

TEEN ZOMBIE SHOW

"Pilot"

By

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COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

INT. SILSBEE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

A SCHOOL BELL RINGS!

SUGAR WILLOWICK, sixteen, sweet but fights hard not to be, bolts out of a classroom.

SUGAR (V.O.)  
My life has more problems than a  
math book.

She careens like a pinball in a swarm of STUDENTS.

SUGAR (V.O.)  
And, relationships? They're like  
iPads. I don't have an iPad.

Sugar dumps a load of books into her locker.

SUGAR (V.O.)  
It's like the headline for my life  
reads: "Facebook: allowing deadbeat  
dads to pretend they're involved  
since 2004."

She throws on a leather coat.

SUGAR (V.O.)  
So, here's what I need to know.  
Am I lovable? I know, I'm supposed  
to be. The doctors gave me a special  
jacket so I can hug myself.

Sugar scans the hallway for attractive boys.

SUGAR (V.O.)  
But, I'm like a parking ticket.  
I need validation. That's why, I'm  
going to the prom. I've got twenty-  
four hours to find someone, and to  
get them to like me. Here's the  
problem...

THREE BAND GEEKS rush by in T-shirts emblazoned with "Available."

SUGAR (V.O.)  
...he types with one finger. That  
one plugs his ears when he pees.  
And, that boy has an unhealthy  
collection of stuffed animals.

TWO HIPSTER WANNABES try to figure out a smokeless vapor pen. They drink the liquid intended for smoking, puke it back up.

SUGAR (V.O.)

These two are making their parents very proud.

A BOY IN "G STAR RAW" DESIGNER CLOTHES poses for a series of selfies while flaunting his excessive bling.

SUGAR (V.O.)

And, this is what passes for a real man these days.

Sugar swipes through her phone to find a video.

SUGAR (V.O.)

So, my best friend, Belinda - she's into media stuff - she recruited my family, and made a video to help me find a date. She's the first person you'll see.

Sugar taps play on her phone.

INSERT: WHITE BACKDROP

SFX: DING! BELINDA FERNANDEZ, seventeen, in a stunning opalescent blue prom dress, struts into the backdrop. She fiddles with her cell phone, looking for a signal.

BELINDA

I don't care who you go to the prom with, just make sure he's a moisty.

SFX: DING! LORRAINE WILLOWICK, late-thirties, a commanding female presence in a bright red designer suit, marches into the backdrop. She snatches the phone from Belinda, searches for a signal.

LORRAINE

It's your evil mother. Just make sure your date doesn't fart like a Clydesdale.

SFX: DING! GRANDMA WILLOWICK, sixties, in a rainbow tie-dyed T-shirt, olive drab hemp pants, hobbles into the backdrop. She takes the phone from Lorraine --

Tap. Tap. Swipe. It lights up, online, ready to go.

GRANDMA

Keep your knees together.

EXT. SILSBEE, TEXAS - ESTABLISHING SHOT - DAY

A rusty sign displays: SILSBEE, TX. - POPULATION 6,586. Silsbee is a cozy, country town, with shops selling everything from fish bait to homemade Bar-B-Que. The groan from a scooter approaches --

EXT. BUMPER TO BUMPER CAR WASH - DAY

Sugar pulls up on her scooter cloaked in black biker clothes.

SUGAR (V.O.)

Belinda posted that video on her YouTube channel. Now, so-called suitable bachelors are showing up everywhere, including where I work, with their mothers.

HANNAH, forties, in a shiny gold jump suit, paces at the entrance.

HANNAH

Ah-yoo-hoo! Sugar, I'm a friend of your mom's. After I seen your little TikTok the good Lord guided me here. Do you remember my son, Montana?

MONTANA, sixteen, in frumpy grey sweats, hides behind his mother. He plays video games on his phone. Hannah elbows him.

HANNAH (CONT'D)

Well, ask her.

Montana eyes Sugar up and down, goes back to playing.

INT. BUMPER TO BUMPER CAR WASH - DAY

Sugar plods to the register. Grandma limps in, pays for a wash.

GRANDMA

How's my favorite granddaughter?

SUGAR

I just got dissed for prom by the weirdest kid in school.

GRANDMA

Can you go alone?

SUGAR

Gotta have a date. School rules.

GRANDMA

You got a friend?

SUGAR

One. Belinda. She wants to go with a boy. Then, play tonsil hockey in a corn maze. I'm gonna go call her.

EXT. BUMPER TO BUMPER CAR WASH - DAY

Sugar huddles around the corner from the car wash exit for privacy. Everything that happens inside the building is behind her, and she has no awareness of the events taking place.

SUGAR

(to the phone)

All I want is somebody cool to go to the dance with.

