

MIXED UP

An Animated Musical Short

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Final Draft

FADE IN:

SCENE 1 — DROP-OFF

EXT. SKY ABOVE SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD — MORNING

The camera glides down through scattered clouds. Below, a quiet suburban grid begins to take shape. Rooftops. Tree lines. School buses turning slow corners.

The camera tightens -- toward one specific neighborhood, then one specific street, then one specific school. A line of cars at the morning drop-off.

The camera selects one car. Descends to its windshield. Through the glass:

HARPER (12), mixed-race, hair forward over her face, a sketchbook held flat against her lap. She stares out the side window.

INT. PAPA'S TESLA — CONTINUOUS

PAPA (white, warm) puts the car in park.

PAPA

So. Staying after today?

HARPER

(quiet)

Probably not.

PAPA

Alright, booboo. Text Mama if you change your mind.

Harper looks up at Papa. Their eyes meet. She gives him a small real smile -- the kind only her family gets to see. Papa smiles back. It's a brief warm exchange between two people who know each other.

Harper pulls a phone from her cardigan pocket, glances at it. The gesture is small and casual -- she's confirming it's there, the way she always does before getting out of the car.

INSERT -- PHONE SCREEN: A text thread with MAMA. Mama's most recent message reads: "Have a good day booboo. Let me

know what you decide."

Harper tucks the phone back into her pocket.

HARPER

Bye, Papa.

Harper gathers her sketchbook against her chest. Pushes the door open. Steps out. Her face settles back into its more contained morning expression as she does.

The door SLAMS.

SCENE 2 – THE WALK / SONG 1: "WHERE DO I GO"

EXT. SCHOOL GROUNDS – CONTINUOUS

MUSIC BEGINS -- instrumental intro to "WHERE DO I GO."

Harper starts walking along the fence that runs the perimeter of the school grounds.

A KID jogs past her toward the field.

KID

Hey, Coach Danny!

In the background, COACH DANNY -- enormous, red-bearded, pink cap, mirrored shades, primary-color tank -- runs a drill with a cluster of athletic kids. He throws a wave without breaking his pose. The kid keeps running.

VOCALS ENTER as Harper continues walking.

She passes the athletic kids. Their movement is sharp, in sync. She passes the trendy kids filming dances on their phones. She passes an academic club setting up a table. She passes the art students working on a mural. She passes the musicians rehearsing.

Harper passes a wall. Among the louder, printed posters -- a small, hand-drawn flyer. The text is partially obscured. Harper slows. Doesn't stop.

Further down the corridor, in soft focus, a KID WITH WILD MESSY CURLS finishes taping another flyer to a different section of wall and walks off the other way. We don't catch his face. Harper's eyes track his movement for a second --

not because she recognizes him, just because something moved. He's gone before her gaze fully reaches him. She keeps walking.

The song carries through verse and chorus.

BRIDGE:

"If I split myself in two..."

[MOTIF MOMENT 1 -- SHADOW SPLIT] Wide shot of Harper alone on the sidewalk. Her shadow on the pavement splits into two distinct shadows that fall away from her body at slightly different angles. She is not aware of them.

*"But when I close my eyes at night /
I feel something warm inside..."*

Harper closes her eyes mid-stride. A small private smile passes across her face -- the warm thing the lyric is naming. Something she keeps inside herself, a quiet joy that belongs only to her. The smile fades naturally as she opens her eyes again and keeps walking.

FINAL CHORUS -- Harper sings "Where do I go?" The resolving lyrics are dropped. Her vocals fade to a wordless hum. The music swells underneath.

Harper reaches the school doors. Pauses.

The music holds -- unresolved.

She pushes the doors open. Steps inside.

The interior sounds of the school rise. The music resolves to silence.

SCENE 3 -- FIRST MISREAD (CHEER)

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - LATER

Harper at her locker. CLASSMATE 1, friendly, at the next locker over.

CLASSMATE 1

Hey, Harper! Aren't you going to try out for cheer?

HARPER

(small)
Oh -- I don't think so.

CLASSMATE 1
Really? You'd be so good. You should
think about it.

HARPER
Yeah... maybe.

Classmate 1 smiles brightly and walks off. Harper closes her locker slowly. Pulls the sketchbook tighter against her chest.

SCENE 4 -- THE HALLWAY / COACH DANNY AND KAI

INT. DIFFERENT HALLWAY - LATER

Harper rounds a corner. Stops.

Down the hall: a KID WITH WILD MESSY CURLS -- KAI (12), mixed-race -- at his locker. COACH DANNY looms over him, bent slightly to talk at his eye level. Clipboard tiny in his huge hand.

COACH DANNY
...and tryouts are Thursday. You'd be a
natural, we'd love to have you.

