

1

INT. LECTURE HALL, PENN STATE - DAY

1

ESTABLISHING SHOT: A few students are sparsely scattered across a drab, yellowing campus.

ERIN

You're all here because you want answers.

Inside a lecture hall, ERIN ECKLAND, 24, is giving a presentation to bored-looking undergrads. She wears a tight ponytail, a stiff sweater set, and a practiced smile.

Behind her, a projector slide reads, "WHAT DO I DO WITH MY ENGLISH DEGREE?"

ERIN

Two years ago, I was sitting in the very seats you're sitting in now. An English lit major, with a head full of impossible dreams. Was I going to finally write that novel? Or maybe, get a grant to study the use of typeface in nineteenth-century British literature? I know we've all been there. As I neared graduation, I began to really wonder: in our cold, modern world, how could I use my English degree to really make the world a better place? That's when I met Topher Roth.

2

INT. APARTMENT KITCHEN - NIGHT

2

A dimly-lit college apartment. Music is playing, and people are talking over each other. Erin is alone, reading a book by the dim light of the kitchen microwave.

From across the party, TOPHER, a cute guy wearing coke bottle glasses, makes his way toward her.

TOPHER

Hey.

Erin looks up reluctantly.

ERIN

Hi.

TOPHER

Erin, right? You're Shelly's roommate?

(CONTINUED)

ERIN

Yeah.

TOPHER

You've got a pretty nice set up over here. It's hard sometimes to find a party this loud to study in.

ERIN

I'm not studying.

TOPHER

Oh. That makes more sense. Why would anyone want to spend their night reading 'The Literary Economy of Jane Austen' by the light of a portable microwave for school credit? It would suck all the fun out of it if it was just for a grade, right?

ERIN

Exactly.

He gets her.

ERIN

Have you, um, have you ever read any Jane Austen?

TOPHER

No. I was in a production of 'Lady Windermere's Fan' last semester, though. I played the fan.

ERIN

That's Oscar Wilde.

TOPHER

Ah. I was just testing your Austen knowledge to see how much I could get away with in this conversation.

ERIN

It looks like not a lot.

TOPHER

It would appear so. Tell you what. Why don't you give me your number, I'll dust up on my eighth-grade book report of 'Wuthering Heights,' and I'll give you a call once I feel adequately prepared to discuss

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TOPHER (cont'd)
it with an intelligent lady like
yourself?

Erin is smiling now.

ERIN
'Wuthering Heights' is Emily
Bronte.

TOPHER
I knew it was wrong as it was
coming out of my mouth.

ERIN
Start with 'Pride and Prejudice.'

TOPHER
That...yeah, I probably should have
known that one, huh?

Erin uses the highlighter she's been marking her book with
to write down her number on a napkin. She hands it to him.

ERIN
Probably.

She walks away, clutching her book to her chest. With her
back to Topher, she starts grinning.

ERIN (VO)
I always knew I wanted to spend my
life sharing the things I loved and
the reasons I loved them. And I had
always dreamed of finding a person
I could share my life with who
loved those things as much as I
did.

3 INT. LECTURE HALL, PENN STATE - DAY

3

Erin still stands in front of the class, now lost in the
re-telling of her story.

ERIN
It took a little while for him to
win me over, of course. It really
wasn't until I heard him say those
magical words...

4 INT. DORM, PENN STATE - DAY

4

Topher sits in a college dorm room with his phone pressed against his ear.

TOPHER

I am obsessed with this book.

CUT TO: In her own dorm room, Erin holds her phone, smiling.

TOPHER

Mr. Wickham is my man. He's like, all I aspire to be. He better sweep Elizabeth off her feet before the end.

ERIN

Just...maybe you should finish the book before you get too attached to anybody.

TOPHER

Erin Eckland! Spoilers!

ERIN

The book has been out for a while, so...

TOPHER

If Elizabeth ends up with Lord Stick-Up-His-Butt Darcy, I will never forgive you.

ERIN

Actually, Darcy is untitled. He's not a--

TOPHER

(mutters)

Oh, shit.

ERIN

Is everything okay?

TOPHER

Yeah, I just forgot. I have an audition across campus in like, thirty minutes.

ERIN

What are you auditioning for?

(CONTINUED)

TOPHER

'Bye Bye Birdie.' It's a student-directed thing. It's kind of stupid.