TWO THUGS, twenties, run into the car wash from the opposite side of the building dragging a full body bag. They snatch Grandma's car keys, pop the trunk. Grandma is the only customer, and roaring air dryers drown out her pleas for help.

Thugs load the body bag into the trunk, slam the lid. They're stealing Grandma's car until police sirens blare in the distance. Thugs race to the driver's door at the same time, hit heads, knock themselves out. Sugar glances over, sees the situation.

INT. BUMPER TO BUMPER CAR WASH - CONTINUOUS

Sugar rushes to Grandma. The rear of her car bounces up and down. Whoever is in the trunk is alive and trying to get out. Sugar pops the lid. Thugs recover, hear the sirens, sprint away.

Sugar examines the body bag. An old pizza delivery receipt is jammed into the zipper and prevents it from opening. The first three letters of the word "pizza" are damaged, leaving the last two letters intact, and proudly sticking out - "za."

SUGAR

Hold on, Za.

Sugar unzips the bag, and discovers ZA, teenager, in a Civil War soldier's uniform. He has ash grey skin, formidable good looks, and an overall air of decency. Sugar and Za lock eyes in a misty realization of mutual raw desire.

GRANDMA

What is it?

SUGAR

A really hot zombie.

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

INT. BUMPER TO BUMPER CAR WASH - DAY

A crime scene investigation wraps up as a POLICE OFFICER enters final notes into his laptop. A PARAMEDIC packs up a cart of meds.

Sugar and Grandma huddle away from the fuss. And, through it all, Za is at the register examining a bag of chips like it's the most amazing thing he's ever seen. He turns it upside down, shakes it. It's empty.

GRANDMA

(to Sugar)

The cops aren't gonna take that zombie guy in?

SUGAR

He didn't do anything wrong. He's the victim here. Plus, the cops don't believe in zombies. They view his condition as some kind of odd medical issue, not a legal one.

GRANDMA

Well, at least they caught those thugs. But, this whole thing is crazy.

SUGAR

Uncle Louie was a cop. I'll have him do a little digging for us.

GRANDMA

And, tell him to string those thugs up by their toilet parts.

Za shuffles to a vending machine, inspects the inventory of snacks like it's a grand mystery.

SUGAR

(to Grandma)

You seem pretty chill about this whole zombie thing.

GRANDMA

I've seen way worse at Burning Man. You?

SUGAR

He's slow as molasses, and can't figure out a vending machine? I don't think he's much of a threat.

GRANDMA

But, what if he wants to eat our brains?

SUGAR

(to Za)

Hey. Do you wanna eat our brains?

Za scowls with disgust like it's the worst idea he's ever heard. He shakes, no.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

(to Grandma)

I think we're good.

Za determines the only way he can reach the snacks inside the machine is to jam his arm into the drop chute. He gets his elbow stuck. Sugar grabs a set of keys from inside her register.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

(to Za)

I'm gonna unlock this so you can get your arm out. If you're hungry, I'll get you something to eat.

She opens the machine. His arm is free. Before she can lock it back up, he snatches a bag of chips.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

What did I just say?

Za grabs the original bag of chips, holds it up.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

Yes, those are my chips.

He turns the bag upside down to show it's empty. Za gives her the identical new bag to replace it.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

You knew I was out of chips, and you were stealing the kind I like, so I could have more?

He nods, yes.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

(to Grandma)

Did Grandpa ever steal stuff for you?

GRANDMA

Does pot count?

EXT. BUMPER TO BUMPER CAR WASH - DAY

Sugar, Za and Grandma, strut out.

GRANDMA

You two go on. When the press shows up, I'm gonna tell them my side of the story.

SUGAR

You do realize this is Silsbee. We could stand right here with a zombie, hold up a sign saying he's a zombie, and no one would care. Come home when you get tired of waiting.

Sugar speeds away on her scooter with Za on the back. Grandma looks up and down County Road 96, not a car or human for miles.

EXT. WILLOWICK HOUSE - SILSBEE, TEXAS - DAY

The pastoral setting is wrecked by the noise from Sugar's scooter barreling up with Za. She pulls up in front of her house.

SUGAR

Wait here.

INT. WILLOWICK HOUSE - DAY

The front door swings open. Sugar peeks in.

SUGAR

Mom?

The coast is clear. She fetches Za, pulls him into the living room. He plops down on the couch.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

No, you can't stay there. We have an extra bed in the basement.

Sugar tries to move him. Za is like a bag of rocks. She pulls, pushes, loses her balance, tumbles on top of him. Lorraine struts in through the front door.

LORRAINE

Sugar?

She sees the mangle of bodies on the couch.

LORRAINE (CONT'D)

Holy perch alert.

