

ANIMATED

By
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Note: The nonbinary character 'Devon' will always be described using the pronouns: they, their(s), and them.

COLD OPEN

INT. KID'S BRAIN STUDIOS - DAY

EMILY, 25, Office Manager, oblivious in general and overly caffeinated, gives a studio tour to a group of COLLEGE ANIMATION STUDENTS.

It becomes obvious as they walk through the studio that employees are trying to avoid the tour.

People dash into various offices when they see the group heading in their direction.

EMILY

(talking fast)

Welcome to Kid's Brain Studios. We currently have something like a hundred animators or something, not to mention editors, modelers, directors, and other positions I haven't learned yet. As I'm sure you're all aware, we make children's cartoon shows such as Fox and Furries, The Boring Pink Duck, Sparkle Farts, and My Grandfather Has a Questionable Past. That's currently in season five.

ANIMATION SECTION - CONTINUOUS

Emily leads the group of eager students into the open concept animation section.

The place is filled with desks that are littered with toy robots, dolls, and various memorabilia from cartoons and movies.

Half the desks, however, are empty due to downsizing. The other half are filled with over-worked animators.

Emily leads the tour group to one shared desk with two animators, JUSTIN, 23, smug, as well as Karen, 55, who has seen it all and tries not to get frustrated by young animators.

EMILY

(enthusiastically)

This is the main animation section.
As you can see, we don't
discriminate by age. We have people
like Karen who is in her mid-
fifties, animating the same show as
Justin over here, who is only
twenty-three years old. Both do the
same kind of work, and both make
the same amount of money.

Karen's jaw drops at Emily's truth bomb. Justin tries to hide his smirk.

EMILY (CONT'D)

Let's go visit some other
departments!

INT. EDIT SUITE - CONTINUOUS

BARB, 35, Episodic Director, ambitious, impatient, and burdened by an insatiable need to be liked by everyone, directs an edit of the series "FOX AND FURRIES."

The editor, DANIEL, 28, a know-it-all who never stops talking, taps away at the keyboard.

BARB

Okay let's flip the two shots.

DANIEL

If we do that they won't hook up,
and animation keeps yelling at me
'cause all the arm movements --

BARB

-- I'll buy them chocolate. If this
doesn't get fixed, it'll look like
the fox is flirting with the furry.

DANIEL

Yeah which one of our clients came
up with the name Fox and Furries?
In the sex experimentation
community, they do know that a
furry is --

BARB

-- They either don't know, and in
that case, we're getting paid so
who cares?

(MORE)

BARB (CONT'D)

Or they do know and I don't want to
know why they kept the title.

DANIEL

Okkkaaayyyy.

A CAT jumps up on the editing desk, and freaks Barb out.

BARB

What the hell?!

DANIEL

(nonchalantly)

It's bring your pet to work
day...today. You didn't notice all
the animals around the studio?

BARB

I just thought they were toys. Most
of them aren't moving.

DANIEL

Yeah, don't pet the iguana near
that goth animator. That thing will
cut you.

BARB

Which one?

Daniel shrugs.

DEVON, 22, Assistant Director, pops into the room. They are non-binary, pansexual, prone to panic and as geeky as they come. They are carrying a hamster inside a transparent, plastic HAMSTER BALL.

DEVON

We have an emergency!

Devon hears something and looks down the hallway. Their eyes widen.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Ah crap!

They rush into the room and start straightening things up. This scares Daniel's cat which meows and dives under the couch.

DANIEL

What are you doing to my office?

Devon points to the doorway.

DEVON
(whispering)
Tour group!

Barb and Daniel rush into action, hiding garbage, erasing swear words and offensive drawings of their cartoon characters on a marker board, etc...

BARB
(to Daniel)
Punch up episode 302.

Daniel jumps into his chair and switches to another episode.

A large FLATSCREEN TV switches to another episode of Fox and Furries.

Barb and Devon sit on the couch. Devon catches their breath and puts the hamster ball on the ground next to them.

Everyone tries to look and act professional. Barb starts fake laughing and elbows Devon to do the same. Daniel laughs as well, which looks and sounds awkward.

The tour group ENTERS.

EMILY
And here is one of our edit suites.
This is where we take all the
animation and cut them together. Hi
everyone!

Barb, Devon, and Daniel are overly friendly.

BARB DEVON DANIEL
Hi!

EMILY
(to the tour group)
Does anyone have any questions?

STUDENT #1
What are you guys doing?

BARB
Oh we're just watching a completed
episode and making sure...
(not sure what to say)
...stuff.

DEVON
Often times we re-watch to ensure
quality control is taken into
account.
(MORE)

DEVON (CONT'D)

This is before we send it off to actual quality control which we call QC. We triple check for mistakes like text on-screen where it isn't supposed to be, if character's arms go through other characters --

STUDENT #2

-- swear words?

