresented LARPing Around when I was talking about it at first.

VIKRAM

No, your pitch was fine. It's like a cult! But for Indiana Jones.

CASSIE

I think it's pretty clear that it's more than just a cult. It's a sex cult. Of which I am very pro. Pro-cult, that is.

STEPHANIE

Yeah, no. You definitely don't get it. Let me explain.

(beat)

You know the funny thing about social media?

The group looks at each other, unsure where she's going with this.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Social media is funny because you only see the good parts of people's lives. You see your cousin's wedding engagement. Or your best friends' celebrating passing that test. But that sucks, you know? That sucks because it always seems like everyone else's life is way better than yours. You never see the invisible people - the friends who are just happy to be surviving, that are barely getting by.

(MORE)

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

But because you don't see them,
you start to wonder - why is *my*
life not as great as all my
friends? What am *I* doing wrong?
Why can't I be like them?

The group nods in agreement.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

Well, LARP answers those
questions. It gives you an escape.
You get to not worry about Tim's
engagement or Juliet's exam grade.
You get to exist in a world that
revolves around you. A world where
you fit in. Where you aren't
judged or ostracized for being too
much of a hippie, or too techy, or
too positive, or too PC, or even
too douchey.

DAVID

Wait, which one of us is too
douchey?

Everyone looks at David, tight-lipped. At this point,
everyone in the room (including outside the circle) has
stopped mingling and are all paying full attention to
Stephanie's speech.

DAVID (CONT'D)

You're kidding. Me?!

STEPHANIE

In that sense, LARP and The Order
aren't really so different. I
mean, look around. There's such a
rich history of student leaders
coming together to be a part of a
family. And that's something
special. That's what being in The
Order is all about. It's not about
the secrecy, or about the impact,
or about the prestige. It's about
building an environment where
people can just, be themselves,
without judgement, sharing ideas
and making the campus a better
place.

Stephanie shoots a glance at Mark, who is stone-faced.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

It's about finding a place where
you belong.

Everyone smiles, feeling like they've been enlightened by Stephanie's speech. Drew starts a slow clap, which is joined in by the rest of the exec board, and then the rest of the members. Mark doesn't clap - he sees right through her facade.

DREW

Wow. Just wow. I don't have a
single word that can describe how
I feel right now.

STEPHANIE

Isn't it "wow"?

DREW

Woah, I guess it is. Listen,
Stephanie. I know this is a crazy
request. But we just lost our
treasurer. And seeing how you're a
student leader on campus - I was
wondering, if I have the exec
board's permission - if you would
be interested in joining us as the
new treasurer.

The group all nods. No complaints there. Stephanie glances over at Mark, who looks back at her. He shakes his head in disgust. Stephanie makes a choice.

STEPHANIE

You know what Drew? I would love
to.

The group cheers - they've found a treasurer!

MARK

(from across the
room)

What is wrong with you?

Mark approaches Stephanie. The crowd forms a circle around them, like two bulls fighting in a bullpen.

DREW

I know they say they're not
dating. But I know the sound of a
lover's quarrel when I hear it.
And this is *definitely* a lover's
quarrel.

STEPHANIE

What?

MARK

(to everyone)

She's not the president of LARPing
Around.

The exec board gasps.

MARK (CONT'D)

She's not the president of
anything!

The whole crowd gasps.

MARK (CONT'D)

All she does is lie and
manipulate. She puts on a nice
face and smiles and says all the
right things - but when the moment
comes, she'll step on you to get
what she wants. I bet the only
reason she agreed to come here as
a couple was to use my +1 so she
could finagle her way into The
Order.

DAVID

Ohhhh, that makes so much more
sense to me.

DREW

Stephanie, is what Mark is saying
true?

Stephanie looks around for a moment, then sighs.

STEPHANIE

Yeah he's right.

Everyone gasps louder.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

But I mean - was that really so
wrong? For the last three years on
campus I've just been searching
for an org - for a *family* to be a
part of. I just thought I'd
finally found that in The Order.
So I found myself doing anything
to get in. I'm sorry - I'm so, so
sorry.

Everyone awwwwws.

LORRIE

Hey - it's okay. We all make mistakes. Like naming the school magazine after a popular American Magazine. Boy, is it hard to find us on Google.

MARK

Are you all idiots? She's *literally* manipulating you right now.

DREW

Mark, I think we've heard enough out of you.

Mark is flabbergasted.

MARK

(to Stephanie)

Well, good luck graduating on time without algebra this semester - you're not getting it from me.

Mark rushes out the door in a huff.

STEPHANIE

C'mon, Mark!

DREW

Go to him. Love is the most important thing we have in our lives.

Stephanie rolls her eyes, then rushes out the door.

EXT. FIRST STREET SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

Stephanie runs up behind Mark, who is quickly stomping away.

STEPHANIE

Mark! Mark!

MARK

Go away. I don't want to talk to you.

STEPHANIE

Look, Mark. I'm sorry. Alright? I really am sorry.

MARK

No, you're not! You just know that's what you need to say to get out of the predicament you're in right now.

STEPHANIE

Okay, you know what? You're right. You were right about me. Look, let me make this right. Just come back in there with me, okay? Five minutes. That's all it'll take.

MARK

This better be good.

INT. FIRST STREET SPEAKEASY - NIGHT

Stephanie and Mark enter the speakeasy. The entire crowd is gathered, waiting anxiously for their arrival. As they walk in, the crowd cheers.