Lorraine digs a canister of pepper spray out of her purse. She runs over, aims, fires. She hits Sugar in the face by accident.

Sugar wrestles with her mom for control of the canister. Lorraine gets a face full of spray during the struggle. They both collapse, grope around blind. Lorraine grabs a magazine, rolls it up. She mistakes Sugar for Za, whacks her repeatedly.

LORRAINE (CONT'D)

Get away from my daughter!

SUGAR

And, how do you propose I get away from myself? Mom, he's my friend.

Lorraine breaks off the attack, leans in for a good look at Za.

LORRAINE

Why is your friend wearing makeup?

SUGAR

He's a zombie.

LORRAINE

Is that like a band?

SUGAR

Okay, embarrassing me in front of the dead guy. Meeting. Kitchen. Now.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sugar and Lorraine stumble in. They both thrust their heads into the sink, turn on the faucet, fight for control of the nozzle.

LORRAINE

I don't know what your plans are for that thing in the living room, but whatever they are, the answer is no. Now, move. My eyes are burning.

SUGAR

So are mine. You just pepper sprayed your own child in the face. You can't teach parenting like that.

Sugar grabs the hose, squirts herself in the face.

LORRAINE

Give me that.

SUGAR

You want this?

Sugar squirts her mom in the face. Lorraine loses her balance, slips in the water, falls. She pulls Sugar down with her.

There's noise from a vacuum cleaner in the living room. They frantically crawl over each other to the door, spy on Za. He's cleaning the carpet.

LORRAINE

What's he doing?

SUGAR

I think he's cleaning our house.

LORRAINE

I mean, why did you bring him home?

SUGAR

I'm gonna ask him to the prom. But, I wanted to get to know him a little better, first.

LORRAINE

There is no way you're going to the prom with that weirdo.

SUGAR

But, I'm not really sure who he is. He doesn't talk - that's my favorite part. I call him, Za. And, now that I know you disapprove of our budding romance, he's all I can think about.

LORRAINE

Sweetheart, I hate to break it to you, but zombies are not real.

SUGAR

He looks real enough to me.

LORRAINE

Then, I'd like to meet his zombie parents. And, how long have zombies been roaming around? And, does he hang out with pod people? You know, I hate pod people.

SUGAR

I have only seen one zombie in the world and he's right there. So, we can put the apocalypse on hold. This means your world is safe.

Za cleans under couch cushions, finds money.

LORRAINE

That's the twenty I lost.

He scans the area.

LORRAINE (CONT'D)

And, now he's making sure the coast is clear, so he can steal it.

Za spots them, shuffles over, gives the money to Lorraine.

SUGAR

And, you wonder where I get my snotty attitude from? Come on, I wanna show you something.

EXT. WILLOWICK HOUSE - DAY

Sugar hustles to her scooter parked in the driveway. She lifts up the seat, digs out a document. Lorraine muscles Za out of the house. He tidies up the area.

SUGAR

This is a report from the police and paramedics who examined him.

LORRAINE

Why is there a report from the police and paramedics?

SUGAR

A bunch of stuff happened at work today. And, a cop said to me - in his finest southern drawl - 'I can give this report to his wife. That you?'

LORRAINE

You lied to the police?

SUGAR

I like to think of it as wishful thinking.

Lorraine flips through the document.

LORRAINE

Patient presented in a "zombified state?" Blood work exhibits "atypical coagulation?" Whatever. But prom? With him? What's the worst that can happen if you don't go?

SUGAR

If I don't go, it proves, I'm not lovable.

LORRAINE

How does it prove that?

SUGAR

No boys like me enough to go to the dance. Dad left me. Proof. Men find me repulsive.

LORRAINE

Sweetie, men are just brain-damaged-ape-idiots destined to ruin our already awful lives.

EXT. WILLOWICK HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Za straightens lawn chairs and smooths out wrinkles on slipcovers in anticipation of Sugar and Lorraine's arrival.

SUGAR

I'm thinking he can sleep in the basement.

LORRAINE

You need to stay focused on school. We'll take him to a shelter in Houston.

SUGAR

The cops gave me a list. Most of them won't take single men - who knew? The one's that do are full.

Sugar opens the door, grabs Za's left arm to pull him inside. Lorraine grabs his right to keep him out. It's a tug-of-war and Za is the rope. Grandma pulls up, hobbles to the mailbox.

GRANDMA

Did my package come?

LORRAINE

I already got it. A little help here?

GRANDMA

Bring it inside.

LORRAINE

(to Sugar)

You want Za to stay here? Fine. I'll compromise. One night. One-hundred dollars. Cash. Up front.

SUGAR

That's not a compromise if you know  
I don't have the money.