DANIEL

What?

STUDENT #2

Making sure swear words aren't on-screen.

BARB

Well that doesn't really happen.

STUDENT #1

We just passed by I think the layout department, getting rid of swear words in an episode.

DEVON

(whispering to Barb)

That was the emergency.

BARB

I thought the student tour group was the emergency.

DEVON

(meekly smiles)

They were...added to the emergency?

The squeaky sound of the hamster ball breaks the awkward silence as it starts to roll away from Devon. Everyone watches the ball.

A second later, Daniel's cat darts out from under the couch and starts attacking the ball.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Oh god no!

The students watch as Barb, Daniel, and Devon lose all sense of professionalism as they try to save the hamster.

ACT ONEINT. LAYOUT DEPARTMENT - LATER

Barb, Devon, and the newly traumatized hamster in its ball, surround DIANE, 40s, Layout Supervisor, confident and outspoken.

Diane shows a cute shot of two bunnies in a forest on her computer monitor.

DIANE

Looks normal right? Well, when we sent this off to QC, they found this.

Diane zooms in. You can start to see in one of the cartoon SHRUBBERIES, leaves that spell out F, then a U, then a C.

BARB

Whoa.

DEVON

Whoa!

BARB (CONT'D)

Please tell me this is the only time it happens in this episode.

DIANE

Nope! There are more swear words hidden in this episode than have ever been spoken by my wife when I try to cook.

DEVON

(to Barb)

I've had her wife's food. It's good.

Barb takes a deep breath.

BARB

So an episode that has to be sent to the client tomorrow has swear words hidden all throughout it?

DIANE

Yes. We also need to check every single frame of this episode in case they missed anything. We don't want to fail QC a second time.

DEVON

If the client finds out, we could
lose the contract.

BARB

I'm not gonna lose a twenty-million-
dollar contract.

DEVON

That's how much this show costs?!

BARB

It's how much most children's
cartoon shows cost nowadays.

DIANE

And here I am still paying off my
student loan from fifteen years
ago.

BARB

Okay, need all hands on deck. Pull
anyone from any department who can
help with this. Push all other
deadlines until this is solved. And
don't tell Mary about it.

Barb gets a text.

BARB (CONT'D)

Crap. That's Mary. Devon take over.
I'll be back.

Barb exits.

DEVON

(to Diane)

You didn't bring a pet today?

Diane pulls her desk drawer open, revealing a SNAKE. Devon is
frozen by fear.

DIANE

Just don't make a sound. It's not
trained.

DEVON

Please close the drawer.

Diane shrugs and closes it as Devon sits down, holding their
hamster in its ball close to them.

INT. MARY'S OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

The office is a cartoon fan's dream come true! It's a museum filled with old autographed cartoon posters, images of Mary with famous voice artists and cartoon icons, as well as toys from every decade in the last fifty years.

Sitting at her desk is MARY, 78, studio owner, Jewish, sarcastic, and quick witted.

Behind her is a row of what looks like TOY PARROTS.

Barb peaks her head in.

BARB

Hey boss.

MARY

Sit.

BARB

What's with the parrots?

MARY

It's bring your pet to work day.

BARB

(shocked)

Are those real?!

MARY

One of them. But it's not talking to me.

(warning)

Don't switch a parrot's food. It gets all pissy.

Mary claps her hands at the parrots...nothing. She shakes her head.

MARY (CONT'D)

Okay let's get down to business.

We're starting a new show. You know that one we've been creating about the dog that magically turns into a dinosaur?

BARB

The one the writers are calling The Prehistoric Bitch?

MARY

Yeah we're still looking for a title.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

But we have the money, and we need
a Series Director, and that'll be
you.

BARB

Are you serious?

MARY

Yep.

BARB

Really?

MARY

Am I the parrot here?

Mary turns to her toy collection of parrots, hoping one will react to the word 'parrot'. No response. She shakes her head.

MARY (CONT'D)

(to herself)

I hate that thing.

(to Barb)

You got your own show and the title of Series Director. It's your dream come true. Problem is as you know, before my husband Jim passed away...

Mary gestures to a very unattractive PORTRAIT of Jim hanging on a nearby wall. He's wearing an ugly suit and sporting a comb over haircut in a failed attempt to cover his mostly bald head.

MARY (CONT'D)

...may his arrogant ass rest in peace, he downsized the studio to save some money. In fact saving money was his passion in life. He found the cheapest artist to do that ugly portrait of him.

Mary looks at it, transfixed for a brief moment.

MARY (CONT'D)

He was that ugly though.

(to Barb)

Thanks to his downsizing, we don't have the staff we need for a new show - which we need to get up and running this week.

