

THE UNDERDOGS

"Pilot"

Episode #1

Written by

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FADE IN:

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A HEART-SHAPED CRYSTAL is being inspected by EVAN (19). He gets lost in its mesmerizing look and plays with it.

PROFESSOR HARPER (O.C.)
There are three acts to a story.
Act one introduces us to our
protagonist and their world. Who
are they? And what do they want?

A WIDE shot of the room reveals about ten other students sitting around a large table all across from each other, and at the end of that table sits PROFESSOR HARPER (50).

Focus is back on Evan, who spins the crystal around with his fingers.

Professor Harper notices the lack of participation from the class. He scans the room for any signs of life, but every student is in their own world.

PROFESSOR HARPER (CONT'D)
With that in mind, why don't you
guys share what you have for the
homework that was due today?

The students look at each other, hesitant to speak up.

Professor Harper looks around, until eventually landing his eyes on Evan.

PROFESSOR HARPER (CONT'D)
Evan, you wanna go first?

EVAN
Uh...

Evan puts the crystal in his pocket and turns his chair to face the professor. He looks around the room, everyone is waiting for him to say something.

EVAN (CONT'D)
Sure.

He sits up and slowly, but anxiously, goes through the laptop that's sitting in front of him.

EVAN (CONT'D)
Just keep in mind I'm still playing
around with it.

PROFESSOR HARPER
No pressure.

Evan hesitates but builds up the confidence to start talking. A lump starts taking form in his throat as he leans forward and gets ready to share with the class.

EVAN
(nervous)
My script is about a young man
who's trying to figure out how to
get back something from his past,
something he loved. It means a lot
to him.

A beat.

The silence in the room turns into murmuring for Evan.

As Professor Harper starts to speak again, the murmuring goes quiet.

PROFESSOR HARPER
Okay, pretty good. Sounds like the
protagonist is dealing with inner
conflict.

EVAN
Yea.

A small win for Evan. It *finally* feels like someone gets it.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMPUS - LATER

Evan drags himself across campus. Headphones on, avoiding everyone around.

INT. EVAN'S DORM - MOMENTS LATER

Evan walks into his room and drops his backpack in the corner.

As he takes off his headphones and turns around he sees his roommate JULIAN (18), and a huge group of people. All of them, gathered around Julian's bed.

JULIAN
(to his friends)
He didn't tell me about that party
so I asked him about it.

Dude played dumb and told me to
fuck off.

Evan quickly grabs his backpack and starts heading for the
door again.

JULIAN (CONT'D)
Wow Evan, leaving already?

Julian's friends all turn to look at Evan.

EVAN
Yea I forgot I got somewhere to be.
I'll see you later.

As Evan heads out the door the murmuring comes back. Julian
goes back to talking to his friends.

CUT TO:

INT. LIBRARY, QUIET STUDY ZONE - LATER

Inside of a "jail-cell" looking room, Evan sits staring into
the empty beige wall. Too many thoughts behind his eyes.

On the other side of the cell, a girl sits on a couch.

Evan takes a moment to look at her. He **admires** her.

It's not long before he goes back to minding his own
business.

Evan takes out the heart-shaped crystal and holds it tight.
He shifts his admiration to the crystal.

RING! RING! Evan's phone takes him out of the moment. He
quickly takes his phone out and reads the contact name: **MOM**

EVAN
(under breath)
Shit.

He turns the volume off, and picks up the phone.

EVAN (CONT'D)
(rubs his face)
Hey mom.

EVAN'S MOM (O.S.)
Hi honey! Oh how I missed hearing
your voice! How's my baby doing?

Beat. Evan can't stand the baby talk.

EVAN
I'm okay. You?

EVAN'S MOM (O.S.)
You know, not too bad.

EVAN
Dad?

EVAN'S MOM (O.S.)
He's him... you know him. Your
brother's are also doing good.

EVAN
Good.

EVAN'S MOM (O.S.)
Listen, I don't want to bother you
for a while so just tell me...
how's the second semester going?

EVAN
Same as the first.

EVAN'S MOM (O.S.)
(annoyed)
Ah man. You should get friends... a
girlfriend-

Evan takes a moment to think about what his next answer will
be.

EVAN
Mom.

EVAN'S MOM (O.S.)
You know what I always tell you.
You're young! You can't let people
ruin you! You'll meet plenty of
others but that's not gonna happen
unless you stop being miserable!