Just as Lorraine tugs on Za, Sugar releases her grip. Lorraine and Za tumble to the ground.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sugar runs in, takes up position behind Grandma for protection. Lorraine struts in, holds up a baggie with a pendant inside.

LORRAINE

(to Grandma)

Why did you buy a charm in the shape  
of a hand?

GRANDMA

When you're feeling loving and  
centered, I'll be happy to explain  
what it means.

LORRAINE

You just did. It's a hippie thing.  
Now, do not take sides between me  
and Sugar.

GRANDMA

The only side I'm on is the side of  
truth. And, Za seems kind of sweet.  
Has he done anything wrong? Is he  
mean to Sugar?

LORRAINE

Am I the only human in the world that  
can see he's a zombie, and this is a  
problem?

SUGAR

Ha! You admit. He's a zombie.

GRANDMA

A really good looking zombie.

LORRAINE

You people need your heads examined.

GRANDMA

Okay, I'm hearing a lot of anger.

Lorraine marches out. Za lumbers in the back door.

SUGAR

Just the man I wanted to see.

Sugar blows him a kiss, pats him on the head twice, shoves a cookie in his mouth. Lorraine rushes back in.

LORRAINE

What is he doing in here?

Za blows Lorraine a kiss, pats her on the head twice, shoves a cookie in her mouth.

GRANDMA

(to Sugar)

I've been trying to shut her up for years, and he does it on his very first day?

EXT. WILLOWICK HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Lorraine muscles Za out the door. She plops down on the porch, drops her head into her hands.

LORRAINE

I'm going to close my eyes, and when I open them, I want zombie boy to be gone.

Sugar sneaks over, motions to Za: go back inside. He slips back into the house. Lorraine opens her eyes.

SUGAR

I'm gonna post Za's picture on Facebook, and send out a tweet to see if anyone knows who he is.

She grabs her cell, thumbs out a message. Za saunters out of the house like he lives there, snacking on a handful of cookies.

LORRAINE

Did you let him inside?  
(to Za)  
What's your name?

Za tries to speak. Nothing comes out.

LORRAINE (CONT'D)

Where are you from?

SUGAR

Hunky Town.

LORRAINE

Hush.  
 (to Za)  
 Use your words.

He still can't talk. Lorraine gets out a pen, jams it into his hands. Za lacks the fine motor skills to write, ends up scribbling. Sugar gets a text.

SUGAR

(to Lorraine)  
 It's Belinda. She needs my help  
 ASAP. I've got video we shot for her  
 YouTube channel.

She digs out a flash drive.

LORRAINE

Fine. Take him with you.

EXT. SILSBEE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Sugar pulls up with Za. Belinda carries video equipment into the building. Sugar digs out a rag so Za can wipe down the scooter.

SUGAR

Enjoy.

Sugar, leaving Za to clean, hustles to Belinda, gives her the flash drive.

BELINDA

Who's the guy?

SUGAR

My future zombie boyfriend. Did you know zombies are real?

BELINDA

Sure. Whatever works for you. Now, I need ideas. I'm shooting a new episode. I'm calling it, "Belinda Goes to Prom."

SUGAR

Is that why you're wearing your dress?

BELINDA

I couldn't wait to put it on. Don't you wish the dance was tonight?

SUGAR

No. But, I found the right guy, I think. What if I ask him, and he says no? What if he only likes hoochies? What if he wants to say yes, but he can only make a series of clicking sounds, like this?

She gets out a pen, obsessively clicks it.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

And, I still need a dress. And tickets. And flowers. And a limo. And a restaurant. What should I do first?

BELINDA

Take a Xanax. They're in my purse.

EXT. WILLOWICK HOUSE - DAY

Sugar pulls up with Za. They stride to the front porch where Lorraine and Grandma work on a computer.

LORRAINE

I just got a call from my friend Hannah. Montana doesn't have a date for prom, and Hannah is blaming you.

SUGAR

How is that my fault?

LORRAINE

Turns out, you were their last hope for a date.

SUGAR

You can't imagine how the term "last hope" makes my self-esteem skyrocket. And, for the record, they ditched me.

Za cleans the area. Lorraine spins the computer around so Sugar can see a picture on it.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

That looks like Za's uniform.

LORRAINE

It's a marching band uniform currently sold in the US. High schools all over Texas are using them.

Lorraine searches Za's clothes for any identifying tags. Her brutish approach yields nothing other than a scared look on Za's face. Sugar drags Lorraine away. They square off in a well-rehearsed fighting formation. Grandma, referees.

GRANDMA

Dharma warriors. Begin.

SUGAR

Mom, I appreciate you looking out for me. But, you're scaring the heck out of him. That's not the plan.

LORRAINE

What is the plan?

SUGAR

I'm going to ask him to the prom.