BARB

Why?

MARY

'Cause my selfish children want the studio and I don't want them to have it. In order for them to own this studio, I have to either die or stop working. All the women in my family die way later than anyone wants them to. So I have to keep working. In order to keep working, I gotta prove we're doing new shows. It's a clause in Jim's will.

BARB

You want me to find all new managers to replace the ones your husband fired? Then they find new staff for their departments?

MARY

Oh no, no, no. Finding new people will take too much time. Rehire everyone we fired.

BARB

Uhm...Mary that might not work. Most people are pretty bitter about being let go. And we're now two weeks away from our holiday vacation.

MARY

Unless you can pitch me another choice, we don't have one. So head out today, meet everyone in person, and convince them to come back.

BARB

We're sort of dealing with another challenge right now. An episode of Fox and Furries.

MARY

God I hate that show. What is it?

Barb hides the truth from Mary.

BARB

It's just a technical problem.

MARY

I hate computers. In the old days, all we needed was a mirror and some paper to do a cartoon.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)
Of course we worked people eighteen
hour days and sexual harassment was
through the roof --

PARROT
(speaking Mandarin)
-- Awwwkkk! Pìgu nǚiyóu

Mary spots the REAL parrot.

MARY
There you are!

BARB
What was that?

MARY
I'm learning Mandarin so I can
better network with our clients in
China. The parrot's been listening.

BARB
What'd it say?

MARY
No idea. It's learning faster than
I am. Get Devon to handle the Fox
and Furries problem. They seem
smart.

BARB
Right...but.

MARY
Clock's ticking. Get your team and
you get the title of Series
Director.

Barb gets up.

BARB
(about the parrot)
What's its name?

MARY
Don't know. It was Jim's and I hate
birds. But it's either I take care
of it or --

BARB
-- your selfish kids get it.
Gotcha. Bye Parrot.

PARROT
(speaking in Mandarin)
Zàijiàn.

BARB
Okay.

Barb EXITS.

INT. KID'S BRAIN ANIMATION STUDIO - HALLWAY - DAY

Barb puts on her winter jacket as she and Devon walk down the hallway.

BARB
Get the swear words that QC found out of the episode first. Then make sure everyone goes through the show and checks for anything missed.

DEVON
(nervous)
Okay.

BARB
You'll be fine. Call me if you need anything.

DEVON
We're gonna need Sally for this.

BARB
(reluctant)
Okay. Find her and --

They almost run right into SALLY, 22, goth, brilliant and loves making others feel uncomfortable. Sally is sporting a CAST that goes from her hand to the end of her forearm.

BARB (CONT'D)
-- Whoa!
(nervous smile)
There she is! Sally. Uhm...hi. Glad you're here.

SALLY
Why?

DEVON
Whoa. What happened to your arm?

SALLY
Nothing.

REACTION: Barb and Devon are confused.

SALLY (CONT'D)
I wanted to remind people I can be
broken.

BARB
Your arm's fine though? You just...

Gestures to Sally's cast.

Sally nods.

Devon fake smiles but is clearly weirded out.

DEVON
(to Barb)
Well that's all the questions I
have.

BARB
(to Sally)
I'm stepping out for the day and we
have a situation with episode
nineteen.

DEVON
Someone, we suspect Geri, slipped
in swear words all throughout the
episode before we fired him.

BARB
We're trying to keep it from the
client. I need you and Diane to
lead the team and make sure every
swear word is found.

SALLY
I like swear words.

BARB
Well...I mean we all do but...okay
so Devon will coordinate. Report
any issues to them. We have to
deliver this episode tomorrow.

SALLY
That's impossible.

BARB
I know. Just...do what you can.

Sally nods and walks away. Barb and Devon watch as she tries to tear off her cast but only rips it a tiny bit.

BARB (CONT'D)
(to Devon)
Good luck.

Barb leaves Devon who takes a deep breath, then walks in the same direction Sally was heading in.

INT. GRAND STREET MALL - MOMENTS LATER

Barb walks out of an elevator that brings her right into the mall the animation studio lives in.

SHOPPERS are trying to get their Christmas shopping done, while disgruntled people dressed as ELVES set up Christmas KIOSKS and more decorations for the holiday.

Barb shakes her head and walks towards the glass exit doors that reveal SNOW and SLUSH everywhere outside.

She sighs, then exits.

EXT. GRAND STREET MALL - SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Wind and blowing snow hit her face the second she steps out.

Her phone rings.

BARB
Hello?

INT. KID'S BRAIN STUDIOS - ANIMATION SECTION - CONTINUOUS

Devon and Sally are crouched down, huddled together, next to Diane, who's unimpressed as she tries to get work done.

DEVON
(whispering to Barb)
The client.

