

OPTION 1: PAUL MATTHEWS

Context: Paul has just learned that a zombie apocalypse is raging through his hometown of Hatchetfield, forcing people to sing and dance as if they are in a musical! He seeks refuge in a local coffee shop, Beanie's. Now he must convince Emma, one of the baristas (and his longtime crush), of the severity of the situation.

PAUL

Okay, okay, okay, okay, okay, okay, okay, okay, okay! All right! This isn't happening. Get a grip, Paul, you're hallucinating. Better yet, you're still dreaming. You need to wake up. You need some coffee. That's it! Just a nice cup of black coffee. Nothing in it. No cream, no sugar. Just black coffee!

(entering Beanie's)

HELLO!? HELLO!?!? Please, God, I just want a black coffee!

Emma enters, singing.

EMMA

BLACK COFFEE, I'M YOUR COFFEE GAL--

PAUL

No!!!!!!

Emma stops and looks at him, confused.

PAUL

Not you too, Emma! Please, God, stop singing!!

EMMA

Okay, okay, I'll stop. Oh, I didn't forget. You're the guy who doesn't like musicals. Paul, right?

PAUL

Emma...you're talking to me. Like a normal person!

EMMA

Uh, yeah, and if my boss catches me, I'll get canned. New company policy: not only do we have to sing when people tip but when they enter, when they order...all the time, apparently!

PAUL

Emma, I think there's something terribly wrong with the world today.

EMMA

Yeah, fucking tell me about it. I spent the entire morning learning some dumbass new tip song, I'm exhausted.

Paul pulls her aside.

PAUL

Emma. I feel like there's something...*sinister* infecting Hatchetfield, and I know this is gonna sound crazy, and not very scary, but it *is* scary if you think about the implications. Promise me you'll think about the implications!!

EMMA

Okay, okay. I promise.

PAUL

Okay. Emma. I think the world is becoming...a musical.

EMMA

Um, I--

PAUL

Don't say anything! Let it sink in.

EMMA

Okay.

PAUL

Okay! Now...

(up in her face)

Are you frightened!?

EMMA

Uh, yeah, I think I *am* starting to get a little frightened.

PAUL

You should be! You should be...

A bell chimes. Nora and Zoey enter.

NORA

Emma! Tip!

ZOEY

Emma! Tip!

EMMA

Oh, thank God. Sorry, Paul, I gotta do this dumbass tip song. Sorry!

## OPTION 2: EMMA PERKINS

Context: Emma and Paul are on the run from a zombie apocalypse that has overtaken their hometown, Hatchetfield. For the moment, they are safe, having found temporary shelter. This marks the first time that Emma opens up to Paul emotionally.

EMMA

Ugh. Why did I come back here? I spent the first 18 years of my life trying to get out of this place. Should've just stayed in Guatemala. I mean, yeah, they've got volcanoes and Coatimundis everywhere, but--

PAUL

What's a Coatimundi?

EMMA

Oh, it's like a little raccoon thing. They get into shit, people hate 'em, but at least they don't sing and dance!

PAUL

So is that what drove you back to Hatchetfield? Coatimundis up in your shit?

EMMA

No, no. It was my sister, Jane. She was the good one. Yeah. She had this Lisa Frank binder when she was little where she mapped out her entire life and I swear to God, she stuck to it. Bullet point by bullet point. It was like, job, husband, house, kids. And, you know, when one sister is so on top of her game, it kind of demands that the other one be a total fuck-up, right?

PAUL

What is yin without yang?

EMMA

That's what I'm saying! Yeah, man, she was off doing life and I was doing...something else. Backpacking, mostly. And she would call me and, you know, invite me home for the big events. Weddings, baby showers. And I'd always say, "Oh, sorry, I'll catch the next one!" But, um...then when I got the invitation to her *funeral*, I was like...oh. There won't be a next one.

PAUL

Oh. I'm sorry.

EMMA

Hey, you didn't crash into her car. Anyway, it's weird growing up in someone else's shadow because then when they're gone, the light shines on *your* life for the first time and it does not look good.

## OPTION 3: BILL WOODWARD

Context: Bill and his best friend, Paul, are trying to rescue Bill's daughter, Alice, who has been trapped by a horde of zombies. Bill is racked with guilt for an argument he had with Alice this morning, in which he admitted that he doesn't like her girlfriend, Deb.

BILL

Alice! Alice? Sweetie, where are you!?

PAUL

Bill! Be quiet! Be quiet, Bill, okay?

BILL

We gotta find her, Paul!

PAUL

We will, but you're gonna have to shut up, all right? This whole school could be crawling with those things. You screaming is gonna get us killed and then who's gonna save Alice?