LORRAINE

You still think that's going to happen?

SUGAR

I just need to find the guts.

LORRAINE

And, I need to protect my daughter. So, I want answers. And, if I don't hear something I like, I'm calling the police, and having him hauled away.

SUGAR

The police are not going to take him away. They already had their chance.

LORRAINE

That was at the car wash. This is my house. I'm entitled by law to say who stays here, and who doesn't.

SUGAR

(to Grandma)

Is that true?

Grandma nods, yes. Sugar digs out her pen, clicks it at Lorraine's face in anger.

LORRAINE

So, you got sixty seconds to stop clicking that pen, and come up with new information about him, or no prom.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. WILLOWICK HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - DAY

Sugar and Lorraine huddle with Za. He struggles to sound out words.

LORRAINE

Thirty seconds.

Za gets frustrated, gives up, collapses.

SUGAR

Are you happy? You broke our zombie.

Sugar gently holds his hand for support. The powerful chemistry they share makes their blood pressure rise, eyes widen in eager anticipation. They wipe sweat off their palms.

LORRAINE

What's happening here?

SUGAR

He's a zombie. But, he doesn't wanna be one. He just wants to be the person he was before any of this happened.

(to Za)

Am I right?

He nods, yes.

LORRAINE

Great. My daughter is the zombie whisperer.

SUGAR

There. New and exciting information. I am simpatico with a zombie, and you're not. I know, it's just a technicality, but I'm desperate.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Sugar marches in, helps Grandma cut vegetables for a pot of soup.

SUGAR

I need your help. Za looks and acts different than anybody else. That's what I like about him. But, that's also going to be a problem.

GRANDMA

What kind of problem?

SUGAR

Kids staring at him, teasing him.  
And, sooner or later, a real zombie  
is bound to cause a commotion.  
Should I try to disguise Za with  
makeup, or have him wear different  
clothes?

GRANDMA

My advice? Let Za be whoever he is.  
The world would be a lot better off  
if people accepted each other just  
the way they are. That can't happen  
if you're pretending to be someone  
else.

SUGAR

I have to pretend to be someone else  
all the time. I'm a misfit from  
Misfit Island.

Grandma takes off her necklace, shows Sugar the pendant.

GRANDMA

See this?

SUGAR

It looks like a tiny hand.

GRANDMA

The hand is open, able to receive  
and accept love.

Grandma places the necklace around Sugar's neck.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

I want you to wear this as a reminder.

SUGAR

That I joined your cult?

GRANDMA

The next time you wanna feel accepted  
for the real you, just hold out your  
open hand.

SUGAR

So, somebody can smack it?

GRANDMA

It's a metaphor. So, somebody who loves  
you can kiss it.

SUGAR

Right. Hand kissing. All the rage.

Sugar checks her laptop. Lorraine peeks in, motions to the screen.

LORRAINE

Find anything about Za?

SUGAR

Not, yet.

LORRAINE

Why don't you take a break? You know,  
get a change of scenery?

SUGAR

And, go where?

LORRAINE

Take him to school. See if somebody  
recognizes him.

INT. SILSBEE HIGH SCHOOL - DAY

Sugar and Za saunter in. Halls are empty.

SUGAR

My goal is to get a scholarship for  
engineering. My dad wanted to be an  
engineer. So, I kind of feel like  
I'm making him proud by doing it. I'm  
currently doing an independent study  
on Newton's first law of motion, and  
how it relates to lighter-than-air  
objects like helium.

Sugar examines a mathematical brain teaser posted on a dry erase  
board in the hall. She makes a few corrections on the equation.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

If my calculations are correct, and  
fluid dynamics is a better metric  
for determining things like inertia,  
I just proved Newton wrong - not my  
original plan, but the perks are  
great. Global fame. A Nobel Prize.  
And, one free appetizer at Chili's.

INT. GYMNASIUM - DAY

Sugar and Za meander in. At the far end of the gym, Belinda sets up a video camera.

SUGAR

(to Za)

That's Belinda. She's my best friend.  
She wants every human on the  
internet to love her. That's why  
she does her show.

Sugar heaps video gear onto Za. They lumber to Belinda. Belinda hugs Sugar like they're long lost friends. But, it's just an excuse, so she can talk to Sugar without Za hearing.

BELINDA

I see the love train has arrived.  
He is chuga chuga choo choo yum yum.

SUGAR

You're not afraid of him or anything?

BELINDA

Yes. But, that boy can get a girl's  
juices flowing. I am so turned on  
right now.

SUGAR

I'm right here.

BELINDA

Right. You're here to help me be  
famous. What's the plan?

SUGAR

I think better with music on.

Belinda gets out a boom box, turns on thumping dance music. Za springs into action, dances like crazy.