BARB (V.O.)
(on the phone)
What?! You have to speak up.

DEVON
(whispers louder)
The CLIENT is here.

SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

BARB

The Client?! What the F--
 (cuts herself off)
 Okay. Is Mary with her?

DEVON (V.O.)

(over the phone)

Yes.

ANIMATION SECTION - CONTINUOUS

BARB (V.O.)

(over the phone)

Whatever you do, keep the client
 away from the animation section.

DEVON

(unsure)

Okay.

SALLY

(to Barb)

She brought fried squirrel.

BARB (V.O.)

(on the phone)

Is that code for something?!

DEVON

It's actually fried squirrel. She's
 throwing a thank you party for the
 crew and wanted to bring a delicacy
 from home.

BARB (V.O.)

(on the phone)

Where's she from?

DEVON

West Virginia.

DIANE

(singing)

West Virginia, mountain mama.

Sally looks up and, without missing a beat:

SALLY

(singing)
Take me home.

DIANE (CONT'D)

(singing)
Take me home.

SIDEWALK - CONTINUOUS

Barb is helplessly listening.

SALLY (V.O.)
(singing over the phone)
Country road.

DIANE (V.O.)
(singing over the phone)
Country road.

BARB
Okay look, I gotta go. But Devon...

LAYOUT DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

BARB (V.O.)
(over the phone)
...you can't call for every problem
that comes up. You're trained and
ready. You're a great Assistant
Director. You got this.

DEVON
Okay.

Devon hangs up.

DEVON (CONT'D)
(to Sally & Diane)
How far along are we?

SALLY
Six shots done.

DEVON
That sounds pretty --

DIANE
-- Out of one hundred and eighty
two.

DEVON
I hope there's liquor at this
party.

SALLY
I don't eat fried squirrel without
a beer.

Diane and Devon shake their heads at Sally.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - DAY

Barb walks into a busy coffee shop.

The lineup is too long for her tight schedule, so she makes her way to the front where BARISTAS are running ragged.

BARB
(to Baristas)
Excuse me. Excuse me is --

BARISTA #1
(talks fast)
-- Back of the line please.

BARB
I don't want anything.

BARISTA #1
-- Then I'm not sure how to help.

JOHN, 27, a moron, but genius design artist, walks out of the back room.

He's holding a SANDWICH BOARD with a beautiful Christmas chalk DRAWING that wows the lineup of impatient customers. They give John a round of applause.

JOHN
(to Barista #1)
What d'ya think?

All the Baristas stop and admire.

BARISTA #1
Back to work.
(to John)
If only you could make lattes as good as you can decorate the sandwich board.

JOHN
Yeah sorry. I just can't get temperatures, and milk turns into foam? Like What?! --

BARB
-- John!

John finally notices Barb.

JOHN
Barb!
(to Barista #1)
Can I take my break now?

BARISTA #1
(sarcastic)
Is the sandwich board done?

John, confused, examines it.

BARISTA #1 (CONT'D)
It's done.

JOHN
(confused)
Oh.

BARISTA #1
Go.

John inappropriately jumps the counter and walks with Barb away from the lineup.

INT. COFFEE SHOP - SITTING AREA - MOMENTS LATER

John and Barb sit next to a large window that shows the snowy outside. From time to time, a pedestrian slips and falls but gets back up, mostly unharmed.

BARB
You're the best designer we had.

JOHN
I don't know Barb. I just got this job, the tips are good. I mean the pay isn't like what it was at the studio but...

A PEDESTRIAN slips and falls outside.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(laughing)
Whoa! That was a good one.

He bangs on the window as the pedestrian gets up with the help of others nearby.

JOHN (CONT'D)
You okay?!

The pedestrian nods and gives a feeble wave.

BARB
Look I can't promise a job forever.
You know in animation people are
let go all the time in-between
projects.
(MORE)

BARB (CONT'D)
But it's a new show, you love
dinosaurs, and I can guarantee
twelve months of work.

JOHN
But when I draw stuff at the studio
it seems like no one cares. Here
people love and clap at my designs
on the sandwich boards! That's all
I care about.

BARB
What can I do to convince you to
take the job?

JOHN
I don't know. Maybe tell me I'm
great whenever I do good work? But
like, I can't quit. I just started.
It's not respectful to just leave
right away.

Barista #1 walks up to John and Barb.

BARISTA #1
(to Barb)
Are you offering him a job?

BARB
Ah yeah.

BARISTA #1
(to John)
You gonna take it?

JOHN
Well I don't want to disappoint you
guys --

BARISTA #1
-- Take it, you suck as a Barista.
But we'll pay you five bucks a day
to stop by the coffee shop before
you head to whatever job she's
offering, so you can design our
sandwich boards.

John excitedly looks at Barb for approval.