Kai's hair falls into his face. He blows it away -- pfff -- with a quick puff from the corner of his mouth.

KAI
(small smile)
Thanks, Coach. I'm good.

Beat. Coach reads him.

COACH DANNY
Door's open if you change your mind.

Coach pats Kai on the shoulder. Kai visibly compresses for a frame.

Coach turns and walks off down the hall, satisfied. He clips a PASSING STUDENT -- papers and a backpack go flying. The student spins.

COACH DANNY

(over his shoulder, not
looking)

Sorry, bud!

He keeps walking, oblivious.

Kai steadies himself. Closes his locker.

For half a beat, his face goes tired -- not bitter. Just tired. Then it resets.

He looks up.

He sees Harper watching.

HALF A SECOND OF EYE CONTACT.

Harper's hair falls forward. She looks down. Ducks her head.

Kai holds the look on her another half-second after she's looked away.

He walks past her down the hall.

Harper stays frozen for a beat. Then -- the smallest internal smile flickers across her face. The absurdity of what she just saw, the kid who refused to be impressed, the coach knocking over a student. A laugh held quietly inside her own mouth. It fades almost as quickly as it came.

She keeps walking.

SCENE 5 — SECOND MISREAD (ANIME)

INT. CLASSROOM - LATER

Students filter into the classroom and settle at their desks. Backpacks shouldered, conversations in progress, kids pulling out notebooks and materials. The lively rhythm of a class period beginning.

Harper sits at her desk on one side of the room. Her sketchbook is open in front of her. She is drawing -- absorbed, focused, lost in her happy place. She hums softly to herself, the small contented sounds of someone enjoying her own work. Her loose curls fall forward around her face. She is unaware of the activity around her.

CLASSMATE 2 walks past Harper's desk and stops near her right shoulder, lingering. She looks down at Harper's sketchbook.

Classmate 2 extends her arm into Harper's space, pointing down at the drawing.

CLASSMATE 2

Oh my gosh, what are you drawing?

Harper's humming stops. Her eyes flick down toward the sketchbook, then dart to the side toward the pointing arm. Her face begins to tighten.

Classmate 2's arm stays pointing at the drawing.

CLASSMATE 2

It's kinda cute... like second-grade cute.

Harper's face hardens. The corners of her mouth pull tight. Her eyes drop into a flat protective stare at the page.

Classmate 2 turns her body away from Harper, her arm withdrawing. She calls out brightly across the classroom.

CLASSMATE 2

(calling out)

Hey Jaxon, come over here and see what Harper's drawing!

Harper's eyes go wide. Full stillness. The protective freeze of someone whose worst moment has just started happening to her.

A beat as the realization settles.

Her face slowly transforms into a frown. The corners of her mouth turn down, her brow furrows, her eyes droop. The grim resolve of someone who has been made small in public.

Her hand sets the pencil down on the desk. Her fingers find the edge of the open page.

She slams the sketchbook shut quickly -- the cover snapping down on the drawing, hiding it from view.

She presses the closed sketchbook flat against her chest with both arms. Her face turns down. Her hair falls forward

over her eyes.

[MOTIF MOMENT 2 -- WRONG REFLECTION] Insert. Close on a window near Harper. Her reflection in the glass is not her -- the reflected version stands taller, hair pulled back, posture confident -- the cheerleader version of Harper that Classmate 1 assumed she should be. The reflection holds steady while Harper's real body in the foreground remains hunched and small.

SCENE 6 – THIRD MISREAD (LUNCH / BLACKTOP)

EXT. SCHOOL LUNCH AREA - LATER

Outdoor lunch tables on the blacktop behind the school. Kids eating in small clusters. The buzz of midday.

Harper sits at the end of a long table, sketchbook closed beside her, picking at a lunch she hasn't touched much. Two CLASSMATES (CLASSMATE LEFT and CLASSMATE RIGHT) sit a few feet down, in conversation. CLASSMATE RIGHT turns toward Harper.

CLASSMATE RIGHT

(friendly)

Hey Harper -- my mom said you must be such a good dancer.

Harper looks up. The smallest pause.

HARPER

(small)

...Oh.

Classmate Right turns back to Classmate Left. Continues like Harper isn't right there.

CLASSMATE LEFT

Wait, your mom is Mama Larsen?

CLASSMATE RIGHT

Yeah, my mom saw her perform last year. She said she was incredible.

CLASSMATE LEFT

Have you seen her shows? My mom says she sells out every time.

CLASSMATE RIGHT

I know, right? Harper's literally so lucky. I'd kill for that.

CLASSMATE LEFT

Wait -- does that mean you can dance too? Like, can you do what she does?