BELINDA

Your plan is to destroy my life?

INT. GYMNASIUM - BY THE WEIGHT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Belinda muscles Sugar to a private area.

BELINDA

I've worked my butt off for twenty-  
five minutes to make sure I'm the  
biggest star at prom. I am not going  
to be upstaged by "Teen Zombie Show."

SUGAR

But, I don't understand.

BELINDA

If you bring him to the dance, I don't stand a chance of being the most popular person there. I mean, look at him - he can dance like that? Did you forget how selfish I am?

Belinda takes Sugar for a stroll.

BELINDA (CONT'D)

How serious are you about this guy?

SUGAR

Whenever we're together, I feel like I'm laying in a kiddie pool filled with puppies.

BELINDA

Did you ask him out, yet?

SUGAR

No. There's too many things that could go wrong. What if he's married? What if he lives in Seattle? What if he doesn't like waffles? How are we going to celebrate National Waffle Day?

Sugar gets out a pen, nervously clicks it.

BELINDA

I need you to focus. What is your mission?

SUGAR

Ask Za to the dance. And, stop clicking my pen?

BELINDA

That is pretty irritating.

SUGAR

Don't worry, we will work on your video. I promise. But, right now, I'm taking him to my favorite place in the whole world.

EXT. GHOST ROAD - DAY

Trees grow on both sides of this dirt lane and create a closed canopy tunnel that stretches for miles. Sugar pulls up with Za.

SUGAR

Here we are. The Ghost Road. When I was a kid my dad would bring me out here, and we'd race dirt bikes. Now, when I need to get away and think, I come out here.

Za grabs a stick, draws in the dirt. Sugar examines his artwork.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

It looks like two people holding hands. Is that me and my dad?

He shakes, no - reaches out, holds her hand.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

Is that you and me?

Za nods, yes. Sugar draws in the dirt, encircles his drawing with her own creation.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

Emoji: heart.

INT. WILLOWICK HOUSE - DAY

Sugar and Za saunter in. Lorraine works on a computer.

LORRAINE

Sweet Jesus in the Garden, for the last time - he is not staying here.

She hands Lorraine a wad of money.

SUGAR

One-hundred dollars for one night's stay. Cash. Up front. I assume this is still the going rate.

LORRAINE

Where did you get this?

SUGAR

From your purse.

LORRAINE

What?

SUGAR

You actually think I would steal this? Shame on you. I got it from my secret Santa.

LORRAINE

I told her to stay out of this.

SUGAR

Okay, how's this? We got a tent in the garage. I'll set it up in the backyard. He can stay there, just for tonight.

LORRAINE

You wanna have zombie camp?

SUGAR

You won't regret this.

LORRAINE

I already do...  
(yelling)  
...secret Santa? Now.

Grandma shuffles in.

GRANDMA

I have never seen Sugar more happy than when she's with this guy.

LORRAINE

But, it's a privilege to have a house and food, and now she wants me to accept a complete stranger into this home? She acts like all this appeared magically, just for her.

GRANDMA

I know. Nothing is given.

LORRAINE

Everything is earned. I work at a suck job selling jewelry in the mall to pay the bills. Sugar sees me leave for work every day. She sees that example. If you give her money, she's not earning it.

Grandma gives Lorraine a wad of money.

LORRAINE (CONT'D)

Apology accepted.

INT. SILSBEE HIGH SCHOOL GYMNASIUM - DAY

Sugar and Za strut in. Belinda turns on lights for a video shoot.

SUGAR

Let's do it just like the text  
I sent.

Belinda hits record on her camera. All three take their place in front of it, Za in the middle.

BELINDA

(to the camera)

Hey, interwebs. It's Belinda. This is my new bae, and that's my best friend, Sugar. I wanted to ask him to go to the prom with me in front of everybody.

(sings to Za)

On the first day of prom, my true love said to me...

SUGAR

...this zombie is going to prom with me.

Sugar muscles Za out of the shot. Belinda performs her best fake-cry-drama-queen act for the camera. Sugar turns it off.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

And, we are out. Now, people from miles around will line up to pity you and console you, and tell you how rotten I am. It feels good to be bad.

EXT. WILLOWICK HOUSE - FRONT PORCH - NIGHT

Lorraine and Grandma play video games on an iPad. Sugar saunters up, peeks over their shoulders to watch.

LORRAINE

(to Grandma)

Did I tell you that Sugar was rude to Hannah? All I want her to do is apologize, and she won't. I sure wish I could avoid any kind of bad blood between me and Hannah.

Grandma looks to Sugar for a reaction.

SUGAR

I say, let there be blood.

Sugar rushes inside. Grandma and Lorraine have some privacy.