BARB
Works for me.

JOHN
(to Barista #1)
Thank you so much!

BARISTA #1
You can start with her today if you want.

BARB
Ohh no, that's not --

JOHN
-- Awesome! Thank you.

Barista #1 half smiles then leaves.

JOHN (CONT'D)
(to Barb)
You know I never learned her name.
But she looks like a Karen to me.

BARB
Well I guess you're coming along
for the ride.

Barb and John get up and leave.

JOHN
Where we going?

BARB
Laser tag.

JOHN
What?! This is the best day ever!

INT. KID'S BRAIN STUDIOS - COMMUNAL SPACE

A large platter of DEEP-FRIED SQUIRREL sits untouched on a table next to soda and biscuits known as CAT'S HEAD in West Virginia.

A small group of EMPLOYEES stare at the table, along with a worried Devon and still hyper Emily.

DEVON
Is that big plate the...

EMILY
Squirrels. Yeah. Mary said if we don't eat it, the client will be offended.

Sally joins them while using a COAT HANGER to scratch her itching arm that's stuck inside the half-torn-off cast.

SALLY
I'm a vegetarian.

EMILY
Since when?

Sally gives Emily the "stare of death."

EMILY (CONT'D)
Okay. You're now a vegetarian.

Devon looks around at the sparse crowd. The student tour group makes up the bulk of the party.

DEVON
(whispering)
You couldn't round up anyone else
for this party?

EMILY
(whispering)
You have practically the entire
studio fixing the swear words. Plus
the student tour group might enjoy
this?

Devon shakes their head.

DEVON
I'm gonna get fired today.

MARY (O.S.)
Can I have your attention please!

In the center of the room stands the client STEPHANIE. She's 49, West Virginia accent, wears a big smile, and is as insincere as they come.

Next to her is an unimpressed Mary, who's eating deep-fried squirrel and feeding some of it to her parrot, which is perched on her shoulder.

MARY (CONT'D)
(badly faking enthusiasm)
For those who don't know, this is
one of our favorite clients,
Stephanie. She wanted to meet you
all and brought some food samples
from her home in West Virginia.
(to Stephanie)
Which is the squirrel?

Stephanie points at Mary's bowl.

STEPHANIE
Aw, bless your heart Mary - that's it.

MARY
(somewhat impressed)
Not bad.

Mary leaves the center of the room and joins Devon, Sally, and Emily.

STEPHANIE
(very fake)
Hi everyone. There's a whole mess of squirrel on the table so don't be shy, and I hope you had a chance to try my homemade cat's head.

The group looks at the table, puzzled as to what the cat's head is.

Sally guesses, holds up a biscuit to Stephanie and raises an eyebrow like she's Spock from Star Trek.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
That's right dear.

Sally slowly tries the biscuit. It gets mild approval which is a lot coming from her.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
I'm so glad to see as many of you youngins as I can while I'm in town. Now I understand most of ya'll are busier than a moth in a mitten, so please try to bring some food to the folks still at their desks.

CROWD REACTION: Unsure how to react.

STEPHANIE (CONT'D)
Now our shows are hatched from the brilliant minds of our incredible writers in Delaware who wanted me to send you their deepest thanks for all the cute work ya'll do up here with the cartoon.

Mary, Devon and Sally talk outside of earshot of Stephanie's speech.

MARY

What a condescending tramp.

DEVON

Uhm...Mary can I be excused? We have a lot of work to do --

MARY

-- I know. The swear words in episode 219. It was probably Geri. I hate that prick but he does good work. Glad my late husband fired him though.

DEVON

You know about the swear words?

MARY

I know everything!

SALLY

Is this place bugged?

MARY

No. I'm a bubbe. What don't we know?

Devon and Sally are confused as to the definition of 'bubbe'.

MARY (CONT'D)

Jewish grandmother. Well...not that Jewish. I'm eating unkosher squirrel for pete's sake. But I do make better babka than anyone you'll ever meet.

DEVON

So can I go?

MARY

How we doing?

Before Devon can say anything, Sally speaks up.

SALLY

Terrible. We have more than a hundred shots to go.

DEVON

I'm so sorry Mary. I don't know what to do and this whole day is giving me anxiety.

MARY
Hold your horses, cowardly lion.
There's always a solution.

Mary scans the room and zeroes in on the university students.

MARY (CONT'D)
Use them.

DEVON
Who?

MARY
The students.

DEVON
(putting it together)
I guess they just have to spot the words.

As Sally contemplates, she scratches her arm inside the cast with the coat hanger again.

SALLY
They were all taught the basic software in the first year so...

DEVON
What do I tell them? How do I convince them to do it?

MARY
What am I, your bubbe? Look. I gave you the feather, now fly with it Dumbo.