Beat.

EVAN
We talked about this. The people
here are not my type of people-

EVAN'S MOM (O.S.)
You're always looking for
perfection.

Evan's heard enough. He doesn't need to have this
conversation.

EVAN
Okay mom, I gotta go.

Beat.

EVAN'S MOM (O.S.)
Take care.

The heart crystal in Evan's hand taunts him. He goes back to look at the girl, but she's gone.

CUT TO:

INT. COUNSELING OFFICE - DAY

In a small room, a few chairs surround Evan from both sides. He stares at the clock to his right.

He's got the heart crystal in his hand.

DR. HERNANDEZ (40s) steps into the room. Evan doesn't notice her.

DR. HERNANDEZ (O.C.)
Evan?

Evan looks up.

EVAN
Yea.

DR. HERNANDEZ
Come with me.

INT. DR. HERNANDEZ'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Evan and Dr. Hernandez sit across from each other.

DR. HERNANDEZ
How are you?

EVAN
I'm okay.

DR. HERNANDEZ
Is this your first time coming to counseling?

EVAN
First time here. I've done therapy before.

DR. HERNANDEZ
Did it help?

EVAN
I'm here today, so...

DR. HERNANDEZ
Do you have a specific reason as to
why you decided to come here?

Evan looks down and keeps his eyes glued to the floor.

EVAN
I feel like I'm getting nowhere.

Dr. Hernandez leans back on the chair.

EVAN (CONT'D)
People say that with time, things
get better. I don't know if that's
true for me.

DR. HERNANDEZ
What is it? What's not getting
better?

EVAN
I think it's just me.

DR. HERNANDEZ
Tell me more Evan.

EVAN
I don't really have anyone.

DR. HERNANDEZ
Family-

EVAN
I have family, but that's it. And I
know I should be grateful for
that...
(hesitates)
I am. I just look around and
everyone has a shoulder to lay on
when things get complicated. I
don't have that anymore, and it's
my fault.

DR. HERNANDEZ
(starts writing in her
notebook)
What's your major?

EVAN
Screenwriting major.

DR. HERNANDEZ
Have you tried talking to other
students in the same major?

EVAN
No.

DR. HERNANDEZ
Why?

EVAN
I don't think they want to spend
time with someone who doesn't know
half of the things they do.

DR. HERNANDEZ
You're afraid you're less
experienced than them?

EVAN
I guess so.

DR. HERNANDEZ
We all gotta start somewhere Evan.
I don't think anyone else is the
problem, and I don't think you're
the problem. I think you expect so
much from yourself... from others.
You might be looking for
perfection.

Evan looks up at Dr Hernandez, scared at what she has to say
next.

DR. HERNANDEZ (CONT'D)
You should try looking for the
imperfect. It might not have been
what you were looking for or what
you were even hoping for... but it
might be better.

This advice makes the gears in Evan's head start turning. He
needed to hear that.

DR. HERNANDEZ (CONT'D)
Try it.

CUT TO:

INT. MEDIA BUILDING - NIGHT

Evan walks past different rooms. Some empty, some with a few students in them.

As he starts heading for the stairs, he notices a poster outside of an auditorium: **SCREENPLAY READINGS - LAST SESSION**

After glancing at both the stairs and the auditorium doors, he decides to head inside the room and check it out.

INT. MEDIA BUILDING, AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

The room is drowning in applause. Evan, not knowing what to do, takes a seat and begins to clap too.

NOAH (21) walks down the stairs and into the middle of the room.

NOAH
Great stuff!

The clapping comes to an end.

NOAH (CONT'D)
Thank you guys for coming out to read and help improve these beautiful scripts made by these very talented students. This only helps us get better. I'm sad it's the last time... but I'll see most of you at the Student Film Festival.

Noah hypes up the audience and receives overwhelming support.

NOAH (CONT'D)
Have a goodnight ya'll.

Students begin to clear out.

NOAH (CONT'D)
Don't forget the deadline to apply for the festival is next week! Perfect way to get your name out there.

NOAH (20) starts heading out the door, Evan follows him.

EVAN
Hi, sorry.

Noah turns around to look at Evan.

NOAH

Oh hey, don't think we've met before.

EVAN

No, my name's Evan.