LORRAINE

Sugar doesn't talk to me much. How's she doing?

GRANDMA

She misses her father.

LORRAINE

Does she still blame me for everything?

GRANDMA

You and I both know it wasn't your fault he left. And, one day, we'll tell her the whole story.

LORRAINE

Did I tell you Uncle Louie called? He might have some information about who Za is.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Sugar makes lunch for the next day. Grandma shuffles in.

GRANDMA

What's all this nonsense I hear about you not feeling lovable?

SUGAR

It's not nonsense.

GRANDMA

Every person that knows you loves you.

SUGAR

Hannah hates me.

GRANDMA

That child needs to be beaten with a stick. My point is, you are surrounded by love.

SUGAR

Then, why don't I feel it?

GRANDMA

Because, you're too young, and too dumb to see it.

SUGAR

Ouch. Is this your idea of tough love?

GRANDMA

Look around you. Friends. Family. A new man. These are the good ole days. As soon as you recognize that everything will fall into place.

SUGAR

So, what should I do?

GRANDMA

Right now? Go talk to your mother.

SUGAR

Am I being punished?

GRANDMA

She's having a hard time.

Grandma hugs Sugar.

GRANDMA (CONT'D)

Did I ever tell you you're my favorite grandchild?

SUGAR

I'm your only grandchild.

GRANDMA

Don't ruin the moment.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Lorraine gets out a shoebox filled with old photos. She digs out a family picture of her, Sugar, and Sugar's father. Sugar saunters up, takes a peek.

SUGAR

That's you, me and dad, out at the Ghost Road. Should we be having a mother daughter moment where we share our feelings and stuff?

LORRAINE

What do you want?

Sugar holds up her phone.

SUGAR

You are not gonna believe this.

LORRAINE

You're right. I don't believe it.

SUGAR

There's an agent that seen Za's picture. They've been looking for someone with a "goth-dead-guy-vibe." And, they're willing to pay him to model clothes.

LORRAINE

All this talk about Za is getting a bit tiring.

SUGAR

How can you say that?

LORRAINE

My spirit is crumbling under the sheer pressure of your persistence. Are you ever gonna ask him to the prom?

SUGAR

You're actually getting weak? I must attack now. I'm gonna go ask him.

Sugar does deep breathing exercises to psyche herself up. Her face contorts with intensity.

LORRAINE

Sweetie?

SUGAR

I'm summoning my goddess energy.

LORRAINE

It looks like you're summoning a stroke.

Sugar bolts outside. She shuffles back.

SUGAR

He's gone. Where would he go?

Sugar sees the family pic from the Ghost Road. She grabs her coat.

LORRAINE

It's bedtime.

SUGAR

I know exactly where he is.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

EXT. GHOST ROAD - NIGHT

Sugar pulls up on her scooter. Za wanders in a nearby field.

SUGAR

What on earth are you doing?

He touches his head, heart.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

You came all the way out here to think about your feelings? I've never felt comfortable talking about my feelings with a guy before. But, you totally get me.

Za trudges over.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

I know we haven't talked a lot, but just being there for me - to listen - to understand. That's really important. I probably should have done a better job of that for my mom.

She fiddles with the hand pendant on her necklace.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

It's like my mom's hand was always open to accept me, just the way I was. She's been treating me like I was lovable all along.

Sugar gives him a helmet for the ride home.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

Come on, I just realized, I have to apologize to my mom. We're always bickering. I know, it's not that big of a deal. But, it's a big deal to me.

INT. WILLOWICK HOUSE - NIGHT

Lorraine, paces. Sugar and Za, shuffle in.

SUGAR

Before you rip me for leaving in the middle of the night...

LORRAINE

...if you have a point, make it.

SUGAR

You always loved me, and respected me, and accepted me in this home. That makes you really smart in my book. I'm sorry for not recognizing this sooner. So, thank you. Now, hand down your punishment.

LORRAINE

I'm actually proud of you. I raised a good kid who thinks for herself. Now, while you're handing out apologies, you got one left for Hannah?

SUGAR

She's the kind of person that makes me wish I had more middle fingers.

LORRAINE

Fine. You just made an enemy. Now, I'm tired. Go to bed. Both of you. He stays outside. You stay inside. Zero contact. Zero genital commotion.

INT. WILLOWICK HOUSE - NEXT DAY

Lorraine makes coffee. Sugar is on the phone.

SUGAR

You're telling me all of the prom tickets have been sold?

LORRAINE

Do you actually have a date? Did you speak the words to him?

SUGAR

No. I haven't officially asked him, yet. But, all the tickets are gone.

Sugar hangs up, flips open her laptop. There's a live YouTube feed of Belinda giving a tearful confession.