ERIN

I love 'Bye Bye Birdie.'

TOPHER

Okay. So you're into birds. That's a little kinky. Good to know. Are you rolling your eyes?

ERIN

No.

TOPHER

You are. I can hear it.

ERIN (VO)

I was rolling my eyes. It was like we were kindred spirits.

A montage of scenes: Erin studies in the library while Topher mutters into his script, gesticulating wildly. Erin stands up to applaud with tears in her eyes as Topher takes a bow on stage at 'Bye Bye Birdie.' At an after-party, Topher sings a song with his cast members while Erin reads another book in the corner. Later, alone, he leans over to give her a kiss on the cheek while she reads from 'Pride and Prejudice' aloud. She tries to ignore him.

5

INT. LECTURE HALL, PENN STATE - DAY

5

The undergrads listening to Erin are wearing expressions ranging from utterly uncomfortable to utterly bored.

ERIN

Were things moving quickly? Sure. But when it's true love, there's really no such thing. I felt like it was time for Topher and I...to start a podcast together.

New slide behind her: A young Erin and Topher sit at a table with a dinky looking microphone and laptop.

ERIN

"The Lovebirds." A show where we would discuss our newfound, shared love for the classical romantic literature of Jane Austen, and its influence on society today.

(CONTINUED)

The next slide: A very sappy piece of cover art for the podcast.

ERIN

Over the first few months, we were reaching only a handful of people each month. But we didn't give up. I knew this was our life's work.

6 INT. ERIN'S DORM ROOM, PENN STATE - DAY

6

Erin and Topher huddle around a stool where they've propped up their microphone, wrapping a sock around it as a pop filter.

TOPHER

I personally, always pictured Mr. Bingley as the shorter man.

ERIN

You're insane.

They're both grinning at each other.

ERIN (VO)

We continued to produce high-quality content every week, without fail.

7 INT. ERIN'S DORM ROOM, PENN STATE - DAY

7

The pair sits on opposite sides of a table with a microphone that now has a pop filter.

ERIN

Really, the Abbey itself it a metaphor...

ERIN (VO)

And over time, those Austenites who share our passions began to find us.

8 INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - DAY

8

Surrounded by moving boxes, in front of a wall where a framed photo of the two of them hangs above Erin's college degree. Topher is helping Erin set up a nice microphone. Erin smiles at him.

ERIN(VO)

In fact, last year, we were ranked one of the top one hundred podcasts

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ERIN(VO) (cont'd)
 to watch by Rudolph Langley's
 thoughtful podcast critique blog,
 'Listen to This: A Thoughtful
 Podcast Critique.'

9 INT. LECTURE HALL, PENN STATE - DAY 9

ERIN
 I know what you're thinking.
 Everyone wants to know the secret
 behind a successful podcast.

One of the students in her audience makes a face, as though
 this is new to him.

ERIN
 For 'The Lovebirds,' I would say
 that our growing success comes from
 three things.

10 INT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 10

Erin sits in a now decorated apartment with a dog at her
 feet, reading and marking a copy of 'Sense and Sensibility.'

ERIN(VO)
 First, we are both intensely
 passionate about the subject of our
 podcast.

11 INT. APPLEBEES' - NIGHT 11

Topher sits at a booth, eating fries while reading
 'Persuasion.' He laughs quietly to himself. He glances at
 his watch.

TOPHER
 Hey, could I get a check, please?

He shuffles out of the restaurant, the book still propped
 open in one hand, shoveling fries into his mouth.

12 EXT. ERIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT 12

Topher carries his book with him, still reading the last few
 paragraphs as he walks to Erin's door. He knocks.

Erin opens the door, smiling, and hugs him.

ERIN
 Hey there.

TOPHER

Hey.

They kiss.

ERIN

How was your day?

TOPHER

Well, it's getting better.

He kisses her again.

ERIN

Didn't you have that meeting with the agent guy?

TOPHER

Shhh. No shop talk.

ERIN

You know we're recording tonight, right?

TOPHER

Right. No struggling-actor shop talk. This is the...recording shop.

ERIN

The recording shop?

TOPHER

Mmm-hmm.

Kiss.

They begin setting up at the table to record their podcast.