Mary pops some deep-fried squirrel in her mouth and joins Stephanie, who's just finished her speech.

MARY (CONT'D)
That was lovely. Please everyone, give her a round of applause.

Stephanie pretends to be humble and shocked at the 'expected' applause.

Devon looks at the unsuspecting, innocent students.

DEVON
(to Sally, determined)
Let's do this.

Sally smiles for the first time in the episode.

SALLY
I'm gonna scare them.

They head towards the students as Sally starts trying to tear off her cast again.

INT. LASER TAG CENTER - DAY

Barb and John are mid-discussion with KYLE, 32, built like a rock and menacingly tall, but has a kind voice. He also wears LASER-PROOF SUNGLASSES and BODY ARMOR.

Behind him is a laser tag arena with people shooting in every direction.

John desperately wants to play laser tag and dances in excitement like a kid who has to pee.

BARB
I know you didn't leave on good terms.

KYLE
A hundred of us got fired a month before Christmas.

JOHN
Mary doesn't celebrate Christmas though.

BARB
She celebrates Hanukkah. But yes, no matter what holiday it is, that sucked. But it wasn't Mary. It was Jim. And...well...he's dead now.

JOHN
Ohhh goddd. Barb plleeassee.

BARB
(to Kyle)
Can John play laser tag?

KYLE
Fine but you have to wear protective --

John grabs Kyle's gun and runs like a madman into the arena without any protection.

Kyle shakes his head.

BARB

You're the best at SFX. No one, and I really mean no one, could have added a thousand effects to Sparkle Farts in the time you had.

KYLE

And what did I get in return? Nothing. No one thanks anyone in animation Barb. They work us to exhaustion, and then when a show finishes, we're let go.

In the background, John tackles a PLAYER and steals their gun. He fires both laser guns in the air.

JOHN

I'm your new god!

He runs off-screen laughing maniacally.

BARB

With this new show, I get to be Series Director. I didn't have that kind of power before. That and the fact that Jim is gone...things should change for the better.

While Barb and Kyle talk, PLAYERS cautiously walk around, lasers drawn, looking for John.

In the darkness, a red LIGHT SWORD, not unlike a lightsaber, turns on. The group starts firing at John who is successfully blocking their shots with his sword. He then chases them as they run away.

KYLE

Sorry Barb. I just don't trust the animation industry anymore.

BARB

But you trust me right?

Kyle reluctantly nods.

BARB (CONT'D)

I'll make sure it's different this time.

KYLE

Sorry. I miss it, and I miss working with you. But, I don't think anything will change.

BARB
(pause)
Okay. I get it.
(to John)
John!

John runs up to them, sweating profusely. He points to the laser tag arena.

JOHN
(to Kyle)
You're gonna have to check on a guy
in there. I...tripped on him or
something.

BARB
See you Kyle.

JOHN
(cheerfully)
Bye!

As Barb and John leave, Kyle is left in deep contemplation.

INT. KID'S BRAIN STUDIOS - ANIMATION SECTION

Devon, Sally, Diane, and the tour group of students surround a very intimidated STUDENT #3, 20, who's sitting at a computer station.

Sally's cast is now half ripped off, with parts dangling everywhere.

STUDENT #3
So I just click here?

DEVON
Yes.

DIANE

No.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Sorry, no.

DIANE
Click there.

STUDENT #3
And treat it like I was fixing a
photo?

SALLY
Close enough.

Sally's IGUANA slowly starts to crawl over Student #3's hands. She's scared but trying not to freak out.

SALLY (CONT'D)
Ignore my iguana.

Once it's clear...

DIANE
Wait. Where's my snake?

Diane briefly looks in her drawer, and around the room.

DIANE (CONT'D)
It'll turn up.
(to a freaked out Student
#3)
And after you click there, just hit
save.

DEVON
(to the tour group)
You all have that?

The group nods reluctantly.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Now the goal is to find as many
words as possible before the end of
the day today.

STUDENT #1
What's the prize?

Devon looks at Sally and Diane, who have no idea.

DEVON
Uhm...Everyone who does well, will
be guaranteed a job interview at
this studio when they graduate.

STUDENT #2
(suspicious)
So the swear words we found the
layout department working on
earlier? What were those about?

Devon tries to cover their tracks.

DEVON
They were preparing the surprise
test for you all today.

Most of the group accepts that answer.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Okay, everyone find a desk!

Mary and Stephanie join the room. Mary's clearly getting bored playing tour guide to Stephanie.

MARY
Devon, I was just telling Stephanie about your idea to give the students a glimpse into the wonderful world they'll be entering when they join the studio blah, blah, blah.

STEPHANIE
This is very impressive.

DEVON
Ahhh thanks. You never know who the next genius in animation will be, so I thought, let's find out!