BELINDA

As many of you know, I just had a terrible breakup with my boyfriend. I really appreciate all the love and support I've received.

Lorraine examines the screen.

LORRAINE

She has thirty thousand subscribers?

BELINDA

I wanted to wish Sugar and Za all  
the best in the world as they embark  
on their new relationship together.  
Now, who wants to be my new bae?

Belinda spins the camera around, reveals a line of cheering supporters begging for the opportunity to go out with her.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

Sugar and Lorraine march in. Za dusts furniture.

SUGAR

Where am I gonna get tickets to the  
prom?

Lorraine reaches atop a cabinet to a secret spot, pulls down an envelope, gives it to Sugar. She takes out a pair of tickets.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

What's this?

LORRAINE

Several weeks ago when you said you  
wanted to go, I knew you'd  
procrastinate buying the tickets.  
So, I bought them for you.

SUGAR

So, you and I are getting along now?

LORRAINE

Like a summertime pop song.

SUGAR

Then, how about if I return the favor?  
You. Me. Za. We'll squad up, and  
search for his true identity. And,  
I'll even be nice to you. But, only  
for short periods of time. Or, until  
I change my mind.

LORRAINE

Deal. And, that reminds me.

INT. LIVING ROOM - BY THE FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Lorraine fishes out a note from a pile of mail.

LORRAINE

Your Uncle Louie talked with some of his cop buddies, and they did some research for you. He printed this out while he was at the station. It has your name on it, so I didn't open it.

Za and Lorraine huddle around Sugar.

SUGAR

It says here, those thugs were on their way to the Gulf of Mexico to dump Za's body in the ocean. They had car trouble on the way, so they were carjacking Grandma to finish their road trip.

LORRAINE

What's the connection between Za and the carjackers?

SUGAR

They don't know. The bad guys aren't talking.

LORRAINE

Did they find out anything about his uniform?

SUGAR

No.

(to Za)

Do you know anything about this?

He shakes, no.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

(to Lorraine)

Uncle Louie finishes by saying, he's got one more lead to check, and he'll call us if he finds anything.

LORRAINE

With Uncle Louie's help, we could look for Za's true identity.

SUGAR

By the power invested in me, as a person who enjoys sprinkles on top of soft-serve ice-cream, I hereby declare us a team dedicated to unraveling a mystery and discovering the truth. Team Za. Unite.

Sugar tries an impromptu handshake with her mom that fails miserably.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

It's a work in progress.

EXT. GHOST ROAD - DAY

Sugar pulls up on her scooter with Za. Her necklace dangles in the breeze. He motions to it.

SUGAR

It's a reminder that people will accept the real me if I extend my open hand. You wanna try it out?

Za nods, yes. Sugar extends her open hand, winces in anticipation of what's coming. Za holds her hand, kisses it.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

Not in a million years did I think that would happen. Now, for the biggest moment of my life.

Sugar is really nervous, gets out a pen, clicks it over and over.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

Would you like to go to the prom with me?

Za takes the pen, tosses it away, gives her a gentle kiss on the lips. Her stiff posture relaxes, eyes sparkle. It's like she's being reborn by the power of love.

Za positions Sugar's hands on each side of his throat for support, her thumbs under his jaw. He takes several deep breaths.

In mounting pain, Za summons all his strength. In a climactic burst, he releases a single word that barely gets past his lips.

ZA

Yes.

END OF ACT THREE

TAG

EXT. WILLOWICK HOUSE - DAY

Sugar and Za strut out. Sugar wears a military-style uniform similar to his, and her makeup matches his Gothic look.

SUGAR (V.O.)  
Prom is in three hours, and I'm  
dressed like this so we can have our  
very own "zombie prom."

A limo speeds up with Belinda, Hannah and Montana.

SUGAR (V.O.)  
Belinda agreed to go to the prom  
with Montana, if Hannah became a  
sponsor for her show.

Hannah leans in close to Sugar for privacy.

HANNAH  
I am not gonna have you two  
parading around my town scaring  
people with your demonic ways. I'm  
coming for both of you.

SUGAR (V.O.)  
Demonic ways? I'm having more fun  
than I thought. This poor woman  
doesn't know she's making me happy.  
Now I got my very own villain?  
Score.

Lorraine and Grandma run out of the house waving phones for pictures. Sugar turns on music. Za dances like crazy. The group joins in.

SUGAR (V.O.)  
And, I finally got the answer I was  
looking for. Turns out, I'm lovable  
after all. Grandma was right - I'm  
surrounded by it - these are the good  
ole days. And, one more thing, I'll  
shave my legs for that zombie.

Lorraine's phone lights up with in incoming call, she takes it.

LORRAINE  
It's your uncle. He knows who Za is.

FADE OUT.

END OF PILOT EPISODE