Harper's eyes drop back to her lunch. She has nothing to say. The conversation continues around her, about her, without her.

She pulls the phone from her cardigan pocket. Checks the time.

INSERT -- PHONE SCREEN: The thread with Mama. Two unanswered messages from Mama sit on the screen: "how's it going booboo" and "you eating? love you." Harper hasn't responded to either.

She puts the phone away without replying.

She gathers her sketchbook against her chest and stands.

SCENE 7 – ACTIVITIES FAIR / SONG 2: "PICK ONE"

INT. GYMNASIUM - END OF DAY

A LOUD, KINETIC activities fair. Tables. Banners. Students shouting club pitches.

Across the room, a small quiet table. Sketchbooks, pencils, a handmade sign. Kai sits at the table, drawing. Doesn't look up.

Harper stands at the edge of the room. She looks toward the table. Takes a half-step toward it.

She freezes.

Three CLASSMATES and a TEACHER converge on her, smiling, well-meaning, holding sign-up sheets.

VOICES

(overlapping)

You should join -- / You'd be great for
-- / We need someone like you for --

MUSIC BEGINS -- "PICK ONE."

WHISPERED, OVERLAPPING VOICES -- voices from earlier in the day return:

"This or that / Over here / No, over there /

Just say it / It's not that hard..."

The room transforms. The pressure builds. Labels frame her in mid-air. Boxes close around her.

"They line me up with the rules on the wall /

Tiny little boxes, names for it all..."

Background chorus voices repeat "Pick one, pick one."

Harper tries reshaping herself to match different versions of what's being demanded. Each attempt visually false -- her body bending toward shapes that aren't hers.

BRIDGE -- music strips back:

"What if I'm not half of anything? /

What if I'm more than the names you bring?..."

Harper's expression shifts. Something has registered.

FINAL CHORUS, defiant:

"Pick one? No, not me /

I'm not your easy answer key..."

Harper stands her ground. The visual world stops moving. The pressure holds but she doesn't bend.

OUTRO:

"I'm standing here, I'm standing true /

But I won't shrink to fit for you..."

Music cuts. Unresolved.

Harper alone in the now-still room. Drained.

She turns. Walks out.

SCENE 8 — BATHROOM / RECOVERY

INT. SCHOOL BATHROOM — CONTINUOUS

Harper pushes through a bathroom door. Empty. Fluorescent light. The hum of a vent.

She goes into a stall. Closes the door. Sits on the closed toilet lid. Sketchbook clutched against her chest.

She breathes. Slow, ragged.

She pulls the phone out of her cardigan pocket.

She unlocks it. Opens her messages with Mama. Above the empty reply field, Mama's earlier texts wait, still unanswered.

She starts typing. Both thumbs, slow.

INSERT -- PHONE SCREEN: The thread with Mama. Mama's last message reads: "thinking about you." Below it, Harper types into the reply field: "not staying today."

Her thumb hovers over send.

A long beat.

She presses send.

INSERT -- PHONE SCREEN: The message "not staying today" jumps up into the thread as a sent blue bubble.

She lowers the phone into her lap. Looks at it. It's done. She told her.

She closes her eyes. Breathes out. Something in her shoulders releases -- the relief of a decision made, even a sad one.

A long beat.

Somewhere outside the bathroom, far off down a hallway, a door closes. The school is emptying out. The day is ending without her.

Harper opens her eyes. She locks the phone and tucks it back into her cardigan pocket.

She stands. Exits the stall. Catches her own reflection in the mirror on her way out. Doesn't stop. Pushes through the bathroom door back into the hall.

SCENE 9 — PAST THE GYM / THE TURN

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Harper walks down a quieter hallway, the school emptying out around her. Her shoulders are still small, her face still hidden. She is somewhere between recovery and giving up. She has already told Mama she's leaving.

She passes the open double doors of the gymnasium.

She slows.

She stops.

She looks in.

Inside the gym, the activities fair is being broken down. A JANITOR sweeps the polished wood floor with long unhurried strokes, gathering bits of confetti and torn paper into a small pile. Booth volunteers fold up their tri-fold display boards. Banners are being pulled down from the rafters by a student on a ladder. The sounds are quiet -- the swish of the broom, folding tables collapsing, hushed voices.

Harper's eyes find the corner where the Anime Club table was.

The table is empty. A student is packing a final stack of sketchbooks into a cardboard box. The handmade sign has already been taken down. The chair behind the table is pushed in. Kai is nowhere.

Harper stands in the doorway watching it. The day is ending. The thing she froze in front of is being put away.

A long beat on her face.

Her expression shifts.

Not sadness. Not loss. Something harder. Decided.