STEPHANIE
What's the test dear?

STUDENT #3
We're suppose to look for sw --

Sally gives her iguana to Student #3 who stops talking as she's now frozen in fear.

DIANE
We're uhm...

DEVON
We're getting the students to analyze shots for lighting changes and 3D asset placement.

It's clear Stephanie doesn't know what any of this means.

Sally steps up to the plate.

SALLY
It's all meant so that when some of these students get hired, they don't animate slower than cold molasses.

Stephanie gets it now.

STEPHANIE
(overly cheerful)
Well that sounds like a good idea!

MARY
(to Stephanie)
Ahh right this way.

Mary gives Devon a "good job" wink as she passes by them.

Devon soaks up Mary's approval and relaxes a bit. They give Sally an inquisitive look.

DEVON
Molasses?

SALLY
I thought learning the beast's language might help disarm it.

DEVON
Very...gothic of you.
(shrugs)
Keep it up.

STUDENT #1
All these computers are locked out.
We need usernames and passwords.

DEVON
(sighs)
Right. I'll get I.T on it.

Devon jets out of the room.

INT. GYM - RECEPTION - DAY

Barb and John talk to JANA, 24, hardcore fit and zero bullshit.

JANA
So Geri was the one who put the swear words in?

JOHN
We think.

BARB
He took being fired pretty bad.

JANA
I know the feeling.

BARB
Well you didn't hide swear words throughout an episode.

JANA

Look, I appreciate the job offer
but I make the same amount of money
here. I hate customer service with
a passion, but 'cause I work at a
gym, I've been able to get my
workouts in sooner, which
translates to more free time.

BARB

You loved your job at the studio.
And it was Jim that let everyone
go. Mary's in charge now. Things
will change.

JOHN

Hey Jana, remember the water cooler
races we did down the hallway?
Remember when we switched Sally's
coffee mug for an identical one but
the bottom read "I'm a happy
person, please talk to me."?

JANA

Look you two, it was fun, but this
job is okay and --

Mr. Spooly, 50s, overweight and annoying, approaches while
pointing at his stomach.

MR. SPOOLY

-- I haven't lost any weight!

JANA

Mr. Spooly, you've been here for
only a week.

MR. SPOOLY

Look at this!

He lifts up his tank top and shakes his belly at Jana.

MR. SPOOLY (CONT'D)

That's your fault. Not mine! I want
a refund.

JANA

I'm in. Can we go?

BARB

Yes!

JOHN

Totally!

Jana throws a towel at Mr. Spooly and takes off.

GYM - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

The three walk down the hallway.

JANA
Where to?

BARB
I need one more person. But Mary's
not gonna like it.

JOHN
Ohhhh mysterious.

INT. GRAND STREET MALL - LATER

Barb, John, and Jana walk into the mall. A few elves are putting the finishing touches on the holiday decorations.

The trio approach the back of one elf on a STEPLADDER

BARB
Hi Geri.

GERI, 55, cocky, untrustworthy, and looking completely out-of-place as an elf, turns and gives an evil grin to the group.

GERI
Well. This must be pretty
satisfying for you. All three of
you.

JANA
Really? We need him?

BARB
Yes, sshhh.

Geri gets off the stepladder and joins them at eye level.

GERI
(smiling)
Need me? Ohhh let me guess.
(mocking Mary)
New show so Mary's children don't
get the studio?
(sizing Barb up)
You were probably offered Series
Director?

JOHN
He's good!

GERI

Hi John.

JOHN

(cheerfully)

Hi Geri!

BARB

Okay. You know you've got me
against a wall 'cause if there was
anyone else who could run a
department as well as you could, I
would go to them.

GERI

You're not a very good negotiator.

BARB

But you need us too. You're a man
in his fifties dressed like an elf.
I'd say I have the high ground.

JOHN

Is that a reference to Star Wa --

BARB

-- Yes shut up.

GERI

Mary won't allow it.

BARB

She will if you agree to change a
few of your behaviors.

JOHN

(remembering)

Hey yeah, weren't you super mean
to...

(thinks about it)

...everyone?

BARB

That's one of them.

GERI

(begrudgingly)

Fine.

BARB

And you have to admit you put the
swear words in the episode we're
trying to fix.

JANA

Don't lie.

GERI

I'm not gonna lie about that. I did it. Some of my best work.

BARB

You'll have to go to Mary and apologize.

GERI

I'll never apologize.

BARB

Then just say you won't do it again.

GERI

I won't do that again.

BARB

To her.

GERI

Fine. Can I take off these stupid ears now?

Barb takes a moment to contemplate the situation.

BARB

Okay you're in.

Geri takes off his ELF EARS and hands them to John.

JOHN

Cooooool!