ERIN (VO)

Second, we're both committed to making the best podcast possible, and we never miss a week. As the world of podcasting becomes more and more competitive, reliability is key. Your audience needs to know they can rely on you.

A montage: The two of them cook together. They record podcasts as more and more fan art accumulates on the wall behind them. Erin sits with Topher at another cast party, smiling. He leans his head on her shoulder as she grades papers.

(CONTINUED)

Again and again and again, Topher knocks on the door and Erin answers it:

ERIN
Hey there.

Topher storms in past her.

TOPHER
Don't talk to me for at least ten full minutes! I'm still furious about what Mr. Willoughby did in this chapter.

Erin laughs and takes the book out of his hands.

Cut.

ERIN
Hey there.

He kisses her lightly before walking in.

Cut.

ERIN
Hey there.

He kisses her passionately, pushing her up against the door.

Cut.

ERIN
Hey...

She bursts into laughter. Topher is standing on her doorway in a full regency-era costume.

TOPHER
What? Is it too much? I got you one too.

Cut.

ERIN
Hey there.

Again and again, he kisses her and walks into the room.

ERIN
Hey.

Topher is standing in the doorway, sullen and tired.

TOPHER

Hey.

She bites her lip.

ERIN

Are we still good to record today?

Topher shrugs.

ERIN

I said I was sorry.

TOPHER

So did I.

ERIN

Okay. Come in.

ERIN (VO)

And third and most importantly, the factor that I believe has put our podcast over the top, is the chemistry between myself and my co-host. Topher and I have been dating for nearly three years now, and with the podcast at the center of our relationship, many of our audience members continue to tune in not only to discuss early nineteenth-century character tropes, but also to watch our relationship grow.

The montage continues: The podcast continues to be recorded with less and less enthusiastic co-hosts. Topher sings drunkenly with his fellow castmates while Erin sits sullenly in a corner. Erin goes to Applebees alone.

13

INT. APPLEBEES' - NIGHT

13

Erin walks in alone, clutching her purse.

WAITRESS

Hey there. Is it just you?

ERIN

Yeah, it's just me.

WAITRESS

Okay, right this way.

Sitting at a table in front of a plate of food, Erin stares forlornly into space, tears filling her eyes.

14 INT. LECTURE HALL, PENN STATE - DAY 14

In front of the lecture hall, Erin stares forlornly into space, tears filling her eyes.

ERIN

We make a perfect team. I'd be lost without him.

TITLE CARD: 'Lovebirds'

15 INT. TOPHER'S APARTMENT, BATHROOM - DAY 15

TOPHER looks up at himself in a steamy bathroom mirror. He's wearing a long, fuzzy robe and his glasses are fogged up.

TOPHER

Hello. My name is Topher Garff, and I am 5'11". I will be auditioning for the part of Matty Lopez. No, no. It's all wrong.

He clears his throat and takes a deep breath, then dramatically takes his glasses off and begins again, this time with smolder.

TOPHER

Hey there. My name is Topher Garff, and I'm 6'0". I will be auditioning for the part of Matty Lopez. Okay.

He clears his throat.

TOPHER

Hey there, muchacho. You've seemed down ever since yesterday, the day those college kids offered us some marijuana. You know, it might have seemed like fun at the time, but those kids always get what's coming to them. What do you say you and me have some good, clean fun tonight? My abuela told me she's making tacos. My a-boo-ell...

He can't pronounce the word correctly. He sighs and pushes the bathroom door open with an elbow.

TOPHER

Hey, Davey?

DAVEY pops his head around the corner. He's a guy a little younger than Topher, tying a tie around his neck.

(CONTINUED)

DAVEY

Yo.

TOPHER

Remind me how you say--

DAVEY

It's 'Abuela.'

TOPHER

Thank you.

DAVEY

I still don't get why you're going out for this part, man. You don't even like going to Emmanuel's with me because you think everything's too spicy.

TOPHER

That's not true! I just think Taco Bell's shells have a better crunch.

DAVEY

But...you see my point, right? You're the whitest person on earth. You host a freaking podcast.

TOPHER

The call just says 'attractive men between the ages of 18-25, must have brown hair or be willing to dye their hair brown.' That's totally me.

DAVEY

Sure.

TOPHER

Besides, this is the Disney Channel. They set you up for life. I could be the next Selena Gomez.