She straightens. The smallest lift in her chin. The sketchbook still pressed against her chest, but her grip on

it is different now -- purposeful, not protective.

MUSIC BEGINS -- "ALL OF ME."

The hummed motif from "Where Do I Go" returns -- resolving this time, not asking.

Harper turns away from the gym doors and starts walking. Quick. Steady. Toward the front of the school.

SCENE 10 – THE WALK OUT / SONG 3: "ALL OF ME"

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY – CONTINUOUS

Harper walks the same hallways from earlier in the day. Now she walks them with intention.

*"I used to think I had to decide /
Which step to take, which way to
side..."*

The hallway transforms around her as she moves. Not in big surreal ways -- just light. The afternoon sun cuts cleaner through the windows. The colors warm.

[MOTIF MOMENT 3 -- SHADOW WHOLE] Medium tracking shot of Harper walking down the hallway. Her shadow on the floor walks beside her -- single, whole, perfectly in sync with her body. Late afternoon golden light catches her face from the side.

She passes the spot where Kai's locker scene happened. She doesn't slow.

*"But I hear a sound I've heard before /
A rhythm knocking at my door..."*

She reaches into her cardigan pocket. Pulls out the phone. Her own sent text -- "not staying today" -- sits in the thread, already delivered.

She looks at it as she walks. The words she sent an hour ago. They don't feel true anymore.

She doesn't reply. She doesn't need to. She'll tell Mama herself.

She tucks the phone away. Keeps walking.

*"'Cause I am all of me /
Every shade, every beat /
Every voice inside my chest /
Is trying to help me breathe..."
"I don't have to choose a side /
I don't have to run and hide /
I'm not half of anything /
I am all of me..."*

Her grip on the sketchbook loosens. She holds it at her side now, not against her chest.

*"I see the lines, I know they're there
/
But they don't tell me where to
stand..."
"I tried to fit the shapes they made /
I tried to fade, I tried to change /
But something stronger pulled me
through /
A quiet truth I always knew..."
"'Cause I am all of me /
Every step, every key /
All the parts they couldn't see /
Were making harmony..."*

She reaches the front doors. Pushes them open. Evening light hits her face.

For the first time in the film, her full face is clearly visible.

She steps out.

SCENE 11 — THE CURB / TELLING MAMA

EXT. SCHOOL CURB - CONTINUOUS

MAMA (Black, warm) stands beside her car at the curb. She came as soon as she got the text. She sees Harper coming.

She doesn't look upset -- just present, ready for whatever her daughter needs. Small smile.

Harper reaches the car. Walking with purpose. Not the walk of a kid who's giving up.

Mama reaches out and smooths Harper's hair back from her face. Doesn't make a moment of it.

Harper looks up. Doesn't hide. She knows what she texted. She knows Mama drove over for it. And she says the opposite anyway.

HARPER

I changed my mind. I'm staying.

A beat. Mama reads her daughter's face -- the lift in it, the steadiness. She understands. No questions, no fuss, no I-drove-all-the-way-here.

MAMA

Okay, baby.

Harper turns back toward the school.

Mama watches her go for a beat. Then gets in the car.

SCENE 12 – BACK INSIDE

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Harper walks back into the school. Music swells.

BRIDGE:

*"If I'm made of more than one song /
That doesn't mean I'm singing wrong..."*

PAPA AND MAMA'S VOICES subtly join the score. They aren't on screen. They're in the music with her.

*"It means my voice is wide and free /
And it sounds like... me..."*

Harper reaches a classroom door. Pauses. Opens it.

SCENE 13 – THE ROOM / FINALE

INT. ANIME CLUB ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The room is warm. Lived-in. Hand-drawn art on the walls. Five KIDS inside -- each visually distinct -- drawing, talking quietly. One watches something on a laptop with headphones.

The ART TEACHER is at her desk grading papers. She glances up as Harper enters. Gives the smallest nod. Goes back to her work.

KAI is at a table, drawing. Hair in his face.

He blows it away -- pfff.

He looks up.

He sees her.

ONE FULL SECOND OF HELD EYE CONTACT. The first in the film.

Kai nods. Small. Almost imperceptible. He goes back to drawing.

Harper crosses to an empty chair near him. Sits.

She sets the sketchbook down on the table. Opens it.

She picks up her pencil.

FINAL CHORUS -- full orchestral swell:

*"I am all of me /
Every color, every dream /
Every place I've ever been /
Is right here inside of me..."*

The camera pulls back. Wider. Wider.

Harper among the kids. Drawing. Face visible. Not hiding.

*"I'll walk my way, I'll take my time /
I don't need their lines to shine /
I'm not half of anything /
I am all of me..."*

OUTRO:

"All of me... all of me..."

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.