BARB

Okay. Let's go.

ACT THREE**INT. KID'S BRAIN STUDIOS - LAYOUT DEPARTMENT - LATER**

Barb, Jana, Geri, and John, who's now wearing Geri's elf ears, all walk into a chaotic animation section.

Students are hard at work alongside other animators.

Devon operates a large MARKER BOARD with shot numbers, number of swear words per shot, and what those swear words are - but with symbols replacing some letters so the entire swear word isn't seen.

Everyone is yelling out swear words which are BLEEPED out by a sound effect.

STUDENT #1
I got 'f#\$k you'.

STUDENT #2
'A#\$hole' next to the cute bunny in shot eighty-two.

STUDENT #3
'S#@t for brains' across the castle of innocence in shot one hundred and eleven.

Devon spots Barb and runs up to give her a hug.

DEVON
Oh thank god you're back! I did my best, but we still have too many shots to finish. I told the students it's a test so we could get them to help, but we're trying to show them what to do while we're doing it --

BARB
-- Devon it's alright. You did good. You did really good okay? Geri said he built a back door.
(to Geri)
Go ahead.

GERI
Hey Sally?

Sally looks up from behind her iguana who's crossing the small desk divider.

SALLY

What?

GERI

In every shot, there's a hidden layer a swear word is in. Just right-click and reveal all. You should be able to delete after that. Do this for every shot.

Sally tries it while everyone waits on bated breath.

SALLY

(unenthused)

That did it.

DEVON

Oh thank god.

Devon falls to their knees and bows their head in exhaustion.

DIANE

Okay everyone do the same and then click 'render.'

Diane and Sally approach the group as Devon gets back up to their feet. Sally's cast is almost entirely off, with the ripped parts dangling everywhere.

DIANE (CONT'D)

We'll still have to send it through 'the farm' overnight. But the editor can get it out first thing in the morning.

BARB

And the client?

Mary comes around a corner.

MARY

Gone, and unaware. Which is how I like my clients.

Mary looks at John, Jana, and Geri.

MARY (CONT'D)

Well, pretty good team you've assembled here. All things considered.

(through gritted dentures)

Hello Geri.

GERI

Hi mother.

JOHN

(shocked)

Whhhhhaaaaattttt?! You two are
mother and son?!

JANA

John you knew that.

JOHN

Yeah I forgot. Wow! Imagine if
someone didn't know that! What a
shock.

Barb shakes her head.

BARB

(to Geri)

Don't you have something to say?

GERI

(to Mary)

I won't do this swear-word thing
again.

Standoff between Mary and Geri.

MARY

(to Geri)

You can come back if you steer
clear of me and my office.

GERI

Funny. I had the same condition.

MARY

I know I'm going to regret this.

GERI

That makes two of us.

MARY

Dinner is at 7pm.

GERI

I'll be there.

End of standoff.

MARY

Good work today people.

Mary walks away.

BARB
(to Devon)
Let the students go afterwards.
Tell them we'll hold a pizza party
at their college and give some sort
of animation presentation.

DEVON
Got it.

BARB
Excuse me.

Barb runs after Mary.

HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Barb catches up to her.

MARY
Great work today. You delegated,
showed initiative, convinced people
to do what you needed them to do.
You'll make a good Series Director.

BARB
Thanks. Yeah I don't want it.

Mary stops walking and faces Barb.

BARB (CONT'D)
Everyone was right. We can't keep
firing staff when we're in-between
cartoons. There needs to be some
way we can keep them on.
(pause)
I just can't work at a place that
doesn't have some kind of job
security.

Mary thinks about it for a moment.

MARY
It was my late husband's idea. I
never liked it so...why not shake
things up?

BARB
In that case, I'd love to be your
Series Director.

They shake hands.

Mary walks down the hallway and whistles. Her parrot flies in and lands on her shoulder.

Barb looks over to reception to see Kyle walk in.

RECEPTION - CONTINUOUS

Barb walks up to Kyle.

KYLE
I don't trust this studio, but I
trust you.

BARB
I'll do everything I can to prove
you can trust both from here on
out. Trust me, this place will be a
lot more professional --

Sally and Devon walk past, both bleeped when they say a swear word. Sally is also trying to rip off the rest of her cast.

DEVON
I got forty-four 'f#\$k yous'.

SALLY
I have fifty two, and ninety-three
'you son of a b#\$ch', as well as
thirteen 'you crack smoking
@#*\$%(^'.

She successfully rips off the cast.

SALLY (CONT'D)
Ahhh there we f#%king go.

Kyle and Barb watch Sally and Devon walk away.

KYLE
(to Barb)
Were you going to say this place is
going to be a lot more
professional?

Barb bites her lips.

BARB
Hmmmm?

THE END