DAVEY

Yeah...good luck.

TOPHER

Thanks.

Topher turns back to the bathroom mirror and begins combing his hair.

(CONTINUED)

DAVEY (O.S.)

Are you coming to ultimate frisbee tonight?

TOPHER

Oh, yeah...I don't think I can, man. I got a recording session with Erin.

DAVEY

Are you still doing that?

TOPHER

What do you mean?

DAVEY

I mean, when are you going to stop doing that?

Davey stands in front of the bathroom door, now in a full suit.

DAVEY

I gotta run, man. I'll see you later.

TOPHER

I'll see ya.

Topher turns back to the bathroom mirror as the door to their apartment opens and closes behind Davey.

TOPHER

How's it going. My name is Topher Garff.

16

INT. DAY - LECTURE HALL, PEN. STATE

16

The students are zipping up backpacks and talking with each other as they leave the room.

A regal woman in her mid-sixties, JOAN, stands at the pulpit next to Erin.

JOAN

Make sure if you're going to write one of your response papers on Ms. Halstrom's presentation, you get that in to me by Friday of this week! Thanks for doing this, Erin.

(CONTINUED)

ERIN

No problem.

JOAN

I have to admit, when I asked you to give a presentation on how your English degree has helped you with your career, I expected you would talk about being my research assistant. But, ah, this was nice too.

ERIN

Oh, I assumed you would, So I thought I would put a sort of unique spin on my presentation.

JOAN

Huh.

KIM

Excuse me, Ms. Halstrom?

KIM, one of the students from class, 18, with braces and a giant tote bag, is standing behind Erin.

ERIN

Hi! Can I help you?

KIM

Hi, Ms. Halstrom, it was such an honor getting to hear you speak. I'm Kim. I'm a huge fan.

ERIN

Oh, wow. Thank you.

KIM

I'm actually coming to see you and Topher live at RomCon in Philly this weekend.

ERIN

Well, I'll try to wave at you from the stage. They moved us to a slightly bigger room at the convention center this year. This one has a stage.

KIM

That's so cool.

(CONTINUED)

ERIN
It is, so cool.

KIM
I was wondering if you could sign
my tote bag?

She holds out a tote bag with an illustration of Topher and Erin's faces etched onto it, surrounded by a giant heart.

Joan looks mildly disturbed.

ERIN
Sure, absolutely!

She picks up a pen and signs the tote bag: "Never stop believing in true love!"

KIM
It's too bad Topher couldn't be
here with you.

ERIN
Yeah, well, he's not an English
major, so I figured it would be a
little weird to bring him along to
talk about what he's doing with his
unfinished theatre and media arts
degree.

Kim laughs.

KIM
I'll have to get him to sign the
other side of the tote at the
convention.

ERIN
Sure, we'll save you a place in
line.

JOAN
We should probably head out, Erin,
I need to start setting up for my
next class.

KIM
Oh, okay. Well, I guess I should go
then. But I just wanted you to know
that you and Topher are totally
goals. Listening to the way you
talk to each other about true love
gave me the courage to break up

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

KIM (cont'd)
with my eleventh-grade boyfriends.
Both of them.

ERIN
Oh, wow. That's awesome Kim. Stay
strong, okay?

KIM
Okay!

She exits.

Erin and Joan exchange a look.

17 INT. DAY - TOPHER'S APARTMENT, BEDROOM 17

Topher sprays himself with cologne and puts on a button-down shirt, muttering his lines to himself as he runs around his room.

Cut to: In his car, Topher starts the engine and then readjusts the rearview mirror to check his teeth. He continues to mutter.

TOPHER
See, buddy? We can have a great
time, without the help of drugs.
Those guys are losers.

18 INT. DAY - ERIN'S CAR 18

Erin drives to the post office with a placid look on her face. A Jane Austen scented air freshener dangles from her rearview mirror.

She pulls up at the post office and walks inside.

19 INT. DAY - CASTING OFFICE 19

Topher jogs inside and walks up to a receptionist, who hands him some paperwork and points him to a seat next to CARA, 22, also there for the casting call. He smiles at her as he sits down.

20 INT. DAY - POST OFFICE 20

Erin approaches a P.O. box and unlocks it.

It's pretty much overflowing. She smiles a little to herself and starts pulling things out one-by-one and looking at them.