DREW

I'm so happy you two managed to work it out!

STEPHANIE

Look, Drew. I honestly want nothing more than to be in The Order.

(beat)

But I can't.

DREW

Well why in heavens name can't you?

STEPHANIE

I'm not the best person for the job. But you know who is? Mark.

Everyone's eyes look at Mark. Mark shoots a confused glance at Stephanie.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)

He's intelligent. He's a student leader. And he's a math major, which means he's good at math. Most importantly, he's a good person. Better than me. He could easily be your treasurer and do a great job at it.

(MORE)

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Besides, LARPing Around is like,
the coolest club on campus.

Some head nods. People are on board.

MARK
Stephanie, can I talk to you?

Stephanie moves over to Mark.

MARK (CONT'D)
I don't want this. The only thing
I wanted was for people to care
about LARP. And I still have 0
sign ups.

Two STUDENTS approach Mark and Stephanie.

STUDENT 1
Hey, LARPing Around sounds so fun.
Can we join?

STUDENT 2
Yeah, I hope we do a Star Wars one
- I wanna play Admiral Ackbar.
It's a trap!

Stephanie looks at Mark with a face that says: "I told
you so.". Mark lights up.

MARK
Uh, sure. Why don't you just write
your emails down on this piece of
paper and I'll grab it before I
leave. First meeting is next week
at 7!

STUDENT 2
So excited.

MARK
Okay, two sign ups. Big deal.

STEPHANIE
That's infinitely times better
than 0.

MARK
I don't even like The Order.

STEPHANIE

Look, you said it yourself. If The Order think LARP is cool, then it'll trickle down. Think of this as a...

(thinking)

A double agent mission. You're infiltrating the elite so you can improve the lives of the common folk.

MARK

Don't patronize me.

(beat)

But that does sound really cool.

Stephanie and Mark rejoin the bigger group.

STEPHANIE

So, what do you say?

DREW

This is highly unusual. But I guess if the exec board is okay with it...

The exec board shrugs. No complaints. They need a treasurer.

DREW (CONT'D)

Okay, well. I guess that settles it. Welcome to the team, Mark!

Everyone claps. Stephanie looks at Mark, who is surrounded by a handful of students eager to sign up for LARPing Around. He looks back. She looks pitiful, like she's lost everything. He sighs. As she starts to leave, he calls out.

MARK

Wait!

The exec board looks at Mark. Stephanie stops and looks back.

MARK (CONT'D)

I'll be the treasurer. But I have one condition.

DREW

Uh, and what's that?

MARK

Stephanie gets to be co-treasurer.

CASSIE
This is so confusing.

LORRIE
But, she's not the president of
any clubs...

MARK
Sure she is.
(beat)
She's the co-president of LARPing
Around.

Stephanie looks up at Mark, with a grateful smile.

MARIA
I thought she lied about that.

MARK
She did. But we talked. And we
worked it out. Look, you all agree
that The Order is about family,
right? Well, Stephanie is my
family.

MARIA
Aren't you guys *dating*? Even for
2018, that is a bit much.

MARK
No, we're not actually family. I
just met her this morning. I was
just trying to -- okay, forget it.
We're a package deal. Take it or
leave it.

The exec board looks around at each other, confused.

DREW
I'm gonna be honest, I have no
idea what's happening, so I'm more
inclined to just say yes to
things. All in favor?

Everyone raises their hands.

DREW (CONT'D)
Great! For the first time in Order
history - we have two treasurers!
That means double the money!

Stephanie walks up to Mark.

STEPHANIE

Hey - thanks. You didn't have to do that.

MARK

Do what?

STEPHANIE

All of it. Ask for me to be co-treasurer. Lie about me being in LARPing Around to get me a spot.

MARK

Don't mention it. I know this is important to you. And besides. That speech you gave about LARP? Amazing. You're going to make a great co-president.

STEPHANIE

Wait, what?

MARK

Meetings are Mondays at 7!

Mark goes back to a growing crowd of students interested in joining LARPing Around. Drew approaches Stephanie.

DREW

So, Stephanie. What was it that you were needing from Mark? Was it his, uh... y'know. Was he holding out on you? So to speak?

STEPHANIE

No, what? We're not - ugh. No. He was just going to trade me his spot in a class I need to get into in order to graduate.

DREW

Oh, ha. Ha ha ha. That's all?

STEPHANIE

What do you mean?

DREW

I mean, I am in charge of the student records office on campus. We can take care of that for you.

STEPHANIE

What do you mean take care of?

INT. MATH ADVISING OFFICE - DAY

Robert is sitting at his computer with his brows furrowed. Stephanie sits across from him, twiddling her thumbs.

STEPHANIE

Well?

ROBERT

This is the strangest thing I have seen in 20 years of math department advising. I could have sworn that there were 130 seats total available for this class. And now there's 131. That room doesn't even fit 131 students.

STEPHANIE

But I'm good, right? I'm enrolled? I'm not going to have to delay graduation?

ROBERT

Yeah. I guess so.

STEPHANIE

That is awesome. You've been a great help.

Robert's face lights up.

ROBERT

You're right... I have. That'll show Sharon, that sneaky, incorrigible woman.

STEPHANIE

I guess you could say everything *ordered* itself out.

ROBERT

Don't you mean sorted itself out?

STEPHANIE

Yeah, sure. Something like that.

FADE OUT.