NOAH

Noah.

(shakes Evan's hand)

Nice to meet you.

EVAN

You too. I came in at the end so I'm not sure what I missed.

NOAH

Every week we meet here to share our screenplays and get feedback from others. You know, what we like and what we don't like.

EVAN

Scary.

NOAH

Yeah.

(laughs)

You a screenwriter?

EVAN

I don't know if I'm good enough to call myself one.

NOAH

Have you written a screenplay before?

EVAN

Yea... short screenplay.

NOAH

Then you're a screenwriter.

Beat.

NOAH (CONT'D)

You know you've caught us at a bad time. Today was actually our last meeting for the year.

I'm graduating after this semester's over, and I doubt anyone will keep this program alive. On top of all that, from now til the end of the semester, everyone's gonna be busy with the festival.

EVAN

Festival?

NOAH

Every year there's a film festival hosted for the students in the Film major, Screenwriting major, minor, you get the idea. That's actually why some of them come here. They want to make sure their scripts are in the best shape possible before they get to work.

EVAN

Makes sense.

NOAH

It's a great way to put your name out there and establish yourself as a filmmaker. It's how I made a name for myself.

EVAN

So, how does it work?

NOAH

Students who sign up have to create an original short film over the course of a couple of months. Oh, and you're only allowed to stick to **your** crew. Students in the festival **can't** help out each other.

EVAN

I'm sure there's a lot of competition.

NOAH

You bet, but, you never know. We like to think of it as friendly fire though.

EVAN

What if you don't have a crew?

NOAH

You can find some people to help you, just remember they can't be in another student's crew.

EVAN

I guess I'll think about it.

NOAH

Don't think too much. There's little to no film freak out there that aren't in a crew. If you want to sign up, grab a slip from Jack. Good luck.

Noah grabs his things and heads out of the room.

Evan stays frozen for a second, taking it all in.

After the moment is over, Evan heads towards Jack who's standing in the back of the room packing his things up.

JACK

(focused on himself, not looking at Evan)
You thinking about joining the festival?

EVAN

I don't know yet.

No response.

EVAN (CONT'D)

I'm Evan, by the way.

JACK

I heard. Come get a sign up sheet.

Evan starts walking towards Jack.

Done packing up his things, Jack watches Evan approach him.

Jack hands Evan the sheet.

JACK (CONT'D)

Fill it out, on the paper is the time and location to drop it off. Make sure you get it done before deadline day.

EVAN

Thanks.

JACK
No crew huh?

EVAN
Not yet.

JACK
You need one.

EVAN
I know. How many people should I
get?

JACK
Doesn't really matter as long as
they know what *they're* doing, and
YOU know what you're doing.

EVAN
Right.

JACK
(inspecting Evan)
Do you know?

Silence.

Not having anything else to say, Jack steps out of the room.

Evan stands there, alone.

INT. EVAN'S DORM - LATER

Back in his room, Evan sits in front of his computer that's
opened up to a screenplay without a title.

He glances at the heart crystal, now placed on his desk.

Evan grabs the crystal, and holds it tight. He's not letting
go.

CUT TO:

EXT. MEDIA BUILDING - DAY

A long line of students is formed in front of a table, with
Jack and his gang standing behind it.

JACK
Hand us your sheet and keep it
moving!

Students hand their sheet and walk away. Everything flowing as intended. *Perfectly.*

Evan slows things down as he steps up to drop off his sheet. He's hesitant about this.

Jack looks at Evan in less of an intimidating manner, and more of a shocked one.

INT. LIBRARY, COMPUTER LOUNGE - EVENING

The sound of a printer echoes throughout the empty library.

Evan stands besides the printer, watching the printer do it's job.

Evan picks up the papers out of the printer, and walks away.

INT. MEDIA BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Evan walks down hallway, looking at the bulletin boards that are drowning in posters, flyers, ads, etc.

Using an empty space on one of the boards, he hangs up one of his flyers, and gives it a look of slight approval.

ON FLYER: **"LOOKING FOR A CREW IN THE STUDENT FILM FESTIVAL?
SIGN UP USING THE QR CODE"**

The flyer, displayed loud and proud in the center of the bulletin board, is surrounded by more detailed, more vibrant posters.

It's not the best one of the bunch, but it'll do.

CUT TO BLACK.

END EPISODE