21 INT. DAY - CASTING OFFICE

21

Topher is in an office space, sitting outside a room where they're holding auditions. He looks around for a place to sit.

A guy, BRETT, similar height and coloring and age as Topher, is sitting near the door. He waves when he sees Topher.

BRETT

Hey, man! How's it going?

TOPHER

Brett, hey!

BRETT

Are you auditioning for the role of the Hispanic friend that pressures people not to do drugs?

TOPHER

Wouldn't you know it.

BRETT

It's been a while, how's, ah, how's everything going with you?

TOPHER

Everything's going really fantastic.

BRETT

That's great. What have you been doing since you dropped out of college a semester before you graduated?

TOPHER

Podcasting, you know, doing things like this.

22 INT. DAY - ERIN'S APARTMENT

22

Erin lives in a little apartment. It's cramped and sweet, with frills and fanart everywhere. She opens the door with her arms filled with bags of fan presents and a dog is immediately running up to her.

ERIN

Hi, Bingley! Hi Bingley! Did you miss me? I missed you! Yes, I did!

(CONTINUED)

We see a whole bunch of Topher and Erin fan art as Erin prepares to make pasta. Then, as the pasta begins to boil, she reads a copy of 'Sense and Sensibility' on the couch, scratching Bingley's head.

Cut to the exterior of the apartment, now in deepening twilight. Topher is seen walking up the stairs to the apartment. He's carrying a book under one arm. He takes a deep breath and rings the doorbell.

Erin looks up and runs to the door. She pauses for a second before opening it, to regain her composure. Then she throws it open, smiling.

ERIN

Hi!

TOPHER

Hey.

She leans forward for a hug, but he sidesteps her into the room.

TOPHER

Is something burning?

ERIN

Crap!

Erin turns back to her kitchen, where her wood spoon is smoking on the hotplate.

ERIN

How's your week been?

TOPHER

Uh, good, yeah. Are you ready to start recording?

ERIN

Oh, yeah, I just--I thought we could eat first.

TOPHER

I sorta need to get going at like, nine, so...

ERIN

Oh. Okay.

TOPHER

Sorry, it's just that, Davey's ultimate frisbee league has their last match tonight, and...

ERIN
Is that like, code for something?

TOPHER
What?

ERIN
It's just, I've never actually seen
Davey play ultimate frisbee.

TOPHER
What would that be code for?

ERIN
I don't know.

Steam is billowing up from the sink, where the burning spoon
is simmering.

ERIN
Sure, we can record first.

TOPHER
Cool.

Quick little montage of shots, setting up recording
equipment, and then the two of them are in their little
make-shift studio, ready to start recording.

ERIN
Could you send me your notes for
the opening segment?

TOPHER
Yeah, just a sec. I'm air dropping
them to you.

There's a horribly awkward pause.

A little "ding" on Erin's computer.

ERIN
Thanks.

TOPHER
You ready to start?

Erin looks at him. There's an elephant's worth of tension in
the room, but Topher has a look on his face that says, "We
are NOT talking about it." Erin looks like she's about to
cry.

ERIN

Lets' do it.

Topher pushes a button on the soundboard and music plays them in.

TOPHER

Hello, hello, Austenites. I'm
Topher Roth--

ERIN

And I'm Erin Eckland--

TOPHER

And this is Lovebirds. It's a show
where we geek out over all things
romantic from the mind of Jane
Austen.

ERIN

This week, we're covering chapters
eight through ten of 'Sense and
Sensibility.'

END ACT ONE

The pasta has totally dried out in the bowl.

TOPHER

Well, I think that about does it!
It's time to wrap things up.

ERIN

Um, aren't you forgetting
something?

TOPHER

Am I?

ERIN

Our live show?

TOPHER

That's right! We're going to have
our first ever live show right here
in Philadelphia this Saturday, at
RomCon. And we're both going to be
totally decked out in period
costume and everything. It's going
to be great.

(CONTINUED)

ERIN

We'll see some of you there. Can't wait.

TOPHER

Well, until next time, I'm Topher Roth--

ERIN

--And I'm Erin Eckland--

TOPHER

And today is a beautiful day to fall in love.

Topher ends the recording and both of them take their headphones off.

ERIN

Do you want to get some pizza or something?