BILL

Right, right. Sorry, Paul, it's just...she's all I have.

PAUL

I know. Just try to stay calm and follow me. Okay?

BILL

You know, she's a good kid, Paul. She's smart and I respect her choices, but...if we're being honest, I don't like Deb. She's just, she's always on her phone, and...I don't know. I just think Alice can do better.

(beat)

This morning, the knucklehead that I am, I said, "Why don't you try dating someone at your own high school in Clivesdale?" And she said, "You just don't like Deb." And what was I supposed to do, lie? So I said, "Why don't you try dating someone like Grace Chasity?" and she goes, "No! Grace Chasity is a nerdy prude!" And I said, "One, I said date someone *like* her. Two, that is not a very nice thing to say," and suddenly I'm defending Grace Chasity of all people, and she says, "You just want Grace Chasity to be your daughter!" and I said, "Well, at least she's nice to me at church!"

(beat)

And I think that fight is why she got off the bus to go see Deb. Oh, God, Paul. I'm the reason they trapped her. It's *my* fault.

## OPTION 4: CHARLOTTE SWEETLY AND TED SPANKOFFSKI

Context: Coworkers Charlotte and Ted have found temporary refuge from the zombie apocalypse, but Charlotte's husband, Sam, has been infected. Though their marriage is falling apart and she has been cheating on him with Ted, Charlotte still desperately wants to restore her and Sam's broken relationship. Ted just wants to have sex.

CHARLOTTE

Oh...Sam, baby...oh!!

TED

Come on, Charlotte. We'll make you a drink, we can relax, talk...fuck...

CHARLOTTE

Ted! I can't believe you're thinking about that at a time like this! The whole world could be coming to an end!

TED

Well, if I'm gonna die, I'm gonna go out doing the thing I love: screwing around with another man's wife.

CHARLOTTE

Ted! You're such a horny bastard!

TED

Always have been. Always will be.

CHARLOTTE

And you know that's why I can't resist you...

She throws her arms around him in a passionate embrace. But then she pulls away.

CHARLOTTE

Wait! Ted! My husband's brains fell out today. If I can't be a wife to him now, what kind of woman am I?

TED

(suddenly angry)

Oh, I don't know, Charlotte! I'm not your therapist! You know, maybe you should go back to fucking *him*. Hmm? I know that's why you actually went to counselling.

CHARLOTTE

I mean, that's not the only reason! I wanted to make things work with Sam. I love him. I know I shouldn't, but I do.

TED

No, Charlotte! This guy is a scumbag, all right? You could upgrade...

(indicates himself)

...To a sleazeball. But you refuse to be happy. You know what, Charlotte? I'm done, all right? So you can stay here with your dying marriage and your dying husband. I'm gonna go hit on that crabby barista.

He exits.

CHARLOTTE

Wait, no! Ted! Wait! Oh, God!

(getting an idea)

Oh...God??

Charlotte falls to her knees and clasps her hands in prayer.

CHARLOTTE

God, if you're up there and you can hear me, it's me, Charlotte. You just gotta know, I didn't want any of this to happen! I love Sam. And I know we've had our problems and I know I've been so angry with him lately, but...but I didn't want him to die! Please, God! Just let him wake up! Just let him wake up!

SAM

(waking up)

Charlotte?

## OPTION 5: HENRY HIDGENS

Context: Hidgens, an eccentric biology professor, and Emma, his student, are investigating the origin of the zombie apocalypse. Once a survivalist who feared the end of the world, Hidgens is now having second thoughts about trying to stop it...

HIDGENS

So, Emma, how do you explain an entire race of beings spontaneously bursting into song and dance? How do they all know the lyrics? The choreography?

EMMA

I don't know, they're all getting orders from the mothership?

HIDGENS

You're not far off. What we're dealing with here is a collective consciousness. On one level, they are individuals, but on another, they are all appendages of a much larger organism all connected by a central brain.

EMMA

And the brain came down in the meteor?

HIDGENS

Or! *It is* the meteor.

EMMA

Okay, and so it wants to kill us all so it can resurrect us as part of its shitty musical?

HIDGENS

That's one way of putting it. You could also say it's uniting us in one common purpose. Think! Emma, if this entity were to spread to the entire planet...why, it could achieve what over 50,000 years of human civilization never could. World peace.

EMMA

Okay...but how do we stop it?

HIDGENS

Yes, of course. Stop it...

EMMA

Okay, um...all right, all right. So this all started with the meteor; *it is* the brain. So if we take it out, will all these things just die?

HIDGENS

That's a sound theory, Emma...which is why it must never leave this room!